

## **Techniques: Chord Inversions**

National Standards: 1, 7-9, 10

The technique whereby different chord “voicings” are created by using notes from different octaves, or inversions, is useful in that doing so allows a chord progression to more easily carry a melody. This then introduces the concept of arranging music.

### **Prepare**

Play each of the audio tracks included in the In Tune story on chord inversions and listen to how the chords stay the same but sound different.

Inspire a discussion about voicings are important to songs, and how they change fingering.

### **Key points in the article:**

- Notation for some forms of music including jazz and rock only provide chord names, leaving the inversion to the player.
- Choosing certain voicings can help players stay within the sonic range of their instruments.
- Choosing certain chord inversions can help musicians play melodies more easily.

### **Begin**

Choose one of the story’s chord inversion examples.

- Ask students why a writer or player would choose one voicing over another.
- Ask your students how choosing certain voicings can help musicians

### **Review vocabulary words from the article below:**

- POLYPHONIC– the ability of an instrument to play multiple sounds at the same time.
- PROGRESSION: in music, a series of notes or chords written or played within a formula.
- INTERPRETING: translating the meaning of words or expressing a same or similar sound in a different way.
- ARPEGGIATE: play a chord as a series of ascending or descending notes.
- TRIAD: in three parts; in music, a chord with three notes.

### **Discuss**

Play a familiar song on a piano or guitar using its written or performed inversions. Then change the inversions and ask students how they change the song, and why the originals were chosen.

### **Q&A**

1. What is the purpose of a chord inversions?
2. How can a monophonic instrument play a chord?
3. Doesn’t sheet music dictate chord voicings?

4. What is a three-note chord called?
5. Other than to better carry a melody, why would a symphonic composer invert a chord?
6. What is a chord's root?

**Answers**

1. To make playing the melody easier and more natural.
2. By arpeggiating the chord, or playing its notes in succession, one at a time
3. Yes, but jazz and some pop/rock notation only offers symbols and/or chord names leaving the voicings up to the player.
4. A triad.
5. To keep it within the range of a particular instrument, or section of instruments.
6. The lowest note in a chord is its root. For example, an F major triad in root position will have an F as its lowest note.