

First Inversion Chords - Cheat Sheet

General Rules:

First inversion chords are shown with a 6 (or sometimes, 6/3) in the figured bass.

This means that there is a 6th and a 3rd above the bass.

Try not to double the 3rd of a first inversion chord. Instead, double whatever note you gave to the soprano, or, if that doesn't work, the remaining chord member.

Piano

C Major I

I⁶

The image shows two musical staves for a piano. The first staff, labeled 'C Major I', shows a C major chord in root position: C4 in the bass, E4 and G4 in the treble. The second staff, labeled 'I⁶', shows the first inversion of the C major chord: G3 in the bass, C4 and E4 in the treble.

**The order of the notes above the bass don't matter. Only that the third is in the bass.

When harmonizing a melody, the use of first inversion can help to smooth out your bassline. You shouldn't use it at the beginning or the end of your piece because it has a weaker sound than a root position chord.

Some other figured bass hints...

Pno.

a minor: #

the # tells us that the 3rd above the bass is raised

6#
4

this tells us that the 6th above the bass is raised by a half step, and that there is also a fourth above the bass.

The image shows two musical staves for a piano. The first staff, labeled 'a minor: #', shows a C minor chord in first inversion: C4 in the bass, E4 and G4 in the treble. An arrow points from the sharp symbol to the E4 note. The second staff, labeled '6# 4', shows a C major chord in first inversion: C4 in the bass, E4 and G4 in the treble. An arrow points from the '6#' symbol to the G4 note, and another arrow points from the '4' symbol to the E4 note.

** Important note - the sharp does not mean that it automatically gets a sharp. If the note should be flat in the key signature, it is made natural instead. If it is already sharp, it would turn into a double sharp. Think of the sharp as raising the note it refers to by a half-step instead of turning it into a sharp.