

## GUIDELINES FOR FIGURED BASS

Figured bass is a shorthand for chords. It identifies the position of the notes in a chord from the bass. The figured bass designation is written after the Roman Numeral that indicates the position of the chord in the key.

### Triad Inversions

A root position triad can be labeled with  $\begin{matrix} 5 \\ 3 \end{matrix}$  indicating that the top note is a 5<sup>th</sup> above the bass

and the middle note is a 3rd above the bass. However, if there are no numbers, the root position is implied.

A first inversion triad is labeled with the number  $\begin{matrix} 6 \\ 3 \end{matrix}$  indicating the interval of a 6th between the bottom

and top notes and a 3rd between the bottom and middle notes. A first inversion triad may be labeled with the **6** only. Example: **I<sub>6</sub>**

A second inversion triad is labeled with the number  $\begin{matrix} 6 \\ 4 \end{matrix}$  indicating the interval of a 6th between the bottom

and top notes and a 4th between the bottom and middle notes. Both numbers are used in this inversion.

### Seventh Chord Inversions

A root position seventh chord can be labeled  $\begin{matrix} 7 \\ 5 \\ 3 \end{matrix}$  or just 7 (5th & 3rd implied). Example: **V<sub>7</sub>**

A first inversion seventh chord has the 3rd in the bass. The tonic is a 6th above, the seventh is a 5th above and the 5th is a 3rd above the bass. It can be labeled  $\begin{matrix} 6 \\ 5 \\ 3 \end{matrix}$  or  $\begin{matrix} 6 \\ 5 \\ 3 \end{matrix}$ .

A second inversion seventh chord has the 5th in the bass. The third is a 6th above, the root is a 4th above and the seventh is a third above the bass. It can be labeled  $\begin{matrix} 6 \\ 4 \\ 3 \end{matrix}$  or  $\begin{matrix} 4 \\ 3 \end{matrix}$ . Example: **IV<sub>4</sub>**

A third inversion seventh chord has the 7th in the bass. The fifth is a 6th above, the third is a 4th above and the tonic is a 2nd above the bass. It can be labeled  $\begin{matrix} 6 \\ 4 \\ 2 \end{matrix}$  or  $\begin{matrix} 4 \\ 2 \end{matrix}$  or **2**.

## Figured Bass for Triads

The following forms are acceptable for all tests

### Long (Complete) Form

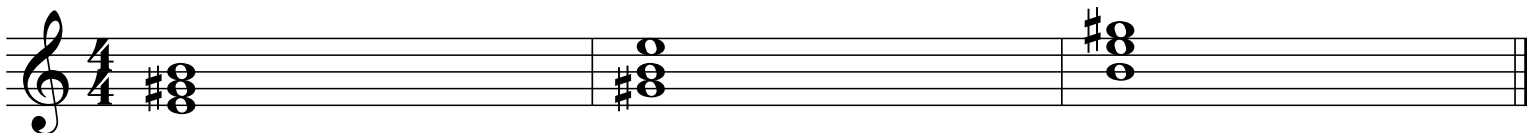
Root Position- $\begin{matrix} 5 \\ 3 \end{matrix}$  First Inversion- $\begin{matrix} 6 \\ 3 \end{matrix}$  Second Inversion- $\begin{matrix} 6 \\ 4 \end{matrix}$

### Short (Abbreviated) Form

Root Position-5 First Inversion-6 Second Inversion

(or left blank)

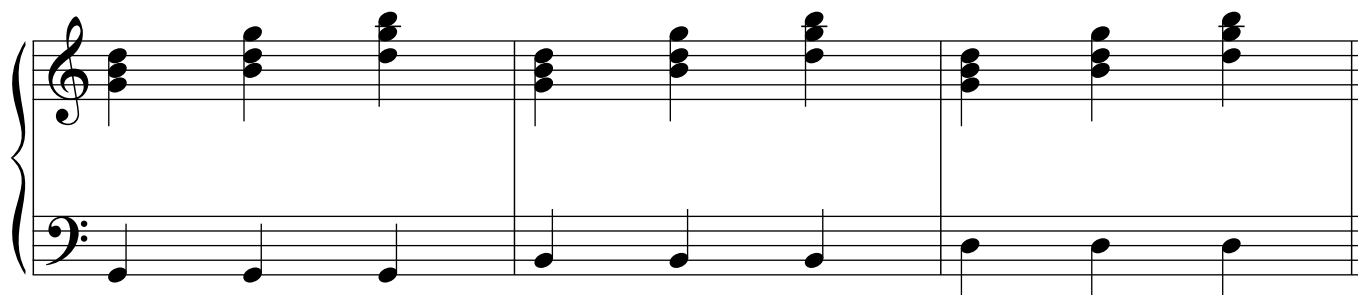
(no abbreviated form)



$\mathbf{I}_3^5$  or  $\mathbf{I}_3^5$  or  $\mathbf{I}$        $\mathbf{I}_3^6$  or  $\mathbf{I}_3^6$        $\mathbf{I}_4^6$

## Figured Bass for Keyboard Style Triads

The following forms are acceptable for all tests



Numbers in parentheses are optional

$\mathbf{I}_{(5)}^{(5)}$   $\mathbf{I}_{(5)}^{(5)}$   $\mathbf{I}_{(5)}^{(5)}$   $\mathbf{I}_6^{(3)}$   $\mathbf{I}_6^{(3)}$   $\mathbf{I}_6^{(3)}$   $\mathbf{I}_6^4$   $\mathbf{I}_6^4$   $\mathbf{I}_6^4$

# Figured Bass for Seventh Chords on one Staff

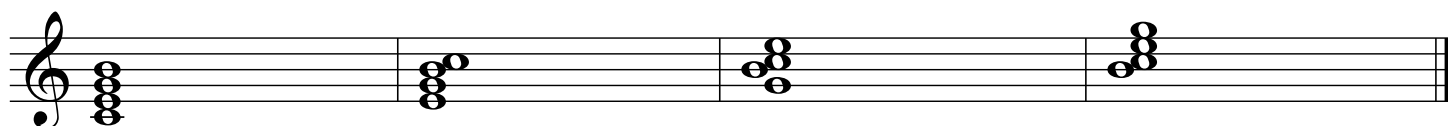
The following forms are acceptable for all tests

## Long (Complete) Form

Root Position- 7	First Inversion-6	Second Inversion-6	Third Inversion- 6
5	5	4	4
3	3	3	2

## Short (Abbreviated) Form

Root Position- 7	First Inversion-6	Second Inversion-4	Third Inversion- 4	or	2
	5	3	2		



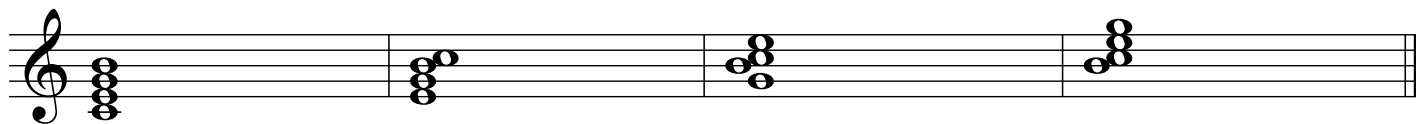
**I**<sub>7</sub>  
5  
3

**I**<sub>6</sub>  
5  
3

**I**<sub>6</sub>  
4  
3

**I**<sub>6</sub>  
4  
2

Or



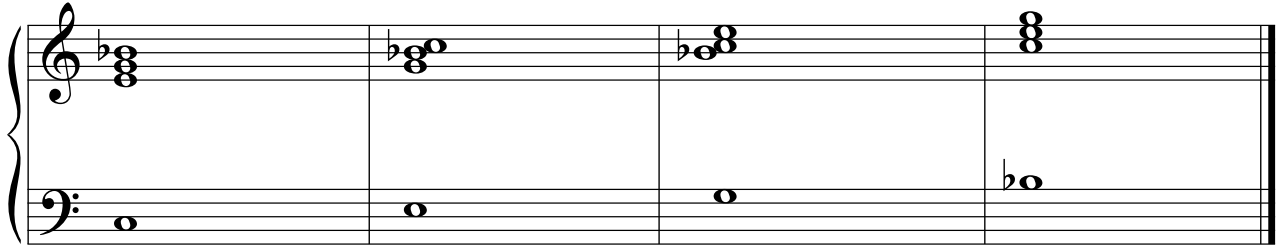
**I**<sub>7</sub>

**I**<sub>6</sub>  
5

**I**<sub>4</sub>  
3

**I**<sub>4</sub> or **I**<sub>2</sub>

# Figured Bass for Seventh Chords on Grand Staff



$\mathbf{V}_{\substack{7 \\ 313}}$  or  $\mathbf{V}_7$        $\mathbf{V}_{\substack{6 \\ 313}}$  or  $\mathbf{V}_{\substack{6 \\ 5}}$        $\mathbf{V}_{\substack{6 \\ 43}}$  or  $\mathbf{V}_{\substack{4 \\ 3}}$        $\mathbf{V}_{\substack{6 \\ 42}}$  or  $\mathbf{V}_{\substack{4 \\ 2}}$  or  $\mathbf{V}_2$