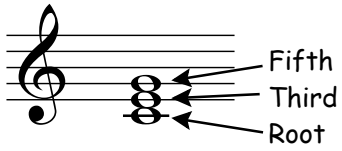
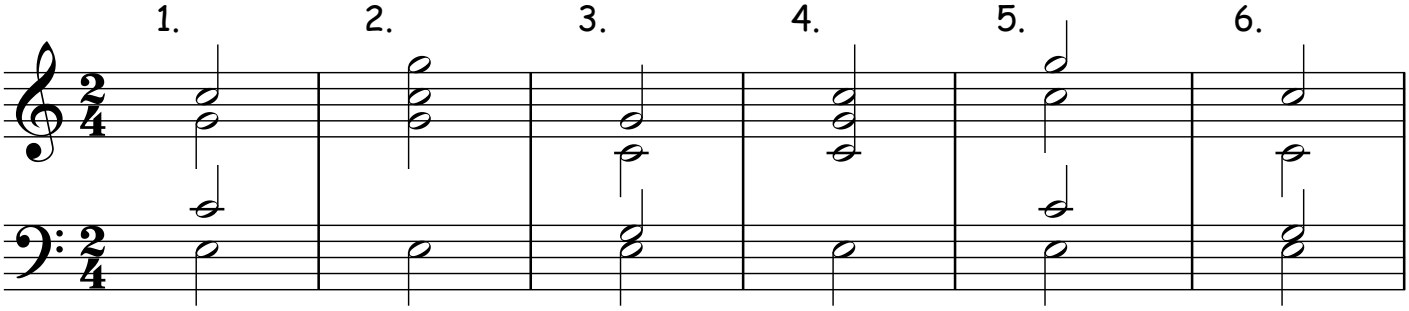
First Inversion ($\frac{6}{3}$) Chords

The three notes of a triad are always referred to as follows:



Up until now, in four-part writing, we have always put the **root** of the chord in the bass. This means that the chord is in **root** position. But if we put the **third** of the chord in the bass, it will be in **first inversion**! (How exciting)

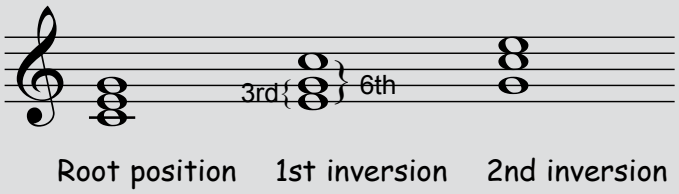
Here are some first inversion chords - called $\frac{6}{3}$ chords - in C major:



Things to notice

- ★ The bass has the **third** of the chord, not the root.
- ★ The third of the chord (the bass note) IS NOT THE NOTE THAT IS DOUBLED.
- ★ In examples 2 & 3, the fifth of the chord is doubled (we haven't done this before, but it is quite a good option – more about this later)

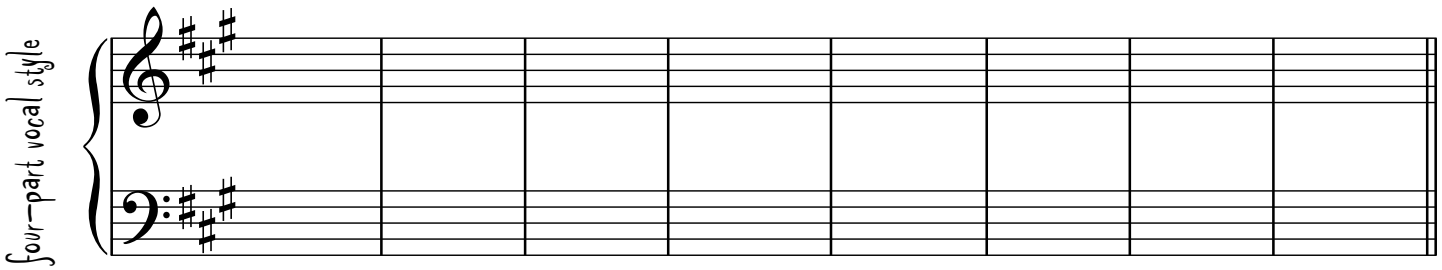
First inversion chords are called $\frac{6}{3}$ chords because of the intervals in the triad:



So chord I in first inversion is actually chord I^6_3, but usually the three is left out and it's known as I^6. Chords II, IV V and VI in first inversion are II^6, IV^6, V^6 and VI^6. First inversion chords may also be called IIb, IVb, Vb and VIb.

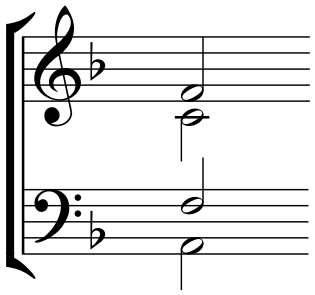
Write root position and first inversion chords in these **major** keys. Remember:

- ★ Root position means the _____ of the chord is in the bass
- ★ First inversion (e.g. I^6 or Ib) means the _____ of the chord is in the bass
- ★ Don't double the bass note in $\frac{6}{3}$ chords - double the root or the fifth of the chord



I I^6 IV IV^6 II II^6 VI VI^6

To identify whether a chord is in root position or first inversion, follow these steps:



Step 1: The four notes used here are __ __ __ __

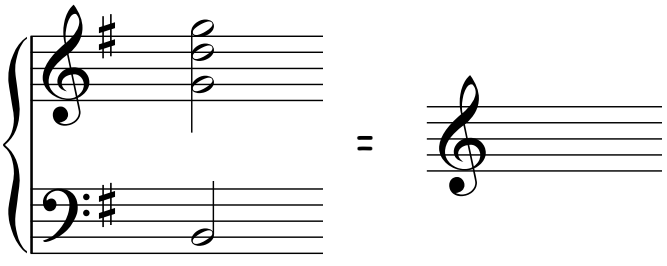
Step 2: Cross out the doubled note.

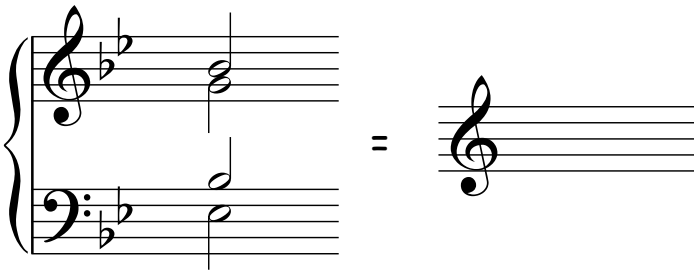
Step 3: Arrange the remaining three notes in a root position triad:

(Remember: root position triads look like a set of traffic lights!)

Now you know that F is the root of the chord. However, the bass note is A. So that means that this chord is in root position/first inversion. (Circle correct answer) Well done!

Find the position of these chords by 'transforming' them into triads first:



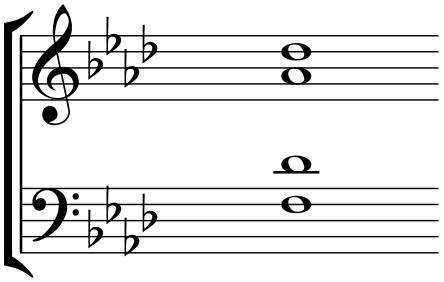


Position: _____ Position: _____

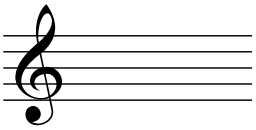
More about $\frac{6}{3}$ Chords

Just like we discussed on the previous page, in the exam you have to work out the key and position of a given chord. Usually you are told the chord number, for instance:

This chord is the subdominant of its key



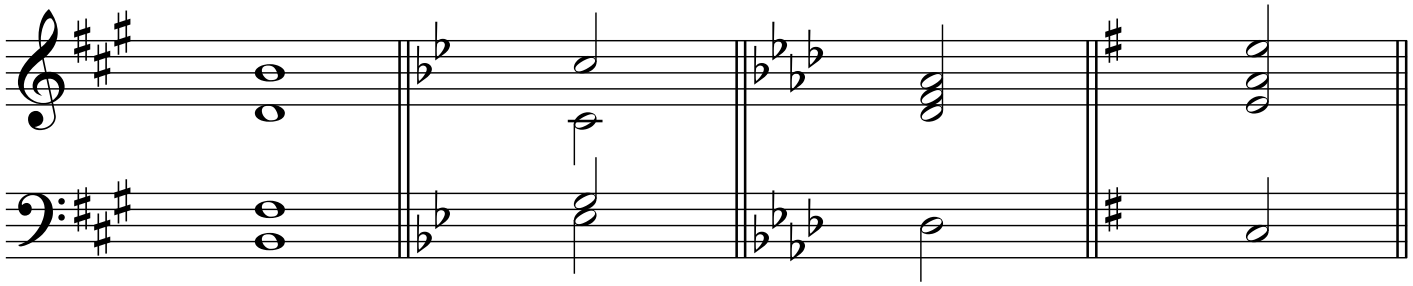
First, find the root of the chord by transforming it into a root position triad: (Remember to ignore the doubled note)



Now you know that the root is _____, and we know that this is the subdominant (no.__). This means the key must be _____.

Now look at the the bass note of the original chord - is it the root or the third? _____
So the position of the chord is _____. Good work!

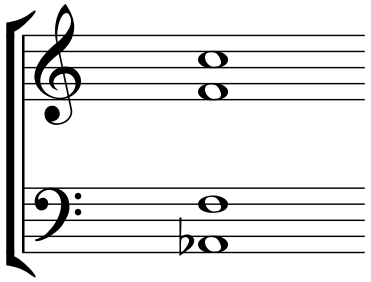
Identify the key and position of these **subdominant** chords:

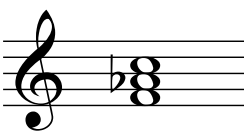


Key: _____ Key: _____ Key: _____ Key: _____

Position: _____ Position: _____ Position: _____ Position: _____

One last thing... sometimes you are given accidentals instead of a key signature; this means you will have to think a bit harder about the key!





This chord could be chord I of F minor or chord IV of C minor