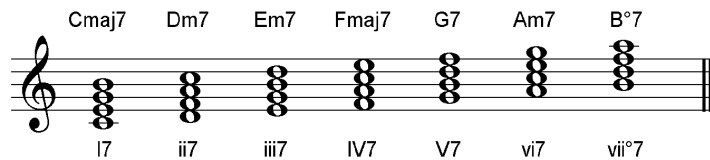


Jazz Harmony

Popular music often uses a combination of chords from both jazz and Classical era styles. If you have only studied classical harmony until this point, it will be useful to familiarise yourself with some of the more typical chords found in jazz styles.

Added 7th Chords

The harmonic unit in jazz harmony is the **added 7th chord**, rather than a basic 3-note triad. Thus, the chords in C major are as follows:

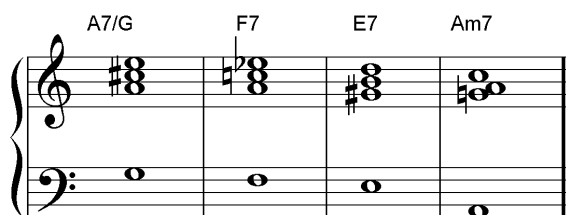


You are likely to find a mix of ordinary triads; and added 7th chords used for added interest. However, the grammatical rules/guidelines for added 7ths chords in popular styles are **not** the same as those used in Classical.

In Classical harmony you will have learnt that the 7th is a dissonance, which ought to resolve with a downwards stepwise motion. For example, when G7 moves to C, the note F should move to E in the same part. (And in earlier Baroque styles, the 7th had to be prepared as well as resolved).

In popular music, the 7th is **not** regarded as a dissonance as such. It is just another chord note which adds a certain flavour. There is **no obligation for the 7th to fall** (but often it will, because stepwise movement is the most common type in all music styles).

In Classical music, dominant 7th chords move to either chord I or VI most of the time. In popular styles, there is a great deal of flexibility, and they may **move to any other chord**. Likewise, secondary dominants² in the classical style will normally move to their own tonics, but in popular styles they can move around much more freely. It is quite common to find a series of V7 chords, e.g. this progression in A minor:



Notice how there is a **lot** of stepwise movement – where possible the parts move chromatically downwards towards the tonic Am chord. Chromatic movement should normally be by semitone step in the **same part**.

² Any dominant 7th chord which is not V7 i.e. I7, II7, III7 etc., used chromatically (not for a key change).

What the Examiner is Expecting

- MAINTAIN THE SAME FORMAT

Some songs are arranged so that the top line of the piano part **doubles** the vocal part almost exactly (or perhaps in a different octave or with small alterations).

In other arrangements the piano part is essentially **independent** and adds harmony and/or countermelodies to the vocal part.

It is **not usual** for an arrangement to switch between these two formats.

Musical notation for a piano part in G major. The top staff (treble clef) contains the vocal line with notes G4, A4, B4, and C5, each with a 'la' syllable below it. The piano part's top line (treble clef) exactly duplicates these notes. The piano part's bottom line (bass clef) provides a simple harmonic accompaniment. Chord symbols G, D/F#, Em, and D are written above the vocal line.

Top piano line doubles top vocal line

Musical notation for a piano part in G major. The top staff (treble clef) contains the vocal line with notes G4, A4, B4, and C5, each with a 'la' syllable below it. The piano part's top line (treble clef) plays an independent melodic line. The piano part's bottom line (bass clef) provides a simple harmonic accompaniment. Chord symbols G, D/F#, Em, and D are written above the vocal line.

Top piano line independent

In most AmusTCL past exam papers, the format is for the piano part to double the vocal, but you must look at the given opening and ascertain whether this is the case. If the piano part is independent, you will need to work out how it fits together with the vocal part and continue in that manner. You need to continue in the same way as the opening.

- USE THE CHORD SYMBOLS AS A GUIDE

The provided chord symbols are **basic** instructions and can often be **elaborated**. They may or may not include inversions and you may be able in some places to “spice up” a chord with an added 7th, 9th, 6th or pedal, for example, or to add some chromatic decoration notes.

Musical notation for a piano part in G major. The top staff (treble clef) contains the vocal line with notes G4, A4, B4, and C5, each with a 'la' syllable below it. The piano part's top line (treble clef) provides a harmonic accompaniment. The piano part's bottom line (bass clef) features a dominant pedal point on the note G. Chord symbols G, D/F#, Em, and D are written above the vocal line.

With dominant pedal

The inner pedal D effectively changes the Em chord to Em7. This is allowed.

Writing a Piano Part

Although there are infinite ways to write a piano pop accompaniment, there are some stylistic patterns which are more common than others which we can study to help us create our own arrangements.

The **left-hand** part tends to be mostly **on** the beat, up until the 1970s. (Later (70s+) pop often has a highly syncopated left-hand, but you are much less likely to meet this type of song in the AmusTCL exam.)

The melody is usually written into the top piano part, **but** there are exceptions, where the melody is found in the bass, with a right-hand chordal accompaniment. (An example can be seen in *April Showers*, in the refrain (chorus), page 4:

<https://www.sheetmusicsinger.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/April-Showers.pdf>)

BASS NOTES

The bass notes which coincide with each chord change normally follow the annotated **inversion** of the chord (but often the inversions are not included in the chord symbols). Bass notes on later beats in the bar during the same harmony might be **auxiliary harmony notes** or **pedals** if the voice part is busy. Occasionally other types of decoration such as passing notes or auxiliary non-chord notes might be used – this tends to be at points where the vocal part is resting or has a long held-note – in other words, where nothing else is happening. Sometimes the true bass note might be delayed until later in the bar.

Here are some examples:

The first example, labeled **A9**, shows a vocal line with a long 'la' note. The piano accompaniment features passing notes and an auxiliary harmony note. The second example, labeled **Fm/C**, shows a vocal line with three 'la' notes. The piano accompaniment features a delayed bass note.

The middle parts fill out the harmony. You must ensure that the music fits the hand comfortably (including the top melody part).

An arpeggio symbol can be used where a stretch is unusually wide.

The image shows a piano accompaniment with an arpeggio symbol used in the right hand to indicate a wide stretch.