

(Book 4) Lesson 16. Three Part 7th Chords on "A-D-G" Strings

Root Position: omit 5th

First Inversion: omit 5th

Second Inversion: omit Root

Third Inversion: omit Root

The three part 7th chords were already introduced in Book 3. If you have only a vague memory of the process, you should refer back to Book 3 for a comprehensive review.

Remember that the "close voiced" four part chords were (and are) more or less impossible to finger on the guitar. The solution is to omit either the 5th or the Root, of course depending on the inversion. The low and high notes of the 4 part chord inversion have to be present to retain the integrity of the inversion. The 3rd of the chord must remain to show the major or minor quality of the chord. The 7th must be present to indicate a chord expanded to the 7th degree.

In Second and Third Inversions, because the Root of the chord is omitted, the resulting three part 7th chords end up being inversions of some related triads. These chords will only truly sound like C7, Cmaj7, Cm7 or CmMaj7 if there is another player supplying at least the root of the chord in question.

As an example: an Edim chord will sound like an Edim chord if played by itself. Perhaps a bass player supplying the root note C would then produce the C7 chord.

A question that some students may ask is: "Why would I use three part 7th chords?"

One possible answer is: "If the rest of the harmony is in triads, a four part chord would tend to sound out of balance."

Another possible answer is: "Three part chords are very appropriate in providing accompaniment in an ensemble setting with a bass player. Keep in mind that bass lines are often (but not always) made from the Roots and 5ths of the given chords. Playing three part chords, whether just plain triads or three part 7th chords can keep the performance very tidy. Big fat bar chords can produce big fat sounds which can similarly result in big fat mud. The amount of 'space' in music is usually just as important as the notes."