

Chord Reading 16.

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Observing the "11th" (sus4), "9th" (2nd) and "13th" (6th)

All of the following is dealt with in great detail in Book 5 of Guitar Fundamentals by George Arvola, based on the documents by Tony Bradan ("A Learning Process for Playing the Guitar.") This page may not have so much to do with reading chords but in many situations, the written notation and the chord name may appear to be contradictions. For those with a desire to analyze, study the following presentation.

The sus 4 which was examined in "Chord Reading 14" is also the eleventh degree on the tower of thirds.

Example: C - E - G - B - D - **F** - A
R - 3 - 5 - 7 - 9 - 11 - 13

For all practical purposes, the **sus4** chord and an **11th** chord are the same thing but we usually reserve the 11th chord name for situations where the 11th is added into a Dominant 7th chord structure. Although the example below only depicts the 2nd inversion triad, the sus4 can exist in any inversion.

C Csus4 C7 C7sus4 (or C11)

Imagine the Root note "C" being sounded by another player.

Notice that the **9th** degree on the tower of thirds is also the **2nd** scale tone. (D would be the 2nd scale tone of the C Major scale.) When the 9th degree is added to a Major triad, it usually replaces the Root and some books might call it something such "Csus 2." Others might call it a "C(add9)".

When the 9th is added to a Major 7th, Minor 7th or a Dominant 7th chord, the terminology is usually as follows: In the case of C being the Root, the chords would be called Cmaj9, Cm9, C9. The 7th degree in the three part version of the 7th chord will usually but not necessarily replace the 5th of the chord.

C Csus2 or C(add9) Cmaj9 Cm9 C9

Imagine the Root note "C" being sounded by another player even though in this inversion, it is totally possible to play the chord with all four notes.

Notice that the "G Major" triad superimposed over a "C" bass note could be played as a substitute chord for Cmaj9 but if the inversion is too low in pitch, it will most likely not work particularly well. Any substitute triad generally functions better in a slightly higher pitch than the usual accompaniment guitar or piano.

Cmaj9 Cmaj9 Cmaj9 Cmaj9(?)

The 6th scale tone of the C major scale is the note "A". The note "A" also appears as the 13th degree in the tower of thirds. It would only be called a 13th chord when it is added to a Dominant 7th type structure. When the 6th is added to a Major or Minor chord, the chords would be called 6th chords or in the case of minor, they would be called minor 6th chords.

C C6 C6 C6 C6 C6 C13

Notice that when the 6th replaces the 5th of the chord, the result here is simply an "A minor" triad.

In a 13th chord, the flat 7th has to be present to show that the original chord is a Dominant 7th type structure. The 3rd while not absolutely essential is a part of the tri-tone and should also be present.