Figured bass is a system of musical shorthand where chords are indicated by the relationship in close voicing of all the notes to the bass note. Example: a closed triad in 1st inversion has (from the bass up) the following intervals \( \rightarrow \) a 3rd, and a 6th. (Whether or not the 3rd’s and 6th’s are major or minor depends on the type of triad.) A 2nd inversion closed triad has the intervals of a 4th, and a 6th (from the bass up). In musical shorthand, any 1st inversion voicing is referred to as a \( 6_{3} \) or more commonly, just 6. Example: C in 1st inversion is written as C\(_{6} \) (notice that the 6 is under the chord). Similarly, any 2nd inversion is referred to as a \( 6_{4} \). Example: C in 2nd inversion is written as C\(_{6_{4}} \). This system of notation will prove to be valuable for the serious musician.

A \( 6_{4} \) chord is a very potent chord and should be treated with care and skill. Here are some guidelines:
1) The I \( 6_{4} \) or (i in minor) is used to “announce” cadences, that is, it sets up the V chord in authentic (and 1/2 cadences sometimes).

Figured bass symbols can be omitted at the discretion of the individual when labeling chords. They are very useful and effective when one wishes to indicate a precise bass line.

2) Although it is found most often in cadences as above, the \( 6_{4} \) may be used effectively elsewhere in a phrase also:

Key of E:
Another common use is that of connecting a chord and its 1st inversion via the $6_4$:

These are called passing $6_4$’s. Here is another example in F#m. Ending on a major chord in a minor key is common (this device is called the Picardy 3rd.):  

Another common use of the $6_4$ is as a stationary bass note embellishment of a chord of which the $6_4$ is the IV (or iv).

Key of F#:  

1/2 cadence
Triads in 2nd Inversion and Figured Bass

Figured bass is a system of musical shorthand where chords are indicated by their relationship to the bass note. Example: A closed triad in 1st inversion has (from the bass up) the following intervals: a 5th, and a 3rd, and a 6th (whether or not the 3rd & 6th's 5th major or minor depends on the type of triad). A 2nd inversion closed triad has the intervals of a 4th, and a 6th (from the bass up). This system of notation will prove to be valuable for the serious musician.

A 6/4 chord is a very potent chord and should be treated with care and skill. Here are some guidelines:

1. The I6 (or I6) is used to "announce" cadences, that is, it sets up the V chord in authentic (and in cadences sometimes).

2. Although the 6/4 is found most often in cadences as above, the 6/4 may be used effectively elsewhere in a phrase. Also:

   - Key of E:
     - A
     - A6
     - E
     - F6

   - Another common use is that of connecting a chord and its 1st inversion via the 6/4:
     - A
     - Bm
     - F6
     - A

   - There are other passing 6/4's. Here is another example in Fm:
     - F6
     - C
     - E
     - C6

   - Another common use of the 6/4 is as a stationary bass note, embellishment of a chord, of which the 6 is the V (or IV).

Figured bass symbols can be omitted at the discretion of the individual when labeling chords. They are very useful and effective when one wishes to indicate a precise bassline.