

# Triads in 2nd Inversion

## (5th in the Bass – also called $I_4^6$ chords)

Ted Greene, 1975-01-11

[Chord forms are suggestions; you may wish to explore other possibilities.]

Playing order: ● × □ △  
○ = opt.

Triads in 2nd inversion are used for basically the same reasons as those in 1st inversion. The most common uses are as follows:

1)  $I_4^6$  ( $i_4^6$  in minor) is used to set up V at the end of a phrase (the end of a phrase is called a *Cadence*, and this type of  $I_4^6$  is called a *Cadential*  $I_4^6$ ).

The image displays two musical examples of triads in 2nd inversion. Each example consists of a sequence of chords, each with a guitar fretboard diagram above it and a musical staff below it. The first example shows a progression in G major: A (I), G#o/B (vii°6), A/C# (I<sub>6</sub>), D (IV), A/E (I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>), E (V), and A (I). The second example shows a progression in G major: F#m<sup>9</sup> (i), E#o/G# (vii°6), F#m/A (i<sub>6</sub>), Bm (iv), F#m/C# (i<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>), C# (V), and F# (I). The fretboard diagrams use dots for fretted notes, 'x' for muted strings, and 'open' for open strings. The musical staves show the chords in a sequence, with the bass line clearly illustrating the 2nd inversion.

Some people consider the cadential  $I_4^6$  to be an appoggiatura chord to the V. Why do you think this is so?

The  $I_4^6$  usually falls on an accented beat in 4/4 time, or on the 2nd beat (occasionally the 1st) in 3/4 time. The chord preceding the  $I_4^6$  is normally the same kind of harmony that would precede the V (such as ii, IV, vi, or I).

More specifically, the cadential  $I_4^6$  is commonly approached “by step,” such as: ii<sub>6</sub> -  $I_4^6$ , IV -  $I_4^6$ , IV<sub>6</sub> -  $I_4^6$ ; and once in a while by “leaps,” such as ii -  $I_4^6$ , I -  $I_4^6$ , I<sub>6</sub> -  $I_4^6$  (these approaches refer to the *Bass Line*).

The normal progression of the cadential  ${}^6_4$  is to V (or V7 which will be discussed later). However, this progression is sometimes delayed by adding other harmonies between the two, such as:  $I^6_4 - ii_6 - V - I$ .

The cadential  ${}^6_4$  may be prolonged by repetition while adding another chord between the two:

Diagram illustrating a progression of chords: F (I), Bb/D (IV<sub>6</sub>), F/C (I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>), Gm/Bb (ii<sub>6</sub>), F/C (I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>), C (V), and F (open I). The diagrams show the fretboard positions for each chord, and the musical staff shows the corresponding notes.

As with other types of sounds dealt with so far, voice-leading does not have to *always* be used when using  ${}^6_4$  chords:

Diagram illustrating a progression of chords: E (I), F#m (D#<sup>o</sup>/F#), E/G# (I<sub>6</sub>), F#m/A (ii<sub>6</sub>), E/B (I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>), B (V), and E (open I). The diagrams show the fretboard positions for each chord, and the musical staff shows the corresponding notes. A blue circle highlights the E/B and B chords, with an arrow pointing to the text "Also try voice-leading this I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> to V-I".

Appoggiatura  ${}^6_4$ 's normally fall on accented beats as above.

2) The cadential  ${}^6_4$  is not the only *Appoggiatura*  ${}^6_4$  to be commonly used:

Diagram illustrating a progression of chords: Ab<sub>6</sub> (I), Db/F (IV<sub>6</sub>), Ab/Eb (I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>), Eb (V<sub>7</sub>), Fm (vi), Eb/G (V<sub>6</sub>), Ab (I), Ab/C (I<sub>6</sub>), and Eb (V). The diagrams show the fretboard positions for each chord, and the musical staff shows the corresponding notes. A blue arrow points to the Ab<sub>6</sub> chord with the text "Could this chord be called something else?".

F/C
C
B<sup>o</sup>/D
A<sup>m</sup>/E
E<sup>m</sup>
F
C/G
C/E
G
F/C
G<sup>7</sup>/C
C

IV<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>
I
vii<sup>o</sup><sub>6</sub>
vi<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>
iii
IV
I<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>
I<sub>6</sub>
V
IV<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>
3 3 4 2
I

3) <sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>'s are sometimes sounded *in between* two triads on the same *bass note*; this type of <sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> is called a **Pedal <sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>** (it also goes by the names of *Neighboring <sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>*, *Stationary <sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>*, *Auxiliary <sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>*, and *Embellishing <sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>*, — none of which will be used here).

The Pedal <sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> is, in a sense, the opposite of the appoggiatura <sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>; it is usually found on an *unaccented* beat and comes *after* the chord on the same bass note, while the appoggiatura <sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> is *accented* and *precedes* the chord on the same bass note. Examples of Pedal <sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>:

D
B<sup>m</sup>
G
F<sup>#</sup>

I
vi
IV
(III)  
V of vi

B<sup>b</sup>m
E<sup>b</sup>m/B<sup>b</sup>
B<sup>b</sup>m
A<sup>o</sup>/C
B<sup>b</sup>m/D<sup>b</sup>
G<sup>b</sup>
B<sup>b</sup>m/F
E<sup>b</sup>m
F

i
iv<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>
i
vii<sup>o</sup><sub>6</sub>
i<sub>6</sub>
VI
i<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub>
iv
V

More rarely, the Pedal  ${}^6_4$  will not resolve back to the chord on the same bass:

$Bb_m$ vi	$Db/Ab$ $I^6_4$	$Ab$ V	$Db$ I

Notice in these analyses that all pedal  ${}^6_4$ 's are not indicated – it is up to you whether you will indicate them in a similar situation.

4) **Stepwise Bass  ${}^6_4$ 's** (also called *Passing  ${}^6_4$ 's*): These are either approached or left stepwise in the bass (usually both), but they are not cadential  ${}^6_4$ 's:

Analyze these passages:

$F$ I	$C/G$ $V^6_4$	$F/A$ $I_6$	$Bb$ IV	$F/C$ $I^6_4$	$C7$ $V7$	$F$ I	$A_m$ i	$E7/B$ $V^6_4$	$F/C$ $VI^6_4$	$B^o_m/D$ $ii^o_6$	$A_m/E$ $i^6_4$	$E$ V	$A_m$ i

$E$ I	$E/G\#$ $I_6$	$A$ IV	$E/B$ $I^6_4$	$B$ V	$A/C\#$ $IV_6$	$B7/D$ $IV_6$	$E$ I	$A$ IV	$F\#m$ ii	$G\#$ V of vi (II)	$C\#m/E$ $i_6$ ( $vi_6$ )	$G\#$ V (II)

Modulation

$F_m/C$ $i^6_4$	$G^o/Bb$ $ii^o_6$	$Db/Ab$ $VI^6_4$	$G^o$ $ii^o$	$F_m/Ab$ $i_6$	$G^o/Bb$ $ii^o_6$	$F_m/C$ $i^6_4$	$C$ V	$F$ I

5) Sometimes a  ${}^6_4$  will be part of a bass-arpeggio effect, that is, the notes of a triad will be outlined in the bass; when this is the case, the  ${}^6_4$  is known as an *Arpeggio*  ${}^6_4$ . Some are more fleeting than others (see 2nd example), not really qualifying as a separate chord.

The image displays two musical examples illustrating bass arpeggios. Each example consists of a row of guitar chord diagrams and a corresponding bass line.

**Example 1:** Shows chords F (I), F/A (I<sub>6</sub>), F/C (I<sub>6</sub><sub>4</sub>), D<sub>m</sub> (vi), G<sub>m</sub> (ii), C (V), and F (I). The bass line shows arpeggios for each chord, with the  ${}^6_4$  label appearing under the F/C chord.

**Example 2:** Shows chords A, E7, F<sub>#m</sub> (open), D (10), A/E (open), E (open), and A (5). The bass line shows arpeggios for each chord, with the  ${}^6_4$  label appearing under the A, D, and E chords.

Try making up progressions or variations on the above principles in various keys.



