

Method 1 - By Letter Name

By James Hober

The earlier chapter, *Method 1 - How to Recognize* is essential. This chapter is not. It's just for people who want to understand Method 1 from a slightly different angle.

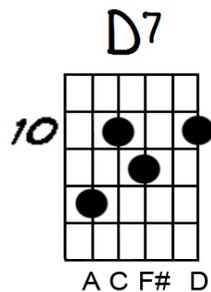
It's possible to recognize which voicing group a particular chord belongs in by using the letter names of the notes it contains rather than the chord tones. For example, for a D7 chord you can use the note names $D \rightarrow F\# \rightarrow A \rightarrow C$, rather than the chord tones $1 \rightarrow 3 \rightarrow 5 \rightarrow b7$. As you can see, this is only a little bit different than *Method 1 - How to Recognize*. Let's see how it works. Instead of the Ascending Chromatic Order of Chord Tones, we simply use the ascending chromatic scale.

The ascending chromatic scale is:

C C# D D# E F F# G G# A A# B (circle back to C)
Db Eb Gb Ab Bb

(If you encounter something like B double-flat, use its enharmonic equivalent: Bbb = A.)

An Example D7 Chord



Strings: 5 4 3 1
Voices: B T A S
Notes: A C F# D
Chord tones: 5 b7 3 1

This time we're not concerned about the numerical chord tones. We'll just consider the letter names of the notes: A, C, F#, and D.

It may help to see these letter names under the entire chromatic scale:

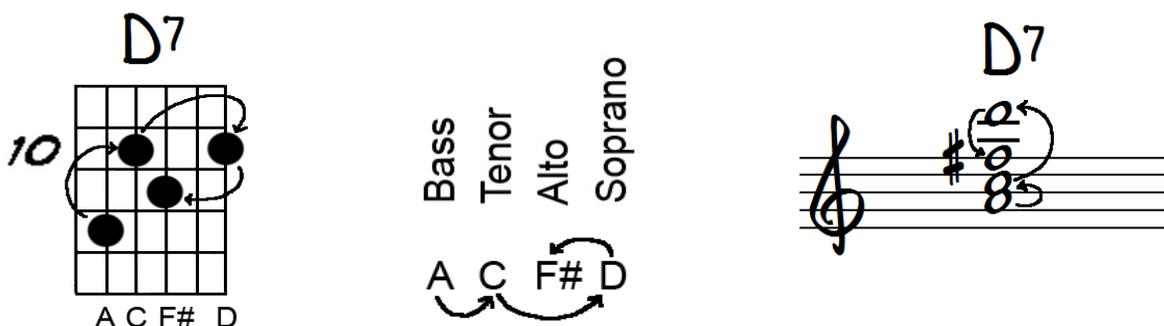
C C# D D# E F F# G G# A A# B
C D F# A

Similar to the Chord Tone Path, the Letter Name Path can begin with any of the four notes. We then continue up the chromatic scale to find the other steppingstones on the path. So our choices for the Letter Name Path are:

D \rightarrow F# \rightarrow A \rightarrow C or
F# \rightarrow A \rightarrow C \rightarrow D or
A \rightarrow C \rightarrow D \rightarrow F# or
C \rightarrow D \rightarrow F# \rightarrow A.

Let's pick $A \rightarrow C \rightarrow D \rightarrow F\#$, for no particular reason. Perhaps you just want to start with the bass note.

Here are three ways to visualize the Letter Name Path through the chord:



The note A is in voice **B**
 The note C is in voice **T**
 The note D is in voice **S**
 The note F# is in voice **A**

We have spelled **BTSA** for the Chronological Voice Formula.

We look it up in...

The Master Formula Table

- V-1** BTAS, SBTA, ASBT, TASB
- V-2** TABS, STAB, BSTA, ABST
- V-3** ABTS, SABT, TSAB, **BTSA**
- V-4** STBA, ASTB, BAST, TBAS
- V-5** BATS, SBAT, TSBA, ATSB
- V-6** (V-1 with B an octave lower)
- V-7** (V-2 with B an octave lower)
- V-8** TBSA, ATBS, SATB, BSAT
- V-9** (V-2 with S an octave higher)
- V-10** (V-2 with both B and T an octave lower, or A and S an octave higher)
- V-11** (V-4 with S an octave higher)
- V-12** (V-3 with B an octave lower)
- V-13** (V-1 with both B and T an octave lower, or A and S an octave higher)
- V-14** (V-1 with S an octave higher)

And we find that our chord is a **V-3**.

Which to Use?

Both the main Method 1 (which uses the Chord Tone Path) and this alternative Method 1 (which uses the Letter Name Path) work fine. Use whichever you like. I would lean toward using the Chord Tone Path. By analyzing which chord tones are in a chord and where, you have already understood a tremendous amount about the chord. This understanding can help you memorize the chord and use it in *musical* situations.