

NOMENCLATURE

LEGEND: + or # = raise 1/2 step; – or b = lower 1/2 step; H = Half Step; W = Whole Step

Because jazz players, composers, educators and authors haven't agreed on a common nomenclature for writing chord and scale symbols, the novice will have to become familiar with several different ways of writing the same scale sound.

Listed below are the most common symbols in order of usage - most-used to least-used. The symbol that is boldface is the one I use most often. Notice that throughout this book you will see CΔ and C to designate a major chord/scale sound. I am doing this so you can begin to get better acquainted with various nomenclature.

Δ = Major scale/chord or major seventh (CΔ). A (7) after a letter means to lower the 7th note of the scale, making it a Dominant 7th quality (C7). A dash (–) when located beside a letter means to lower the third and seventh of the scale 1/2 step, thus making it a minor tonality (Dorian minor) (C–). ∅ means half-diminished (C∅). C–Δ means a minor scale/chord with a major 7th. –3 means 3 half-steps (a minor 3rd). A ° beside a letter means diminished (C° = diminished scale/chord).

CHORD/SCALE TYPE	ABBREVIATED CHORD/SCALE SYMBOL
* MAJOR (Ionian) (WWHWWWH) C D E F G A B C	CΔ Cmaj, Cma, Cma7, Cmaj7, CM, CM7, Cmaj9, Cmaj13
* DOMINANT SEVENTH (Mixolydian) (WWHWWHW) 5th Mode of Major: C D E F G A B \flat C	C7 C9, C11, C13
* MINOR SEVENTH (Dorian) (WHWWWHW) 2nd Mode of Major: C D E \flat F G A B \flat C	C– C–7, Cmi, Cmi7, Cm7, Cmin, Cmin7, Cm9, Cm11, Cm13
LYDIAN (Major Scale with #4) (WWWHWWH) 4th Mode of Major: C D E F# G A B C	CΔ+4 Cmaj+4, CM+4, CΔ+11, CΔb5, Cmajb5
* HALF-DIMINISHED (Locrian) (HWWHWWW) 7th Mode of Major: C D \flat E \flat F G \flat A \flat B \flat C	C∅ Cmi7(b5), C–7b5
HALF-DIMINISHED #2 (Locrian #2) (WHWHWWW) 6th Mode of Melodic Minor: C D E \flat F G \flat A \flat B \flat C	C∅#2 C∅+2, C∅9
DIMINISHED (WHWHWHWH) C D E \flat F G \flat A \flat B C	C° Cdim, C°7, Cdim7, C°9
LYDIAN DOMINANT (Dom. 7th with #4) (WWWHWHW) 4th Mode of Melodic Minor: C D E F# G A B \flat C	C7+4 C7+11, C7b5, C9+11, C13+11
WHOLE-TONE (WWWWWWW) C D E F# G# B \flat C	C7+ C7aug, C7+5, C7+5 ⁺⁴
DOMINANT SEVENTH (Using a Dim. Scale) (HWHWHWHW) C D \flat E \flat E F# G A B \flat C	C7b9 C7b9+4, C13b9+11 ^{+9 +9}
DIMINISHED WHOLE-TONE (Altered Scale) (HWHWWWW) 7th Mode of Melodic Minor: C D \flat E \flat E F# G# B \flat C	C7+9 C7alt, C7b9+4, C7b9+11 ^{+9+5 +9b13}
LYDIAN AUGMENTED (Major with #4 & #5) (WWWHWHW) 3rd Mode of Melodic Minor: C D E F# G# A B C	CΔ+4 CΔ+5 ⁺⁵
MELODIC MINOR (Ascending Only) (WHWWWWH) C D E \flat F G A B C	C–Δ Cmin(maj7), CmiΔ, C–Δ (Melodic), Cm6
HARMONIC MINOR (WHWWH–3H) C D E \flat F G A \flat B C	C–Δ CmiΔ, C–Δ (Har), C–Δb6
SUSPENDED 4th (W–3WWHW) or (WWHWWHW) C D F G A B \flat C or C D E F G A B \flat C	G– G–7, C7sus4, C7sus, C4, C11 C C
* BLUES SCALE (Use at player's discretion) (–3WHH–3W) (1, b3, 4, #4, 5, b7, 1) C E \flat F F# G B \flat C	(There is no chord symbol for the Blues Scale) Used mostly with dominant and minor chords)

* These are the most common chord/scales in Western Music.

I believe in a reduced chord/scale notation that allows our creative side, our natural side (right brain function) to have direction and guidance without feeling inhibited or limited. **When we speak of “quality” we mean whether it is Major, Minor, Dim., or whatever.** I have tried to standardize the chord/scale symbol notation in my books. Since some have been out many years there are instances where I may have used a different chord symbol in one book than I used in this one.

I feel the improviser needs as little notation as possible in order to transcend the actual nomenclature on the page. The more numbers, letters and alterations that appear on the page, the less chance they will have to remove their thoughts from the written page and express what is being heard in their mind. That is why I prefer **C, C7, C–, C∅, C7+9, C7b9**. Remember, we are playing a music called jazz, and it contains many altered tones. Once we learn the various alterations and their corresponding abbreviated chord symbol, why keep writing all the alterations beside the chord symbol? Check out carefully the Scale Syllabus! Listen to Volume 26 “The Scale Syllabus.”

Remember: 2nd's are the same as 9th's, 4th's are the same as 11th's, 13th's are the same as 6th's. Example: Key of C ... the 2nd, D, is the same as the 9th, D. Often a composer will simply write their preferred name of the scale beside the chord symbol, such as E \flat –Δ (melodic minor), F– (phrygian), F– (phry).