

Sweet Adelines International  
2009 Director's Seminar/Judge Training  
Arranging for Non-Arrangers  
Sylvia Alsbury  
Handout #1

**OBJECTIVES:**

1. To review chord structures, voicings and forms used in arranging our music
2. To provide methods of customizing arrangements for a particular ensemble
3. To provide useful techniques for creating modulations, swipes and other embellishments

**I. Chord Structures and Forms**

- A. Review eleven chords used in barbershop
- B. Review acceptable voicings of chords
- C. Review acceptable forms in barbershop

**II. Customizing an arrangement**

- A. Revoicings
- B. Lyrics
- C. Repeats
- D. Embellishments
  1. Swipes, echos and Slides
  2. Bell Chords
  3. Modulations
- E. Intros
- F. Tags

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Handout #2

## CHORD STRUCTURES:

Eleven chords are used in arranging barbershop harmony. Six are constructed on the major triad, three on the minor triad and two are symmetrical in form.

Six chords built on the major triad are:

1. Major triad
2. Barbershop seventh
3. Barbershop ninth
4. Major Sixth
5. Major Seventh
6. Major Ninth

Three chords built on the minor triad are:

1. Minor triad
2. Minor sixth
3. Minor seventh

Two symmetrical chords are:

1. Augmented triad
2. Diminished seventh.

Three of the chords are triads, thereby requiring a doubled tone. They are the major triad, the minor triad, and the augmented triad.

Two of the chords contain five notes, thereby requiring the omission of a tone. They are the barbershop ninth and the major ninth.

The remaining six are constructed with four notes and therefore no note may be omitted.

Of the eleven chords, three provide the predominant flavor of barbershop harmony. They are the major triad, the barbershop seventh chord and the barbershop ninth chord.

## VOICINGS AND DOUBLINGS

### Major Triad:

Since this chord has three tones, root, third and fifth, one tone must be doubled. For the strongest voicing, double the root. (We will discuss how you find the root), Rarely double the fifth and avoid doubling the third. The strongest voicing has the root in the bass. Voicing with the fifth in the bass is seldom used and never at the end of a phrase, at a stress point in the music or at the end of the song. Voicing with the third in the bass should be reserved for special effects.

### Barbershop Seventh Chord

This chord is made up of four tones: root, third, fifth and flatted seventh, and therefore no tone is doubled and no tone is ever omitted. The strongest voicing has the root or the fifth in the bass. Voicing the bass on the third or the seventh is rarely used and then only in passing or for flavor or mood. This chord is also called a dominant seventh chord.

### Barbershop Ninth Chord

This chord has five tones: root, third, fifth, flatted seventh and the ninth. This chord is also called the dominant ninth. Since only four of the five tones are used, no tone is doubled. Correct omission is usually the root, occasionally the fifth, and never the third or flatted seventh tone. The strongest voicing uses the fifth in the bass. If the fifth is omitted, the next strongest voicing places the bass on the root. When the root is omitted, the third or seventh can be used in the bass, but only in passing or for special effect. This chord with the root omitted can also be identified as a minor sixth chord.

### Major Sixth Chord

This chord is made up of four tones: root, third, fifth and the sixth. Since there are four tones to this chord, no tone may be omitted and no tone is doubled. The strongest voicing has the root in the bass. Bass on third, fifth or sixth is infrequent. This chord may also be identified as a minor seventh chord and is recognized as a secondary chord in barbershop harmony.

### Major Seventh Chord

This chord is made up of four tones: root, third, fifth and seventh. All four tones must be used, therefore no tone is doubled and no tone is omitted. This is considered a secondary chord and most commonly used when the melody falls on the seventh tone. Strongest voicing has the root in the bass.

### Major Ninth Chord

This chord is made up of five tones: root, third, fifth, major seventh and major ninth. This chord is a secondary chord and used only when the lead note falls on the ninth tone. Since four tones must be used, no tone is doubled. The seventh tone of the chord is always omitted. This chord should be used only with the root in the bass.

### Minor Triad

This chord consists of three tones: the root, flatted third and fifth. No tone is ever omitted and one tone must be doubled. Any of the three tones may be doubled, but doubling the root or third is preferable to doubling the fifth. To enhance the minor flavor, the chord is strongest with the bass on the root and the root doubled. It is also used as a substitute for its relative major, in which case the third is in the bass and the third is doubled.

### Minor Sixth Chord

This chord has four tones: root, flatted third, fifth and a sixth. Since there are four tones, all four must be used and no tone may be omitted or doubled. The strongest voicing has the root in the bass. This chord contains the same tones as the barbershop ninth chord with the root omitted. The voicing and function determine the correct name.

### Minor Seventh Chord

This chord has a root, flatted third, fifth and a flatted seventh tone. It is considered a secondary chord and is used in passing or for special effect. Since there are four tones, all four must be used and no tone may be omitted or doubled. Strongest voicing is when the root or the fifth is in the bass. This chord contains the same tones as a major sixth chord. Voicing and progressions determine the correct name.

### Augmented Triad

This chord has three tones: root, third and raised or augmented fifth. It is called a symmetrical chord because it is composed of equal intervals ( a major third plus a major third.) This chord is most commonly used when the melody falls on the augmented fifth tone and is strongest when the root is doubled and in the bass.

### Diminished Seventh Chord

This chord consists of four tones, each a minor third apart. Since there are four tones, all four must be used and no tone is doubled or omitted. Any chord tone in the bass is acceptable. This chord is considered secondary harmony and may be used for ease in voice leading, to connect two chords and to create a special flavor. It is occasionally misspelled to avoid the use of double accidentals. It can also occasionally be spelled with both sharps and flats.