

## Keyboard Workshop has announced the release of a new DVD course titled **How To Play More Piano Notes Without Reading More Notes**

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Most people learn to play the piano by learning to sight read the written music. Playing by written music is exactly what the phrase says it is -- playing the exact notation on a piece of sheet music. But playing by chord symbol is very different. Instead of following the harmony note by note, the musician follows the chord symbols (i.e. C7 or F) written above the harmonies, filling in the gaps with their own improvisations, fills, or runs.

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Chord symbols -- sometimes referred to as "chord tabs" (for example, Cmaj7 or G6 or Fm7) are a type of notation used frequently in jazz and other areas of modern music to notate chord progressions and changes. This type of notation differs from that of classical music in that chord symbols don't show the function of a chord the way the Roman numeral notation does. Chord symbols, for modern music with lots of changes, are much easier to read. They function as a sort of shorthand for change-heavy music and are written with four chord parts in mind: the root, the quality, the extension, and the alterations.

The first part in chord symbols, the root, tells the musician which note is the root of the chord. In an E6 chord, for instance, the E serves as the root. In a C7 chord, C is the root. Easy enough.

Quality, the second part in chord symbols, denotes whether the chord is major, minor, diminished, or augmented. In a Cmaj7, the maj tells us that the C chord is major. The abbreviations for this area in chord symbols are maj, min, dim, and aug respectively. So Cm means the chord is a C minor chord. Caug means that the chord is a C augmented chord.

The extension in chord symbols, written after the quality, shows the musician if the chord differs from a triad, such as an 11th or 6th or 9th or 7th or 13th. So a C9 would mean that the C chord includes the 9th note above C, which is D. A C6 chord would mean that the C chord includes the 6th scale note above C, which is A. This part of chord symbols is not always shown; if there is no indication of an extension, the musician is to assume that the chord is a triad.

The last part in chord symbols, the alteration, is usually but not always expressed. Think of this part as the "notes" section in chord symbols; it gives the musician any specific (and sometimes irregular) instructions for playing the chord and is always written in parentheses after the extension (or the quality, if no extension exists). For instance, (no fifth) would tell the musician that the chord is to be played with the fifth tone left out. Sus - short for "suspension", would mean to play the 4th scale note instead of the 3rd. A minus sign would mean to lower (flat) a chord tone, such as C-9 which would mean to flat the 9th of the chord. Conversely, a plus sign would mean to raise (sharp) a particular chord tone.

Reading music using chord symbols allows a person to use written music as a map, rather than a note-for-note approach -- being tied to the written sheet music. By just reading the melody note and the chord symbols, musicians can improvise to their hearts content and create their own sounds on the keyboard. So you can use sheet music as a map instead of a ball & chain that ties you down.

It is an unfortunate fact that many pianists wouldn't have a clue what to do if a gust of wind blew their sheet music off the music rack? Obviously it is very embarrassing to the pianist. There's a true story about a famous concert pianist who could play most any piece of written music, but when asked to play "Happy Birthday" at a party, she couldn't do it because she didn't have any written music!

To address this problem, Keyboard Workshop has announced the release of a new DVD course titled "How To Play More Piano Notes Without Reading More Notes" which demonstrates the art of playing songs using chord symbols -- also sometimes referred to as "chord tabs".

Other helpful information regarding the this DVD course can be found at: [www.playpiano.com/playmorenotes.html](http://www.playpiano.com/playmorenotes.html)

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