

So here's what a piece of music might have looked like that was handed to our ancestor keyboard player.

C: I I⁶ IV V⁶₄ I IV⁶₄ I

And here is how it might have been interpreted. Notice that just like chord symbols on a lead sheet, figured bass leaves some of the creativity up to the player.

Clearing Up A Misconception

Let's clear up some potential confusion before it happens.

This is not necessarily a C/E because we need to

know *what note is in the bass* before we name it properly.

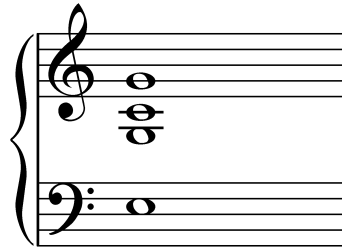
All we see so far are notes in the treble clef. It is *unlikely* that those are the only notes. So far, the bass is a mystery, and we *need it before we name the chord*. It would be *unusual* to name a treble clef chord C/E. Really, it's just a plain, old C chord that has been *voiced differently*.

Unless this is *all* the information you get,

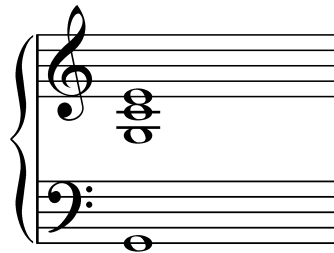
this C this C and this C

are *all* called C...not C/E or C/G.

This is a C/E

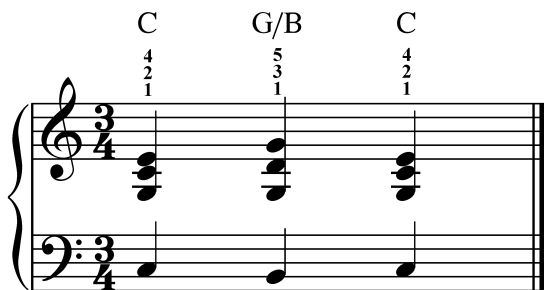


and *this* is a C/G

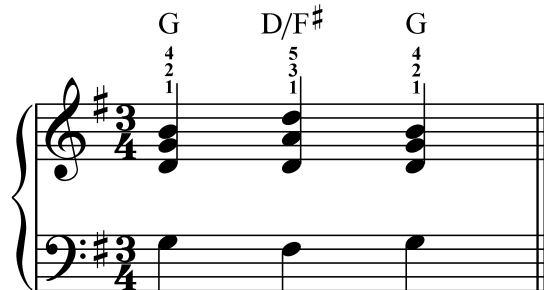


Recognizing Inversions

The big advantage for a pianist in knowing about inversions is the ability to *anticipate* and *execute* the correct fingering. Here are two examples of I V⁶ I in two different keys. Notice how the shapes and the fingerings of the right hand parts are the same.



C: I V⁶ I



G: I V⁶ I