

## AUGMENTED SIXTH CHORDS

### Definition:

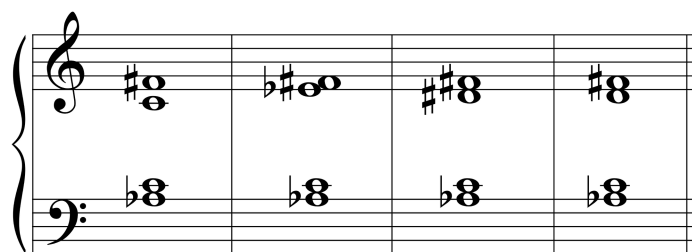
A chord that contains the interval of an augmented sixth.

### Description:

There are 3 such chords: the German 6th (Gr<sup>6</sup>), the French 6th (Fr<sup>6</sup>) and the Italian 6th (It<sup>6</sup>).

The chords consist of the following intervals:

Italian 6:	M3, A6
German 6:	M3, P5 (or DA4), A6
French 6:	M3, A4, A6



C: It6 Gr6 Gr6 Fr6

The Gr<sup>6</sup> in major may be spelled with a doubly augmented fourth instead of a perfect fifth to show the resolution of the pitches in the direction of the inflection (see part-writing below).

A6 chords are most often built on the note a half step above the dominant (<sup>b</sup>6) of the scale in both major and minor keys (as the above examples in the key of C).

A6 chords may also be built on the note a half step above the tonic (<sup>b</sup>2) (see below for examples).

### Sound:

It<sup>6</sup> sounds like an incomplete V7 chord (i.e., with the fifth omitted).

Gr<sup>6</sup> sounds like a complete V7 chord.

Fr<sup>6</sup> has its own unique sound.

### Function:

A6 chords are used for color and tension.

They can also be used in chromatic modulations.

**Resolution:**

When built on the  $b^6$ , A6 chords usually resolve to V or a  $V\left(\begin{smallmatrix} 6 - & 5 \\ 4 - & 3 \end{smallmatrix}\right)$  progression.

C: Fr6 V Fr6  $V\left(\begin{smallmatrix} 6 - & 5 \\ 4 - & 3 \end{smallmatrix}\right)$

When built on the  $b^2$ , A6 chords will resolve to I.

C: Fr6 I

**Part-Writing:****ITALIAN 6:**

In the Italian sixth chord, double the note that is a third above the bass; double the unaltered/non-tendency tone.

Resolve the interval of the A6 to the octave; resolve the altered notes in the direction of their inflection/tendency.

Take other notes to the nearest chord tone following part-writing rules.

The image shows a musical score for a piano. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The first measure contains a D major triad (D, F#, A) in the treble clef and a D major triad (D, F#, A) in the bass clef. The second measure contains a D major triad (D, F#, A) in the treble clef and a D major triad (D, F#, A) in the bass clef. This represents a resolution from a D major triad to another D major triad.

D: I<sup>t</sup>6 V

### FRENCH 6:

The French 6 has four notes, so put one note in each voice. Do not leave any notes out. Resolve the interval of the A6 to an octave; resolve the notes in the direction of their inflection/tendency.

Keep the common tone.

Take the other note to the nearest chord tone.

The image shows a musical score for a piano. The key signature has two sharps (F# and C#). The first measure contains a D major triad (D, F#, A) in the treble clef and a D major triad (D, F#, A) in the bass clef. The second measure contains a D major triad (D, F#, A) in the treble clef and a D major triad (D, F#, A) in the bass clef. This represents a resolution from a D major triad to another D major triad.

D: Fr6 V

### GERMAN 6:

The German has four notes; put one note in each voice. Do not leave out notes. Resolve the interval of the A6 to an octave.

Resolve the interval of the A6 to an octave; resolve the notes in the direction of their inflection/tendency.

Take the notes to the nearest chord tone.

*Problem – Parallel Fifths:*

Resolving a Gr<sup>6</sup> (on <sup>b</sup>6) directly to V or Gr<sup>6</sup> (on <sup>b</sup>2) directly to I will result in parallel perfect fifths (see below).

The musical notation shows a D major triad (D4, F#4, A4) in the treble clef and a D major triad (D3, F#3, A3) in the bass clef. This is followed by a German sixth chord (Gr6) with notes D4, F#4, A4, and C#5 in the treble, and D3, F#3, and A3 in the bass. Finally, it resolves to a dominant seventh chord (V) with notes D4, F#4, A4, and C5 in the treble, and D3, F#3, and A3 in the bass.

D: Gr6 V

In order to avoid the P5s, resolve the German to another chord (e.g., a cadential<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> or a Fr<sup>6</sup> or It<sup>6</sup>) before resolving to the V (see second and third examples below).

The musical notation shows a D major triad (D4, F#4, A4) in the treble clef and a D major triad (D3, F#3, A3) in the bass clef. This is followed by a German sixth chord (Gr6) with notes D4, F#4, A4, and C#5 in the treble, and D3, F#3, and A3 in the bass. Finally, it resolves to a cadential sixth chord (V(6-5/4-3)) with notes D4, F#4, A4, and C5 in the treble, and D3, F#3, and A3 in the bass.

D: Gr6 V<sup>(6 - 5)</sup><sub>(4 - 3)</sub>

The musical notation shows a D major triad (D4, F#4, A4) in the treble clef and a D major triad (D3, F#3, A3) in the bass clef. This is followed by a German sixth chord (Gr6) with notes D4, F#4, A4, and C#5 in the treble, and D3, F#3, and A3 in the bass. Then, it resolves to a French sixth chord (Fr6) with notes D4, F#4, A4, and C5 in the treble, and D3, F#3, and A3 in the bass. Finally, it resolves to a dominant seventh chord (V) with notes D4, F#4, A4, and C5 in the treble, and D3, F#3, and A3 in the bass.

D: Gr6 Fr6 V

*Problem:* In a major key, spell the Gr<sup>6</sup> with the DA4 spelling to show the resolution of that tone to the third of the  $V\begin{pmatrix} 6 - 5 \\ 4 - 3 \end{pmatrix}$ .

The image shows a musical score for a piano in D major. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The first measure shows a D major triad with a suspended 6th (Gr6), with notes D4, F#4, A4, and B4. The second measure shows a dominant triad (V), with notes D4, F#4, and A4. The third measure shows a dominant triad (V), with notes D4, F#4, and A4. The notes are written as whole notes.

D: Gr<sup>6</sup>  $V\begin{pmatrix} 6 - 5 \\ 4 - 3 \end{pmatrix}$

**Other:**

Augmented 6<sup>th</sup> chords can be created by scale degrees other than <sup>b</sup>6 and <sup>b</sup>2. They may be built on the note a half-step above the note of resolution creating a secondary function. See the example below.

The image shows a musical score for a piano in C major. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The first measure shows a C major triad with an augmented 6th (Fr6/IV), with notes C4, E4, G4, and A#4. The second measure shows a C major triad (IV), with notes C4, E4, and G4. The notes are written as whole notes.

C: Fr<sup>6</sup>/IV IV