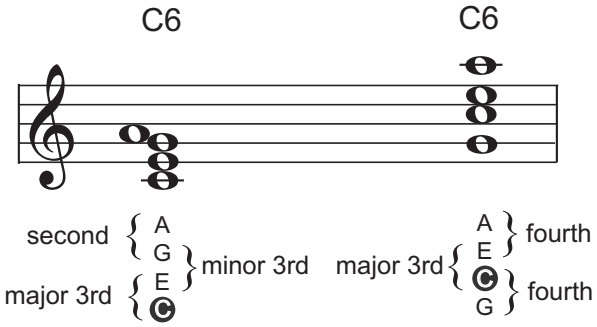
# Purpose of Chord Inversions

Chord inversions are useful for several reasons.

1) Adding harmonic variety
2) Creating chord melodies
3) Creating bass movement
4) Making chord changes efficiently

### Adding Harmonic Variety

Chord inversions create different harmonies (also known as voicings) by introducing different intervals between the chord notes. Even though the notes remain the same (perhaps an octave change) the harmonic spacing between the notes produces a different sound from the original, uninverted chord.




In the example above the C6 consists of three intervals, major 3rd, major second, and minor 3rd. The inversion form shown here creates a major 3rd and two perfect fourths. As a result, the inversion form of the chord with its larger intervals sounds more open and spacious.

## Quick Review of Intervals

Intervals are the musical distance between notes. The most common interval is the octave. It happens to be the interval between two notes where one note vibrates at twice the frequency of the other. This musical distance is commonly divided into seven consecutive steps known as a scale. This scale can be sung *do-ra-me-fa-so-la-ti-do* with each syllable representing a note of the scale. Just as the interval from *do* to *do* is called an octave, the distances between the other notes have names.

The names of other intervals can be found on the opposite page.

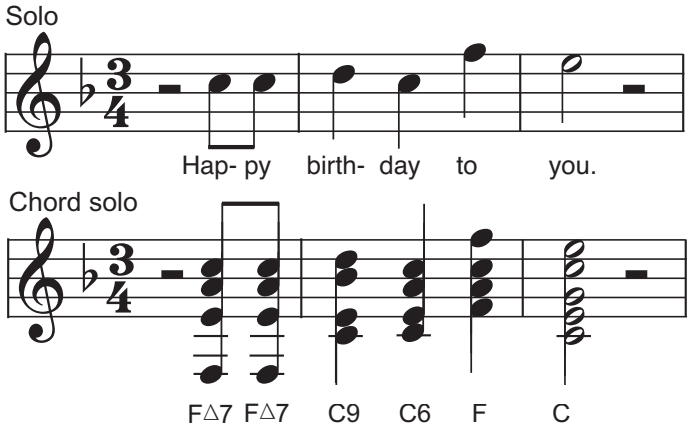
### Creating Chord Melodies

The melody of a song is the sequence of individual notes. The individual notes are spaced by time and frequency to produce a harmonic and psychological effect. In its most basic form the melody is the part of a song you can whistle.

While melodies can be composed very artfully, they are inherently simple due to their straightforwardness. However, most songwriters and composer choose to add chordal harmony in an attempt to enhance the melody. This fills the song with more sound. Chords and melodies are closely related. It would not be wrong to say that music is an interplay between the two.

Chord inversions provide a popular way to add harmony to melody and melody to harmony. *Chord soloing* is the technique jazz guitarists use so that the top note of the chord is the melody note. As the melody note changes so does the chord yet the melody can be clearly heard.

Beginning guitarists often know what note is in the root of the chord they are playing but not so aware of what's the top note. In jazz knowing the top note is just as important. This allows you to play chords and melody at the same time similar to what a pianist does.




*The top staff in the illustration above shows the basic melody for this popular song. The lower staff shows how a note from a chord can become the top note to highlight the melody while providing additional harmony.*