

## Guide to Chord Notation Shorthand Symbols

by Dennis Winge

Guitar players in particular rely on chord charts. It is easy enough to learn to write very accurate chord charts where the exact number of beats per chord and what type of chord is to be played. For the most part this can even be done without using music notation software, although a certain amount of creativity must be used as in, for example, the following chart in which the last beat of bar 8 has two chords (Bb7 and Bb°), indicated by the makeshift (not universally known or used) underline.

|| Am | / / / E7 | Am A7 | Dm G7 |

| CΔ7 FΔ7 | B° E7 | Am | / / / Bb7 Bb° |

| Bb7 E7 // | / / / / | // Am Dm | Am E7 Am / |

| Am | /// E7 | Am A7 | / / / / ||

Here are some of the most common chord-chart symbols.

### General Symbols

♮	natural. Negate a previous sharp or flat
♭	flat. Bring note down one half-step
♯	sharp. Bring note up one half-step


### Chord Symbols














-	minor. So D- = Dm
ø	half diminished, which means m7b5. So Dø = Dm7b5
o	diminished. So A° means Adim
+	augmented. So C7+ = C7(#5) = C7aug
Δ	major, so FΔ7 = Fmaj7. When a chord is on its own, however, with no – or m after it, it automatically means that it's major. So F = F maj. Therefore, the Δ is generally only used when there is a 7 or some other number after it, to distinguish it from a dominant chord. For example, FΔ7 means Fmaj7 but F7 means "F dominant 7."  [Side note: I cross my sevens just because I lived in Europe for a while and developed that habit. There was, at some point in the 1970s, a school that

	popularized the crossed 7 to mean a major 7 chord. This is not the case with my notation.]
alt	altered chord. A dominant chord with any combination of b5, #5, b9, #9
chord name/letter	slash chord, ex: C/Bb is a C chord with Bb in the bass.
N.C.	no chord (i.e. accompaniment instrument(s) do not play)

### Chart-Reading Symbols

	bar line. Bars are one cycle of however many beats are in a bar. Since this piece is in 4/4 time signature, the symbol marks the end of a 4-beat cycle and the beginning of a new one. If we were in 3/4 then the bar line would mark the end of a 3-beat cycle. then define what roman numerals mean
	end of section.
	beginning of piece.
	end of piece.
:	repeat back to here.
:	repeat to previous symbol (or top)
⌘	repeat whatever you had in the previous bar, so:   Am   ⌘   means 2 bars of Am

<p>∕∕.</p>	<p>repeat whatever you had for last 2 bars. So if you had:   Am   Dm   then ∕∕. was inserted through the next two bars, you would play   Am   Dm   again</p>
<p>/</p>	<p>one beat. When there's one chord in a bar, it automatically gets 4 beats, so none of those symbols need to be used. Similarly, when 2 chords share a bar, they automatically get two beats each. But if Am gets 3 beats and A7 gets one, you would notate that as:   Am / / A7  . Both the chord name and each / symbol counts as 1 beat.</p>
<p>⊕</p>	<p>coda, the last section of the piece. This symbol can be used to designate this last section itself or, when within the main body of the piece, to instruct when to skip down to the last section</p>
<p>⌘</p>	<p>Segno ("sign"); a marker that will be returned to later</p>
<p>D.S.</p>	<p>Dal Segno ("go to the sign"); return to the marker above</p>
<p>D.C.</p>	<p>Da Capo ("to the top"); go to the beginning</p>
<p>D.C. al coda</p>	<p>Da Capo al coda; go to the beginning, then take the coda</p>
<p>D.S. al coda</p>	<p>Dal Segno al coda; go to the sign, then take the coda</p>
<p>vamp</p>	<p>keep repeating a certain number of bars, until instructed to move on via a conductor, bandleader, or some other cue</p>
<p>fade</p>	<p>keep repeating a certain section which will be faded out in a recording; in a live performance, it may indicate that the ending can be made up on the fly</p>
<p>1.</p>	<p>first ending. In the example below, play the two bars then repeat (as per the repeat symbol) to wherever is indicated</p> 

	second ending. In the above example, having played the first ending and repeated back to wherever was indicated, you would now go directly to the second ending
	g clef. Used by violin, piano, guitar, harpsichord, trumpet, horn, flute, oboe, clarinet, saxophone.
	c clef. Use by viola, alto trombone, mandola
	f clef. Use by bass guitar, cello, double bass, bassoon, trombone, tuba, and timpani.
	Common time, 4/4, four quarter-notes per measure.
	Cut time, 2/2, two half-notes per measure
	fermata. Take a brief pause here.
	caesura. A longer pause.
	breath mark for wind instruments
	piano. Softly
	mezzo. Medium (dynamics)
	forte. loudly
	crescendo. Get louder

V	decrescendo. Get softer
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