9th Chords, Simplified

Spice up your chords easily

I had been hoping to find a single page on the internet that summarizes all the 9th chords, and perhaps the reason it was difficult to do so is that it's not a simple matter of just listing voicings. There are many different voicings possible, and there are many different types of 9th chords. In this article we will try and summarize the most common types of 9th chords for major, minor, and dominant chord qualities.

The types of 9th chords presented will be those that include, or can include, the 7th. In other words, we will not include "add9" chords, which are major chords consisting of 1, 3, 5, and 9. I already outlined the most common add9 chords in my article called "3 Different Types of 9th Chords."

The intervals of the chords presented here are:

Type of Chord	Intervals	Example
Major 9th	1, 3, 5, 7, 9	Cmaj9
Dominant 9th	1, 3, 5, b7, 9	Ab9
Minor 9th	1, b3, 5, b7, 9	Em9

As for voicings, we will adhere only to those with roots on the 5th or 6th string, so that they can be easily integrated with regular barre chords. Open position 9th chords, on the other hand, may be useful to learn but are not moveable shapes that can apply to any key like the ones discussed here. We will discuss the most common voicings **using the key of C as the example**, give fingering suggestions, and point out some of special things to note about certain voicings.
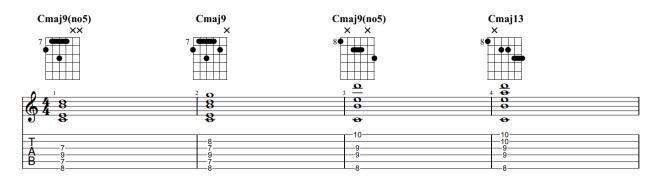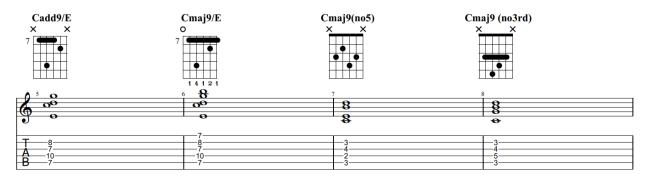
Major 9th Chord Voicings

a. table format

Fret numbers	Fingering	Intervals	Name
8-7-9-7-x-x	2, 1, 4, 1	1, 3, 7, 9	Cmaj9 (no 5th)
8-7-9-7-8-x	2, 1, 4, 1, 3	1, 3, 7, 9, 5	Cmaj9
8-x-9-9-x-10	1, 2, 3, 4	1, 7, 3, 9	Cmaj9 (no 5th)
8-x-9-9-10-10	1, 2, 3, 4, 4	1, 7, 3, 13, 9	Cmaj13
x-7-10-7-8-x	1, 4, 1, 2	3, 1, 9, 5	Cadd9/E**
x-7-10-7-8-7	1, 4, 1, 2, 1	3, 1, 9, 5, 7	Cma9/E
x-3-2-4-3-x	2, 1, 4, 3	1, 3, 7, 9	Cmaj9 (no 5th)
x-3-5-4-3-x	1, 3, 2, 1	1, 5, 7, 9	Cmaj9 (no 3rd) = G/C

** earlier I said we wouldn't be discussing add9 chords, but since this chord has no 7th, add9 is the proper name for it.
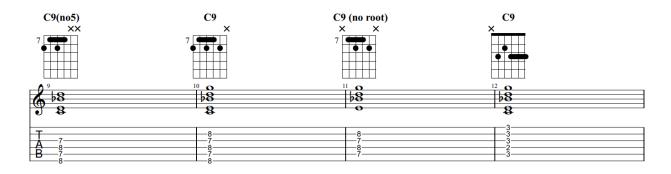
b. tab / standard notation / diagram format

Cmaj9(no5) Cmaj9 Cmaj9(no5) Cmaj13

Cadd9/E Cmaj9/E Cmaj9(no5) Cmaj9 (no3rd)

Dominant 9th Chord Voicings

a. table format

Fret numbers	Fingering	Intervals	Name
8-7-8-7-x-x	2, 1, 3, 1	1, 3, b7, 9	C9 (no 5th)
8-7-8-7-8-x	2, 1, 3, 1, 4	1, 3, b7, 9, 5	C9
x-7-8-7-8-x	1, 3, 2, 4	3, b7, 9, 5	C9 without root = Em7b5
x-3-2-3-3-3	2, 1, 3, 3, 3	1, 3, b7, 9, 5	C9

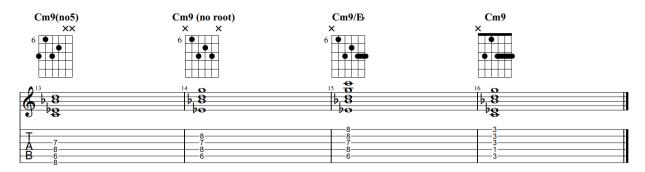b. tab / standard notation / diagram format

C9(no5) C9 C9 (no root) C9

Minor 9th Chord Voicings

a. table format

Fret numbers	Fingering	Intervals	Name
8-6-8-7-x-x	3, 1, 4, 2	1, b3, b7, 9	Cm9 (no 5th)
x-6-8-7-8-x	1, 3, 2, 4	b3, b7, 9, 5	Cm9 no root = Ebmaj7
x-6-8-7-8-8	1, 3, 2, 4, 4	b3, b7, 9, 5, 1	Cm9/Eb
x-3-1-3-3-3	2, 1, 3, 3, 3	1, b3, b7, 9, 5	Cm9

b. tab / standard notation / diagram format

My suggestion is simply to choose 2 versions of chord each type, one whose root is on the 6th string and one whose root is on the 5th string (or at least is implied for those chords that do not have a root). So that's only 6 chords to memorize. That way, you'll be able to play a major, dominant or minor 9th chord in 2 places instantly.