

Suspended Chords

Suspended chords, often abbreviated by writing Sus, are three note chords that are neither Major or Minor. Without the presence of a 3rd or b3rd interval a chord does not have a Major or Minor quality.

The most common suspended chords are Sus2 and Sus4. When you build suspended chords in a Major key you will come across different suspended chords.

When converting a Major, minor, or diminished chord into it's Sus2 counterpart, the easiest way to achieve this is identify the note that needs to be changed (the 3rd or b3rd interval) and lower that note to the very next note in key.

To change the triad chords into their Sus4 counterparts simply raise the 3rd or b3rd interval up to the very next note in key.

You can change an Augmented chord into a Sus2 or Sus4 chord too, but it won't be found in a Major key.

That described method of changing chords into suspended chords almost always works. Sometimes, however, you may find that the note you need to drop is an open string, and you can't lower an open string. In this case you will most likely have to reconstruct the chord shape in order to have all three notes needed to make the chord complete.

The following formulas are the suspended chords that occur in a Major Key. The roman numerals tell where these chords occur in the Major Scale.

Sus2 = 1, 2, 5
I – ii – IV – V – vi

Sus4 = 1, 4, 5
I – ii – iii – V – vi

Sus b2 = 1, b2, 5
iii

Sus #4 = 1, #4, 5
IV

Sus b2 b5 = 1, b2, b5
vii

Sus4 b5 = 1, 4, b5
vii

If you played the suspended chords in order in the Major Scale they would like this:

Sus2 – Sus2 – Sus b2 – Sus2 – Sus2 – Sus2 – Sus b2 b5
I ii iii IV V vi vii

Sus4 – Sus4 – Sus4 – Sus #4 – Sus4 – Sus4 – Sus4 b5
I ii iii IV V vi vii