

*Section 5.7***SECOND INVERSION TRIADS****Four types of  
second inversion  
triads****C-PAP**

Second inversion triads (6-4 chords, or “six-four” chords) have the fifth of the chord as the lowest note (also called the **bass**, pronounced “base”). They do not always follow the standard progressions from **Section 5.3**. Instead, they depend on nearby chords for their harmonic function. They almost always occur as one of **four types: cadential, passing, arpeggio, or pedal** (forming the acronym C-PAP, like a C-PAP breathing machine). While rare exceptions and variations do occur, these are the usual patterns. All types **except** cadential may occur with any harmony in the key.

**Cadential 6-4  
chords:  
Pattern for  
resolution**

In a cadential 6-4 (cad6-4) chord, the **bass** is always the **fifth step** of the scale, and the resolution harmony (that is, the next harmony) is always dominant. The cad6-4 has the pitches of the tonic triad, but is really just a decoration of the dominant, not a true tonic. Almost always, the parts follow a pattern:

1. The bass repeats the dominant pitch (fifth step of the scale).
2. The note a sixth above the bass steps down to a perfect fifth (6—5).
3. The note a fourth above the bass steps down to a major third (4—3).
4. If there is a fourth part, it will repeat the same note.

4th above bass  
M3 above bass  
6th above bass  
P5  
M3  
C:  $\text{cad}_4^6$  V I  
V

Variant with V7 in bass:  
4th above bass  
M3 above bass  
6th above bass  
P5  
M3  
C:  $\text{cad}_4^6$   $\text{V}_2^4$   $\text{I}^6$   
V

**Cadential 6-4  
chords:  
Metrically  
Accented**

Cad6-4 chords are the **only 6-4** chords that are **metrically stronger** than the resolution chord:

1. For 2-beat measures, they occur on beat 1 only, resolving on beat 2.
2. For 3-beat measures, they can occur on beats 1 or 2. If they occur on beat 2, the resolution dominant chord will be on beat 3.
3. For 4-beat measures, they can occur on beats 1 or 3. If they occur on beat 3, the resolution dominant chord will be on beat 4.

**Passing 6-4 chords**

In a passing 6-4 chord, the bass moves by step up or down a third. One of the upper parts normally “trades notes” with the bass; this is called a **voice exchange**. Below left, the bass moves from C to E, while the part right above it moves from E to C instead. The remaining two parts (if present) have a step down and step back up (below, C—B—C), or a repeated note.

C:I    V<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>    I<sup>6</sup>    voice exchange    OR    C:I<sup>6</sup>    V<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>    I

**Arpeggio 6-4 chords**

In an arpeggio 6-4 chord, the bass leaps from the root or third of the same harmony. The other parts repeat or freely change notes. The resolution chord should follow the ordinary harmonic progressions given in 5.3.

C:I    I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>    IV    OR    C:I<sup>6</sup>    I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>    IV

**Pedal 6-4 chords**

In a pedal 6-4 chord, the bass has the same note three times. Two of the upper parts have an “upper neighbor” figure: step up, then step down. The remaining part (if present) will have a repeated note.

step up, step down  
C:I    IV<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>    I

**Summary: Tips for Identification**

Cadential 6-4s are the only metrically accented 6-4 chords. Passing 6-4s have stepwise bass motion up or down a third. Arpeggio 6-4s skip in the bass from a repeated harmony. Pedal 6-4s have a repeated bass note.