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3.5 Neapolitan Chords

Definition and Harmonic Function

1. **Major triad** built on the lowered second scale step (*b2*).
2. Often in **first inversion** (hence the common name "Neapolitan sixth chord").
3. **Usually resolves to V or cadential 6/4.**
4. More common in minor keys because it requires 2 accidentals in major keys, 1 in minor keys.
5. The N can be tonicized with its own secondary dominant; modulations to the Neapolitan are also possible.

In C major:

N

In C minor:

N

Part-writing First Inversion Neapolitan (N6 or *b*II6)

1. The *b2* note resolves to the leading tone.
2. In first inversion, **double the third** in the Neapolitan.

C: N⁶ V₂⁴

C: N⁶ V

There are many more possibilities.

Part-writing Root Position Neapolitan (N or *b*II)

1. In root position, **double the root** of the Neapolitan.
2. The *b2* note **still resolves to the leading tone.**
2. The bass will resolve down a diminished 5th to V or cadential 6/4.

C: N V

Delaying the Dominant Harmony

Sometimes the dominant harmony is delayed by a **cadential 6/4 chord**.
 The *b2* note still resolves to the **leading tone** eventually, but moves down by step first.

C: N⁶ $\begin{matrix} i_4^6 \\ \downarrow \\ V \end{matrix}$