

# GRADE 7 MUSIC THEORY

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Lesson 3: Neapolitan Chords

## Creating the Neapolitan Chord

1. The Neapolitan Chord is a type of chromatic alteration.
2. It is **ALWAYS** a major chord built on the lowered second scale degree.
3. In root position it is referred to as a  $bII$ , but it is more common in first inversion ( $bII^6$ ), so it's frequently referred to as a Neapolitan Sixth Chord (N6) because of the **minor 6th degree** that results from first inversion.
4. When in first inversion, the bass note (3rd of the chord) is usually doubled.



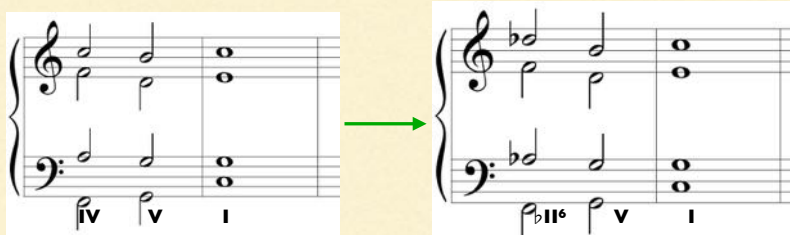
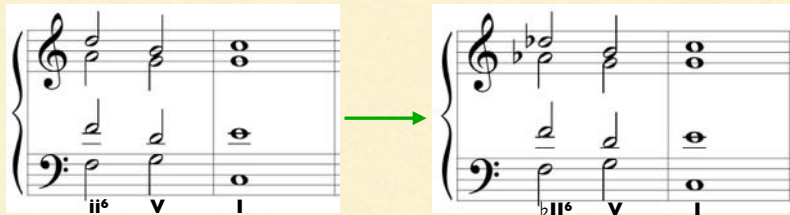
Key: C Major  $bII^6$   
or N6



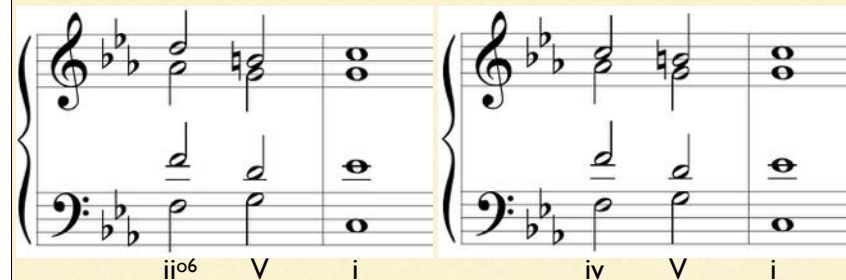
Key: C Minor  $bII^6$   
or N6

## Using the Neapolitan Chord

5. Usually appears at authentic cadences as a chromatic alteration of a pre-dominant harmony, substituting for IV or ii (particularly  $ii^6$ ) chord. So it's a **type of pre-dominant chord**, resolving to  $V^{(7)}$  or  $I_4^6 - V$ .



## The Neapolitan Chord in Minor Keys



In minor keys,  
only one note  
needs altered!



**Beethoven's Piano Sonata No.14 'Moonlight Sonata'**

Start

VI    bII°    V7    i

iv=F#-A-C#  
bII=D#-F#-A

i    i<sup>2</sup>    VI    bII<sup>6</sup>    V<sup>7</sup>    i

**Nocturne in F minor, Op.55 No.1 by Chopin**

0:16 (p) etc.

V<sup>5</sup>    i    bVII<sup>6</sup>    III    bII<sup>6</sup>    i<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>    V<sup>7</sup>    i

**Waltz No.2 Op.32 by Chopin**

*espressivo*

A minor: I    bII<sup>6</sup>    V<sup>7</sup>    VI

**Beethoven, Piano Sonata, Op.31 No.2 (1st mvt)**

(Allegro) 7:50

D minor:    bII<sup>6</sup>    bII<sup>6</sup>

**Chopin, Prelude, Op.28 No.20**

(Largo) 0:42 (p) *ritenuto*

bII

not as common in root position

**Mozart: Piano Concerto in A K488 (2nd mvt)**

Adagio 0:30

F#min: I    VI    bII<sup>6</sup>    i<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>    V<sup>7</sup>    i

# Modulation & Neapolitan Chords

6. Like other chromatic chords, the Neapolitan chord can also be used for **modulation**: it is the most common means of modulating down **a semitone** (e.g. A $\flat$  major to G minor)

2:50 (Allegretto) Beethoven, Piano Sonata, Op.31 No.1 (3rd mvt)

A $\flat$  major:  $V_5^6$  —  $bII_6$  —  $V_5^6$

G minor:  $bII_6$  —  $V_5^6$

Piano Sonata in A, D.959 by Schubert

A minor:  $i_6$   $VI_{(Germ.)}^6$   $i_4^4$   $V_7$

(A minor):  $bII_6$   $II_3^4$   $A$  minor:  $V_7$   $VI_{(Germ.)}^6$   $i_4^4$   $V_7$

(A minor): A major:  $I_6$   $II_3^4$   $I_4^4$   $V_7$

3:56 (Allegro) Beethoven, Piano Sonata in C minor ("Pathétique"), Op.13 (3rd mvt)

C minor:  $i_6$   $bII_6$   $A\flat$  major:  $IV_6$   $V_5^6$  —

C minor: VI