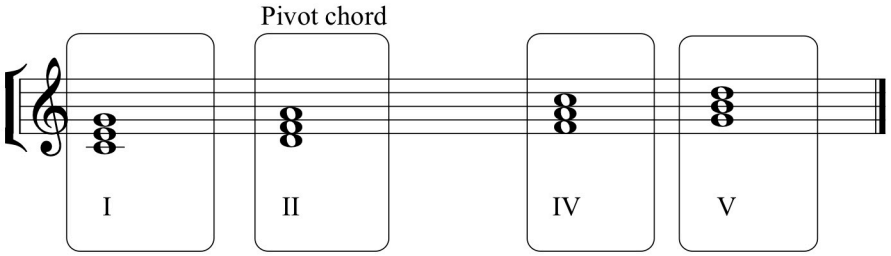
Secondary Triads and Chord Inversions

All the notes within a scale can potentially be used to create triads. When the 2nd, 3rd, 6th and 7th notes of the scale are used they become secondary triads as they are weaker than the primary triads I, IV, V. However the 2nd degree of the scale (supertonic) is unique. It may be regarded as a weaker secondary triad in the major key, but it becomes a strong primary triad in the relative minor key. Chord II has a special function as a pivot chord to modulate between major and relative minor keys, providing a smooth transition from a weak to a strong chord.

for example: In C Major chord II = D,F,A is a secondary triad, but in A minor (the relative key) it becomes chord IV which is a strong primary triad.

When chord II is combined with the primary triads creating I, II, IV, V, this combination is known collectively as the Functional Harmonies.

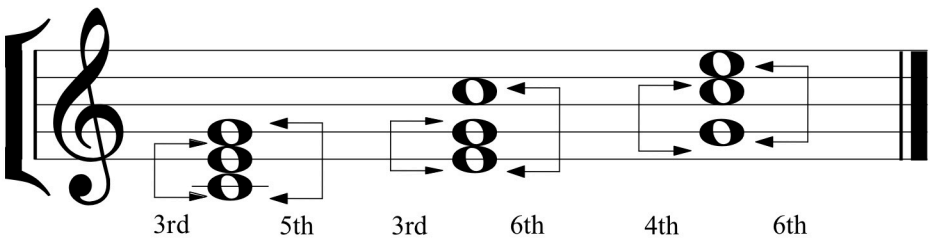
These are the Functional Harmonies in the scale of C Major



It is also possible to create new chords by re-arranging the notes within the triad creating inversions. Chord inversions occur when the bottom note of the triad is moved to the top of the chord creating a new bass note. The intervals between the notes also change and can be described in the following 3 different ways:

This is an example of chord I in C Major

Root Position	1st Inversion	2nd Inversion
Root in Bass	3rd in Bass	5th in Bass
5	6	6
3	3	4



Root Position — 1st Inversion — 2nd Inversion