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**Modern Jazz Voicings  
Arranging for Small and Medium  
Ensembles**

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3-2 Five-Part Spreads

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## 3-2 Five-Part Spreads

Spread voicings, sometimes referred to as pads, add “bottom” to the sound of the ensemble. They are voicings with the root of the chord on the bottom. Rather than “hanging” chord sounds below the lead note as in the standard mechanical voicing methods (four-way close, drop 2, drop 3, and drop 2 + 4), with spreads you start at the bottom and work up. In choosing notes, your primary concerns should be spacing and a balance of chord sound. Spreads can be used to harmonize inactive or percussive melodies; they also make effective backgrounds. Where possible, use voice leading with spreads, connecting each inner voice to the next through stepwise movement or common tones.

### Characteristics

Five-part spread voicings generally consist of the following notes, reading from top to bottom voice:

- 1st part      The melody or lead note (a chord tone or tension)
- 2nd part      Supporting chord tone or harmonic tension
- 3rd part      Guide tones 3 or 7 (or 5) or, in some cases, a harmonic tension
- 4th part      Guide tones 3 or 7 (or 5)
- 5th part      Root

The middle voices should play both the third and the seventh, the strongest guide tones, which define the chord quality (major, minor, dominant seventh, etc.). The top voices enhance the chord sound with additional chord tones or tensions. Although a spread may include a doubling, it is preferable to use five different notes.

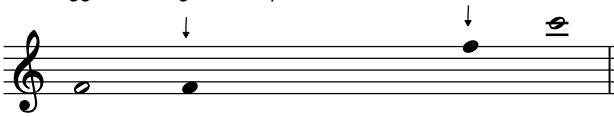
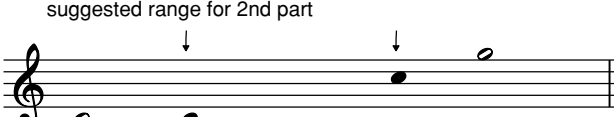
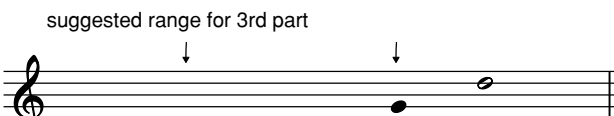
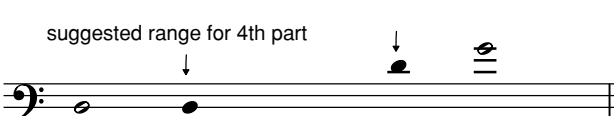
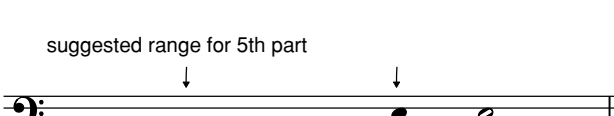
When scoring spreads, be sure that the root is assigned to a bass clef-sounding instrument such as baritone saxophone, bass trombone, or any other instrument that can play comfortably in the bottom of the bass-clef range. As “bottom” is the fundamental effect of spreads, the root must be delivered with conviction and full control.

Here are some typical five-part spreads:

The image shows five-part spread voicings for five chords: Cmaj7, F-7, G7(b9,b13), Bb7, and Fmaj7. Each chord is shown in two staves (treble and bass clef). The notes are distributed as follows:

- Cmaj7:** Treble clef: C5, E5, G5; Bass clef: C4, E4, G4.
- F-7:** Treble clef: F4, A4, C5; Bass clef: F3, A3, C4.
- G7(b9,b13):** Treble clef: G4, Bb4, D5; Bass clef: G3, Bb3, D4.
- Bb7:** Treble clef: Bb4, D5, F5; Bass clef: Bb3, D4, F4.
- Fmaj7:** Treble clef: F4, A4, C5; Bass clef: F3, A3, C4. An alternative voicing is shown with the word "or" between two sets of notes: Treble clef: F4, A4, C5; Bass clef: F3, A3, C4.

## Adjacent Note Spacing and Suggested Ranges for Spreads

<u>Spacing</u>		<u>Range</u> (a practical range) *
1st part (lead)	No more than an octave between 1st and 2nd parts	suggested range for 1st part 
2nd part		suggested range for 2nd part 
3rd part	No more than an octave between 2nd and 3rd parts	suggested range for 3rd part 
4th part	No more than an octave between 3rd and 4th parts	suggested range for 4th part 
5th part (bottom)	No more than a 10th between 4th and 5th parts	suggested range for 5th part 

\* To avoid potential balance problems, don't exceed the practical range unless you are writing for pros.

## Uses of Spread Voicings

1. To harmonize sustained or percussive melody notes:

16

**Med. Swing**  
 Bb6                      G7(b13)   G7(#9, b13)   C-7                      F7(b9)                      Bb-7

This musical score is for a medium swing piece. It features five measures of music. The first measure is for the Bb6 chord, the second for G7(b13), the third for G7(#9, b13), the fourth for C-7, and the fifth for Bb-7. The score is written for Trumpet, Alto, Tenor, Trombone, and Baritone. The voicings are spread across the instrument's range, with some notes in the inner voices being sustained or percussive.

2. For backgrounds: To avoid the weight and monotony of a series of whole-note spread voicings, embellish the sustained pitches of inner voices. As in the two examples below, this creates a more animated texture.

17

a. Five-part spread background

**Slow**  
 Gmaj7                      D-7                      Gmaj7                      D-7,9

This musical score is for a slow piece. It features four measures of music. The first measure is for the Gmaj7 chord, the second for D-7, the third for Gmaj7, and the fourth for D-7,9. The score is written for Trumpet, Flugelhorn, Alto, Tenor, Trombone, and Baritone. The voicings are spread across the instrument's range, and the inner voices are embellished with moving lines to create a more animated texture.

18

Gmaj7                      D-7                      Gmaj7                      D-7,9

This musical score is for a slow piece. It features four measures of music. The first measure is for the Gmaj7 chord, the second for D-7, the third for Gmaj7, and the fourth for D-7,9. The score is written for Female voice, Flugelhorn, Tenor, Male voice, and Baritone sax. The voicings are spread across the instrument's range, and the inner voices are embellished with moving lines to create a more animated texture.

b. Four-part spread background

19

Chord progression: Gmaj7, D-7, Gmaj7, D-7,9

Alto sax

Trumpet Tenor

Trombone Baritone

Detailed description: This musical score is for exercise 19, titled 'Four-part spread background'. It consists of four measures with a 4/4 time signature and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The chord progression is Gmaj7, D-7, Gmaj7, and D-7,9. The Alto saxophone part starts with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5 in the first measure. In the second measure, it plays a half note D5. In the third measure, it plays a half note G5. In the fourth measure, it plays a whole note D6. The Trumpet Tenor part plays a series of chords: Gmaj7 (quarter), D-7 (quarter), Gmaj7 (quarter), and D-7,9 (quarter). The Trombone Baritone part plays a series of chords: Gmaj7 (quarter), D-7 (quarter), Gmaj7 (quarter), and D-7,9 (quarter). In the third measure, there is a melodic line for the Trombone Baritone: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, C5, B4, A4, G4.

20

Chord progression: Gmaj7, D-7, Gmaj7, D-7,9

Female voice

String Quartet

Detailed description: This musical score is for exercise 20, titled 'Four-part spread background'. It consists of four measures with a 4/4 time signature and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The chord progression is Gmaj7, D-7, Gmaj7, and D-7,9. The Female voice part starts with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, B4, and C5 in the first measure. In the second measure, it plays a half note D5. In the third measure, it plays a half note G5. In the fourth measure, it plays a whole note D6. The String Quartet part plays a series of chords: Gmaj7 (quarter), D-7 (quarter), Gmaj7 (quarter), and D-7,9 (quarter). In the third measure, there is a melodic line for the String Quartet: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, C5, B4, A4, G4.

3. In a five-part tutti:

21

Chord progression: C6, Bb7,13, Ab7,13, Dbmaj7,9, C-maj7,9,13

Trp./Gtr.

Alto Tenor

Trombone Baritone

Detailed description: This musical score is for exercise 21, titled 'In a five-part tutti'. It consists of five measures with a 4/4 time signature and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The chord progression is C6, Bb7,13, Ab7,13, Dbmaj7,9, C-maj7,9,13. The Trp./Gtr. part plays a series of chords: C6 (quarter), Bb7,13 (quarter), Ab7,13 (quarter), Dbmaj7,9 (quarter), and C-maj7,9,13 (quarter). The Alto Tenor part plays a series of chords: C6 (quarter), Bb7,13 (quarter), Ab7,13 (quarter), Dbmaj7,9 (quarter), and C-maj7,9,13 (quarter). The Trombone Baritone part plays a series of chords: C6 (quarter), Bb7,13 (quarter), Ab7,13 (quarter), Dbmaj7,9 (quarter), and C-maj7,9,13 (quarter). In the third measure, there is a melodic line for the Trombone Baritone: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, C5, B4, A4, G4.

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