

## The Neapolitan Sixth Chord

The neapolitan sixth chord is a major triad in 1st inversion with the lowered supertonic scale degree as its root. The half-step relation of the lowered supertonic to the tonic gives the N6 a unique, dark quality. N6 most frequently is found in minor keys in 1st inversion. However, it may also occasionally appear in root position. N6 is a predominant functioning chord.

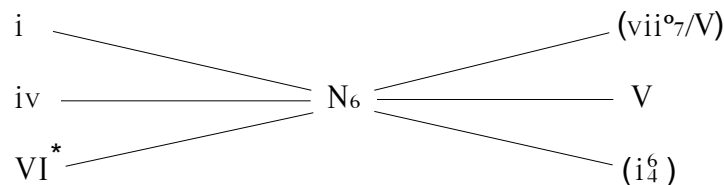
Part-writing the N6:

- (1) In a four-part texture, double the bass. Scale degrees  $b6$  and  $b2$  are tendency tones.
- (2) Scale degree  $b2$  should progress to either the leading-tone (if V follows) or to the tonic (if  $i_4^6$  follows).
- (3) The cross relation that appears when N6 progresses to V should involve an inner voice. The cross relation should not appear within the same voice.

Compare the following two progressions:

The image shows two musical progressions in 4/4 time. The first progression consists of three chords: i (tonic), ii°6 (supertonic in first inversion), and V7 (dominant seventh). The second progression consists of three chords: i (tonic), N6 (Neapolitan sixth chord), and V7 (dominant seventh). The N6 chord is shown with a lowered second scale degree (b2) and a leading seventh (7). The bass line is doubled in both progressions.

Consult the following chart when using the N6 in a progression:



\*Only in minor keys. Very rare in major.

Watch out for parallel fifths when N<sub>6</sub> progresses to i<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>. The root of the N<sub>6</sub> must be above the 5th.

The image shows two musical progressions illustrating parallel fifths. The first progression shows N<sub>6</sub> (Neapolitan sixth chord) progressing to i<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> (tonic in first inversion). The second progression shows N<sub>6</sub> progressing to i<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>. The first progression is labeled P5 (parallel fifth) and the second is labeled P4 (parallel fourth). The bass line is doubled in both progressions.

Exceptions to the conventional use of the N6:

- (1) May appear in root position (see Chopin's Funeral March: Prelude in c minor, Op. 28, #20).
- (2) May appear between two instances of a tonic chord.
- (3) May also be used as a pivot chord in a modulation.