Although a chord is technically any combination of notes played simultaneously, in music theory we usually define chords as the combination of three or more notes.

**Triads**

**Secundal Harmony**

Chords built from seconds form tone clusters, which are not harmonic so much as timbral.

**Tertial Harmony**

Chords built from thirds (more specifically, from major thirds and minor thirds) form the basis of most harmony in the common practice period.

**Quartal Harmony**

Chords built from perfect fourths create a different sound, used in compositions from the early 1900s and onward.

**Quintal Harmony**

Chords built from perfect fifths can be respelled as quartal chords, and as such they do not create a separate system of harmony.

**Is the chord still tertial if it is built from diminished thirds or augmented thirds?**

No.

Let's get started on tertial harmony with the smallest chord possible: the triad.

The lowest note in the chord when the chord is in simple form is called the root. The names of the other notes are based on their interval above the root.

There are four ways to create a triad using major and minor thirds:

- **The Diminished Triad**
  - Two minor thirds stacked together

- **The Minor Triad**
  - A major third on top, a minor third on bottom

- **The Major Triad**
  - A minor third on top, a major third on bottom

- **The Augmented Triad**
  - Two major thirds stacked together

We label triads using their root (“a C minor triad”). The abbreviations shown above, which use upper case, lower case, and symbols to show chord type, are called macro analysis.

Music theory for musicians and normal people by Toby W. Rush

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