

Major 6 & Minor 6 Inversions

16 Practice Exercises for Jazz Piano

ROOT POSITION	1ST INVERSION	2ND INVERSION	3RD INVERSION
A	C	E	G
G	A	C	E
E	G	A	C
C	E	G	A

Example: the 4 inversions of C6 — the melody note stays on top

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Before you can use the Barry Harris voicing system in real time, you need one thing: you need to know the inversions of the Major 6 and Minor 6 chords by heart.

This workbook gives you 16 exercises — 4 movement variations across the 4 inversions — designed to be practised chromatically so that every exercise covers all 12 keys.

The goal is not speed. The goal is that your hand goes automatically to the right inversion the moment you see a chord symbol and its corresponding melody note.

4-WEEK PROGRAM

Week 1 · Root position	→ exercises 1 – 4
Week 2 · 1st inversion	→ exercises 5 – 8
Week 3 · 2nd inversion	→ exercises 9 – 12
Week 4 · 3rd inversion	→ exercises 13 – 16

Then repeat the whole cycle for Minor 6.

THE 4 MOVEMENT VARIATIONS (repeated for each inversion)

1. Ascending — play each chord bottom → top, moving up chromatically.
2. Descending — play each chord top → bottom, moving up chromatically.
3. Ascending / Descending — alternate direction from one chord to the next.
4. Descending / Ascending — the reverse. The hardest of the four.

"Movement should be minimal — not leaps, but steps."

— Barry Harris

Major 6 — Root Position

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MAJOR 6 · EXERCISES 1 - 4

INVERSION: ROOT POSITION · All 12 chords chromatically · Melody note (top) highlighted in gold

1

Exercise 1 — Ascending

Play each chord bottom → top. Move up chromatically.

C6	C#6	D6	E♭6	E6	F6	F#6	G6	A♭6	A6	B♭6	B6
A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭
G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#
E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭
C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B
top: A	top: B♭	top: B	top: C	top: C#	top: D	top: E♭	top: E	top: F	top: F#	top: G	top: A♭

2

Exercise 2 — Descending

Play each chord top → bottom. Move up chromatically.

C6	C#6	D6	E♭6	E6	F6	F#6	G6	A♭6	A6	B♭6	B6
C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B
E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭
G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#
A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭
top: A	top: B♭	top: B	top: C	top: C#	top: D	top: E♭	top: E	top: F	top: F#	top: G	top: A♭

3

Exercise 3 — Ascending / Descending

Alternate direction from one chord to the next.

C6	C#6	D6	E♭6	E6	F6	F#6	G6	A♭6	A6	B♭6	B6
A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭
G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#
E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭
C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B
top: A	top: B♭	top: B	top: C	top: C#	top: D	top: E♭	top: E	top: F	top: F#	top: G	top: A♭

4

Exercise 4 — Descending / Ascending

Reverse alternation — the hardest one.

C6	C#6	D6	E♭6	E6	F6	F#6	G6	A♭6	A6	B♭6	B6
C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B
E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭
G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#
A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭
top: A	top: B♭	top: B	top: C	top: C#	top: D	top: E♭	top: E	top: F	top: F#	top: G	top: A♭

Major 6 — 1st Inversion

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MAJOR 6 • EXERCISES 5 – 8

INVERSION: 1ST INVERSION • All 12 chords chromatically • Melody note (top) highlighted in gold

5

Exercise 5 — Ascending

Play each chord bottom → top. Move up chromatically.

C6	C#6	D6	E♭6	E6	F6	F#6	G6	A♭6	A6	B♭6	B6
C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B
A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭
G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#
E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭
top: C	top: C#	top: D	top: E♭	top: E	top: F	top: F#	top: G	top: A♭	top: A	top: B♭	top: B

6

Exercise 6 — Descending

Play each chord top → bottom. Move up chromatically.

C6	C#6	D6	E♭6	E6	F6	F#6	G6	A♭6	A6	B♭6	B6
E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭
G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#
A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭
C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B
top: C	top: C#	top: D	top: E♭	top: E	top: F	top: F#	top: G	top: A♭	top: A	top: B♭	top: B

7

Exercise 7 — Ascending / Descending

Alternate direction from one chord to the next.

C6	C#6	D6	E♭6	E6	F6	F#6	G6	A♭6	A6	B♭6	B6
C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B
A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭
G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#
E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭
top: C	top: C#	top: D	top: E♭	top: E	top: F	top: F#	top: G	top: A♭	top: A	top: B♭	top: B

8

Exercise 8 — Descending / Ascending

Reverse alternation — the hardest one.

C6	C#6	D6	E♭6	E6	F6	F#6	G6	A♭6	A6	B♭6	B6
E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭
G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#
A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭
C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B
top: C	top: C#	top: D	top: E♭	top: E	top: F	top: F#	top: G	top: A♭	top: A	top: B♭	top: B

Major 6 — 2nd Inversion

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MAJOR 6 · EXERCISES 9 - 12

INVERSION: 2ND INVERSION · All 12 chords chromatically · Melody note (top) highlighted in gold

9

Exercise 9 — Ascending

Play each chord bottom → top. Move up chromatically.

C6	C#6	D6	E♭6	E6	F6	F#6	G6	A♭6	A6	B♭6	B6
E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭
C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B
A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭
G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#
top: E	top: F	top: F#	top: G	top: A♭	top: A	top: B♭	top: B	top: C	top: C#	top: D	top: E♭

10

Exercise 10 — Descending

Play each chord top → bottom. Move up chromatically.

C6	C#6	D6	E♭6	E6	F6	F#6	G6	A♭6	A6	B♭6	B6
G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#
A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭
C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B
E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭
top: E	top: F	top: F#	top: G	top: A♭	top: A	top: B♭	top: B	top: C	top: C#	top: D	top: E♭

11

Exercise 11 — Ascending / Descending

Alternate direction from one chord to the next.

C6	C#6	D6	E♭6	E6	F6	F#6	G6	A♭6	A6	B♭6	B6
E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭
C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B
A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭
G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#
top: E	top: F	top: F#	top: G	top: A♭	top: A	top: B♭	top: B	top: C	top: C#	top: D	top: E♭

12

Exercise 12 — Descending / Ascending

Reverse alternation — the hardest one.

C6	C#6	D6	E♭6	E6	F6	F#6	G6	A♭6	A6	B♭6	B6
G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#
A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭
C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B
E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭
top: E	top: F	top: F#	top: G	top: A♭	top: A	top: B♭	top: B	top: C	top: C#	top: D	top: E♭

Major 6 — 3rd Inversion

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MAJOR 6 · EXERCISES 13 – 16

INVERSION: 3RD INVERSION · All 12 chords chromatically · Melody note (top) highlighted in gold

13 Exercise 13 — Ascending

Play each chord bottom → top. Move up chromatically.

C6	C#6	D6	E♭6	E6	F6	F#6	G6	A♭6	A6	B♭6	B6
G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#
E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭
C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B
A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭
top: G	top: A♭	top: A	top: B♭	top: B	top: C	top: C#	top: D	top: E♭	top: E	top: F	top: F#

14 Exercise 14 — Descending

Play each chord top → bottom. Move up chromatically.

C6	C#6	D6	E♭6	E6	F6	F#6	G6	A♭6	A6	B♭6	B6
A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭
C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B
E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭
G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#
top: G	top: A♭	top: A	top: B♭	top: B	top: C	top: C#	top: D	top: E♭	top: E	top: F	top: F#

15 Exercise 15 — Ascending / Descending

Alternate direction from one chord to the next.

C6	C#6	D6	E♭6	E6	F6	F#6	G6	A♭6	A6	B♭6	B6
G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#
E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭
C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B
A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭
top: G	top: A♭	top: A	top: B♭	top: B	top: C	top: C#	top: D	top: E♭	top: E	top: F	top: F#

16 Exercise 16 — Descending / Ascending

Reverse alternation — the hardest one.

C6	C#6	D6	E♭6	E6	F6	F#6	G6	A♭6	A6	B♭6	B6
A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭
C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B
E	F	F#	G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭
G	A♭	A	B♭	B	C	C#	D	E♭	E	F	F#
top: G	top: A♭	top: A	top: B♭	top: B	top: C	top: C#	top: D	top: E♭	top: E	top: F	top: F#

Minor 6 — Same Program

ONCE YOU FINISH MAJOR 6, REPEAT IT FOR MINOR 6

The Minor 6 chord uses the same 4-week cycle. The logic is identical: root position, then 1st, 2nd, and 3rd inversion — each with the same 4 movement variations.

Minor 6 is the second half of the Barry Harris system. It covers minor, dominant and altered chords through the 'See → Think' voicing map. Without it, half of the standards remain out of reach.

MINOR 6 · ROOT POSITION · ASCENDING (example — same structure for all 16)

Cm6	C#m6	Dm6	Ebm6	Em6	Fm6	F#m6	Gm6	Abm6	Am6	Bbm6	Bm6
A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	Ab
G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	Eb	E	F	F#
Eb	E	F	F#	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	C#	D
C	C#	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	Ab	A	Bb	B
top: A	top: Bb	top: B	top: C	top: C#	top: D	top: Eb	top: E	top: F	top: F#	top: G	top: Ab

REMEMBER

Every dominant chord (G7, C7, F7 ...) becomes a Minor 6 a perfect 5th above the root (G7 → Dm6, C7 → Gm6, F7 → Cm6, and so on). Every ii-V-I in jazz uses this substitution. That is why the Minor 6 inversions are just as essential as the Major 6.

1

Slowly and cleanly, always

Metronome at 50-60 bpm to start. Every chord must sound clean and complete before you move on.

2

Say the notes out loud

"C6, 2nd inversion: G · A · C · E." Hearing + saying builds knowledge faster than muscle memory alone.

3

One inversion per week

Don't try to learn all four inversions at once. Focus on one inversion for a full week before moving to the next.

4

Swing feel from the start

Play with a swing feel even in the technical exercises — not straight time. Your hand stays in a jazz groove.

5

Both hands together

Once the right hand is confident, add the left hand shell voicing: root + top note of the 6th chord.

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