AUGMENTED SIXTH CHORDS

Definition:
A chord that contains the interval of an augmented sixth.

Description:
There are 3 such chords: the German 6th (Gr\(^6\)), the French 6th (Fr\(^6\)) and the Italian 6th (It\(^6\)). The chords consist of the following intervals:

- **Italian 6:** M3, A6
- **German 6:** M3, P5 (or DA4), A6
- **French 6:** M3, A4, A6

The Gr\(^6\) in major may be spelled with a doubly augmented fourth instead of a perfect fifth to show the resolution of the pitches in the direction of the inflection (see part-writing below).

A6 chords are most often built on the note a half step above the dominant (\(b6\)) of the scale in both major and minor keys (as the above examples in the key of C). A6 chords may also be built on the note a half step above the tonic (\(b2\)) or the fourth scale degree (see below for examples).

Sound:
- It\(^6\) sounds like an **incomplete** V7 chord (i.e., with the fifth omitted).
- Gr\(^6\) sounds like a **complete** V7 chord.
- Fr\(^6\) has its own unique sound.

Function:
A6 chords are used for color and tension. They can also be used in chromatic modulations.
Resolution:

When built on the $b_6$, A6 chords usually resolve to V or $I_4^6$ - V (see below).
When built on the $b_2$, A6 chords will resolve to I.
When built on the fourth scale degree, A6 chords will resolve to $I^6$ or I.

![Musical notation with resolutions]

Part-Writing:

ITALIAN 6:

Double the note that is a third above the bass.
Resolve the interval of the A6 to an octave.
Take other notes to the nearest chord tone.

![Musical notation for ITALIAN 6]

FRENCH 6:

Resolve the interval of the A6 to an octave.
Keep the common tone.
Take other notes to the nearest chord tone.

![Musical notation for FRENCH 6]
GERMAN 6:
Resolve the interval of the A6 to an octave.
Keep any common tones.
Take other notes to the nearest chord tone.
In a major key, spell the Gr\(^6\) with the DA4 spelling to show the resolution of that tone to the third of the I\(^4\).

SPECIAL PROBLEM: resolving a Gr\(^6\) (on b6) to V or Gr\(^6\) (on b2) to I will result in parallel perfect fifths (see first example below). In order to avoid the P5s, resolve the German to another chord (e.g., a I\(^6\) or a Fr\(^6\) or It\(^6\)) before resolving to the V (see second and third examples below).

Other:
The interval of the A6 can be created by scale degrees other than b6, b2 and 4. They may be built on the note a half-step above the note of resolution creating a secondary function (e.g., C: Fr6/IV -> IV, the Fr6 is built on a G\(^b\)).