The Neapolitan Chord
(Phrygian II)

Definition
The Neapolitan chord is a major triad built on the lowered second scale degree (b2). It is indicated in analysis as N.
It is often found in minor mode but may also be found in major. It most often appears in first inversion (with an unaltered note in the bass), so is most often referred to as the Neapolitan Sixth (for $\text{N}_6$).

It can be thought of as a borrowed chord; borrowed from phrygian mode on the same tonic as the key.

Function:
The Neapolitan chord is a pre-dominant chord (i.e., it leads to a dominant functioning chord).
It may also serve as a pivot chord in modulations where it is the N in one key and a major triad in the other key.

Resolution:
Being a pre-dominant chord, the N proceeds to a dominant functioning chord, most often the $I_6$ or the V(7).
Less often, it resolves to other chords as part of a chromatic line.
It may be followed by a dominant of the dominant (viio7/V or V7/V).

Part-Writing:
Always double the third of the chord, since it is the unaltered tone.
Try to use the chord in first inversion, so an unaltered tone is in the bass voice. Keep the root higher than the fifth of the chord in order to avoid parallel fifths.

Resolve the b2 down by step (in the direction of its inflection). It is permitted to write a diminished 3rd interval between the b2 and the 7 in the key; it is best to put this motion in an outer voice.

Be careful to avoid the A2 interval when approaching or leaving this chord. The N is usually preceded by a VI, IV, or II. It may be preceded by a secondary dominant (V/N = bVI).