A **triad** is a group of three notes that sound at the same time. In much tonal music, chords are built by stacking thirds on top of each other, creating what is known as **tertian** harmony. A tertian triad is a chord with three notes that is built with thirds. Even when a chord is spread out over several octaves and/or re-voiced so that the notes appear in a different order, we still hear these as equivalent.

When determining how to name a chord, the first step is to stack it in thirds in its most compact form. The most compact form will always be thirds and within one octave. Once this compact form is determined, the notes are identified as root (lowest), third (middle), and fifth (highest). The following example is a guide through the process of determining which note is which in several chords.

![Musical notation example](image)

The first step is to identify the pitches in the chord. In the first, from bottom to top, we have F, B♭, and D. There are three possible arrangements of these three notes within a single octave (shown in step 2). The one arrangement in which all of the adjacent intervals are thirds is the most compact form, which is called “root position” (marked with the asterisk). Once root position is found, we can identify the root at B♭, the third as D, and the fifth as F. In the second example, F is the root, A is the third, and C is the fifth.

There are four possible qualities for a triad: diminished, minor, major, or augmented. The quality of a triad is defined by the quality of the thirds (major or minor) that make up the chord. If both thirds are minor, the triad is **diminished**. If the bottom third is minor and the top is major, the triad is **minor**. If the bottom third is major and the top is minor, the triad is **major**. Finally, a triad that has both major thirds is **augmented**. These qualities are abbreviated as o, m, M, and +, respectively.
Music Fundamentals Primer
Exercises for Lesson 4

I. Spell the triads in root position (root, third, fifth).

II. Identify the quality of the triads. o, m, M, or +

III. Notate the triads above the given ROOT. DON'T CHANGE THE GIVEN NOTE!