The Nashville Number System is a quick and versatile method of notating music so that a song can be performed. Nashville chord charts substitute numbers for the chord letter symbols found in traditional music notation. Around 1957, Neal Matthews, a member of the Jordanaires (who sang many sessions in town and provided background vocals for Elvis), originated the idea of substituting regular numbers for notes. He began writing vocal charts, substituting numbers for the shape notes and developed his own system of writing music with numbers. In the early '60s, none of the session musicians used charts. They memorized songs, then recorded. Charlie McCoy, a regular session player and artist, noticed Neal using numbers to map out songs for the Jordanaires and adapted the numbering system into rhythm section chord charts. Musicians used the number system to chart out an entire song on one piece of paper while hearing a demo of the tune for the first time. This innovative number system has become the standard method of music notation in Nashville.

In the Nashville system, numbers assigned to each step of the Major scale represent chords as well as single notes. In the key of A, we have the Major scale A B C D E F G. This major scale become chords 1 2 3 4 5 6 7. A chord based on A is a 1 chord, or on G would be a 7 chord. In the same way traditional notation uses: I, IV and V the Nashville system is written with numbers 1, 4 and 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>Bm</th>
<th>C#m</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F#m</th>
<th>G#°</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2-</td>
<td>3-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6-</td>
<td>7°</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Still in the key of A, how would we determine what number to assign a C chord? Well, we know that C# is the 3 chord, and C is one half step below C#. So, one half step below the 3 chord is the b3 or “flat three” chord. Likewise, what is the b6 chord in the key of A? Simply determine the 6 chord and flat it one half step. F# is the 6, therefore F would be the b6 chord.

For a song in a minor key, chord charts are written as in the Relative Major key. A song in A minor sounds like Am would be the tonal center, but the chart will be written as in the key of C Major. In which case the A minor chord would be written as a 6 minor.

CHORD SYMBOLS

In addition to assigning each chord a number, we must designate whether the chord is a Major or minor, and if it carries a seventh, a major seventh, etc. A Major chord needs no symbol. The number by itself always means that it is a basic Major chord. Minor chords carry a minus sign to the right of the chord number, 6-. You may also use a small m for minor, but that can sometimes be confused with major. Chord voicing (sixths, sevenths, ninths, etc.) appear as smaller numbers to the upper right of the chord: 57. When chords are played in inversion, or with an alternate bass note they are written as fractions. For example, a 4 chord with a 5 note in the bass is written as a fraction, 4/5, and called a “four over five.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chord Symbols</th>
<th>Preferred Notation</th>
<th>Also may be seen</th>
<th>Preferred Notation</th>
<th>Also may be seen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Suspended 4</td>
<td>5/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Seventh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Seven with a Suspended 4</td>
<td>5/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Ninth</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>Augmented</td>
<td>5/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant Seventh</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>Augmented Seventh</td>
<td>5/7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>Diminished</td>
<td>4/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninth</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>Minor Major Seventh</td>
<td>4/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major 9</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>5/6</td>
<td>Minor Seven Flat Five</td>
<td>4/0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor</td>
<td>6-</td>
<td>6/0</td>
<td>(or Half-Diminished)</td>
<td>7/6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor Seventh</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>6/7</td>
<td>Seven with a Flat Nine</td>
<td>5/9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example: A typical walkdown including a 5 over 7 inversion:

In traditional notation, there is one bar, or measure between each bar line.

However, in the **Nashville Number System**, a chord number automatically lasts one measure. Divider lines for each measure are not needed. Besides, bar lines are easily confused with the number 1. Usually there are four measures per line. In Nashville, the line above would be written like this:

When more than one chord is written within a measure, the chord numbers are underlined. These measures are called **split bars**. When there is an uneven number of chords per bar, small hash marks over the chord show how many beats each chord gets. When there are two chords in a measure and each gets 2 beats, no hash marks are necessary. The same applies if there are 4 separate chords in a measure of 4/4. They automatically get one beat each and no hash marks are needed. If a split bar has a syncopated rhythm, or attacks that aren’t on the basic downbeat, you may enclose the measure in a box and write the rhythmic phrase in notation below the chord changes.

**DIAMOND**
A diamond means to strike the chord and let it ring for its designated duration. Simply draw a diamond around the chord to be held. Below, the final bar, called a “One diamond,” is struck and held for one full measure.

**CUT OFF OR MUTE**
A ▲ or • above the chord means that the chord is struck and muted, or cut off. You don’t allow the chord to ring for the full beat. Here, the 1 is struck and muted, though the full measure is counted.
TIME SIGNATURE CHANGES
In traditional notation, you may change the time signature by writing the new signature in parentheses before the measure that changes; then resume by inserting the original time signature in parentheses in front of it's next measure. A lot of songs will have a lyrical phrase that contains an extra half measure. In Nashville, you can put a 2/4 bar in a box with two hash marks above the number, as shown below. The time signature changes, to allow a song’s phrasing to go for an extra half measure, but you don’t have to re-enter the original signature for bar four.

SPECIAL RHYTHMS
When you use rhythmic notation, you may box in your split bars. In the example below, the 4 chord is pushed or anticipated. It is struck on the “and” of beat 2. Then, the last beat in the first bar is tied to the next measure. The accent symbol in Nashville notation > is an abbreviation for the push, or anticipation, and goes over the chord being pushed. So, another easier way to write the same example appears to the right.

MELODY NOTATION
The number system can apply to single notes, as well as chords. Numbers are assigned to different notes in a scale the same way they are assigned to different chords. Rhythmic notation is written beneath the number to show the time value of each note. An arrow ↑ or ↓ can show which direction an interval moves from the previous note.

MODULATIONS
Modulations can be specified at the end of a line by steps or by interval, with or without specifying the keys.

BASS LINE WALK-UPS AND WALK-DOWNS are easily specified by use of an arrow.
EXTRA MEASURES

An extra measure is sometimes added at the end of the line to provide time for an extended vocal phrase or note, or to make room for an instrumental or vocal pickup to the next phrase; it can provide space for a singer to keep phrasing even. There may be more than one extra measure, but they are written to the right of the measure whose phrase they extend. The important idea is to have the beginning of a musical or vocal phrase start at the beginning of a new line. This example has an extra measure at the end of the 2nd and 3rd lines of the chorus. Notice the extra measures placed at the end of the 2nd and 3rd lines instead of at the beginning of the lines that follow. Also notice the dots which mark the end of the usual 4 measure phrases, showing that these measures are extra.

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\frac{C}{C} & 1 & 1 & 4 \\
3- & 6- & 4 & 5 \cdot 5 \\
1 & 1 & 4 & 2 \cdot 2 \\
14 & 15 & 1 & 1 \\
\end{array}
\]

Special thanks to Chas Williams, who has graciously allowed the use of excerpts from his definitive book on this subject—The Nashville Number System. I highly recommend this resource to anyone interested in learning more about these notation techniques—a subject every instrumentalist can benefit from. Copies of Chas’ book are available at his website: http://www.nashvillenumbersystem.com and more info is available on his facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/The-Nashville-Number-System-970753932968344/
Hark! The Herald Angels Sing

Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
With th'angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Christ, by highest Heav'n adored;
Christ the everlasting Lord;
Late in time, behold Him come,
Offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
Hail th'incarnate Deity,
Pleased with us in flesh to dwell,
Jesus our Emmanuel.

Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"

Hail the heav'nly Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Ris'n with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die.
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.

Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"
Nothing But the Blood

What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus
What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus

Oh! precious is the flow
That makes me white as snow;
No other fount I know,
Nothing but the blood of Jesus

For my pardon this I see, nothing but the blood of Jesus;
For my cleansing this my plea, nothing but the blood of Jesus.

This is all my hope and peace, nothing but the blood of Jesus;
This is all my righteousness, nothing but the blood of Jesus.

W/M: Robert Lowry
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CCLI#2003690
How lovely is Your dwelling place, 
oh Lord Almighty 
My soul longs and even faints for You 
For here my heart is satisfied, 
within Your presence 
I sing beneath the shadow of Your wings

Better is one day in Your courts  
Better is one day in Your house  
Better is one day in Your courts  
Than thousands elsewhere  

One thing I ask and I would seek,  
to see Your beauty  
To find You in the place Your glory dwells  
For here my heart is satisfied,  
within Your presence  
I sing beneath the shadow of Your wings  

Better is one day in Your courts  
Better is one day in Your house  
Better is one day in Your courts  
Than thousands elsewhere  

My heart and flesh cry out,  
for You the living God  
Your spirit's water for my soul  
I've tasted and I've seen,  
come once again to me  
I will draw near to You  
I will draw near to You  

Better is one day in Your courts  
Better is one day in Your house  
Better is one day in Your courts  
Than thousands elsewhere  

Jesus Loves Me (Tomlin, Glover, Morgan)

I was lost, I was in chains
The world had a hold of me
My heart was a stone, I was covered in shame
When He came for me
I couldn't run, couldn't run from His presence
I couldn't run, couldn't run from His arms

Jesus, He loves me
He loves me, He is for me
Jesus, how can it be?
He loves me, He is for me

It was a fire deep in my soul
I'll never be the same
I stepped out of the dark and into the light
When He called my name
I couldn't run, couldn't run from His presence
I couldn't run, couldn't run from His arms

Jesus, He loves me
He loves me, He is for me
Jesus, how can it be?
He loves me, He is for me

He holds the stars,
and He holds my heart
With healing hands
that bear the scars
The rugged cross
where He died for me
My only hope,
my everything

Jesus, He loves me
He loves me, He is for me
Jesus, how can it be?
He loves me, He is for me