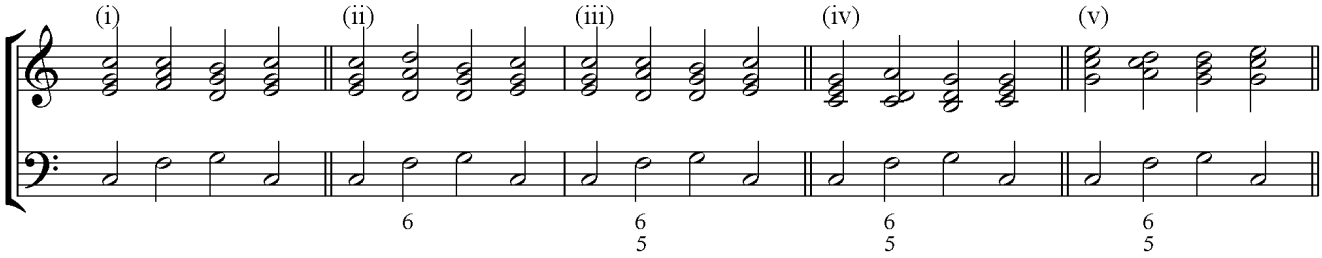
The $\frac{6}{5}$ Chord

$\frac{6}{5}$ chords should usually be played with an added 3rd, whether it is notated or not.

Most often the $\frac{6}{5}$ chord is used as a substitute for a subdominant or secondary dominant triad.

1. The subdominant $\frac{6}{5}$

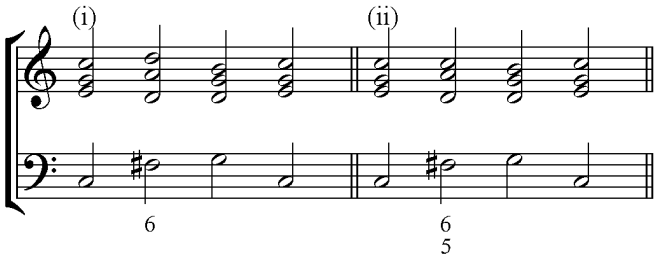
The $\frac{6}{5}$ chord can be used as a direct replacement of the subdominant triad or subdominant 6 chord, so it should occur just before the dominant triad. In (i), a standard cadence is shown using the subdominant triad; the same is shown in (ii) with a 6 chord. In (iii) a $\frac{6}{5}$ chord is used in place of either; note how similar it is to the previous two. Other arrangements of the upper voices are shown in (iv) and (v).



2. The dominant $\frac{6}{5}$

This type of $\frac{6}{5}$ would be called a "first-inversion dominant seventh chord" in modern terminology. You should not be too quick to use this chord in very early 17th-century music since it contains a tritone against the bass note, which according to the earliest continuo treatises should be avoided.

Once again, this $\frac{6}{5}$ chord occurs in a pre-dominant position, but this time it functions as a replacement for a secondary dominant chord inversion. Example (i) shows the secondary dominant (this would be called "five-six of five" in modern terms), followed by the dominant $\frac{6}{5}$ in (ii). Note the tritone F#-C in (ii). The upper voices can be arranged the same way as in the previous examples.



Note that the dominant $\frac{6}{5}$ is sometimes written as just 5 in the continuo. If the 5 is in fact a diminished 5th above the bass, a $\frac{6}{5}$ can often be substituted. On occasion a 6 and 5 written next to each other (not stacked vertically) can also be played simultaneously as a $\frac{6}{5}$ chord.

Since these $\frac{6}{5}$ chords are not too different from the simpler chords they replace, it is often possible to play an ordinary triad or 6 chord instead of a subdominant $\frac{6}{5}$, or a 6 chord instead of a dominant $\frac{6}{5}$, and the result usually sounds fine.