Building Triads

In order to understand triads, there are a few things you should know first.

You need to understand what an interval is, and specifically, what a major third and a minor third are.

An interval is simply the distance between two notes, measured in half-steps.

Major third (M3) = 4 half-steps

Minor third (m3) = 3 half-steps

You should be able to quickly "spell" in musical thirds. Practice repeating the following phrase to yourself to memorize the order of thirds in music:

"C-E-G-B-D-F-A…C-E-G-B-D-F-A…"

This is important because all triads are spelled by stacking two thirds according to the following formula:

1 3 5

… where 1 3 5 might translate to C E G, for example.

Now you're ready to learn how to build triads!

There are four types of triads:

Major
Minor (m)
Diminished (° or dim)
Augmented (+ or aug)

They each have a unique formula for construction:

Major = (M3 , m3)
minor = (m3, M3)
dim = (m3 , m3)
aug = (M3 , M3)

Now that we have the formulas, we can apply it to the basic 1 3 5 triad template.
Let's try building a set of G chords —
G major, G minor, G diminished, and G augmented.

		1	3	5
			M3 m3	
G	**=**	**G**	**B**	**D**
			m3 M3	
Gm	**=**	**G**	**Bb**	**D**
			m3 m3	
G°	**=**	**G**	**Bb**	**Db**
			M3 M3	
G+	**=**	**G**	**B**	**D#**

That's it! Now you can find any triad you like!
Try finding new triads on your own to practice your knowledge!