Building Triads Via Shortcuts

Building triads using the major third and minor third formulas works, but there is a faster way!

To use the shortcut formulas, we first need a basic template of chords memorized.
Let's use the key of C/Am!

Commit this to memory!

Chord		1 3 5
C	=	C E G
Dm	=	D F A
Em	=	E G B
F	=	F A C
G	=	G B D
Am	=	A C E
B°	=	B D F

Now let's learn the shortcut formulas for major, minor, diminished, and augmented.

The important point to remember here is that these formulas describe ***procedures***, not labels for the chords, in relation to a given major chord spelling.

Major	**1**	**3**	**5**
minor	**1**	**b3**	**5**
dim	**1**	**b3**	**b5**
aug	**1**	**3**	**#5**

For example, the minor shortcut formula is "1 b3 5", which translates as:

"If a major chord spelling is 1 3 5, then the minor version will keep the 1 and 5 the same, but lower the 3 by a half-step!"

Let's see a couple of examples!
First, let's assume we already know G Major is spelled "G B D".
We can then fill in the remaining triads based on G B D being equal to 1 3 5:

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

It so happens that the G triad labels align perfectly with the procedures in the shortcut formulas. But don't be fooled! This is just a coincidence! Let's see another example where the chord labels and the shortcut procedures are not matched:

		1	3	5
B	**=**	**B**	**D#**	**F#**
Bm	**=**	**B**	**D**	**F#**
B°	**=**	**B**	**D**	**F**
B+	**=**	**B**	**D#**	**FX**

Here, we know B° is spelled "B D F" because we memorized the key of C/Am. Knowing this, we can find Major by raising the third and fifth by a half step to "B D# F#". Minor and augmented can be found in a similar fashion.
Try spelling new chords on your own using the shortcut formulas!