To play 1-7-3-5 piano voicings, just think "oyster!" Okay, let me explain...

This one's so simple, yet so effective, if it's your first time learning it, you'll feel as though the lights just turned on. To play this voicing, simply play any seventh chord in its root position that you've learned thus far.

Need to review your seventh chords? Please take your time to do so here ... Become acquainted with the many types of 7th chords that you will learn there and combine that with what you are about to explore here and you've take a significant step toward piano chord mastery!

Okay, let's continue...

For our example, let's use the Cmaj7 chord, which is illustrated here:

Since there is a direct relationship between chords and scales, if we take a look at how this chord relates to the C Major scale, we see the the C is the 1, E is 3, G is 5, and B is 7...

So we have 1 3 5 7 of the scale, right? Good!

Okay, let's play a little game with the order of these notes, shall we? What's we'll do is leave the 1 and 7 right where they are. While leaving them there, we will take the notes in the middle, the 3 and 5 of the chord and play them one octave higher - that's it!

Play the 1 and 7 (C and B) with your left hand pinkie and thumb. Play the 3 and 5 (E and G) with your right hand thumb and index finger (or middle finger).
Note: By the way, when we refer to the "3 of the chord" or "5 of the chord," etc... we are referring to where these notes exist in the corresponding scale.

Now, if you take a good look at what we've done, we have left the outer voices stable - and we took what was in the middle and moved it... these outer voices are often referred to as the "shell" of a chord, much like an oyster has an outer shell that consists of two halves. The inner voices are taken out and moved an octave higher, as I mentioned.

Play this Cmaj7 piano voicing and listen!

Wow, what a difference, wouldn't you agree? Play the original Cmaj7 and play this one again. How would you describe the difference between the two? There's no wrong answer - how you hear this difference is what is important. Some would say the 1-7-3-5 voicing has a more "open" sound.

This makes sense since we did, in fact, "open" the chord up. As a matter of fact, this chord is said to be in open position, since all the chord tones have been spread out and they are no longer as "close" to each other as possible as they were before (the original chord above is said to be in closed position).

See a video demonstration here
Please take this many, many, many steps further by applying the 1-7-3-5 piano voicings to other seventh chords that you've learned or are about to learn, including minor sevenths, dominant sevenths, diminished sevenths, etc. (the program that link takes you to is the easiest way to get a quick handle on 7th chords. I strongly suggest you consider it)

Just by knowing this voicing, you can make some pretty nice sounding music at that piano or keyboard of yours, you know...

Let's consider a common use of this voicing - the way a pro would use it. Let's say that the chord you were playing was a Cmaj7 and the melody notes were E and G. Well, by just playing the "shell" (C and B, or 1 and 7) in the left hand, the right hand is free to play these melody notes!

Just play a series of 1-7-3-5 voicings ("oysters" I like to call them) and improvise a melody using this approach. The video gives you an idea as to how to do this. I hope you'll use it to motivate you to take this idea many steps further. Have fun with this one!

I love the topic of piano voicings and look forward to sharing so many more of them with you as we continue our journey together through the terrain of those 88 keys!

And remember...

Always...

ALWAYS...

PLAY WITH PASSION!

Musically,

Creator of ProProach