

Chord Progressions

There are five kinds of chord progressions in music:

- Basic Harmony
- Scale Chords
- Substitute Chords
- Circle of Fifth Chords
- Chromatic Chords

In the last four months, we presented Basic Harmony, Scale Chords, Substitute Chords, and Circle of Fifths. This month, we will be working with Chromatic Chords. Now that the series is complete, you will then be able to recognize them in the music you play. You will also be able to use the knowledge of chord progressions to change the music you play and make it more interesting.

Chromatic Chord Progressions

In most music, chromatic progressions are achieved by using diminished 7ths or dominant 7ths as passing chords within other types of chord progressions.


Diminished 7ths resolve up $\frac{1}{2}$ step
Dominant 7ths resolve down $\frac{1}{2}$ step

Here are some examples of diminished and dominant chords used as passing chords within a variety of the other chord progressions you have already learned.

Chromatic Chord Progressions - 1

Here are some examples of diminished and dominant chords used as passing chords within a normal basic song harmony.

C F G C



A musical staff in treble clef showing four chords: C major, F major, G major, and C major. Each chord is represented by a vertical line with dots indicating the notes on the staff.

Approach each chord with a diminished 7th.

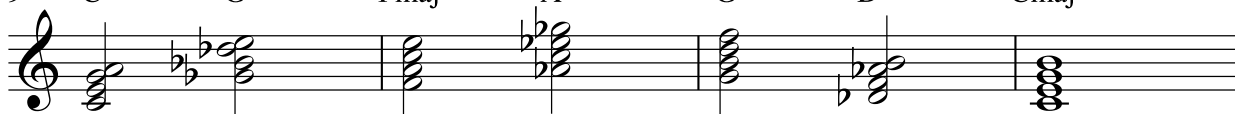
5 C Edim⁷ F F[#]dim⁷ G Bdim⁷ C



A musical staff in treble clef showing a sequence of seven chords: C major, E diminished 7th, F major, F# diminished 7th, G major, B diminished 7th, and C major. The diminished 7th chords are shown with their characteristic tritone intervals.

Approach each chord with a dominant 7th.


9 C⁶ G^{b7} Fmaj⁷ A^{b7} G⁷ D^{b7} Cmaj⁷



A musical staff in treble clef showing a sequence of seven chords: C6, Gb7, Fmaj7, Ab7, G7, Db7, and Cmaj7. The dominant 7th chords are shown with their characteristic tritone intervals.

Here's a common scale chord progression

13 C Dm Em F



A musical staff in treble clef showing four chords: C major, D minor, E minor, and F major, representing a diatonic progression.

Here are the passing diminished 7ths to move up.

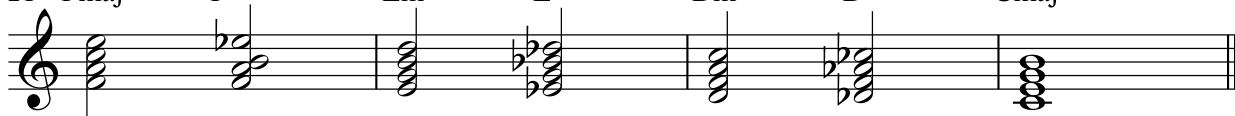
17 C C[#]dim⁷ Dm E^bdim⁷ Em Edim⁷ F



A musical staff in treble clef showing a sequence of seven chords: C major, C# diminished 7th, D minor, Eb diminished 7th, E minor, E diminished 7th, and F major.

Here are the Dominant 7ths to move down.

21 Fmaj⁷ F⁷(b5) Em⁷ E^b7 Dm⁷ D^b7 Cmaj⁷



A musical staff in treble clef showing a sequence of seven chords: F major 7th, F7(b5), E minor 7th, Eb7, D minor 7th, Db7, and C major 7th.

Chromatic Chords - 2

Here is a common circle of 5ths progressions

1 C Am Dm Dm⁷

5 G⁷ G⁷ Cmaj⁷ C⁶

Here are the passing diminished 7ths.

9 C G^{#dim7} Am C^{#dim7} Dm C^{#dim7} Dm⁷ G^{bdim7}

13 G⁷ F^{#dim7} G⁷ Bdim⁷ Cmaj⁷ Bdim⁷ C⁶

Passing dominant 7th chords would work like this:

17 C B^{b7} Am E^{b7} Dm E^{b7} Dm⁷ A^{b7}

21 G⁷ A^{b7} G⁷ D^{b7} Cmaj⁷ D^{b7} C⁶

Chromatic Chords - 3

Most good musicians would use a mixture of chords and progressions within a song, so we might end up with something like this:

Musical notation for the first line of a chord progression. The chords are: C⁶, B^{b7}, Am⁷, C^{#dim7}, Dm, E^{b7}, Dm⁷, and F^{#dim7}. The notation shows the chord symbols above a treble clef staff with the corresponding chord voicings.

Musical notation for the second line of a chord progression. The chords are: G, A^{b7}, G⁷, D^{b7}, Cmaj⁷, D^{b7}, and C⁶. The notation shows the chord symbols above a treble clef staff with the corresponding chord voicings.

Here's a melody improvised over that same progression. Enjoy!

Musical notation for the first line of a melody. The chords are: C⁶, B^{b7}, Am⁷, C^{#dim7}, Dm, E^{b7}, Dm⁷, and F^{#dim7}. The notation shows the chord symbols above a treble clef staff with a melodic line consisting of eighth and quarter notes.

Musical notation for the second line of a melody. The chords are: G, A^{b7}, G⁷, D^{b7}, Cmaj⁷, D^{b7}, and C⁶. The notation shows the chord symbols above a treble clef staff with a melodic line consisting of eighth and quarter notes.

On the next pages below, you will find several simple songs with passing chromatic chords.

Michael, Row the Boat Ashore

with chromatic passing chords

Am⁷ Dm⁷ D^{b9#11} Cmaj⁷ Edim⁷

A musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The first measure contains a half note G4. The second measure contains a quarter note A4, a quarter note B4, and a dotted quarter note C5. The third measure contains a quarter note B4, a quarter note A4, a quarter note G4, and a half note F4. The fourth measure contains a half note E4. The fifth measure contains a quarter note D4, a quarter note C4, and a half note B3. The sixth measure contains a quarter note A3, a quarter note G3, and a half note F3.

4 Fmaj⁷ Bdim Cmaj⁷ B^{b9#11}

A musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The first measure contains a half note F4. The second measure contains a half note E4. The third measure contains a quarter note D4, a quarter note C4, and a half note B3. The fourth measure contains a quarter note A3, a quarter note G3, and a half note F3. The fifth measure contains a quarter note E3, a quarter note D3, and a half note C3. The sixth measure contains a quarter note B2, a quarter note A2, and a half note G2.

6 Am⁷ A^{b13#11} G⁷ Am⁷ Bdim⁷

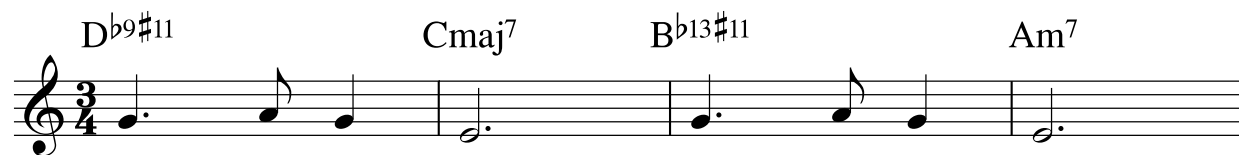
A musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The first measure contains a quarter note G4, a quarter note F4, and a half note E4. The second measure contains a quarter note D4, a quarter note C4, and a half note B3. The third measure contains a quarter note A3, a quarter note G3, and a half note F3. The fourth measure contains a quarter note E3, a quarter note D3, and a half note C3. The fifth measure contains a quarter note B2, a quarter note A2, and a half note G2. The sixth measure contains a quarter note F2, a quarter note E2, and a half note D2.

8 Cmaj⁷ A^{b7} G⁷ D^{b7b9} Cmaj⁷ C⁶

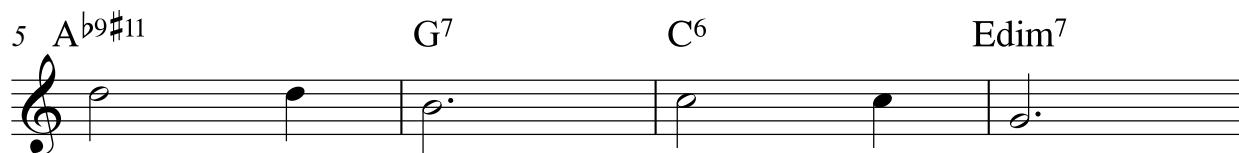
A musical staff in 4/4 time with a treble clef. The first measure contains a half note C4. The second measure contains a quarter note B3, a quarter note A3, and a half note G3. The third measure contains a quarter note F3, a quarter note E3, and a half note D3. The fourth measure contains a quarter note C3, a quarter note B2, and a half note A2. The fifth measure contains a quarter note G2, a quarter note F2, and a half note E2. The sixth measure contains a quarter note D2, a quarter note C2, and a half note B1. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Silent Night - Passing Chromatic Chords

1 $D^{b9}\#11$ C^{maj7} $B^{b13}\#11$ A^{m7}



5 $A^{b9}\#11$ G^7 C^6 E^{dim7}



9 F^{maj7} E^{bdim7} D^{m7} G^7 $D^{b9}\#11$ C^6 $F\#^7$



13 F^{maj7} E^{bdim7} D^{m7} D^{b7} B^{dim} C^6 $B^{b13}\#11$ A^{m7} E^{bdim7}



17 D^{m7} $A^{b9}\#11$ G^7 D^{m7} $D^{b9}\#11$ C^{maj7} $B^{b9}\#11$



21 A^{m7} E^{b7} D^{m9} $D^{b9}\#11$ G^{7b9} C^{maj7} C^6

