

400

Piano Chord Progressions

- * Major & minor keys
 - * Key changes
 - * Cadences
 - * Bass lines
- * Passing chords
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40 audio examples

400 Piano Chord Progressions

ebook by [Pianochord.org](https://pianochord.org)

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Audio

40 audio examples and other playing examples are available from

<https://www.pianochord.org/400pcp-audio.html>

About this ebook

The purpose with this ebook is to serve you a variety of chords that enrich your piano playing and provide you with a better understanding of chords and chord progressions.

Thank you for purchasing this ebook!

Using the progressions

The presented progressions span from basic to complex and can be executed with main variations of chords, with inversions, or with different voicings. Inversions are written out in some cases, but can always be used when it serves a purpose.

The chord progressions can be seen as whole units as well as building blocks. As an example, the following progression C - G - Am - F - C - G could return to home (C - G - Am - F - C - G - C), or could continue in numerous ways (- G7, - F - Am - G, - Am - Em - Am and so on).

Chords have different functions in progressions. One is tension. Dominant seventh chords, for example, have much tension and therefore unstable and not suitable being the last chord in a progression (or a song). They are often followed by the I chord, which they resolve in. No further discussion of music theory will take place here, this is plainly said to avoid some possible confusing when you play through the progressions in this collection. You may see a progression that ends on a dominant seventh but, once again, the chord progressions can be seen as building blocks and a progression such as Em - G - D - Am - B7 can continue by resolving to Em directly or continue with delayed resolving. The choice is yours.

Left or right hand? Left and right hand?

The choice is actually yours, when there is a choice. There are many ways to play chords (some tips are given below). With triads, a simple approach is to play with only one hand, often will the register there the left hand is positioned sound better, although that is subjective (and possible depending on the piano, keyboard, synth). Five-note chords can be played with one hand, but stacking many notes to close will not sound great. You should experiment, by doing this you will be more flexible and faster develop technique and ideas to more advanced performance.

About being creative with chord progressions

As you become as better musician, you will be able to make a chord progression more musically interesting. Some simple tips for you along the way:

One of the progressions in this collection is C - C6 - F - F6. Instead for simply playing the chords in a straightforward fashion, you can play C - C6 as the notes c - e - g - a followed by the whole C chord, when F - F6 as the notes f - a - c - d followed by the whole F chord. By doing this you blend C and C6 as well as F and F6.

You must not treat the chords rigorously. For example, in progressions involving alternate bass notes, with sequences such as C - C/B - Am, you can skip the c note (and possible e and g as well) in C/B. C/B can be played as a four-note chord but its main function in this case is to lead on to the Am chord.

Omitting notes in chords are definitely allowed. The E - Eaug - C#m/E - E7 progression in this collection may sound better if E7 is played with an omitted 5th. Meaning the notes E, G#, D for which the chord name E7(no5) can be used, but is not in this ebook because omitting the fifth in seventh chords are done so regularly.

Another progression is C - Cmaj7 - F. Once again, you can deviate from a straightforward approach and instead split the chords in two parts. For the C chord, you first play the C note when followed by the rest of the chords (e and g notes). Do the same for Cmaj7 and F and you will get something that remains of the song “Imagine”.

In the last section chord accompanying concepts in standard notation can be found.

Voicings

No chord diagrams are included in this ebook. The reason is simple: this ebook is about chord progressions - how to apply chords - and chord diagrams take up considerable room. All chords that are included in the progressions can be found as chord diagrams on Pianochord.org.

But to make it easier, uncommon chords are written out note by note in letters, and chords consisting of five notes are written out in forms of voicings (refers to the concept of arranging notes in chords).

Voicings (especially so-called open voicings) often involve two hands. Inversions that group tones close together tends to create dissonances. The tones C and Db will create a dissonance if they are played directly next to each other and it is better to split them on two octaves. Some rootless chord voicings are included as well. These may look strange, but are sometimes utilized.

The voicings are intended to be grouped in the order the notes are written out. If the notes written out are G, F, B, E it means that G should be the first note from the left and F will follow on the next octave together with B and, on the next octave, E.

In chords with numerous notes, some notes are often skipped. You will see five-, six- and seven-note chords as four-note voicings. The re-grouping follows a number of rules, read more about [voicings](http://Pianochord.org) on Pianochord.org.

The main thing is that this can help you play the chords and treat them in the same way that professional pianists often approach extended chords.

Part 1

Progressions sorted by keys

Piano progression in various keys.

- Progressions in major keys
- Progressions in minor keys
- Progressions with key changes

Progressions in major keys

In Western music, the adjectives major and minor may describe an interval, chord, scale, or key. When a song predominately uses notes from one scale, it is said to be in the key of that scale. Notice that chords with notes outside a specific key is sometimes used as well, which may contribute to variations from the most familiar sounds.

Basic progressions in C

C - Em - Am - F - G [audio track 1]

C - Dm - G

C - G - Am - F

C - F - Am - G

C - Am - G - Em

Progressions in C

C - Cmaj7 - F

C - C7 - Fmaj7 - F6 - G

Cmaj9 - Am7 - Dm7 - G7

C - C6 - F - F6

C/E - Fsus2 - F - Am/E

G - C/G - F - G

Cmaj7 - G6 - Am7

C - G/B - Am - C/G - F - C/E - Dm7 - Dm7b5 - C

C - Am - Em - F - Fm - C/E

C - Em - A7 - Dm - Fm - C

C - E - F - Am - Dm7 - G7 - C

C - E7 - F - Am - D7 - G7 - C

C - Am - D7 - G7 - C

C - C#dim - Dm7 - G7 - C

C - Eb - F - Ab - C

C/G - G# - G

C - C6 - C7 - F

C - C/B - Am - Am/G - F - F/E - Dm7

C - Caug - Am/C

[audio track 2]

Cmaj9 voicing: C E B D

Dm7b5: D F Ab C

C#dim: C# E G

Caug: C E G#

Basic progressions in D

D - A - G - D

D - Bm - G - A

D - F#m - Em - A - D

D - G - Em - A

D - Em - A

D - F#m - A - G [audio track 3]

Progressions in D

D - Bm - G - A7 - D

D/F# - Gsus2 - Dsus2 - A

Dmaj7 - Gmaj7 - Bm7 - A7

Dmaj9 - Bm9 - Amaj9

Dmaj9: D F# C# E, Bm9: B D A C#, Amaj9: A C# G# B

D - D/C# - Bm

D - D7 - Em7 - A7

D - D7 - G/D - Gm/D - D - A7/C# - D

D - D6 - Em9 - A6 - Dmaj7

Em9: E G B D F#

Dmaj7 - A9 - G6

A9: A E G B C#

G - D6 - Em6 - A7

D - Dmaj7 - D7 - G

D - Dmaj7 - G - Gmaj7

Dsus2 - D - Gsus4 - G

D - G - A - Am - B7 - Em7 - A7 - D

D - Daug - Bm/D - G/D

[audio track 4] Daug: D F# A#

D - F# - B7 - Em7 - A13 - D

A13: C# G B F#

D - D6 - Gmaj7 - Em7 - Em7b5 - D6

Dmaj7 - Gmaj7 - Em11 - Dmaj9

Em11: E G B D A

Basic progressions in E

E - A - B

E - C#m - A - B [audio track 5]

E - G#m - C#m - A

E - G#m - A - B

E - F#m - B

E - B - A

Progressions in E

Emaj7 - B6 - B7 - F#m7 - Amaj7 [audio track 6]

E/G# - Asus2 - B/F#

A/E - Bsus4/E - B/D# - E

E - E/D# - C#m7

C#m - Esus2 - E

E - Eaug - C#m/E - E7

Emaj9 - A6 - G#m7 - Emaj7

Eaug: E G# C

Emaj9: E G# D# F#

Basic progressions in F

F - Bb - C - Bb

F - Dm - Bb - C

F - Dm - Gm - Bb [audio track 7]

F - Am - Bb - C

F - Gm - C

Progressions in F

F - Am/E - Gm/D - C6/E

Fmaj7 - Am7/G - Bb

Fmaj7 - Gm7 - Am7

[audio track 8]

F - A7 - Bb

F - F/E - Dm7

F - F/E - F/D - Bb - Bb/A - C/G - Bb - F

F - Dm - Gm7 - C7sus4 - C7

C7sus4: C F G Bb

F - Fsus2 - C/E - Fsus4 - F

Gm7 - Bbm6/G - C7/G - Fmaj7

F - F#dim - Gm - Bb - C

F#dim: F# A C

F - Ab - Bb - C

F - C/E - A7/E - Dm

Dm11 - Fmaj9 - C7

Dm11: D F A C G, Fmaj9: F A E G

F - F7 - Bb/F - Bbm/F - F - D7 - Gm/D - C7

Dm - C - F/C - Gm/D - Bb/D - C/E - F

Basic progressions in G

G - D - Em - C

G - Bm - C

G - C - G - D

G - D - Am - G - D - C [audio track 9]

G - Em - D

Progressions in G

G - Csus2 - D

Gmaj7 - Am7 - D7 - Gmaj7

Em7 - Gsus2 - Cadd9

G - G/F# - Em - C/E - D

Gmaj7 - Am13 - Em9 - Cmaj9 [audio track 10]

G6 - D7 - Am7

Em - C - Am7 - Am7b5 - G - G6

Am7b5: A C Eb G

G - G7/F - C/E - D7 - B7

G - Em/G - Bm - D7 - G

G - F#m7 - Bm7 - Em

G - B7 - Em - G7 - C - D7 - G [audio track 11]

Em - Am - F#dim - C/E - G

Basic progressions in A

A - D - E - A

A - D - E - D - A [audio track 12]

A - C#m - D - A

A - Bm - E

A - E - D - E

Progressions in A

A - Amaj7/G# - F#m7 - Bm7 - E7

Amaj9 - Em7 - F#m11

Amaj9: A E G# B C#, F#m11: E A B F#

Amaj7 - F#m7 - Bm7 - E7 [audio track 13]

A - Amaj7/G# - A7/G - A6/F#

A - E - F#m - D - Dsus2 - A

A - F#m - D7 - Esus2

A - D6/A - C#m

D6/A: A B D F#,

Bm/F# - Asus2 - E/G# - A

Bm - D - Asus4 - A

A - A#aug - Bm - E - A

A#aug: A# C# F

Basic progressions in B

B - F# - G#m - E

B - F# - E - B

B - C#m - F#

B - D#m - E - F#

B - E - G#m [audio track 14]

Progressions in B

B - G#m - F#m - E/G# [audio track 15]

B - Bmaj7 - E7sus4 - E7

B - Bmaj7 - B7 - B6

[audio track 16]

B - B7/A - G#m

B/D# - F#7sus4/C# - B

F#7sus4/C#: C# E F# B

Progressions in minor keys

In music theory, the term minor scale refers to three scale patterns: the natural minor scale, the harmonic minor scale and the melodic minor scale (the harmonic minor differs from the natural minor with a raised seventh; the melodic minor differs from the natural minor with raised sixth and seventh). Consequently, chords can be derived from all of these. The V chord changes from minor to major in the harmonic minor, compared to the natural minor, which gives a stronger resolution between the V and I chords.

Basic progressions in A minor

Am - F - C - G

Am - G - C - F [audio track 17]

Am - F - G - C

Am - C - Em

Am - Em - Dm

Progressions in A minor

Am - Am7/G - F - C - Em - G [audio track 18]

Am - Fmaj7 - G - Em7

Am - G7 - Fmaj7

Am - Am7/G - Fmaj7 - F6 - Em7

Am - D - F - C

Am - D7 - G

Am7 - Bm7 - C

Am11 - Cmaj13 - D9 - Fmaj7 [audio track 19]

Am - E - G

Am9 - E7 - G13

Am9: A C G B, G13: B F A E

Basic progressions in B minor

Bm - A - G

Bm - F#m - G - A [audio track 20]

Bm - Em - A - G

Bm - G - D

Bm - D - Em

Progressions in B minor

Bm7 - Dmaj7 - Asus4

Bm9 - Amaj7 - Dmaj9 [audio track 21]

Bm - F#m7 - Gsus2 - D

Bm7 - E9 - Amaj13

E9: E G# D F#, Amaj13: C# G# B F#

Basic progressions in C minor

Cm - Ab - Bb - Cm

Cm - Bb - Fm [audio track 22]

Cm - Eb - Bb

Cm - Gm - Fm

Cm - Fm - Eb

Progressions in C minor

Cm7 - Fm7 - Bb7 - Ebmaj7 [audio track 23]

Fm - Eb - Bb - Bb7 - Cm

Cm9 - Abmaj9 - Ebmaj7

Cm9: C Eb Bb D, Abmaj9: Ab C G Bb

Cm7 - F7 - D7 - Gm

Basic progressions in D minor

Dm - C - Bb

Dm - F - Gm - Bb [audio track 24]

Dm - C - F

Dm - Bb - F

Dm - Gm - Am

Progressions in D minor

Dm7 - Am7 - Dm7 - Cmaj7 [audio track 25]

Dm9 - C6 - Gm9

Dm9: D F C E, Gm9: G Bb F A

Dm - A7 - Bb - F

Dm7 - G7 - C - F

Dm - G7 - Bm7b5 - A7 [audio track 26]

Dm - Gm - C7 - F - A7 - Dm

C - C#dim - Dm

Dm - Gm - F - Eb - Am7b5 - D7

Dm7 - G9 - C6

G9: G B F A

Basic progressions in E minor

Em - G - D - C

Em - C - D - G [audio track 27]

Em - Am - D

Em - Bm - C - D - G

Em - D - G - C

Progressions in E minor

Em7 - C - D7 - G	
Em - Am7/E - D7/C - G	[audio track 28]
Em - Cmaj7 - Bm7	
Em - Em/D - Cmaj7	
Em - G - D - Am - B7	
Em - A - D - G	
Em - Em/D - C - Bsus4 - B	
Em7 - C6 - D7 - Gmaj7	
Cmaj7 - C6 - Bm7 - Em	
Am - Em11 - B7 - Am7	Em11: E G A D
Em11 - Am7E - B7/D# - Cmaj13 - Em7	Cmaj13: C E A B

Basic progressions in F minor

Fm - Cm - Bbm	
Fm - Eb - Db	[audio track 29]
Fm - Bbm - Db - Eb	
Fm - Db - Bbm	
Fm - Ab - Bbm	

Progressions F minor

Fm7 - Cm7 - Bbm7	[audio track 30]
Fm - C - Am - G6	
Fm - Ab - Absus2 - Eb	

Basic progressions in G minor

Gm - Bb - F	
Gm - Cm - F	
Gm - Eb - Bb - F	[audio track 31]
Gm - F - Eb	
Gm - Dm - Cm	

Progressions in G minor

Gm - Dm7 - Eb7 - Bb6	
Gm7 - F7 - Eb	
Gm - Dm/F - Eb - Dm - Fsus2	

Gm/D - Dm7 - Eb7 - D7

[audio track 32]

Gm - Cm7 - F7

Gm/D - Gm7/D - C7 - F7 - Bbmaj7

Gm - Em7b5 - A7 - Dm

Em7b5: E G Bb D

Key changes

A key change is also called modulation. The chords that initialize modal changes are written in italics.

From major to minor using the same root

F#m - A - *Am* - F - C

Dm - C - *Cm* - Ab - Eb

Em - D - *Dm* - Bb - F

G#m - E - *Em* - C - G

G - G7 - C - *Cm* - F - Bb [audio track 33]

From I chord to ii chord

E - A - *F#m* - G - D

D - G - *Em* - F - C

C - F - *Dm* - Eb - Bb

Bbmaj7 - Eb6 - *Cm7* - Fm7

Modal interchange

This concept of key change is characterized by a temporary change in which a chord is replaced with its equivalent in a parallel key. The chords that make up the modal interchange are written in italics.

C - Em - G - F - *Fm* - C

D - Bm - F#m - G - *Gm* - D

Amaj7 - E7 - Bm7 - Dmaj7 - *Dm7* - Amaj7

Cmaj7 - *Dm7b5* - Fmaj7 - Am7

Fmaj7 - Dm7 - C7 - *Gm7b5* - F6

Dmaj7 - G6 - F#m7 - *Em7b5* - A7 - Dmaj7

Dm7b5: D F Ab C

Gm7b5: G Bb Db F

Em7b5: E G Bb D

Part 2

Progressions - assorted themes

Chord progressions with focus on various ideas and themes.

- Bass lines
- Passing chords
- Substitutions
- Cycle of fifths
- Cadences

Progressions involving bass lines

A bass line is the term used in many styles of music for the low-pitched instrumental part or line played by a rhythm section instrument such as the electric bass, double bass, cello, tuba or keyboard. In unaccompanied solo performance, bass lines may simply be played in the lower register of any instrument such as piano while melody and/or further accompaniment is provided in the middle or upper register. Chord progressions with bass lines could in more simple terms intend sequences in which the bass notes are ascending (leading upwards) or descending (moving downwards), including possible shorter gaps.

Progressions with ascending or descending bass

C - Bb - Am - Gm - F

C - Em7 - F - G

D - E - G - A

D - Em - F#m

Dm - C - Bb

Dm - C7 - Bb6 - Am7

E - C#m - B

E - G#m - A

E - F#m - G#m - A - B

Em - D - C - B7

F - Dm7 - Bb - Gm

G - Em - D - C

G - Bm - C - D

A - C#m - D

Am - G - F

Bm - Am7 - G

Progressions including chords with alternate bass note

C/E - F - G

C - G/B - F/A - C/G

C - C/Bb - Am - Gm

C - C/B - F/A

C - Dm - Am/E - F

Cm - Cm/Bb - Ab

Dm - Dm/C - Dm/Bb - Am

D - D/C# - Bm7

D - D/C# - Bm - D/A - G5

D - F#m/C# - G/B - D/A

D - F#/C# - Bm

D - A/C# - G/B - D/A

E - G#/D# - A/C#
E/G# - Asus2 - B
E - E/D# - C#m
E - E/D# - E/C# - A6
E - B6/D# - D - A/C#
Em - Em/D - C6 - Bm7
Em - D/F# - G
Em7 - Bm7/F# - G6 - Am6
F/A - Bb - C
F - C/E - Dm
F - C/E - Bb/D - F/C
F - A7/E - Dm - Bb
G - B7/F# - Em
G - G7/F - Cmaj7/E
G - D/F# - C/E
G - G/F# - Em
A - A/G# - D/F# - E
Bm - A/C# - D
A - E/G# - D/F# - A/E
Am - Am/G - Fmaj7
Am7/E - G7/D - Cmaj7
Am - C/G - D/F# - F

Progressions including dim chords

Dm - C#dim - C	C#dim: C# E G
D - D#dim - Em	D#dim: D# F# A
Em/G - F#dim - Em	F#dim: F# A C
B - Cdim - C#m	Cdim: C Eb Gb

Passing chords

Passing chords are non-diatonic chords (not matching the key of the chord progression) that is placed between two chords to increase the chord density, especially common in jazz compositions. A passing chord is a chord you often run through relatively fast, its duration is often a half or a quarter of a bar. If we, for instance, have G7 and Cmaj7 as part of a chord progression, the typical approach is to use a passing chord with a bass note one semi-step above the bass note in the second chord (Cmaj7). An idea for such a chord is Db7.

Dominant passing chords

Passing chords are often dominant chords, including extended chord types. The passing chords are written in italics.

Dm7 - G7 - <i>Db7</i> - Cmaj7	
Dm7 - <i>Db7</i> - Cm11	Cm11: C E G Bb F
Dm9 - <i>Db13</i> - Cm7	Dm9: D F C E, Db13: Db B F Bb
Ebm7 - D7 - Dbmaj7	
Gbmaj7 - B7 - Bb7	
Gm7 - <i>Gb7</i> - Fm7	
Gmaj7 - <i>Db9</i> - Cmaj7	Db9: Db F B Eb
A7 - <i>Eb7</i> - Dm	
Am7 - D7 - <i>Db7</i> - Cmaj7	
Am7(b5) - <i>Ab7(#11)</i> - Gm7	Ab7(#11): Ab C Eb Gb D
D7 - <i>Ab7(#11)</i> - Gmaj7	
Bb - C - <i>C#dim</i> - Dm	
Cm7 - <i>Bbm7</i> - A7	
C/G - <i>G#dim</i> - F - C/E	

Diminished passing chords

Diminished chords are often used to accomplish chromatic sequences is a recognized feature.

C - <i>C#dim</i> - G/D	C#dim: C# E G
Cm7 - Bdim7 - Bbmaj7	Bdim7: B D F Ab
Cmaj7 - Ebdim7 - Dm7	Ebdim7: Eb Gb A C
Dm9 - C#dim7 - Cm6	C#dim7: C# E G A#
F - F#dim - C/G - A7	F#dim: F# A C
D7 - F#dim7 - Gm7	F#dim7: F# A C D#
Em - Edim - D7 - G	Edim: E G Bb
Dm7 - Dm7b5 - G7 - Cmaj7 - C/E - Ebdim - Dm	Dm7b5: D F Ab C

Augmented passing chords

Augmented chords can also be used to accomplish chromatic sequences.

C - C^{aug} - A^m/C	C ^{aug} : C E G [#]
F - F^{aug} - D^m/F	F ^{aug} : F A C [#]
G - G^{aug} - E^m/G - G⁷	G ^{aug} : G B D [#]
B^m7/D - D^{aug}7 - D^{maj}7	D ^{aug} 7: D F [#] A [#] C

Other categories of passing chords

The not so common m(maj7), spelled minor major seventh, can be used as a passing chord, usually to a m7 chord.

A^m - A^m(maj7) - A^m7	A ^m (maj7): A C E G [#]
C^m - C^m(maj7) - C^m7	C ^m (maj7): C E ^b G B
E^m - E^m(maj7) - E^m7	E ^m (maj7): E G B D [#]

Substitutions

In a chord context, a substitution, refers to a chord that replace another. There are mainly two situations for chord substitutions: a seventh or an extended chord replaces a triad (e.g., Cmaj7 replaces C), an altered chord replaces a chord with a similar function (e.g., C7#9 replaces C7). Some substitutions practices are covered in the jazz section and won't be repeated here.

Secondary dominant substitution

The root note remains the same, but the chord quality changes. The chords that execute the substitution are written in italics.

C - C7 - Fmaj7 - Dm7 - G7 - C

A - A7 - D6 - E7

G - G7 - C - G - Em

C - A7 - D - G

F - D7 - Bb - C9

Diminished seventh substitution

A diminished seventh chord can be used instead as a V chord for returning to the tonic (I chord).

Am - Em - Am7 - G#dim7 - Am

Am - Dm - F - Bdim7 - C

Em - Am - Em - D#dim7 - Em

Em - Bm - C - F#dim7 - G

G#dim7: G# B D F

Bdim7: B D F Ab

D#dim7: D# F# A C

F#dim7: F# A C D#

Cycles of fifths

In music theory, the circle of fifths is the relationship among the 12 notes of the chromatic scale and the associated major and minor keys. More specifically, it is a geometrical representation of relationships among the 12 pitch classes of the chromatic scale in pitch class space. Moving counterclockwise the direction of the circle of fifths gives the circle of fourths, although this is not a very common term to use.

Cycles of fifths with dominant chords

A common method is to use cycles of fifths with dominant chords.

C - E7 - A7 - D7 - G7 - C

D - F#7 - B7 - E7 - A7 - D

E - G#7 - C#7 - F#7 - B7 - E

F - A7 - D7 - G7 - C7 - F

G - B7 - E7 - A7 - D7 - G

A - C#7 - F#7 - B7 - E7 - A

Cycles of fifths including minor chords

A7 - Dm7 - G7 - C

C - Bm7 - E7 - Am7

D - C#7 - F#7 - B7 - Em7 - G7

Descending progressions

B7 - E7 - A7 - D7 - G7 - C7

C7 - F7 - Bb7 - Eb7 - Ab7 - Db7

D9 - G9 - C9 - F9 - A#9 - D#9 - D9

Cadences

A cadence is a chord progression that closes a musical phrase or a whole song (imperfect cadences does on the other hand anticipate a continuation, such as a new verse).

Perfect cadence

IV - V - ii. The V chord can also be played as V7. This progression gives the strongest accent to an outro.

F - G - C

F# - G# - C#

G - A - D

G# - A# - D#

A - B - E

Bb - C - F

B - C# - G#

C - D - G

C# - D# - G#

D - E - A

D# - F - A#

E - F# - B

F - G7 - C

C - D7 - G

A - B7 - E

Bb - C7 - F

Imperfect cadence

I / ii / IV - V. The V chord can be followed by a Vsus4.

F - G

G - A

Em - D

F#m - E

E - B

F# - C#

F - G - Gsus4

G - A - Asus4

Em - D - Dsus4

F#m - E - Esus4

E - B - Bsus4

F# - C# - C#sus4

Plagal cadence

IV - I. Without the V.

F - C

G - D

A - E

Bb - F

C - G

D - A

E - B

Interrupted cadence

V - VI / ii. The expected return to the home chord is interrupted.

E - D

G - F

E - Bm

G - Dm

F# - C# - C#sus4

Aeolian cadence

bIV - bVII - I.

Ab - Bb - C

Bb - C - D

C - D - E

D - E - F#

E - F# - G#

F# - G# - A#

Part 3

Blues and jazz

Chord progressions in blues and jazz styles.

- 12-bar structure
- Common jazz chord progressions and turnarounds

Blues progressions

Blues is a music genre and musical form which was originated in the Deep South of the United States around the 1870s by African-Americans from roots in African musical traditions, African-American work songs, and spirituals. Blues incorporated spirituals, work songs, field hollers, shouts, chants, and rhymed simple narrative ballads. The blues form, ubiquitous in jazz, rhythm and blues and rock and roll, is characterized by the call-and-response pattern, the blues scale and specific chord progressions, of which the twelve-bar blues is the most common.

12-bar blues progressions in C

C	F7	C	G7
F7	F7	C	C
G7	F7	C	C

C7	F7	C7	C7
F7	F7	C7	C7
G7	F7	C	C

C7	F7	C7	C7
F7	F7	C7	C7
G7	Ab	F7	Bb B C

C7	F7	C7	C7
F7	F#dim	C7	C7
Dm7	G7	C	F#dim G7

C	C	C7	C7
F	F	F#dim	C
A7 D7	G7 C	F7	C G7

C7	F7	C7	Gm7	C7
F7	F#dim	C7	B7	Bb7 A7
Dm7	G7	C7	A7	Dm7 G7

12-bar blues progressions in D

D	G7	D	A7
G7	G7	D	D
A7	G7	D	D

D7	G7	D7	D7
G7	G7	D7	D7
A7	G7	D	D

D7	G7	D7	D7
G7	G7	D7	D7

A7	Bb	G7	C	C#	D
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D7	G7	D7	D7
G7	G#dim	D7	D7
Em7	A7	D	G#dim A7

D	D	D7	D7
G	G	G#dim	D
B7	E7	A7	D A7

D7	G7	D7	Am7	D7
G7	G#dim	D7	C#7	C7 B7
Em7	A7	D7	B7	Em7 A7

12-bar blues progressions in A minor

Am	Dm	Am	Am
Dm	Dm	Am	Am
E7	Dm	Am	Am

Am7	Dm7	Am7	Am7
Dm7	Dm7	Am7	Am7
E7	Dm7	Am7	Am7

12-bar blues progressions in B minor

Bm	Em	Bm	Bm
Em	Em	Bm	Bm
F#7	Em	Bm	Bm

Bm7	Em7	Bm7	Bm7
Em7	Em7	Bm7	Bm7
F#7	Em7	Bm7	Bm7

12-bar blues progressions in F# minor

F#m	Bm	F#m	F#m
Bm	Bm	F#m	F#m
C#7	Bm	F#m	F#m

F#m7	Bm7	F#m7	F#m7
Bm7	Bm7	F#m7	F#m7
C#m7	Bm7	F#m7	C#m7

Jazz progressions

Jazz originated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and developed from roots in blues and ragtime. Since the 1920s Jazz Age, jazz has become recognized as a major form of musical expression. It then emerged in the form of independent traditional and popular musical styles, all linked by the common bonds of African-American and European-American musical parentage with a performance orientation. Jazz is characterized by swing and blue notes, call and response vocals, polyrhythms and improvisation.

Roman numeral analysis is a type of musical analysis in which chords are represented by Roman numerals. Uppercase Roman numerals (such as I, IV, V) are used to represent major chords, while lowercase Roman numerals (such as ii, iii, vi) are used to represent minor chords.

ii - V - I

The ii - V - I is perhaps the most mentioned chord progressions in jazz.

Dm7 - G7 - Cmaj7	
Em7 - A7 - Dmaj7	[audio track 34]
Gm7 - C7 - Fmaj7	
Abm7 - Db7 - Gbmaj7	
Bbm7 - Eb7 - Abmaj7	

ii - V - I with substitutions

Substitutions meaning swapping among interchangeable chords. G13 is, for example, an interchangeable chord for G7.

Dm7 - G13 - Cmaj7	G13: G F B E
Em7 - A7 - Dmaj9	Dmaj9: D F# C# E
Gm9 - C7#5 - Fmaj9	[audio track 35]
Am11 - D7 - Gmaj7	Am11: A C E G D
Bbm7 - Eb7#9 - Abmaj7	E9: E B D G
Bm9 - E9 - Amaj7	Bm9: B D F# A C#, E9: E B D F# G#
Cm7 - F9 - Bbmaj13	F9: F A Eb G, Bbmaj13: D A C G

ii - V - I with tritone substitutions

The V chord is substituted for another V chord, which root is a tritone interval away.

Dm7 - Db7 - Cmaj7	
Em7 - Eb9 - Dmaj9	
Gm9 - Gb9 - Fmaj13	Fmaj13: F E A D
Am11 - Ab7 - Gmaj7	Am11: A C E G D

ii - V - I with added chords

The ii - V - I structure can include more than three chords.

Dm7 - G7 - Cmaj7 - C6	[audio track 36]
Em7 - A7 - Dmaj7 - D6	
Gm7 - C7 - Fmaj7 - F6	
Am7 - D7 - Gmaj7 - G6	
Bbm7 - Eb7 - Abmaj7 - Ab6	

ii - V - I in minor keys

The ii - V - I structure can transpose into minor with some new chord types.

Am7b5 - Dm7 - Gm7	[audio track 37]
Bm7b5 - Em7 - Am7	
Dm7b5 - G7 - CmM7	CmM7: C Eb G B
Gm7b5 - C7 - FmM7	FmM7: F Ab C E

I - vi - ii - V

The I - vi - ii - V is another common chord progression in jazz.

Cmaj7 - Am7 - Dm7 - G7	
Ebmaj7 - Cm7 - Fm7 - Bb7	[audio track 38]
Fmaj7 - Dm7 - Gm7 - C7	

I - vi - ii - V with substitutions

Cmaj7 - Am7 - Dm7 - G13	[audio track 39]
Ebmaj7 - Cm7 - Fm9 - Bb11	Fm9: F Ab C Eb G, Bb11: D Ab Bb Eb
Dmaj9 - Bm11 - Em7 - A7	Dmaj9: D F# C# E, Bm11: B D E A

I - V - ii - V

A modern way to play the I - vi - ii - V is with a dominant instead of a minor second chord.

Cmaj7 - A7 - Dm7 - G7
Dbmaj7 - Bb7 - Ebm7 - Ab7
Ebmaj7 - C7 - Fm7 - Bb7
Fmaj7 - D7 - Gm7 - C7
Bbmaj7 - G7 - Cm7 - F7

I - V - ii - V with substitutions

Cmaj7 - A7 - Dm7 - G13	G13: G F B E
Dbmaj9 - Bb11 - Ebm7 - Ab7	Dbmaj9: Db F C Eb, Bb11: D Ab Bb Eb
Ebmaj7 - C7 - Fm9 - Bb11	Fm9: F Ab C Eb G
Bbmaj7 - G9 - Cm7 - F13	F13: F Eb A D

vi - ii - V - I

The vi - ii - V - I is yet another common jazz minor progression.

Dm7 - Gm7 - C7 - Fmaj7	
Cm7 - Fm7 - Bb7 - Ebmaj7	
Am7 - Dm7 - G7 - Cmaj7	[audio track 40]

vi - ii - V - I with continuation

Alternatives for expanding the vi - ii - V - I structure into longer progressions back to “home” (vi).

Dm7 - Gm7 - C7 - Fmaj7 - Bbmaj7 - Em7b5 - A7 - Dm7
Cm7 - Fm7 - Bb7 - Ebmaj7 - Abmaj7 - Dm7b5 - G7 - Cm7

3 - 6 - 2 - 5 turnaround

In jazz, a turnaround is a passage at the end of a section which leads to the next section. (A 3 - 6 - 2 - 5 turnaround starting with an A minor chord are related to the F major key.)

Am7 - D7 - Gm7 - C7
Bm7 - E7 - Am7 - D7

Part 4

Playing concepts

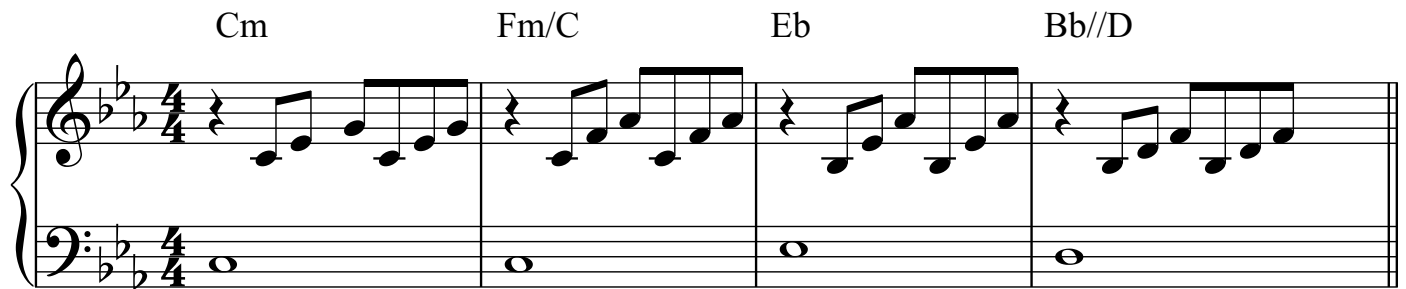
Some simple chord accompanying concepts in standard notation.

For audio, go to <https://www.pianochord.org/400pcp-audio.html>.

Concept 1

Example 1

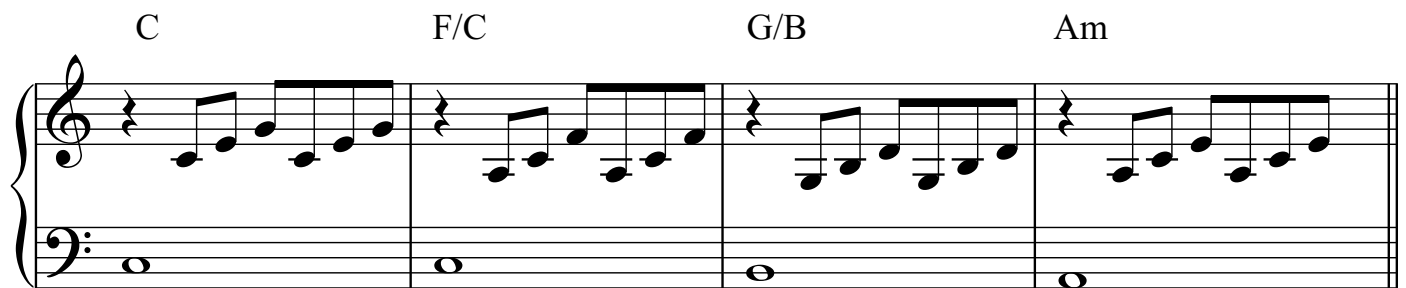
Chord progression: Cm Fm/C Eb Bb//D



Musical notation for Example 1, showing a four-measure progression in C minor, 4/4 time. The melody in the right hand consists of eighth-note patterns: C-B-A-G, F-E-D-C, Eb-D-C-B, and Bb-A-G-F. The bass line in the left hand consists of whole notes: C, F, Eb, and Bb. The key signature has three flats (Bb, Eb, Ab).

Example 2

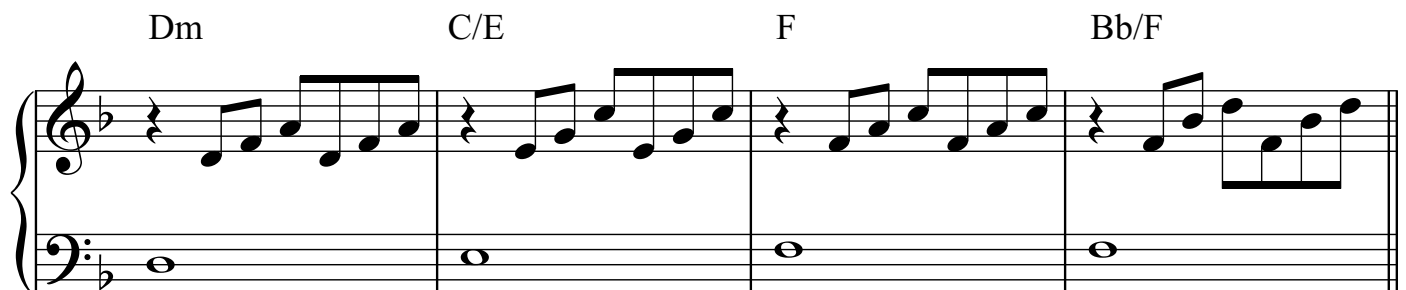
Chord progression: C F/C G/B Am



Musical notation for Example 2, showing a four-measure progression in C major, 4/4 time. The melody in the right hand consists of eighth-note patterns: C-B-A-G, F-E-D-C, G-F-E-D, and C-B-A-G. The bass line in the left hand consists of whole notes: C, F, G, and A. The key signature has no flats or sharps.

Example 3

Chord progression: Dm C/E F Bb/F



Musical notation for Example 3, showing a four-measure progression in D minor, 4/4 time. The melody in the right hand consists of eighth-note patterns: D-C-B-A, C-B-A-G, F-E-D-C, and Bb-A-G-F. The bass line in the left hand consists of whole notes: D, C, F, and Bb. The key signature has two flats (Bb, Eb).

Example 4

Chord progression: Fmaj7/C Dm7/A Gm7 C7



Musical notation for Example 4, showing a four-measure progression in F major, 4/4 time. The melody in the right hand consists of eighth-note patterns: F-E-D-C, D-C-B-A, G-F-E-D, and C-B-A-G. The bass line in the left hand consists of whole notes: F, D, G, and C. The key signature has one flat (Bb).

Concept 2

Example 1

Am/C G/B F/A C/G

Example 2

Em/B D/A C/G Gmaj7/F#

Example 3

Cm Bb Fm/Ab Cmadd2/G

Example 4

Gm F Ebmaj7 Bb/D

Concept 3

Example 1

A/E C#m/E D E

Musical notation for Example 1, showing four measures of music. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The time signature is 6/8. The melody consists of eighth notes: A4 (quarter rest), B4, C#5, D5, E5, F#5. The bass line consists of half notes: A3, C#3, D3, E3.

Example 2

A6/F# Dmaj7/F# Dsus2/E A/C#

Musical notation for Example 2, showing four measures of music. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The time signature is 6/8. The melody consists of eighth notes: A4 (quarter rest), B4, C#5, D5, E5, F#5. The bass line consists of half notes: A3, C#3, D3, E3.

Example 3

Em7 Cadd9(no5) Bsus4/E Gmaj7

Musical notation for Example 3, showing four measures of music. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The time signature is 6/8. The melody consists of eighth notes: E4 (quarter rest), F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The bass line consists of half notes: E3, G3, B3, C4.

Example 4

B/D# G#m/D# E Esus4

Musical notation for Example 4, showing four measures of music. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#). The time signature is 6/8. The melody consists of eighth notes: B4 (quarter rest), C#5, D5, E5, F#5, G#5. The bass line consists of half notes: B3, D#3, E3, F#3.

Concept 4

Example 1

G C/G Bm/F# D/F#

Musical notation for Example 1, showing a 4-measure exercise in G major, 6/8 time. The right hand plays eighth notes, and the left hand plays eighth notes. Chords are G, C/G, Bm/F#, and D/F#.

Example 2

Em Am/E D/F# G

Musical notation for Example 2, showing a 4-measure exercise in G major, 6/8 time. The right hand plays eighth notes, and the left hand plays eighth notes. Chords are Em, Am/E, D/F#, and G.

Example 3

Dm C7 Bb6 Am7

Musical notation for Example 3, showing a 4-measure exercise in D minor, 6/8 time. The right hand plays eighth notes, and the left hand plays eighth notes. Chords are Dm, C7, Bb6, and Am7.

Example 4

E B/D# D A/C#

Musical notation for Example 4, showing a 4-measure exercise in E major, 6/8 time. The right hand plays eighth notes, and the left hand plays eighth notes. Chords are E, B/D#, D, and A/C#.

Concept 5

Example 1

Example 1 shows a four-measure progression in G major (one sharp). The chords are G, C, D, and G. The melody in the treble clef consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5 for G; G4, A4, B4, A4 for C; G4, F#4, E4, D4 for D; and G4, A4, B4, A4 for G. The bass line in the bass clef consists of half notes: G3, C3, D3, G3.

Example 2

Example 2 shows a four-measure progression in D major (two sharps). The chords are D, G, A, and D. The melody in the treble clef consists of quarter notes: D4, E4, F#4, G4 for D; D4, E4, F#4, E4 for G; D4, E4, F#4, D4 for A; and D4, E4, F#4, E4 for D. The bass line in the bass clef consists of half notes: D3, G2, A2, D3.

Example 3

Example 3 shows a four-measure progression in A major (three sharps). The chords are A, D, E, and A. The melody in the treble clef consists of quarter notes: A4, B4, C#5, D5 for A; A4, B4, C#5, B4 for D; A4, B4, C#5, A4 for E; and A4, B4, C#5, B4 for A. The bass line in the bass clef consists of half notes: A3, D3, E3, A3.

Example 4

Example 4 shows a four-measure progression in F major (one flat). The chords are F, Bb, C, and F. The melody in the treble clef consists of quarter notes: F4, G4, A4, B4 for F; F4, G4, A4, G4 for Bb; F4, G4, A4, F4 for C; and F4, G4, A4, G4 for F. The bass line in the bass clef consists of half notes: F3, Bb2, C3, F3.

Concept 6

Example 1

Example 1 shows a sequence of chords in C major: C, C^{sus4}, C, G7^{sus4}, and G. The notation is in 4/4 time, with the right hand playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, and the left hand playing a simple bass line.

Example 2

Example 2 shows a sequence of chords in G major: G, G^{sus4}, G, D7^{sus4}, and D. The notation is in 4/4 time, with the right hand playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, and the left hand playing a simple bass line.

Example 3

Example 3 shows a sequence of chords in D major: D, D^{sus4}, D, A7^{sus4}, and A. The notation is in 4/4 time, with the right hand playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, and the left hand playing a simple bass line.

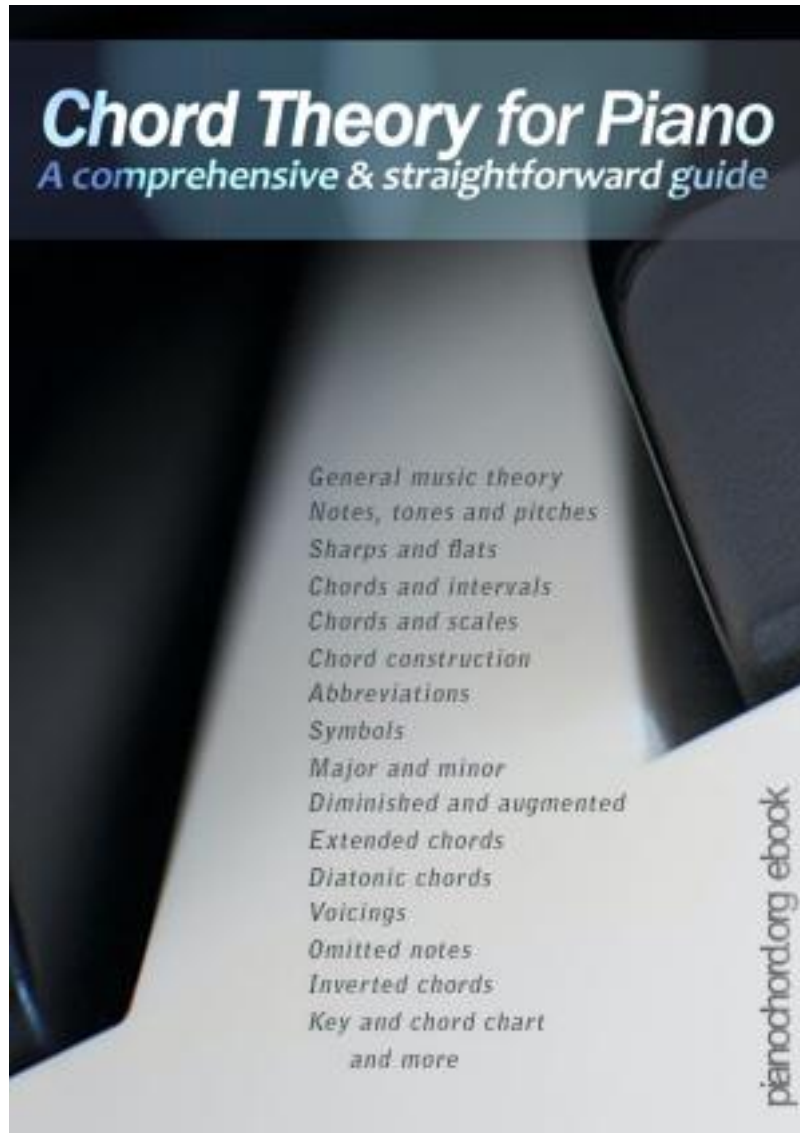
Example 4

Example 4 shows a sequence of chords in A major: A, A^{sus4}, A, E7^{sus4}, and E. The notation is in 4/4 time, with the right hand playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, and the left hand playing a simple bass line.

More ebooks

The *Chord Theory for Piano* ebook summarize what you need to know about chords from a theoretical perspective.

The text is supported by tables and diagrams.



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