

## Concerning diatonic chord progression

**The most important harmonic paradigm:** I ----- V (I). Think of phrase structure and cadences (half, authentic) in relation to this. All of the following "fit" within this paradigm.

The **primary** triads (I, IV, V) come **before** their **secondary** mates (vi, ii, vii<sup>o</sup> respectively)

**Chord classes:** T: I, vi (i, VI) S: IV, ii (iv, ii<sup>o</sup>) D: V, vii<sup>o</sup>  
 iii and III are ambiguous--sometimes T function, sometimes D function

**Progressions:** T S D T, T D T, T S T (this last one: S = subdominant); see also sequence below.

**Root movement:** most commonly **down by P5** (up a P4), **down by thirds** (i.e. I vi IV ii), and **up by seconds** (i.e. IV V or V vi or occasionally iii IV)

**Harmonic sequence:** the **circle of fifths** is a **critically important** harmonic paradigm whose role in music from the Baroque period through the twentieth century cannot be overstated.

In major: I IV vii<sup>o</sup> iii vi ii V I In minor: i iv  $\flat$ VII III VI ii<sup>o</sup> V i

**Memorize it like a telephone number: 1 - 4 7 3 - 6 2 5 1**

Two other common sequences: 1) by thirds (I V vi iii IV I); 2) by parallel first inversion triads.

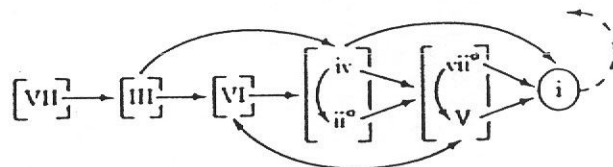
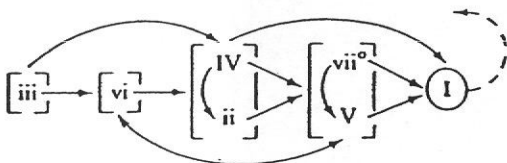
CHORD	GOES TO	CHORD	GOES TO
I (i)	anywhere	V (V)	I, vi (i, VI)
ii (ii <sup>o</sup> )	V, vi (V, VI)	vi (VI)	IV, ii, V, iii (iv, ii <sup>o</sup> , V, III)
iii (III)	vi, IV (VI, iv)	vii <sup>o</sup> (vii <sup>o</sup> )	I (i)
IV (iv)	V, I, ii, vii <sup>o</sup> (V, i, ii <sup>o</sup> , vii <sup>o</sup> , $\flat$ VII)	$\flat$ VII	III (usually only in minor key)

**Remember:** V<sub>5</sub><sup>6</sup> and V<sup>6</sup> are often **neighboring chords** to I (i);  
 V<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>, V<sub>3</sub><sup>4</sup>, and vii<sup>o</sup>6 often **passing** between I and I<sup>6</sup> (i and i<sup>6</sup>);  
 IV<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> (iv<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>) **only** used as a **neighboring chord** to I (i);  
 I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> (i<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup>) has several different uses, the most important of which is **cadential**  
 (always I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> then V or V<sup>7</sup> after it: I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> → V(7) → I);  
 the other triads (ii, iii, vi, vii<sup>o</sup>) rarely if ever occur in second inversion.

Here are charts which summarize these ideas in slightly different ways.

Major mode:

Minor mode:



An "expandable progression" showing two things:  
 1) the gradual addition of harmonic vocabulary;  
 2) harmonic hierarchy

Reading from top to bottom shows the addition of vocabulary; reading from bottom to top shows a gradual reduction to the most structurally important harmonic underpinnings. Remember that this is simply *one possible progression* used as a demonstration; of course, *many others are possible*.

1:  
 I V I

2:  
 I IV V I

3:  
 I V I IV V I IV V I

4:  
 I V<sup>6</sup> IV<sup>6</sup> V -<sup>6</sup> I V<sup>6</sup> I -<sup>6</sup> IV V I IV V I

5:  
 I V<sup>6</sup> IV<sup>6</sup> V -<sup>6</sup> I V<sup>6</sup> I V<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> I<sup>6</sup> IV V I IV I<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> V I IV<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> I

6:  
 I V<sup>6</sup> IV<sup>6</sup> V -<sup>6</sup> I V<sup>6</sup> I V<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> I<sup>6</sup> IV ii V I IV ii I<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> V I IV<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> I

7:  
 I V<sup>6</sup> IV<sup>6</sup> V  $\frac{-6}{5}$  I  $\frac{V^6_5}{(V^6)}$  I  $\frac{V^4_3}{(V^6_4)}$  I<sup>6</sup> IV ii V -7 I IV ii I<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> V<sup>(7)</sup>I IV<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> I

8:  
 I V<sup>6</sup> IV<sup>6</sup> V  $\frac{-6}{5}$  I  $\frac{V^6_5}{(V^6)}$  I  $\frac{V^4_3}{(V^6_4)}$  I<sup>6</sup> IV ii V -7 I IV ii I<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> V<sup>(7)</sup>I IV<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> I

9:  
 I V<sup>6</sup> IV<sup>6</sup> V  $\frac{-6}{5}$  I  $\frac{V^6_5}{(V^6)}$  I  $\frac{V^4_3}{(V^6_4)}$  I<sup>6</sup> IV ii V -7 vi IV ii I<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> V<sup>(7)</sup>I IV<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> I

(I)

(vii<sup>o</sup>6)

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>1: the fundamental I V I underpinning</p> <p>2: addition of a predominant triad</p> <p>3: filling in with more primary triads</p> <p>4: addition of first inversion triads (note passing motion filling I - V gap; V - V<sup>6</sup> arpeggiation; neighboring motion in I - V<sup>6</sup> - I; I - I<sup>6</sup> arpeggiation)</p> <p>5: addition of second inversion triads (note V<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> as passing chord filling I - I<sup>6</sup> gap; I<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> as cadential <math>\frac{6}{4}</math> preceding V; IV<sup>6</sup><sub>4</sub> as neighbor chord functioning as a post-cadential extension)</p> | <p>6: addition of ii chord as an extension of predominant function ("extends" the IV)</p> <p>7: simply a change in chord <i>qualities</i> in places, due to addition of dominant 7th chord</p> <p>8: simple addition of vii<sup>o</sup>6 as another passing-chord option between I and I<sup>6</sup></p> <p>9: simple substitution of vi for I; creates a deceptive resolution of dominant; note falling-third motion of vi - IV - ii</p> |
|---|---|

# Tonality and archetypal harmonic progressions

## Points to consider

- Tonality and harmony are not just tones in succession, but rather sound “events” that *progress* from one to another in a logical manner. This forms a *narrative* of sorts by implying that certain expectable events “will follow.” For this reason, it is better to use the term *harmonic progression* instead of harmonic succession.
- A common example of this involves the leading tone ( $\hat{7}$ , or *ti*). Movement to the leading tone creates the expectation that  $\hat{1}$  will follow shortly (if not immediately). Likewise, movement to a chord that harmonizes the  $\hat{7}$ , such as the dominant (V), implies that a chord containing  $\hat{1}$  will follow—usually the I or the vi chord (which is a “tonic substitute”).
- Hence, tonal music may be heard as a series of *implications* and *realizations* (creating expectations and gratifications in the mind of the listener). Not every event will carry an implication, nor will every expectation be realized. In many instances, implications that are thwarted or avoided in a progression stand out in a special way, and are there for a specific reason (much like a novel’s plot taking a sudden unexpected twist or turn). Interested in the ideas of implication and realization? Check out books and articles by Leonard B. Meyer for far more specific detail about these fascinating ideas.
- It is essential that you be able to recognize the archetypal progressions shown below—both analytically and aurally—as well as write them fluently. They represent “norms” or “expected harmonic behaviors.” Learning them will also enhance your skill at seeing and hearing the “unexpected” harmonic events.

## Archetypal progressions

- I — (anything) — I**    *Comments:*
  - More likely to be a surface progression.
  - Essentially, this prolongs the tonic triad.
  - The most common form of this progression: I - V - I.
- T — S — D — T**    *Comments:*
  - The basic paradigm for tonal harmonic motion.
  - Elaborations include different inversions and functional substitutions (secondary triads for primary triads, dominant sevenths for dominant triad, etc.)

### c. Circle of fifths progression

- Most common (major mode): I — iii — vi — ii — V — I
- Elaboration: I — IV — vii<sup>o</sup> — iii — vi — ii — V — I
- Minor mode: i — iv —  $\flat$ VII — III — VI — ii<sup>o</sup>(6) — V — i

### d. “Retrogressive sequential”: I — V — vi — iii — IV — I

### e. Ascending bass lines (from $\hat{1}$ up to $\hat{5}$ ):

$\hat{1}$	$\hat{2}$	$\hat{3}$	$\hat{4}$	$\hat{5}$	
I	D	I <sup>6</sup>	IV (ii <sup>6</sup> )	V	[where D (stands for dominant function) = V <sub>4</sub> <sup>6</sup> or V <sub>3</sub> <sup>4</sup> or vii <sup>o</sup> 6]

### f. Descending bass lines [from $\hat{8}$ down to $\hat{5}$ (or $\hat{4}$ ):

$\hat{8}$	$\hat{7}$	$\hat{6}$	$\hat{5}$	( $\hat{4}$ )		$\hat{8}$	$\hat{7}$	$\hat{6}$	$\hat{5}$	( $\hat{4}$ )
I	V <sup>6</sup>	vi (IV <sup>6</sup> )	V I <sub>4</sub> <sup>6</sup>	IV)		i	v <sup>6</sup>	iv <sup>6</sup> (VI)	V (i <sub>4</sub> <sup>6</sup> )	iv)

- Thanks to my friend and colleague John W. White for some of the ideas presented above.