

Introduction to Chord Progressions

Revision: three common major scales

The scale of C major is, C,D,E,F,G,A,B

The scale of F major is, F,G,A,Bb,C,D,E,F

The scale of G major is G,A,B,C,D,E,F#,G

- Tunes are composed in a particular key by using the notes just from that scale.
- There are three chords that go strongly with each key. These are known as **the primary chords**.
- The primary chords are built from the first fourth and fifth note of the scale and are known as the Tonic, Sub-dominant and Dominant respectively. The dominant is often made to be a seventh chord.
- Example: for tunes in C, the tonic will be a C chord, the subdominant will be F and the dominant either G or G7. (G7 is known as a “dominant seventh”)
- Roman numerals are used to notate the position of the chords in the scale, so C, F, and G7 would be the **I, IV** and **V7** chords for tunes in C major.
- NB: The three chords don't always appear strictly in the order I, IV, V, although a tune will mostly start and finish with the I chord

Examples of I, IV, V progression

[G]O'er the hills and [C]o'er the main
[G]Through Flanders, Portu-[D]gal and Spain
[G]King George commands and [C]we obey
[G]Over the hills and [D]far away

(Tacet) Heel y'[F]ho boys, let her go, boys
Bring her [C]head round into the [Bb]wea-[F]ther
[F]Heel y'ho boys, let her go boys
Sailing [C]homeward to Mingu-[F]lay!

Examples of I, IV, V7 progression

[C]Trailers for [F]sale or rent, [G7]rooms to let...[C]fifty cents.
No phone, no [F]pool, no pets [G7][STOP] I ain't got no cigarettes
Ah, but..[C]two hours of [F]pushin' broom buys an [G7]eight by twelve [C]four-bit
room I'm a man of [F]means by no means[G7][G7][STOP] King of the road.

[C]I met him on a Monday and my [F]heart stood still
Da [G7] doo ron ron ron, da [C]do ron ron
Somebody told me that his [F]name was Bill
Da [G7] doo ron ron ron, da [C]do ron ron

Many progressions are used beyond the three primary chords. The extract from the Howlin' Hobbit website on this page gives some common ones. A minor chord is often added for interest, such as in the very commonly found progression below (NB: Minor chord numbers are notated in lower case roman numerals)

Example of I, vi, IV, V progression:

[C] Here's my story it's sad but true **[Am]** it's about a girl that I once knew
[F] She took my love then ran around **[G]** with every single guy in town
[C] Hey hey woh oh oh oh oh **[Am]** hey hey woh oh oh oh oh
[F] Hey hey woh oh oh oh oh **[G]** hey
[C] Hey hey woh oh oh oh oh **[Am]** hey hey woh oh oh oh oh
[F] Hey hey woh oh oh oh oh **[G]** hey woooooohhhhh

Here is the same progression as above, but with a dominant seventh.

Example of I, vi, IV, V7 progression:

[C] Young man there's no need to feel down
I said **[Am]** young man pick yourself off the ground
I said **[F]** young man cause you're in a new town
There's no **[G7]** need to be unhappy