

LESSON ONE- PRIMARY TRIADS AND PROGRESSIONS

Chords are built on the various scale degrees. The position of the chord in the scale determines how one chord tone relates to the other. You can call it tonal harmony, functional harmony or just the 'language of harmony'.

A musical staff in 4/4 time showing the first seven chords of a major scale. The chords are: C (I), Dm (ii), Em (iii), F (IV), G (V), Am (vi), and B^{dim} (vii^{dim}). The bass line is empty.

The *primary* triads of the scale are major I, IV, V. The root relationship of the IV (Subdominant) and V (Dominant) are perfect 5ths from the I (Tonic). The dominant (V) is a 5th above the tonic and the subdominant (IV) is a fifth below the tonic. These three provide structure in building progressions.

A diagram on a musical staff showing the interval relationships between the subdominant (IV), tonic (I), and dominant (V). A line connects IV to I, labeled 'P5' (Perfect Fifth). Another line connects I to V, also labeled 'P5'. The labels 'SUBDOMINANT IV', 'TONIC I', and 'DOMINANT V' are placed below the staff.

Basic opening progressions are I-V, I-IV, or I-IV-V. Progressions of harmonic phrases are completed or closed by returning to the tonic. The closing progressions are V-I, IV-I, and IV-V-I.

An example of the opening chord progression I-V is found in Dvorak's New World Symphony.

Musical notation for the opening of Dvorak's New World Symphony. The key signature is D major (two sharps) and the time signature is 4/4. The first bar contains the tonic chord (D major, I) and the second bar contains the dominant chord (A major, V). The notes in the first bar are F#-A-F#-D and in the second bar are E-A-E.



The key of the piece is in D major and the diatonic scale is shown on the chord map. The notes in bar one F#-A-F#-D fit with a chord of D major (I), and the notes in bar two E-A-E fit with a chord of A major (V).

A diatonic chord map for D major. The chords are: D (I), Em (ii), Fm (iii), G (IV), A (V), B (vi), and C (vii^p). The notes are written above each chord.

The melody contains notes that are **not** part of the underlying harmony chord. In bar 1, there is an E that isn't part of the chord of D major. In bar 2, there are two F#s that are not part of the chord of A major. These are **non-chord** notes. The notes that fall **on the beat** are * **chord notes**. Notes falling on an **off-beat** can be either chord notes or non-chord notes.

The **I-V** opening progression of Beethoven Sonata, Op. 2, No 3 is given below.

Allegro con brio

I V

The progression is completed when the dominant 7th chord resolves to the tonic.

V7 I

The opening progression **I-IV** is often completed by returning to the **I** as shown in Schumann, Album for the Young, Op. 68, 10.

Allegro

I IV I

The **IV** chord often progresses to a **V** chord. The Bach Chorale In Allen Mein Taten illustrates the progression **I-IV-V**.

I IV V

The **I-IV-V** chord progression is sometimes called the 'the little chord progression that could'.