

Beginning Progressions

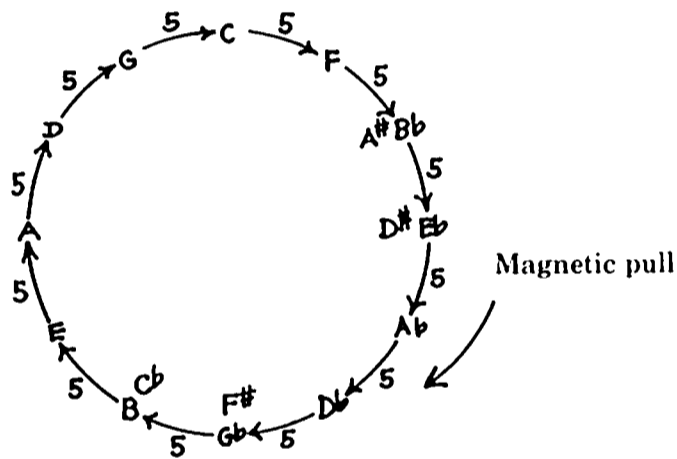
While many approaches exist for teaching improvisation, I feel it is most beneficial to:

1. Study chord construction.
2. Study chord resolution.
3. Study chord substitution.
4. Study alternate scales to be used against chords.

Cycle of Fifths

The basic movement of chords in our western music is according to the cycle of fifths. Study the chart below. It could be called the Cycle of Fourths because each chord resolves to a chord built on a 4th scale degree. Thus, C leads to F; or (to put it another way) C is the V chord of F.

Cycle of Fifths



| Exercise | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| C leads to _____ (F) | D leads to _____ |
| Bb leads to _____ | G leads to _____ |
| Ab leads to _____ | Gb leads to _____ |
| E leads to _____ | F leads to _____ |
| A leads to _____ | B leads to _____ |
| Db leads to _____ | Eb leads to _____ |

Dominant 7th Chord

Remember:
 The dominant 7th chord resolves to a fourth step above. Thus:
 C7 → F G7 → C etc.

V7 To 17

The above pattern started on the 5th of the V7 chord. Write your own pattern starting on the 3rd, then starting on the root, then starting on the 7th.

Your Pattern Starting on The 3rd

Now write and play patterns starting on root, then the 7th.

Blues Scale

The blues scale works well against major, minor, or 7th chords. The formula for building blues scales is:

Root - \flat 3rd, whole step, $\frac{1}{2}$ step, $\frac{1}{2}$ step, \flat 3rd interval, whole step.
 or
 Root - \flat 3rd, 4th, \flat 5th, \flat 5th, \flat 7th, root
 C - Eb , F, Gb , G, Bb , C

Play in the following keys:

F Blues Scale

Blues Modulation

C7 Blues Scale

V7 To I Using Blues Scale

The blues scale can be played against the dominant or minor seventh type chords. The use of the blues scale in such situations is governed by style and taste. Play the following examples and write your own ideas. 1

Two musical phrases in C major. The first phrase shows the blues scale for G7 (V7) moving to C (I). The second phrase shows the blues scale for C7 (V7) moving to F (I).

Two musical phrases in Bb major. The first phrase shows the blues scale for F7 (V7) moving to Bb (I). The second phrase shows the blues scale for Bb7 (V7) moving to Eb (I).

Continue by ear in Eb7 → Ab, Ab7 → Db, Db7 → Gb, Gb(F#)7 → B, B7 → E, E7 → A, A7 → D, D7 → G.
Write the studies in all keys if you have trouble at this stage playing them by ear.

Two musical phrases in C major, identical to the first example, showing the blues scale for G7 (V7) moving to C (I) and C7 (V7) moving to F (I).

Continue the above study by ear in F7 → Bb, Bb7 → Eb, Eb7 → Ab, Ab7 → Db, Db7 → Gb, Gb(F#)7 → B, B7 → E, E7 → A, A7 → D, D7 → G.

Write Your Own

Write your own studies on V7 to I using the blues scale.
Play each study by ear in all keys!

A blank musical staff in C major (treble clef, common time). The first measure is labeled 'V7' and the second measure is labeled 'I'.

A blank musical staff in Bb major (treble clef, 3/4 time). The first measure is labeled 'V7' and the second measure is labeled 'I'.

Expanding Our Basic V7-I Progression

II7 → V7 → I

Play all of the following examples by ear through the cycle of keys!

1. 

Play above in keys of F, B \flat , E \flat , A \flat , D \flat , G \flat , B, E, A, D, G, C.

2. 



3. 

4. **Rock feeling** 

Playing Arpeggios

A good way to learn to hear a new progression is to simply play the chords in arpeggio form. Try the following.



Play all of the above exercises and make up your own in all keys.

VI7-II7-V7-I

Play the following in F, Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, Gb, B, E, A, D, & G.

1. Musical staff 1: Treble clef, common time. Chords: VI7(A7), II7(D7), V7(G7), I(C).

2. Musical staff 2: Treble clef, common time. Chords: VI7(A7), II7(D7), V7(G7), I(C).

3. **Rock feeling**
 Musical staff 3: Treble clef, common time. Chords: VI7(A7), II7(D7), V7(G7).

4. Musical staff 4: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Chords: VI7(A7), II7(D7).

5. Musical staff 5: Treble clef, common time. Chords: V7(G7), I(C).

6. Musical staff 6: Treble clef, common time. Chords: A7, D7, G7, C.

Write Your Own

On all progressions covered in this text, the more you write, the better will be your playing!

Empty musical staff 1: Treble clef, common time. Chords: A7, A7, D7, D7.

Empty musical staff 2: Treble clef, common time. Chords: G7, G7, C, C.

Empty musical staff 3: Treble clef, 3/4 time. Chords: A7, A7, D7, D7, G7, C.

Review Study

Write the correct chord or progressions.

1. IV in key of C
2. V⁷ in key of A \flat
3. I in key of F \sharp
4. VI⁷—II⁷ in B \flat
5. II⁷—V⁷ in D \flat
6. IV—V⁷ in E \flat
7. V⁷ in F
8. II⁷—V⁷ in G
9. III m in A
10. VII⁷ in E
11. III⁷—VI⁷ in D \flat
12. VI m —II m —V⁷ in B
13. III m^7 —VI⁷—II⁷—V⁷ in G \flat
14. VI⁷— \flat VI⁷—V⁷ in C
15. \flat III⁷—II⁷— \flat II⁷ in E \flat
16. III mi^7 —VI⁷—II⁷—V⁷ in A
17. VI m —II m —V⁷ in F
18. IV m^7 —III m^7 — \flat III m^7 —II m —V⁷ in A \flat
19. VII⁷—III⁷—VI⁷—II⁷—V⁷—I in D
20. III⁷—II⁷— \flat III⁷— \flat II⁷—I in G