

## II-V-I Chord Progressions

All progressions shown are taken from the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> degrees of the key. For example in C major:

**I**      **II**      III      IV      **V**      VI      VII      I  
**Cmaj7**   **Dm7**   Em7   Fmaj7   **G7**   Am7   Bm7b5   Cmaj9

When you're working out which key signature the chords belong to, or which scale to play over, the chord it is vitally important to recognise which chords are the root, the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup>. You will then be able to apply the correct scale and play within the correct key signature. For example if you were presented with these chords: C#m7 /// F#7 /// Bmaj7 ///. What key do these chords belong to? The following chords are in all major keys.

KEY	II	V	I
C	Dm7	G7	Cmaj7
G	Am7	D7	Gmaj7
D	Em7	A7	Dmaj7
A	Bm7	E7	Amaj7
E	F#m7	B7	Emaj7
B	C#m7	F#7	Bmaj7
F#	G#m7	C#7	F#maj7
C#	D#m7	G#7	C#maj7
F	Gm7	C7	Fmaj7
Bb	Cm7	F7	Bbmaj7
Eb	Fm7	Bb7	Ebmaj7
Ab	Bbm7	Eb7	Abmaj7
Db	Ebm7	Ab7	Dbmaj7
Gb	Abm7	Db7	Gbmaj7
Cb	Dbm7	Gb7	Cbmaj7

These progressions shown are taken from the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> degrees of the key stated. For example in C major:

**I**      **II**      III      IV      **V**      VI      VII      **I**  
**Cmaj7**   **Dm7**   Em7   Fmaj7   **G7**   Am7   Bm7b5   **Cmaj9**

Progression taken from A Natural Minor:

**I**      **II**      III      IV      **V**      VI      VII      **I**  
**Am7**   **Bm7b5**   Cmaj7   Dm7   **Em7**   Fmaj7   G7   **Am9**

Also shown here is the same progression taken from the key of A Harmonic Minor:

I II III IV V VI VII I  
**Am/maj7 Bm7b5** Cmaj#5 Dm7 **E7** Fmaj7 G#o7 **Am/maj9**

Progression in A Melodic Minor:

I II III IV V VI VII I  
**Am/maj7 Bm7** Cmaj7#5 D7 **E7** F#m7b5 G#m7b5 **Am/maj9**

The following chords are in all harmonic minor keys.

KEY	II	V	I
Am	Bm7b5	E7	Am/maj7
Em	F#m7b5	B7	Em/maj7
Bm	C#m7b5	F#7	Bm/maj7
F#m	G#m7b5	C#7	F#m/maj7
C#m	D#m7b5	G#7	C#m/maj7
G#m	A#m7b5	D#7	G#m/maj7
D#m	E#m7b5	A#7	D#m/maj7
A#m	B#m7b5	E#7	A#m/maj7
Dm	Em7b5	A7	Dm/maj7
Gm	Am7b5	D7	Gm/maj7
Cm	Dm7b5	G7	Cm/maj7
Fm	Gm7b5	C7	Fm/maj7
Bbm	Cm7b5	F7	Bbm/maj7
Ebm	Fm7b5	Bb7	Ebm/maj7
Abm	Bbmin7b5	Eb7	Abm/maj7

The following chords are in all melodic minor keys.

KEY	II	V	I
Am	Bmin7	E7	Am/maj7
Em	F#min7	B7	Em/maj7
Bm	C#min7	F#7	Bm/maj7
F#m	G#min7	C#7	F#m/maj7
C#m	D#min7	G#7	C#m/maj7
G#m	A#min7	D#7	G#m/maj7
D#m	E#min7	A#7	D#m/maj7
A#m	B#min7	E#7	A#m/maj7
Dm	Emin7	A7	Dm/maj7
Gm	Amin7	D7	Gm/maj7
Cm	Dmin7	G7	Cm/maj7
Fm	Gmin7	C7	Fm/maj7
Bbm	Cmin7	F7	Bbm/maj7
Ebm	Fmin7	Bb7	Ebm/maj7
Abm	Bbmin7	Eb7	Abm/maj7

In a **Major key** the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree will be a minor/min7 chord, the 5<sup>th</sup> will be a major/dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chord and the root will be major/maj7.

In a **Natural minor** key the 2<sup>nd</sup> will be a min7<sup>(b5)</sup> chord the 5<sup>th</sup> will be a min7 and the root will be min7.

In a **Harmonic minor** key the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree will be min7<sup>(b5)</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> will be dom7 and the root will be a minor chord.

In a **Melodic minor** key the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree will be min7<sup>(b9)</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> will be dom7 and the root will be a minor chord.

### **Improvisation & Practise...**

When improvising over a II - V - I progression, phrase into each chord, don't just play the diatonic scale key that the chords lie in, make sure each chord can be heard in your lead phrasing. Do this by playing the arpeggio of the chord in a restricted position and strings.

Take II-V-I in C (Dm7 - G7 - Cmaj7) and play through it using the 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> strings in frets 0 to 3. You now have a small space to improvise over but all the notes are there. Once you have done this and made a few variations on a theme with the idea then move to strings 2, 3 and 4 and practise the same method. When you get through all strings move the position up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> fret and start again!

There is a difference between playing and practising. Playing is to do as you wish. Practising is to put limitations on your playing, so you have to think of new ideas. If you run out of ideas change the limitations.

Try phrasing into the notes of each chord. Start with using arpeggios at first and link the arpeggios so they flow into each other over the chords. Give yourself plenty of time to think about the chords you are playing over. Try playing over this simple II - V - I in C at a tempo of 60bpm:

4/4 ||: Dm7/// /// G7/// /// |Cmaj7/// /// /// :||

Record the chords down and have a metronome or drum machine to keep you in time. Remember; think of the notes in each chord and put limitations on yourself to practise with. Singing the notes you play helps your phrasing.

Changing the root (I) chord by adding a different voicing to it can make you think new ideas when returning to the home chord. For example take II-V-I in Am harmonic and change the Am into Am6, this will get you think about the F# in the Am6 chord. You should be then thinking modally about the chord changes.

B Locrian #6  
Bm7b5 ///

E Phrygian Dom  
E7 ///

A Dorian  
Am6 ///

Once you get into using this method, you will find there are lots of scale choices you can make from a simple II - V - I chord changes. Have a look at the following ideas or systems:

**Taken from a II – V – I in Am...**

B Locrian #6 Bm7b5 ///	E Phrygian Dom E7 ///	Am Natural Am7 ///
B Dorian b9 Bm7b5 ///	E Phrygian Dom E7 ///	Am Natural Am7 ///
B Locrian #6 Bm7b5 ///	E Phrygian Dom E7 ///	Am Natural Am7 ///
B Dorian b9 Bm7b5 ///	E Phrygian Dom E7 ///	Am Dorian Am7 ///
B Dorian b9 Bm7b5 ///	E Altered E7 ///	Am Dorian Am7 ///

**Taken from a II – V – I in C...**

D Dorian Dm7 ///	G Mixolydian G7 ///	C Ionian Cmaj7 ///
D Dorian b9 Dm7 ///	G Altered G7 ///	C Ionian Cmaj7 ///
D Locrian #2 Dm7 ///	G Phrygian Dom G7 ///	C Ionian Cmaj7 ///
D Dorian b9 Dm7 ///	G Phrygian Dom G7 ///	C Ionian Cmaj7 ///
D Dorian b9 Dm7b5 ///	G Phrygian Dom G7 ///	C Ionian Cmaj7 ///
D Locrian #6 Dm7b5 ///	G Altered G7 ///	C Ionian Cmaj7 ///