



# Understanding Chord Progressions for Guitar

by Arnie Berle

Use the chords in this book to play most any song.  
Get to know the most popular progressions in  
folk, blues, pop, and jazz.

Ripped by Herbie



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Gibson L4 on cover owned by Scot Arch  
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# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this book is to provide the student with an easy, direct, and practical approach to the study of chords and progressions and their application to song accompaniment.

## Chords

Although there are literally hundreds and hundreds of chord forms that one can play, the truth is that most of these chord forms are simply embellished variations of a few more basic chord forms. In other words, it is not really necessary to learn all of the chord forms that are shown in so many chord books. With the chords shown in this book you should be able to play most any song. When you feel comfortable with what you learn in this book, you can add to these basic chords any of the hundreds of embellished chords to dress up your progressions.

## Progressions

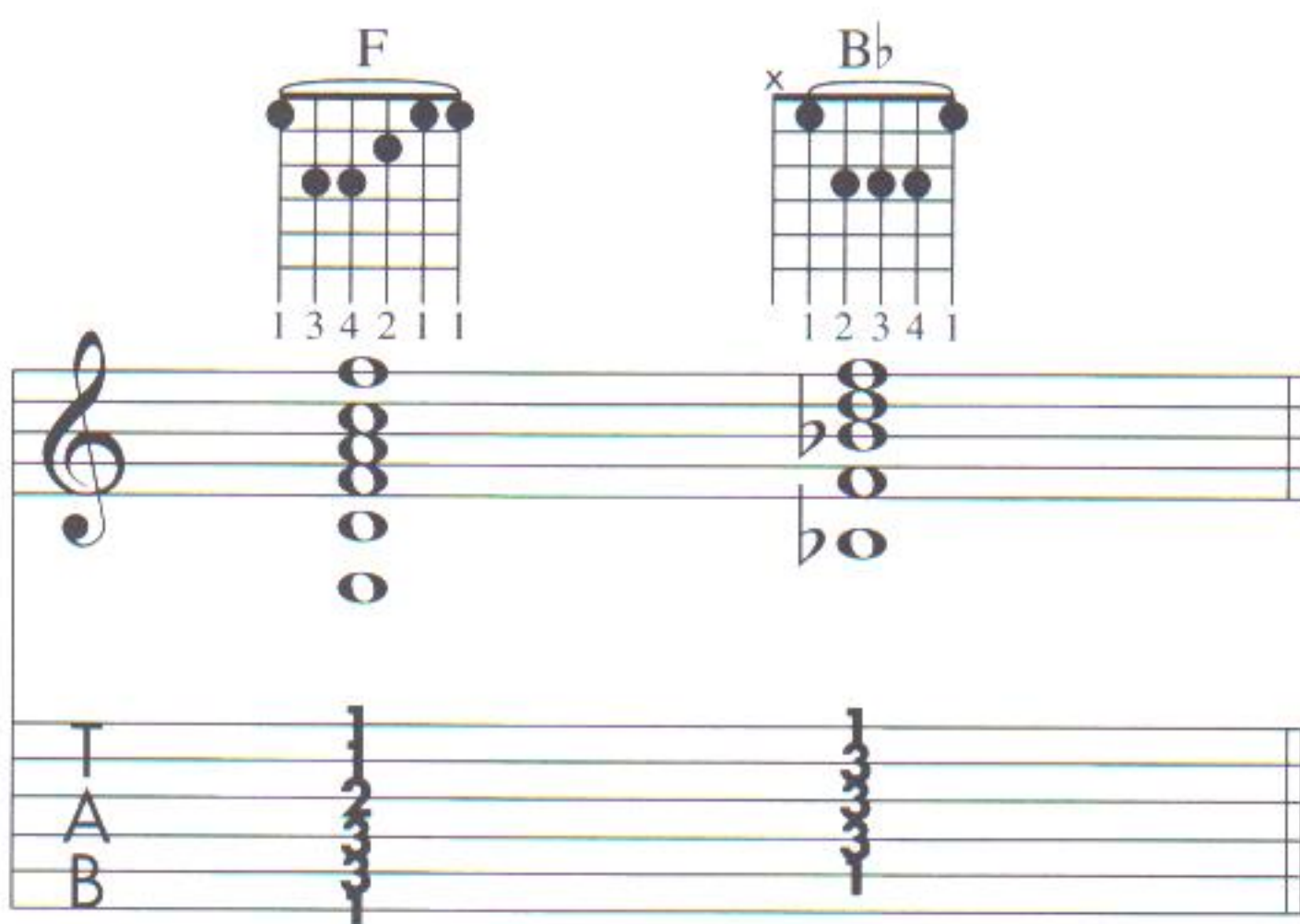
Chords, by themselves, have about as much value as the words in a dictionary. Words take on more meaning when they are used in sentences, and chords take on more meaning when they are used in progressions. Just as a story is made up of sentences, the harmony to a song is made up of progressions. In this book you will learn how to make up, and dress up, some of the more frequently used progressions heard in folk, blues, pop, and jazz.



# CHORDS OF REST

*Chords of rest* are chords that offer a feeling of finality, a sense of having “arrived.” These chords are used at the end of a song, but they also may begin a song—and they may be heard in the middle of a song as a sort of rest stop. Playing through the chords of a song is like taking a round-trip from home. You begin your trip from home, you may make several comforting rest stops along the way, and then you return home.

Let’s begin by looking at the most basic rest chord there is, the *major chord*. Using a common musical shorthand, this chord is referred to as the *I chord* since it is built from the first note of any major scale. The diagrams below show two ways of fingering a major chord. One fingering shows the *root* (the letter-name) of the chord played on the 6th string and the other fingering shows the root of the chord played on the 5th string. These chord-forms are called *bar chords*, the “bar” being the first finger laid over two or more strings. These forms are most often used by rock and folk guitarists.



These are *moveable* chord forms and should be played up the fingerboard. The diagram below shows the letter-name of each fret along the 6th and 5th strings. Memorize the name of each chord at each fret.

fret	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII
5th string	Bb	B	C	C#	D	Eb	E	F	F#	G	Ab	A
6th string	F	F#	G	Ab	A	Bb	B	C	C#	D	Eb	E



# CHORDS OF MOVEMENT

*Chords of movement* are chords that generate a feeling of motion—they want to move forward, they create tension that demands resolution.

Below are two kinds of movement chords. The *dominant 7 chord* is built from the fifth note of the major scale and is referred to as the *V chord*. The *minor 7 chord* is built from the second note of the major scale and is referred to as the *II chord*. Play these chords up the fingerboard and memorize their letter-name at each fret.

Diagram illustrating four movement chords (F7, B $\flat$ 7, Fm7, B $\flat$ m7) with their respective fingerings and musical notation.

**F7:** Fingering: 1 3 | 2 1 1. Musical notation: Treble clef, F major scale, 5th fret (F7).

**B $\flat$ 7:** Fingering: 1 3 | 1 4 1. Musical notation: Treble clef, B $\flat$  major scale, 5th fret (B $\flat$ 7).

**Fm7:** Fingering: 1 3 | 1 1 1 1. Musical notation: Treble clef, F minor scale, 5th fret (Fm7).

**B $\flat$ m7:** Fingering: 1 3 | 1 2 1. Musical notation: Treble clef, B $\flat$  minor scale, 5th fret (B $\flat$ m7).

Below the diagrams is a bass staff with strings T, A, and B, showing the fret positions for each chord.

Another very valuable form for the dominant 7 chord (V chord) is shown below. Notice that this chord form has two roots, one on the 2nd string and one of the 5th string.

Diagram illustrating the C7 chord with its fingering and musical notation.

**C7:** Fingering: 3 2 | 4 1. Musical notation: Treble clef, C major scale, 5th fret (C7).

Below the diagram is a bass staff with strings T, A, and B, showing the fret positions for the C7 chord.

fret	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII
2nd string	C	C $\sharp$	D	E $\flat$	E	F	F $\sharp$	G	A $\flat$	A	B $\flat$	B
5th string	—	—	C	C $\sharp$	D	E $\flat$	E	F	F $\sharp$	G	A $\flat$	A



# THE V-I PROGRESSION

Now put some of the chords you've learned into use as we play some very simple but important progressions. The *V-I progression* is a perfect example of a chord of movement moving to a chord of rest. Below are two examples of how to play the same progression but on different parts of the fingerboard.

F

1 3 4 2 1 1

x B $\flat$

1 2 3 4 1

x F7 x

3 2 4 1

B $\flat$

1 3 4 2 1 1

T

A

B

Here are two more examples of how to play the V-I progression in another key.

x C7 x

3 2 4 1

F

1 3 4 2 1 1

C7

1 3 1 2 1 1

x F x

1 2 3 4 1

T

A

B



# THE II-V PROGRESSION

The most often used progression in all music from pop to rock to jazz is the *II-V progression*. Placing the II in front of the V increases the tension, the feeling of movement. Sometimes the V is followed by the I and sometimes you might play a whole series of II-V chords before finally resolving to I. Below are two examples of how to play the same II-V progression.

Diagram illustrating the II-V progression in C minor (Cm7 to F7).

Chord diagrams for Cm7 and F7 are shown above the staff. The Cm7 diagram shows the notes C, E-flat, G, and B-flat. The F7 diagram shows the notes F, A, C, and E-flat. The progression is shown in 4/4 time, with the Cm7 chord in the first two measures and the F7 chord in the next two measures. The staff shows the notes for each chord, and the tablature below shows the fretting for each chord.

Tablature for Cm7 and F7 progression:

```

e|-----|-----|-----|-----|
B|-----|-----|-----|-----|
G|-----|-----|-----|-----|
D|-----|-----|-----|-----|
A|-----|-----|-----|-----|
E|-----|-----|-----|-----|
  
```

Here again are two ways to play the II-V progression in another key.

Diagram illustrating the II-V progression in G minor (Gm7 to C7).

Chord diagrams for Gm7 and C7 are shown above the staff. The Gm7 diagram shows the notes G, B-flat, D, and F. The C7 diagram shows the notes C, E, G, and B-flat. The progression is shown in 4/4 time, with the Gm7 chord in the first two measures and the C7 chord in the next two measures. The staff shows the notes for each chord, and the tablature below shows the fretting for each chord.

Tablature for Gm7 and C7 progression:

```

e|-----|-----|-----|-----|
B|-----|-----|-----|-----|
G|-----|-----|-----|-----|
D|-----|-----|-----|-----|
A|-----|-----|-----|-----|
E|-----|-----|-----|-----|
  
```



# THE II-V-I PROGRESSION

Almost any time you see a II-V chord sequence, it will be followed by the I chord. The II-V chords set up the tension, and the I chord releases the tension. Below is an example of II-V-I in the key of B $\flat$ . It should be practiced in all keys.

Diagram illustrating the II-V-I progression in the key of B $\flat$  (Cm7, F7, B $\flat$ ).

Chord diagrams and fingerings:

- Cm7:** Fretboard diagram showing notes C, E $\flat$ , G, B $\flat$ . Fingering: 1 3 1 2 1.
- F7:** Fretboard diagram showing notes F, A, C, E $\flat$ . Fingering: 1 3 1 2 1 1.
- B $\flat$ :** Fretboard diagram showing notes B $\flat$ , D, F, A $\flat$ . Fingering: 1 2 3 4 1.

Musical notation showing the progression in 4/4 time, with Treble and Bass staves.

Here is the II-V-I progression in the key of F.

Diagram illustrating the II-V-I progression in the key of F (Gm7, C7, F).

Chord diagrams and fingerings:

- Gm7:** Fretboard diagram showing notes G, B $\flat$ , D $\flat$ , F. Fingering: 1 3 1 1 1 1.
- C7:** Fretboard diagram showing notes C, E, G, B $\flat$ . Fingering: 3 2 4 1.
- F:** Fretboard diagram showing notes F, A, C, E. Fingering: 1 3 4 2 1 1.

Musical notation showing the progression in 4/4 time, with Treble and Bass staves.



# THE I-IV-V BLUES PROGRESSION

A very common progression in blues, rock, and jazz is the I-IV-V progression in the form known as the *twelve-bar blues*. Below are the chords to be used for this standard blues progression in the key of G. Notice that the IV chord is the chord built on the fourth note of the major scale and that it's another major chord like the I chord.

The diagram illustrates the I-IV-V progression in the key of G. At the top, three guitar fretboard diagrams are shown for the chords G, C, and D7, each with its respective fingering: G (1 3 4 2 1 1), C (1 2 3 4 1), and D7 (3 2 4 1). Below these, two staves of musical notation are provided. The top staff, in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#), shows the chords I (G), IV (C), and V (D7) as whole notes. The bottom staff, in bass clef, shows the same chords I, IV, and V as whole notes, with the letters T, A, and B written below the staff lines to indicate the notes G, C, and D respectively.

The blues is a twelve-measure form. Below you can see how the I, IV, and V chords are placed within the twelve measures. Each slash mark (/) represents one beat. Play the chord once for each slash mark.

The diagram shows the placement of the I, IV, and V chords within a twelve-measure blues progression. It consists of three staves, each in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff shows the I chord (G) in measures 1, 4, and 7, with a 4/4 time signature. The second staff shows the IV chord (C) in measures 1 and 4, and the I chord (G) in measures 7 and 10. The third staff shows the V chord (D7) in measures 1 and 4, and the I chord (G) in measures 7 and 10. Each measure is represented by a staff with diagonal lines indicating the duration of the chord.



# VARIATIONS ON THE BLUES PROGRESSION

The blues progression offers many possibilities for variations. Here is one example.

- Play all I and IV chords as dominant 7 chords. These chords give a “bluesy” or funky effect.
- Use II chords to create a II-V-I sequence.

Here are the chord forms we will use in this variation.

Diagram showing five guitar chord forms and their corresponding musical notation:

- G7:** Fretboard diagram with fingerings 1 3 1 2 1 1. Musical notation shows a treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), and a G7 chord.
- C7:** Fretboard diagram with fingerings 3 2 4 1. Musical notation shows a treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), and a C7 chord.
- D7:** Fretboard diagram with fingerings 3 2 4 1. Musical notation shows a treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), and a D7 chord.
- Dm7:** Fretboard diagram with fingerings 1 3 1 2 1. Musical notation shows a treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), and a Dm7 chord.
- Am7:** Fretboard diagram with fingerings 1 3 1 1 1 1. Musical notation shows a treble clef, key signature of one sharp (F#), and an Am7 chord.

Here is the variation on the blues progression.

Musical notation for a variation on the blues progression in 4/4 time, consisting of three staves:

- Staff 1:** Chords: G7, C7, G7, Dm7 G7.
- Staff 2:** Chords: C7, G7.
- Staff 3:** Chords: Am7, D7, G7, Am7 D7.



# THE I-VI-II-V PROGRESSION

This progression is heard over and over again in those “oldies but goodies” tunes. The VI chord is another minor 7 chord built on the sixth note of the major scale.

Here is the I-VI-II-V progression in the key of F.

Diagram illustrating the I-VI-II-V progression in the key of F major. The progression consists of four chords: F (I), Dm7 (VI), Gm7 (II), and C7 (V). The F chord is shown with a barre across the first four frets and fingers 1, 3, 4, 2, 1, 1. The Dm7 chord is shown with a barre across the second fret and fingers 1, 3, 1, 2, 1, with a 'v' indicating the natural D note on the 4th string. The Gm7 chord is shown with a barre across the third fret and fingers 1, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1. The C7 chord is shown with a barre across the fifth fret and fingers 3, 2, 4, 1, with 'x' marks on the 1st and 6th strings. Below the guitar diagrams is a musical staff in 4/4 time, showing the progression of chords I, VI, II, and V. The staff includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (F major), and a 4/4 time signature. The chords are represented by block chords on the staff. Below the staff are three staves labeled T, A, and B, showing the fret positions for each chord: I (1st fret), VI (2nd fret), II (3rd fret), and V (5th fret).

Here is the I-VI-II-V progression in the key of C.

Diagram illustrating the I-VI-II-V progression in the key of C major. The progression consists of four chords: C (I), Am7 (VI), Dm7 (II), and G7 (V). The C chord is shown with a barre across the first fret and fingers 1, 2, 3, 4, 1. The Am7 chord is shown with a barre across the second fret and fingers 1, 3, 1, 1, 1, 1, with a 'v' indicating the natural A note on the 4th string. The Dm7 chord is shown with a barre across the third fret and fingers 1, 3, 1, 2, 1, with a 'v' indicating the natural D note on the 4th string. The G7 chord is shown with a barre across the third fret and fingers 1, 3, 1, 2, 1, 1. Below the guitar diagrams is a musical staff in 4/4 time, showing the progression of chords I, VI, II, and V. The staff includes a treble clef, a key signature of no sharps or flats (C major), and a 4/4 time signature. The chords are represented by block chords on the staff. Below the staff are three staves labeled T, A, and B, showing the fret positions for each chord: I (1st fret), VI (2nd fret), II (3rd fret), and V (5th fret).

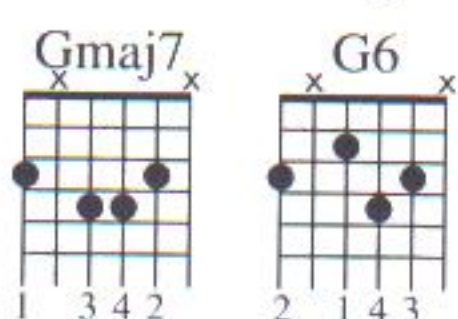


# SOME JAZZIER CHORDS

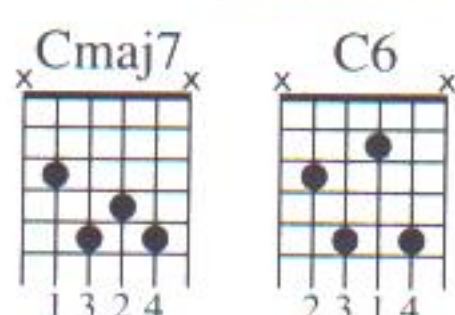
If you want to sound a bit hipper or more sophisticated, then these are the chords for you. Notice that another form of the I chord is the *major* 6. Learn these chords up the fingerboard.

## I Chords

root on the 6th string

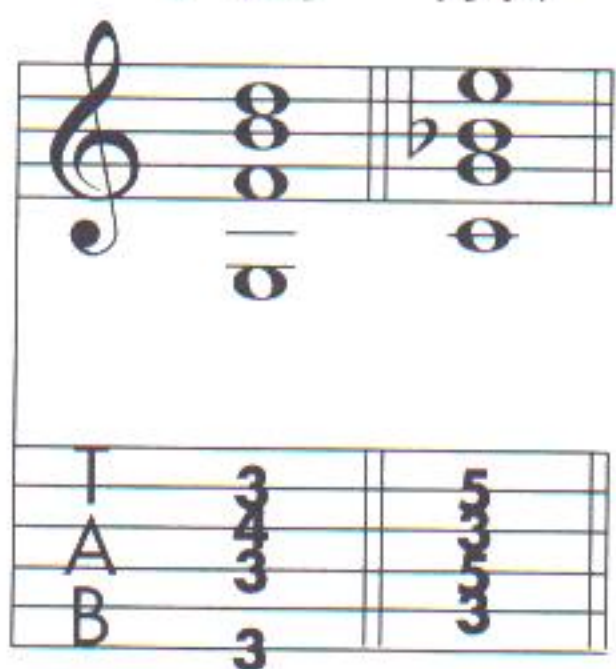
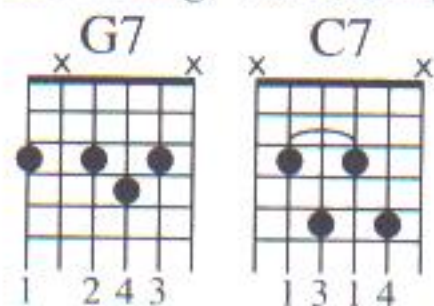


root on the 5th string



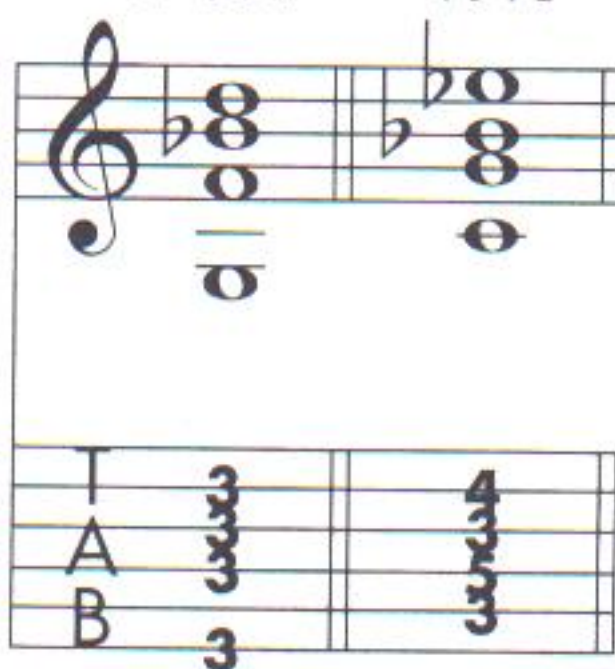
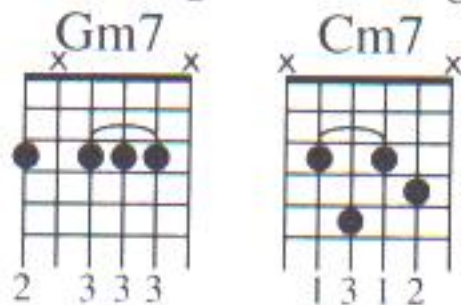
## V Chords

root on 6th string      root on 5th string



## II Chords

root on 6th string      root on 5th string

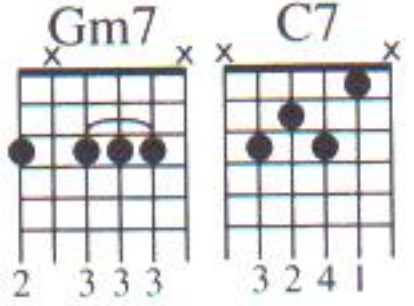




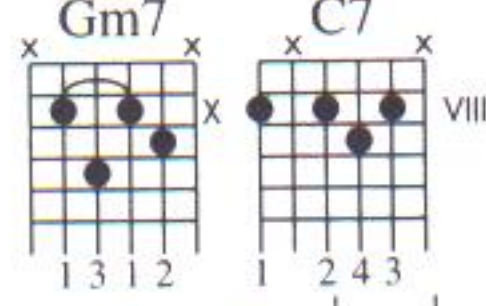
# PLAYING THE II-V PROGRESSION WITH JAZZ CHORDS



Here is the II-V progression played with our new jazz chords plus one old form of the dominant 7. Notice how playing the same chords in a different position on the fingerboard gives a new flavor to the same basic progression.

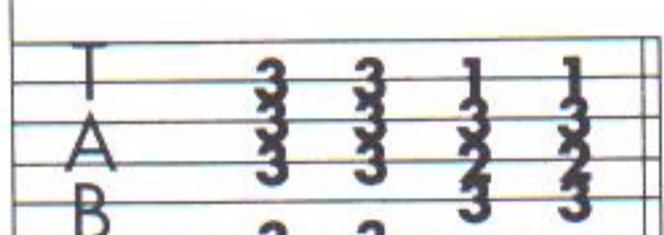
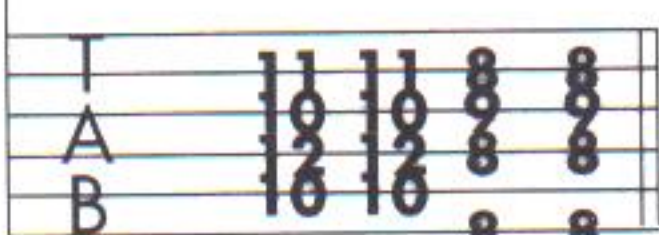
**Gm7 C7**



**Gm7 C7**

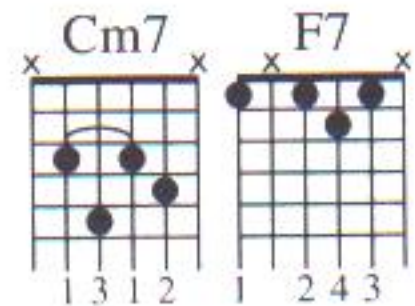


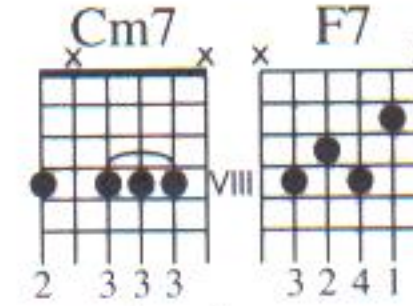





Here is another example of the II-V progression in another key played in two different positions on the fingerboard.


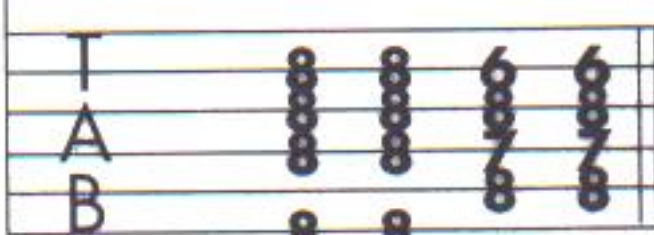
**Cm7 F7**



**Cm7 F7**





# II-V-I WITH JAZZ CHORDS

Here is the ever-popular II-V-I progression using our new jazz chords. Notice that the major 6 chord is another form of the I chord and that its use is optional.

Am7

2 3 3 3

D7

3 2 4 1

Gmaj7

1 3 4 2

G6

2 1 4 3

T	5	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
A	5	5	4	4	4	4	2	2	2
B	5	5	5	5	3	3	3	3	3

Here is another way to play the II-V-I progression in a new key.

Dm7

1 3 1 2

G7

1 2 4 3

Cmaj7

1 3 2 4

C6

2 3 1 4

T	6	6	3	3	5	5	5	5	5
A	5	5	4	4	4	4	2	2	2
B	5	5	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

The above progressions should be played all over the fingerboard in all keys.



# THE I-VI-II-V PROGRESSION WITH JAZZ CHORDS

This progression, played earlier with bar chords, is used in so many different ways that you should try to play it in all keys all over the fingerboard.

Fmaj7

1 3 4 2

Dm7

1 3 1 2

Gm7

2 3 3 3

C7

3 2 4 1

I VI II V

	I		VI		II		V	
T	1	1	6	6	3	3	1	1
A	2	2	5	5	3	3	3	3
B	1	1	5	5	3	3	3	3

Here is another example of this progression.

Cmaj7

1 3 2 4

Am7

2 3 3 3

Dm7

1 3 1 2

G7

1 2 4 3

I VI II V

	I		VI		II		V	
T	5	5	5	5	6	6	3	3
A	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	4
B	3	3	5	5	5	5	3	3



# THE CYCLE

In the progression you just played, Cmaj7-Am7-Dm7-G7, notice that the roots of the Am7-Dm7-G7 move down a perfect fifth with each new chord: A down to D down to G. This movement of the roots of chords down a perfect fifth is referred to as *the cycle*.

Each of the following letters represent the roots of possible chords. They may be all major 7s, all minor 7s, all dominant 7s, or any combination of these qualities.

C F B $\flat$  E $\flat$  A $\flat$  D $\flat$  G $\flat$  B E A D G C  
(C $\sharp$ )(F $\sharp$ )

The most common example of the cycle is the II-V-I progression. Below is another example of cycle movement. The progression is taken from the great standard "All the Things You Are" by Jerome Kern. It is a VI-II-V-I progression.

Am7

Dm7





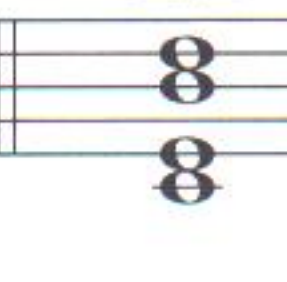
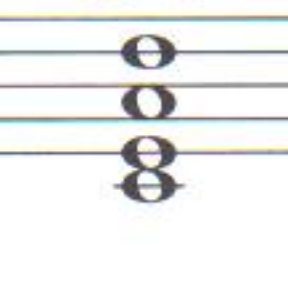
G7

Cmaj7



# EXTENDING AND ALTERING THE I CHORD

All chords may be extended or altered in order to create more interesting tonal colors. Since the I chord is a chord of resolution, it does not take too well to alterations that add tension. Below are examples of extended I major chords.

	G <sup>♯</sup>	Cmaj9	C <sup>♯</sup>
			
			
T	3	3	3
A	3	4	3
B	3	3	3



# EXTENDING AND ALTERING THE V CHORD

Since the V chords create tension, a feeling of movement, they can take altered notes as well as extensions. Here are some examples.

**G7+**

**G7b5**

**G13**

T			
A	4	2	5
B	3	3	3

Here are more examples of altered chords, continuing with our extended and altered V dominant chords.

**C9**

**C7b9**

**C7#9**

T			
A	3	2	4
B	3	3	3



# EXTENDING AND ALTERING THE II MINOR CHORDS

The minor chords don't lend themselves to many extensions or alterations but the following examples are rather common.

Gm7<sup>b</sup>5

x

x

2 3 4 1

Cm9

x

2 1 3 4

T

A

B

2

3

3

2

3

3

3

3

3



# DRESSING UP YOUR PROGRESSIONS

When you extend or alter a basic chord you are dressing it up—or, in musical terminology, *embellishing* it. Embellished chords create more interesting and colorful progressions. Here is the familiar II-V-I progression in C with embellishments added to all three chords. Notice how these embellishments create a smooth, chromatic melody.

Dm9

2 1 3 4

G7+

1 2 3 4

C9

2 1 1 3

	Dm9		G7+		C9			
T	5	5	4	4	3	3	3	3
A	5	5	4	4	3	3	3	3
B	5	5	3	3	3	3	3	3

In this next example of an embellished II-V-I progression notice the new form for the C6 chord. This is another moveable form and should be practiced up the fingerboard.

Dm9

2 1 3 4

G7+

1 2 3 4

G7b5

2 3 4 1

C6

4 2 3 1

	Dm9		G7+		G7b5		C6	
T	5	5	4	2	1			
A	5	5	4	4	3			
B	5	5	3	3	3			



Here is another example, continuing with our embellished II-V-I progressions.

Am7

D7#9

D7b9

Gmaj7

T	5	5	6	4	3
A	5	5	5	5	4
B	5	5	5	5	3

Here is another embellished II-V-I progression with an altered II chord (IIIm7b5).

Am7b5

D7

D9

Gmaj7

T	4	4	7	5	3
A	5	5	5	5	4
B	5	5	5	5	3



# CHORD SUBSTITUTION

## The Tritone Substitution

Another way to dress up a bland progression is through the use of *chord substitutes*. Any dominant 7 may be replaced with another dominant 7 whose root is three whole-tones above the root of the original chord. This is called a *tritone substitution*.

original progression

Am7      D7      Gmaj7      G6

II      V      I

with tritone substitution

Am7      Ab7      Gmaj7      G6

II      bII      I

T	5	5	4	4	3	3	3	3
A	5	5	4	4	4	4	2	2
B	5	5	4	4	3	3	3	3

Notice how the tritone substitution creates a descending chromatic bassline. It's easy to remember the tritone substitution for a V chord because it will always be the dominant 7 chord that is one half-step above the I chord. You can think of it as the  $\flat$ II7 chord.



# Changing Chord Quality

Another type of substitution results when you change the quality of a chord—major, minor, dominant, etc.—while the root remains the same.

original progression

Cmaj7    Am7    Dm7    G7

I    VI    II    V

with chord-quality substitution

Cmaj7<sub>x</sub>    A7<sub>x</sub>    D7<sub>x</sub>    G7<sub>x</sub>

VIII    V

I    VI7    V    of

or I

T 8 8 5 5  
A 9 9 5 5  
B 8 8 5 5

D7<sub>x</sub>    G7<sub>x</sub>

V

II7    of    V    of

V

T 7 7 3 3  
A 5 5 4 4  
B 7 7 3 3

By changing the minor 7 chords to dominant 7 chords we increase the level of tension making the resolution to the I more satisfying. The second line of Roman numerals shows a different way to analyze this progression: Think of the A7 as the V of D7, and the D7 as the V of G7.



# Substituting the III Chord for the I Chord

In the key of C, the III chord is Em7 and the notes are E G B D. The I chord is Cmaj7 and the notes are C E G B. Since three of the notes in Em7 are the same as three notes of the Cmaj7, we can substitute the III chord for the I.

original progression

Cmaj7    Am7    Dm7    G7

I    VI    II    V

with III-for-I and chord-quality substitution

Em7    A7

III    VI7

T	8	8	5	5
A	7	7	5	5
B	7	7	5	5

Dm7    G7

II    V

T	6	6	3	3
A	5	5	4	4
B	5	5	3	3

By substituting III for I and changing the quality of the VI to a dominant 7, we have set up a series of II-V chords.



# Combining Substitutions

By combining some of the substitutions—III chord for the I, tritone, and changing chord quality—we arrive at the following new progression.

original progression

Cmaj7    Am7    Dm7    G7

I    VI    II    V

substitute progression

Em7    Eb7

III    bIII7

III    bIII7

Dm7    Db7

II    bII7

II    bII7

Using these substitutions, you create a descending chromatic bassline. This is much more interesting and colorful than the original I-VI-II-V progression.



# CHORDS WITH THE 5TH IN THE BASS

Up until now all the chords have been played with the roots in the bass (lowest note). Now let's see how some of these chords may be played with the 5th in the bass.

Cmaj7/G



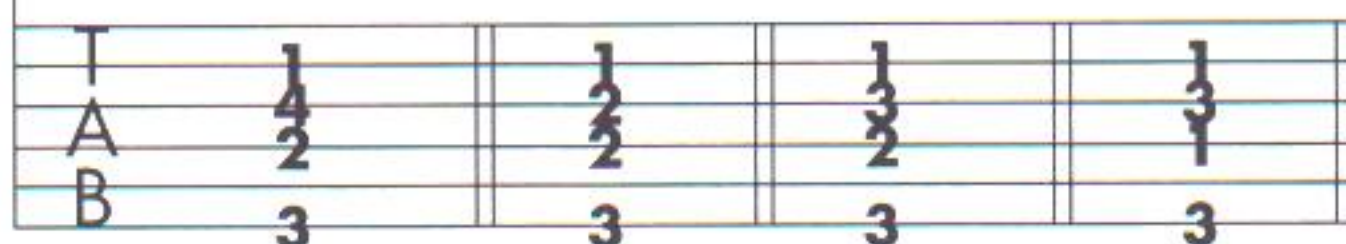
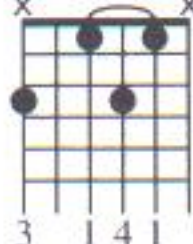
C6/G



C7/G



Cm7/G





# CHORDS WITH THE $\flat 5$ IN THE BASS

Here are two commonly used chords with the  $\flat 5$  in the bass.



Two musical staves showing the chords C7 $\flat 5$ /G $\flat$  and Cm7 $\flat 5$ /G $\flat$  in standard notation. The first staff shows the C7 $\flat 5$ /G $\flat$  chord, and the second staff shows the Cm7 $\flat 5$ /G $\flat$  chord. Both chords are written in a 2/4 time signature.

	C7 $\flat 5$ /G $\flat$	Cm7 $\flat 5$ /G $\flat$
T	1	1
A	3	3
B	2	1



# MOVING LINES IN THE BASS

By using combinations of unaltered chords and altered chords you can create some more interesting and colorful progressions with some nice moving lines. Listen carefully to the following progressions and play them all over the fingerboard. Hear the moving line in the bass in this progression.

Gm7

2 3 3 3

C7<sup>b</sup>5/G<sup>b</sup>

2 3 4 1

Fmaj7

1 3 4 2

T	3	3	1	1	1
A	3	3	2	2	2
B	3	3	2	2	1

In this next progression, listen to the moving lines in both the bass and the top line.

Dm7/A

3 1 4 1

Dm7<sup>b</sup>5/A<sup>b</sup>

2 1 4 1

G7<sup>b</sup>5

2 3 4 1

C6/G

4 2 3 1

T	3	3	2	2	1
A	3	3	4	4	2
B	5	4	3	3	3



# MOVING LINES IN THE TOP VOICE

Moving lines on the top of the chord tend to stand out more clearly than moving lines on the inside of the chords.

**Dm9/A**

**G7+**

**G7b5**

**C/G**

T	5	5	4	2	1
A	5	5	4	3	2
B	5	5	3	3	3

Here is another example of a moving line played on the top of the chords.

**Am7**

**Am7b5**

**D7#9/A**

**D7b9/A**

**Gmaj7**

T	5	4	6	4	3
A	5	5	5	5	4
B	5	5	5	5	3



# THE HARMONIZED MAJOR SCALE

When you harmonize each step of a major scale, the resulting chords are referred to as *diatonic chords*. The following scale is based on chords whose roots are on the 6th string.

	I	II	III	IV
T	1	3	5	6
A	2	3	5	7
B	1	3	5	6

	V	VI	VII	I
T	5	6	8	10
A	3	5	7	9
B	3	5	7	8

For a more in-depth study of harmonized scales see *Chords and Progressions for Jazz and Pop Guitar* by Arnie Berle.



# IMPROVING A WEAK PROGRESSION

## Fill-In Chords

*Fill-in chords* are used to add interest or motion to a weak or static progression. These fill-in chords are usually taken from the harmonized scale. When a I chord is held for a long period of time you can use combinations of the II and III chords to strengthen the progression. Below are two examples of how this might be done.

original progression



fill-in no. 1

Diagram illustrating the first fill-in progression (fill-in no. 1) using chords from the G major scale:

Chord diagrams and fingering for the fill-in chords:

- Gmaj7**: Fingering 1 3 4 2
- Am7**: Fingering 2 3 3 3
- Bm7**: Fingering 2 3 3 3
- Am7**: Fingering 2 3 3 3
- Gmaj7**: Fingering 1 3 4 2

The musical notation shows the progression: I (Gmaj7) → II (Am7) → III (Bm7) → II (Am7) → I (Gmaj7).

fill-in no. 2

Diagram illustrating the second fill-in progression (fill-in no. 2) using chords from the G major scale:

Chord diagrams and fingering for the fill-in chords:

- Gmaj7**: Fingering 1 3 4 2
- Bm7**: Fingering 2 3 3 3
- Am7**: Fingering 2 3 3 3
- Gmaj7**: Fingering 1 3 4 2

The musical notation shows the progression: I (Gmaj7) → III (Bm7) → II (Am7) → I (Gmaj7).



# Chromatic Passing Chords

A chromatic passing chord is a chord that is not in the harmonized scale but may be used to connect any two chords of the scale that are a whole step apart.

original progression

Gmaj7 D7

I V

with chromatic passing chords

Gmaj7 Bm7 Bbm7

I III  $\flat$ III

T	3	3	7	6
A	4	4	7	6
B	3	3	7	6

Am7 D7 $\flat$ 5 $\flat$ 9/A $\flat$  (A $\flat$ 7)

II V( $\flat$ II7)

T	5	5	4	4
A	5	5	4	4
B	5	5	4	4

Notice that the II chord is placed in front of the V chord. II may always be placed in front of a V chord. Notice also that the altered D7 chord D7 $\flat$ 9 $\flat$ 5/A $\flat$ , produces an A $\flat$ 7 chord which is the tritone substitution ( $\flat$ II7) for the V chord.



# The Diminished 7 Chord

The *diminished 7 chord* is formed by lowering the 3rd, 5th, and 7th of any dominant 7 chord by one half-step. It is used as a linking chord or a passing chord between two chords a whole step apart. Below are two fingerings for the diminished 7 chord.

**F<sup>°</sup>7**

**B<sup>°</sup>7**

T	1	3
A	2	1
B	2	2

Because each of the notes that make up the diminished 7 chord is equally distant from its neighbors, any of the notes in the chord may be considered the root of the chord.

The diminished 7 may be used as a passing chord connecting the I chord to the II chord.

**Fmaj7**

**F<sup>°</sup>7**

**Gm7**

**C7**

T	1	1	1	1	3	3	5	5
A	2	2	1	1	3	3	3	3
B	1	1	2	2	3	3	3	3



When a I chord is held for two measures, the diminished 7 may be used as a passing or connecting chord between the II and the III chords. (Remember that the III chord serves as a substitute for the I chord.)

Diagram illustrating a chord progression in E minor (4/4 time):

Chord diagrams for the progression:

- Fmaj7**: Fret 1, strings 1, 3, 4, 2.
- Gm7**: Fret 2, strings 2, 3, 3, 3.
- G<sup>°</sup>7**: Fret 2, strings 2, 1, 3, 1.
- Am7**: Fret 2, strings 2, 3, 3, 3.

Musical notation (treble clef, 4/4 time) showing the progression:

I      II       $\sharp\text{II}^{\circ}7$       III

Tablature (T, A, B strings):

T	1	1	3	3	3	3	5	5
A	2	2	3	3	3	3	5	5
B	1	1	3	3	4	4	5	5

Here's how to play the same progression in C from the 5th string.

Diagram illustrating a chord progression in C major (4/4 time):

Chord diagrams for the progression:

- Cmaj7**: Fret 1, strings 1, 3, 2, 4.
- Dm7**: Fret 1, strings 1, 3, 1, 2.
- D<sup>°</sup>7**: Fret 2, strings 2, 3, 1, 4.
- Em7**: Fret 1, strings 1, 3, 1, 2.

Musical notation (treble clef, 4/4 time) showing the progression:

I      II       $\sharp\text{II}^{\circ}7$       III

Tablature (T, A, B strings):

T	5	5	6	6	7	7	8	8
A	4	4	5	5	5	5	6	6
B	3	3	5	5	6	6	7	7



When a I chord is held for a prolonged period of time (three or four measures), the diminished 7 chord may be used in the following manner. Since the III chord is a substitution for the I chord we can move scalewise up the harmonized scale by using the diminished 7 chord as a passing chord until we reach the III chord.

Diagram illustrating the first part of the progression, showing the I chord and the  $\sharp I^{\circ}7$  chord.

**Chord Diagrams:**

- Cmaj7:** Fretboard diagram showing notes C (1), E (3), G (2), B (4). Fingerings: 1, 3, 2, 4.
- C $\sharp^{\circ}7$ :** Fretboard diagram showing notes C $\sharp$  (2), E $\flat$  (3), G $\flat$  (1), B $\flat$  (4). Fingerings: 2, 3, 1, 4.

**Musical Notation:** Treble clef, 4/4 time. The I chord (Cmaj7) is held for four measures. The  $\sharp I^{\circ}7$  chord (C $\sharp^{\circ}7$ ) is introduced in the third measure.

**Harmonized Scale:**

	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4
T	5	5	5	5
A	4	4	3	3
B	3	3	4	4

Diagram illustrating the second part of the progression, showing the II chord, the  $\sharp II^{\circ}7$  chord, and the III chord.

**Chord Diagrams:**

- Dm7:** Fretboard diagram showing notes D (1), F (3), A (1), C (2). Fingerings: 1, 3, 1, 2.
- D $\sharp^{\circ}7$ :** Fretboard diagram showing notes D $\sharp$  (2), F $\flat$  (3), A $\flat$  (1), C $\flat$  (4). Fingerings: 2, 3, 1, 4.
- Em7:** Fretboard diagram showing notes E (1), G (3), B (1), D (2). Fingerings: 1, 3, 1, 2.

**Musical Notation:** Treble clef, 4/4 time. The II chord (Dm7) is held for four measures. The  $\sharp II^{\circ}7$  chord (D $\sharp^{\circ}7$ ) is introduced in the third measure. The III chord (Em7) is introduced in the fifth measure.

**Harmonized Scale:**

	Measure 1	Measure 2	Measure 3	Measure 4	Measure 5
T	6	6	7	7	8
A	5	5	5	5	7
B	5	5	6	6	7



# THE HALF-STEP-APPROACH CHORD

Any chord may be approached by another chord which is a half step higher or lower. The approach chord is generally, but not always, the same quality and form as the chord that follows. See below how this is applied to the I-VI-II-V progression.

original progression

Fmaj7      Dm7      Gm7      C7

I                  VI                  II                  V

played with approach chords

Fmaj7      E $\flat$ m7      Dm7      A $\flat$ m7

I                  half-step approach                  VI                  half-step approach

T	1	7	6	4
A	2	6	5	4
B	1	6	5	4

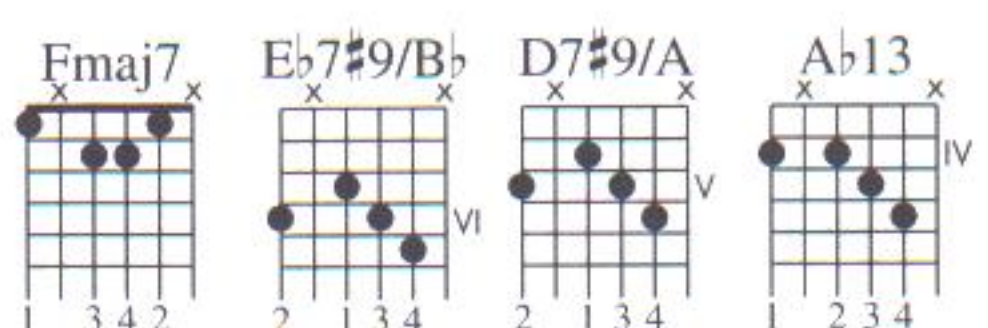
Gm7      D $\flat$ 7      C7      G $\flat$ maj7


II                  half-step approach                  V                  half-step approach

T	3	2	1	2
A	3	3	3	3
B	3	4	3	2

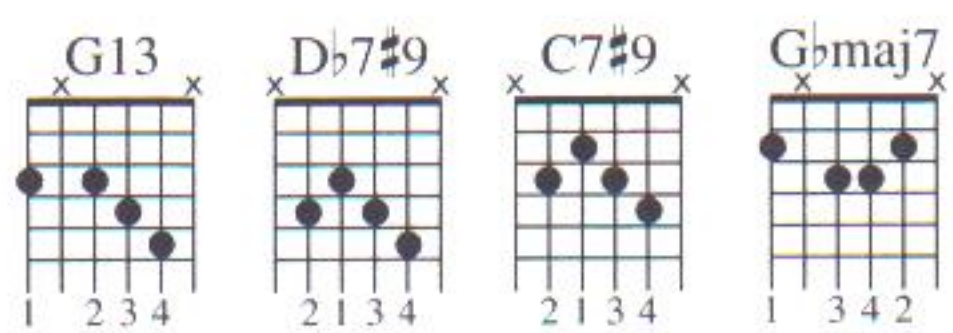



In order to add some interest and color to our I-VI-II-V progression let's add some extensions and altered notes to change the quality of some of the chords.





T	1	7	6	6
A	2	6	5	5
B	1	6	5	4





T	5	5	4	2
A	4	4	3	3
B	3	4	3	2



# MODULATIONS

Moving from one key to another key is called *modulation*. The simplest and most direct way to modulate is to play the II-V chords of the new key.

Cmaj7                      E♭maj7

I                      ( II                      V )                      I  
                         of new key

	5	5	9	6	8
T	5	5	9	6	8
A	4	4	8	7	7
B	3	3	10	6	8

In moving from the key of C to the key of D you can “walk” up to the Em7 (II of D) by going from Cmaj7 to Dm7 to Em7 to A7 to Dmaj7.

Cmaj7                      Dmaj7

I                      II                      III                      V                      I  
                         (II                      V)

	5	6	8	5	7
T	5	6	8	5	7
A	4	5	7	6	6
B	3	5	7	5	5



# INTRODUCTIONS

*Introductions* are used to set the mood, the tempo, and most importantly, the feeling of key. The important thing to remember is that the first chord of the tune must be prepared by its II-V chords. For example, if the first chord of the tune is a I chord, then you must prepare it by playing the II-V of that I chord. However, you might want to start your introduction further back. In that case you can play our old friend the I-VI-II-V progression leading to the I of the song.

Diagram illustrating a common introduction progression for a G major chord (I). The progression consists of five chords: Gmaj7, Em7, Am7, D7, and Gmaj7. The first four chords are labeled with Roman numerals I, VI, II, and V respectively. The final chord is labeled I. A box labeled "song begins" is placed above the final Gmaj7 chord.

Another technique is to *backcycle*; that is, go as far back on the cycle as you want and play a series of II-V chords until you resolve to the I chord of the tune.

Diagram illustrating a backcycle introduction progression. The progression consists of five chords: Bm7, E7#9, Am7, D7#9, and Gmaj7. The first four chords are labeled with Roman numerals (II), V, II, and V respectively. The final chord is labeled I. A box labeled "song begins" is placed above the final Gmaj7 chord. The word "temporary" is written below the V chord.



When the first chord of the song is a II chord—as in “Satin Doll” by Duke Ellington—the principle still works. Think of the II chord as a temporary I and precede it with a II-V. To stretch it out, you can think of the new II chord again as a temporary I and play the II-V of the temporary I.

Diagram illustrating the II-V progression for "Satin Doll" by Duke Ellington, showing the relationship between the II chord and the V chord, and how the II chord can be treated as a temporary I.

Chord diagrams and labels:

- F#m7** (IX): F#m7 (IX)
- B13** (VII): B13 (VII)
- Em7** (VII): Em7 (VII)
- A13** (V): A13 (V)

Staff notation shows the progression: (II) — V — (I) — V. The V chords are labeled as "temporary".

Below the staff, the progression is labeled: **song begins**, **Dm7** (II), **G7** (V).

By using the  $\flat$ II substitution (tritone substitution) for the V chords, we come up with the following. Again, listen to the moving line in the top voice of the chords, as well as in the bass.

Diagram illustrating the II-V progression for "Satin Doll" by Duke Ellington, showing the relationship between the II chord and the V chord, and how the II chord can be treated as a temporary I.

Chord diagrams and labels:

- F#m7** (IX): F#m7 (IX)
- F7#9** (VIII): F7#9 (VIII)
- Em7** (VII): Em7 (VII)
- E $\flat$ 7#9** (VI): E $\flat$ 7#9 (VI)

Staff notation shows the progression: (II) —  $\flat$ II7 — (I) —  $\flat$ II7. The  $\flat$ II7 chords are labeled as "temporary".

Below the staff, the progression is labeled: **Dm7** (II), **G7** (V).



# TAG ENDINGS

A *tag* ending is an extension of a song or a delaying of the final ending of the song. The most common method of delaying the ending is by replacing the final I chord with a substitute chord, usually the III chord and then moving through the cycle until you arrive at the final I chord.

song ends

G7

1 2 4 3

Em7

1 3 1 2

A7

1 2 4 3

T	3	3	8	8	5	5
A	4	4	9	9	6	6
B	3	3	7	7	5	5

Dm7

1 3 1 2

G7

1 2 4 3

Cmaj7

1 3 2 4

T	6	6	3	3	5
A	5	5	4	4	4
B	5	5	3	3	3

Notice how the III chord replaces the original I chord and then moves through the cycle finally coming to an end on the I chord.



Here is a variation on the tag ending you just played. Notice that the  $E\flat 9$  is a tritone substitution for the  $A7$  chord and the  $A\flat m7-D\flat 7\flat 9$  is a tritone substitution for the  $Dm7-G7$  that normally precedes the  $I$  chord.

song ends

$G7$

1 2 4 3

$Em7$

1 3 1 2

$E\flat 9/B\flat$

2 1 3 3

V

III  
( $\flat VI$ )

V

T	3	3	8	8	6	6
A	3	3	7	7	5	5
B	3	3	7	7	6	6

$A\flat m7$

2 3 3 3

$D\flat 7\flat 9/A\flat$

2 1 3 1

$C6/G$

4 2 3 1

$\flat VI$   
I)

$\flat II7$

I

T	4	4	3	3	1
A	4	4	3	3	2
B	4	4	4	4	3



Another effective ending is to play a series of chords that keep the root of the I chord in the top voice. Note the new chord forms.

Gm7

2 3 3 3

C7

3 2 4 1

T

A

B

3

3

3

3

3

3

1

1

1

1

1

1

Am7+

2 3 3 4

A♭13

1 2 3 4

Gm7

1 1 1 4

G♭maj7

4 3 2 1

Fmaj7

1 2 3 1

song ends

T

A

B

6

6

5

6

4

4

6

3

3

2

4

4

1

2

1

Notice that the Am7+ is a III chord which is the substitution for the Fmaj7 which is the I chord. And then we descend chromatically to the I chord.



In this last example, we use the B $\flat$ 13 as a tritone substitution for the III chord (which is another substitution for the I chord). Then we proceed through the cycle with each chord containing the root of the I chord as a common tone. We finally descend a half step to the I chord.

### original progression

G13

Cmaj7

### tag ending

B $\flat$ 13

E $\flat$ 6

A $\flat$ 13

D $\flat$ maj7

Cmaj7



# THE TURNAROUND

A *turnaround* is a one- or two-measure progression that comes at the end of a section of music and sends you back to the top. Turnarounds are commonly found in the last two measures of a blues progression. Here is a basic turnaround.

Fmaj7 C7

I V7

To add harmonic interest to this basic progression we can put the II chord in front of the V.

Fmaj7 Gm7 C7

I II V7

To add still further harmonic interest we can put the VI chord in front of the II chord.

Fmaj7 Dm7 Gm7 C7

I VI II V7

Notice that we arrive back at the I-VI-II-V progression. To this progression we can now add extensions, alterations, and substitutions to create more interest.

Fmaj7 D7#9 Gm7 C7b9

I VI7 II V

T 1 1 6 6 3 3 2 2 .

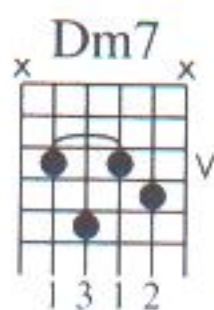
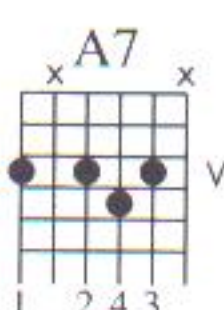
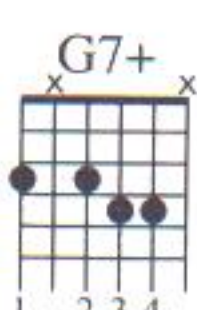
A 2 2 5 5 3 3 3 3 .

B 1 1 5 5 3 3 3 3 .



# BACK TO THE BLUES

The blues form gives us an excellent opportunity to make use of all the things we've learned so far. Let's start with a basic blues progression as used by jazz players.





Chord diagrams for the first system:

- Cmaj7**: Fingering 1 3 2 4
- A7+**: Fingering 1 2 3 4
- Dm9**: Fingering 2 1 3 4
- G7+**: Fingering 1 2 3 4

The musical staff shows a sequence of chords: Cmaj7, A7+, Dm9, G7+, and a turnaround ending on Cmaj7.

## Bebop Blues Variation

Here is another variation on the blues. This was used by the bebop players of the 1940s. Notice the extended series of II-V sequences leading to the IV chord in measure 5.

Chord diagrams for the second system:

- Cmaj7**: Fingering 1 3 2 4
- Bm7**: Fingering 1 3 1 2
- E9**: Fingering 2 1 3 4

The musical staff shows a sequence of chords: Cmaj7, Bm7, E9, and a turnaround ending on Cmaj7.

Chord diagrams for the third system:

- Am7**: Fingering 2 3 3 3
- D9**: Fingering 2 1 3 4
- Gm7**: Fingering 2 3 3 3
- C7**: Fingering 1 3 1 4

The musical staff shows a sequence of chords: Am7, D9, Gm7, C7, and a turnaround ending on Am7.

Chord diagrams for the fourth system:

- Fmaj7**: Fingering 1 3 4 2
- Fm7**: Fingering 2 3 3 3
- Bb7**: Fingering 1 3 1 4

The musical staff shows a sequence of chords: Fmaj7, Fm7, Bb7, and a turnaround ending on Fmaj7.

Chord diagrams for the fifth system:

- Cmaj7**: Fingering 1 3 2 4
- Bb7**: Fingering 1 2 4 3
- A7**: Fingering 1 2 4 3
- Ebm9**: Fingering 2 1 3 4

The musical staff shows a sequence of chords: Cmaj7, Bb7, A7, Ebm9, and a turnaround ending on Cmaj7.



Chord diagrams and musical notation for a blues progression variation.

Chord diagrams shown:

- Dm9 (Fret 1, Fingering: 2 1 3 4)
- A $\flat$ 7 (Fret 1, Fingering: 1 2 4 3)
- G7 (Fret 1, Fingering: 1 2 4 3)
- Em9 (Fret 2, Fingering: 2 1 3 4, labeled VII)
- E $\flat$ 9 (Fret 2, Fingering: 2 1 3 3, labeled VI)
- Dm9 (Fret 2, Fingering: 2 1 3 4)
- D $\flat$ 9 (Fret 2, Fingering: 2 1 3 3)

The musical notation shows a sequence of chords in a blues progression, with a "turnaround" section indicated by a bracket.

## Another Blues Variation

Here is one more example of a blues progression variation. This one uses several of the chord sequences and substitutions you have learned so far.






Chord diagrams and musical notation for another blues progression variation.


Chord diagrams shown:



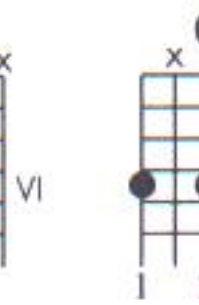
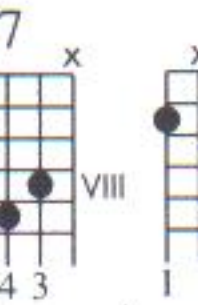
- F6/C (Fret 4, Fingering: 4 2 3 1, labeled VIII)
- F7/C (Fret 3, Fingering: 3 2 4 1, labeled VIII)
- B $\flat$ 6 (Fret 2, Fingering: 2 1 4 3, labeled VI)
- B $\circ$ 7 (Fret 2, Fingering: 2 1 3 1, labeled VII)
- F6/C (Fret 4, Fingering: 4 2 3 1, labeled VIII)
- Am7 (Fret 2, Fingering: 2 3 3 3)
- Cm7 (Fret 2, Fingering: 2 3 3 3, labeled VIII)
- F7 $\flat$ 5/C $\flat$  (Fret 2, Fingering: 2 3 4 1, labeled VII)
- B $\flat$ 13 (Fret 1, Fingering: 1 2 3 4, labeled VI)
- B $\flat$ 7 (Fret 1, Fingering: 1 2 4 3, labeled VI)
- B $\flat$ 7 $\flat$ 5 (Fret 2, Fingering: 2 3 4 1, labeled VI)
- B $\flat$ 7 (Fret 1, Fingering: 1 2 4 3, labeled VI)

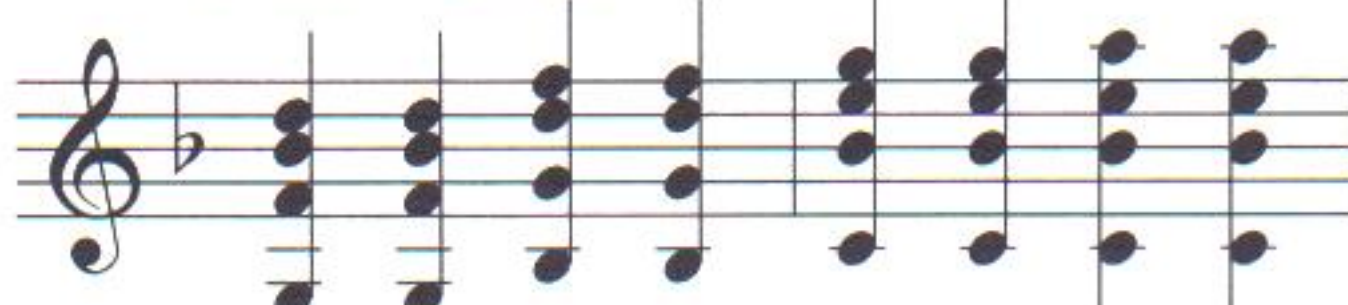
The musical notation shows a sequence of chords in a blues progression, with a "turnaround" section indicated by a bracket.







Fmaj7 
 Gm7 
 Am7 
 D7#9/A 
 D7b9/Ab 





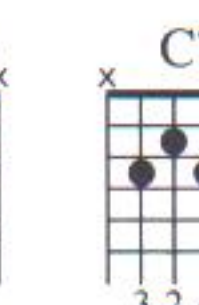

Gm7 
 Bb6 
 C7 
 C13 




F6/C 
 Bb6 
 B°7 



turnaround

F6/C 
 Db9/Ab 
 C7 
 C9/G 



turnaround



# CHORD SUSPENSIONS

*Suspensions* are often used to delay resolution to the I chord. The suspended note is usually the fourth note of the scale which replaces the third of the chord. Below are two examples.

Diagram illustrating the first example of chord suspensions, showing four chords: Gm7, C7sus4/G, C7/G, and Fmaj7. Each chord is shown with its fingering and a corresponding musical staff notation in 4/4 time.

**Chord Diagrams and Fingerings:**

- Gm7:** Fingering: 2, 3, 3, 3. (Diagram shows notes on strings 2, 3, 4, 5 with an x on the 1st string).
- C7sus4/G:** Fingering: 2, 3, 4, 1. (Diagram shows notes on strings 2, 3, 4, 5 with an x on the 1st string).
- C7/G:** Fingering: 3, 2, 4, 1. (Diagram shows notes on strings 2, 3, 4, 5 with an x on the 1st string).
- Fmaj7:** Fingering: 1, 3, 4, 2. (Diagram shows notes on strings 2, 3, 4, 5 with an x on the 1st string).

**Musical Staff Notation:**

The staff shows a sequence of chords in 4/4 time. The first four measures correspond to the chords Gm7, C7sus4/G, C7/G, and Fmaj7. The fifth measure shows a final chord (Fmaj7) with a whole note. The staff is labeled with T, A, and B lines.

Diagram illustrating the second example of chord suspensions, showing four chords: Dm7, G7sus4, G7, and Cmaj7. Each chord is shown with its fingering and a corresponding musical staff notation in 4/4 time.

**Chord Diagrams and Fingerings:**

- Dm7:** Fingering: 3, 1, 4, 1. (Diagram shows notes on strings 2, 3, 4, 5 with an x on the 1st string).
- G7sus4:** Fingering: 1, 3, 1, 4, 1. (Diagram shows notes on strings 2, 3, 4, 5 with an x on the 1st string).
- G7:** Fingering: 1, 3, 1, 2, 1. (Diagram shows notes on strings 2, 3, 4, 5 with an x on the 1st string).
- Cmaj7:** Fingering: 1, 3, 2, 4. (Diagram shows notes on strings 2, 3, 4, 5 with an x on the 1st string).

**Musical Staff Notation:**

The staff shows a sequence of chords in 4/4 time. The first four measures correspond to the chords Dm7, G7sus4, G7, and Cmaj7. The fifth measure shows a final chord (Cmaj7) with a whole note. The staff is labeled with T, A, and B lines.



# PLAYING THE MINOR II-V-I

The following II-V-I sequence is useful for songs written in a minor key.

Am7 $\flat$ 5      D7      Gm

T  
A  
B

It could also be played like this.

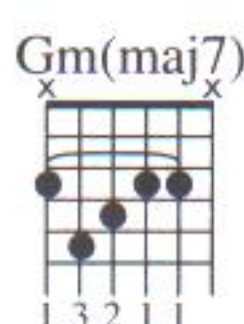
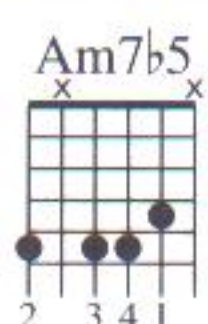
Cm7 $\flat$ 5      F7      B $\flat$ m

T  
A  
B

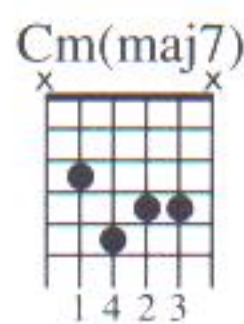
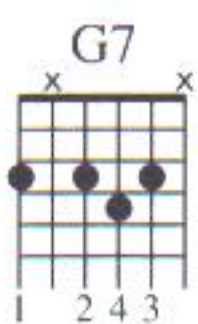
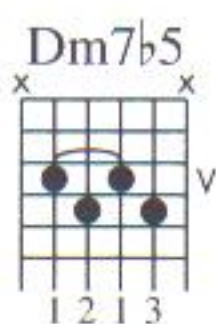


## Minor II-V-I Variations

Use the following chord forms for a minor II-V-I to create a stronger feeling of the minor key.



Here is still another way to play a minor II-V-I progression.





# THE Im-Im(maj7)-Im7-Im6

This sequence is found in such tunes as "My Funny Valentine," "Michelle," "More," and "What Are You Doing the Rest of Your Life?" Notice how the following chord forms suggest an interesting moving line played on the 4th string.

Chord diagrams for Gm, Gm(maj7), Gm7, and Gm6 are shown above the staff. The staff shows the progression in 4/4 time, with the 4th string moving line indicated by a slur. The fretboard diagram below the staff shows the fingerings for the 4th string across the progression.

Chord diagrams:

- Gm: 1 4 1 1
- Gm(maj7): 1 3 1 1
- Gm7: 2 3 3 3
- Gm6: 2 1 3 3

Staff notation shows the progression: Im, Im(maj7), Im7, Im6.

Fretboard diagram (4th string):

T	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
A	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
B	3	3	3	3	3	3	3

Here is another way to play this progression, this time with the moving line on the 2nd string.

Chord diagrams for Cm, Cm(maj7), Cm7, and Cm6 are shown above the staff. The staff shows the progression in 4/4 time, with the 2nd string moving line indicated by a slur. The fretboard diagram below the staff shows the fingerings for the 2nd string across the progression.

Chord diagrams:

- Cm: 1 3 4 2
- Cm(maj7): 1 4 2 3
- Cm7: 1 4 1 3
- Cm6: 2 4 1 3

Staff notation shows the progression: Im, Im(maj7), Im7, Im6.

Fretboard diagram (2nd string):

T	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
A	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
B	3	3	3	3	3	3	3



# Im-Im(maj7)-Im7-Im6 AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR II-V

The Im-Im(maj7)-Im7-Im6 chords may also be used as a substitution for the II-V chords in a major key.

original progression

Gm7 C7 Fmaj7

with substitution

Gm Gm(maj7) Gm7 Gm6 Fmaj7

Im Im(maj7) Im7 Im6 Imaj7

T	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1
A	3	3	4	4	3	3	2	2	2
B	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1

original progression

Cm7 F7 Bbmaj7

with substitution

Cm Cm(maj7) Cm7 Cm6 Bbmaj7

Im Im(maj7) Im7 Im6 I

T	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3
A	5	5	4	4	3	3	2	2	3
B	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1



# THREE-NOTE CHORDS

Three-note chords are almost always played on the 6th, 4th, and 3rd strings. The notes that give the chord its quality are always played. These notes are the 3rd and 7th of the chord. The 5th or, in some cases, the root may be omitted from the chord. Here are some of the most frequently played three-string chords.

Gmaj7

G6

G7

Gm7

T				
A	4	4	4	3
B	3	3	3	3

Notice that the following chords all have the 5th in the bass. You can also put the root in the bass by substituting the optional note for the lowest note in each chord.

○ = optional bass note

Cmaj7/G

C6/G

C7/G

Cm7/G

T				
A	4	3	3	3
B	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)



# PLAYING THE II-V-I PROGRESSION WITH THREE-NOTE CHORDS

Listen to the interesting moving line you can get in the top notes of these chords.

Dm7/A

G7

Cmaj7/G

C6/G

T								
A	5	5	4	4	4	4	2	2
B	5	5	3	3	3	3	3	3

Here is a II-V-I progression with a different set of chords.

Am7

D7/A

Gmaj7

G6

T								
A	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4
B	5	5	5	5	3	3	3	3



# II-V CHORDS IN CYCLE MOVEMENT

Note that all the V chords in this backcycling progression are played with the root on the 5th string. Listen for the descending line played on the 4th string.

Chord diagrams for Dm7, G7, Cm7, and F7 are shown above the staff. The staff notation shows the progression: II (Dm7), V (G7), I (Cm7), II (F7), V. The fretboard diagram below shows the fret numbers for strings T, A, and B.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
T								
A	10	10	10	10	8	8	8	8
B	10	10	10	10	8	8	8	8

Chord diagrams for Bbm7, Eb7, Abmaj7, and Ab6 are shown above the staff. The staff notation shows the progression: II (Bbm7), V (Eb7), I (Abmaj7), I (Ab6). The fretboard diagram below shows the fret numbers for strings T, A, and B.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
T								
A	6	6	6	6	5	5	5	5
B	6	6	6	6	4	4	4	4







# THREE-NOTE CHORD FORMS FOR Im-Im(maj7)-Im7-Im6

When the Im-Im(maj7)-Im7-Im6 chords appear in a tune it is a good idea to bring out the moving line that is suggested by the chord symbols. The following series of three-note chord forms allows the moving line to be heard in the lowest voice.

Am Am(maj7) Am7 Am6 Am6/F#

3 1 4 2 1 4 2 1 4 1 2 4 2 3 1

Im Im(maj7) Im7 Im6

T A B

5 5 5 (1)  
2 2 2 2  
5 4 3 2

In this next series of chord forms the moving line is placed in the top voice.

Cm7/G Cm(maj7)/G Cm7/G Cm6/G

2 1 4 2 1 4 2 1 3 3 1 2

T A B

5 4 3 2  
1 1 1 1  
3 3 3 3



# THE Im-Im+-Im6 CHORD SEQUENCE

The minor-minor augmented-minor 6 chord sequence has a number of uses. Here is a practical series of chord forms.

Am

3 1 4

Am+

3 1 4

Am6

3 1 3

The above chord sequence may be used any time a minor chord appears. The example below shows the sequence in a II-V situation.

original progression

Am7

3 1 4

D7

2 3 4 5

Gmaj7

3 2 1 3

with substitution

Am

3 1 4

Am+

3 1 4

Am6

3 1 4

Am+

3 1 4

G6

3 2 1 3



# Im-Im+Im6 as a Substitute for a Dominant 7

For a V-I progression you may play the minor-minor augmented-minor 6 sequence in place of the V chord. Just start on the minor chord whose root is the 5th of the V chord. For example, to substitute for an F7, start on Cm.

original progression



with substitution

Diagram illustrating the substitution sequence for F7:

Chords shown: Cm, Cm+, Cm6, Cm+, Bb6.

Each chord is shown with a guitar fretboard diagram indicating fingerings (3, 1, 4 for Cm and Cm+; 2, 1, 3 for Cm6; 3, 1, 4 for Cm+ and Bb6) and Roman numerals (VIII for Cm, Cm+, Cm6, Cm+; VI for Bb6).

The musical notation shows the sequence of chords in 4/4 time, with the final measure containing a whole note Bb6 chord.

The tablature below the staff shows the fret numbers for the strings (T, A, B):

String	Cm	Cm+	Cm6	Cm+	Bb6
T					
A	8	8	8	8	7
B	8	8	8	8	6

Finally, the same sequence may be used to add interest and movement when a major chord is held for two or more measures. Start the sequence on the minor chord whose root is a major 3rd up from the root of the major chord.

original progression



with substitution

Diagram illustrating the substitution sequence for G:

Chords shown: Bm, Bm+, Bm6, Bm7, Gmaj7.

Each chord is shown with a guitar fretboard diagram indicating fingerings (3, 1, 4 for Bm and Bm+; 2, 1, 3 for Bm6; 2, 3, 3 for Bm7; 1, 3, 4 for Gmaj7) and Roman numerals (VII for Bm, Bm+, Bm6, Bm7; VII for Gmaj7).

The musical notation shows the sequence of chords in 4/4 time, with the final measure containing a whole note Gmaj7 chord.

The tablature below the staff shows the fret numbers for the strings (T, A, B):

String	Bm	Bm+	Bm6	Bm7	Gmaj7
T					
A	7	7	7	7	4
B	7	7	7	7	3



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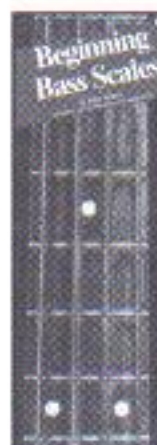


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