

# All the Music Theory a producer needs.



Written by Red Bow Music

Version 5.0.

# Introduction

Hey, I'm Red. Welcome to a new chapter in your music career. I promise after you are done reading and understanding the contents of this book you will never look at the way you make music the same ever again.

Here you will learn the most relevant information I gathered over the 2 years I spent taking university level music theory classes. Over those 2 years I spent countless hours learning stuff that helped me improve my beats a lot, stuff that I reference back to almost weekly because it is so convenient to know, it's almost like hacks to making better music faster and more easily.

The more I learnt the easier it became to come up with interesting pieces and the more sense current music made in my mind, it's like understanding the method to the madness. This made me wonder why I didn't look into music theory earlier, and also ask why so few people were talking about how convenient it is. And then it hit me, making music is seen in the beat makers world as a pure talent based game. You should be able to make beautiful music just by ear and nothing else, you should be able to hop on a piano knowing just the absolute most basic stuff and be able to make some hard beats, right?

Well, I (as a very untalented person) simply could not keep up with the amazing music I was witnessing other people create. I watched FL tutorials and they did help me, but they were just series of small tips that usually did not build on each other, they never made anything click in my head. So I spent my days either thinking I was getting better every time or thinking I was the most untalented person in the world. It was mostly luck-based whether I made something I was proud of or not.

Skip to a few months later when I find this dude's music theory course, an ex university teacher that decided to make a complete music theory course online, "comprehensible and complete" he called it, I decided to give it a shot. 2 months in, I could not have been happier from what I was learning, other than scales and triads I was learning that it wasn't that I was simply bad at music, it was that I didn't have the information I needed. This made me gain back the passion for music I had when I first started making it and helped me overcome those massive lows you get when you can't make anything that sounds good for a while.

This massive breakthrough in my life is why I decided to start explaining simple music theory for free on the internet. I did it because I knew most people did not know how much it could help them (and because by doing that I could help myself out too). I knew most people would never sit through 12 straight hours of learning the ways people in the 1700's made music and how it influences our music today, but they might sit through a 1 minute video explaining the theory behind Travis Scott's newest single.

So it is with that principle in mind that I decided to write a book for beat makers that takes them in the simplest way possible from not knowing what a triad is, to knowing everything I know. And it is with that same principle in mind that I decided to re-write this book one year later, and make it truly perfect (at least according to me). I am incredibly proud of what this book has become and I am certain that this will be life changing knowledge for you. Thank you for trusting me with your time and money.

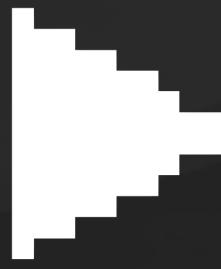
I'm so glad to be a part of your journey, now let's stop wasting time and begin. Enjoy.

# Table of contents

1.	The basics of your grid .....	4
2.	Strong and weak beats .....	9
3.	Simple vs. Compound meter .....	14
4.	The basics of your piano roll .....	19
5.	The basics of scales .....	24
6.	The absolute basics behind modes .....	27
7.	The absolute basics of intervals .....	31
8.	The absolute basics of chords .....	37
9.	Everything you need to know about intervals .....	41
10.	All you need to know about chords (kind of) .....	53
11.	Scale degrees in a major scale (and the chords built on top of them) .....	61
12.	Scale degrees in a minor scale (and the chords built on top of them) .....	84
13.	Scale degrees in a harmonic minor scale (and the chords built on top of them) .....	107
14.	Dominant vs. Diminished vs. Augmented .....	110
15.	The true magic behind the harmonic minor scale .....	112
16.	Suspended chords .....	118
17.	Chord extensions .....	125
18.	Inversions .....	133
19.	The Circle Of Fifths .....	142
20.	Some help with top melodies .....	150
	Summary .....	160

(Spaces between topics represent length of section)

# 1. The basics of your grid



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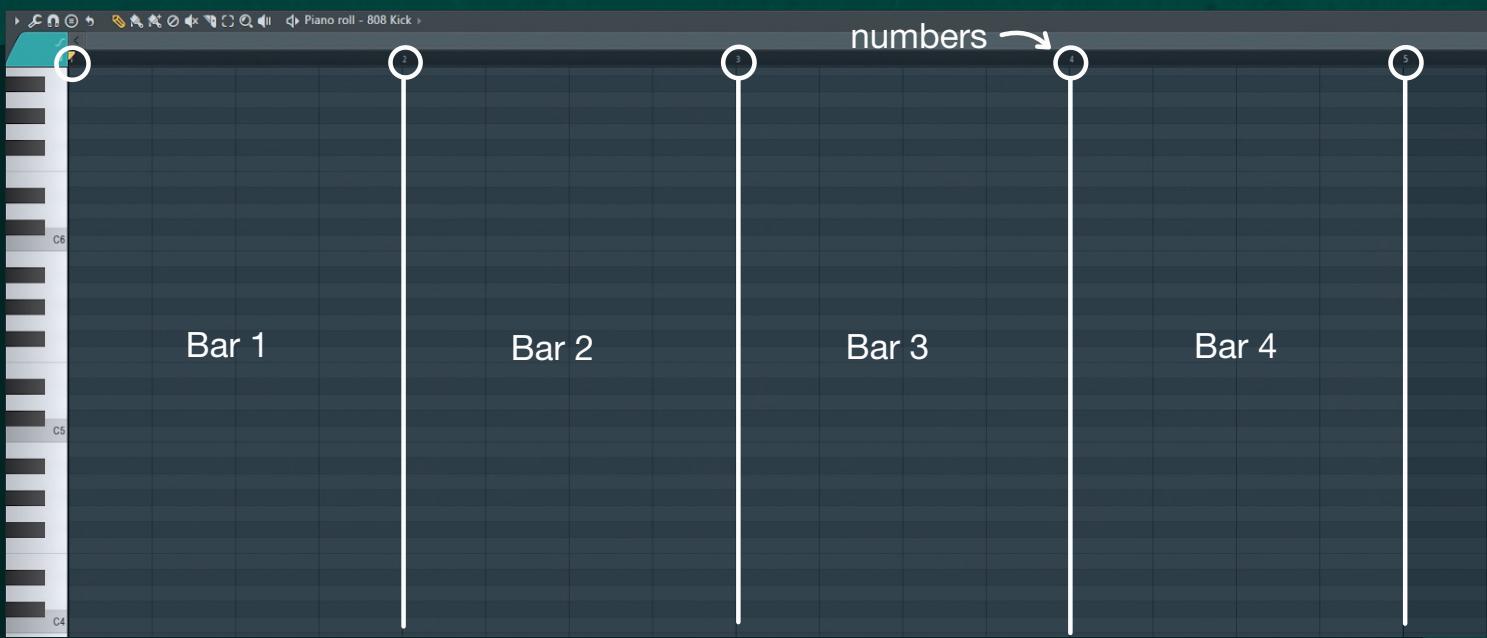
## 1. The basics of your grid:

Before you start running you need to learn how to crawl, so let's get started on the simplest stuff first and get progressively more complicated later. Sound good? Ok, first thing, the piano roll's (and playlist's) grid:

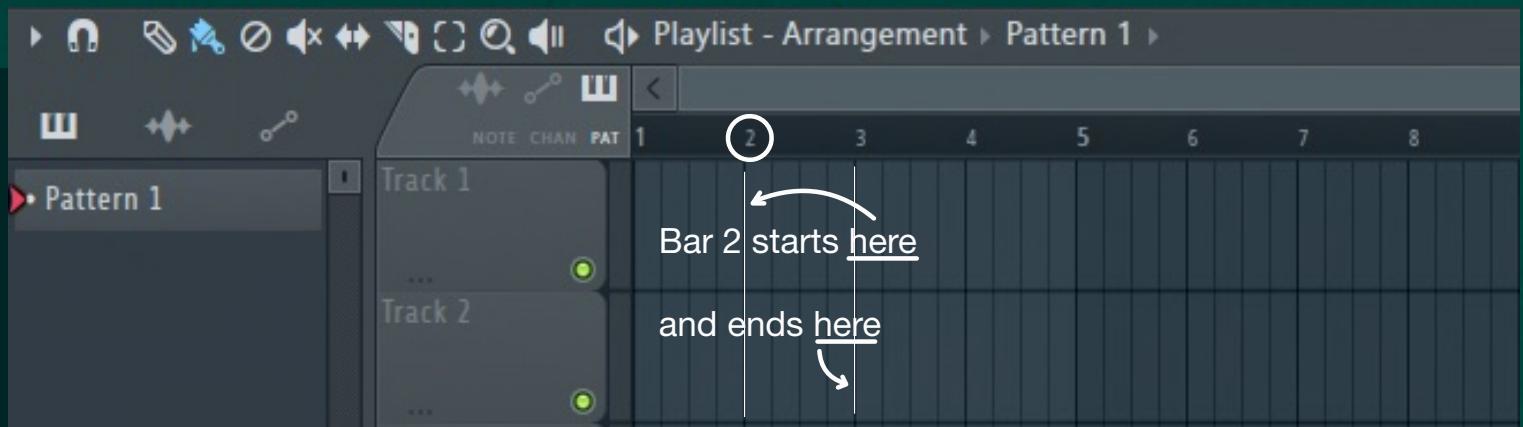


First thing you're going to notice when you open your Piano Roll are these vertical lines. These lines are there to separate different cuts of beats and bars from each other. Understanding them is going to be really important for you if you want to make good sounding melodies, so let's start with the simplest one: Bars.

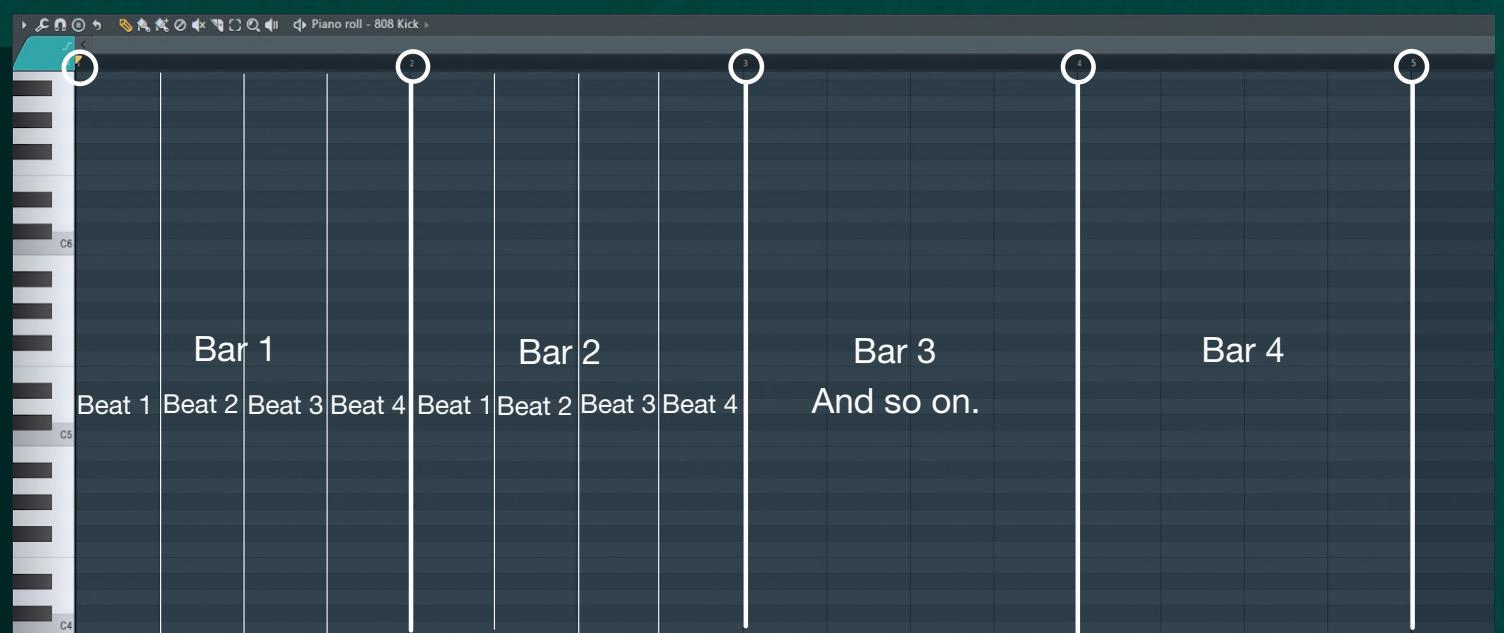
A bar is a group of 4 beats (I'll explain those next). You can tell when a bar starts and ends in your piano roll by checking the numbers above. Every new number means the end of a bar and the beginning of a new one. In the example below you can see 4 complete bars and the beginning of a 5th one.



You can also tell where a bar begins and ends in your playlist by checking the numbers above the grid (by the way “grid” means the vertical lines).

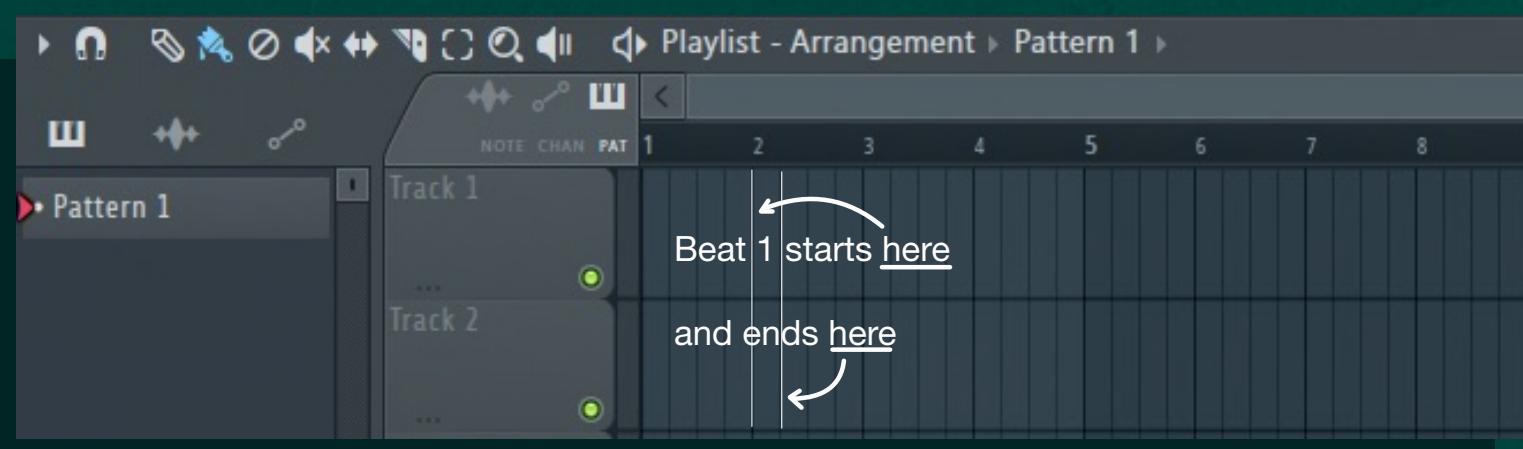


Got it? Ok, let's move on to beats. Beats are smaller than bars. Like I said before, 4 beats make 1 bar (at least in quadruple meter, other meters are not really used in modern music outside of some specific genres and styles which probably don't interest you so we'll leave them out of this class). Which means that while bars can go up to infinity, beats can really just go up to 4, after that they restart.



Now, there is such a thing as strong and weak beats, and whether you place your notes on strong or weak beats has a big impact of how your melody feels.

But before we get into that lets see where beats are visible in your playlist:



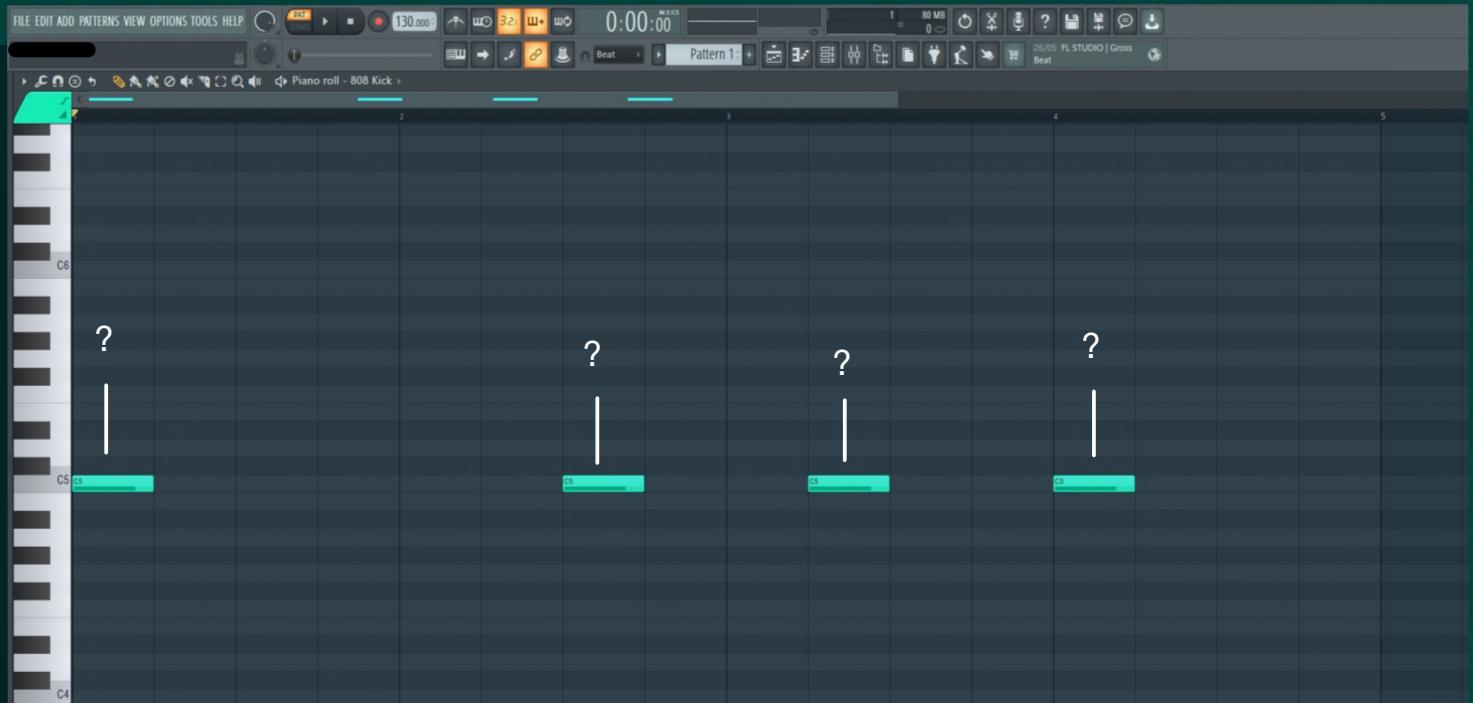
## But wait!

### Before you move on... Test your knowledge!

This is a small set of challenges I prepare after every chapter that will help you check if you understood the contents of this lesson, and if you're ready to apply them to your music.

#### Challenge 1: (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next page)

- Can you identify where the following notes are placed? (Being able to do this will be important later)
- Your task is to answer in which beat and bar the 4 notes below are.



#### Challenge 2: (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next page)

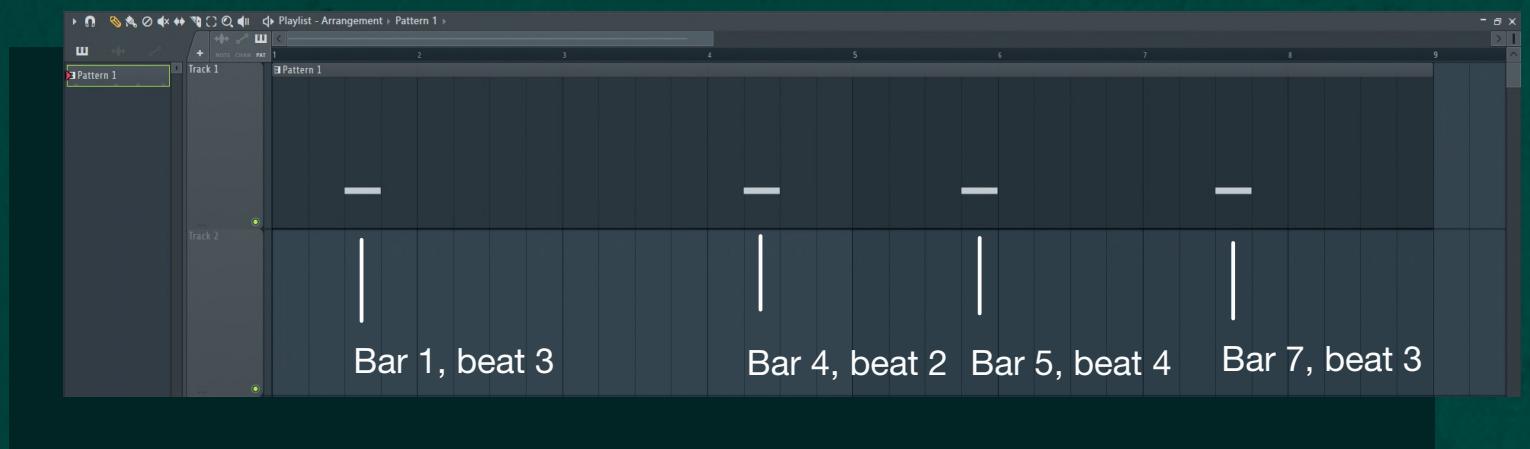
- Can you identify where the following notes are placed?
- Your task is to answer in which beat and bar the 4 notes below are.



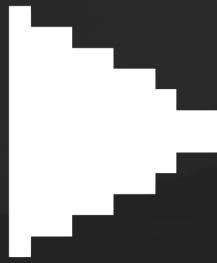
## Answer 1:



## Answer 2:



## 2. Strong and weak beats



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## 2. strong and weak beats:

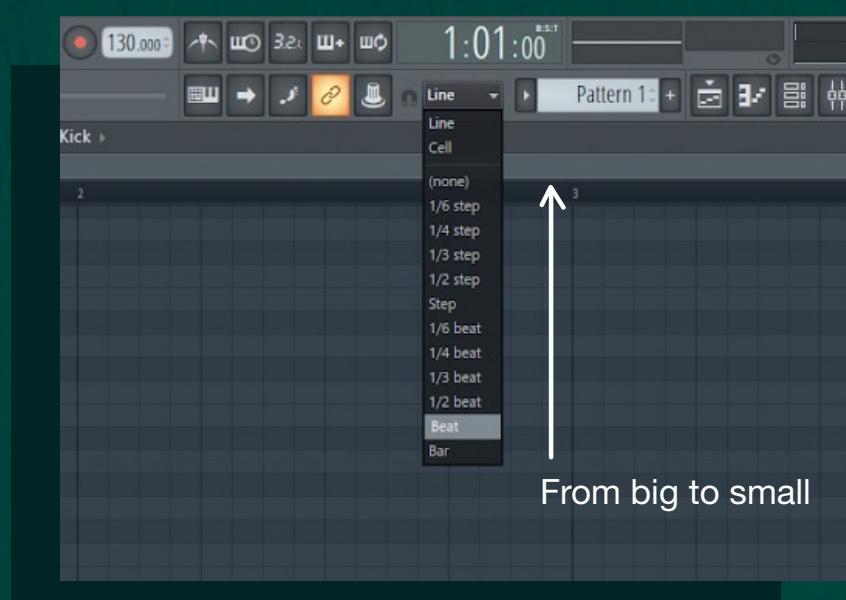
A strong beat or **Downbeat** is understood as the beat that starts a group. In our regular quadruple meter (meaning a bar made of 4 beats) those starts are on the 1st and 3rd beats. These 2 beats are more noticeable than the 2nd and 4th in a melody, so here musicians prefer to primarily use **chordal notes** in their top melodies (meaning the same notes as in your chords, don't worry too much about that for now, we'll get more into that later).

A weak beat or **Upbeat** (also called Offbeat) is understood as the beats in the middle of a group. In the case of quadruple meter those are the 2nd and 4th beats. These beats are less noticeable and because of this they are the perfect spot to use notes that are a bit more unexpected and interesting, for now we'll call those notes **non-chordal notes** (meaning notes that aren't being used in your chords, discussed further later).

This is what strong and weak beats look like in your piano roll:



It's important to note that you will only be able to see full beats as long as you have the Beat option selected in your grid, otherwise you might see these other types of divisions: ('Step' divisions only mean beats cut into really really small pieces)



If you're asking yourself how the weak and strong beat separation works on smaller divisions like 1/2 beat, the only thing you really need to remember is that:

in **simple meter**... (meaning division of 2, like 1/2 beat and 1/4 beat, better explained later)

...**numbers 1 and 3**... (if applicable, for example in a division of 1/2 beat there is no 3 but in 1/4 beat there is a 3)

...**are strong beat divisions...**

and in **compound meter**... (meaning division of 3, like 1/3 beat and 1/6 beat, better explained later)

...**only the 1 is the strong one, the rest are considered weak.**

Besides, anything smaller than 1/3 beat is not going to be too noticeable on its own at all so the separation becomes less and less important the smaller you go. So for now just remember the 1 and 3 are strong beats.

This will be better explained once we get to top melody making, but that's not until just about the end of this book so let's put a pin on that.

Remember a little bit ago when I mentioned the words 'simple meter'? I said I would explain that better later. Well, now is later..

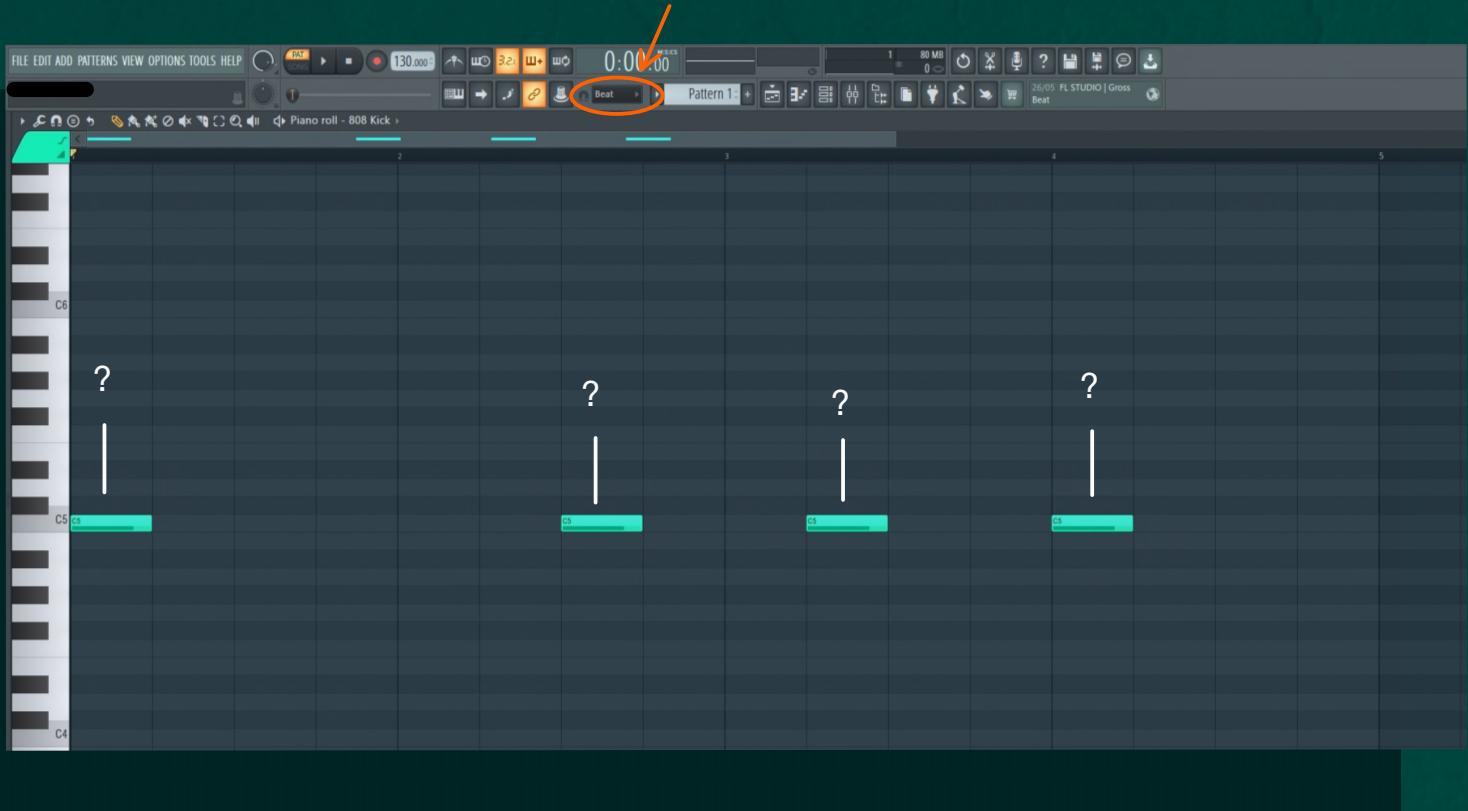
## But wait!

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#### Challenge 1: (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next page)

- Can you identify if the notes below are on a strong or weak beat? (**Using 'Beat' as separation on your grid**)
- (being able to do this will be super important when it comes to making top melodies, so don't skip this one)

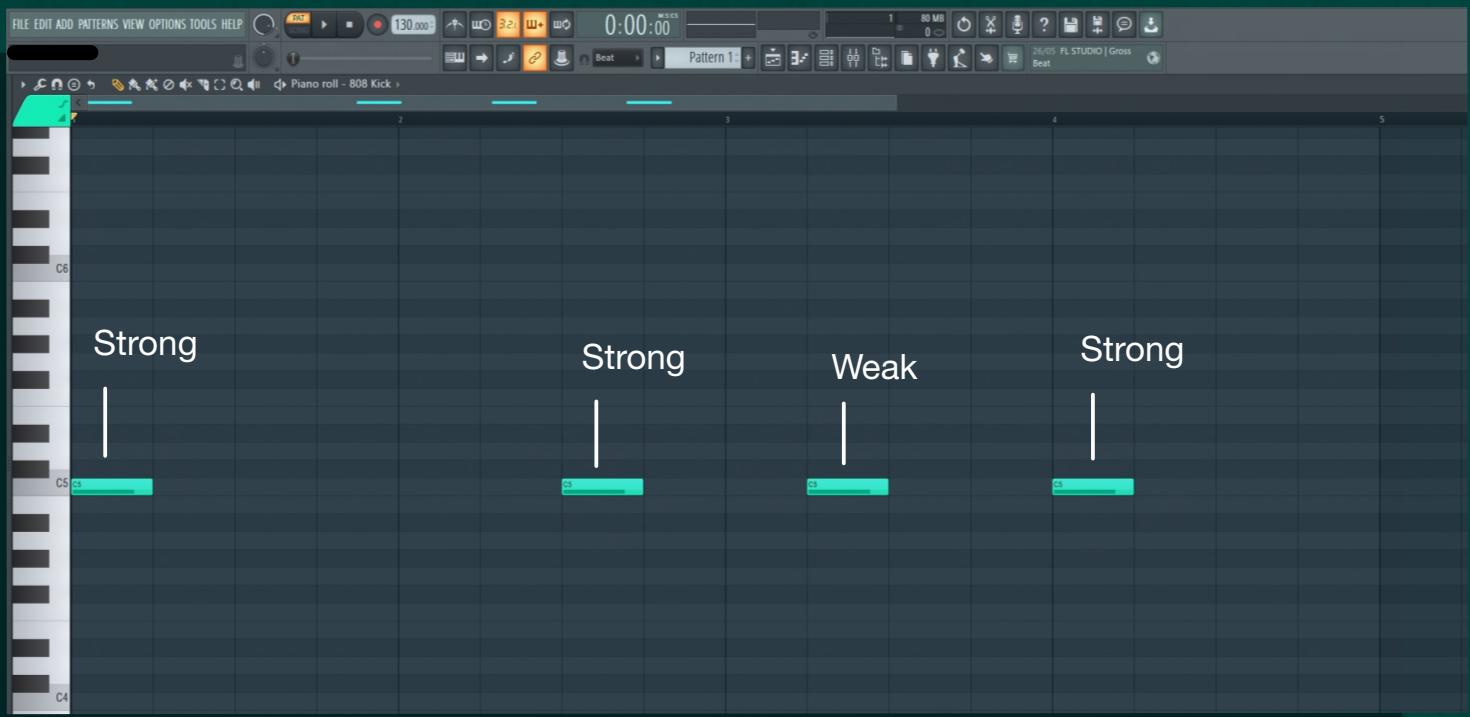


#### Challenge 2: (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next page)

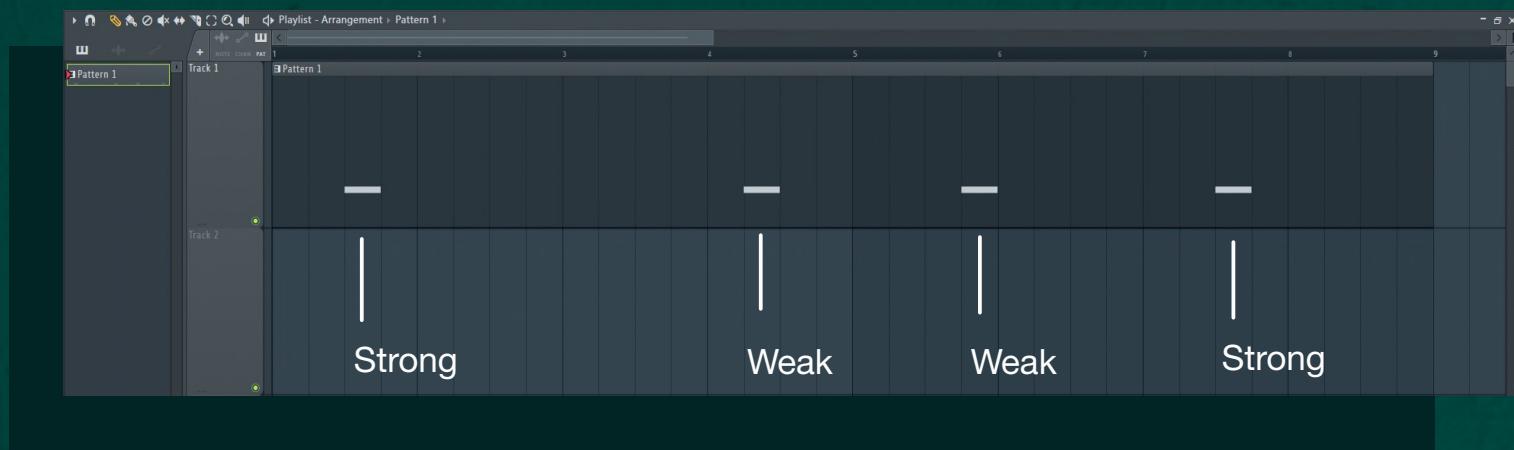
- Can you identify if the notes below are on a strong or weak beat? (**Using 'Beat' as separation on your grid**)



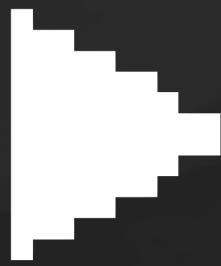
## Answer 1:



## Answer 2:



### 3. Simple vs. Compound meter



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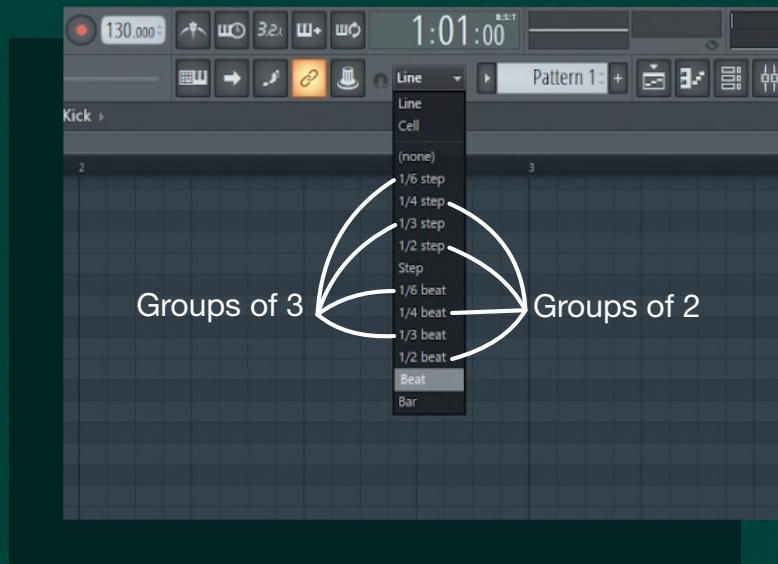


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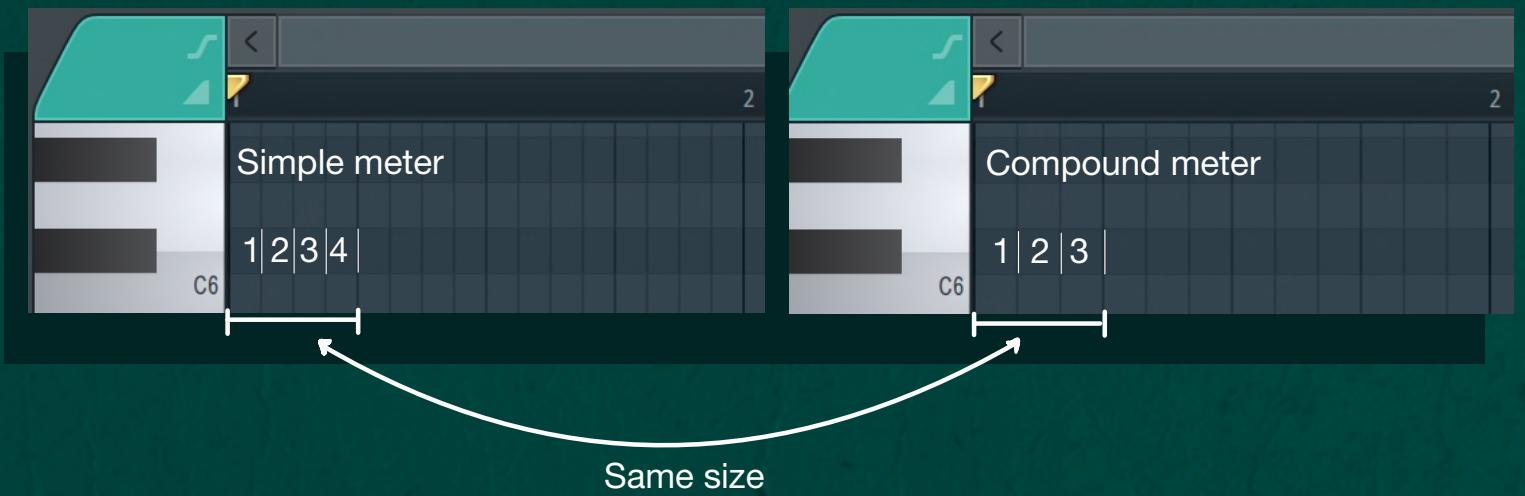


### 3. Simple vs. Compound meter

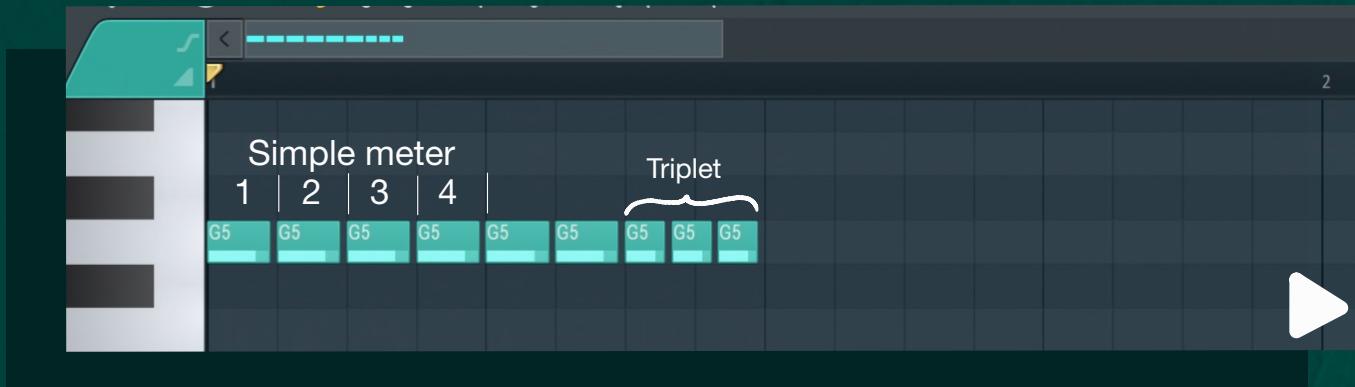
For this next part we'll focus on the difference between simple and compound meter. The words simple and compound meter refer to what kind of divisions we can find between beats. As you saw in the last image, those divisions can happen either in groups of 2 or in groups of 3.



Basically, divisions in groups of 2 are called simple meter and divisions of 3 called compound meter. Simple meter is the one most often used in music, so it's definitely the one you're the most familiar with.



You can imagine simple meter as a regular trap Hi Hat pattern with no fancy Hi Hat rolls, just a classic line of hits. And compound meter would be those fancy Hi Hat rolls. That simple beat moving to a compound meter while the rest stays in regular simple meter is called a ‘Triplet’ and is used commonly in Hi Hat patterns, guitar arpeggios and more.



Now that you know how your grid works we can get a little more complicated from here. But before we do that let me just tell you some super basic stuff for a second. The last visual aspect of the piano roll left to discuss is the piano itself. I know you may already know how this works so let's move quickly.

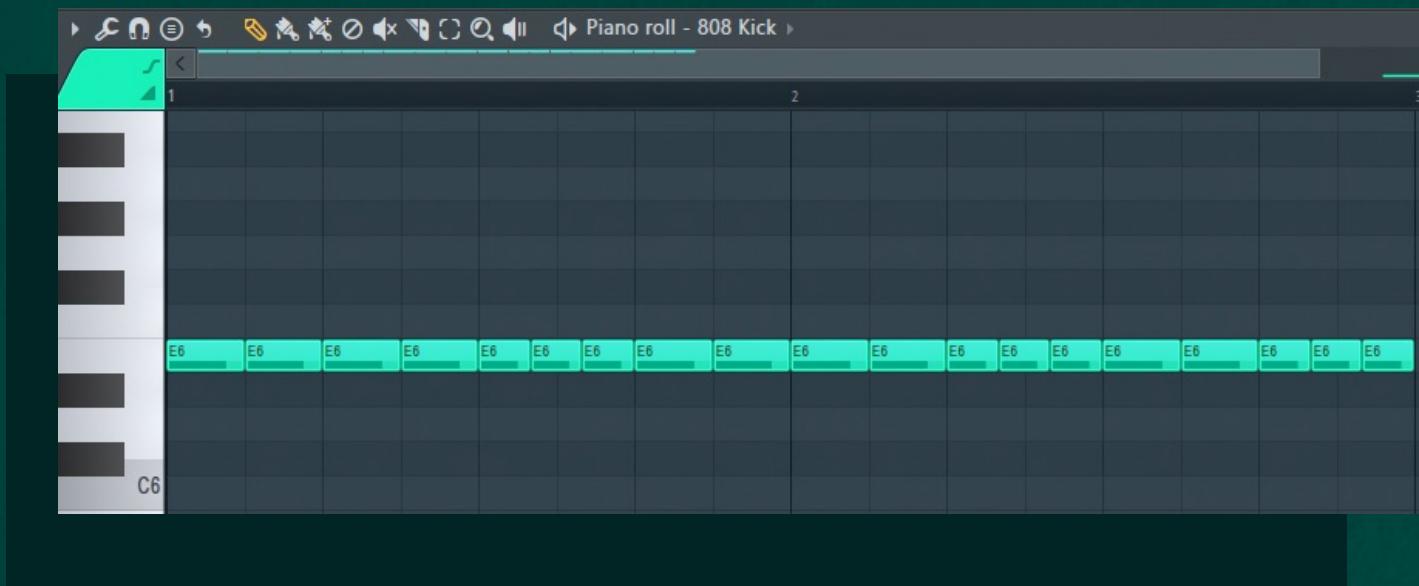
**But wait!**

### **Before you move on... Test your knowledge!**

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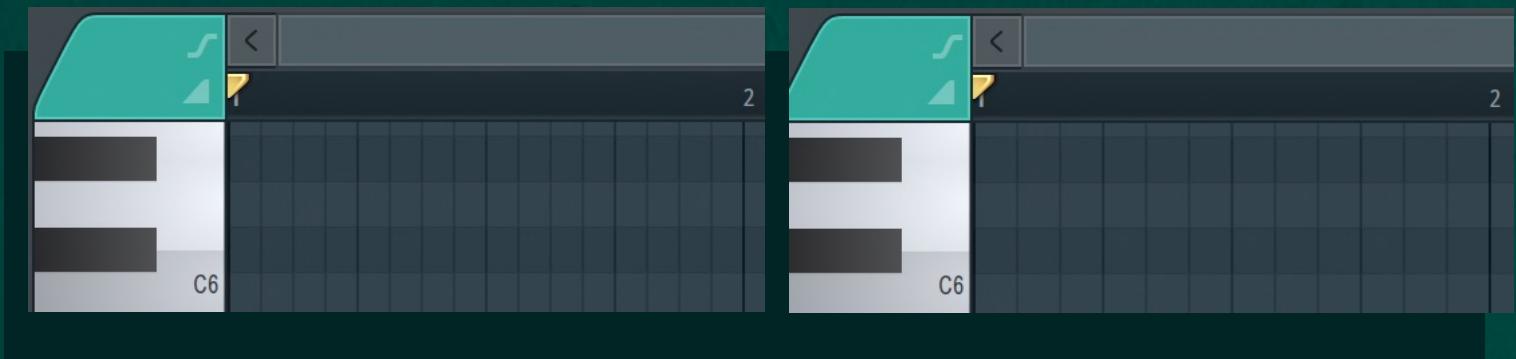
#### **Challenge 1:** (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next page)

- Can you identify all triplets in the following line of notes?



#### **Challenge 2:** (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next page)

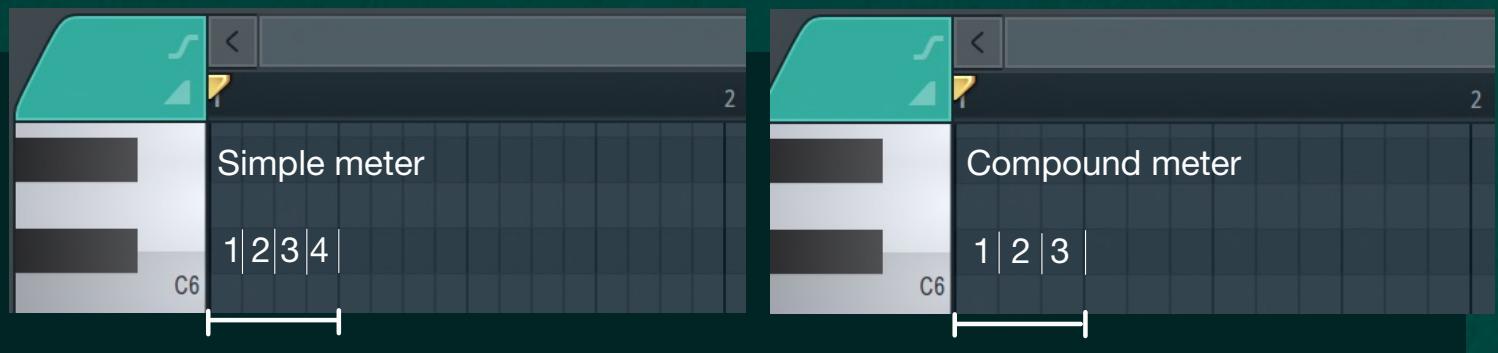
- Which one of these grids is in compound meter and which in simple meter?



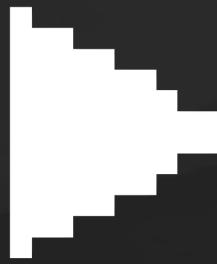
## Answer 1:



## Answer 2:



## 4. The basics of your piano roll



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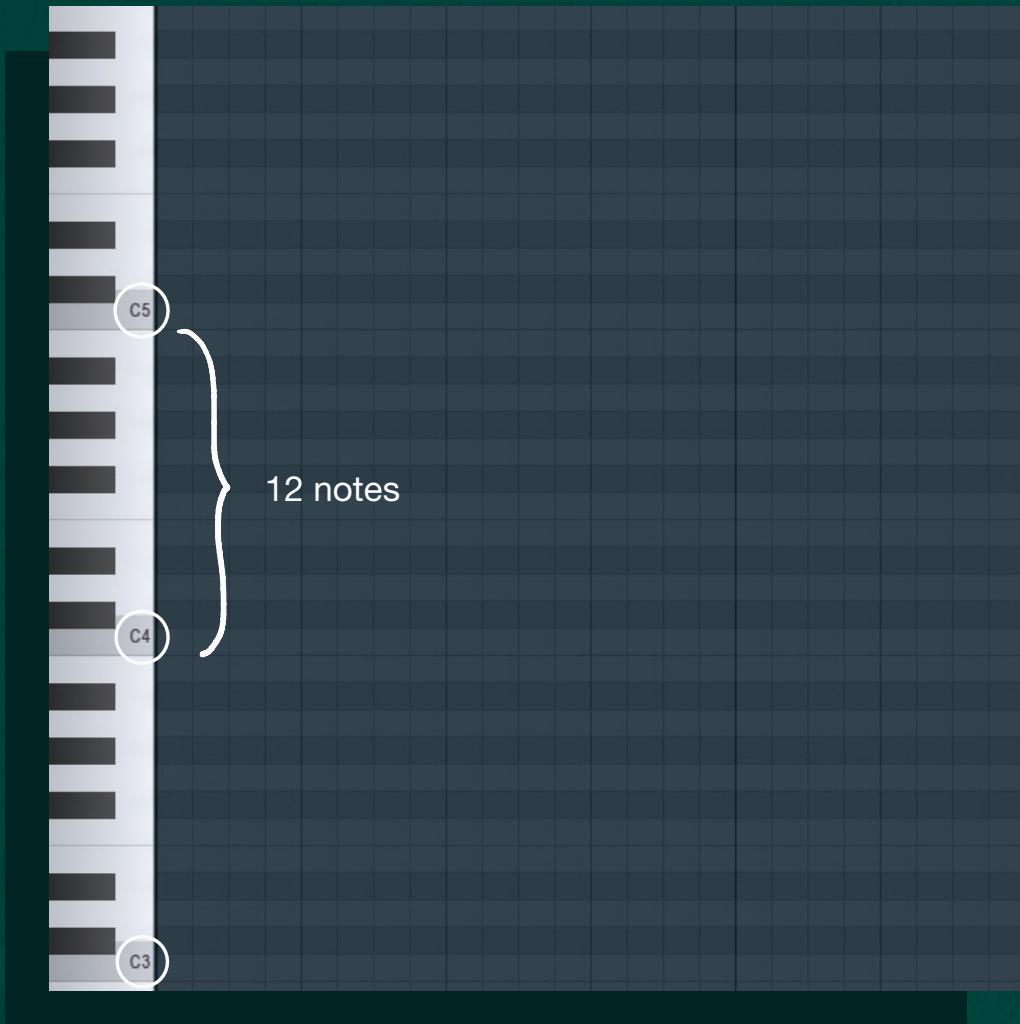


Your progress!



#### 4. The basics of your piano roll

A piano keyboard is made out of 12 notes, 7 white ones (or naturals) and 5 black ones (or accidentals). After those 12 notes the notes above and below them are simply a copy of the first 12 notes but octaves higher or lower. Octave up or down refers to a change 12 notes either up or down. The C3, C4 and C5 you see in the picture below refer to the same note (in this case C) in different octaves (in this case octaves 3, 4 and 5). The note is still C but the octaves change. The higher the octave, the higher the pitch of the note.



Like I said there are only 7 white notes and only 5 black ones, and within this 12 notes hides pretty much all the music ever created. There are specific ways to refer to those notes and in this course (and in most english speaking countries) we're going to refer to the white ones as:

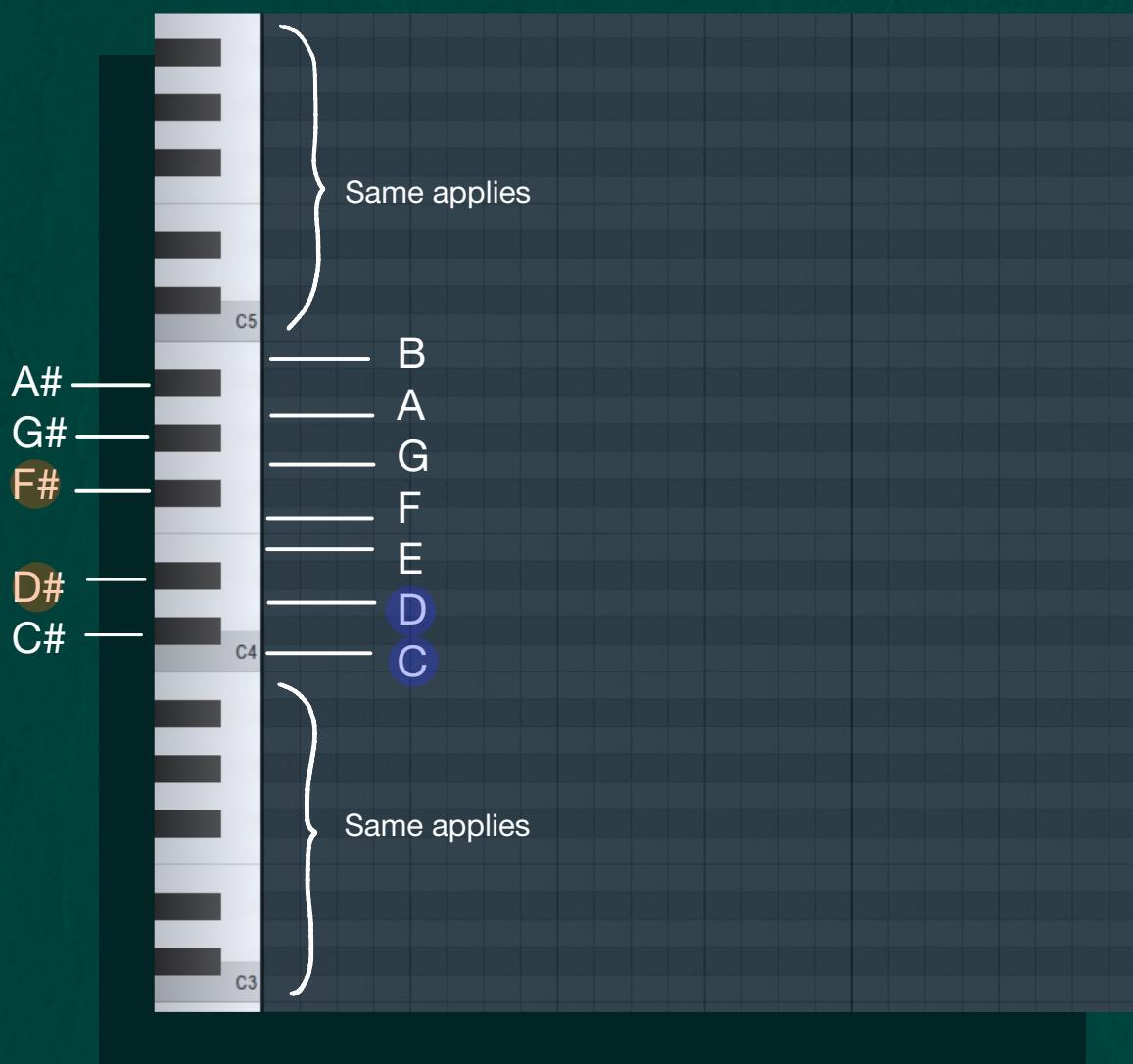
C, D, E, F, G, A, B

The white ones are the only notes that get a real name, the black ones only get a name based on their relation to the white ones. This relation can be either Sharp (#) or Flat (b). Sharp meaning one above and flat meaning one below.

For example here we have a C note, above it there is a black note, so the name of that note is C#, but if you look to the D right next to it you'll see that our C# is technically also below the D, so it should be also called Db right? Well, technically yes, you can refer to that note as C# or as Db and be right, usually what you call them depends on how the scale you're using was built, but at the end of the day is just an over complicated way to refer to a note, so I simply refer to all the black ones with a # no matter the circumstance. I know its not how old white composers would do it but you know what? Its easier, so let's just remember them like that for now. So with that logic, then black notes are:

C#, D#, F#, G#, A#

So with that, our 12 keyboard notes will now be refers to as:



Now you might have noticed that there is a big space between D# and F#, and honestly I wish I knew why but I bet the answer is boring anyways so let's move on.

**But wait!**

**Before you move on... Test your knowledge!**

This is a small set of challenges I prepare after every chapter that will help you check if you understood the contents of this lesson, and if you're ready to apply them to your music.

**Challenge 1:** (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next page)

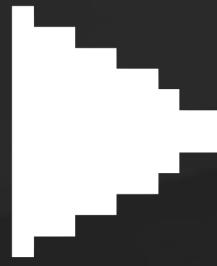
- Can you name the following notes?



**Answer 1:**



## 5. The basics of scales 6. The absolute basics behind modes



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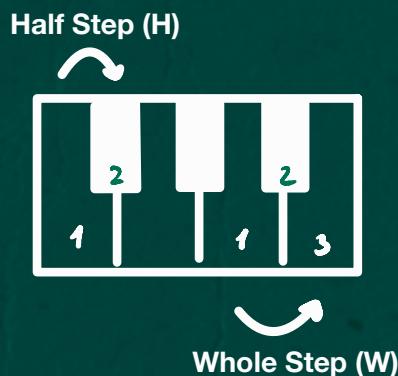
## 5. The basics of scales

Now that we're finally done with the super basic stuff we can move on to more fun things. The first thing I want to show you are the so called 'Scales'. Scales are sets of musical notes ordered by frequency or pitch (how or why I don't know). There are tons of scales out there but the most important 2, that make up about 99% of todays music, are the major (Ionian) and minor (aeolian) scales. Ionian and Aeolian are their old timey names so you can forget about those (I'll talk a bit more about the old timey names later, when we talk about "modes").

The major and minor scales are sets of 7 notes selected in specific ways. The way they are selected does not depend on specific notes in the keyboard but rather on distances between notes. I know this sounds confusing so let's go slower. First we'll discuss the major scale.

The **Major scale** is a group of 7 notes. To find the notes of a major scale you need only 2 things, you need to select a starting note and you also need to know this: W W H W W W H.

H refers to a Half Step (different step from the 'Step' beat division we saw earlier in the grid), meaning the note directly above the one you're currently in. W refers to Whole Step, meaning 2 notes away from the one you are currently in. In a keyboard that looks like this:



So with this info we can see that if you choose a note to start on, in this case that note is going to be C (but it could be any note you choose), and from there you move first one whole step up and place a note then one whole step up and place another note, then a half step up and place a note, and so on you'll end with a full major scale. (The reason why I didn't add a note on the last H is because that note would have been our starting C note again just one octave higher). This scale could keep going up or down for as long as we want, as long as the spaces: W W H W W W H are correct.



But that's not the only major scale there is, as you know in our keyboard we have 12 different notes, and since you can start counting wherever you want, there have to be 12 different major scales. So as you can see, a major scale is not a set of specific notes, but a set of distances between them.

Now we can move on to the Minor scale and then I'll tell you more about why these note separations are important for us. The **Natural minor scale** (There are other minor scales, less important but we'll still discuss one of them later) is a group of 7 notes. To find the notes of a minor scale you need only 2 things, you need to select a starting note and you also need to know this: W H W W H W W (different than the one for a major scale).

For this example of a minor scale we're also going to be using the C note (but you can once again choose any note you want to start on).



## 6. The absolute basics behind modes

Now that you know how to build the main 2 scales we can get a bit more into why you should know this. The reason scales exist at all is because some smart people found that using different sets of notes caused different sounds. For example, I'm sure you've heard that major scales are happy and minor scales are sad, well that's basically the idea. In the old times people used to have 7 different scales called "modes" for 7 different moods.

Nowadays 5 of those 7 modes aren't as popular but 2 of them still are, the Ionian (or major) and the Aeolian (or minor) modes. And while the major and minor scales can be used for much more than simply happy and sad sounds it is true that one of them achieves 'sad' sounds really easily and the other one 'happy' sounds really easily. The reason behind this is the different chords that these specific note separations allow you to make.

But before we get into how to build these chords and how these 2 scales affect the chords you can create, let's talk for a little bit about "modes". Before we start it's important to mention that 99% of music nowadays uses either the major or minor scale, but a lot of people still like to use the Phrygian scale sometimes for example, so I would feel bad if I didn't at least teach you the absolute basics behind them. So let's quickly go over the most important.

Modes are types of musical scales that have different characteristics and moods. They originated in ancient Greece and were named after regions or tribes. There are seven main modes in Western music:

- 1 Ionian
- 2 Dorian
- 3 Phrygian
- 4 Lydian
- 5 Mixolydian
- 6 Aeolian
- 7 Locrian

Each mode has a different starting note or tonic within the same set of notes. For example, C Ionian and D Dorian have the same notes, but start on C and D respectively.

To construct a mode from a major scale, you can use the same notes as the major scale, but start and end on a different scale degree. For example, to construct D Dorian from C major, you start and end on the second degree of C major, which is D. The result is D E F G A B C D. (This is NOT the same as a D major scale, which has F# and C#.)

Similarly, to construct A Aeolian from C major, you start and end on the sixth degree of C major, which is A. The result is A B C D E F G A. This is different from A major, which has F#, C# and G#.

So you basically you make a major scale on any note you want, and from there instead of treating the first note of that major scale as the first note of the scale (a treatment which you will learn in a few pages when we talk about scale degrees), you simply pick a different note to treat like the first note, and if you pick the second note to treat as a first, you get a Dorian scale, if you pick the third, you get a phrygian scale, and so on.

This sounds crazy but you've actually been following these rules all your career, because as you know... an aeolian scale is the same as a minor scale, which means that to use it you were simply using a major scale all along, but treating the 6th note of that major scale as the first note. I know, crazy right?



Anyway... Some modes sound major, some sound minor, and some sound ambiguous. Some modes were associated with certain emotions, expressions, or genres of music. For example,

1. The Ionian mode is the same as the modern major scale and sounds bright and happy.
2. The Dorian mode is similar to the minor scale but with a raised sixth note, and sounds melancholic and jazzy.
3. The Phrygian mode has a lowered second note and sounds exotic and mysterious. It is also known as the Spanish gypsy scale and is used in flamenco music.
4. The Lydian mode has a raised fourth note and sounds dreamy and mystical.
5. The Mixolydian mode has a lowered seventh note and sounds bluesy and rock-like.
6. The Aeolian mode is the same as the modern natural minor scale and sounds sad and dark.
7. The Locrian mode has a lowered second and fifth note and sounds unstable and dissonant. It is rarely used in music because it does not have a perfect fifth interval.

## But wait!

### Before you move on... Test your knowledge!

This is a small set of challenges I prepare after every chapter that will help you check if you understood the contents of this lesson, and if you're ready to apply them to your music.

#### Challenge 1: (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next page)

- Can you repeat the W & H formulas I just gave you for both major and minor scales? (This basically is asking if you can build a major and minor scale without help from like ghost notes or whatever, can you?)
- Major scale: \_ \_ \_ \_ \_
- Minor scale: \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

#### Challenge 2: (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next page)

- Can pair each mode with its respective mood?

Name:

1. The Ionian mode is ...
2. The Dorian mode is ...
3. The Phrygian mode is ...
4. The Lydian mode is ...
5. The Mixolydian is ...
6. The Aeolian mode is ...
7. The Locrian mode is ...

Mood:

- ... sad and dark
  - ... bluesy and rock-like
  - ... bright and happy
  - ... melancholic and jazzy
  - ... lacking a perfect 5th interval
  - ... dreamy and mystical
  - ... exotic and mysterious
- (also known as the Spanish gypsy scale and is used in flamenco music)

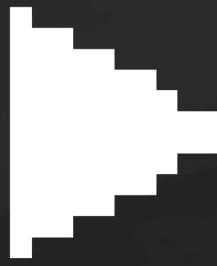
**Answer 1:**

- Major scale: W W H W W W W H
- Minor scale: W H W W H W W

**Answer 2:**

1. The Ionian mode is bright and happy.
2. The Dorian mode is melancholic and jazzy.
3. The Phrygian mode is exotic and mysterious. It is also known as the Spanish gypsy scale and is used in flamenco music.
4. The Lydian mode is dreamy and mystical.
5. The Mixolydian is bluesy and rock-like.
6. The Aeolian mode sounds sad and dark.
7. The Locrian mode is lacking a perfect 5th interval

# 7. The absolute basics of intervals



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## 7. The absolute basics of intervals

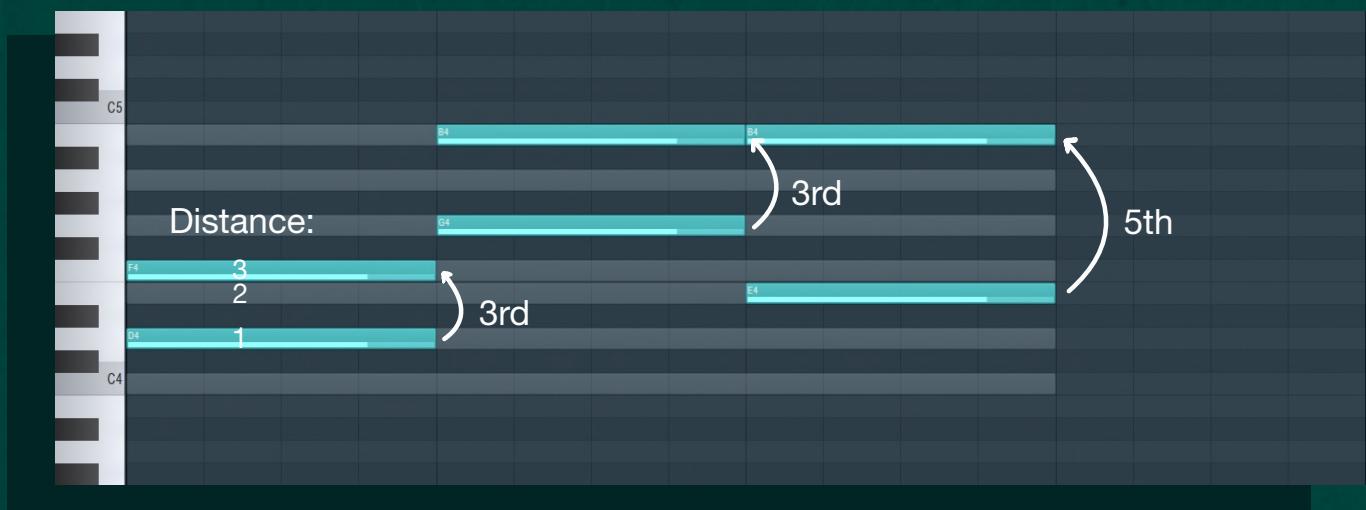
A chord technically is understood as a group of notes, technically any group of notes can be a chord so we gotta get more specific if we want to understand them. A diad chord is a chord made from 2 notes, usually these chords are simply seen as triad chords with a missing note so we're gonna skip them and get right into the meat and potatoes.

A triad chord is a chord made with 3 notes, get this, where each note is separated by a third. I know what you're thinking, "a third of what?" Well, a third is a type of interval, let me show you.

We use intervals to describe vertical distances between notes in a scale. A distance between the first note of the scale and the second is a second. A distance between the first note of the scale and the third note of the scale is a third, one between the first note and the fifth, you get it, its a fifth.



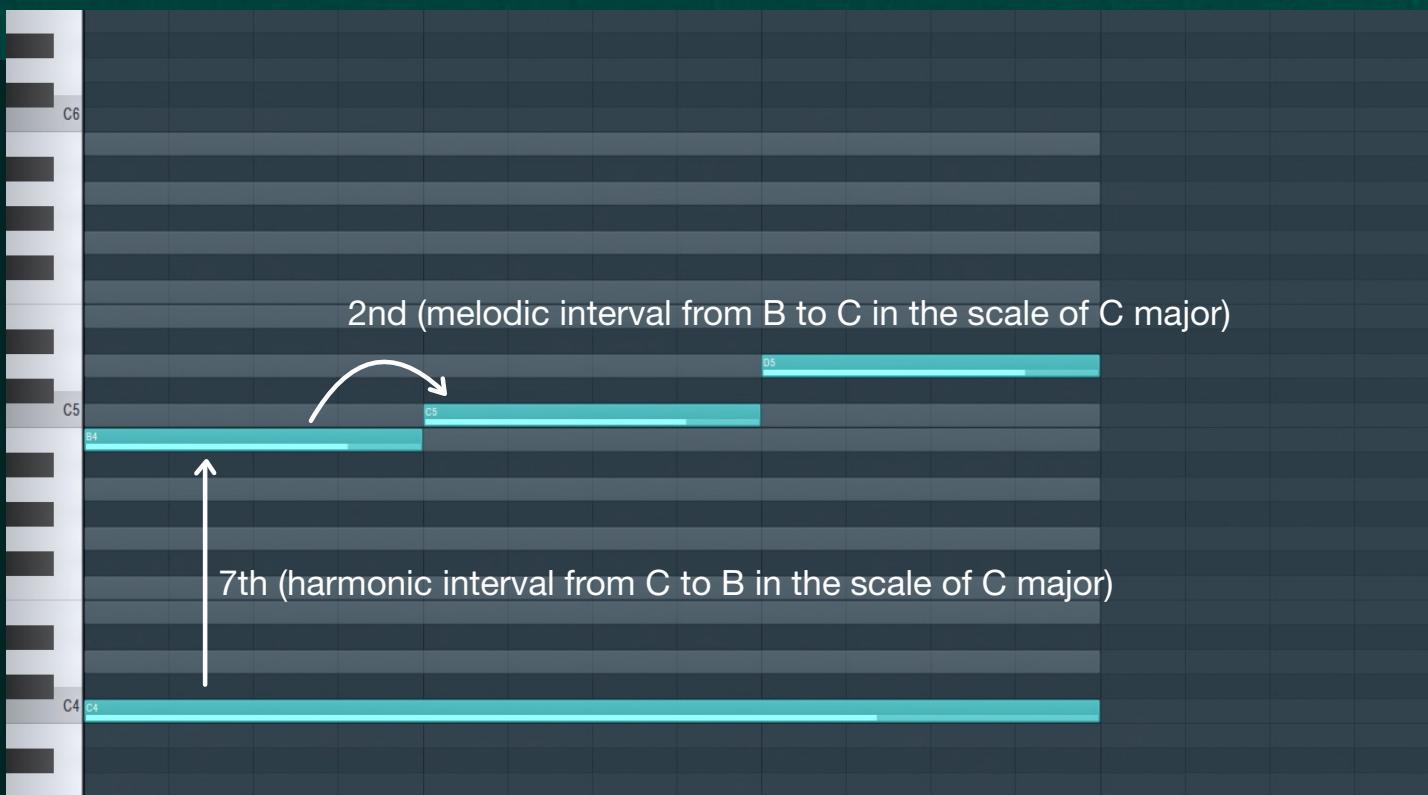
But intervals don't only apply to the first note of the scale in relation to others, an interval can start anywhere and end anywhere. An interval between the 2nd note of the scale and the 4th is called a 3rd interval (because from the second note to the second note is an interval of 1, to the third note an interval of 2nd and to the 4th note as interval of 3rd). Also an interval between the 5th and the 7th notes is a third, and an interval between the third and the seventh note is a 5th, etc, etc.



Intervals can also go beyond the borders of the 7 notes of that octave. When this happens you have 2 choices, you can either go beyond the 7th to 8th, 9th and so on (which is unnecessary in my opinion) or you can just go back to 1st, 2nd and 3rd (which is better, I think). I mean I see how an 8th interval would be useful but beyond that I just see no use in saying a 9th instead of simply just going back to a 2nd. But of course its up to you how you wanna say it both ways are correct.



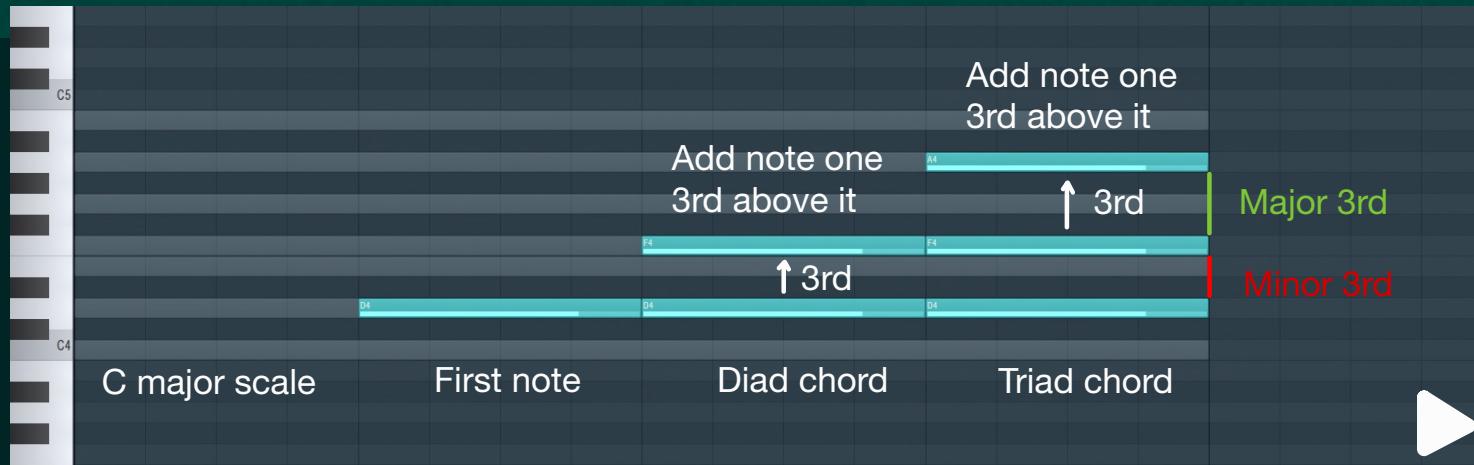
Intervals can be melodic or harmonic, which is basically a fancy word for saying there can be intervals between notes that start on the same point in the grid or in different ones. (Harmony meaning a vertical line of notes and Melody meaning a horizontal line of notes).



Anyway, remember we were talking about chords? Yeah, well, triad chords are built off of 3 notes, separated by internals of a third (we chose 3rds because for some reason they sound good to our dumb caveman ears). Basically what that means (now that you understand intervals) is that **to make a triad chord all you need is a scale, a note to start on, and to count 2 intervals of a third**. Like this:



or also again like this:



Easy right? Well, its about to get harder. You see those red and green lines that say Major and minor 3rd? Those are basically the reason why we say major scales are happy and minor scales are sad. The distribution of notes in major and minor scales make it so that when you have triad chords with 3rds in between, most times one of those 3rds is going to be bigger than the other. This means that there are basically 2 types of 3rd intervals, one where the notes are 4 chromatic notes apart, or major 3rd intervals, and one where the notes are only 3 chromatic notes apart, or minor 3rd intervals. (Chromatic meaning taking all notes into consideration, Diatonic on the other hand, means taking only scale notes into consideration).



## But wait!

### Before you move on... Test your knowledge!

This is a small set of challenges I prepare after every chapter that will help you check if you understood the contents of this lesson, and if you're ready to apply them to your music.

#### Challenge 1: (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next page)

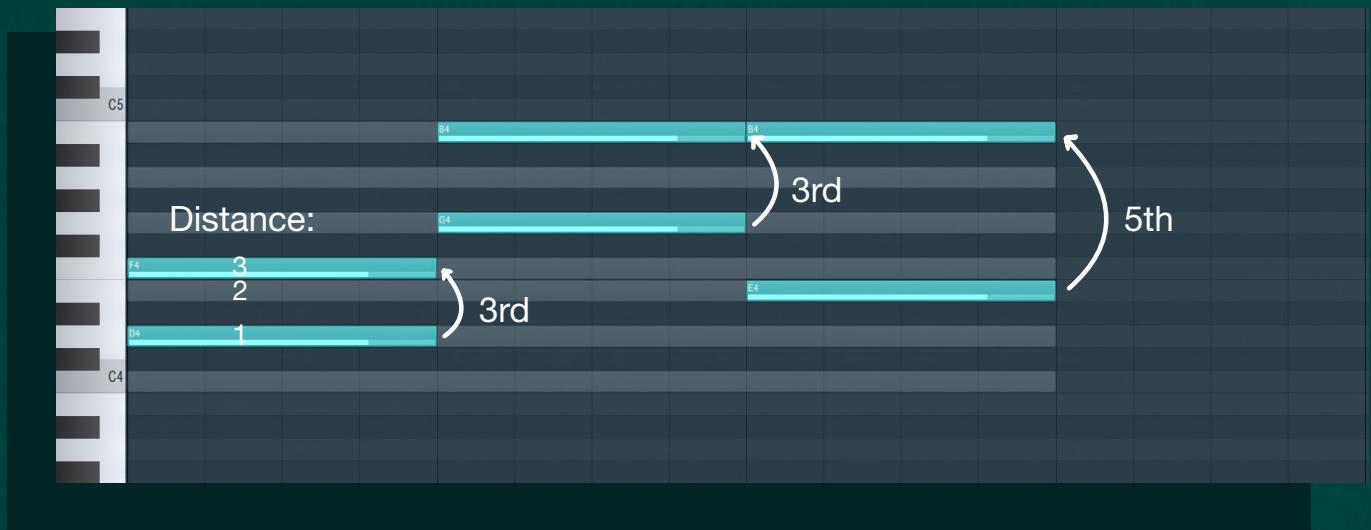
- Can you name the following 3 harmonic intervals?

A piano keyboard diagram showing three harmonic intervals. The first interval (top) consists of notes G4 and B4, with a question mark indicating it is a major third. The second interval (middle) consists of notes B4 and D5, also with a question mark indicating it is a major third. The third interval (bottom) consists of notes D4 and F#4, with a question mark indicating it is a minor third. The piano keys are shown in white and black, with note names labeled above the keys: C5, B4, G4, F#4, D4, and C4.

#### Challenge 2: (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next page)

- Which of the following 2 sentences is a definition for the word Diatonic?
1. ... means taking into account every note, not a certain scale's notes.
  2. ... means taking into account only notes that are in our scale, not all notes.

## Answer 1:

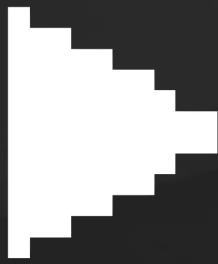


## Answer 2:

- Which of the following 2 sentences is a definition for the word Diatonic?
  1. ... means taking into account every note, not a certain scale's notes. X
  2. ... means taking into account only notes that are in our scale, not all notes. ✓

(The first definition applies to the word “chromatic”)

## 8. The absolute basics of chords



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## 8. The absolute basics of chords

These different sizes can happen in 4 different ways in triad chords:

1. The first one is major and the second minor, which would make what we call a **Major chord**.
2. The first one is minor and the second major, which makes a **minor chord**.
3. Both are minor, which makes a **diminished chord**.
4. Both are major, which makes an **augmented chord**.

For now, forget about diminished and augmented chords, we'll cover those later when you are ready. Let's focus only on Major and minor chords for now.

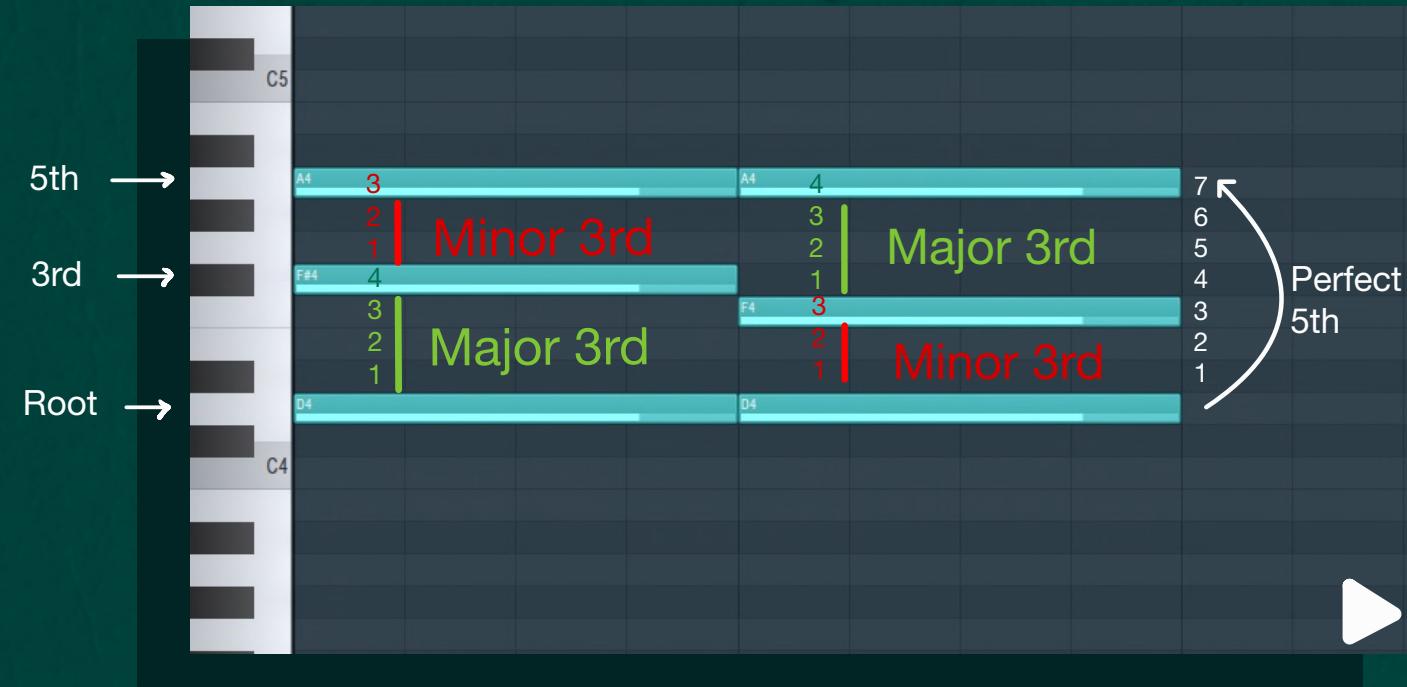
In the image below you can see a major chord right next to a minor chord. The first thing you should be able to tell is that their first and last notes are exactly in the same places.

*Side note: from now on when it comes to chords, we'll refer to the first note of the chord as “Root” (because it is what the chord is named after), to the middle note as “3rd” (because it is one third interval above the root), and to the top note as “5th” (because the top note is a fifth interval above the root. All intervals will be explained better in a bit).*

Got it? Ok, back to the chords. Here you can see that in major and minor chords, both the root and the 5th are in the same places. That's because major and minor chords can only work if the **5th interval** between the root and the 5th chord **is perfect**. (Oh yes, you thought only 3rd intervals had different levels? Think again)

When I say “perfect” I mean that this only works if the 5th is exactly 7 chromatic notes above the root. This was, is and always will be the case for major and minor chords. If the 5th were one note above or one note below exactly 7 (so 6 or 8 notes above the root), then it would no longer be a major or minor chord, it would be a different fancy chord which we'll discuss later. And again, this exists because of the way in the spaces between notes are distributed in major and minor scales (here I'm referring to that whole H and W thing from before), it just so happens that you don't always get the same distances between notes, depending on where you start counting a 5th could be 6, 7 or even 8 notes above your root.

I know this is confusing so I'll make it a little easier for you in the next page.



**But wait!**

### **Before you move on... Test your knowledge!**

This is a small set of challenges I prepare after every chapter that will help you check if you understood the contents of this lesson, and if you're ready to apply them to your music.

#### **Challenge 1:** (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next page)

- Draw a triad chord that starts on this note, then determine whether this chord is major or minor.

A piano keyboard diagram showing the C major scale. The keys are labeled C4 and C5. A teal bar highlights the first note of the scale.

#### **Challenge 2:** (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next page)

- Draw a triad chord that starts on this note, then determine whether this chord is major or minor.

A piano keyboard diagram showing the C major scale. The keys are labeled C4 and C5. A teal bar highlights the first note of the scale.

## Answer 1:

C major scale

First note

Diad chord

Triad chord

Add note one  
3rd above it

Add note one  
3rd above it

↑ 3rd

Minor 3rd

Major 3rd

Play button

## Answer 2:

C major scale

First note

Diad chord

Triad chord

Add note one  
3rd above it

Add note one  
3rd above it

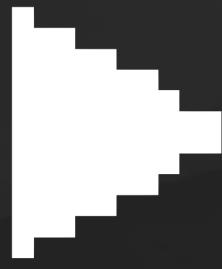
↑ 3rd

Major 3rd

Minor 3rd

Play button

# 9. Everything you need to know about intervals



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Your progress!



## 9. Everything you need to know about intervals

Ok so I know this different levels in intervals thing is confusing, so I want to make this a little more visual for you. For this, we'll use the example of a minor scale since I'm sure you're sick of major scales by this point.

First, lets start with the distance of a first. This means the distance from the note you chose to 1 intervals above it. As you can see, that's just the same note, its not even a single note above it, just the same note. So 1st intervals are always the same. They just have 1 level, easy. And since they are technically not even measuring a real distance, we call them **unison**.



Now lets move on to **2nd intervals**. Second intervals require you to move one diatonic note up or down (btw, like I said before, the word diatonic means “in the scale” so move 1 note up in the scale, which means only take into account the scale notes. Also “key” and “scale” will be used pretty much interchangeably in this course)

Anyway, second intervals, in this case its not hard to find places where one diatonic note up or down can be bigger and places where it can be smaller. So 2nd intervals have different levels too. 3 to be exact. If the 2nd is 1 **chromatic** note above the root then it is called a minor 2nd, if the 2nd is 2 **chromatic** notes above the root then it is called a major 2nd, and in rare cases (like in the Harmonic minor scale, discussed later) if it is 3 **chromatic** notes above the root, then it's called an augmented 2nd.

For this example I'm using a Harmonic minor scale, that's why the space between notes at the top is so big. Don't worry, we'll cover that scale later. I just wanted you to see what a augmented 2nd looks like.



Now before we continue, I need to talk to you a bit about **consonant and dissonant intervals**. As you know in music we have these 2 words (consonant and dissonant) to describe whether a sound is pleasant or unpleasant. Of course in reality they are much more complex than nice sound and bad sound, but for now, let's just think of them like this:

- **Consonant intervals are those that sound stable and pleasant to the ear**
- **Dissonant intervals sound tense and unstable.**

In general, consonant intervals are used more frequently in traditional Western music, while dissonant intervals are used more sparingly and for specific purposes, such as to create tension or movement in a piece.

Just so I don't have to explain this over and over again. I will include here a list of all possible intervals and whether they are consonant or dissonant. Of course whether sounds are truly consonant or dissonant depends on the culture, context, etc. but the following is largely agreed upon in most western music:

Major/minor	Status	Aug/dim	Status	Separation
Perfect Unison	Very consonant			Same pitch
Minor 2nd	Dissonant			1 Half step
Major 2nd	Consonant	Dim 3rd	Dissonant	2 Half steps
Minor 3rd	Slightly dissonant	Aug 2nd	Dissonant	3 Half steps
Major 3rd	Consonant	Dim 4th	Dissonant	4 Half steps
Perfect 4th	Consonant	Aug 3rd	Dissonant	5 Half steps
Tritone	Very dissonant	Aug 4th / Dim 5th	Dissonant	6 Half steps
Perfect 5th	Very consonant	Dim 6		7 Half steps
Minor 6th	Slightly dissonant	Aug 5th	Dissonant	8 Half steps
Major 6th	Consonant	Dim 7	Dissonant	9 Half steps
Minor 7th	Slightly dissonant	Aug 6th	Dissonant	10 Half steps
Major 7th	Consonant			11 Half steps
Perfect Octave (same as unison)	Consonant	Aug 7th	Dissonant	12 Half steps

Half steps counted chromatically!

4 Half steps, and so on.  
3 Half steps  
2 Half steps  
1 Half step  
Same pitch



For now, most of this info will not make any sense. But I promise if you come back after finishing this section on intervals you will realize how useful this truly is.

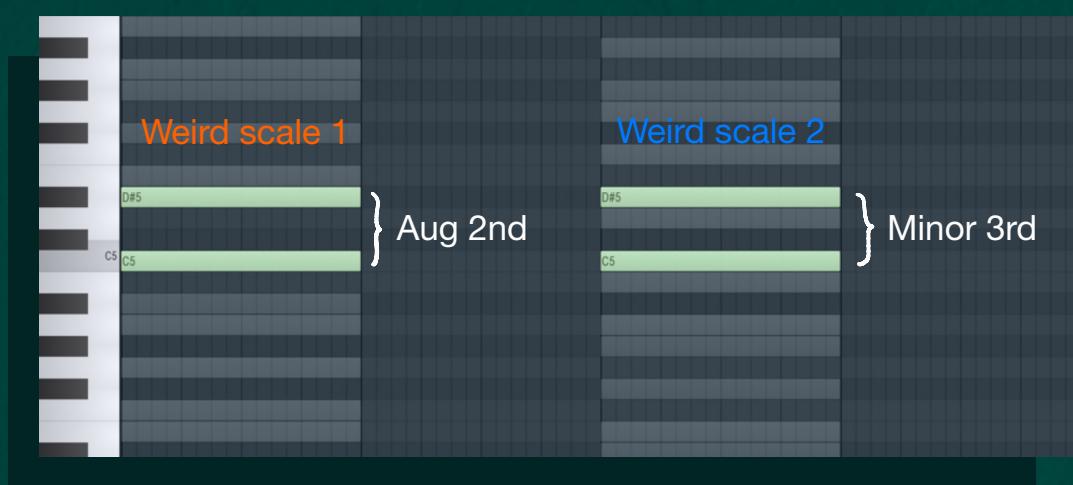
Also, commonly intervals that are dissonant want to resolve melodically either one scale note up or down, for example a major 2nd intervals want to resolve to either unison or major 3rd intervals and so on. I know I just said this like out of nowhere but it is actually really important that you remember it for melody making, so put a pin on this and come back once we're done talking about top melodies at the end of this book. Of course this is not obligatory to do, it's just how old classic music people did it, but it kinda works so keep it in mind.

Now, you might notice how the augmented and diminished intervals part are the same separations as the major and minor, and most of those even change status from consonant to dissonant even though the half step separation stays the same..

.., let me quickly explain. A 2nd interval for example, means that there are no scale notes between the first and the 2nd notes (that you used to calculate the interval in the scale). This space can be bigger or smaller but it will be a 2nd interval as long as there are no other scale notes in between.

A 3rd interval is a 3rd interval as long as there is only 1 note between the first note and the 3rd notes used to calculate the interval.

Now, it can happen that in different weird scales, you might have a space of 3 half steps with no scale notes between your 1st and 2nd notes, it can also happen that in some weird scale you might have a space of only 2 half steps between the 1st and 2nd notes. It can also happen that in that same scale there is a scale note right above our 2nd note. This would make for a minor 3rd interval in the scenario I'm currently describing, and for a aug2 in the scenario I described previously. Both are in the same note but the intervals have different names.

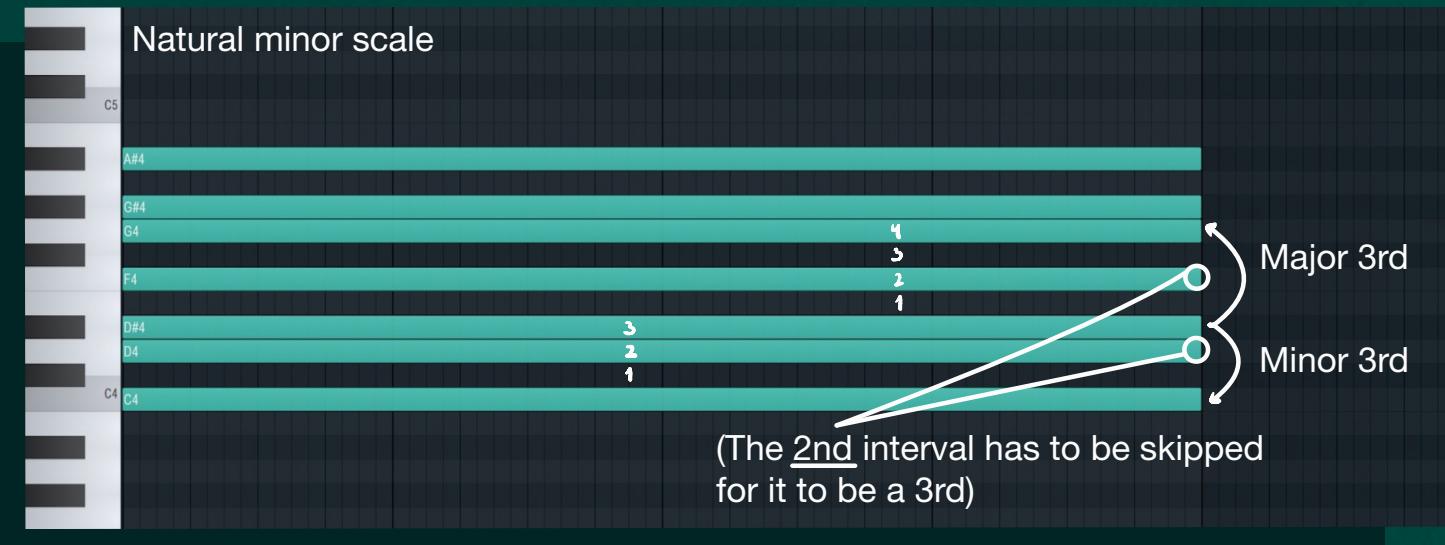


Now, why are some major/minor intervals described as consonant while for that same space their aug/dim counterparts are dissonant? I truly don't know, I honestly would just ignore those because chances are you will almost never find aug/dim intervals in the wild, except for aug 3rd intervals those are present in harmonic minor scales, but more on those in the next page.

Also, to save you some confusion, from this point on I probably will used the terms H (half step) and semitone interchangeably, that's because they essentially mean the same thing. For example the distance from root to 5th here is 7H or 7 semitones.



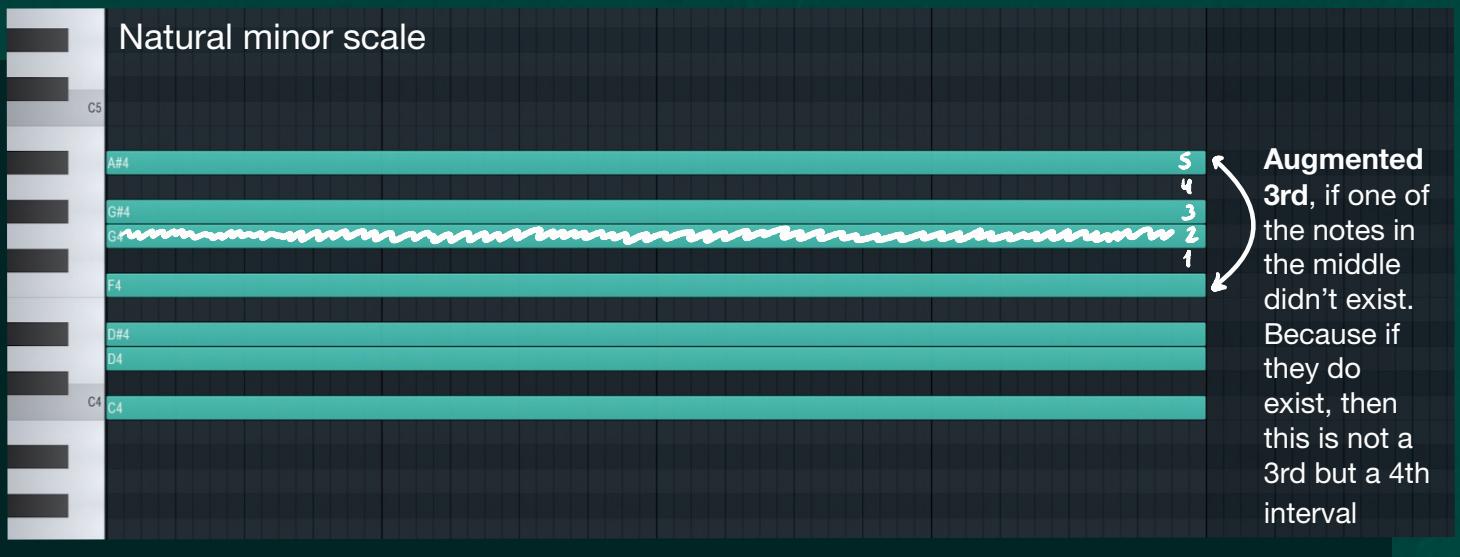
**3rd intervals.** 3rd intervals can be either major, minor, diminished or augmented. I know, this sucks, but once we get past 4th intervals I promise it will get a lot easier. So minor 3rd is when there's a 3H space between notes and major 3rd is when there are 4H space between notes, provided there is also a scale note in the middle. It is only a third as long as you can skip the 2nd interval, if you can't, then that's just a big 2nd interval, at least as far as how 99% of scales are built in the western music world. Diminished and augmented 3rds are explained below.



You may notice, that the diminished 3rd is not here, that's because for it to appear you would need 3 diatonic notes to be as close as humanly possible, which is something that happens in some scales but not in the ones we will go over (the popular ones) so forget about the diminished 3rd for this class. In the scales we will consider the max amount of closest notes consecutively together is 2, never 3.



You may also notice that the augmented 3rd is not there either. Same thing, for it to appear you would need a space this big, which simply doesn't appear in our scales, so forget about those too for this class.



**4th intervals.** 4th intervals can't be major nor minor. They can be perfect, augmented or diminished. I mean, I think maybe there technically is such a thing as major 4ths but in the scales we'll use in this course won't have it, so let's stop over complicating it and simply only count the ones we'll use. A perfect 4th is a space of 5H, 1 semitone up (so 6H) and that turns into an augmented 4th (can be found in Harmonic minor scales), 1 semitone down (so 4H) and it turns into a diminished 4th. (Semitones are the same thing as half steps btw)



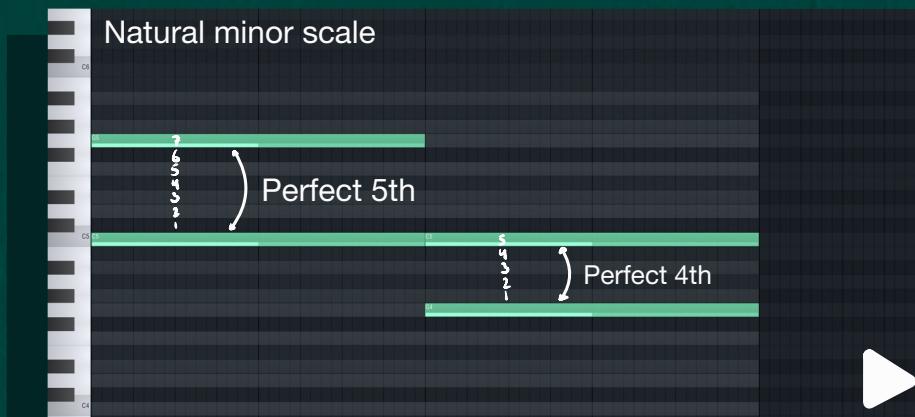
**5th intervals.** Here it starts to get interesting. You see, in music we don't only count intervals within the notes of 1 single octave. We count them in all octaves, and like I told you here you have the option to either go up and count 9th, 10th, 11th intervals or go back to 2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc. Well, if you do the latter (which I recommend) something interesting happens.

Moving notes that have an interval relationship to other octaves up or down is called **inversions (more on those later)**. So basically if you move this 5th one octave down, now it's inverted.



And here is where the interesting part comes in, this used to be a perfect 5th, (because it was a space of 7H) when moved an octave down the space is now only 5H.

Also remember, in order for you to count up intervals you have to skip scale notes. A 3rd interval is only 3rd as long as it goes over the 2nd, the 5th interval is only 5th as long as it passes over the 4th and so on. Well, here you can see that one octave up it used to pass above the 4th, but now it's an octave lower, it now only passes the 2nd and 3rd, making it a 4th, a perfect 4th in fact.



But it doesn't stop there, an augmented 5th (space of 8H) when inverted turns into a diminished 4th. A diminished 5th (space of 6H, also known as a "tritone", explanation of this later) when inverted turns into an augmented 4th.



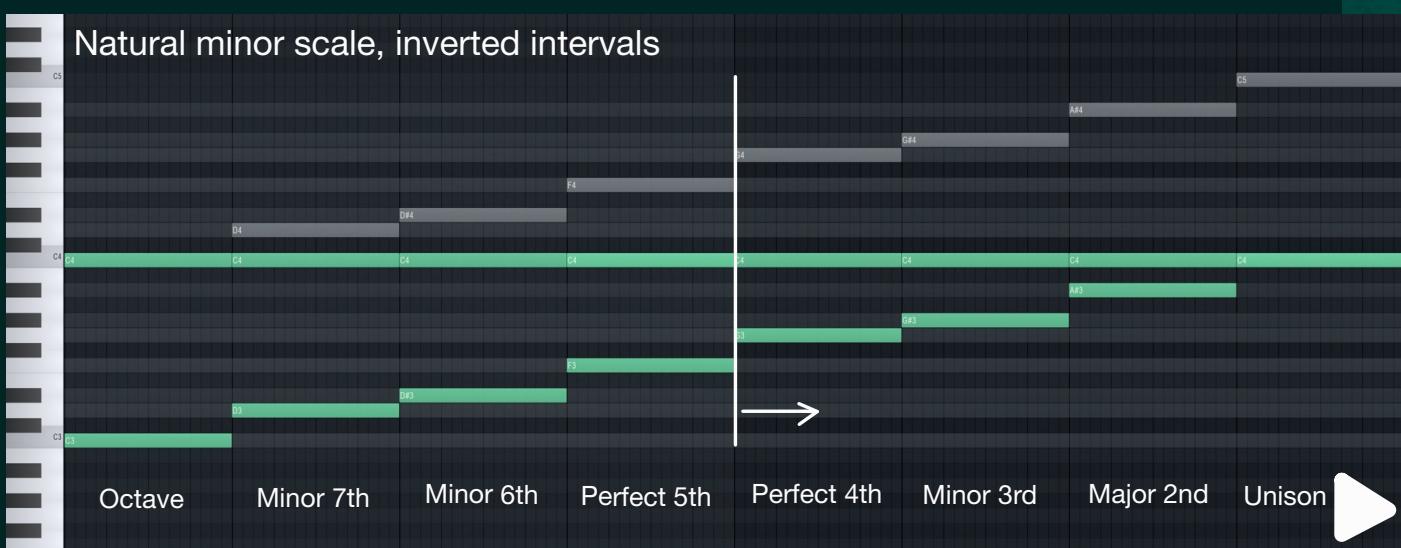
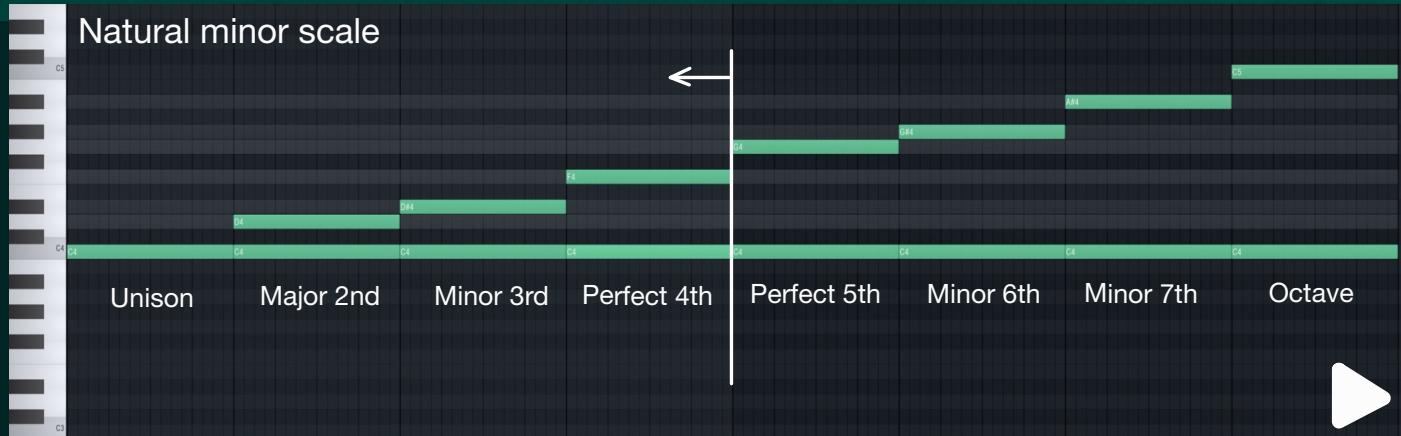
And this crazy characteristic also exists in 6th and 7th intervals.

So basically, the **2nd** interval inverts to the **7th** and vice versa

The **3rd** interval inverts to the **6th** and vice versa

And the **4th** interval inverts to the **5th** interval and vice versa.

And the **1** inverts to the **1**, no changes there.



So what I'm saying is: 2nd 3rd and 4th intervals are mirror images of 5th, 6th and 7th ones.

So with that logic, since the 3rd has major, minor, augmented and diminished intervals, the 6th must also have them right? Yes. Major 6ths (9H) invert to minor 3rds, minor 6ths (8H) invert to major 3rds, diminished 6ths (7H) to augmented 3rds and augmented 6ths (10H) to diminished 3rds. I know this sounds very confusing, so in the next page I'll add a little summary. (Plus here you can see once again all the different intervals and whether they are consonant or dissonant)

Major/minor	Status	Aug/dim	Status	Separation
Perfect Unison	Very consonant			Same pitch
Minor 2nd	Dissonant			1 Half step
Major 2nd	Consonant	Dim 3rd	Dissonant	2 Half steps
Minor 3rd	Slightly dissonant	Aug 2nd	Dissonant	3 Half steps
Major 3rd	Consonant	Dim 4th	Dissonant	4 Half steps
Perfect 4th	Consonant	Aug 3rd	Dissonant	5 Half steps
Tritone	Very dissonant	Aug 4th / Dim 5th	Dissonant	6 Half steps
Perfect 5th	Very consonant	Dim 6		7 Half steps
Minor 6th	Slightly dissonant	Aug 5th	Dissonant	8 Half steps
Major 6th	Consonant	Dim 7	Dissonant	9 Half steps
Minor 7th	Slightly dissonant	Aug 6th	Dissonant	10 Half steps
Major 7th	Consonant			11 Half steps
Perfect Octave (same as unison)	Consonant	Aug 7th	Dissonant	12 Half steps

So by now you probably have noticed 2 patterns:

**The first** one is going from diminished to augmented:

**In the case of major/minors:**

1. Diminished + 1 Semitone (1H up or down) = minor
2. Minor + 1 Semitone = Major
3. Major + 1 semitone = Augmented

So:

Diminished < minor < Major < Augmented

(This also works the other way around, with -1 from augmented all the way to diminished)

**And of course in the case of perfects:**

1. Diminished + 1 Semitone = Perfect
2. Perfect + 1 Semitone = Augmented

So:

Diminished < Perfect < Augmented

**The second** pattern you noticed is inversions:

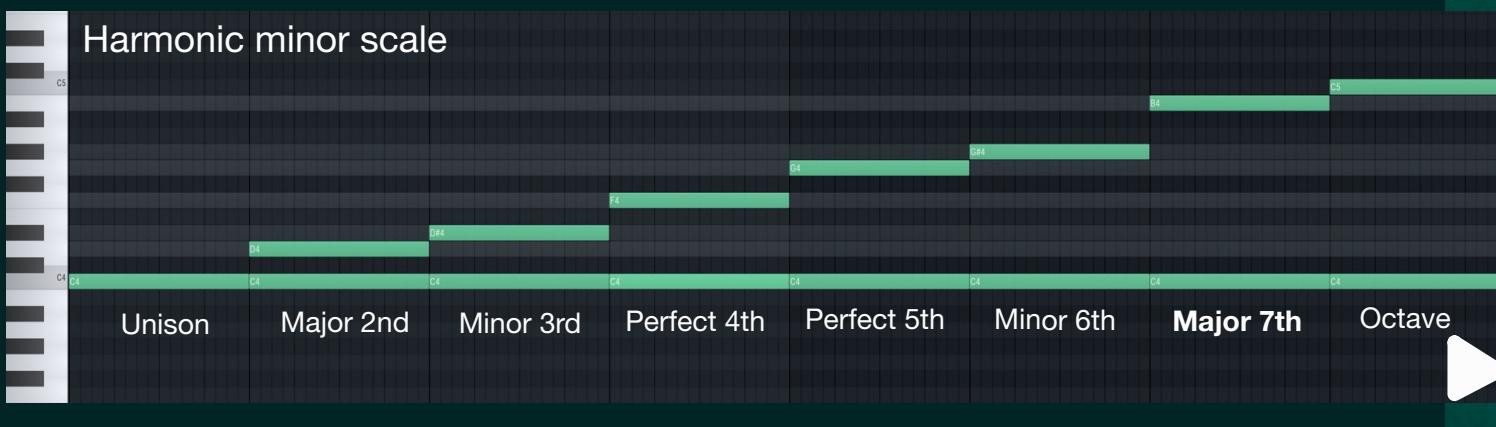
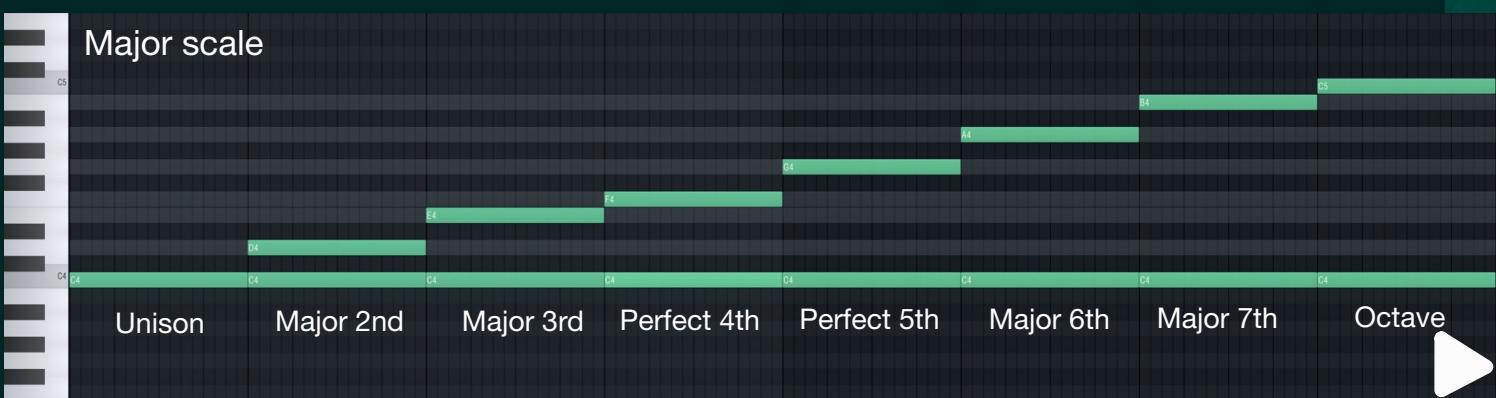
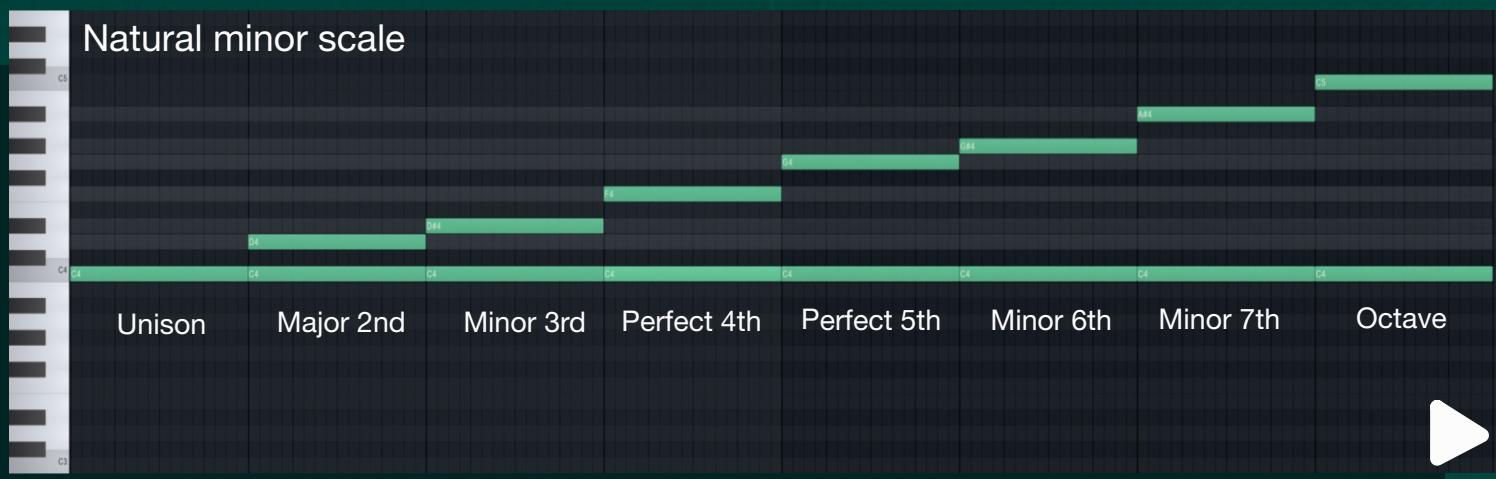
1. Augmented inverts to Diminished (and vice versa)
2. Major inverts to minor (and vice versa)
3. Perfect inverts to Perfect (and vice versa)

I get this might still be confusing but don't worry, I'll add a nice simpler summary of all this as soon as we're done with 7th intervals. So let's get to it.

Remember how the diminished 2nd was really a unison (or 1st interval)? Well, so is it's inversion the augmented 7th (12H) so you can also forget about this one.

But other than that, business as usual: augmented 2nd inverts to diminished 7th (9H), Major 2nd inverts to minor 7th (10H) and minor 2nd inverts to major 7th (11H).

And with that, we're done. Those are all the statuses of the types of intervals you need to know. I have made you a simple summary so you never forget them.



Major/minor	Status	Aug/dim		Status	Separation
Perfect Unison	Very consonant				Same pitch
Minor 2nd	Dissonant				1 Half step
Major 2nd	Consonant	Dim 3rd		Dissonant	2 Half steps
Minor 3rd	Slightly dissonant	Aug 2nd		Dissonant	3 Half steps
Major 3rd	Consonant	Dim 4th		Dissonant	4 Half steps
Perfect 4th	Consonant	Aug 3rd		Dissonant	5 Half steps
Tritone	Very dissonant	Aug 4th / Dim 5th		Dissonant	6 Half steps
Perfect 5th	Very consonant	Dim 6			7 Half steps
Minor 6th	Slightly dissonant	Aug 5th		Dissonant	8 Half steps
Major 6th	Consonant	Dim 7		Dissonant	9 Half steps
Minor 7th	Slightly dissonant	Aug 6th		Dissonant	10 Half steps
Major 7th	Consonant				11 Half steps
Perfect Octave (same as unison)	Consonant	Aug 7th		Dissonant	12 Half steps

## But wait!

### Before you move on... Test your knowledge!

This is a small set of challenges I prepare after every chapter that will help you check if you understood the contents of this lesson, and if you're ready to apply them to your music.

#### Challenge 1: (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next page)

- Can you name all the following intervals, as well as identifying whether they are major, minor, perfect, etc.?
- (as a bonus challenge after doing this try and guess which scale this is)

Scale: ?

C0  
E1  
F1  
G1  
A1  
B1  
C2  
E2  
F2  
G2  
A2  
B2  
C3  
E3  
F3  
G3  
A3  
B3  
C4  
E4  
F4  
G4  
A4  
B4  
C5

?

?

?

?

?

?

?

?

#### Challenge 2: (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next page)

- Can you identify whether the following intervals are consonant or dissonant? (important to know before making a top melody)

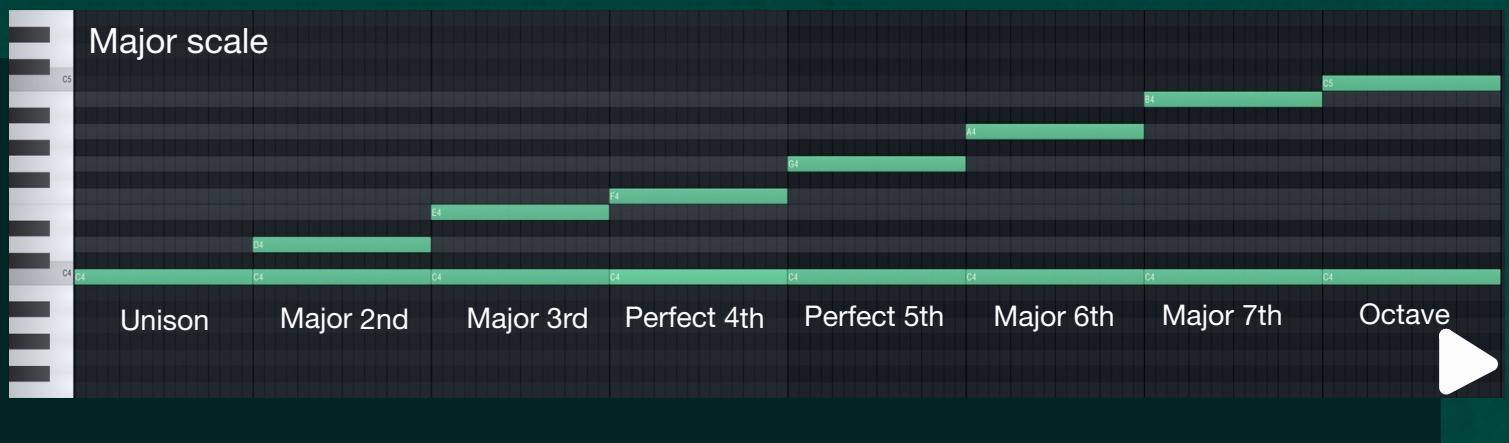
Major/minor	Status	Aug/dim	Status	Separation
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Perfect 4th	Consonant	Aug 3rd	Dissonant	5 Half steps
Tritone	Dissonant	Aug 4th / Dim 5th	Dissonant	6 Half steps
Perfect 5th	Consonant	Dim 6		7 Half steps
Minor 6th	Slightly dissonant	Aug 5th	Dissonant	8 Half steps
Major 6th	Consonant	Dim 7	Dissonant	9 Half steps
Minor 7th	Slightly dissonant	Aug 6th	Dissonant	10 Half steps
Major 7th	Consonant			11 Half steps
Perfect Octave (same as unison)	Consonant	Aug 7th	Dissonant	12 Half steps

#### Challenge 3: (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next page)

- Complete the following sentences:

1. Augmented inverts to \_\_\_\_\_
2. Major inverts to \_\_\_\_\_
3. Perfect inverts to \_\_\_\_\_

## Answer 1:



## Answer 2:

Major/minor	Status	Aug/dim	Status	Separation
Perfect Unison	Very consonant			Same pitch
Minor 2nd	Dissonant			1 Half step
Major 2nd	Consonant	Dim 3rd	Dissonant	2 Half steps
Minor 3rd	Slightly dissonant	Aug 2nd	Dissonant	3 Half steps
Major 3rd	Consonant	Dim 4th	Dissonant	4 Half steps
Perfect 4th	Consonant	Aug 3rd	Dissonant	5 Half steps
Tritone	Very dissonant	Aug 4th / Dim 5th	Dissonant	6 Half steps
Perfect 5th	Very consonant	Dim 6		7 Half steps
Minor 6th	Slightly dissonant	Aug 5th	Dissonant	8 Half steps
Major 6th	Consonant	Dim 7	Dissonant	9 Half steps
Minor 7th	Slightly dissonant	Aug 6th	Dissonant	10 Half steps
Major 7th	Consonant			11 Half steps
Perfect Octave (same as unison)	Consonant	Aug 7th	Dissonant	12 Half steps

## Answer 3:

1. Augmented inverts to Diminished (and vice versa)
2. Major inverts to minor (and vice versa)
3. Perfect inverts to Perfect (and vice versa)

# 10. All you need to know about chords (kind of)

The “kind of” is there because there is still a lot left to know about chords like inversions, doubling, suspensions, extensions, etc. but if you are going to learn something and nothing else, it should be the content of this chapter...



**UNLOCK VIDEO**

Watch and exclusive video explanation of this chapter.

(Only available on ‘Red’ version)



Your progress!



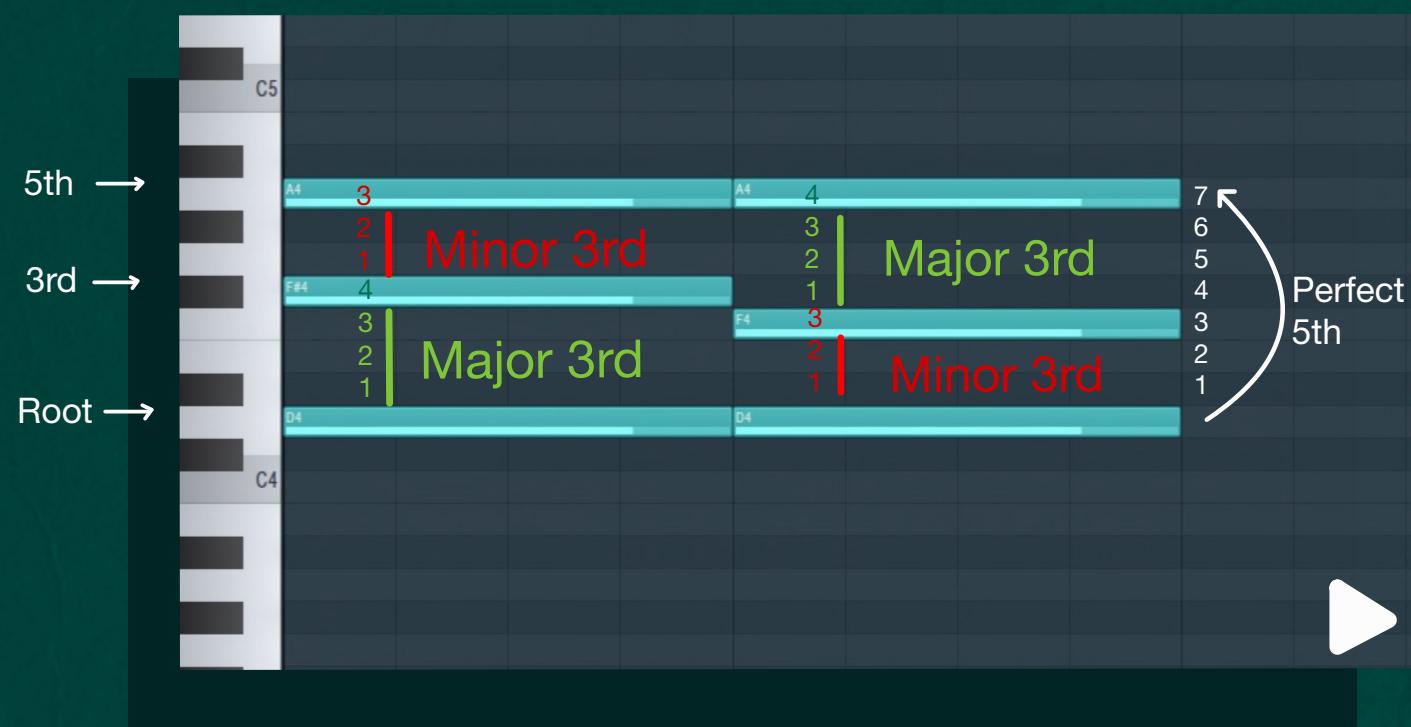
The following is a simple explanation of how basic triad chords work. If you're on the free version, then you were not able to read the chapter before this one, which explains everything you need to know about intervals in music. Don't worry, I'll get you up to speed in a bit.

## 10. All you need to know about chords (kind of)

Now that you know them (referring to intervals) you might be asking yourself, how is knowing the different statuses of the types of intervals going to help me? Isn't this just a bunch of unnecessary, over complicated nonsense? And the answer is (surprisingly) no. It actually is very useful. Let me explain.

Knowing the different statuses helps you understand why scales sound the way they do and, even more important, why chords sound the way they do (remember we were talking about simple triad chords before I put you through all this nonsense? We're finally going to finish understanding them).

Let's rewind to where we last saw triad chords, to this image:



Back at this point, all you knew was that triad chords were built on a root, a third and a fifth, with spaces of third intervals between them. And you knew that those intervals could be major or minor. Now you know that there are also augmented and diminished 3rd intervals but forgot about those because in our scales they don't appear.

You also knew that the combination of major and minor created either major or minor chords. Either the major 3rd comes first making it a major chord, or the minor 3rd interval comes first making it a minor chord.

Got that? Ok, so now you know how major and minor chords are built.

You pick a note, and follow your scale notes up one third (which means you skip the scale note directly above), place the 3rd note...

...then up a third again (so skip another scale note) to place the 5th, and based on which 3rd is bigger you'll know you have either a major or a minor chord.

The diagram illustrates the construction of a minor chord on the note C4. It shows a piano keyboard with keys highlighted in blue. A vertical stack of three blue bars represents the notes of the chord: a Root note (C4), a 3rd (E4), and a 5th (G4). Above the notes, arrows indicate the intervals: '↑ 3rd' points from the Root to the 3rd, and '↑ 3rd' points from the 3rd to the 5th. Labels on the right side explain the process: 'Add note one 3rd above it' is shown twice, once for the 3rd and once for the 5th. The 3rd is labeled '3rd' and the 5th is labeled '5th'. The bottom note is labeled 'Root note'. The text 'Minor chord' is centered below the notes.

The diagram illustrates the construction of a major chord on the note C4. It shows a piano keyboard with keys highlighted in blue. A vertical stack of three blue bars represents the notes of the chord: a Root note (C4), a 3rd (E4), and a 5th (G4). Above the notes, arrows indicate the intervals: '↑ 3rd' points from the Root to the 3rd, and '↑ 3rd' points from the 3rd to the 5th. Labels on the right side explain the process: 'Add note one 3rd above it' is shown twice, once for the 3rd and once for the 5th. The 3rd is labeled '3rd' and the 5th is labeled '5th'. The bottom note is labeled 'Root note'. The text 'Major chord' is centered below the notes.

Easy right? We'll, like always, it's about to get more complex.

At this point I had told you that this combination made it so that the 5th would always be a perfect interval (meaning always 7 scale notes up from the root).

But triad chords don't always combine one major and one minor third. Sometimes both 3rds will be minor and sometimes both 3rds will be major. This gives birth to our next chords: the **augmented and diminished triad chords**. (Not to be confused with **augmented and diminished intervals**, of course. They are not the same but you will find out that they are closely connected to each other).

*(Quick interruption, I know I still have not said "major chords are happy and minor chords are sad, etc., etc." that's because the way they make you feel have a lot to do with which root they have in which scale, but to explain that first you need to know Aug and Dim chords, otherwise our scale chords won't be complete, so that explanation comes right after this.)*

**Diminished chords.** Diminished chords are triad chords built on 2 minor 3rd intervals. That means the root is separated from the 3rd by a minor 3rd interval and that 3rd is separated from the 5th by another minor 3rd interval. These chords do not appear as often in our scales as major and minor chords but they still do, so we need to know them.

Major chord	Minor chord	Diminished chord
C5	E4	G#4
minor 3rd	Major 3rd	minor 3rd
F#4	A4	B4
Major 3rd	minor 3rd	minor 3rd
D4	D4	D5
C4		

As you can see, these minor 3rd intervals together make it so that the 5th note is one semitone lower than the perfect 5th we're used to in major and minor chords. And as you know when you make a perfect interval one semitone smaller it turns into a... diminished interval, so that's why it's called a diminished chord. A diminished 5th interval can also be called a "Tritone".

Natural minor scale		Diminished Chord	
C5		G#4	6H
			5H
		F4	4H
		D4	3H
			2H
			1H
C4			

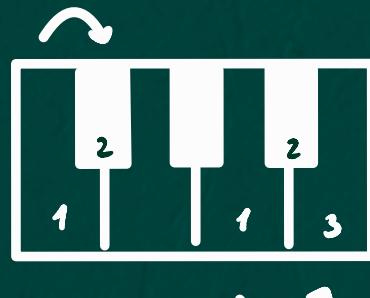
The Tritone is a uniquely awful sounding harmony which can be used to make things sound unsettling and out of place. That's why trap beats love this chord, but we're getting ahead of ourselves. Before we discuss the different effects of chords we have to go over one last chord, the Augmented chord.

Also the diminished chord doesn't necessarily sound 'awful', it can be a very beautiful chord sometimes, but the unstableness of its sound makes it perfect for creating an unsettling feeling.

Quick reminder of what a ‘semitone’ is:

### Half Step (H), also called semitone

(Meaning next note up or down)



Whole Step (W)

**Augmented chords.** Augmented chords are triad chords built on 2 major 3rd intervals. That means the root is separated from the 3rd by a major 3rd interval and that 3rd is separated from the 5th by another major 3rd interval.

This combination makes the usual perfect 5th change size again, it makes it one semitone bigger. And as you know: Perfect interval + 1 semitone = Augmented interval, so that's where the name augmented comes from, from the augmented 5th interval in the chord.

Ok so now you know all important triad chords (there are still a few left but you'll learn about them later). For now, we have everything we need to start discussing the different chords in our scales and what they do. So let's get to it.

Before we start you need to know that a chord can have different effects depending on which chords it is paired with, the instrument used to play it, the tempo at which it is played, its number in the scale, etc. Its number in the scale is especially interesting though, it helps us assign each chord what's called a **Harmonic function**, this is the tendency of certain chords to progress to other chords, or to remain at rest. Each function will be explained in the next section.

To better understand the effects of the different chords, we need to understand what these numbers in the scale even mean. These numbers behave a bit differently depending on which scale you're using. So we'll first look at the major scale, then the minor scales.

Before we start remember that scale degrees are not the same as notes. The C note will always be a C note, but a ^1 scale degree can be any note of the scale depending on which scale you're using. If you're using a Cmaj scale, then C would be ^1, but if you're using an Amin scale, then A would be ^1 and so on. Here's a visual example on that:

At first sight both of these Progression do not look the same, but once you take into account their respective scales and scale degrees, you'll find that both of this chords follow a 1 - 4 progression. (Meaning these chords are built using scale degrees 1 and 4 as roots, better explained in the following section)



Understanding how important scale degrees are in music will help you a lot when it comes to writing music. Because you'll find that a lot of very popular songs have very similar bases if not the exact same. Finding those patterns and similarities will help you to never go blank when it comes to writing music, because you'll know common trap chord progression, emotional progression, happy progression, etc. + typical ways to resolve them so you can choose to go standard or purposefully make something unexpected.

For example here are some songs that use the very common 1 - 6 - 3 sad chord progression: (This whole 'numbers instead of chord names' thing is also explained in the following section)

	1 - 6 - 3 - 7
Ed Sheeran - Happier	i7 - VI - III
Sam Smith - Stay With Me	i - VI - III
GBW - Say Something	i - VI - III - VIIsus4
Dean Lewis - Be Alright	i - VI - III - VII

At first sight, these songs do not sound very similar, but they all use the same base.

Now that you know how important scale degrees are, let's take a deeper look into every scale degree:

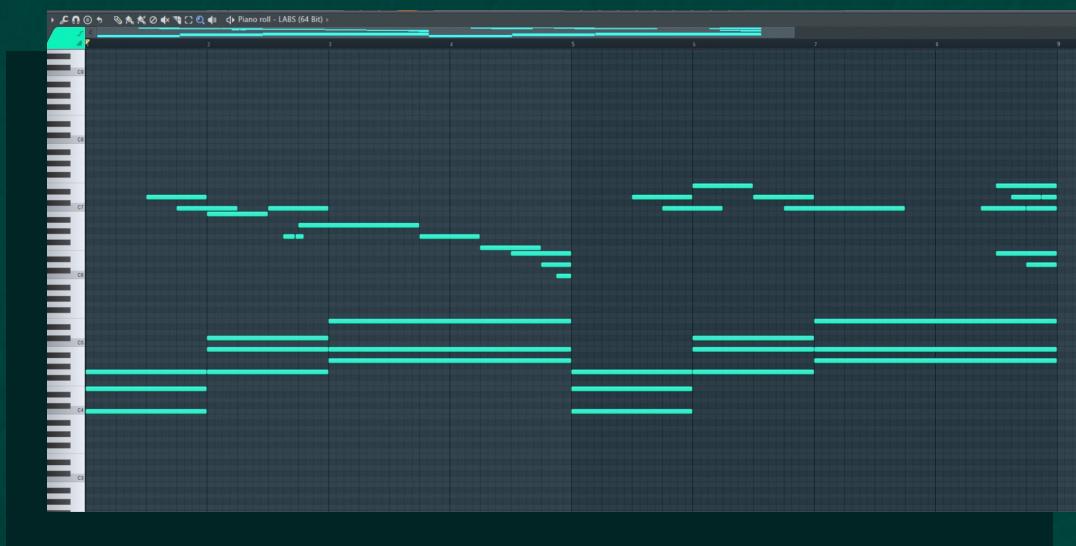
**But wait!**

## **Before you move on... Test your knowledge!**

This is a small set of challenges I prepare after every chapter that will help you check if you understood the contents of this lesson, and if you're ready to apply them to your music.

### **Challenge 1:** (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next page)

- The following melody in the scale of C major has 3 chords, 2 of those chords have been created without proper knowledge of how chords are built, making the progression sound amateur and not good.
- Your task is finding where the problem lies in these 2 chords and fixing it.

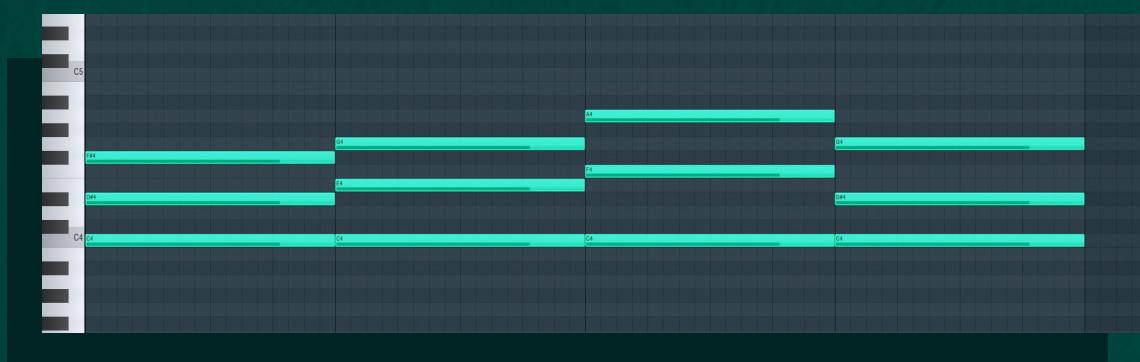


**Download MIDI to participate  
(Chapter 10 - challenge 1)**

**If you use FL studio. Tap here to  
learn how to see your scale notes.**

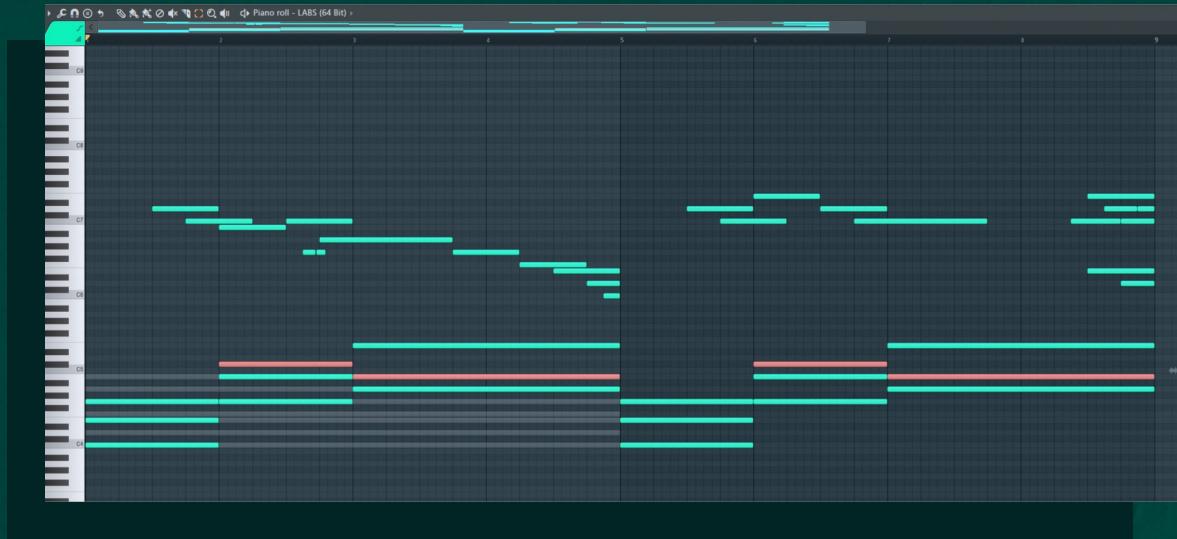
### **Challenge 2:** (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next page)

- Which of the following chords is the augmented chord and which is the diminished? (The other 2 are major and minor chords)



## Answer 1:

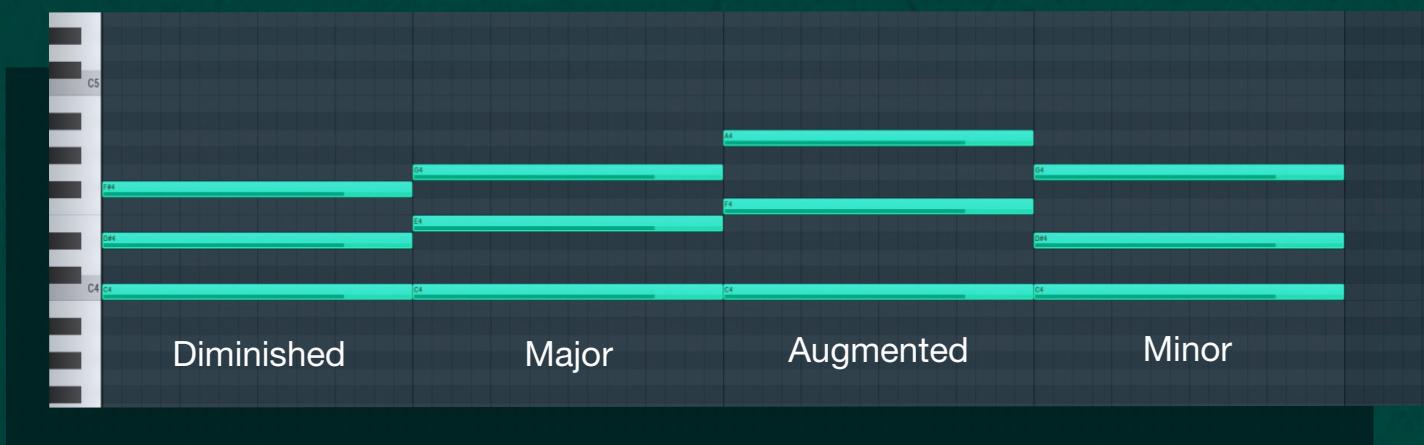
- The problem was on the second and third chords.
- The second chord's 5th was missing, and instead we had an out of place C# note.
- The third chord's 3rd was missing, and instead we had an out of place B note.
- There are many ways to interpret a chord progression, so if your solution doesn't look like this, don't worry. As long as you applied third intervals between the notes of your chords you did it correctly.



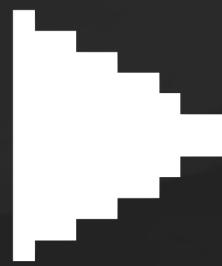
[Download MIDI answer  
\(Chapter 10 - answer 1\)](#)

## Answer 2:

- If you look closely, you'll see that both spaces between notes are equally small in the first chord and equally big in the third chord. While chords 2 and 4 have 1 space bigger than the other.



# 11. Degrees in a major scale (and the chords built on top of them)



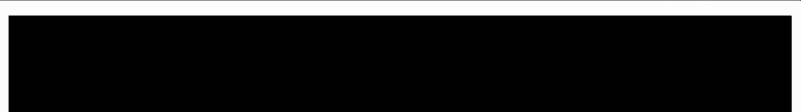
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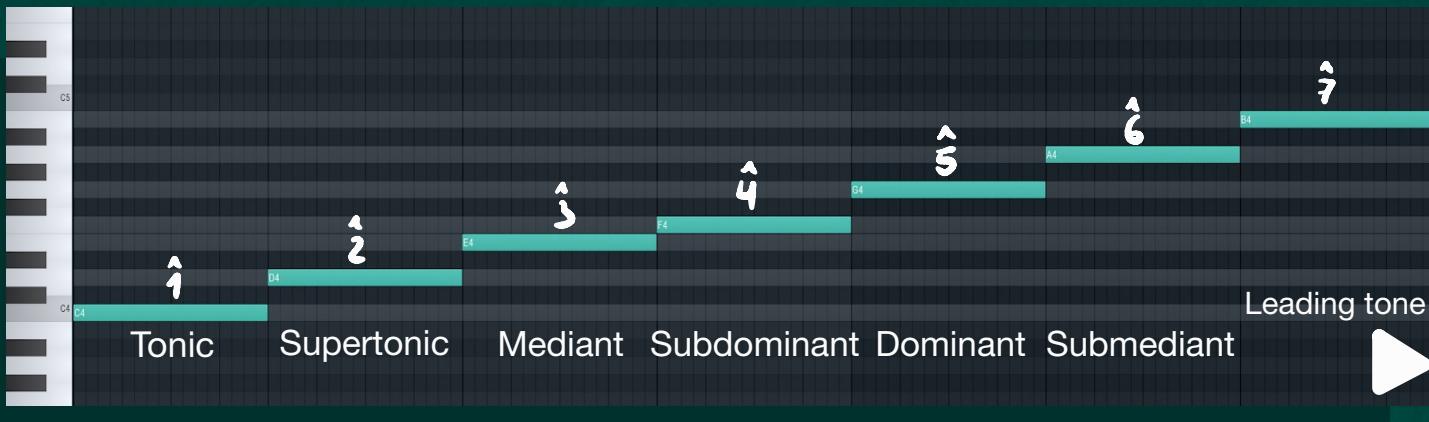


## 11. degrees in a major scale (and the chords built on top of them):

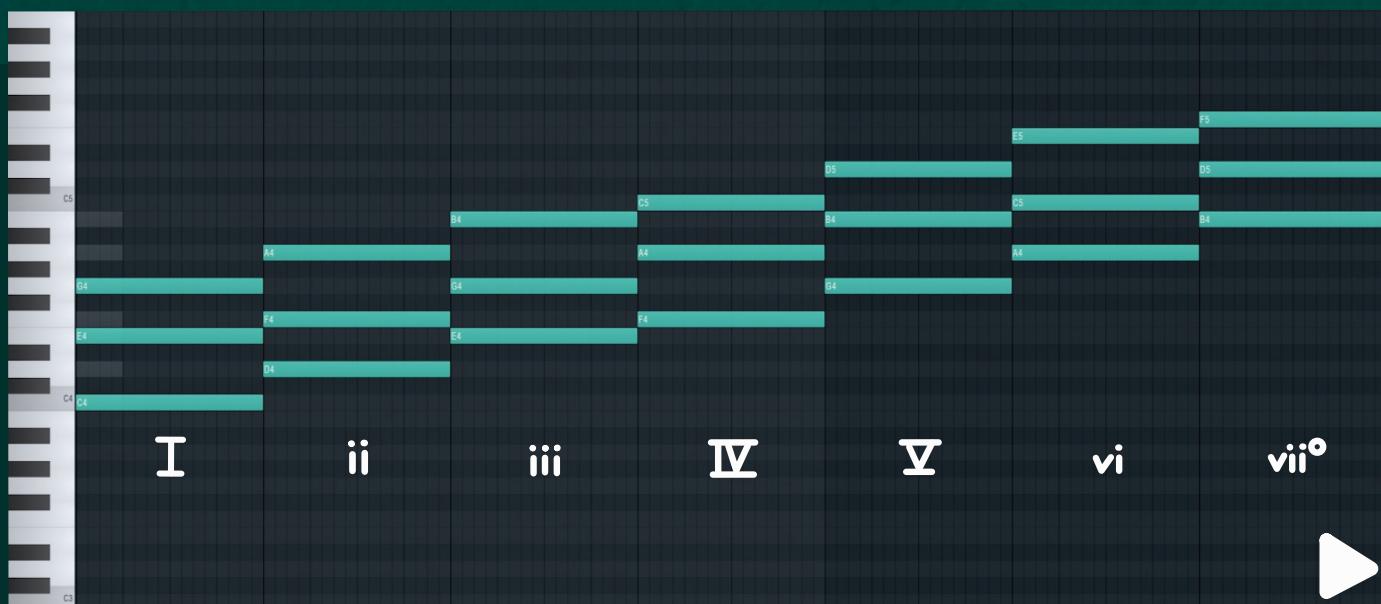
The major scale is built off of 7 notes (as you know, using these formula: W W H W W W H), each one of these notes is a scale degree (from  $\hat{1}$  to  $\hat{7}$ ). Each one of these 7 scale degrees has a name, the names are as follows:



### Scale degree names: (Major scale)



As you know, all triad chords need a root, a third and a fifth. Well, this 7 notes are all the 7 root notes in a major scale, which means that there are only 7 triad chords in a major scale. Those chords are the following (Roman numerals explained on the next pages):



Now we'll go over each scale degree and the chord built on top of them.

## Tonic: Major scale degree ^1

Tonic is the first degree of the scale. The tonic note defines the name of the scale and also serves as the natural resolution point for all other notes in the scale, it holds the feeling of “home” (explained at the end of this page).

The tonic chord is made out of the tonic note (or scale degree ^1), the mediant (or scale degree ^3), and the dominant (or scale degree ^5). This chord is built with these notes because one third interval above tonic is the mediant, and one third interval above the mediant is the dominant. And as you now know, triad chords are built on third intervals.

The way the notes in a major scale are separated make the tonic chord a Major chord. Its classical notation symbol is the Roman numeral for 1:

I

This number being written in the UPPER CASE and not lower case means it's a Major chord

I = Major tonic chord      i = minor tonic chord

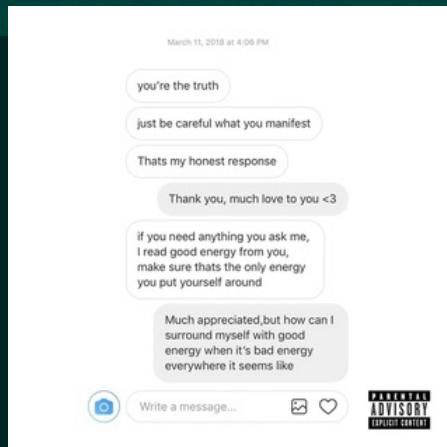


By saying that tonic has the feeling of “home”, I mean that historically tonic was the go-to chord to end a piece. It makes the chord progression feel resolved, finished. If you hear this chord after a chord progression you could hear nothing else and walk away calmly. But if you heard any other chord in the end of a progression it would feel like the progression has not finished yet, like it's still waiting to go somewhere. (That's mainly how I find the scale of a song for my video deconstructions, I find the progression then I play whatever chord I believe to be tonic and if it sounds finished, then I know I got the right scale, if not, then I keep looking). This characteristic is called **Tonic function**, and it means that tonic chords have a state of stability and rest. Tonic chords do not demand progression to other chords.

Of course most of that feeling of home on the tonic chord comes from the tonic note itself so the tonic note is also extremely common to find in top melodies and progressions for single note instruments like flutes and such.

The tonic chord nowadays is present in almost all chord progressions in rap, pop, country, etc. Most times it is the first chord of the progression in fact. That's because resolution is an important part of music, and while it is not impossible to write nice sounding music without it, most producers find that there's no replacing the tonic chord in a melody, be it in the major or minor scale.

Here are some examples of the I chord being used to start a progression:



Juice WRLD - Legends

**Video breakdown:**



Juice WRLD - Empty

**Video breakdown:**



Juice WRLD - Black & White

**Video breakdown:**

*Reminder: we are now only discussing the chords of the MAJOR SCALE, we will go over the ones of the minor scale later, but for now don't confuse them. They are pretty similar but have some key differences so please don't mix them up. We are now on the major scale. Ok, moving on.*

## Supertonic: Major scale degree ^2

Supertonic is the second degree of the scale. The supertonic note is currently extremely important for popular music and that's because of 2 things, first the 2nd scale degree offers no real ugly dissonant sound when paired with any of the 7 triad chords in a major scale, which means that it can be used the most often without sounding bad at any point. And second, because the 2nd scale degree is right in between ^1 and ^3, which as you know are part of the Tonic chord, which is the chord that holds the feeling of "home", so it can not only be paired with any chord, but it can easily resolve by moving either one scale note up or down. (Scale degrees like to resolve by moving 1 scale note up or down, so the fact that this note can do that and also land on a note of the tonic chord in either direction is pretty special).

The supertonic chord is made out of the supertonic note (or scale degree ^2), the subdominant (or scale degree ^4), and the submediant (or scale degree ^6).

The way the notes in a major scale are separated make the Supertonic chord a minor chord. It's classical notation symbol is the Roman numeral for 2 (in lower case, because it's a minor chord):

ii

A5  
F#5  
C6

Supertonic, or ii

The supertonic chord has what's called a **Pre-dominant (aka Subdominant) harmonic function**. Chords with this function are chords containing the subdominant ^4 and submediant ^6 (we'll go over those later). These chords tend to progress to chords of dominant function, meaning the V (5 in Roman numerals) and vii° (7 in Roman numerals). However I would argue that it does not move nicely to the vii°, because the vii° is such a weird chord, but we'll also go over that later.

This basically means that the supertonic chord has the tendency to go to V.

This supertonic chord also works well as a substitute for the Leading tone chord, because it shares two notes with both of them. Which causes it to also work when used next to the I chord. So it works well next to the chords I and V. It sounds especially good when the ii chord moves DOWN to the V chord because moving by an interval of a 5th (which is the distance between II and the V from an octave below) creates a good strong harmonic motion.

Here are some examples of the ii chord being used in different situations. In the first one we see it next to a V chord, in the second one we see it next to a I chord, and in the last one next to the iii chord, which also sound good because chords ii and iii are right next to eachother in the scale, this makes for a smooth transition between them:



Rosalia - Beso

Video breakdown:



Juice WRLD - Robbery

Video breakdown:



XXXTENTACION - SAD!

Video breakdown:

## Mediant: Major scale degree ^3

Mediant is the third degree of the scale. The function of the median chord is a lot harder to define than the tonic or supertonic. I like to think that rather than having a strictly tonic, subdominant or dominant function (you'll understand all those 3 words in a bit) the mediant has a **prolongation function**. By that I mean that the function of the mediant chord doesn't depend so much in the chord itself but rather the context it is put into. If you use it after the I chord then it adapts into a tonic function, because it prolongs the feeling of tonic or "home", and if you put it next to a V chord then it prolongs the feeling of dominant (explained later), so it adapts to a dominant function.

The reason behind this is that the mediant chord is built on  $\wedge 3 \wedge 5 \wedge 7$ , and in this case the mediant ( $\wedge 3$ ) note has a feeling of tonic while the leading tone ( $\wedge 7$ ) has a strong dominant feeling, so the 2 are clashing in one chord giving the mediant triad this cool characteristic.

(Note: a lot of people have their mind made up that the mediant chord is either just tonic or just dominant function, this last part was just my experience with the chord)

The way the notes in a major scale are separated make the Mediant chord a minor chord. Its classical notation symbol is the Roman numeral for 3 (in lower case, because it's a minor chord):

iii

Mediant, or iii

The fact that the mediant chord is a minor chord and also the fact that it is just a 3rd interval above tonic (3rd interval moves are considered a **weak motion**, because only 1 note changes when going from one chord a 3rd interval up or down. ALSO REMEMBER, a movement of a 5th interval is a strong move, I told you that in the previous page. So 3rd interval move is weak and 5th interval move is strong) gives this chord a special feature.

Natural minor scale

3rd interval

i      III      ii°

Natural minor scale

5th interval

i      III      v

The special feature it has is that going from I to iii can make a progression in the Major scale sound sad. I know I said that a I - iii made the iii have a tonic prolongation function, and that is still true, but on top of that it also helps give us a more serious melancholic feeling.

So the mediant chord is not only a way to keep the tonic feeling of “home” while letting us change the chord so the progression is less boring, it is also a great way to introduce a feeling of sadness to your track.

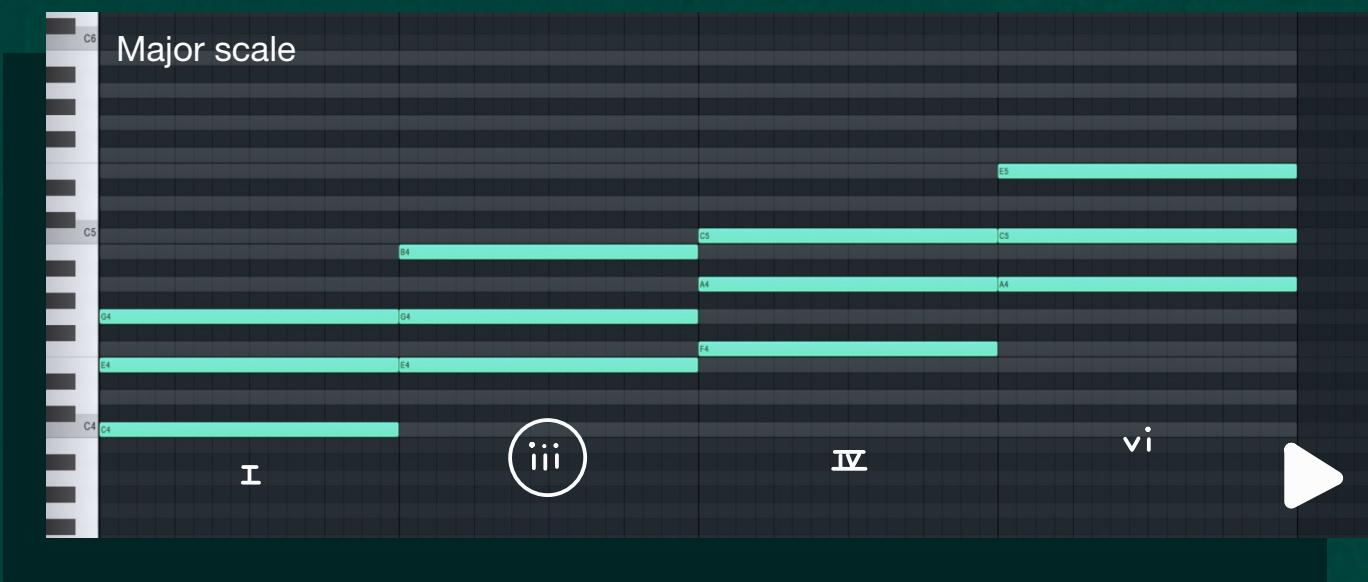
This sad feeling in my experience can also be there even if not played right after the I chord, here are some sad song examples:

	1 - 3 - 4
Ed Sheeran - Supermarket Flowers	I - iii - IV
	1 - 4 - 6 - 3
Joschua Bassett - Crisis	I - IV - vi - iii
	1 - 6 - 3 - 4
Adele - Easy On Me	I - vi7 - iii - IV7

The mediant chord also leads very nicely to the IV (4 in Roman numerals) chord, so a very common progression nowadays is the I then iii and lastly IV. Well, not lastly, the IV leads nicely to either the I (plagal cadence) or the V (authentic cadence), and the V leads nicely to the I so the last chord usually is the I but I'm getting ahead of myself.

(I'll also explain that cadence thing in 2 pages)

Lastly I wanna say that the iii chord, much like all other chords, can be paired with any chord, and it's really up to you to make it sound good. After all there are no absolutes in music. But most often you will see it being used next to I, IV or vi (6 in Roman numerals).



## Subdominant: Major scale degree ^4

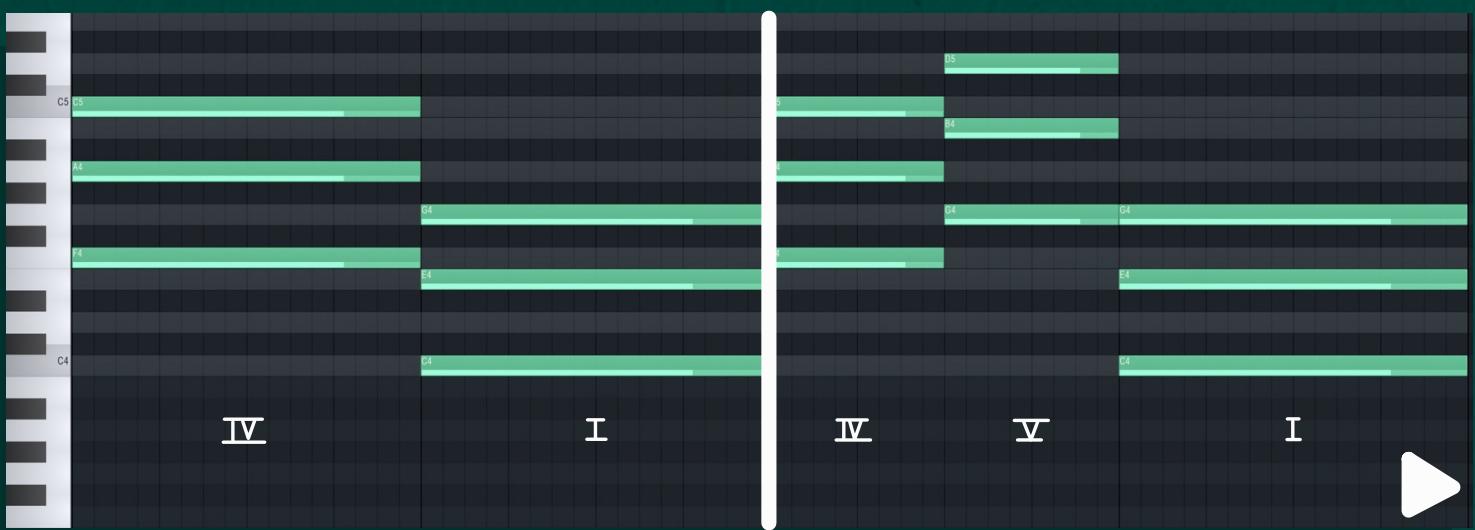
Subdominant is the fourth degree of the scale. Much like the second degree in the scale, the subdominant chord (made from scale degrees ^4, ^6 and ^1) is often used for moving between Triads with more weight or resolution, it has a **predominant (aka subdominant) function**, which means it leads nicely to V. But unlike the ii, the VI can also resolve pretty effectively to the tonic chord or I.

It is classically used as a precursor to the V chord to help it form an authentic cadence (when the progression ends on chords V - I, this is the most common way to end a progression in classical music), or before I to form a plagal cadence (progression ends on IV - I, this is not as strong of an end as the V - I, and that's because the IV or "subdominant" chord does not have a super strong feeling of "away from home" which the V does have, that's because one of the notes of the IV is the ^1 which is arguably the most important component of the tonic chord).

(Word cadence explained later, but it basically means way to end chord sequence)

The way the notes in a major scale are separated make the Subdominant chord a major chord. It's classical notation symbol is the Roman numeral for 4 (UPPER CASE because it's major):

IV



Note: the submediant note itself leads nicely to the ^5 and ^3, because like I said before, scale degrees like resolving either one scale note up or down. Also, pretty much all chords move nicely to their nearest chord (like IV with iii and V) because of this same principle.

In my opinion, the IV chord is kind of a chill chord, often you will hear it in melodic beats because it can add to the melodic richness of a track without bringing with it too much tension. You couldn't do that so easily with a chord like the iii for example (which like I told you has kind of an emotional feeling).

This characteristics makes the IV often be used in the following progressions:

Starting on a I - IV is common, also common in melodic beats is starting on a IV - I  
Ending on a IV - I is, like I said also very common  
Moving from iii to IV  
IV to V  
I've also seen vi - IV or IV - vi quite often

Here are some examples of it being used:

Name	Chords
	1 - 3 - 4
Ed Sheeran - Supermarket Flowers	I - iii - IV
	1 - 4 - 6 - 3
Joschua Basset - Crisis	I - IV - vi - iii
	1 - 4 - 6 - 5
Clinton Kane - Chicken Tendies	I - IV9 - vi - Vsus4
Clinton Kane - IDWWTTWWSE	I - IV - vi - V
Lauv - Superhero	I - IV - vi - V
	1 - 5 - 6 - 4
Lewis Capaldi - Someone You Loved	I - V - vi - IV
	1 - 6 - 3 - 4
Adele - Easy On Me	I - vi7 - iii - IV7
	1 - 6 - 4 - 1
James Arthur - Falling Like The Stars	I - vi7 - IVsus2 - I
Olivia Rodrigo - Drivers License	I - vi - IV - I

## Dominant: Major scale degree ^5

Dominant is the fifth degree of the scale. The dominant chord is made from scale degrees ^5, ^7 and ^2. The dominant chord is the second most important chord behind the tonic chord (I chord), and that is because if the tonic is home, then the dominant chord is the further possible place from home, let me explain.

Classically, the preferred way to end a progression is by playing the dominant chord, which creates tension, and then end it on the tonic chord, which resolves that tension giving you the feeling of completion. The reason the V chord has this characteristic is because of the ^7 in it.

(As you known, the Mediant chord also has a ^7 scale degree in it, but the reason the mediant doesn't have this characteristic is because the mediant also has a ^3 in it, which has a tonic feeling. The dominant chord does not have a tonic sounding note, which lets the ^7 completely take over)

The ^7 is called the leading tone, that's because it leads to tonic. Being the last note before tonic and it also being only 1 semitone away from it gives the ^7 this feeling that the scale is almost done, but not quite yet, which makes you want to hear that final tonic sound to end it. And of course the ^5 as a root ensures a strong harmonic motion to I, since its a move of 5th interval.

A chord that has this characteristic is a chord that has a **dominant function**, which V has.



The way the notes in a major scale are separated make the Dominant chord a major chord. Its classical notation symbol is the Roman numeral for 5:

V



There are many ways to use the V chord outside the classic way of using it to end a progression on a perfect cadence of V - I (btw, the word cadence will be explained in a bit).

Most commonly the V is also used after the chords IV and ii, which have a pre-dominant function.

The V chord is also commonly used before or after the vi, since their scale degrees lead nicely to each other (especially before vi, since the vi chord has theoretically a tonic function, but more on that later). Lastly it can also be used before or after the mediant (iii) since they both share 2 scale degrees (the ^5 and ^7).

Ultimately the 5 chord is a chord that can be used next to basically any other chord as long as you know how to manage the tension that it creates. Which is something that you'll have to learn through practice and from looking at how others do it in their songs.

Here are some examples of the V chord being used. The first 2 are examples of the V chord landing on a I chord, and the last example is the IV chord leading to the V chord.



Juice WRLD - Empty

**Video breakdown:**



Juice WRLD - Black & White

**Video breakdown:**



Juice WRLD - Moonlight

**Video breakdown:**

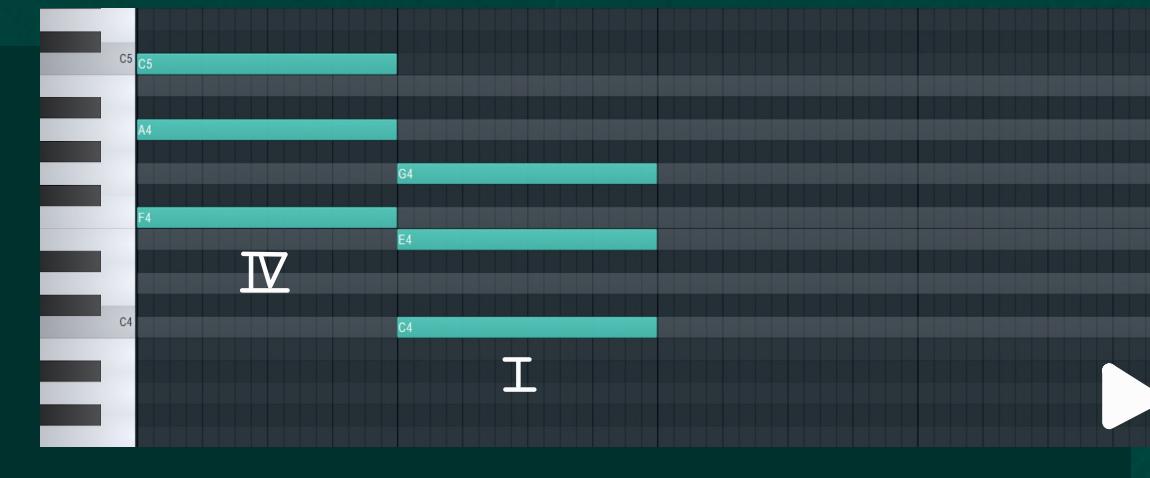
Ok, now let me quickly explain cadences to you so we can move on:

Cadence can mean both the end of a phrase or be understood as a drum line, here we're talking about ways to end a phrase or sequence of chords. These are the main different types:

1. Authentic or perfect cadence = V - I



2. Plagal cadence = IV - I



3. Half close = ends on V

4. Deceptive cadence = V - (anything except I)

Ok, so now you know what I'm talking about if I say the word cadence, let's move on..

## Submediant: Major scale degree ^6

Submediant is the 6th degree of the scale. The submediant chord is made from scale degrees ^6, ^1 and ^3. Like the mediant chord, the submediant has a **prolongation function**, but unlike the mediant, this prolongation function is not as versatile. The Submediant chord's primary function is of **tonic prolongation**, meaning it can be used as a replacement for the I chord, and it also can follow the I chord in progressions without there being a too noticeable chord change if the inversions are done correctly (don't worry about inversions for now, they'll be explained later). And that is because the tonic and submediant share degrees ^1 and ^3.

The way the notes in a major scale are separated make the submediant chord a minor chord. Its classical notation symbol is the Roman numeral for 6:

vi

Submediant, or vi

Like the tonic and subdominant chords, this is a good chord to start a progression on because it has the tonic scale degree in it, or ^1.

The subdominant chord moves nicely to or from I and IV chords because of their shared degrees (^1 and ^6 in the case of IV, and ^1 and ^3 in the case of I). But in the case of I, going from I to vi is far more common than from vi to I.

Also because of how close their scale degrees are, vi works well paired with V, with I - V - vi being one of my favorite ways to make a soulful sounding progression.

Also in a lot of sad songs, it is very common to find the vi chord going to the iii chord. (For example, in the MIDI challenge for chapter10 you just did, I'm using a I - vi - iii progression)

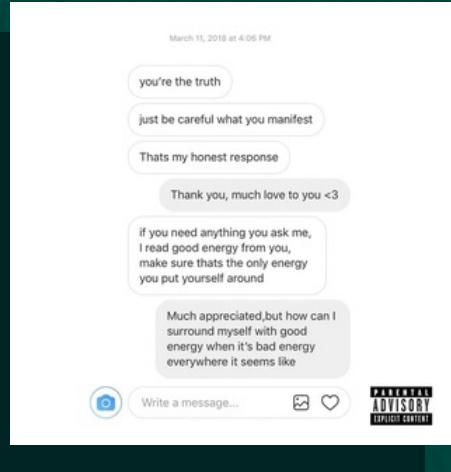
Overall, the submediant chord has kind of a sweet, not very dominant at all sound.

Here are some examples of the vi chord being used:



Beso - ii IV vi V

Video breakdown:



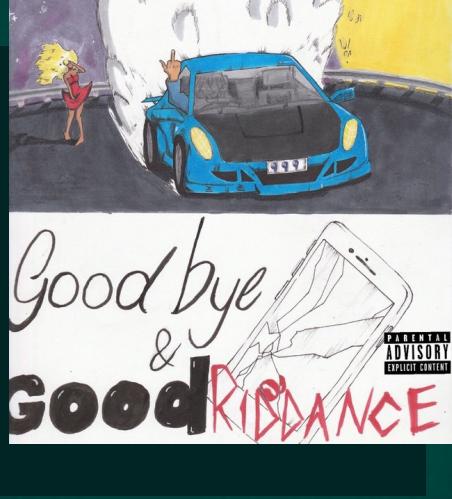
Legends - i vi III

Video breakdown:



Empty - I vi V

Video breakdown:



Black & White - I V vi V

Video breakdown:



SAD! - IV vi ii III

Video breakdown:

## Leading Tone: Major scale degree ^7

Leading tone is the 7th degree of the scale. The leading tone chord is made from scale degrees ^7, ^2 and ^4. Like the dominant chord, the leading tone has a **dominant function** (meaning it creates tension and wants to resolve to tonic), because it also has a ^7 scale degree without any tonic sounding notes in it. But unlike the dominant, the leading tone chord does not have that strong 5th interval move to tonic making this not as satisfactory of a conclusion.

The way the notes in a major scale are separated make the leading tone chord a diminished chord. Its classical notation symbol is the Roman numeral for 7:

vii<sup>o</sup> Indicates this is a diminished chord

Leading tone, or vii°

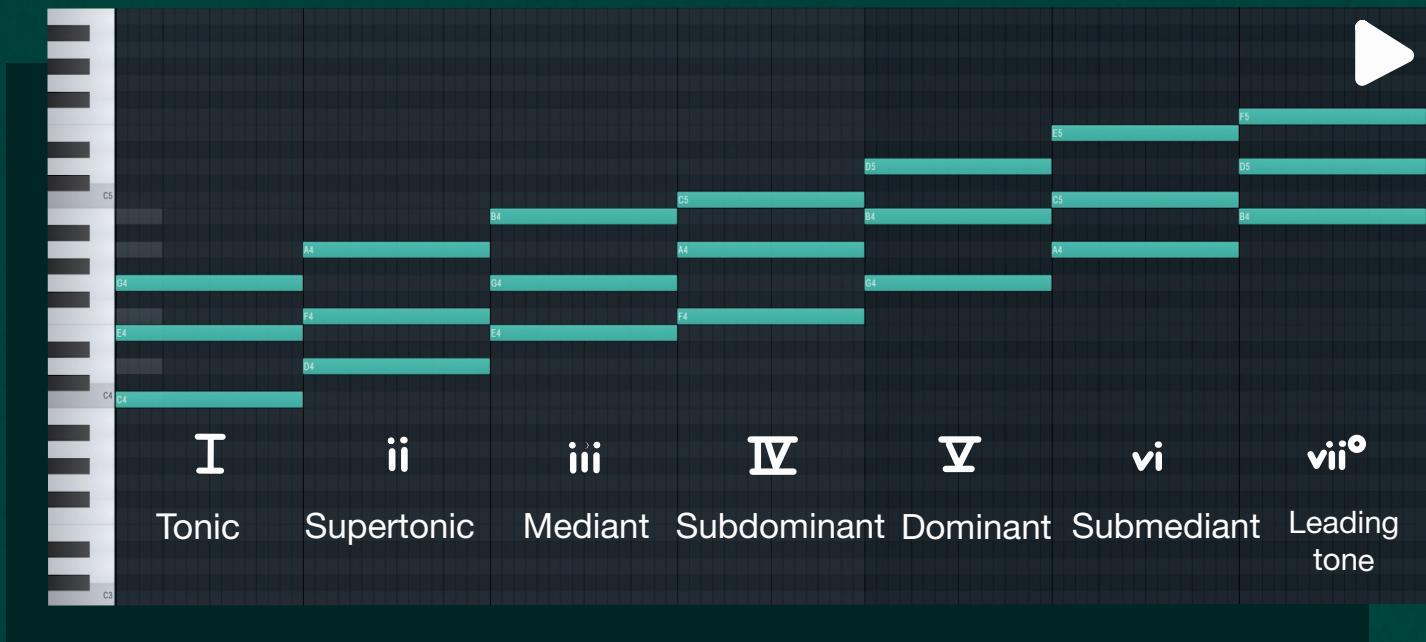
As you already know, diminished chords are built on 2 minor 3rds and contain a tritone, which make this chord sound pretty weird and not good at all. It sounds so bad in fact, that a lot of people don't even consider this a real chord on the scale but rather a V chord without the root (or scale degree ^5) and a ^4 scale degree over it.

That is not the case for the diminished chord of the minor scale, in fact, we're going to be using that chord quite often. But in the case of the major scale, I have almost never seen the leading tone chord being used in modern popular music.

Regardless of how often it's used nowadays, the leading tone chord can help add a sense of 'suspense and excitement', or 'drama and intensity' to your music, so at least try it before you decide it sounds weird.

And with that, now you know all 7 chords. I know this was probably a lot to take in in your first read so in the next page you'll see a nice little summary of the most important stuff I mentioned here so we can move on to the minor scale next.

## Summary: degrees in a major scale (and the chords built on top of them):



### Tonic chord:

Tonic function. State of stability and rest (feeling of “home”). Does not demand progression to other chords. Historically the go-to chord to start and end a piece.

### Supertonic chord:

Pre-dominant function. Tends to progress to chords of dominant function, specially when it moves down to V. Also works well as a substitute for the Leading tone chord. Supertonic note is extremely common modern music.

### Mediant chord:

Prolongation function. Prolongation effect depends on context. Helps give a progression a more serious melancholic feeling. Great for introducing a feeling of sadness.

### Subdominant chord:

Pre-dominant function. Tends to progress to chords of dominant function. Chill chord, used often in beautiful melodic beats, because it can add to the melodic richness of a track without bringing with it too much tension.

### Dominant chord:

Dominant function. Feeling of “further possible place from home”. Classically, the preferred way to end a progression. p (V - I), because it creates a lot of tension that resolves to Tonic.

### Submediant chord:

Tonic prolongation function. Can be used as a replacement of the I chord, has a sweet not very tense sound.

### Leading Tone chord:

Dominant function. Contains a tritone, which makes this chord sound pretty weird. Can be used to create a sense of ‘suspense and excitement’, or ‘drama and intensity’.

## But wait!

### Before you move on... Test your knowledge!

This is a small set of challenges I prepare after every chapter that will help you check if you understood the contents of this lesson, and if you're ready to apply them to your music.

#### Challenge 1: (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next pages)

- Make a good sounding 3-4 chord progression using the chords of the C major scale.
- You can move the entire chord octaves up or down but you're not allowed to move individual notes (so inversions, doubling, suspensions are a no go here, because I have not taught you about them yet.)
- To make it a little easier for you I'll give you your starting chord: I or Tonic
- Your task is to choose the other 2-3 chords and build a good sounding progression



**Download MIDI to participate  
(Chapter 11 - challenge 1)**

**If you use FL studio.** Tap here to learn how to see your scale notes.

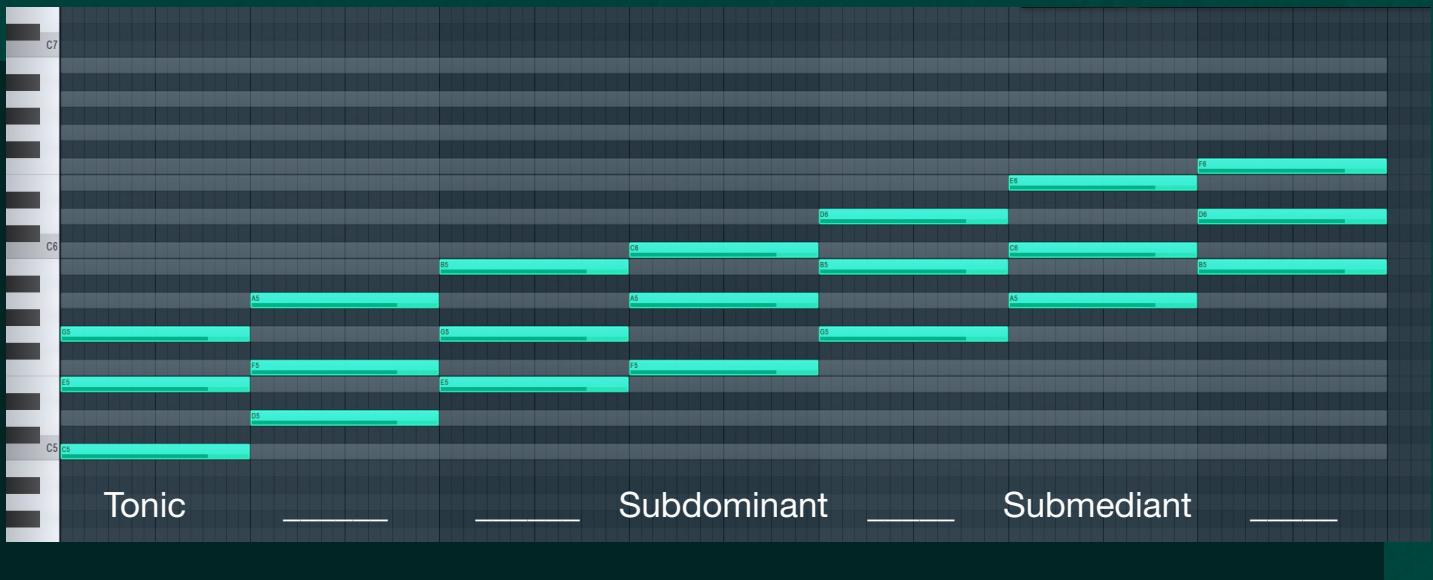
#### Important notes:

- Since you're not allowed to use inversions nor doubling, you're going to have to choose chords that sound good right off the bat. In the future you'll know how to manipulate chords and make them sound good even if they sound bad initially, but for now keep this in mind:
- The best sounding pairings for root position chords (which are the ones you'll be using) are usually chords that either have a **strong harmonic motion**, are the **next chord up or down** (like the next chord up from VI is V), or that already **share 2 notes between them** (for example the I chord shares 2 notes with the iii chord and 1 note with the V chord).
- Anyway... good luck!

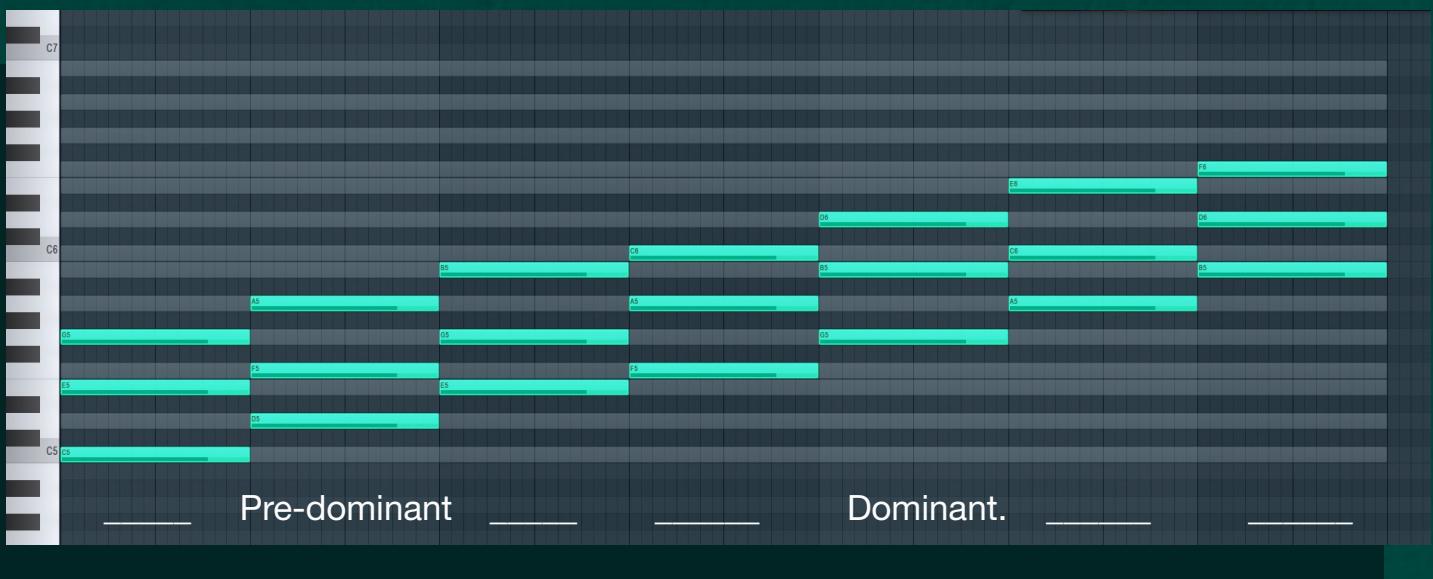
## Challenge 2: (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next pages)

- Without looking at the previous pages, can you remember all the names **and** harmonic functions of all 7 triad chords in the major scale?
- (If its too hard you can go back and look, but try this again without looking tomorrow or something, because its really important that you are able to remember these functions.)

### Names:



### Harmonic functions:



### **Challenge 3:** (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next pages)

- Do you even know what the different harmonic functions mean? Bet you don't, yet you were still about to scroll right to the next chapter, shameful.
- Your task is to pair each harmonic function name with its meaning, go!

(Also the full meanings are more complex than just this, but for your memory's sake, lets try and keep it simple.)

#### **Function names:**

Dominant function...

Prolongation function...

Pre-dominant function...

Tonic function...

Tonic prolongation function...

#### **Function meanings:**

...means the tendency of a chord to move to dominant.

...means the stability and rest fullness of a chord in relation to the key.

...means the tendency of a chord to move to tonic.

...means the extension of tonic function by using a similar chord.

...means the expansion of another chord's function by use of the mediant chord.

*Note: Prolongation and tonic prolongation functions are very often put into the same category as Tonic function by scholars, so there are only 3 functions in the eyes of older people: Tonic, Pre-dominant, and Dominant.*

(The following are only examples of what you could've done, they are in no way the only answers.)

### Answer 1 - 1:

- I to V is a 5th interval move up, so a strong harmonic motion
- vi is the next chord up from V.
- vi and IV share 2 notes.
- IV and I share 1 note



[Download MIDI answer  
\(Chapter 11 - answer 1\)](#)

### Answer 1 - 2:

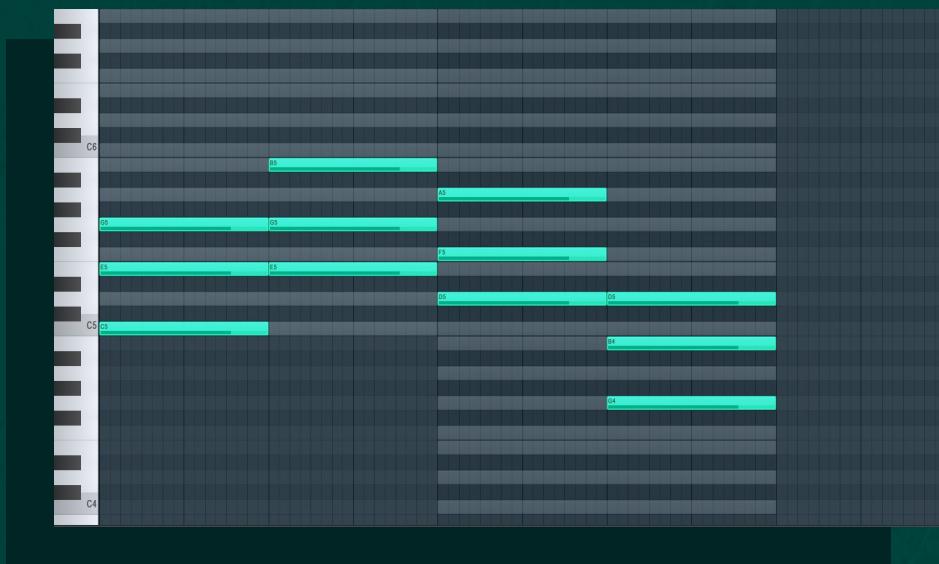
- I and iii share 2 notes.
- IV is the next note up from iii.
- IV shares 1 note with I.



[Download MIDI answer  
\(Chapter 11 - answer 2\)](#)

## Answer 1 - 3:

- I and iii share 2 notes.
- ii is the next note down from iii.
- ii down to V is a 5th interval movement, so a strong harmonic motion.
- V and I share one note (no 5th interval movement because V is one octave down, making the movement between them a 4th interval, we covered this in chapter 9, but if you are on the free version you can just count the notes to check that in fact, there are only 4 scale notes between these 2 chords, so its only a 4th interval move up from V to I).



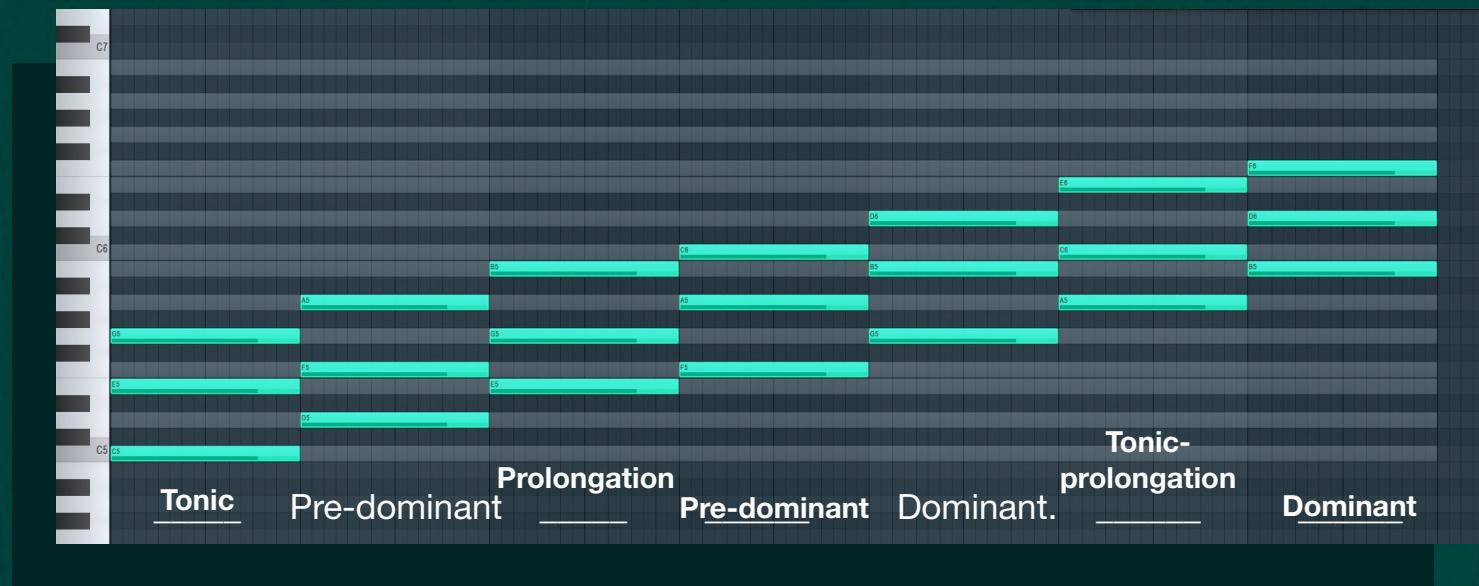
[Download MIDI answer  
\(Chapter 11 - answer 3\)](#)

## Answer 2:

### Names:



### Harmonic functions:



## Answer 3:

**Dominant function** means the tendency of a chord to move to tonic.

**Prolongation function** means the expansion of another chord's function by use of the mediant.

**Pre-dominant function** means the tendency of a chord to move to dominant.

**Tonic function** means the stability and rest fullness of a chord in relation to the key.

**Tonic prolongation function** means the extension of tonic function by using a similar chord.

# 12. Degrees in a minor scale (and the chords built on top of them)



**UNLOCK VIDEO**

Watch and exclusive video explanation of this chapter.

(Only available on 'Red' version)



Your progress!

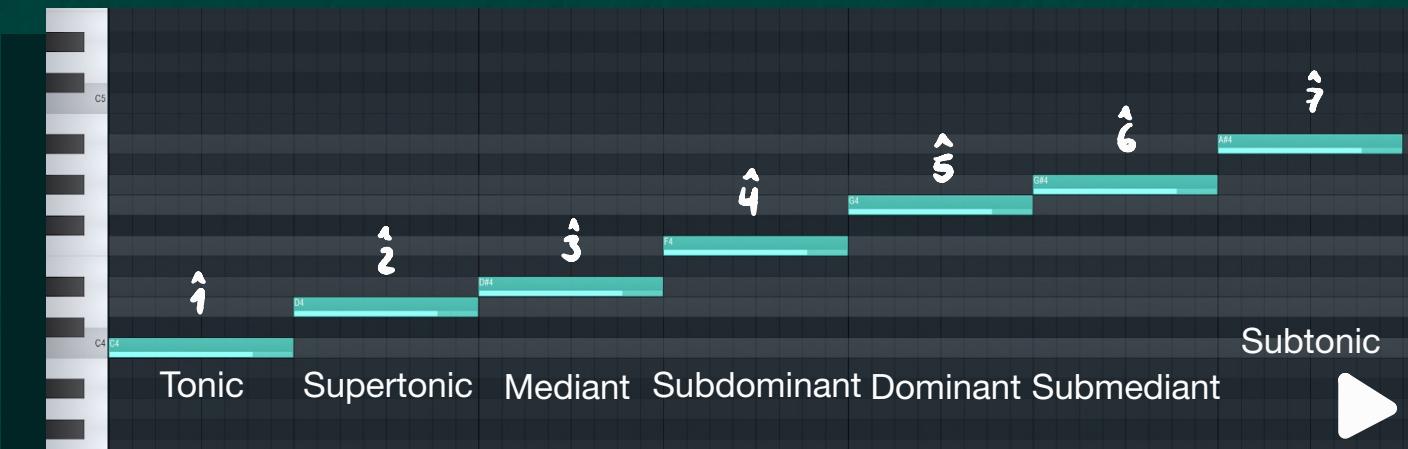


## 12. Scale degrees in a minor scale (and the chords built on top of them):

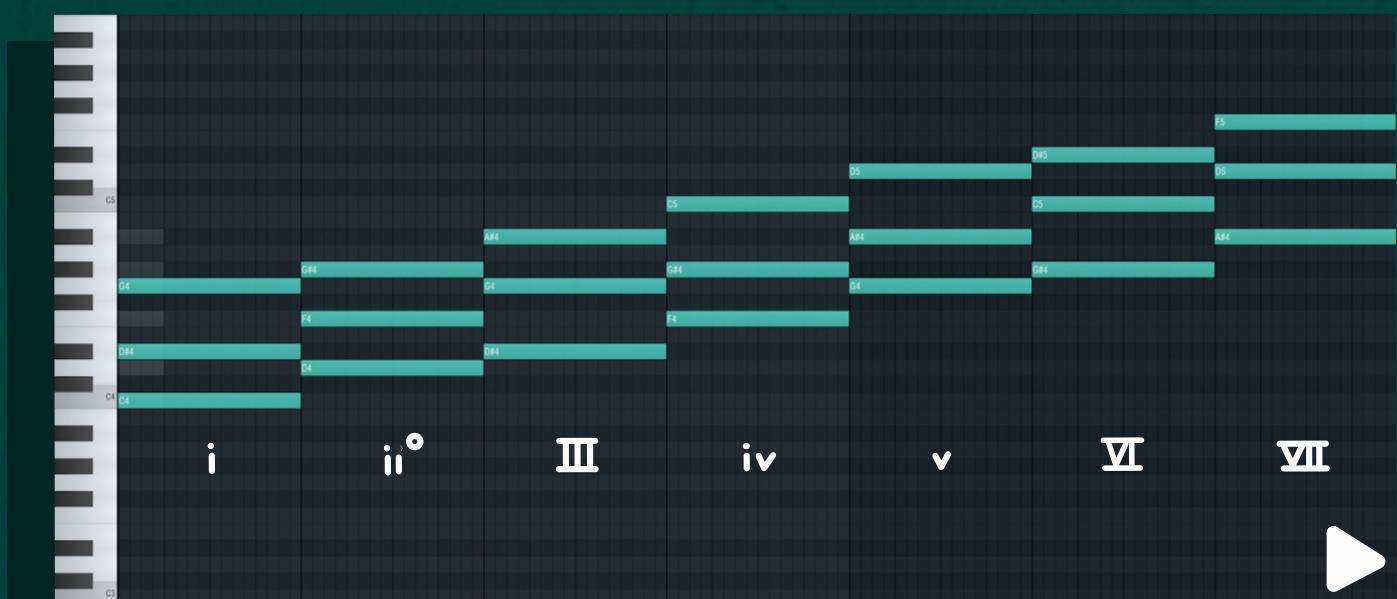
The minor scale is built off of 7 notes (as you know, using these formula: W H W W H W W), each one of these notes is a scale degree (from  $\hat{1}$  to  $\hat{7}$ ). Each one of these 7 scale degrees has a name, the names are as follows:



Scale degree names: (minor scale)



As you know, all triad chords need a root, a third and a fifth. Well, this 7 notes are all 7 root notes in a minor scale, which means that there are only 7 triad chords in a minor scale. Those chords are the following:



Now we'll go over each scale degree and the chord built on top of them.

## Tonic: minor scale degree ^1

Tonic is the first degree of the scale. In the case of minor scales, the tonic note and the tonic chord also hold the feeling of home. So what I said in the previous section about having a **tonic function** also applies here.

The way the notes in a major scale are separated make the tonic chord a minor chord. It's classical notation symbol is the Roman numeral for 1:

i

$\hat{5}$

$\hat{3}$

$\hat{1}$

C4

G4

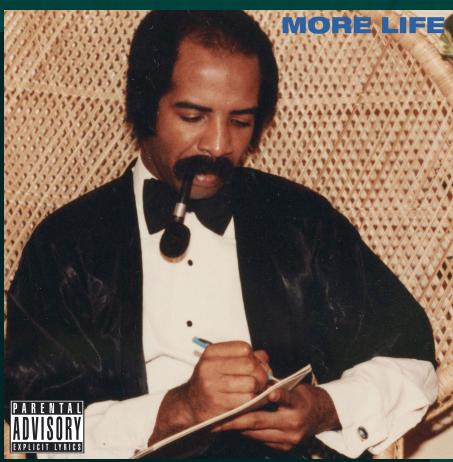
D#4

Tonic, or i

While the tonic chord in major and minor scales both have tonic function it's important to keep in mind the fact that the tonic chord in minor scales is a minor chord, while the one in major scales is major. That's because the 3rd scale degree in minor scales is placed one semitone closer to tonic making it a minor 3rd interval. This gives the tonic chord a bit less stability making its sound a little darker or sadder than the major scale tonic chord.

Regardless of that the tonic chord of minor scales is still used as a stability point in most modern music and is present in almost all modern chord progressions that use the minor scale, being most often used as the very first chord in the progression. This applies whether you're making a melody that sounds sad, hard, pop, chill, etc.

Here are a few examples of it being used in popular songs:



Drake - Sneakin' (Dark melody)   Travis Scott - YOSEMITE (Chill)   JACKBOYS - OUT WEST (Hard)

Video breakdown:

Video breakdown:

Video breakdown:

## Supertonic: minor scale degree ^2

Supertonic is the second degree of the scale. The supertonic note in minor scales holds the same characteristic as the one of major scales of being able to get resolved easily by going one scale note up or down to notes with the feeling of home ^1 and ^3. So it is still a note that you'll find often in top melodies, but where it differs from the major scale is in the supertonic chord.

The supertonic chord is made out of the supertonic note (or scale degree ^2), the subdominant (or scale degree ^4), and the submediant (or scale degree ^6).

The way the notes in a minor scale are separated make the Supertonic chord a diminished chord. Its classical notation symbol is the Roman numeral for 2:

A piano keyboard diagram showing the notes G#4, F4, and D4 highlighted in teal. Above the keyboard, the Roman numeral 'ii°' is displayed. The notes correspond to the scale degrees ^6, ^4, and ^2 respectively. The label 'Supertonic' is placed below the keyboard. A play button icon is located in the bottom right corner.

The supertonic chord has what's called a **Pre-dominant (aka Subdominant) harmonic function**. These chords tend to progress to chords of dominant function, which we will later see, don't really exist in minor scales.

*Side note explaining that last sentence, starting from here the term harmonic function starts to lose meaning because of the difference in intervals in a major scale compared to a minor scale. This difference makes minor scales lose important note placements for things to really get a clear harmonic function. The changed notes are scale degrees ^3, ^6 and ^7. See image on the next page.*

*And as you now know, the ^3 is really important because it helps add a lot of stability to the scale, and with its new placement on the minor scale it now possesses less stability, making the mediant and submediant chords lose a bit of its tonic prolongation function.*

*Also as you know the ^7 scale degree is the key note to make dominant function chords, and now with its new placement the chords that relied on it are less dominant and more predominant.*

*So predominant function becomes this catch all term that encapsulates the chords that are not quite tonic and also aren't quite dominant. Which I believe are almost all minor chords except for tonic sounding chords like tonic, and maybe also mediant and submediant (but I'm not 100% decided in those last 2)*



Anyway, where were we? The supertonic is a diminished chord in minor scales. A chord being diminished made us almost not even refer to it as a chord when we found one in major scales, but here it is a bit different.

This diminished chord has found its place in the heart of most simple dark trap melodies, with artists like Travis Scott using it all the time in his tracks (well, maybe not him but his producers use it). That's because the diminished supertonic chord paired with the darker tonic sound of the tonic chord can make a really cool dark sound when used melodically and not harmonically.

What I mean by that is that when the notes of this 2 chords are used in a melody, they can really get an amazing dark sound. See examples on the images below.

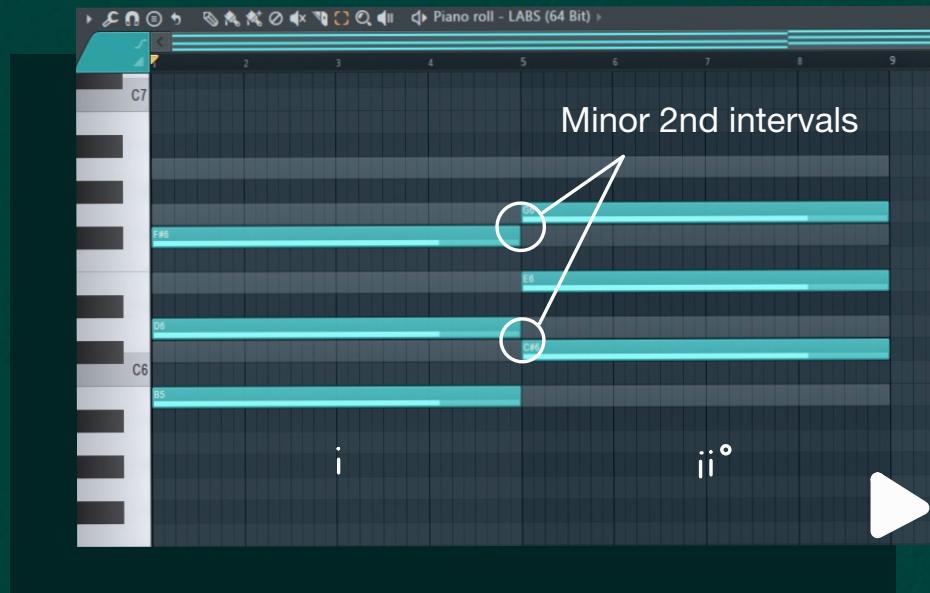
### Travis Scott - The Prayer



### Travis Scott - Butterfly effect



The reason they work so well together (tonic and supertonic chords in minor scales) is because their notes are placed really close to each other in the scale, this 2 minor 2nd intervals create a very unsettling sound which when paired with the stability of tonic, create this perfect sound for trap melodies. (I've also heard his combination of notes used often in reggaeton beats, check my YouTube short deconstructing Maria Becerra's LOKITA for more on that)



Besides being used next to the tonic chord, I have not really heard it in many tracks, reason being that the tritone diminished chords have create a sound not fit for most popular music.

That's why I said "melodically and not harmonically" in the previous page, melodically meaning with the notes placed next to each other horizontally and harmonically meaning with the notes placed on top of each other vertically (as in chords and not simply a melody like in the previous examples).

Here is a simple example on how you can get started on using this simple principle to make simple hard trap melodies:



Video breakdown:



XXXTENTACION - LOOK AT ME

Video breakdown:

## Mediant: minor scale degree ^3

Mediant is the third degree of the scale. We discussed in the past section how the mediant has a prolongation function (to which a lot of classical music people would argue that its true function is tonic function but I do not believe that), but since then, you learned that the functions get a little more blurry for minor scale chords, and this affects the median chord as well.

The new placement of ^3 makes the mediant chord less stable and in turn, less tonic. But the new placement of ^7 makes the mediant chord less unstable, so again we are left with a chord whose function is determined more by context than by anything else. You might think this means that the mediant doesn't change from major scale to minor scale but there are a few key changes:

The first one is that, like I said, classically, the mediant chord in major scales is understood to have tonic function, so now that tonic function is a lot more blurry.

The second, the way the notes in a minor scale are separated make the mediant chord a Major chord. Its classical notation symbol is the Roman numeral for 3:

III

A#4

G4

D#4

C5

C4

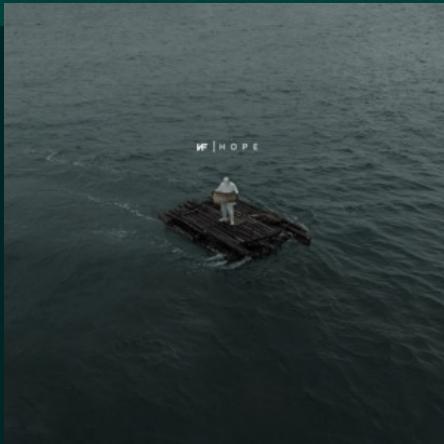
Mediant, or III

And the third, and most important in my opinion.. the mediant chord no longer has that sad quality. It is still often used in sad progressions, (especially in a i - VI - III descending progression) but it is no longer a chord that is inherently sad, it becomes sad by context not by nature.

Either way the Mediant chord still works nicely when placed next to the Tonic chord (because of notes in common), Subdominant chord (^3 resolves nicely to ^4 and vice versa), and the submediant chord (because of notes in common). Once again you can place chords however you want, there are no absolutes in music. But if I were to use a III chord, then 90% of the time I would use it next to either the i or VI chords and for the purpose of helping me make either a chill or a sad progression.

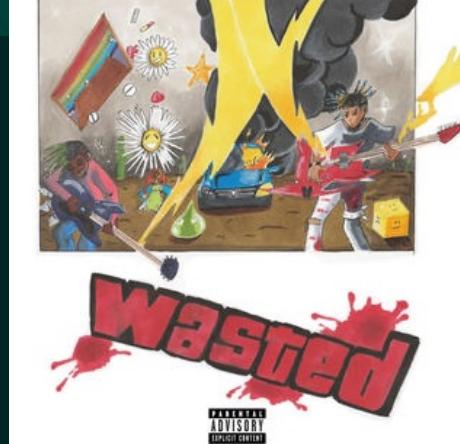
Also, in case you want a second opinion on this one. According to ChatGPT, the mediant chord has a feeling of: "brightness and optimism, which creates a contrast between the darker, more melancholic chords in the scale". So yeah, there you go.

Here are a few examples of the III chord being used. Like I said, most times it'll find its place next to i, iv or VI:



NF - BULLET (Sad melody)

Video breakdown:



Juice WRLD - Wasted (Chill)

Video breakdown:



Juice WRLD - My Fault (Sad)

Video breakdown:

### Subdominant: minor scale degree ^4

Subdominant is the fourth degree of the scale. The subdominant note is usually the one that carries the pre-dominant feeling, meaning it acts as a nice bridge between tonic and dominant, but since the mediant note is now further apart from it, the instability the subdominant chord introduces is now less present, making its function a little blurrier. Nevertheless it is still said that in the minor scale the subdominant chord has a **subdominant function**.

The subdominant chord, much like the supertonic chord has found its place in countless hip hop beats in the recent years because of the unique placement of its notes, so to explain that better, first we need to know where those are.

The way the notes in a minor scale are separated make the subdominant chord a minor chord. Its classical notation symbol is the Roman numeral for 4:

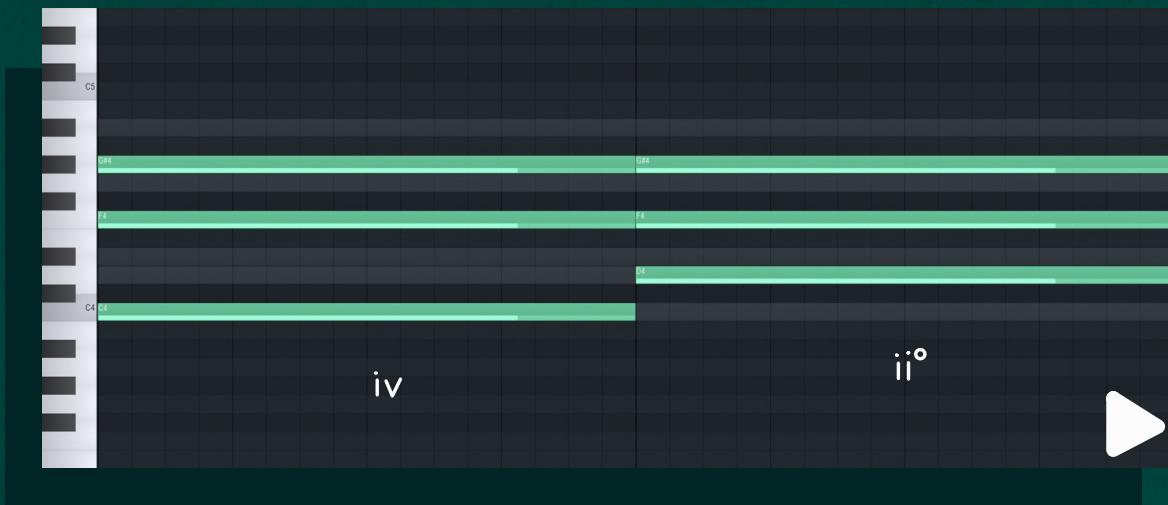
A digital piano keyboard interface showing three specific notes highlighted in teal: C5 (the tonic), G#4 (the mediant), and F4 (the subdominant). The notes are labeled with Roman numerals above them: 1, 6, and 4 respectively. The keyboard shows the full range from C4 to C5. A play button icon is located in the bottom right corner of the interface.

Subdominant, or vi

Now to refresh your memory (and to set up what comes next), here's what a supertonic chord looks like:



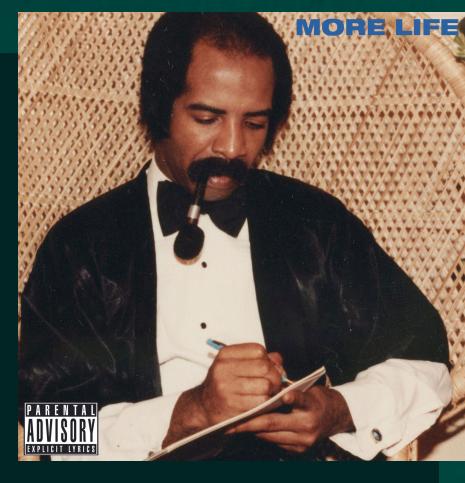
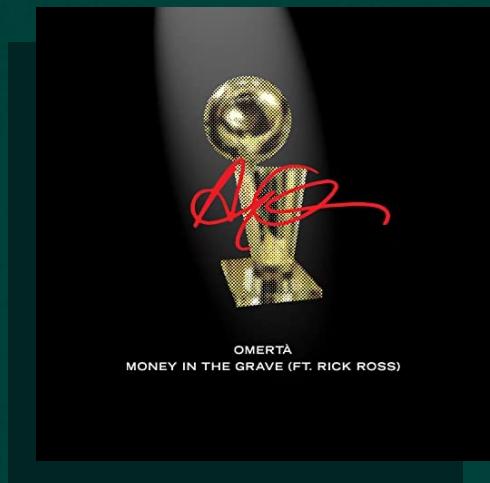
And now here's what those 2 look like together, but if the top note of the subdominant chord was an octave lower:



As you can see, they're off by 1 semitone. Which doesn't look like much but means a whole lot. Remember how I told you the supertonic chord was perfect for simple trap beat but only melodically and not harmonically? Well, this inversion of the submediant chord does not have that ugly tritone in it, and is close enough to the supertonic's chord notes that this is actually what is often used in hiphop when you want to get that evil sound but harmonically. Meaning that when there's chords involved and not only melodic notes, the i - vi progression is a go-to.

Drake's producer OZ famously uses it in almost all of his beats and I believe that is because of this very cool characteristic and because of what comes next...

...But first, a few examples of the i - iv being used harmonically:



Drake - Money In The Grave

Video breakdown:

Meek Mill - Going Bad

Video breakdown:

Drake - Sneakin'

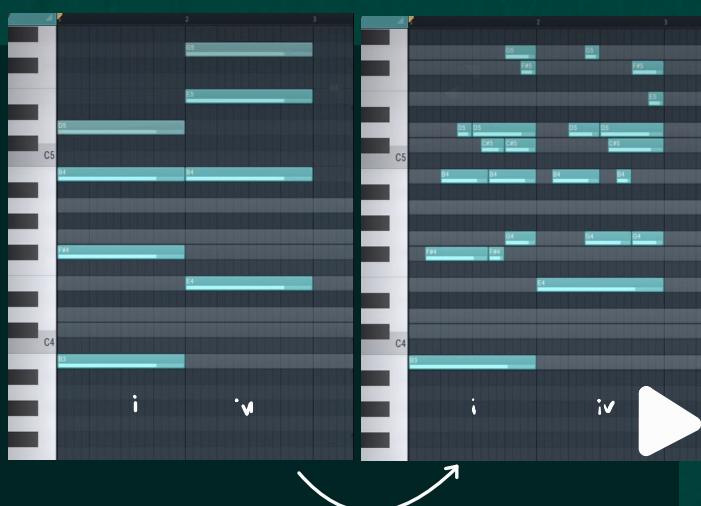
Video breakdown:

Now we can discuss the second reason...

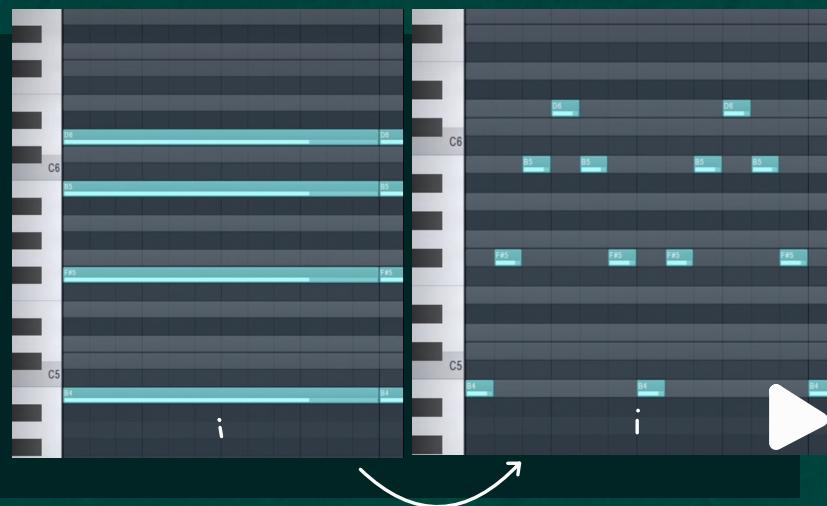
...See, the subdominant chord is not only cool because of that, it is also an amazing chord to add when making hip hop guitar melodies. Going from i to iv is done so often in guitar melodies I honestly start every single one of my guitar melodies with those chords. I believe they sound so great together because the i - iv has not only this dark cool sound but because it allows you to simply copy the arpeggio you were playing on the i chord and paste it and transpose it a few notes up without making any changes. Which helps add that classic guitar arpeggio feeling.

Check this out, on the left you have A M A R I's melody and on the right, Closed On Sunday's:

Kanye West - Close On Sundays



J Cole - A M A R I



(Same Arpeggio on iv chord, there wasn't enough space for it)

They both use a i - iv progression, but check what happens if you transpose the iv chord a few notes down:

(Transposed down  
5 Half steps)

That's what I mean, the fact that the i and iv chords are built using the same intervals allows you to simply copy your arpeggio and transpose it up, which helps give your guitar melodies an interesting sound.

(But this special characteristic does only work for going up, if you transpose your arpeggio notes 5H down, or a 4th interval down, this also works wonderfully. Of course now you know that going one 4th interval down is actually a i - v progression but with the notes inverted, and going a 4th interval up is a true i - iv progression.)

This, and the fact that these 2 chords have that cool dark sound makes them perfect for guitar melodies, especially if you place your notes in a realistic manner, which I guess I might just show you how to do right now: The key to getting realistic sounding midi guitar chords is doubling the root note one octave up and moving the third also one octave up:

6  
4  
3  
1  
1  
5  
4  
1  
3

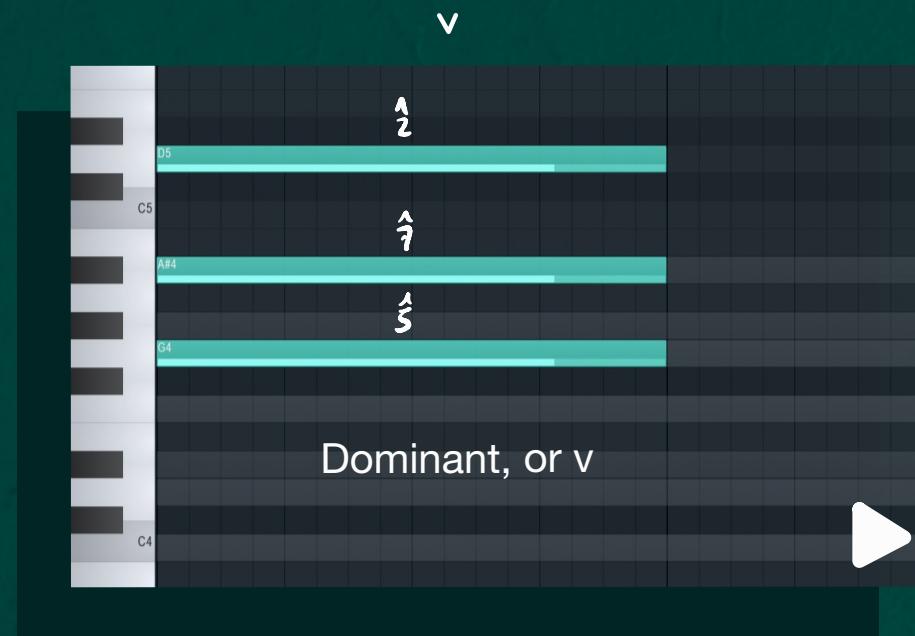
Why? Well because if you grab a real guitar and play a chord, the notes will be naturally placed in this octaves. Why? Because the guy/girl that invented guitars decided so I don't know. Just try it, it works.

Besides all that the iv chord of course also leads nicely to the v chord, the dominant chord, and I've also seen it used often next to the VI chord. Anyway... moving on.

## Dominant: minor scale degree ^5

Dominant is the fifth degree of the scale. Now, the dominant chord in the major scale had a dominant function, and so does the one from minor scale, but this time the scale degree ^7 is no longer a leading tone but a sub-tonic, which makes the dominant chord less dominant. Some would even say the dominant chord in the natural minor scale has a predominant function, but honestly when I hear a i - v - i progression I still hear the v as quite dominant sounding, but that might be just because moving by intervals of a 5th is a strong harmonic motion. But that's just my opinion.

Anyways, the way the notes in a minor scale are separated make the dominant chord a minor chord. It's classical notation symbol is the Roman numeral for 5:



Despite having now less of a dominant effect, the v - i progression is still quite common in songs that use the minor scale. In my experience there almost never is a v chord in the progression unless there is also a i chord in there somewhere. Besides i the chord I've seen the v paired up with the VI chord, that's because the i - v - VI creates a nice soulful sounding progression and the VI - v - i creates a cool dark sounding one.

But I've honestly seen the 5 chord paired with just about any chord in the scale and sounding good. That's because most chords in the minor scale sound kinda predominant and the v chord, while not so dominant, definitely sounds more dominant than the iv or III for example, so they move nicely to the v chord almost always.

Here are some examples of it being used:

Lauv - Julia	1 - 3 - 5 - 2 i - III - v - ii <sup>7</sup> sus4
NF - Chasing	1 - 7 - 5 - 4 i - VII - v - VI
Billie Eilish - Everything I Wanted	1 - 7 - 5 - 6 i - VII - v - VI

And here, some video deconstructions of melodies that use the chord:



Drake - War

Video breakdown:



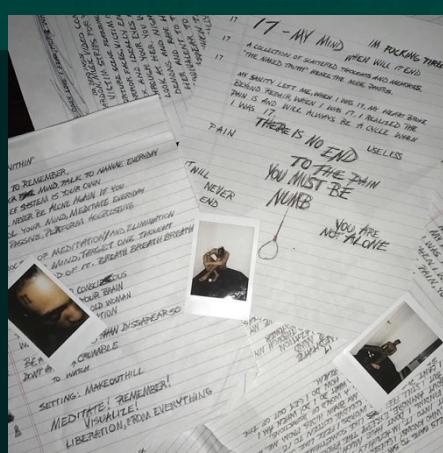
Travis Scott - Franchise

Video breakdown:



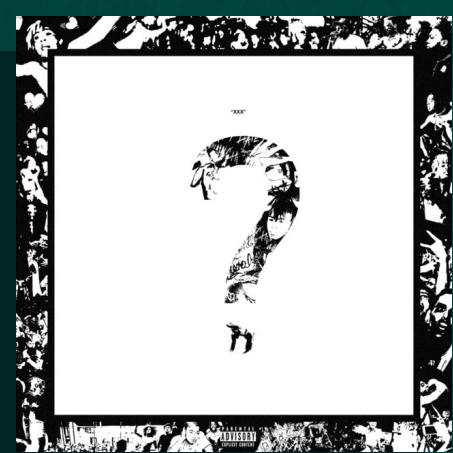
Travis Scott - Stargazing

Video breakdown:



XXXTENTACION - F Love

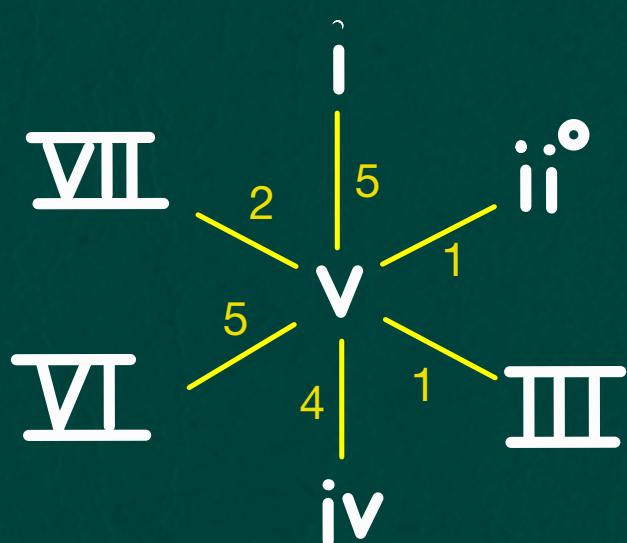
Video breakdown:



XXXTENTACION - Moonlight

Video breakdown:

As a little visual helper, here are the other chords of the scale, and how often the V chord was placed either before or after them in the 8 melody examples I just gave you,



## Submediant: minor scale degree ^6

Submediant is the 6th degree of the scale. The submediant chord, just like the one in major scales, has a tonic or tonic prolongation function. The Submediant chord's primary function is of tonic prolongation, meaning it can be used as a replacement of the I chord, and also can follow the I chord in progressions without there being a too noticeable chord change if the inversions are done correctly (don't worry about inversions for now they'll be explained later). And that is because the tonic and submediant share degrees ^1 and ^3, Like I said earlier.

The way the notes in a minor scale are separated make the submediant chord a major chord. It's classical notation symbol is the Roman numeral for 6:



Remember how in the major scale, we had this one chord (the mediant, or iii) that when used in a chord progression made the whole thing feel a lot more emotional and sad? Well, I believe the VI is the equivalent to that chord for minor scales. The VI chord is often used in a descending progression after the i to create an emotional feeling. So much so that after analyzing most of juice WRLD's top sad songs I found that all of them use the same technique of falling from i to VI to create sadness:

Base of Lean Wit Me - Juice WRLD

i      v      VI<sup>7</sup>

Means 7th chord, will be explained later

Base of Righteous - Juice WRLD

i      III      VI<sup>7</sup>

Of course, that's not the only use for a VI chord, as shown on the previous page about the dominant chord. The fact that this chord has kind of a tonic sound to it (and the fact it is made by scale degrees ^6, ^1 and ^3) also makes it a good progression starter as well as a nice follow up to chords III, v and even VII. But more on that on the next page.

Here are some examples of the VI chord being used for sad progressions (using i - VI):



Juice WRLD - Lean Wit Me

**Video breakdown:**



Juice WRLD - My fault

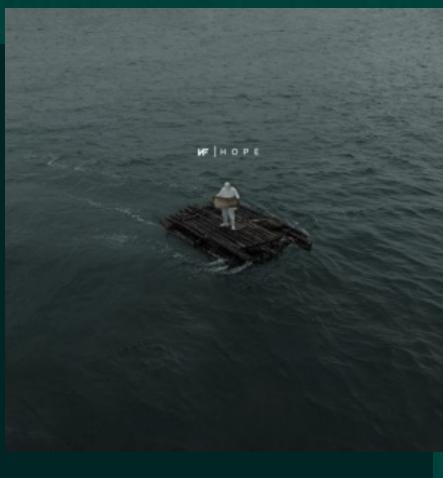
**Video breakdown:**



Juice WRLD - Burn

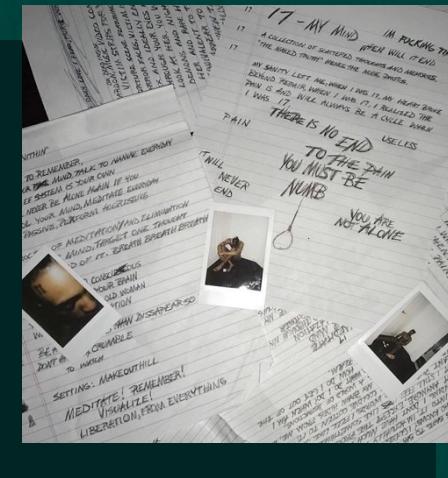
**Video breakdown:**

And some examples of it being used to start progressions:



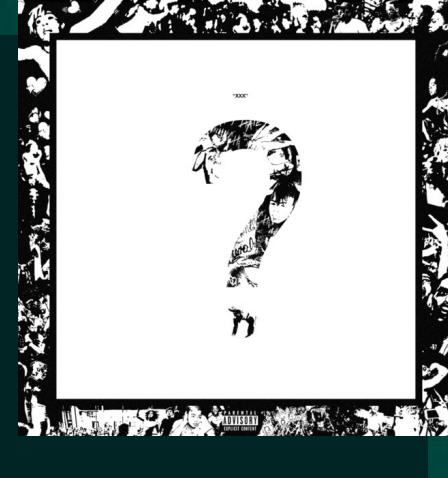
NF - BULLET

**Video breakdown:**



XXXTENTACION - F Love

**Video breakdown:**

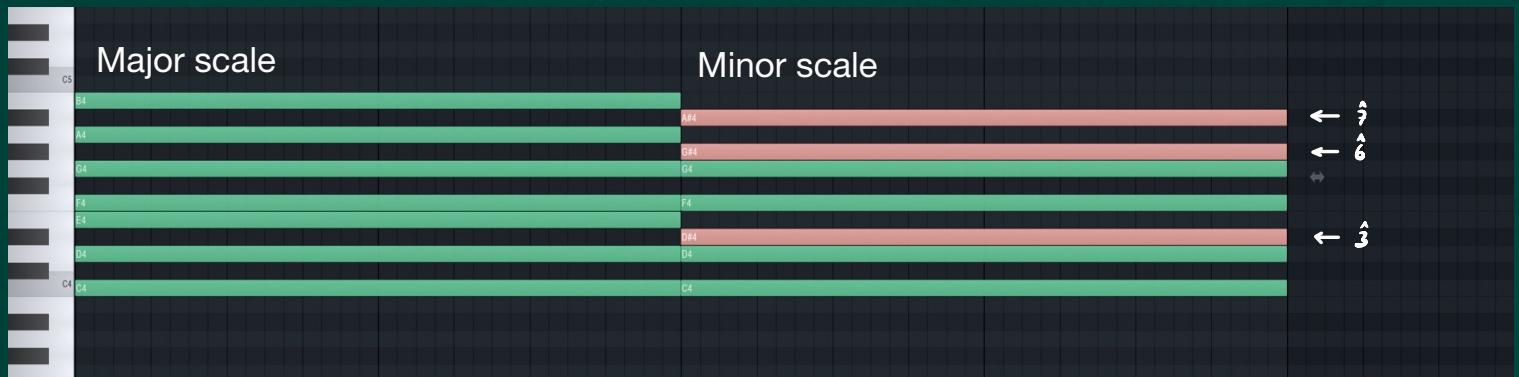


XXXTENTACION - Moonlight

**Video breakdown:**

## Leading Tone Subtonic: minor scale degree ^7

Subtonic is the 7th degree of the scale. The reason the ^7 is no longer called leading tone like in major scales is because the leading tone and Subtonic are actually in different places. Leading tone is one semitone above, which makes it hold a lot more tension, which is partly why the major scale harmonic functions are so well established while the minor scale ones are blurrier.

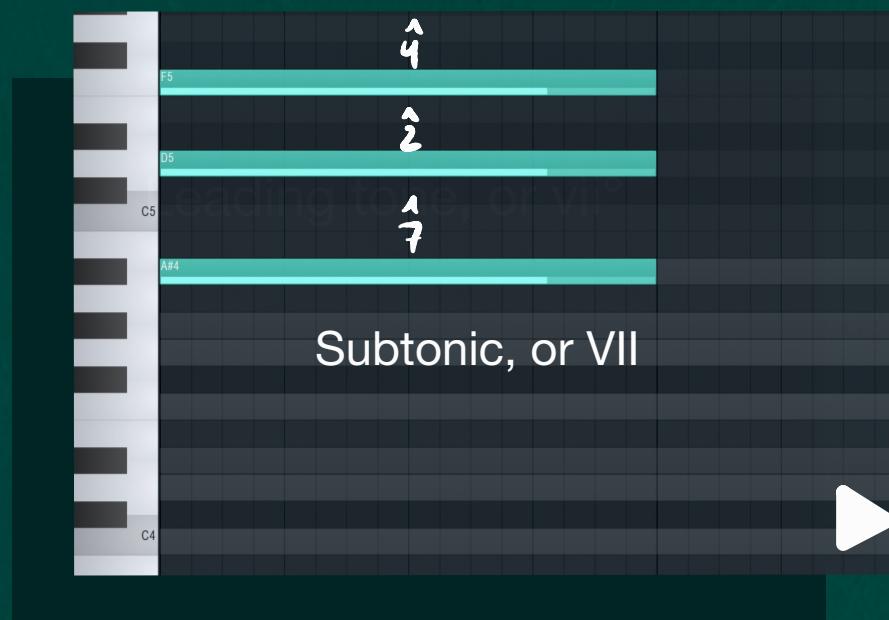


The ^7 is the tone that holds the most instability, and with it moved one semitone down, some of that instability is lost, which in turn makes chords like VII, v and III sound different than the ones in major scales. This is a problem that was solved by creating the harmonic minor scale, but more on that later, back to the natural minor:

The subtonic chord is made from scale degrees ^7, ^2 and ^4. Like the dominant chord, the leading tone has a dominant function (meaning it creates tension and wants to resolve to tonic, but obviously, because of the non-existent leading tone this function becomes a lot less effective and a lot blurrier).

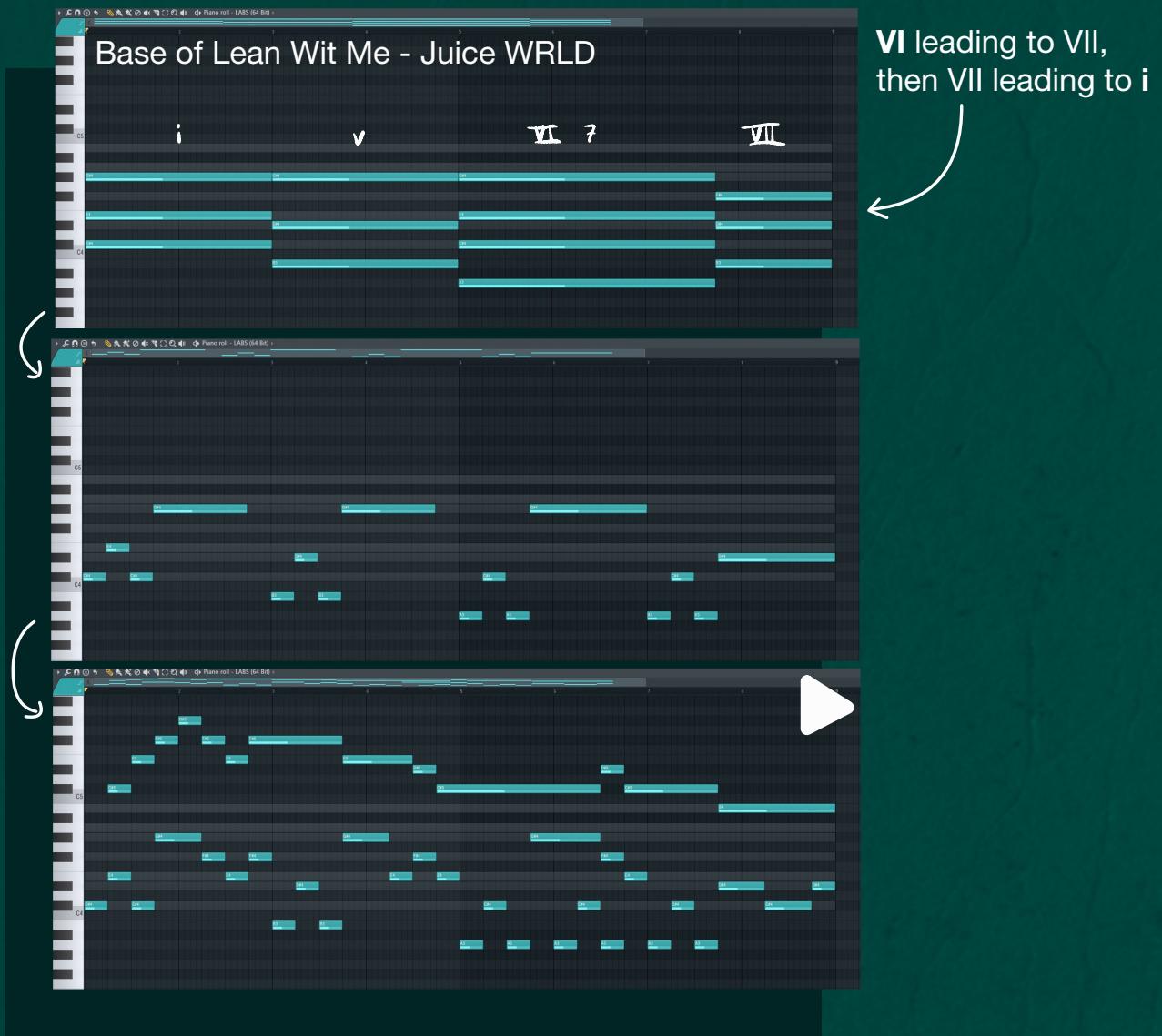
The way the notes in a minor scale are separated make the subtonic chord a major chord. It's classical notation symbol is the Roman numeral for 7:

VII



Since the VII in minor scales is no longer a diminished chord, it is used a lot more often in pop songs and such (because it no longer has that unsettling feeling of the tritone that diminished chords have). So much so, that it is even part of my favorite sad chord progression, which is the i - VII - VI (I'm pretty sure that is the progression for juice WRLD's 734 and also In My Head).

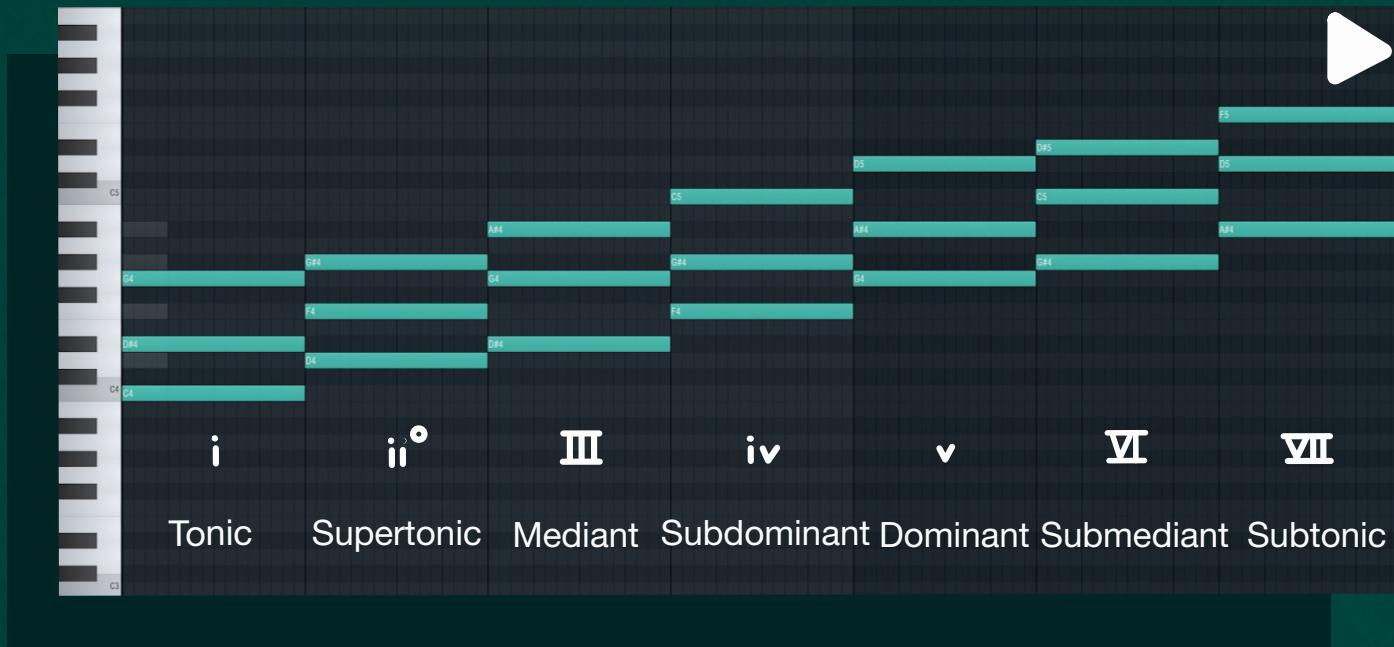
In my experience with this chord, I have seen it paired the most with chords v, because of the notes they share; and VI & i, because it creates nice voice leading (and the dominant to tonic transition of course, also term 'voice leading' explained later).



While the VII chord is not as dominant as the one in major scales, keep in mind that it still creates some tension when used in a track, so it can be a great help to add movement when needed just like the v chord.

And with that, now you know all 7 chords. I know this was probably a lot to take in in your first read so in the next page you'll see a nice little summary of the most important stuff I mentioned here so we can move on to the harmonic minor scale next.

## Summary: Scale degrees in a minor scale (and the chords built on top of them):



### Tonic chord:

Tonic function. State of stability and rest (feeling of “home”). Does not demand progression to other chords. A Bit darker than the major scale tonic because of its minor 3rd.

### Supertonic chord:

Pre-dominant function. Has found its place in the heart of most simple dark trap melodies, because the diminished supertonic chord paired with the darker tonic sound of the tonic chord can make a really cool dark sound when used melodically and not harmonically.

### Mediant chord:

Blurry Tonic prolongation function. No longer has that sad quality. Has a feeling of: “brightness and optimism, which creates a contrast between the darker, more melancholic chords.

### Subdominant chord:

Pre-dominant function. Is often used in hiphop when you want to get that evil sound but harmonically (alongside Tonic). Also used alongside Tonic for guitar melodies (not only iv, but also v when Tonic goes down to it).

### Dominant chord:

Blurry dominant function. Still a chord that carries tension and Tonic is still an effective way to resolve it.

### Submediant chord:

Blurry Tonic prolongation function. Great for introducing a feeling of sadness, especially when used in a descending progression after i.

### Subtonic chord:

Blurry dominant function. While the VII chord is not as dominant as the one in major scales, keep in mind that it still creates some tension when used in a track, so it can be a great help to add movement when needed just like the v chord.

**But wait!**

## **Before you move on... Test your knowledge!**

This is a small set of challenges I prepare after every chapter that will help you check if you understood the contents of this lesson, and if you're ready to apply them to your music.

### **Challenge 1:** (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next pages)

- Make a good sounding 3-4 chord progression using the chords of the C minor scale.
- You can move the entire chord octaves up or down but you're not allowed to move individual notes (so inversions, doubling, suspensions are a no go here, because I have not taught you about them yet.)
- This time you can pick the starting chord as well



**Download MIDI to participate  
(Chapter 12 - challenge 1)**

**If you use FL studio. Tap here to  
learn how to see your scale notes.**

## **Challenge 2:** (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next pages)

- Watch this 4 minute video. This video deconstructs how simple trap melodies are made using the simple principles of Tonic stability paired with dissonance (found of course in the small interval variations between the i and ii°/iv chords)
- Using the informations from the video try to make a simple trap progression that sounds dark.



## **Challenge 3:** (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next pages)

- Watch this short video again. Using the blueprint provided in this short video, try to make a simple good sounding dark progression. (Use 2nd video as example)
- If you're feeling creative and want a bigger challenge. You can use the same bass but get more complex, use the third video as inspiration.



Video breakdown:

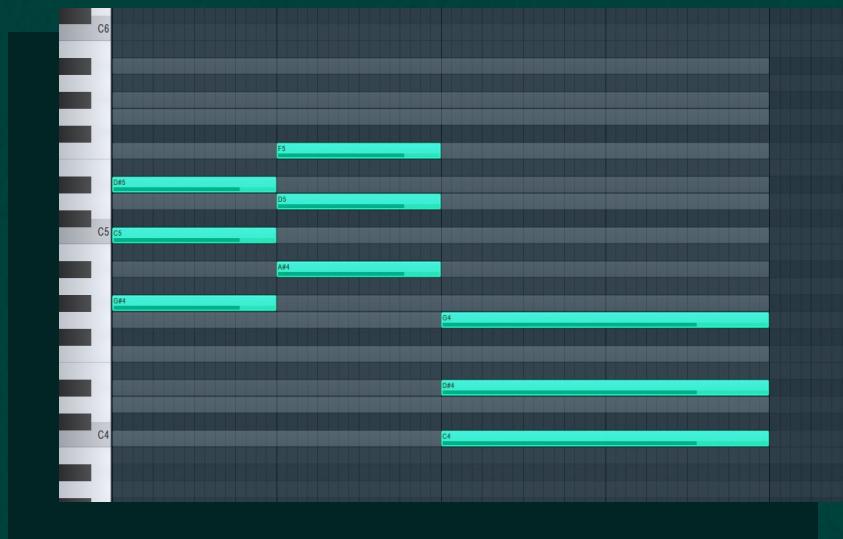
Video breakdown:

Video breakdown:

(The following are only examples of what you could've done, they are in no way the only answers.)

### Answer 1 - 1:

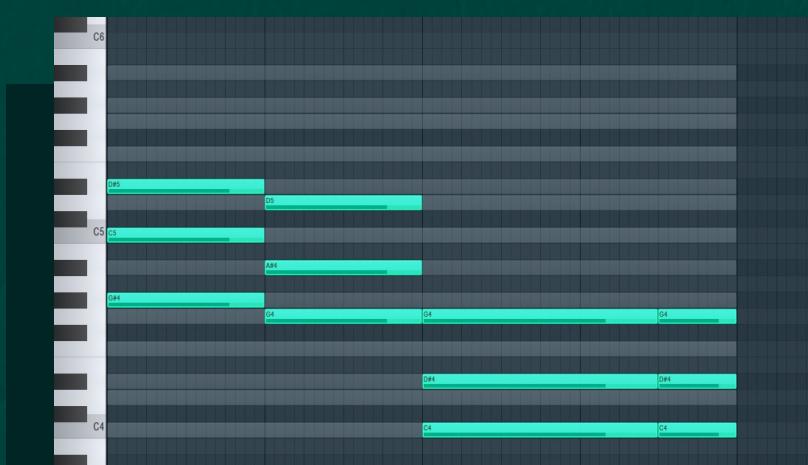
- VI - VII - I is a common ‘emotional’ progression and can be seen in Juice WRLD’s In My Head for example:



[Download MIDI answer  
\(Chapter 12 - answer 1 - 1\)](#)

### Answer 1 - 2:

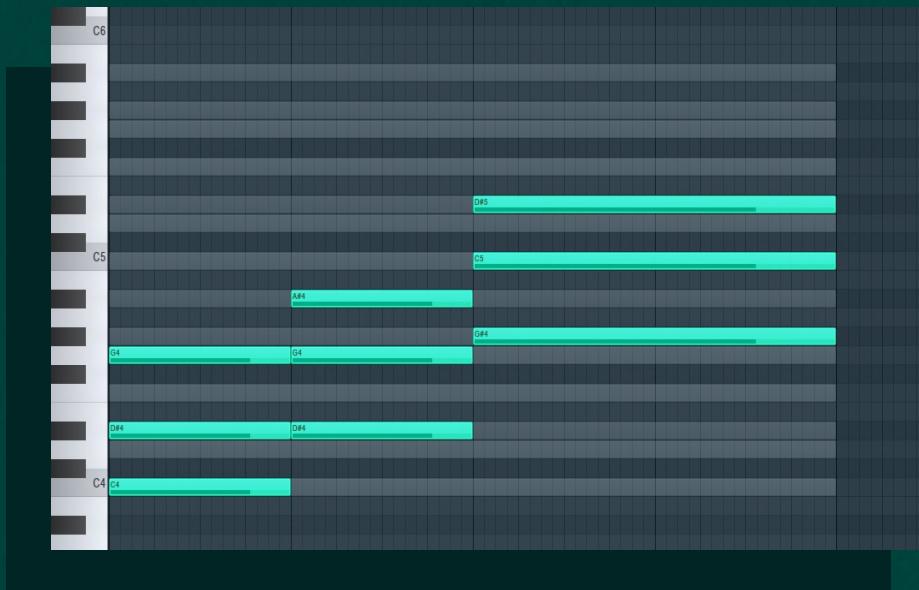
- VI - v - i is a common ‘cool’ sounding progression and can be seen in XXXTENTACION’s MOONLIGHT for example



[Download MIDI answer  
\(Chapter 12 - answer 1- 2\)](#)

## Answer 1 - 3:

- i - III - VI is a common 'chill' progression and can be seen in Juice WRLD's Wasted for example

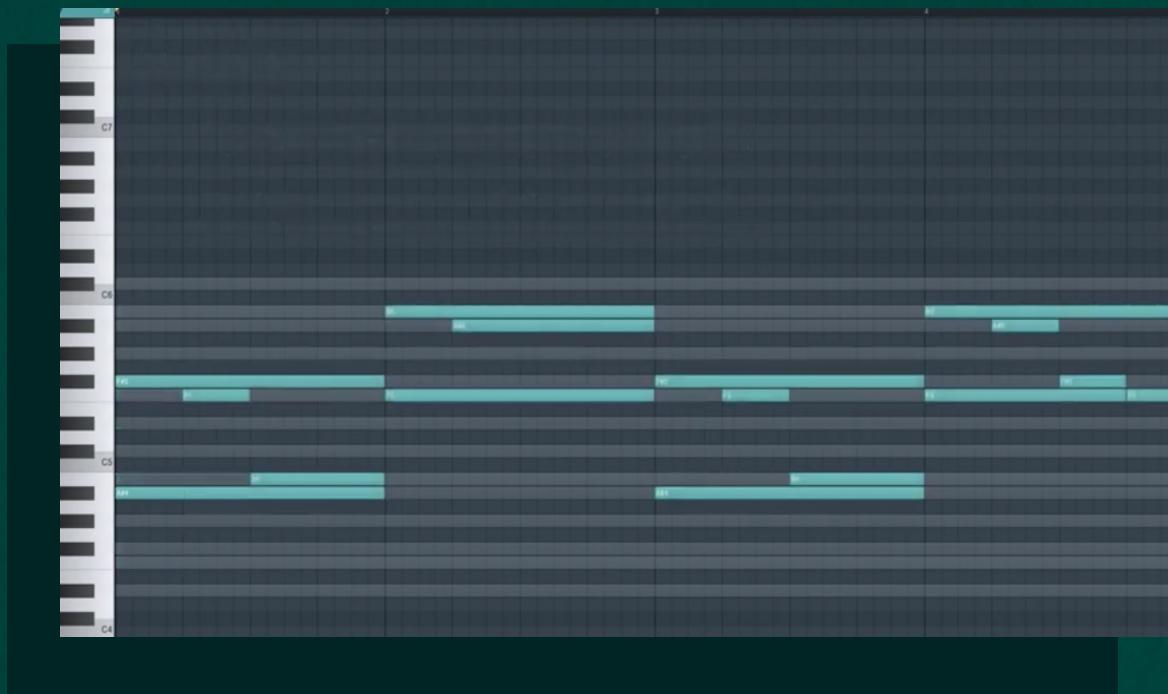


[Download MIDI answer  
\(Chapter 12 - answer 1 - 3\)](#)

## Answer 2 (1 to 4): (examples of what you could've done)



**Answer 3:** (example of what you could've done, second one is if you chose to try and make a more complex progression)

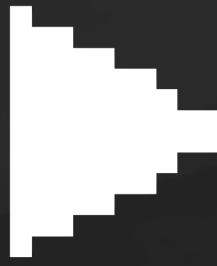


[Download MIDI answer  
\(Chapter 12 - answer 3 - 1\)](#)



[Download MIDI answer  
\(Chapter 12 - answer 3 - 2\)](#)

# 13. Scale degrees in a harmonic scale (and the chords built on top of them)



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Watch and exclusive video explanation of this chapter.

(Only available on 'Red' version)

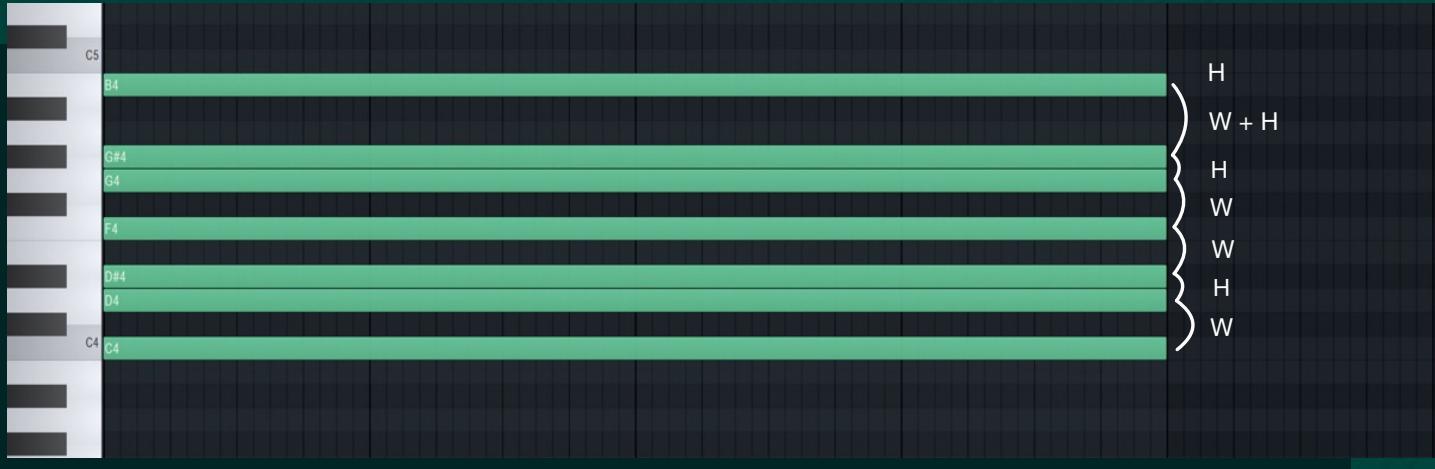


Your progress!

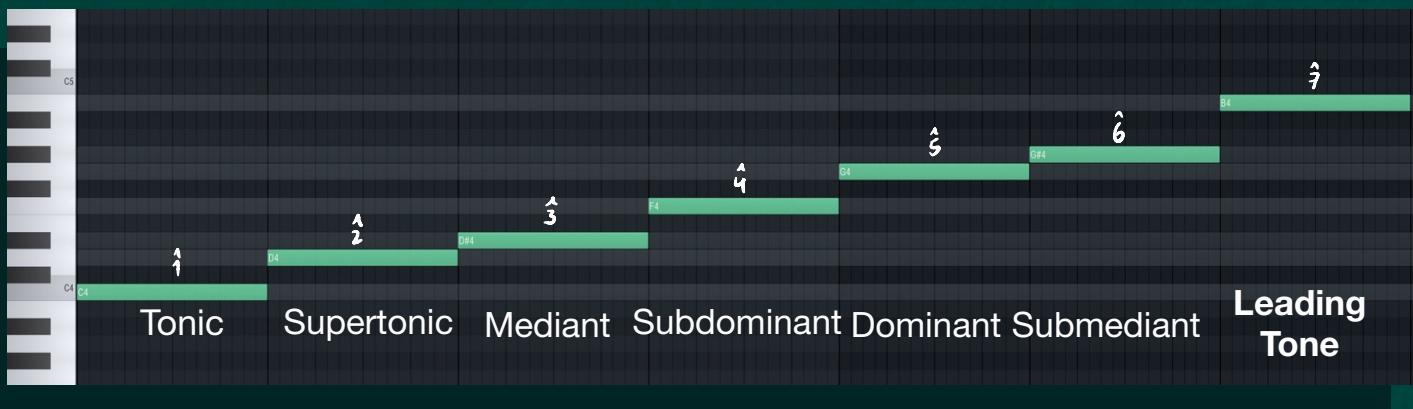


### 13. Scale degrees in a harmonic minor scale (and the chords built on top of them):

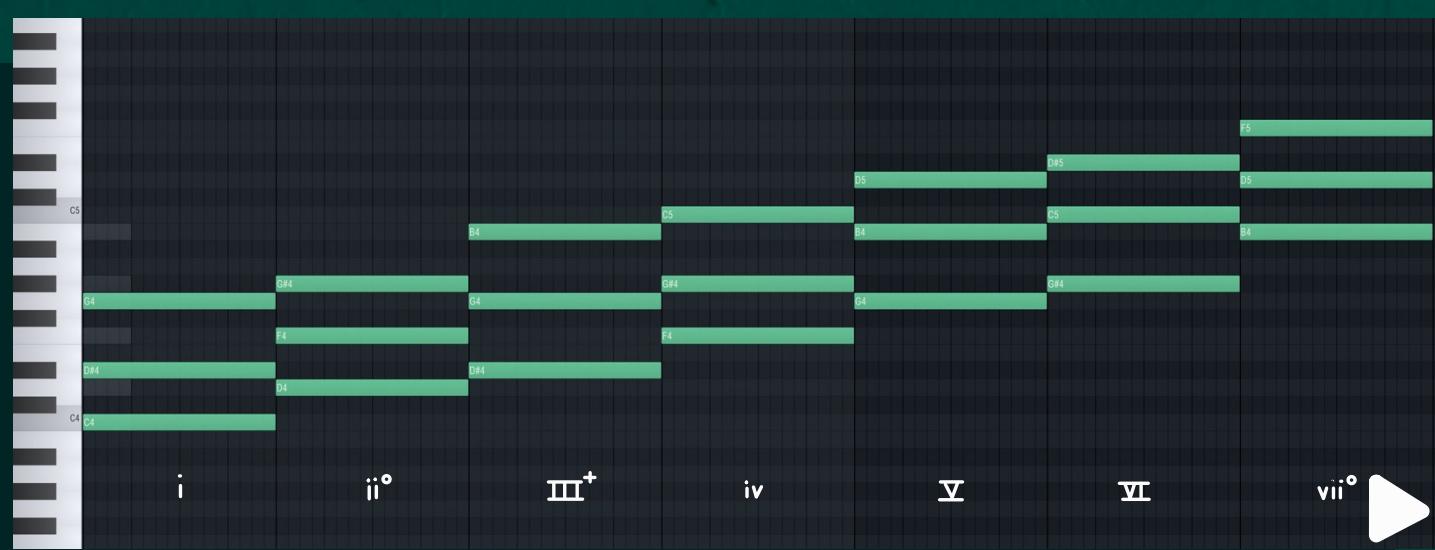
Ok so, now you know that the harmonic minor scale was made to solve the issue of the natural minor scale not having a leading tone. So, naturally, the way a harmonic minor scale is built is simply a minor scale, but move the subtonic one semitone up creating a leading tone. This creates a weird big space between notes we haven't seen so far, and it also allows that classic dominant feeling to come back, since there is now a proper leading tone that leads us to tonic. This new scale creates a few key differences to the minor scale, which we will cover in the next few pages.



Scale degree names: (Harmonic minor scale)



As you know, all triad chords need a root, a third and a fifth. Well, this 7 notes are all 7 root notes in a minor scale, which means that there are only 7 triad chords in a harmonic minor scale. Those chords are the following:



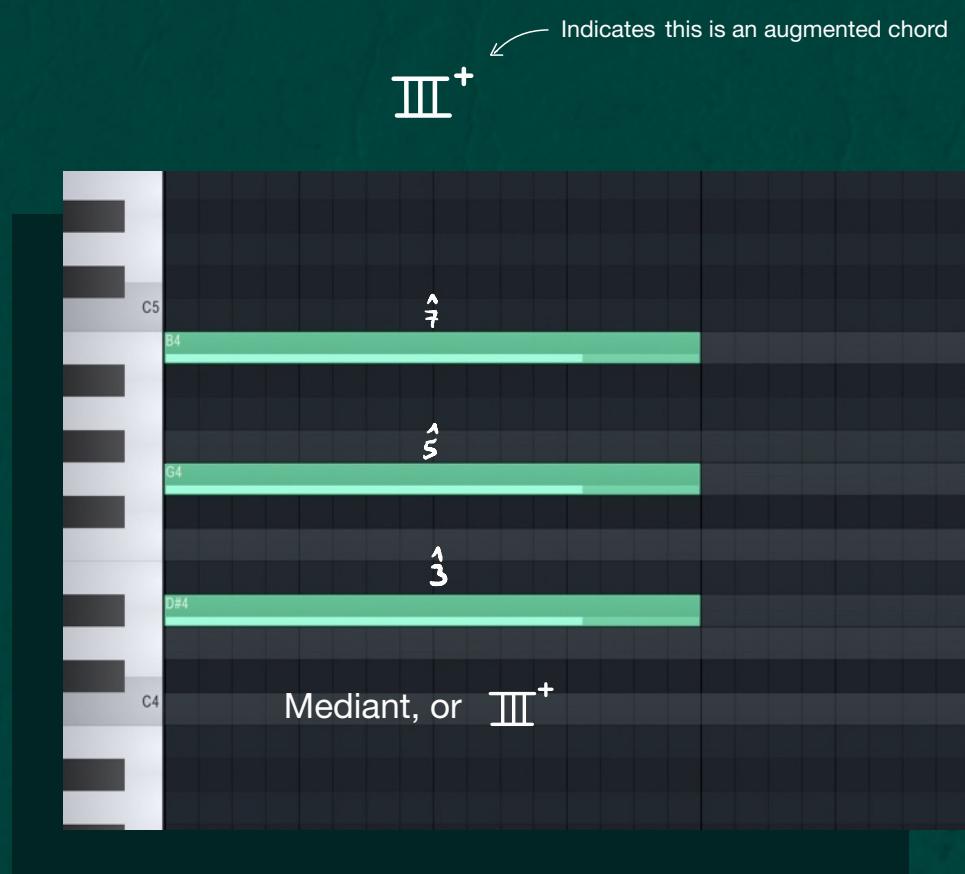
Now we'll go over each scale degree and the chord built on top of them.

Now, I just said we would go over each scale degree and the chords built on top of them, but that's a lie. Because we already did for most of them. Not all chords of a minor scale are affected by moving the  $\hat{7}$  one semitone up. In fact, only chords III+, V and vii $\circ$  are affected, and out of those, the V and vii $\circ$  are the same as the ones from the major scales. So let's quickly go over the new III+ chord before we discuss the real magic behind the harmonic minor scale.

### Augmented Mediant chord (III+):

The placement of the mediant note is the same as in natural minor chords, but the chord itself is a lot different. The mediant chord is made from scale degrees  $\hat{3}$   $\hat{5}$  and  $\hat{7}$ , and since now the  $\hat{7}$  is one semitone up it causes the mediant chord to stretch and be composed of 2 major 3rd intervals and not one of each like normal triad chords. This abnormal separation is something we have not yet seen in a scale before, we have however seen 2 minor 3rd intervals that create a diminished chord, and well, this is basically the opposite of a diminished chord.

This is called an augmented chord, a chord built from 2 major 3rd intervals, and its notation is the Roman numeral 3 and a + sign:

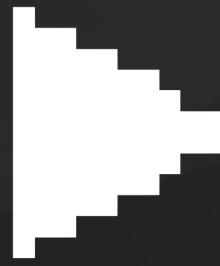


Like the diminished chord, this separation causes the augmented chords to have an unusual sound that creates a lot of tension, which is the reason why the III+ is probably the least used chord in harmonic minor scales, same way the diminished chord is the least used chord in major scales.

Since I don't know much about this chord for obvious reasons I asked ChatGPT for help and this is what it gave me: "This chord has a distinctive, bright sound that can create a sense of tension and excitement in the music."

("Test your knowledge" challenges for harmonic minor scale come later)

# 14. Dominant vs. Diminished vs. Augmented



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explanation of this chapter.

(Only available on 'Red' version)



Your progress!



## 14. Dominant vs. Diminished vs. Augmented

And with that, you now know all big 3 types of chords that create tension: Dominant major and minor chords, diminished chords and augmented chords.

(Major, minor, diminished and augmented refers to the status of the chord, while dominant refers to the 5th chord in a major or minor scale, don't get those terms confused)

So naturally you must be asking yourself, how is that tension different? Is it the same tension? Could I use this chords interchangeably? I have explained for example, how diminished chords minor 2nd intervals leading to tonic can be used in trap melodies, but that explanation was more about the intervals between some of the notes of those 2 chords and not about the diminished chord itself. I was talking melodically and not harmonically.

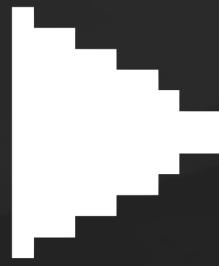
So, to get a final comparison on this 3 main different types of chords that create tension, I resorted to the always helpful and not at all likely to take over control of humanity ChatGPT. And after a few trial and error attempts, I believe it has given me the best explanation of how these chords are different for each other I have ever heard, so here it is:

“The ii dim and vii dim chords, for example, create tension because they contain a diminished fifth, which creates a dissonant and unstable sound that naturally resolves to a more stable chord.

The V chord creates tension because it is the dominant chord, which is a chord that naturally wants to resolve to the tonic chord.

The augmented chord, on the other hand, creates tension because it contains an augmented fifth, which sounds dissonant and creates a sense of ambiguity or uncertainty. Unlike the ii dim and vii dim chords, which naturally resolve to a more stable chord, the augmented chord does not have a clear resolution, which makes it a particularly interesting and unique chord to use in certain musical contexts.”

# 15. The true magic behind the harmonic minor scale



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explanation of this chapter.

(Only available on 'Red' version)



Your progress!

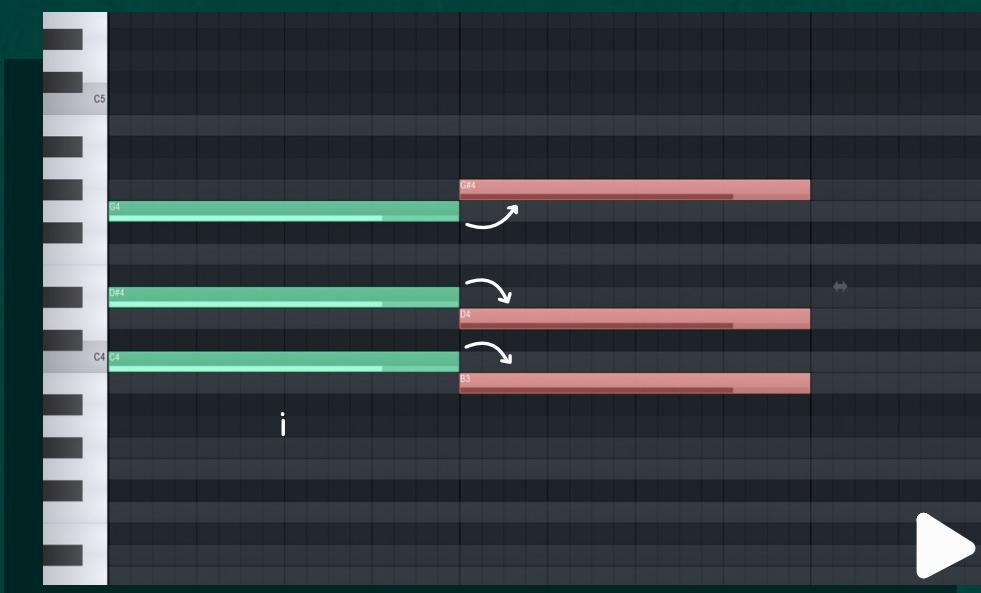


## 15. The true magic behind the harmonic minor scale

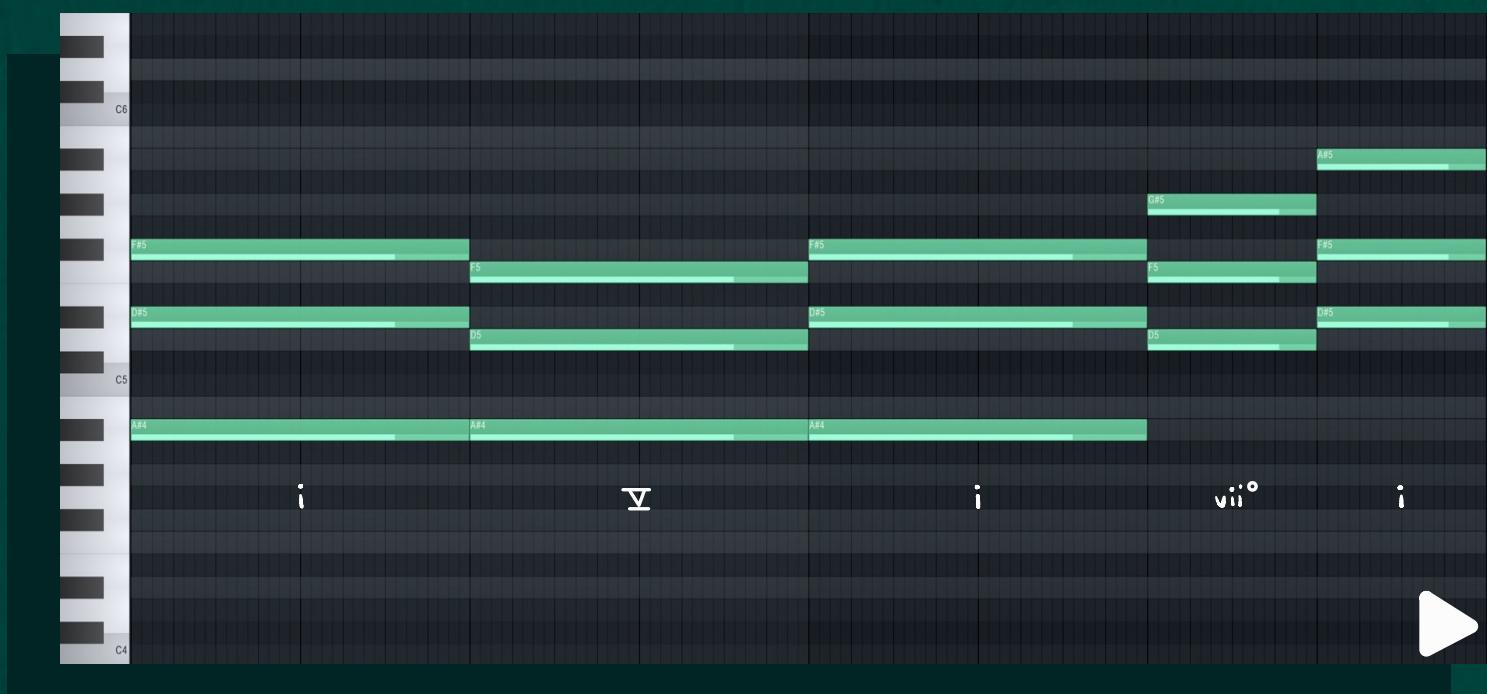
But enough of that boring stuff, I know what you want. You want to make crazy dark/evil trap melodies and vibrant Spanish guitar beats. That's what we all want. And lucky for you, the harmonic minor scale just might be the key behind those..

Starting with evil melodies:

As you know, a great part of any dark sounding melody is the minor 2nd interval. The harmonic minor scale offers us the possibility to not only use the 2 present in a natural minor scale, but an extra one is created in harmonic minor scales because of the movement of the ^7. This offers us the possibility to not only go up from tonic to minor 2nd intervals, but also down from tonic to 2 different minor second intervals.



This gives us the possibility to go from tonic to this inversion of V, to create one of the most classic and efficient evil sounding progressions out there. You may have heard it already in a bunch of NF songs, and the fact that now the Leading tone chord is there (unlike in natural minor scales) gives us the chance to add even more tension to this progression if needed, that's because the sound of a minor tonic chord to a leading tone chord creates a special cool sounding tensions you just won't ever get in any major or minor scale.

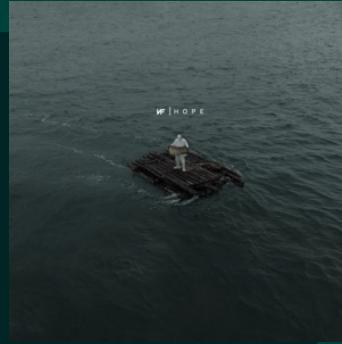


Here are a few video deconstructions of songs that use this scale to get that cool dark sound:



Rich Flex

Video breakdown:



MOTTO

Video breakdown:



TQG

Video breakdown:



HOPE

Video breakdown:

Moving on to Spanish melodies:

Now I honestly don't know why this works, but the change from Subtonic to leading tone in harmonic minor scales changes everything for guitar melodies. While it does make for a great downward evil sounding tonic to dominant melody, where the harmonic minor scale really shines is here.

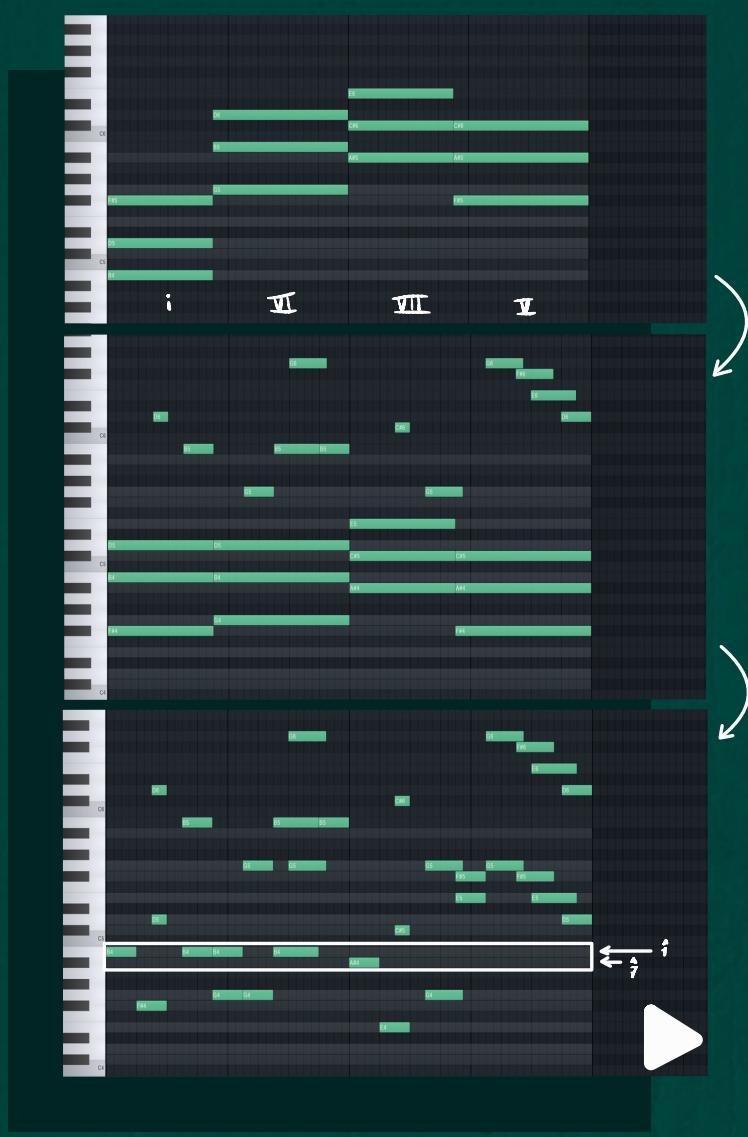
The inclusion of this leading tone paired with the very, very classic tonic-predominant-dominant progression seems for some reason to be a hack to getting Spanish guitar sounding melodies quickly.

That progression is a simple as it sounds:

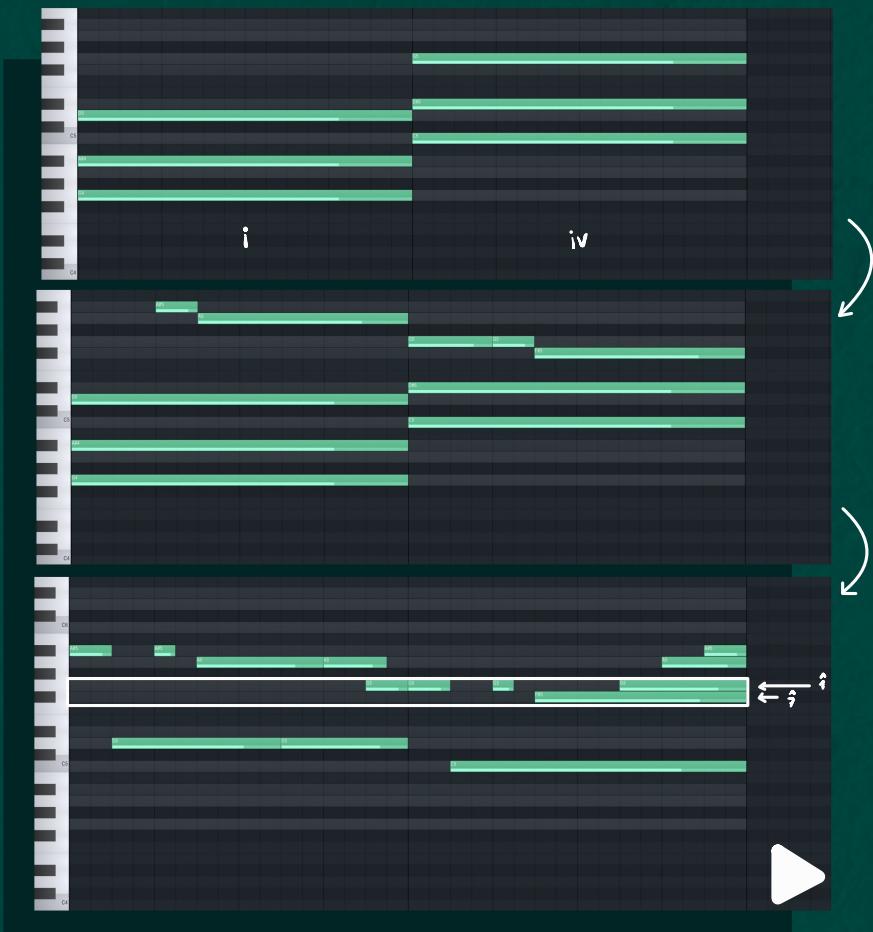
- Tonic = triad built using  $\wedge 1$  as a root
- Predominant = triads built using  $\wedge 4$  &  $\wedge 6$  as roots
- Dominant = triads built using  $\wedge 5$  &  $\wedge 7$  as roots

Of course those are not all possibilities but these are the ones I've seen most commonly used. (Also I want to mention that technically  $\wedge 6$  is not predominant but tonic function, but since we're on minor scale rules these functions get blurrier to the point I would like to put it under predominant function category but you might disagree and that's totally fine.) To give you a few examples to support my point and to also help you as inspiration to get started on those Spanish melodies, the images below will show you the deconstruction of 2 different Spanish guitar melodies I really like.

## Becky G - PELEAS:



## Becky G - UNA MAS:



And with that, I'm afraid we're done with the extremely long chapter on scales. However these are not all the scales out there, like I said before, Major and minor scales are actually just 2 modes in a 7 mode family. And the harmonic minor scale is just a minor scale with a small change. There are many scales out there but I strongly believe these to be the most important 3, and honestly all I've ever needed.

You might wanna look into pentatonic scales if you play guitar, I've heard they are great for coming up with freestyle melodies, but honestly I wouldn't know. Anyway, it's time to move on to the next chapter in our journey: Continuing to ramble on about chords.

Before I started talking about scales I had just finished explaining to you how Major, minor, diminished and augmented chord where all the types of triad chords out there, and while that is technically true, those are all the types of chords you can build by using the classic 2 3rd intervals model, you can make more chords than just those 4 types.

Let's start with suspended chords, since those are the easiest to explain. And believe me, this info will be very useful for you so don't skip ahead. Its kind a Mr. Miyagi situation over here you won't know how helpful this stuff is until we're done. So let's keep going.

## But wait!

### Before you move on... Test your knowledge!

This is a small set of challenges I prepare after every chapter that will help you check if you understood the contents of this lesson, and if you're ready to apply them to your music.

#### Challenge 1: (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next pages)

- Using the harmonic minor scale, and the simple Tonic, Predominant, Dominant formula i gave you earlier make a nice guitar chord progression, or melody, or arpeggio.

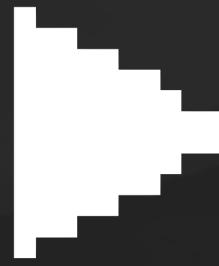
The image shows a digital piano keyboard interface. On the left, a vertical piano key indicates the note C5. The main area displays a harmonic minor scale across seven octaves. Below the keyboard, Roman numerals indicate specific chords: i, ii°, III+, iv, V, VI, and vii°. A white play button is located at the bottom right. The interface has a dark background with light-colored keys.

## Answer 1:

- Of course there are hundreds of possible answers, but here is one in case you needed help or got lost:



# 16. Suspended chords



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(Only available on 'Red' version)



Your progress!



## 16. Suspended chords:

Ok so a quick refresher on what chords are:

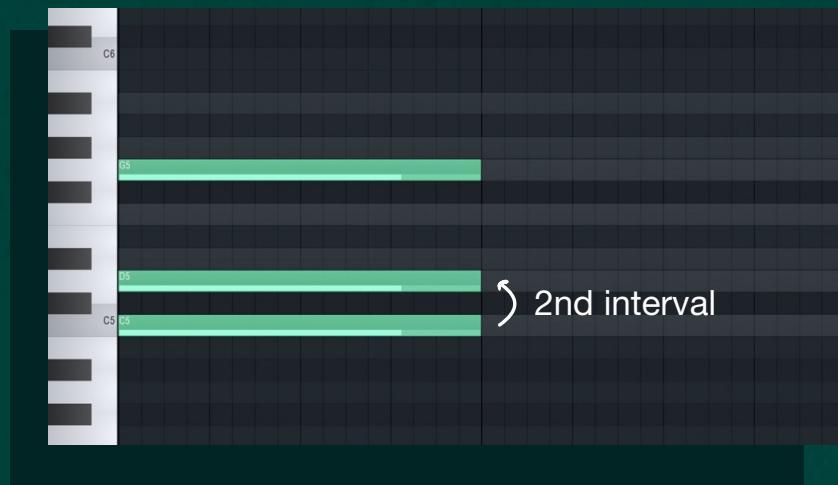
A chord is technically any group of notes, like literally any group. So to get more specific we talk about diad and triad chords. Diad chords are chords made from 2 notes, but people usually see those as simple triad chords that are missing one note. Triad chords are chords built from 3 notes, where each note is a 3rd interval apart from the note above and/or below. And from here depending on whether those intervals are one major and one minor, both minor, both major, you get major, minor, diminished and augmented chords.

Suspended chords are a triad chords that replace the third note that is one third interval above root and one third interval below 5th with either a fourth or a second interval. That's it, that's all they are, simply move your third note one scale note up or down and you have created a suspended chord.

The following lesson will focus on suspended chords only on major and minor chords, but it's the same principle for diminished and augmented chords.

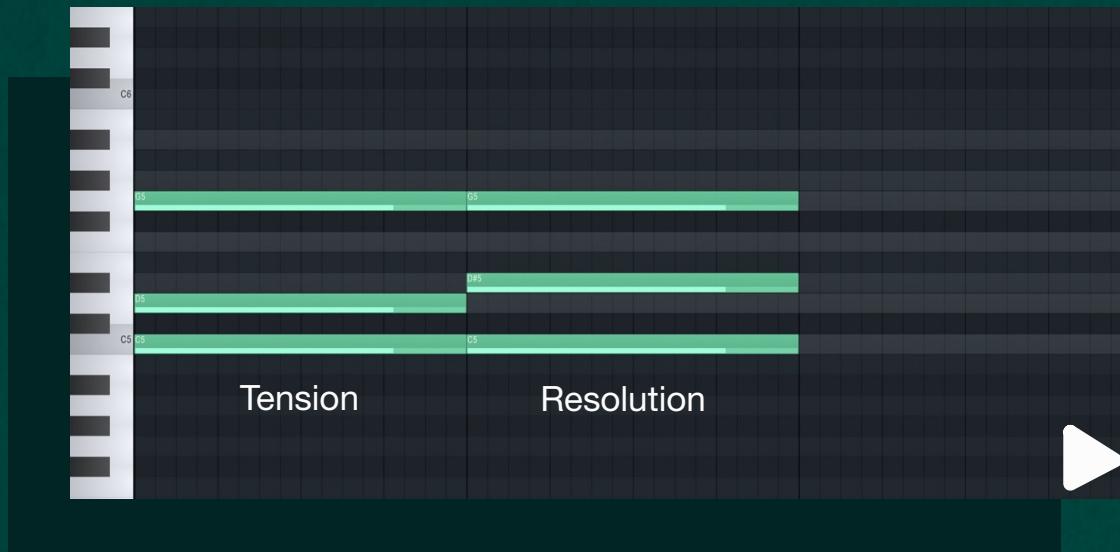
Triad chord      Suspended chord      Suspended chord

**Sus2 chords** (or suspended chords that are created by the 3rd being replaced by a 2nd interval note above root) are these ones:



This creates a chord that sounds dreamy and ambiguous, as the lack of a third note removes the defining major or minor quality of the chord. The suspended second note creates an interval of a whole step above the root note, which contributes to the open and unresolved feel of the chord. Sus2 chords are commonly used in a variety of musical genres to create an ethereal atmosphere, and are a versatile tool for composers and songwriters.

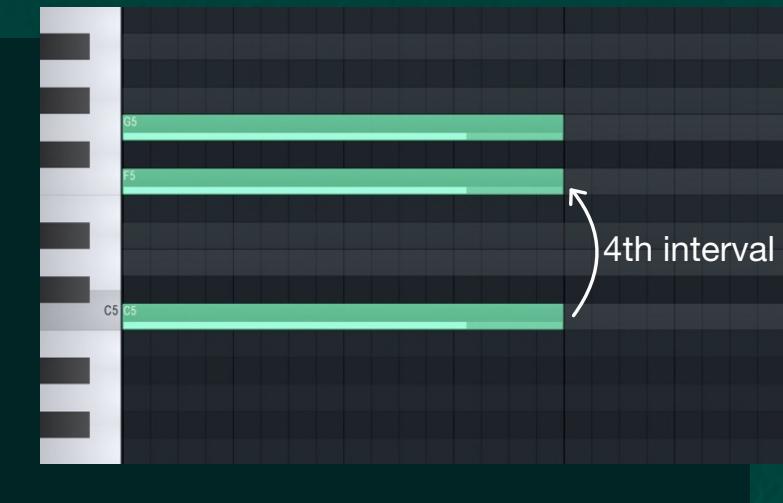
One common resolution for a sus2 chord is to resolve it to a major or minor chord with the same root note. This creates a sense of resolution and stability, as the missing third is added back into the chord.



Of course, sus2 chords can also progress to other major and minor chords that don't have the same root, and depending on which chord this is it can create a sense of movement and tension or a simple sense of resolution. For example a iisus2 chord progressing to a V chord will probably create tension, but a iisus2 moving to a I chord will probably create resolution.

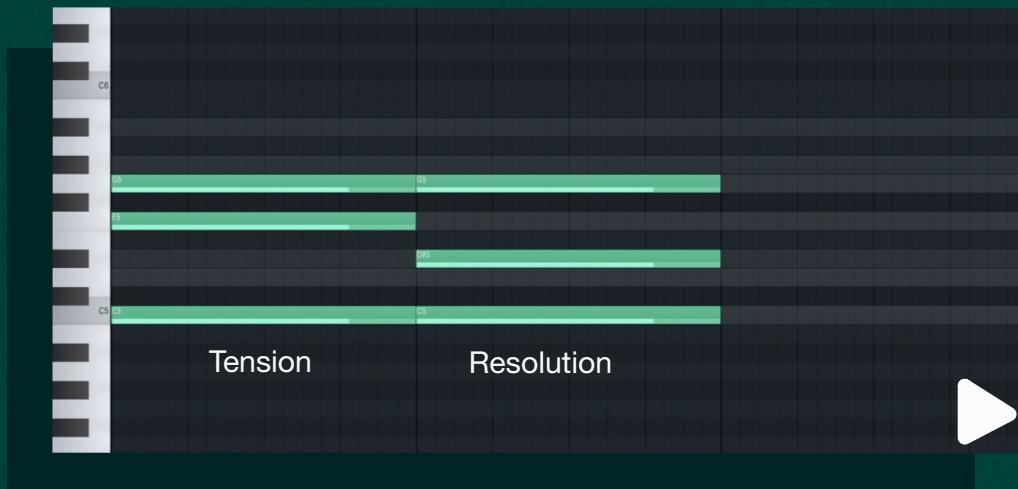
Before I tell you how I have personally found sus chords the most useful we need to go over the other type of sus chord, sus4.

**Sus4 chords** (or suspended chords that are created by the 3rd being replaced by a 4th interval note above root) are these ones:

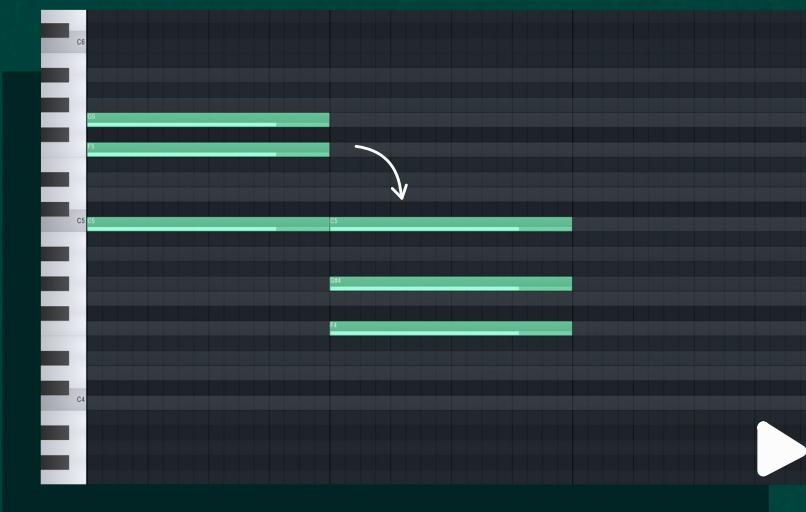


This creates a chord that sounds tense and unresolved, as the suspended fourth note creates an interval of two whole steps above the root note. Sus4 chords are commonly used in music to create tension and anticipation, as they create a sense of instability that leads to resolution.

One common resolution for a sus4 chord is to resolve it to a major or minor chord with the same root note. This creates a sense of resolution and stability, as the missing third is added back into the chord.



Another common resolution for a sus4 chord is to use it as a dominant chord in a chord progression. In this case, the sus4 chord is typically followed by a major or minor chord a perfect fourth below, creating a sense of resolution and tension. For example, a **Csus4 chord (C-F-G)** can be used as a dominant chord and followed by an F major chord (F-A-C) or an **F minor chord (F-Ab-C)** for a sense of resolution and movement.



I've personally seen people use suspended chords in 2 big ways:

1. **to change the notes of a chord to achieve a more convenient placement**, let me explain. Take this progression for example:

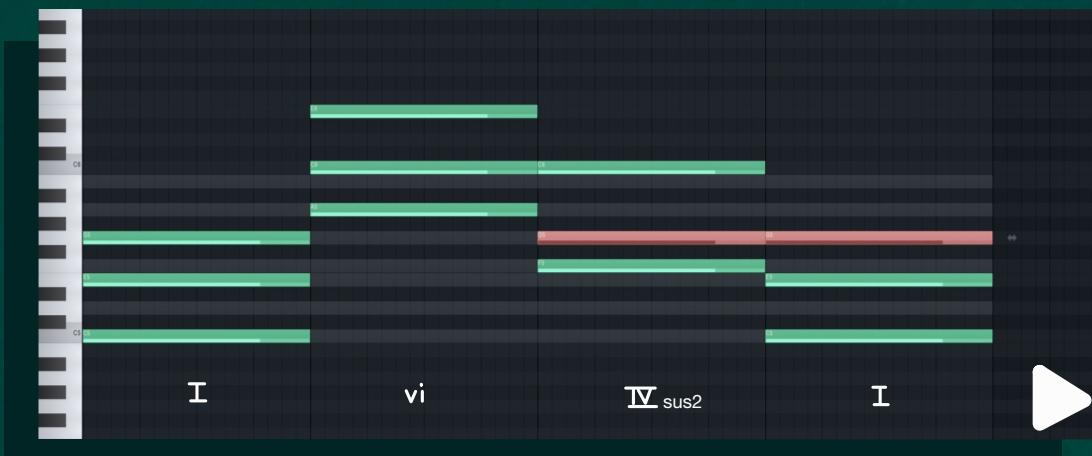
- James Arthur - Falling like the stars: I - vi - IVsus2 - I

The suspended chord is used here to change the scale degrees of the 4 chord from:

^4 ^6 ^1 to

^4 ^5 ^1, which moves much more smoothly to the tonic chord which has its notes on ^1 ^3 ^5

This smoother transition works especially well for sad progressions like this one, this offer a smoother transition while still giving you the predominant feel of the 4 chord.

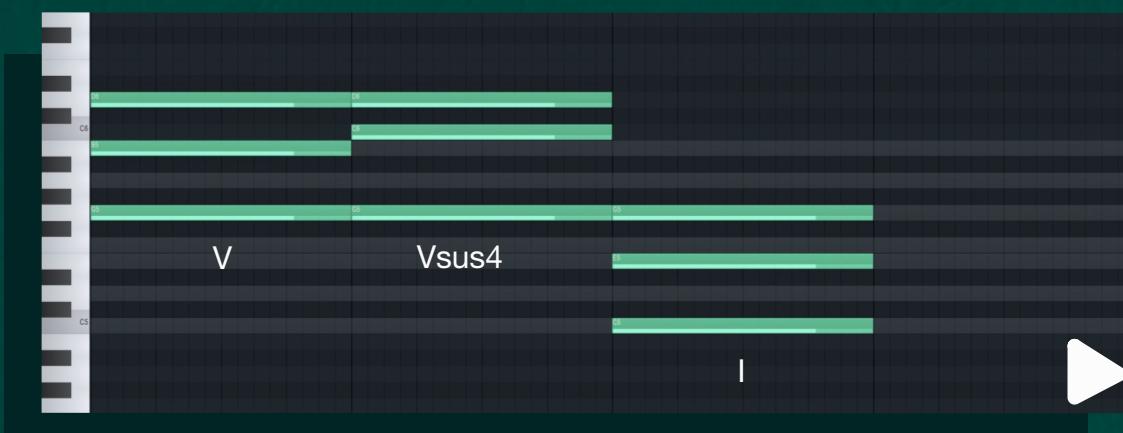


## 2. To extend tension:

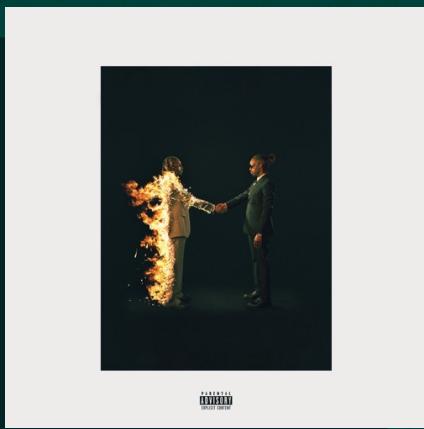
Using the suspended version of a chord, before or after the non suspended version of a chord is a great way to extend its tension. For example, using the V chords feels like the next chord should be I, but if you put a Vsus4 in between, the tension is unexpectedly extended, which creates a cool sound.

Because usually there is no chord that will create more tension than V, so out of nowhere not hearing a I chord and hearing a chord that also has a lot of tension that is not the same as V (because V and Vsus4 sound different) creates a cool sound.

For example, You can hear this effect being used in Travis Scott's - Down In Atlanta, but there is not resolution to I, which in my opinion helps to add to the funky feeling of the track. For more on that song you can look up my short video about it on YouTube or Tik Tok.

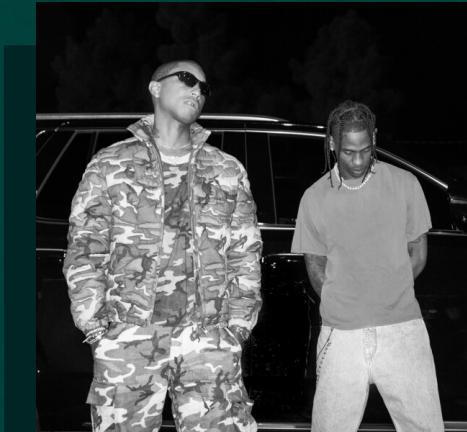


Here are 3 video breakdowns I made of popular songs that use this technique:



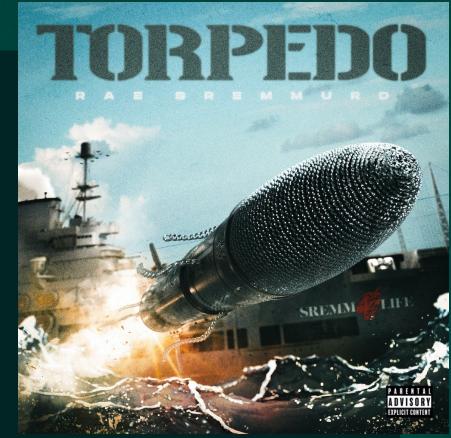
Metro Boomin - Raindrops

**Video breakdown:**



Travis Scott - Down In Atlanta

**Video breakdown:**



Rae Sremmurd - Torpedo

**Video breakdown:**

Now that you know what suspended chords are and how they work, let's move on to chord extensions:

**But wait!**

**Before you move on... Test your knowledge!**

This is a small set of challenges I prepare after every chapter that will help you check if you understood the contents of this lesson, and if you're ready to apply them to your music.

**Challenge 1:** (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next page)

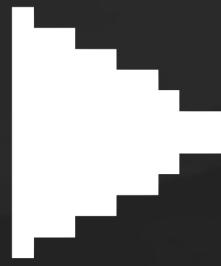
- Can you identify which of the following chords are suspended chords?



**Answer 1:**



# 17. Chord extensions



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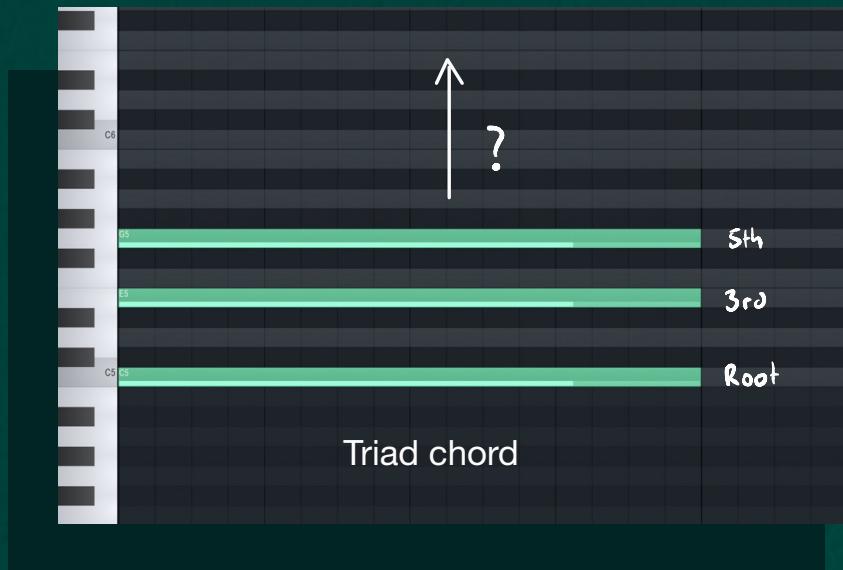
Your progress!



## 17. Chord extensions:

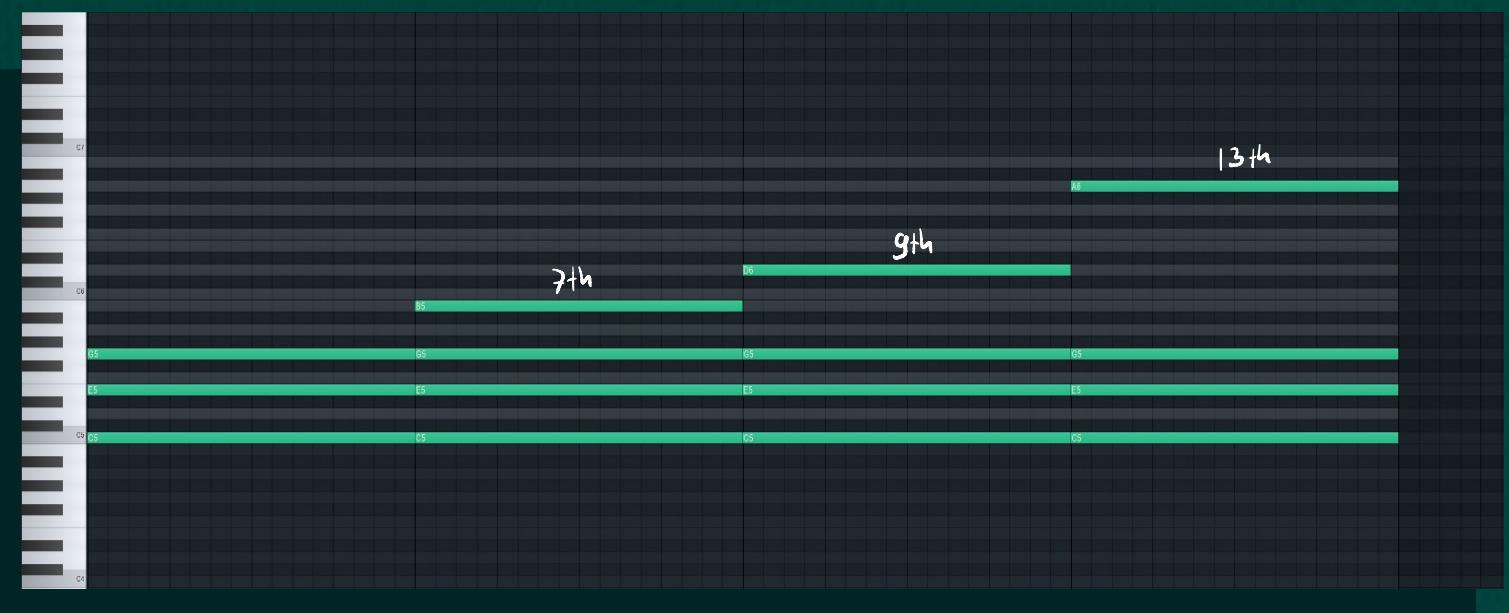
Now technically an extension only counts past the 7th (term which you'll understand in a bit) but I'm including in here anything past 5th because it's just a name and it makes the explanation simpler for you and me.

When I say a chord extension I mean a triad chord that has notes added to it past the normal 5th threshold. So a 4 note chord, past the 7th they turn into 5 note chords (because a 9th chord for example assumes that there is already a 7th there) and past the 9th they become 6 note chords (because a 11th chord for example assumes that there is already a 7th and a 9th there), but all that will become clearer in the next page.



As you know, the names root, 3rd and 5th in a triad chord come from the notes being a 3rd interval and a 5th interval above the root note, we'll it's the same principle for the notes above them.

If we add a note here, it would be called a 7th, here a 9th, here a 13th and so on.



Like I told you at some point these intervals start being the same note just one octave above, like a 9th is simply a 2nd interval but one octave higher, so you can call it whatever you want, either 2nd or 9th, and so on.



Now of course, whether the 2nd is in the real 2nd position or in the 9th position changes the sound. This is called an inversion (by that I mean the act of moving a note octaves up or down is an inversion, but we'll touch more on that later).

For now let's focus on why we even want to extend chords in the first place:

(For this next short part about 6th to 11th chords, I made rough explanations myself and had ChatGPT help me fill in some gaps in my knowledge. This next part was still monitored by me and ChatGPT even added some things I wasn't aware of before, so it's a better explanation than it would've been otherwise. I just want to be transparent with you where I used extra robot help for the book so I don't feel like I'm lying to you. Anyway, back to the lesson..)

## 6th chords:

A sixth chord is a four-note chord that includes the root note, third, fifth, and sixth intervals. Sixth chords are often used in jazz and other genres that emphasize harmonic complexity and experimentation, the reason for that (and the reason behind all cool chord extension characteristics) is that 6th chords offer a richer and more complex sound than simple triad chords. They can add a sense of tension or resolution to a progression, depending on how they're used (like if you use a V6 it will add more tension than if you use a I6 for example). I wish I could be more precise in how these chords sound but the reality is that context is king when it comes to adding intervals to triad chords, so I'd afraid you'll have to listen to them and make your own decisions depending on context of that specific chord progression. But the main takeaway is that these extensions will make your chords have a richer more complex sound.

## 7th Chords:

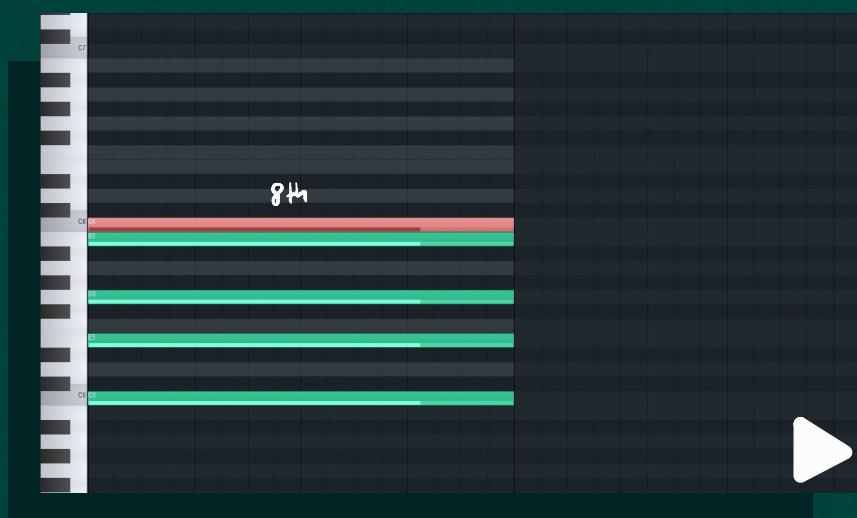
A seventh chord is a four-note chord that includes the root note, third, fifth, and seventh intervals. Seventh chords are commonly used in jazz and blues music to create tension and resolution within a chord progression. They are more dissonant than sixth chords, which means they have a stronger sense of tension and require a stronger resolution.

The 7th chords are probably the chords you think of when you think of jazzy chords, just play a Cmaj7 chord in any piano and you'll know what I mean.



## 8th Chords:

An eighth chord is a five-note chord that includes the root note, third, fifth, seventh, and eighth intervals. The eighth interval is actually the same as the root note but an octave higher. Eighth chords are less common than sixth and seventh chords, but they can be used to create interesting and complex harmonic progressions. They are particularly common in gospel and R&B music, where they are often used to add a sense of excitement and energy to a song.



Now, you can technically have an 8th chord without the 7th. Which is why especially in 8th, 10th and 12th chords whether we're extending the chord or just using doubling becomes a bit blurry.

Doubling means simply using the same notes from your chord again in other octaves to make your chords sound fuller, I mean fuller as in occupy more frequencies. Nick Mira does this all the time for Juice WRLD songs for example, he adds a simple i chord, but doubles the notes to the point it looks much more complex than it is..

base of Robbery - Juice WRLD

After doubling and inversions..

..and all that just so that the chord will occupy more frequencies, it is a really effective technique. Try it in your next piano beat and you'll be amazed I promise.

## 9th Chords:

A ninth chord is a five-note chord that includes the root note, third, fifth, seventh, and ninth intervals. Ninth chords are commonly used in jazz and blues music, where they are used to add complexity and interest to a chord progression. They can also be used in funk and R&B music to create a sense of groove and rhythm.

In my experience, ninth chords can add a really cool sound to dark beats when used in pads or pianos with a lot of reverb, try them out next time.

## 10th Chords:

A tenth chord is a six-note chord that includes the root note, third, fifth, seventh, ninth, and tenth intervals. The tenth interval is the same as the third interval but an octave higher. Tenth chords are uncommon in most genres of music but are sometimes used in jazz and gospel music to create interesting harmonic progressions.



## 11th Chords:

An eleventh chord is a six-note chord that includes the root note, third, fifth, seventh, ninth, and eleventh intervals. Eleventh chords are commonly used in jazz and fusion music, where they are used to create complex and sophisticated harmonic progressions. They can also be used in funk and R&B music to create a sense of groove and rhythm.



I could keep going from here but you get the idea. More notes = more complex sound. The only chord extensions I have personally seen used in the wild are mostly either 6th, 7th, 9ths or doubling (that nick mira trick) so start trying those out and experiment.

Now that you know how chord extensions work, we can move on to chord inversion.

**But wait!**

## Before you move on... Test your knowledge!

This is a small set of challenges I prepare after every chapter that will help you check if you understood the contents of this lesson, and if you're ready to apply them to your music.

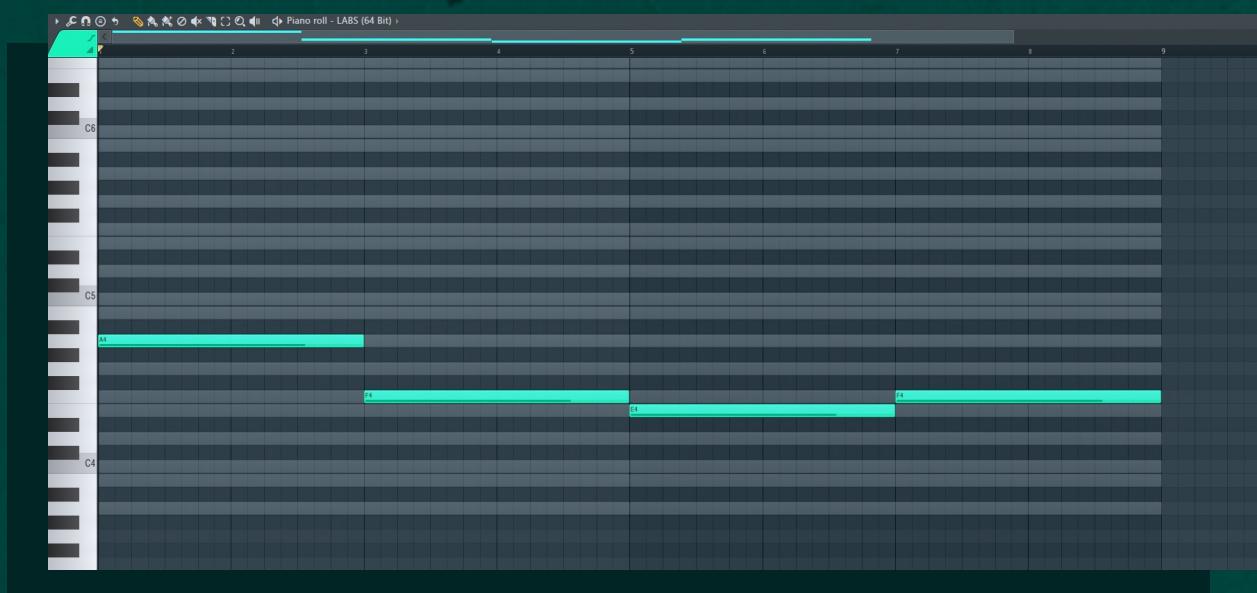
### Challenge 1: (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next pages)

- Can you name the following chord extensions?



### Challenge 2: (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next pages)

- Using the A minor scale and these 4 root notes make 2 7th chords, one triad chord with the root doubled and a simple triad chord. You decide which is which.
- After your progression is sounding good, add the top melody midi found in the file, and see how it sounds.



**Download MIDI to participate  
(Chapter 17 - challenge 2)**

**If you use FL studio.** Tap here to learn how to see your scale notes.

## Answer 1:

A musical staff with five horizontal lines and four spaces. The notes are represented by horizontal cyan bars. On the left, a vertical column of white boxes shows note names: C5, G4, E4, C4, and A3. The first measure, labeled "7th chord", contains notes at G4, E4, C4, and A3. The second measure, labeled "6th chord", contains notes at C5, E4, C4, and A3. The notes are positioned such that the G4 note in the 7th chord is the same as the C5 note in the 6th chord, creating a doubling effect.

(More on doubling and inversions on the next page)

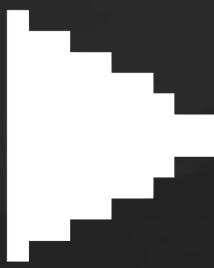
## Answer 2: (not the only answer but the answer I chose, yours is right as long as you like it)

- I made the first 2 chords 7ths and doubled the root on the 3rd one.
- That would make this progression a i7 - VI7 - v - VI

A musical staff with five horizontal lines and four spaces. The notes are represented by horizontal cyan bars. On the left, a vertical column of white boxes shows note names: C8, G7, C7, G6, C6, G5, C5, G4, E4, C4, and A3. The progression consists of three measures. The first measure has notes at G7, C7, G6, and C6. The second measure has notes at C8, G7, C7, G6, and C6. The third measure has notes at G5, C5, G4, E4, C4, and A3. The notes are positioned to create a harmonic progression from a dominant 7th chord (G7) to a tonic 7th chord (C7), and then to a subdominant chord (G4, E4).

[Download MIDI answer  
\(Chapter 17 - answer 2\)](#)

# 18. Inversions



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**Your progress!**



## 18. Inversions:

Chord inversions happen when you move around the notes in your chord up or down. This is not the same as doubling because that implies there being 2 notes, 1 in the old octave and 1 in the new. An inversion means there's now only a note in the new octave, the old one's place is now empty.

Doubled 3rd                          Inverted 3rd

There are different types of inversions and you need to at least have heard of them before we get into voice leading and other uses for inversion, which is going to blow your mind (probably), so let's not waste any time and get right into them:

### Root position:

This is the first type of inversion in that this is no inversion at all. Root position means a chord with the bass note at the bottom, so a regular chord. It sounds very much like a regular chord and has all the powers of a regular chord.

Chord: C minor in root position

root note = C

Now we're about to really get into types of inversions so let's first go over inversions on triad chords and after that inversions on 7th chords, after that we'll do voice leading and the other fun stuff, I promise.

## Inversions on triad chords:

The following are the Roman numeral notation of the 3 different types of inversion we can find in triad chords. The numbers in “()” mean that usually in notation you won't find this numbers written, so if you see a blank space is because you're supposed to understand that number is there. The big Roman I means that we're talking about the inversions of a tonic chord, but they're all notated in the same way.

$I^{(s)}$  = Root position

$I^6_{(3)}$  = 1st inversion (3rd note in the bass)

$I^6_{(4)}$  = 2nd inversion (5th note in the bass)

Interval from lowest note to second highest and highest  
Chord

Chord: C minor

3rd

root

root

5th

5th

5th

3rd

3rd

i

$i^6$

$i^6_{(4)}$

## Inversions on 7th chords:

The following are the Roman numeral notation of the 4 different types of inversion we can find in 7th chords. The big Roman I means that we're talking about the inversions of a tonic chord, but they're all notated in the same way.

$I^7$  = Root position

$I^6_s$  = 3rd note in the bass

$I^4_s$  = 5th note in the bass

$I^2$  = 7th note in the bass

Chord: C minor 7

7th

7th

7th

7th

i<sup>7</sup>

$i^6$

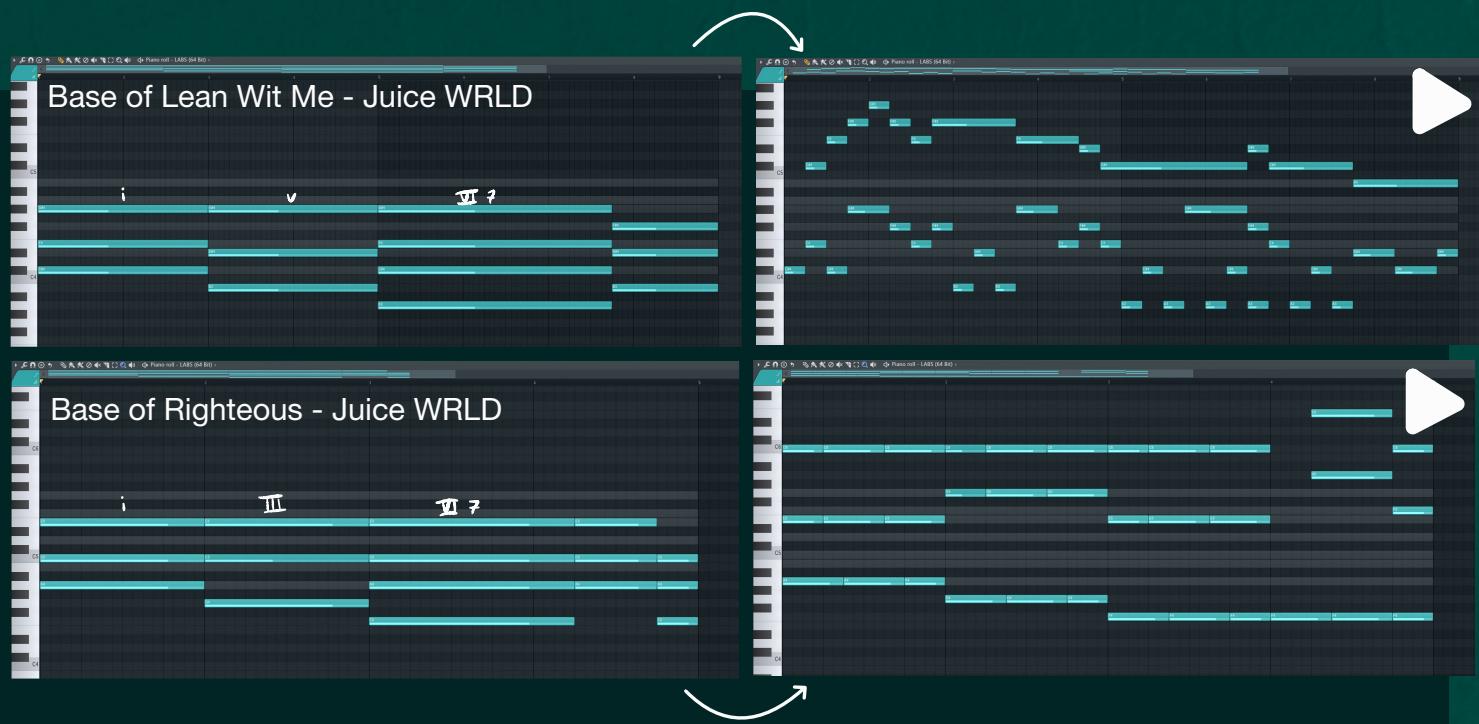
$i^4$

$i^2$

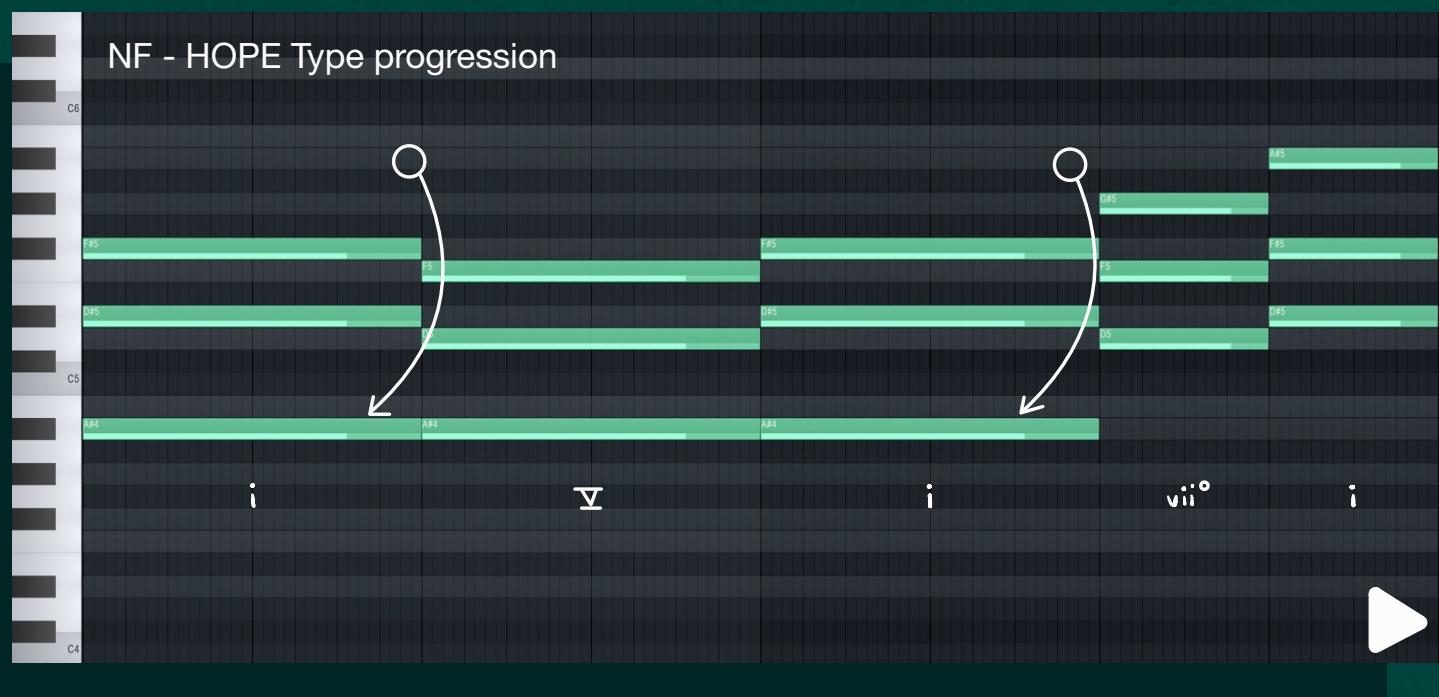
## Why even care about inversions?

Inversions are one of the greatest tools we have in our arsenal as producers. They can completely change how chord progressions sound and can help intensify the feeling we're going, let me give you 2 examples:

Juice WRLD's songs rely on inversions a lot where for a sad melody, they will use them to help their chord progressions go down, to intensify that sad feeling:



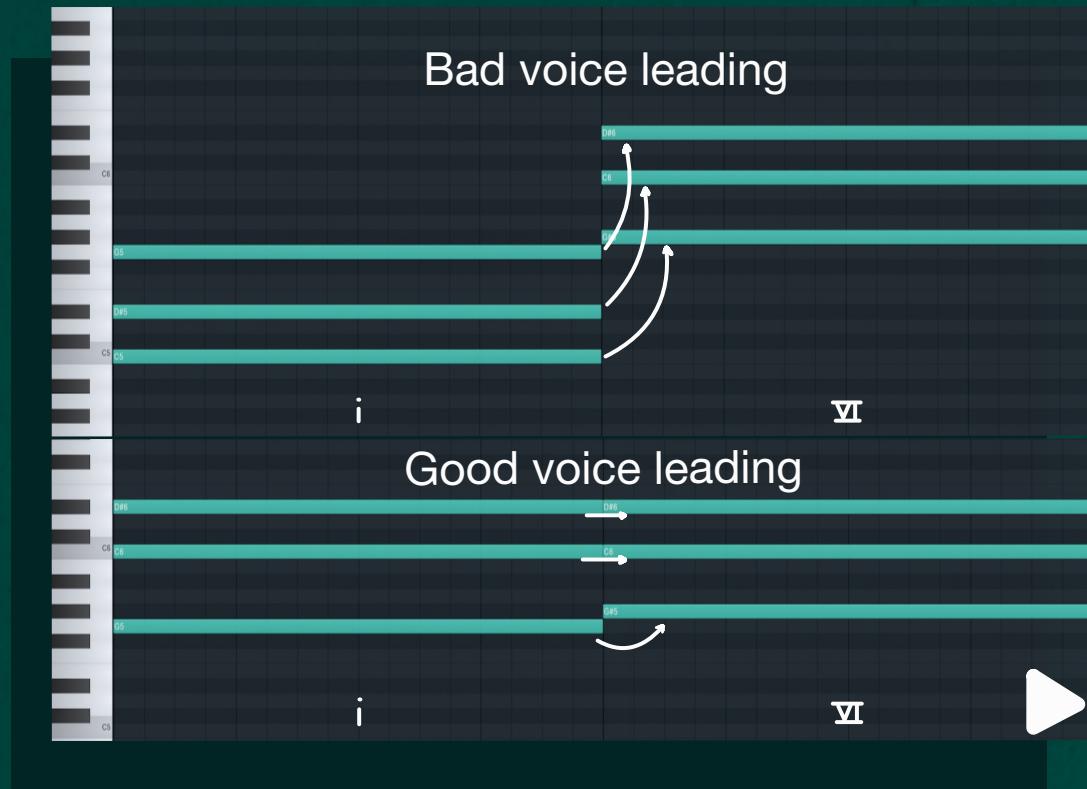
Another great example is evil melodies. NF uses a harmonic minor scale in his song HOPE, and to get that evil minor second interval harmonic minor scales have but without using a diminished chord, NF's producer used a simple i - V progression. But to still get that crazy dark feeling he used these inversions, to help the chords flow smoothly and take advantage of the minor 2nd intervals while making the progression feel like going down.



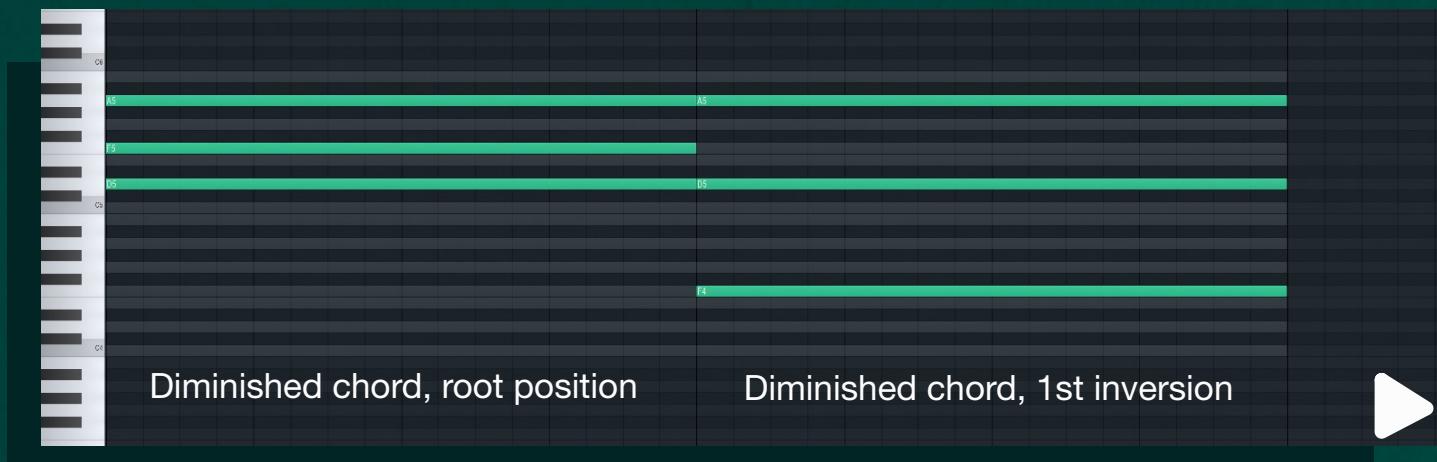
Now the mix of chord progressions and inversions is such a massive topic, that I'm currently working on a new surprise document for you that will explain how to combine chords and use inversions to achieve any type of feeling. By the time this book is finished, I will probably have already released a few packs on that. I plan to release them slowly by analyzing how different artists achieve their signature sound and feeling and using that to give you guides on which chords and inversions to use to get a similar result. If you bought this book then just use the code: MUSIC15 for a 15% discount on any of those packs. But for now, I don't want to leave you hanging. So here's a list of all amazing benefits/uses inversions have. But to get into more specific uses for each chord in each scale for each goal, you'll have to either explore on your own, or let me help you (but for money, I want more money, otherwise I'm not helping).

Doing it this way allows me to charge you less because I assume you don't want to learn every single inversion use there is, so in the end it is cheaper for you to just get the ones you want and not have to pay for every single one. Because if I had to add all those in this book, then the price would be much higher. Anyway, here are the different benefits of using inversions:

- Inversions can help to create a smoother, more flowing melody by avoiding large jumps between notes.** This is called voice leading. And the principle of it is imagining note line (top, middle, bottom) as an individual singer, your task is to make their job easier by decreasing pitch changes between note lines. This means that using chord inversions you are making the chord progression less jumpy. This method is used in popular music all the time and helps make chord changes smoother and nicer.



**2. Using inversions can make dissonant chords sound less harsh.** This is especially efficient in diminished chords, moving these chords from root position to first inversion can make them sound less dissonant because now we don't have those same harsh intervals between the notes.



**3. Inversions can be used to create a sense of tension and release by creating a feeling of forward momentum and energy in the music.** For this one an example by myself with the help of ChatGPT:

Let's consider a simple chord progression in the key of C major: C - F - G. If we play these chords in root position, they can sound stable and predictable. However, if we play the G chord in first inversion (with the B note in the bass), it can create a sense of tension that is then resolved when the chord is played in root position.

So if we play the progression as C - F - G/B - C, the first inversion of the G chord creates a sense of tension that is then resolved when we return to the C chord. The inversion allows us to create a feeling of forward momentum and energy in the music, leading the listener to anticipate the resolution that comes when we return to the C chord.



**4. Using inversions can create a more interesting and varied harmonic texture by adding depth and complexity to the music.** This is kind of an obvious point, inversions can create a more interesting and less predictable sound, kind of like what we did in the previous point.

There are more uses to inversions than these main 4, but these are the most important ones you should keep in mind when creating music. At least in my opinion.

Now, before we finish this part and move on to the amazing circle of fifths, I would like to share my favorite ways to use inversions & doubling to get a more realistic sound. As you know doubling basically means using one or more notes of your chord in different octaves to get a richer sound, and inversions are moving your notes octaves up or down.

### My personal favorite ways to write chords for:

- 1. Guitar:** a guitar's strings work differently than a keyboards keys, so if you want to make guitar chords sound realistic you gotta move some notes around. The way guitar chords work you usually will end up playing the notes of the chords in this inversion:

The diagram illustrates the difference in chord写作方法 between a regular guitar chord and a more realistic one. On the left, under 'Regular', a C major chord is shown with notes at D4, F4, and A4. On the right, under 'Realistic', the same notes are moved to D5, C5, and G4. A play button is located in the bottom right corner.

Regular	Realistic
D4	D5
F4	C5
A4	G4
	3rd
	root double
5th	5th
D4	
F4	
A4	
3rd	
root	root

- 2. Piano:** To make piano chords sound fuller and more interesting my personal favorite inversion is to play the chords like this:

The diagram illustrates the difference in chord写作方法 between a regular piano chord and a more 'better' (according to me) one. On the left, under 'Regular', a C major chord is shown with notes at D4, F4, and A4. On the right, under 'Better (according to me)', the notes are moved to D5, G4, and C5. A play button is located in the bottom right corner.

Regular	Better (according to me)
D4	D5
F4	
A4	3rd
D4	G4
F4	5th
A4	
3rd	
root	root

**But wait!**

## **Before you move on... Test your knowledge!**

This is a small set of challenges I prepare after every chapter that will help you check if you understood the contents of this lesson, and if you're ready to apply them to your music.

### **Challenge 1:** (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next pages)

- Use these 2 root notes to make a realistic guitar progression in the key of B min.
- After the chords and inversions are ready, set your grid to 1/3 beat and arpeggiate the notes of your chord to go up up and down with each new 1/3 beat cut. Like this:



**Download MIDI to participate  
(Chapter 18 - challenge 1)**

### **Challenge 2:** (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next pages)

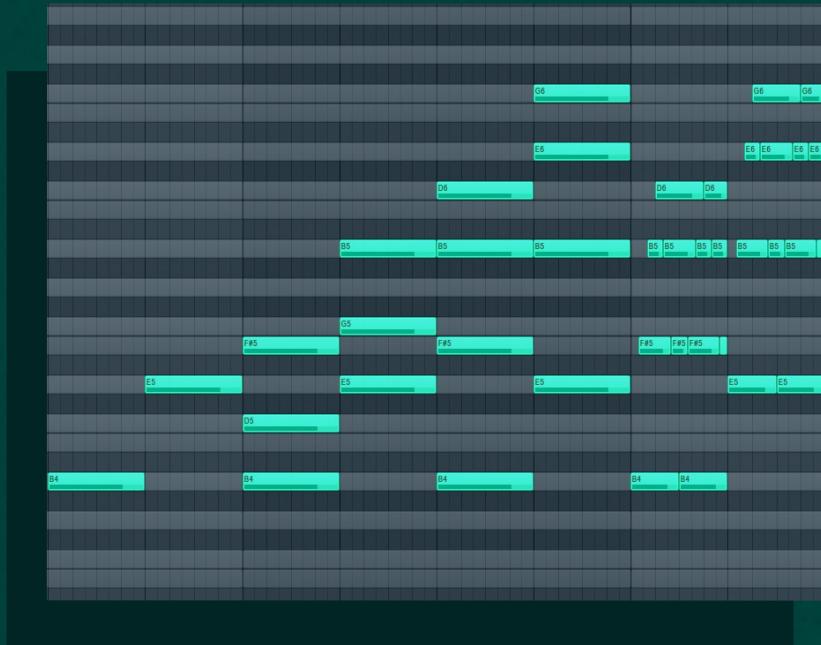
- Use inversions and/or doubling to make the following chord progression in the key of B min sound good



**Download MIDI to participate  
(Chapter 18 - challenge 2)**

## Answer 1:

- You should end up with something like this:
- (This is the first half of AMARI's guitar arpeggio)



A M A R I - J Cole

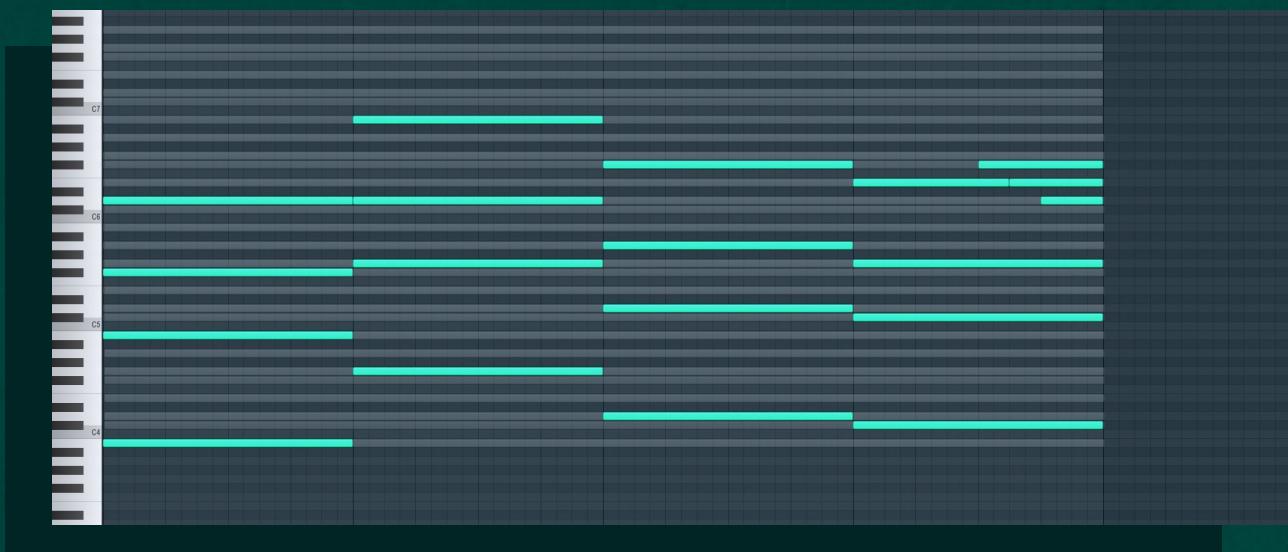
Video breakdown:



[Download MIDI answer  
\(Chapter 18 - answer 1\)](#)

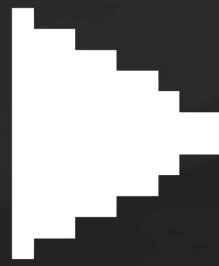
## Answer 2:

- I ended up going with my own formula for doubling piano melodies, but a simpler voice leading guided route could've also worked. If you found this one specially difficult don't worry, the diminished chord in the end was put there specifically to make it harder for you.



[Download MIDI answer  
\(Chapter 18 - answer 2\)](#)

# 19. The circle of fifths



**UNLOCK VIDEO**

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**Your progress!**

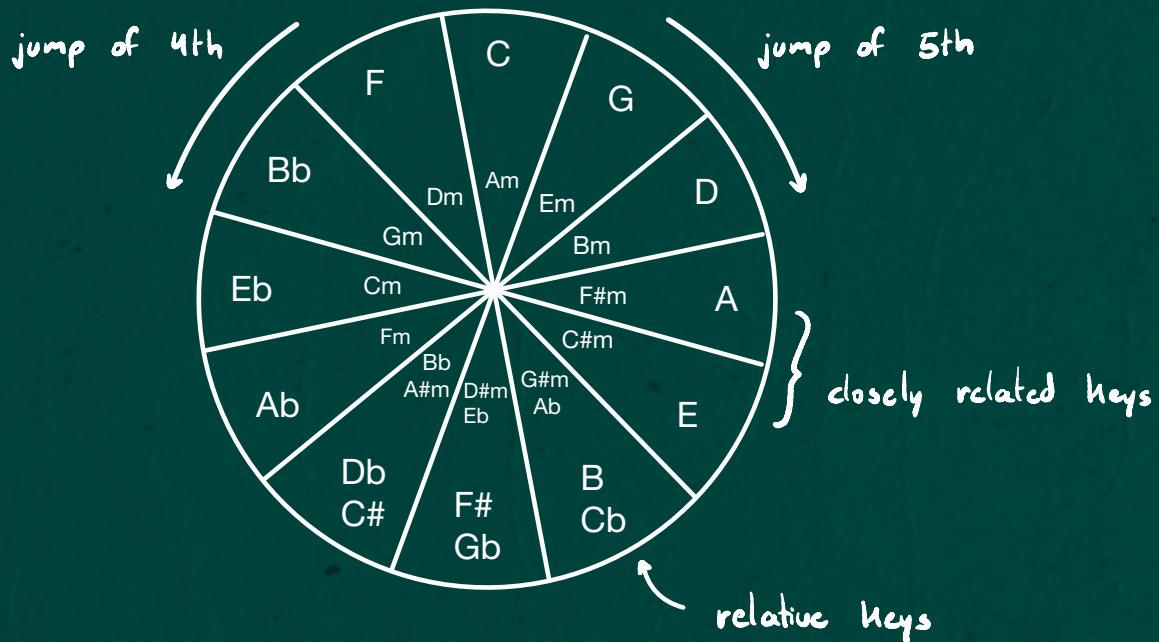


## 19. The Circle Of Fifths:

The circle of fifths is a powerful tool that is widely used in music theory and composition. It is a visual representation of the relationships between the 12 notes of the Western musical system, organized in a circle that progresses clockwise by ascending fifth intervals (or counter-clockwise in descending fourth intervals).

The circle of fifths is important in music because it provides a framework for understanding the harmonic relationships between chords and keys. By following the circle, we can easily see how different chords and keys relate to each other, and use this knowledge to create more interesting and complex harmonic progressions. I will go over every major use for the circle of fifths in the following few pages.

Plus, I believe I have found a way to use this circle to make help us analyze other chord progressions and more easily identify patterns that we can use in our own melodies. So lets jump right in.



### • Components:

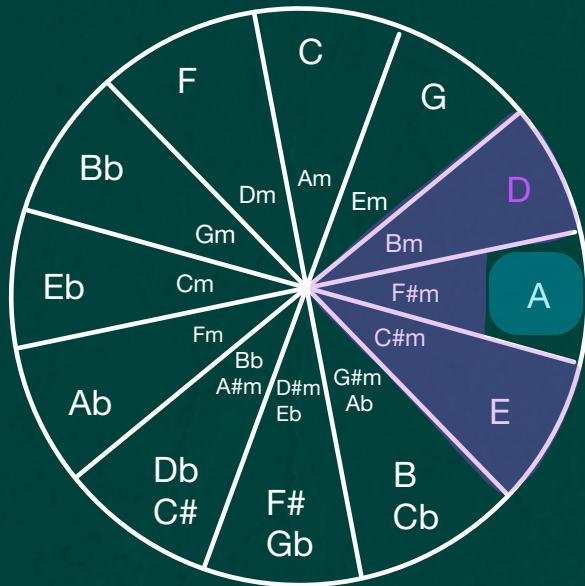
- Each space to the left is a new scale a 4th below the last one
- Each space to the right is a new scale a 5th above the last one
- The outside layer represents major scales, the inside layer represents the relative minor scale of that major scale (explained in a bit)
- Closely related keys are scales that are different only by one # or b (meaning one note of those scales is either a 2nd higher or lower, and the rest of the notes in the 2 scales are the same)

- **Uses:** (List of uses achieved with the help of [Ledgernote.com's The Circle of Fifths Explained](#))

1 We use **closely related keys** to know which notes we could „borrow“ from other scales without making the progression sound out of key

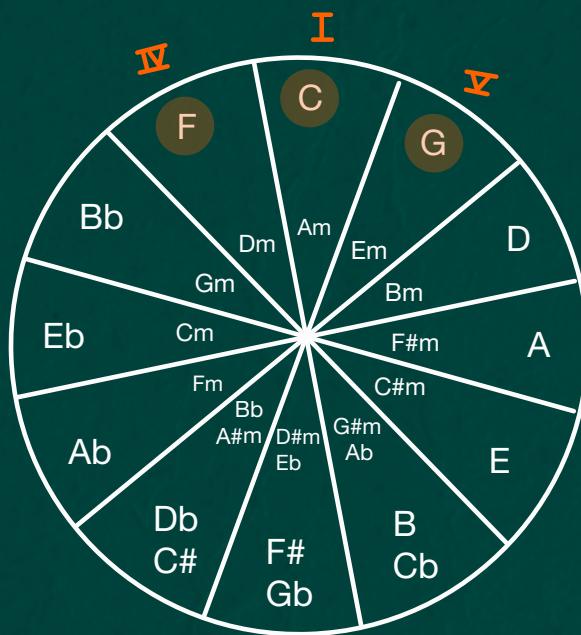
This helps expand the possibilities we have when making chord progressions or melodies

For example if we were in the key of **A**, we could borrow notes from the scales **E, D, C#m, F#m or Bm** (which in these case are the notes D# and G)



2

"The most popular chord progression in the world, in which most pop music recycles over and over is the: I - IV - V - I. Now, what's interesting is if you find the tonic of your key on the Circle, you've already found the 4th chord and the 5th chord in the key and can construct a catchy song in less than 10 seconds."



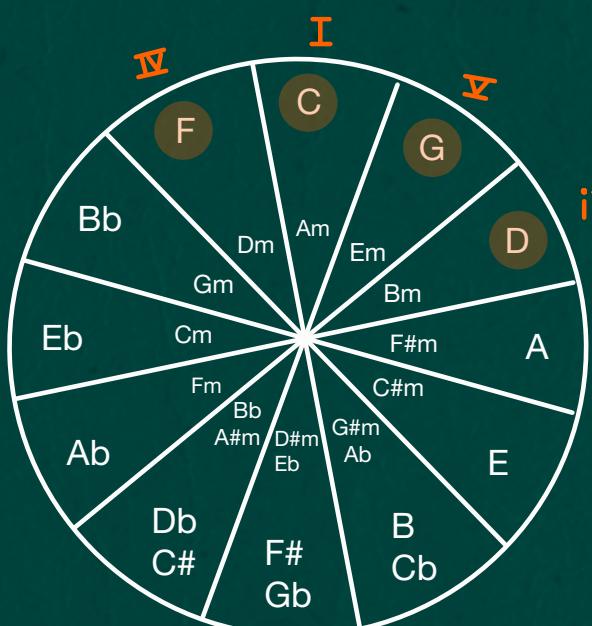
3

It also helps to visualize different **harmonic functions** (tendency of certain chords to progress to other chords, or to remain at rest, a better explanation comes later):

"you can see and hear that the dominant chord (V) is closer to the tonic than the supertonic chord (ii), even though if you look at the musical staff you'd think otherwise. This is another example of how useful the Circle of Fifths is, especially once explained."

This tells us that an authentic cadence like I - ii - V - I feels more resolved (has more resolution) than a plagal cadence like I - IV - I.

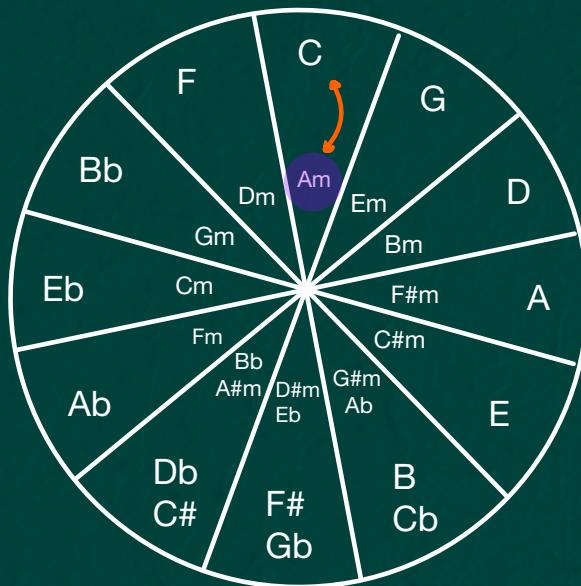
The reason for this is that, even though the V chord and IV chord are both "one step" away from the tonic physically on the circle, the IV chord is the furthest away if you consider the distance going clockwise around the circle."



4

"Finding the relative minor or major of a key: Every major key has a relative minor key. What this means is that both keys use the exact same notes." You can find the relative minors on the inside of the scale and the majors on the outside

For example: The relative minor of C Major is A minor.

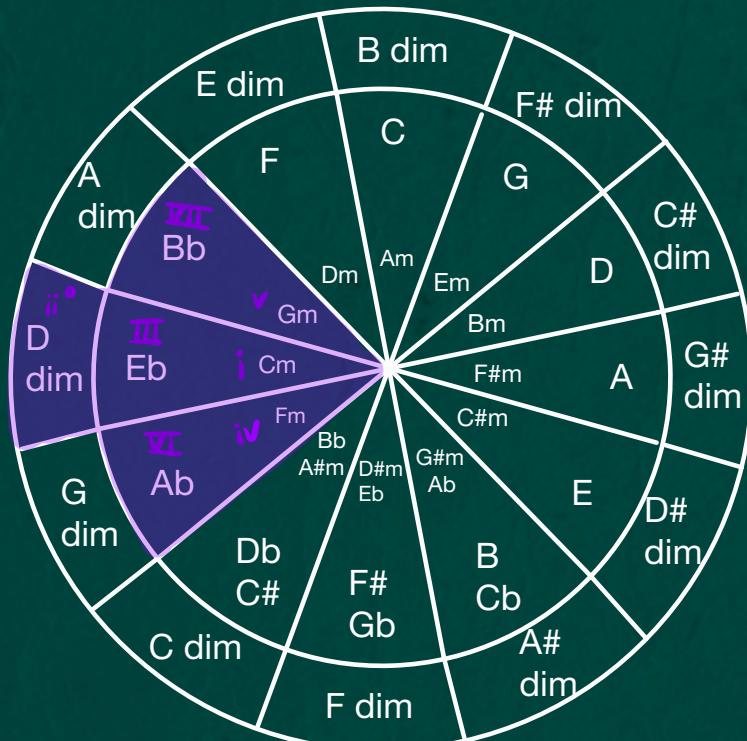
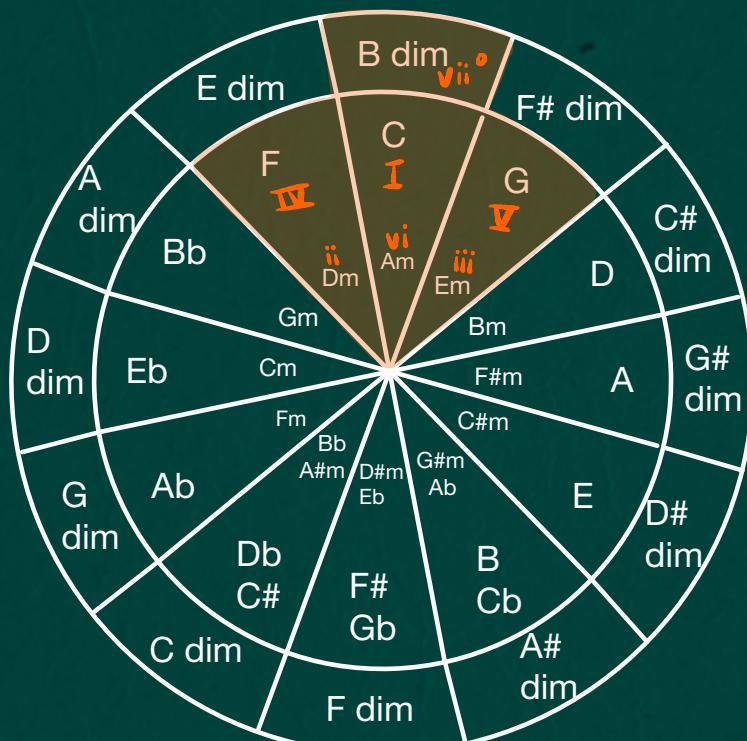


5

If you add this **diminished chords** to the circle, now you can easily find all 7 chords on any Major or minor scale.

**C Major scale example:** The C is the I chord, Dm the II chord, Em the iii, F the IV, G the V and lastly B diminished is the vii dim.

**C minor scale example:** The Cm is the i chord, D diminished the ii dim chord, Eb (Maj) the III, Fm the iv, Gm the v and lastly Bb (Maj) is the VII.



6

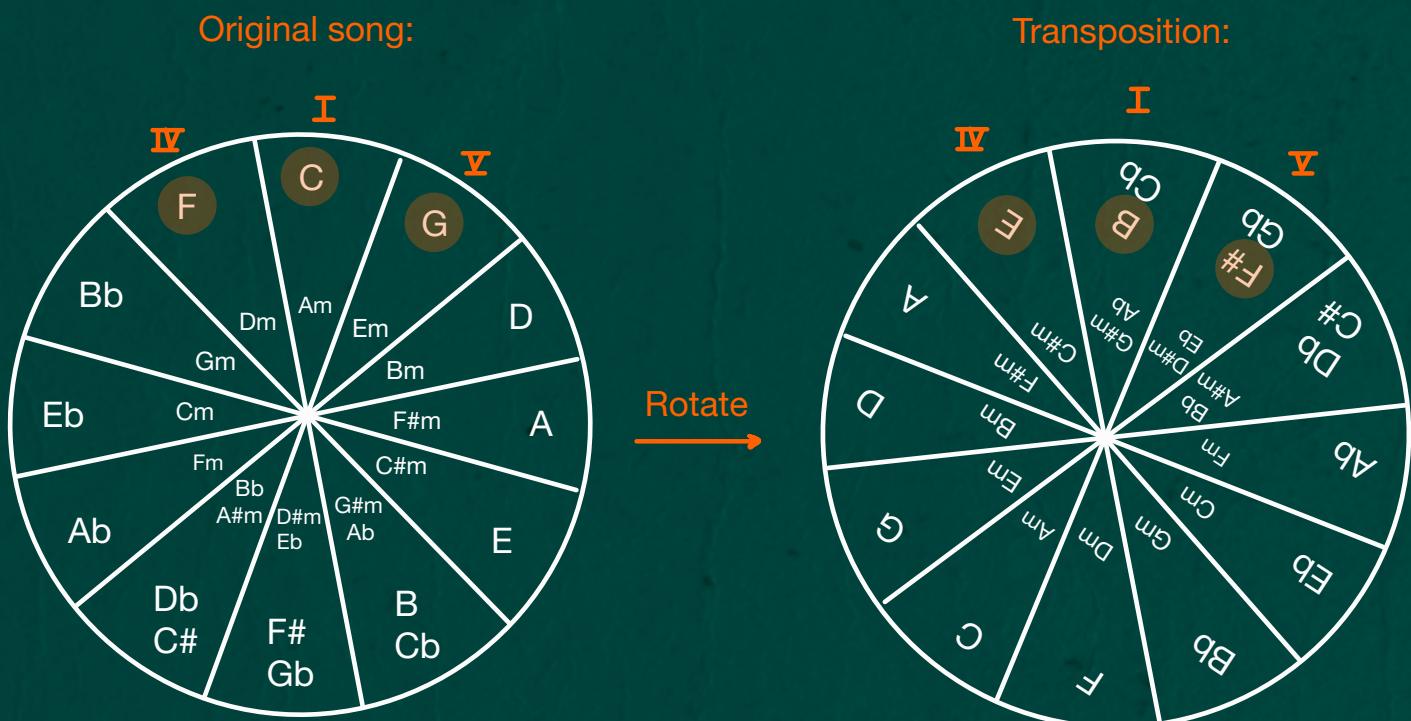
**Transpose** (When you move all the chords together either up or down) chords on the fly:

I - IV - V - I progression **transposed** 3 semitones down

"All you need to do is find the tonic of the key you want to use and you can snag the chords right off of the circle."

For example: If you know the song is a I - IV - V - I, then all you have to do is rotate your circle so that your desired key's I chord is in the same place as where the original song's I chord used to be in the circle, one step left is the IV, and one step right is the V.

"Let's switch from a C-Major song with the I - IV - V - I progression to the same in B-Major:"



(This works better of course when paired with use #5!)

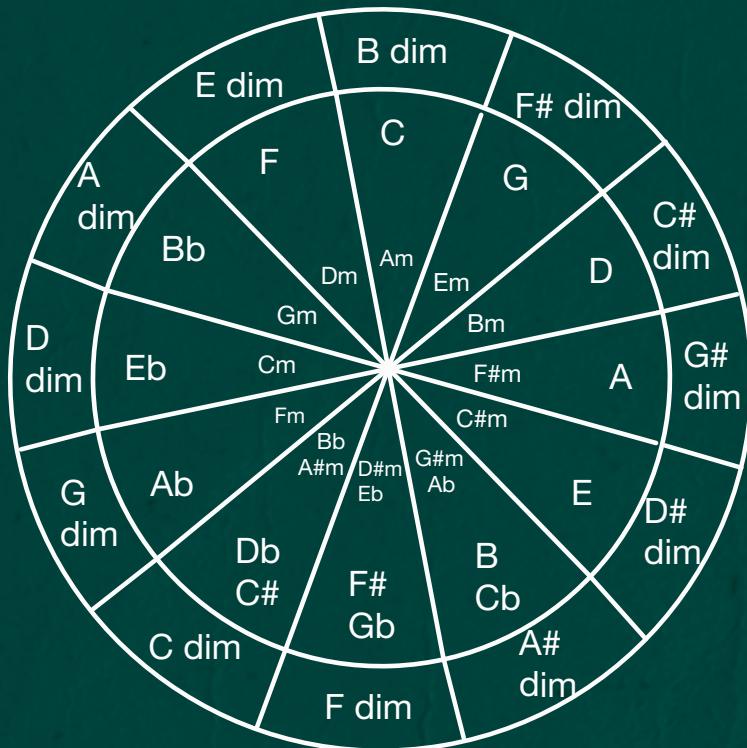
**But wait!**

**Before you move on... Test your knowledge!**

This is a small set of challenges I prepare after every chapter that will help you check if you understood the contents of this lesson, and if you're ready to apply them to your music.

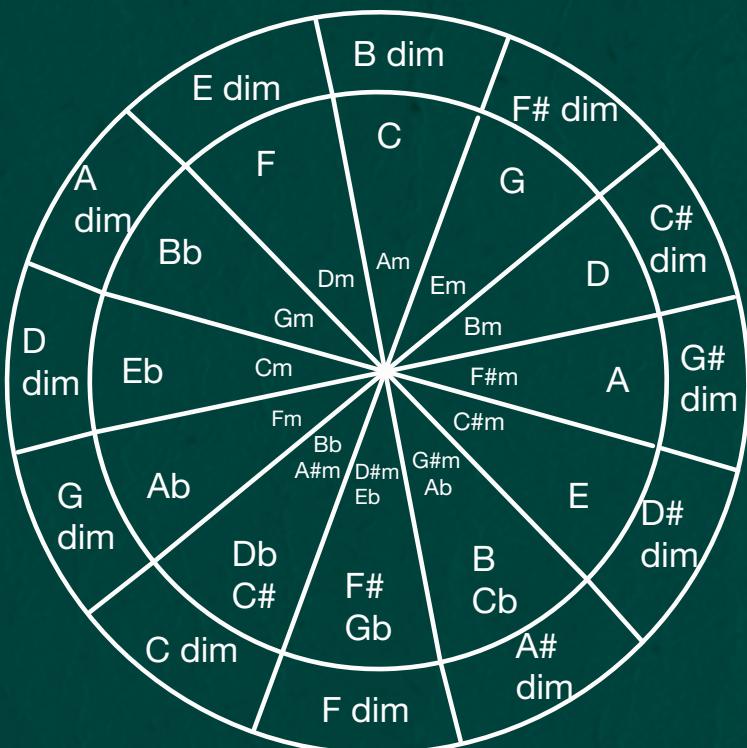
**Challenge 1:** (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next pages)

- Using the circle of fifths, find the relative minor keys of C Maj and A Maj

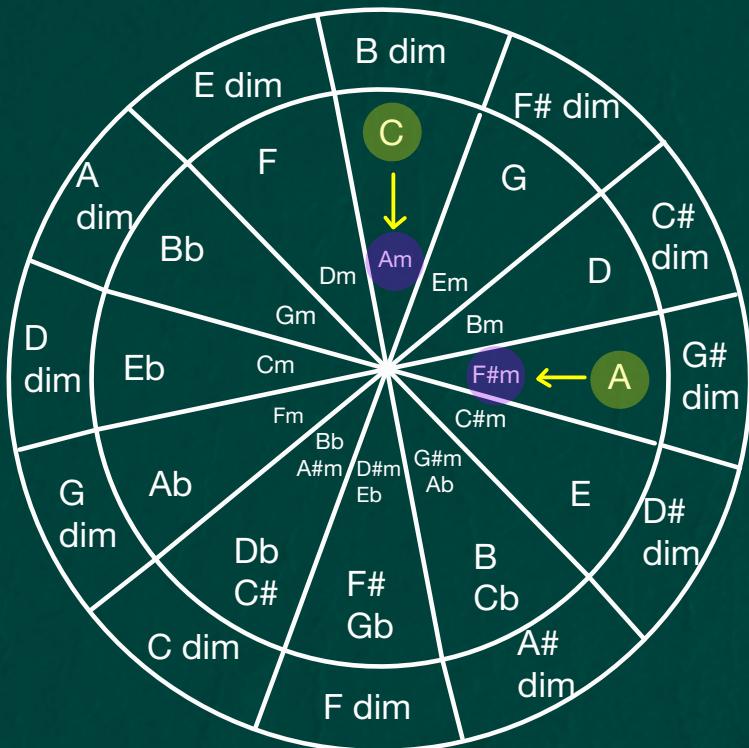


**Challenge 2:** (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next pages)

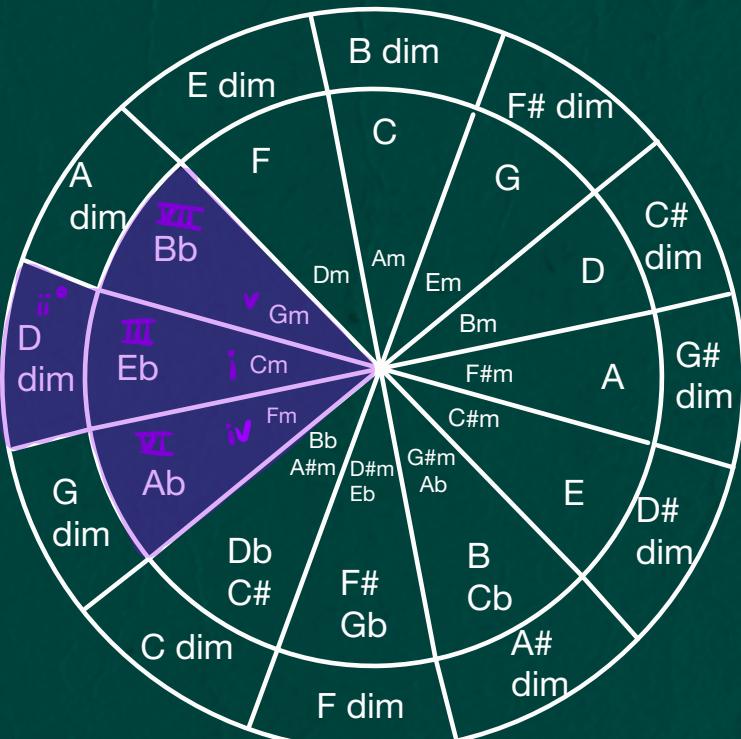
- Using the circle of fifths, find the 7 chords in the C minor scale.



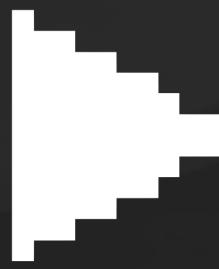
**Answer 1:**



**Answer 2:**



## 20. Some help with top melodies



**UNLOCK VIDEO**

Watch and exclusive video explanation of this chapter.

(Only available on 'Red' version)



Your progress!



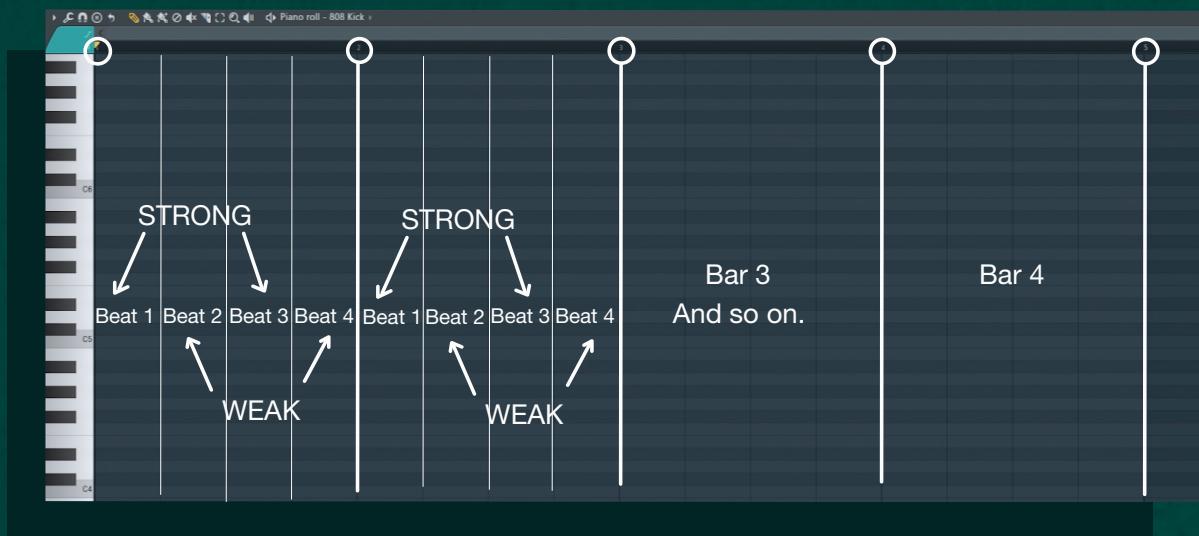
## 20. Some help with top melodies:

By now you're pretty much up to date with everything that has to do with chords, so naturally, the last step in your music theory preparation are top melodies. Now, how you build a top melody depends a lot on your personal taste, after all, top melodies are arguably the most unique part of a song beside its lyrics.

However there are a few guidelines and infos that I found were really helpful for me when it came time to do top melodies. So what follows is a list of useful info you might want to remember next time you want to write a top melody.

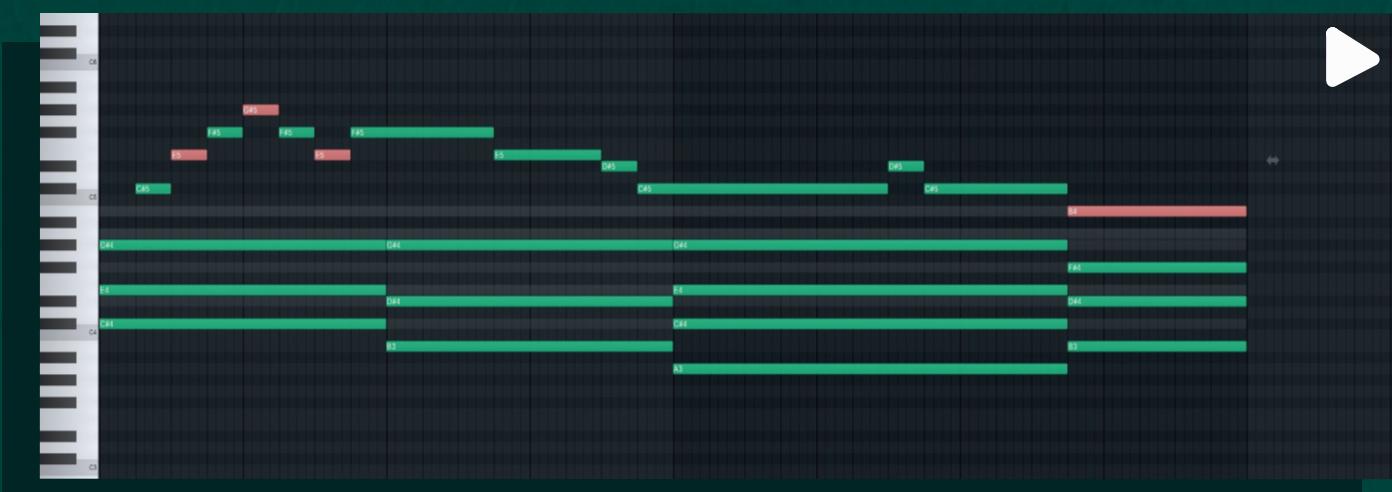
### Up and Downbeats:

We've already touched a little bit on the importance of down beats. Down beats essentially refers to Beats 1 and 3 in your grid, this is the place where you want to add chordal notes. Meaning here and here you want to most times use either the root, 3rd or 5th of your chord, the reason behind it is that using it sounds more stable and consonant. The rule technically says that we place a consonant notes in down beats and dissonant in Up beats, but I find it easier and more practical to talk about chordal and non chordal notes.



And in the other beats, you can use non-chord tones a lot more frequently. I'm telling you. This down beats thing is used literally all the time in trap, hip hop, pop, you name it. So next time you don't know where to start a top melody, start it on a down beat in Beats 1 or 3.

For example, this is Lean Wit Me's top melody above the base chords. You'll see that whenever a top melody note is in a down beat, the note is chordal (red notes).

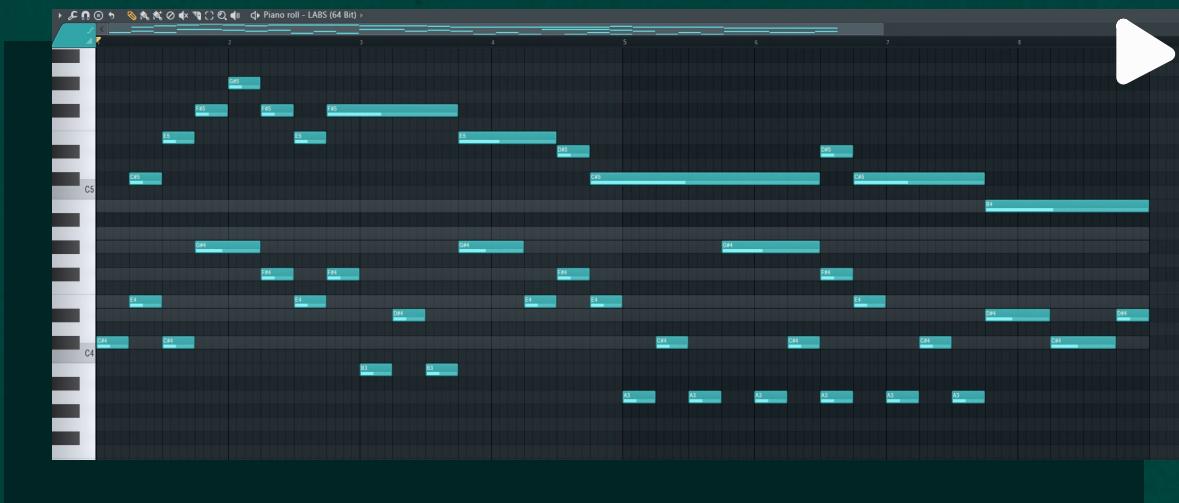


## Keep it simple:

Often times when I make a top melody I tend to get a bit carried away and add a bunch of notes that end up making the whole thing way to complicated. Well, in the making of my new project I've been telling you about, (that one about the MUSIC15 for -15%) I found out, that most top melodies, tend to include only around 3 to 4 notes per bar. Isn't that crazy? I was completely shocked when I realized I had been using way too many my entire career basically.

I'm not saying always do this, but definitely keep this in mind, some of the most memorable songs have some of the most simple melodies.

- Juice WRLD - Lean Wit Me: 4 top notes per bar



## Go down in the end:

I know this sounds like dumb advice, but after analyzing probably hundreds of songs, I have noticed that a simple descending progression in the 4th bar is a go-to way to close the progression in a nice way. I'm telling you it's done pretty often in modern music.

The image displays two piano roll interfaces from digital audio workstations. The top interface is for 'Travis Scott - Butterfly Effect' and the bottom one is for 'Juice WRLD - My Fault'. Both screens show a grid where horizontal bars represent notes over time. In both cases, there is a distinct downward trend in pitch starting around the 4th bar, which serves as a melodic closure. A large white play button is visible in the bottom right corner of each piano roll view.

## Be mindful of your intervals:

When it comes to top melodies, big jumps in intervals are just as noticeable as big jumps in chord changes (which is why we use voice leading, remember?) so try to keep your big jumps for important moments in the melody. Of course you can do whatever you want but the most common interval jumps are: 2nd and 3rd, then after those 4th and 5th. So if you're planning to make jumps bigger than that they better be worth it. Big jumps are a great way to make melodies more interesting but can be a bit too much when overdone.

I wish I could give you more specific advice than simply saying “be mindful”, but this is one of those things that are completely up to the context.

This piano roll screenshot shows a complex melody with numerous note heads labeled with musical notes such as C7, F#6, G6, E6, D6, C#6, B5, and G5. The notes are distributed across multiple octaves, primarily in the C6 and C7 ranges. The melody features several large interval jumps, particularly between the 4th and 5th bars, which are highlighted by the note labeling. A large white play button is located in the bottom right corner of the piano roll view.

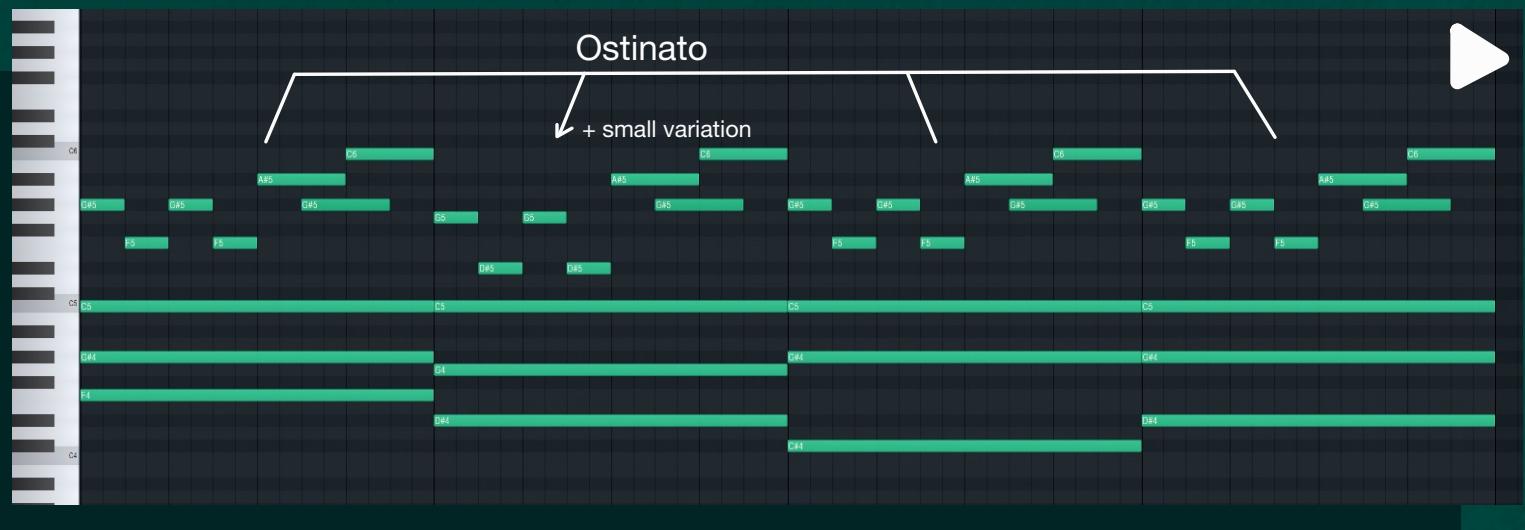
As an example: Travis Scott - The Prayer

## Don't shy away from repetition 1:

Some of the most memorable trap melodies out there are simple 4 note melodies being repeated over and over again over simple chord progressions. This very technique has actually its own name, its called Ostinato. And it is definitely present in some of your favorite songs.

So remember a repeating phrase over changing chords can be very fun and interesting while seeming simple and lazy to the eye.

For example this is the melody of Gorillaz - Silent Running, notice how there's a clear top melody Ostinato (with a small variation on bar 2, but the rest is the same).



## Don't shy away from repetition 2:

Pedal tones are another way repetition in music can play in your favor. A pedal tone is basically a long repeated note that stays the same while other notes change around it. It is not always but most times the lowest note in the melody.

Pedal tones are used often by artists like Drake or XXXTENTACION to create a cool ambience dark feeling. Pedal tones can be achieved by using inversions in your chords, you do that by moving the one note that different chords share to the same octave. Like how both the I chord and the IV chord have the scale degree ^1 somewhere in them, we'll move that to the same octave and so you could get a pedal tone.



## Be mindful of embellishments:

Embellishments are those little note groups that you probably heard for example in robbery by Juice WRLD, they are used mostly in piano melodies and they help add a cool complex sound that helps make specially chill melodies more beautiful.

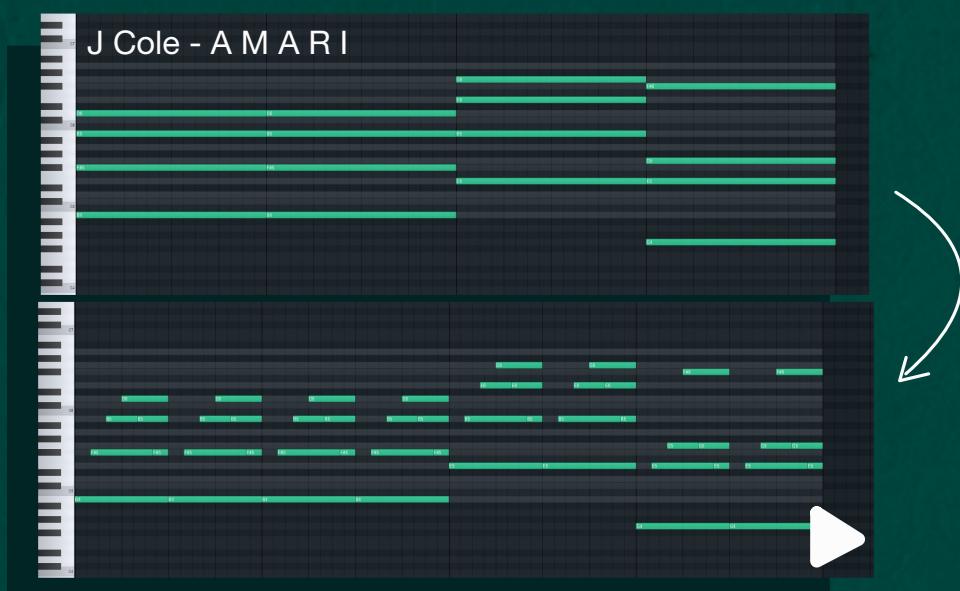
Well, they are great, but too much of them can really make you sound amateur so add them when you want, but if you've added more than 2 in a single 4 bar progression ask yourself if they are really making the melody better or if you just wanna show off.



## F\*ck top melodies:

You don't always need a top melody to have a complete melody. Very often a simple arpeggio can do the trick. Arpeggio means cutting up the notes of your chords in ascending, descending, or whatever you want pattern to achieve melodies, but without having to resort to necessarily a top melody.

Arpeggios are used especially in guitar progressions. For example A M A R I by J Cole is nothing but a simple up and down guitar arpeggio. Again, types of arpeggios and stuff are definitely very context dependent. So if you wanna learn more about those, I'll be periodically releasing them in my upcoming few projects where I show you how to mix inversions and chord progressions to get to your sound goal.



Lastly, as a last little lesson before you graduate from this book. I want to elaborate a little more on that part I said about up and down beats. When going from chords, tone to another chordal tone, there are a certain number of possibilities, 3 to be exact. Well, those possibilities have names and they all fall under the category: Non-chord tones, so let me ramble for a little bit about those and after that you'll be good forever. Well, not forever, you definitely still have to take notes and read them again and again, but you get what I mean. Also after this I'll give you a little summary of the most important info so you can simply go back to that if you have any questions instead of trying to find an answer in this 100 page book.

### **Non-chord tones:**

Non chord tones are melody notes that are not the same as the notes of the chord directly below them. They can exist in 3 different scenarios:

- passing tones = When going from one chordal note to another



- neighbor tones = As variation between the same chordal note



- suspensions = Chordal note is held for more than 1 chord, turns non chordal in relation to the 2nd chord (I know what you're thinking and no, they're not the same as chord suspensions with the sus4 and sus2)



- there's also this thing called double neighbor tone, it's basically the same as a neighbor tone, but instead of just going up or down p, its 2 notes, 1 goes up and 1 down and then we go back to the chordal note, this chordal note then resolves into a new chordal note in a different chord.

And that's about it. This is about all the music theory knowledge I use for my videos and to make my own beats. Of course there is more to music theory than just this, but after taking a 4 semester full university level course on music theory I can confidently tell you that you will not need much more than what's in here as long as you don't decide to try making classical music for a living.

I want to thank you for supporting me by buying this ebook. This took me months and almost a dozen drafts to make and perfect. I know after all is said and done I probably won't get back even minimum wage for the amount of time I put into this relative to how many sales I get, but that's not really the point of this. I'm really grateful I get to help people like you on your music journey, and as a last thank you I prepared a small summary of the most important contents of this book so you can use it to refresh your memory every once in a while.

After this I plan to continue making free content for as long as you guys want me to, I also plan to keep learning as much about mixing, sound selection and even music theory as I can. My next big step is to start making a definitive chords and inversion guide to help you master any type of sound. By the time you get to this part there probably is already one or 2 packs released. So if you check my website and find something you're interested in, use code: MUSIC15 for 15% off.

Once again thank you so much for supporting me and I hope this ebook was all you hoped it would be. Anyway, see ya.

- Red

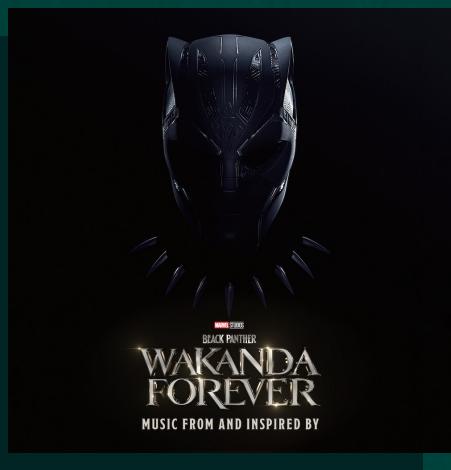
**But wait!**

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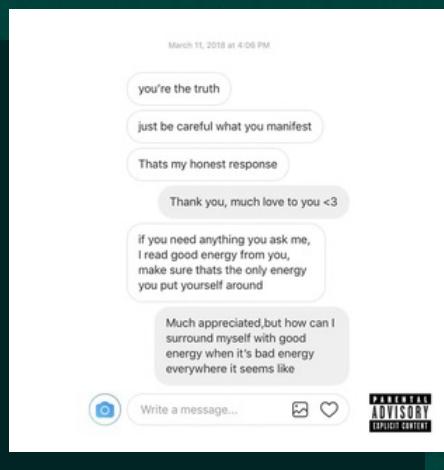
### **Challenge 1:** (Correct answer to check if what you did was right on the next pages)

- This is going to be your last and your biggest challenge yet.
  - Using any scale you want and any combination of chords, inversions, etc. make a sad piano chord progression + top melody.
  - And add a top melody to it.
- Here are some ideas for your inspiration: (if it gets hard, never forget there's absolutely nothing wrong in stealing a chord progression! I'm not kidding, I do that all the time)



Rihanna - Born Again

**Video breakdown:**



Juice WRLD - Legends

**Video breakdown:**



Legends - In my head

**Video breakdown:**



NF - BULLET

**Video breakdown:**



Juice WRLD - My fault

**Video breakdown:**

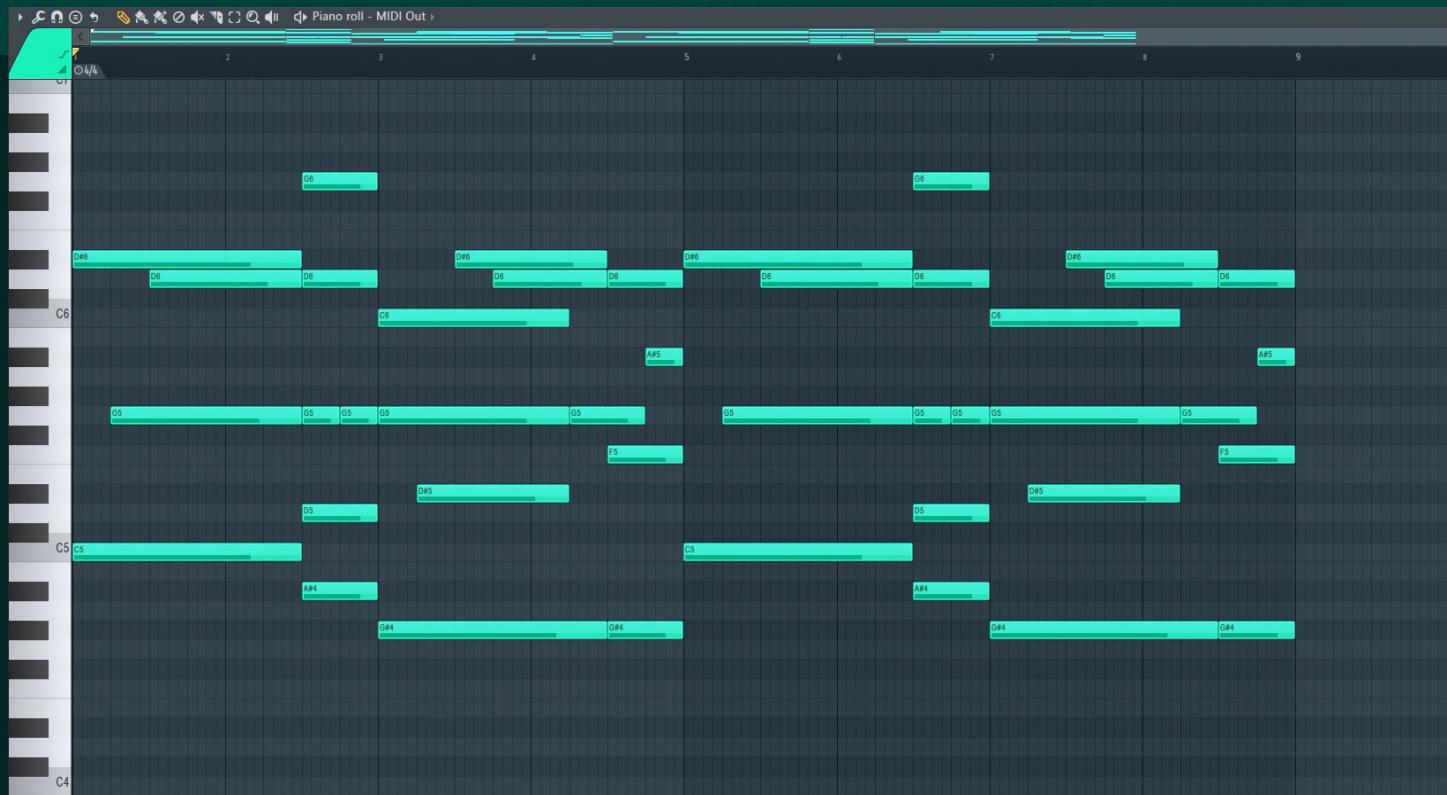


XXXTENTACION - Changes

**Video breakdown:**

## Answer 1:

- Of course there are hundreds of possible answers, but here is one in case you needed help or got lost:
- (and as a bonus last challenge ever, try to deconstruct this melody and see which base chords I used for this melody and DM me the progression you think is right to mi IG @RedBowMusic, and if you get it right... I'll give you a surprise!)



[Download MIDI answer  
\(Chapter 20 - answer 1\)](#)

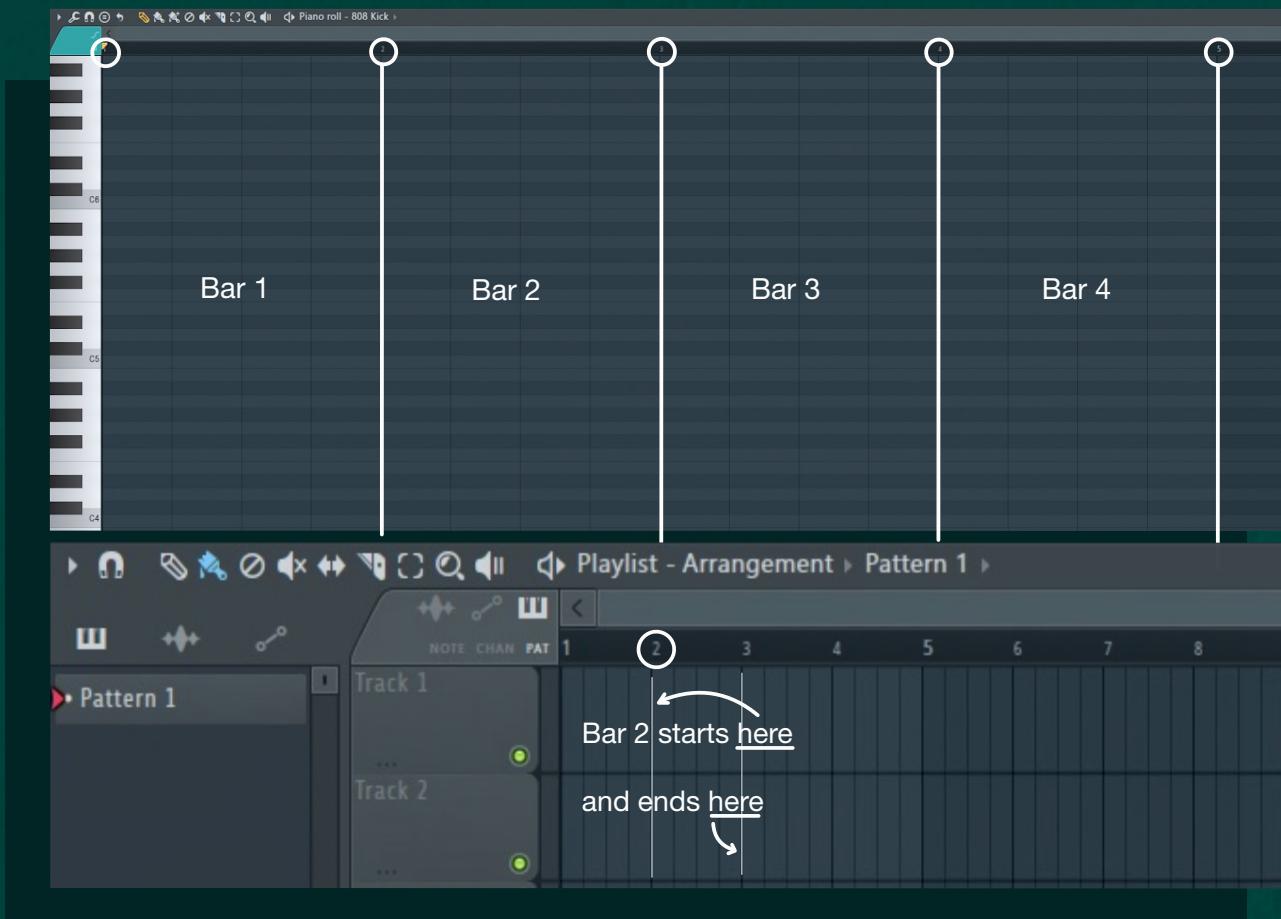
# Summary



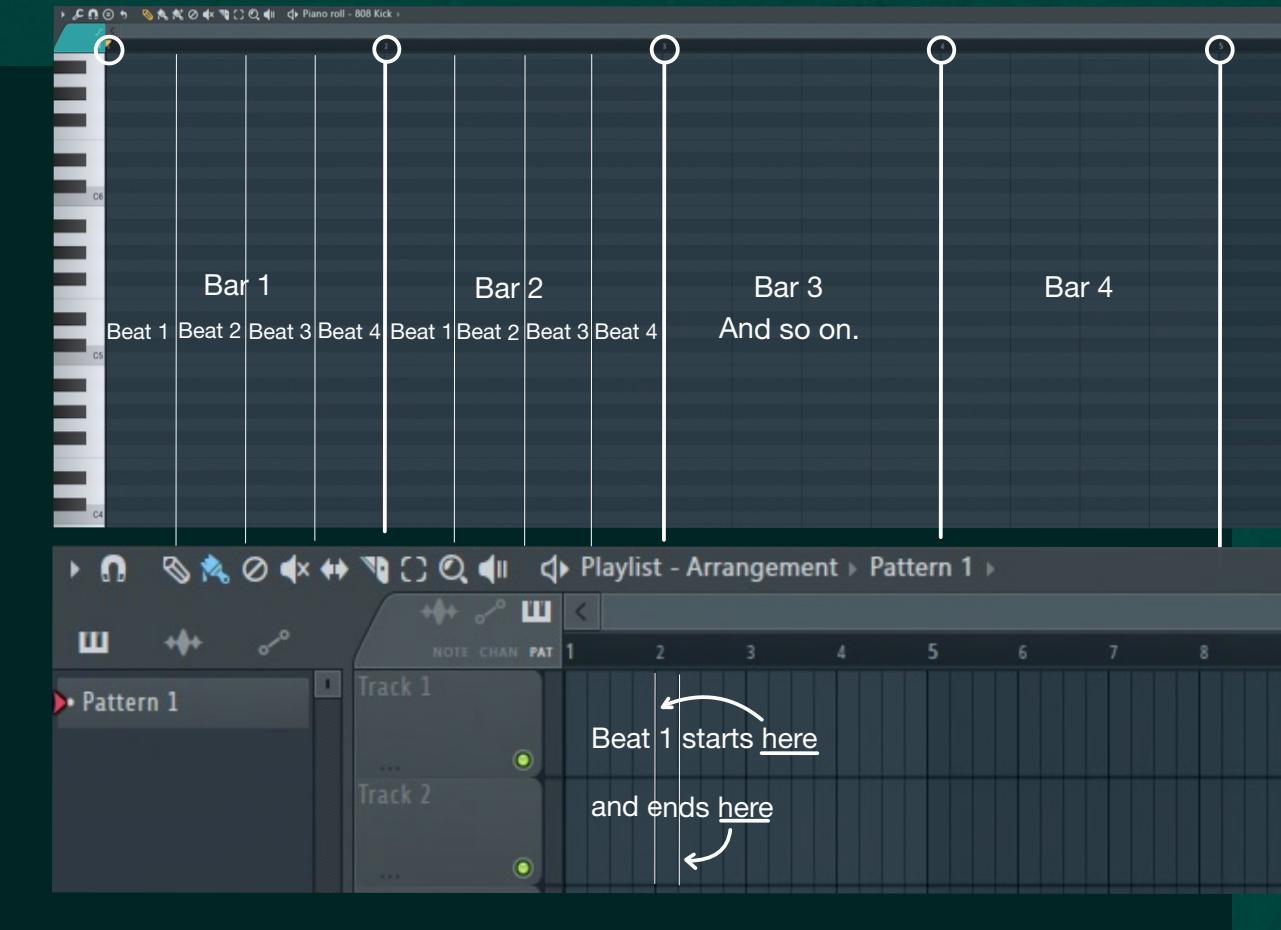
You did it!

## 1. The basics of your grid:

- 1 Bar = 4 Beats

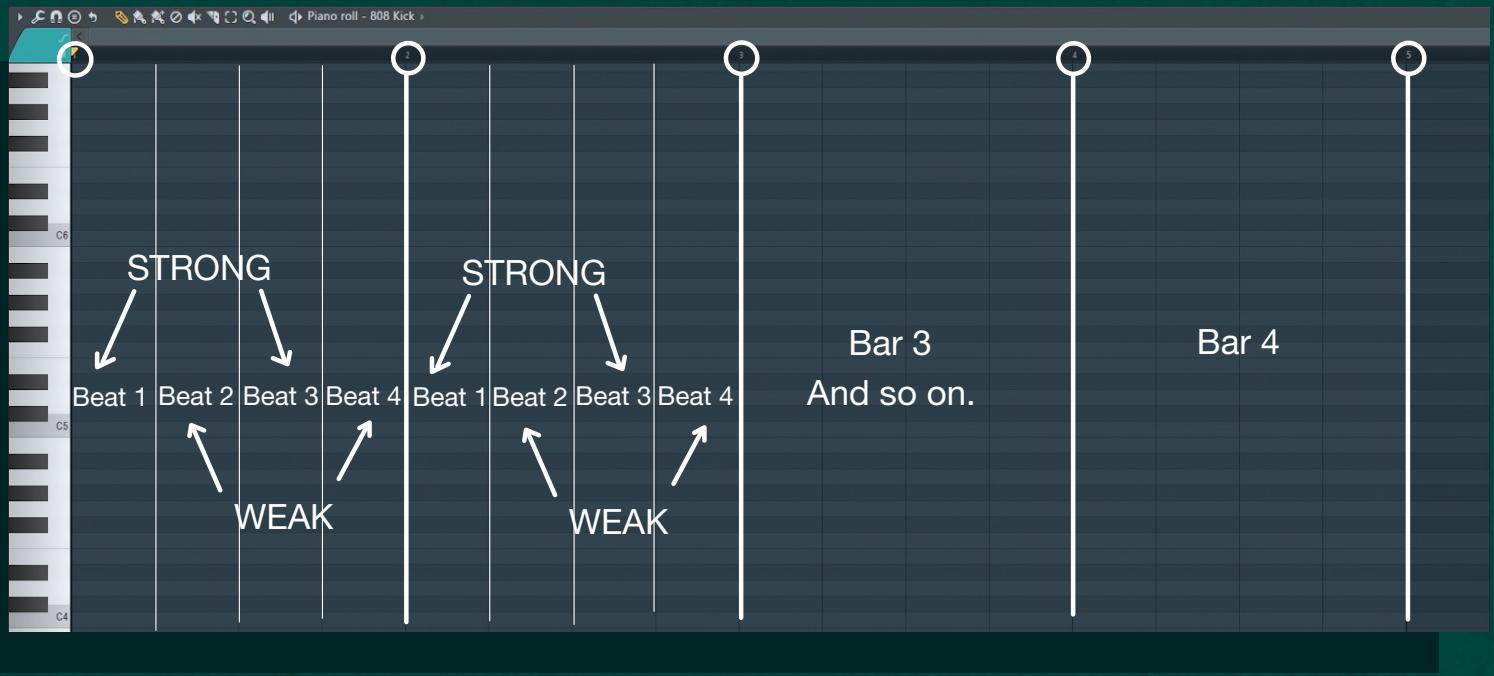


- Beats:



## 2. strong and weak beats:

- **Downbeat** = the beat that starts a group. In simple quadruple meter on the 1st and 3rd beats, in compound meter, only the 1. Here musicians prefer to primarily use **chordal notes**.
- **Upbeat** = the beats in the middle of a group. In quadruple meter those are the 2nd and 4th beats. They are the perfect spot for **non-chordal notes**.

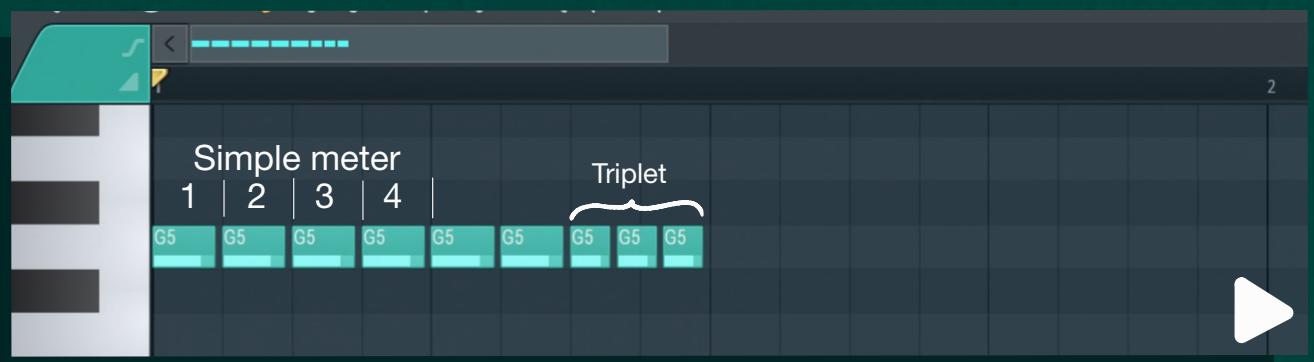


## 3. Simple vs. Compound meter

- Divisions in groups of 2 or in groups of 3.

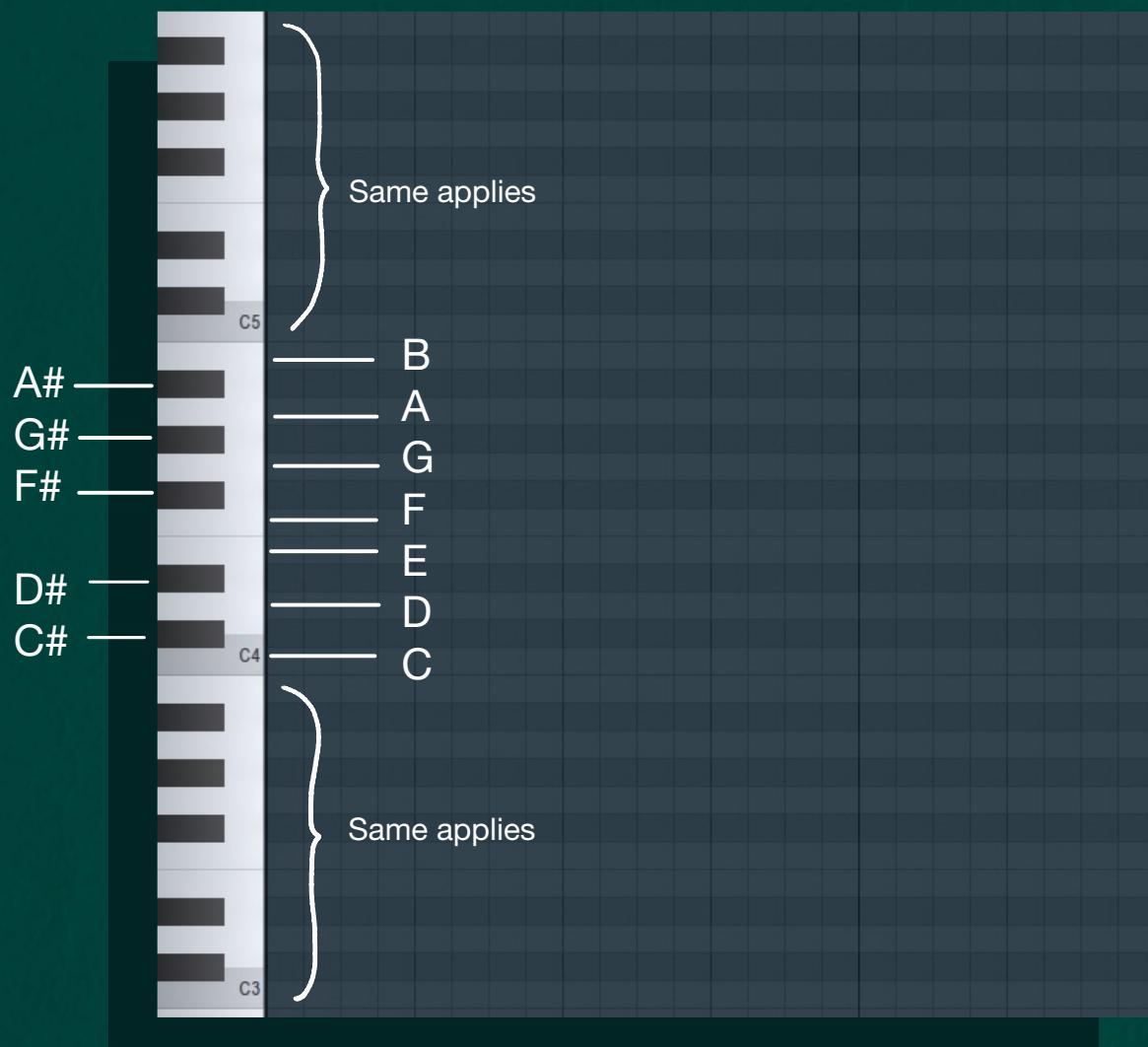


- Triplet = only part in compound meter

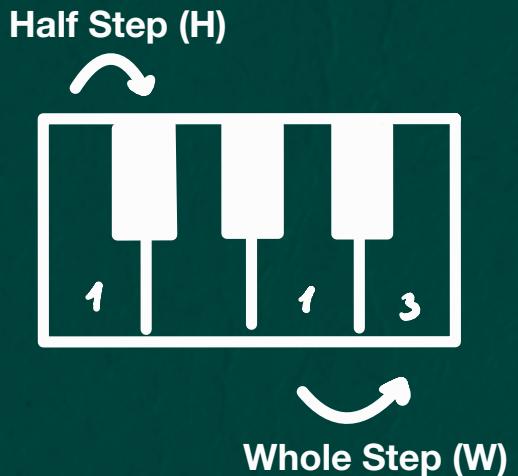


#### 4. The basics of your piano roll

- A piano keyboard is made out of 12 notes, 7 white ones (or naturals) and 5 black ones (or accidentals).



## 5. The basics of scales



- **Major scale:** W W H W W W H



- **Natural minor scale:** W H W W H W W



## 6. The absolute basics behind modes (skipped)

## 7. The absolute basics of intervals (skipped)

## 8. The absolute basics of chords

- Triad chords are built on a root, a 3rd and a 5th separated by intervals of 3rd.
- Whether these 3rds are major or minor changes the chords.

1. The first one is major and the second minor, which makes a **Major chord**.
2. The first one is minor and the second major, which makes a **minor chord**.
3. Both are minor, which makes a **diminished chord**.
4. Both are major, which makes an **augmented chord**.

5th →

3rd →

Root →

Minor 3rd

Major 3rd

Major 3rd

Minor 3rd

Perfect 5th

Play

Major chord	Minor chord	Diminished chord	Augmented chord
minor 3rd	Major 3rd	minor 3rd	Major 3rd
Major 3rd	minor 3rd	minor 3rd	Major 3rd
C5	A4	G#4	A#4
A4	A4	A#4	A#4
F#4	F#4	F#4	F#4
Major 3rd	minor 3rd	minor 3rd	Major 3rd
D4	D4	D4	D4
C4			

Major chord

Minor chord

Diminished chord

Augmented chord

minor 3rd

Major 3rd

Major 3rd

minor 3rd

minor 3rd

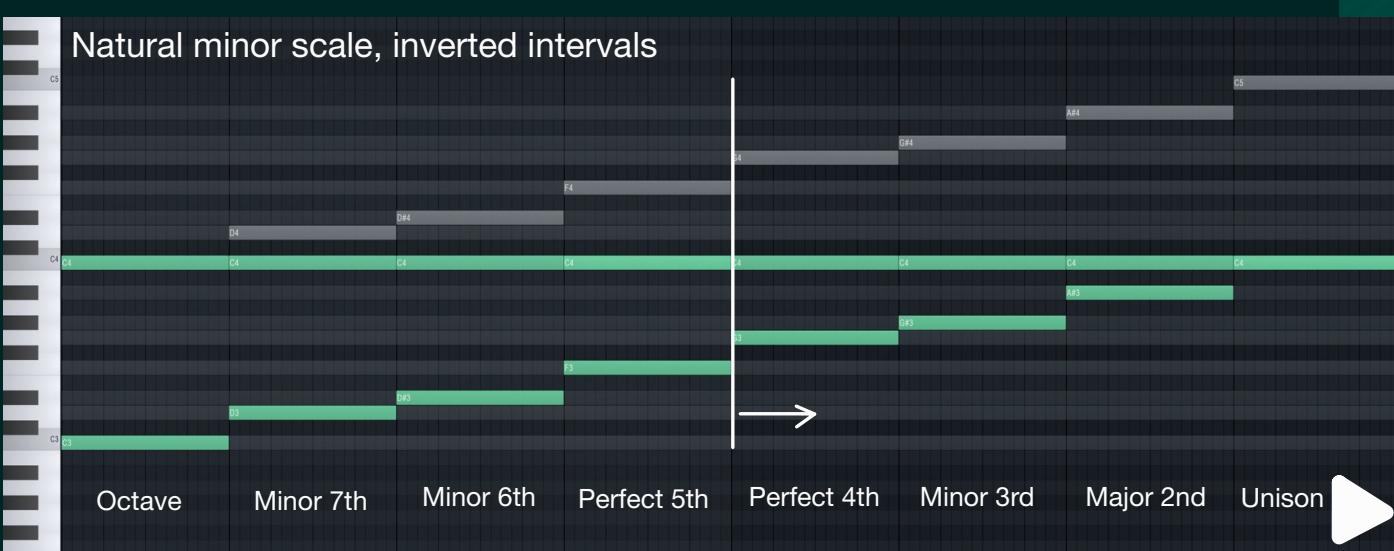
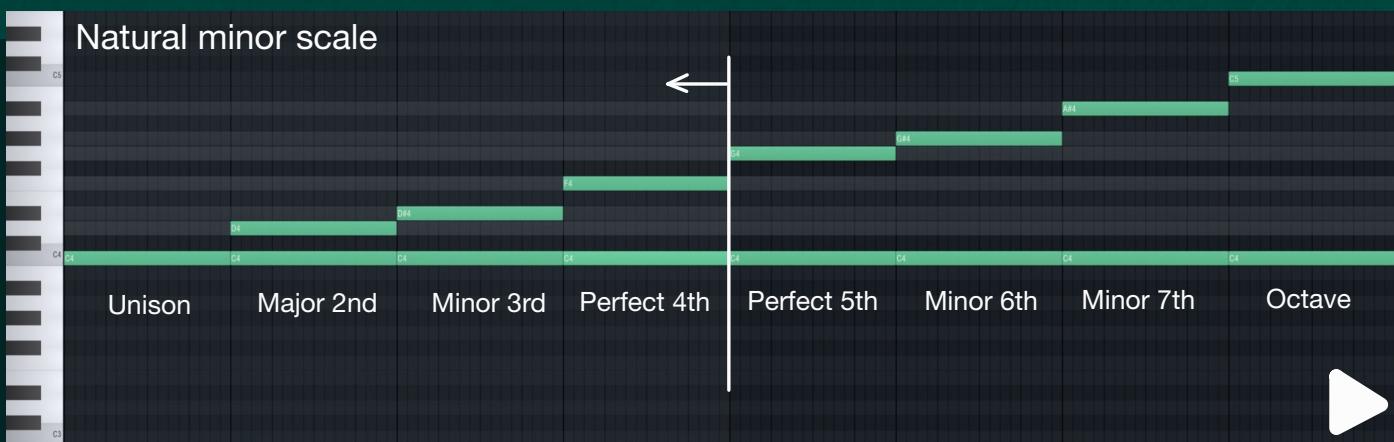
Major 3rd

Play

## 9. Everything you need to know about intervals

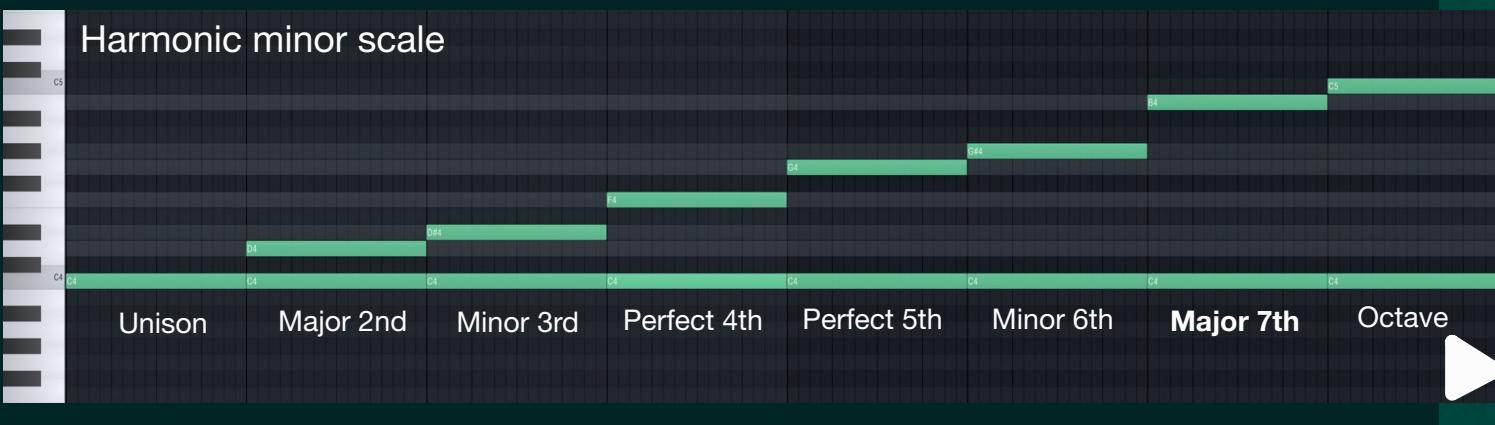
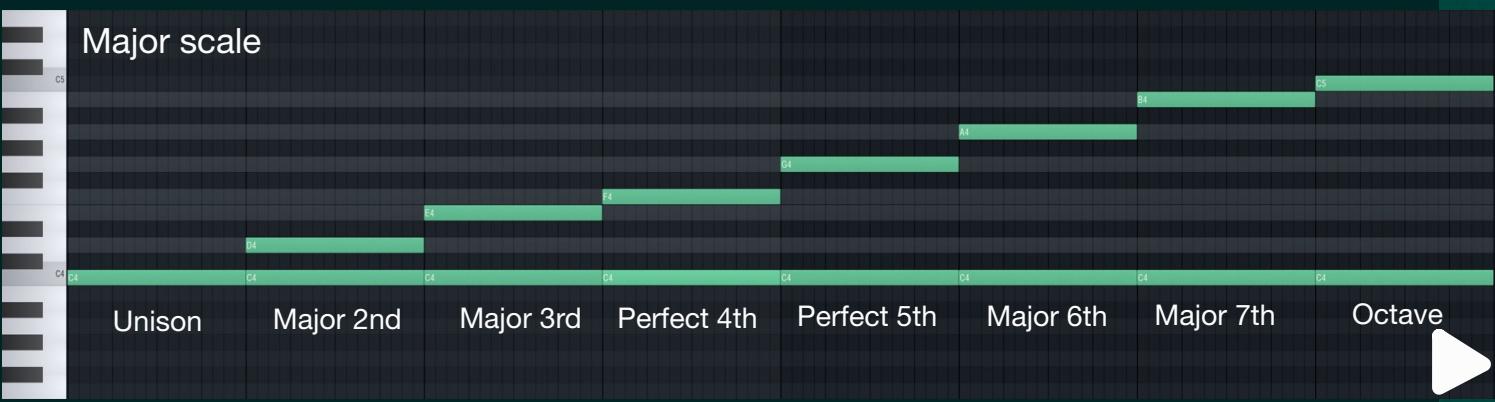
Major/minor	Status	Aug/dim	Status	Separation
Perfect Unison	Very consonant			Same pitch
Minor 2nd	Dissonant			1 Half step
Major 2nd	Consonant	Dim 3rd	Dissonant	2 Half steps
Minor 3rd	Slightly dissonant	Aug 2nd	Dissonant	3 Half steps
Major 3rd	Consonant	Dim 4th	Dissonant	4 Half steps
Perfect 4th	Consonant	Aug 3rd	Dissonant	5 Half steps
Tritone	Very dissonant	Aug 4th / Dim 5th	Dissonant	6 Half steps
Perfect 5th	Very consonant	Dim 6		7 Half steps
Minor 6th	Slightly dissonant	Aug 5th	Dissonant	8 Half steps
Major 6th	Consonant	Dim 7	Dissonant	9 Half steps
Minor 7th	Slightly dissonant	Aug 6th	Dissonant	10 Half steps
Major 7th	Consonant			11 Half steps
Perfect Octave (same as unison)	Consonant	Aug 7th	Dissonant	12 Half steps

- The **2nd** interval inverts to the **7th** and vice versa
- The **3rd** interval inverts to the **6th** and vice versa
- And the **4th** interval inverts to the **5th** interval and vice versa.

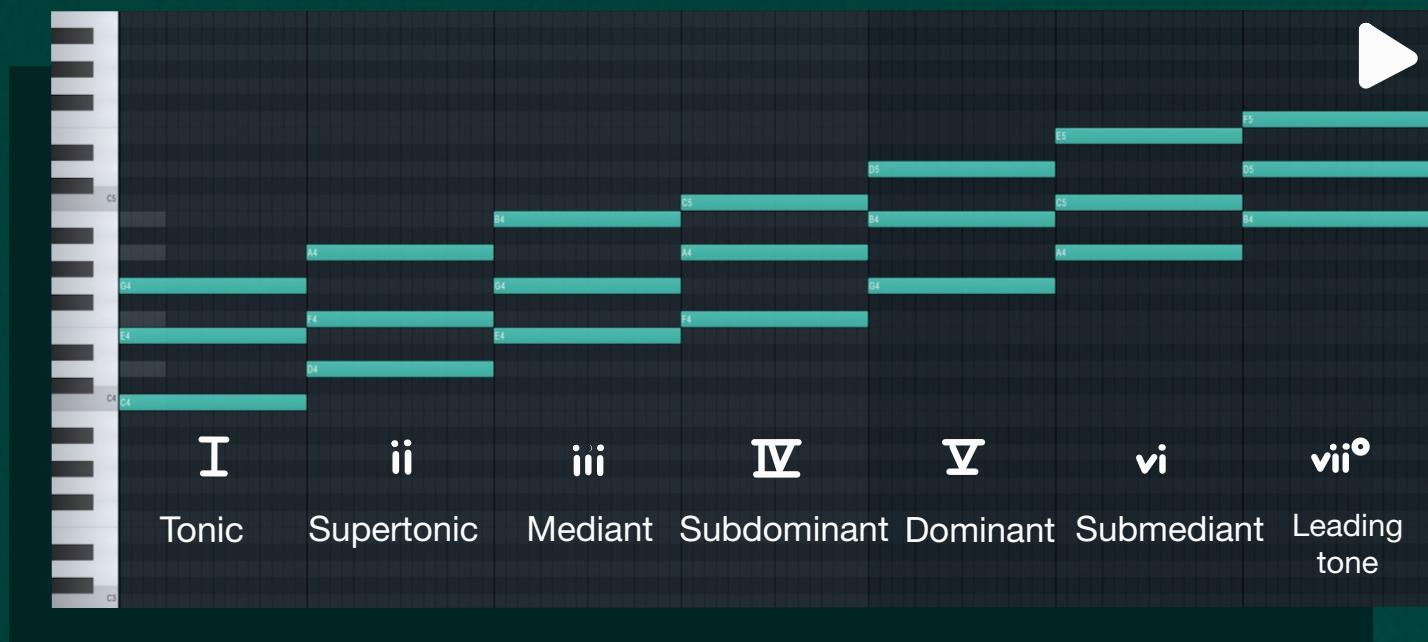


1. Augmented inverts to Diminished (and vice versa)
2. Major inverts to minor (and vice versa)
3. Perfect inverts to Perfect (and vice versa)

- Intervals within our scales:



## Summary: degrees in a major scale (and the chords built on top of them):



### Tonic chord:

Tonic function. State of stability and rest (feeling of “home”). Does not demand progression to other chords. Historically the go-to chord to start and end a piece.

### Supertonic chord:

Pre-dominant function. Tends to progress to chords of dominant function, specially when it moves down to V. Also works well as a substitute for the Subdominant and Leading tone chords. Supertonic note is extremely common modern music.

### Mediant chord:

Prolongation function. Prolongation effect depends on context. Helps give a progression a more serious melancholic feeling. Great for introducing a feeling of sadness.

### Subdominant chord:

Pre-dominant function. Tends to progress to chords of dominant function. Chill chord, used often in beautiful melodic beats, because it can add to the melodic richness of a track without bringing with it too much tension.

### Dominant chord:

Dominant function. Feeling of “further possible place from home”. Classically, the preferred way to end a progression. p (V - I), because it creates a lot of tension that resolves to Tonic.

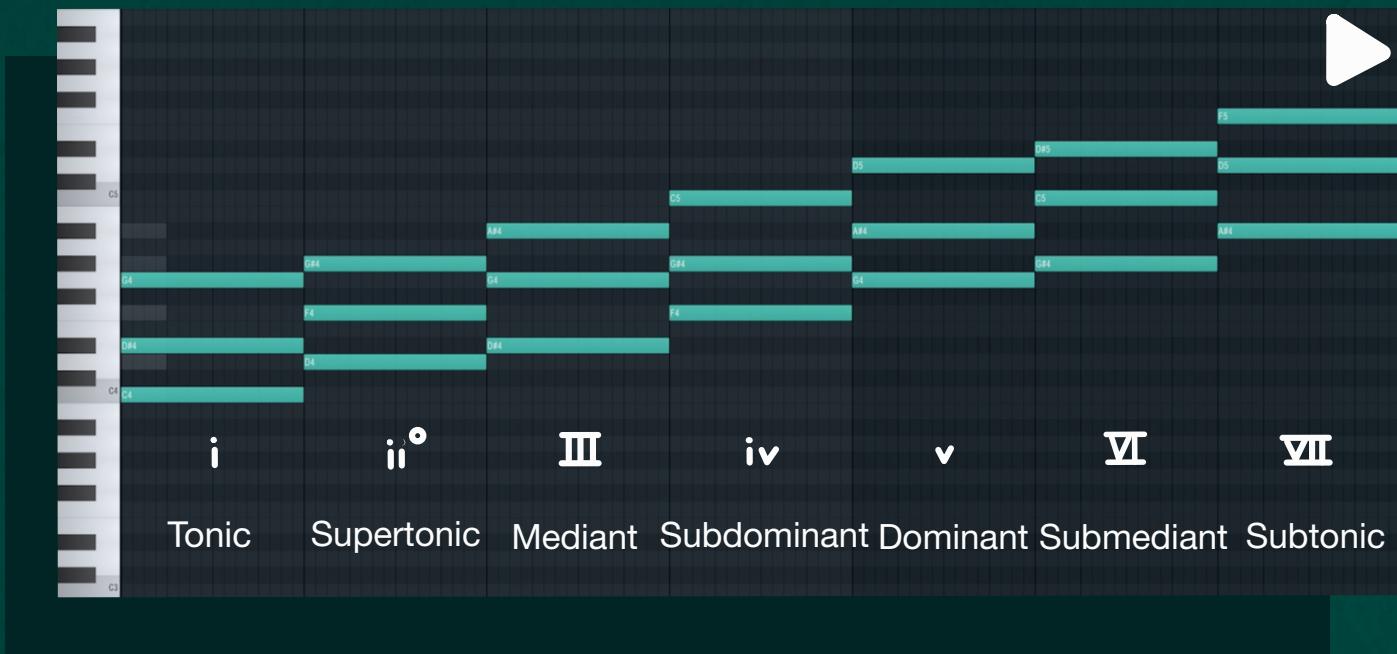
### Submediant chord:

Tonic prolongation function. Can be used as a replacement of the I chord, has a sweet not very tense sound.

### Leading Tone chord:

Dominant function. Contains a tritone, which makes this chord sound pretty weird. Can be used to create a sense of ‘suspense and excitement’, or ‘drama and intensity’.

## Summary: Scale degrees in a minor scale (and the chords built on top of them):



### Tonic chord:

Tonic function. State of stability and rest (feeling of “home”). Does not demand progression to other chords. A Bit darker than the major scale tonic because of its minor 3rd.

### Supertonic chord:

Pre-dominant function. Has found its place in the heart of most simple dark trap melodies, because the diminished supertonic chord paired with the darker tonic sound of the tonic chord can make a really cool dark sound when used melodically and not harmonically.

### Mediant chord:

Blurry Tonic prolongation function. No longer has that sad quality. Has a feeling of: “brightness and optimism, which creates a contrast between the darker, more melancholic chords.

### Subdominant chord:

Pre-dominant function. Is often used in hiphop when you want to get that evil sound but harmonically (alongside Tonic). Also used alongside Tonic for guitar melodies (not only iv, but also v when Tonic goes down to it).

### Dominant chord:

Blurry dominant function. Still a chord that carries tension and Tonic is still an effective way to resolve it.

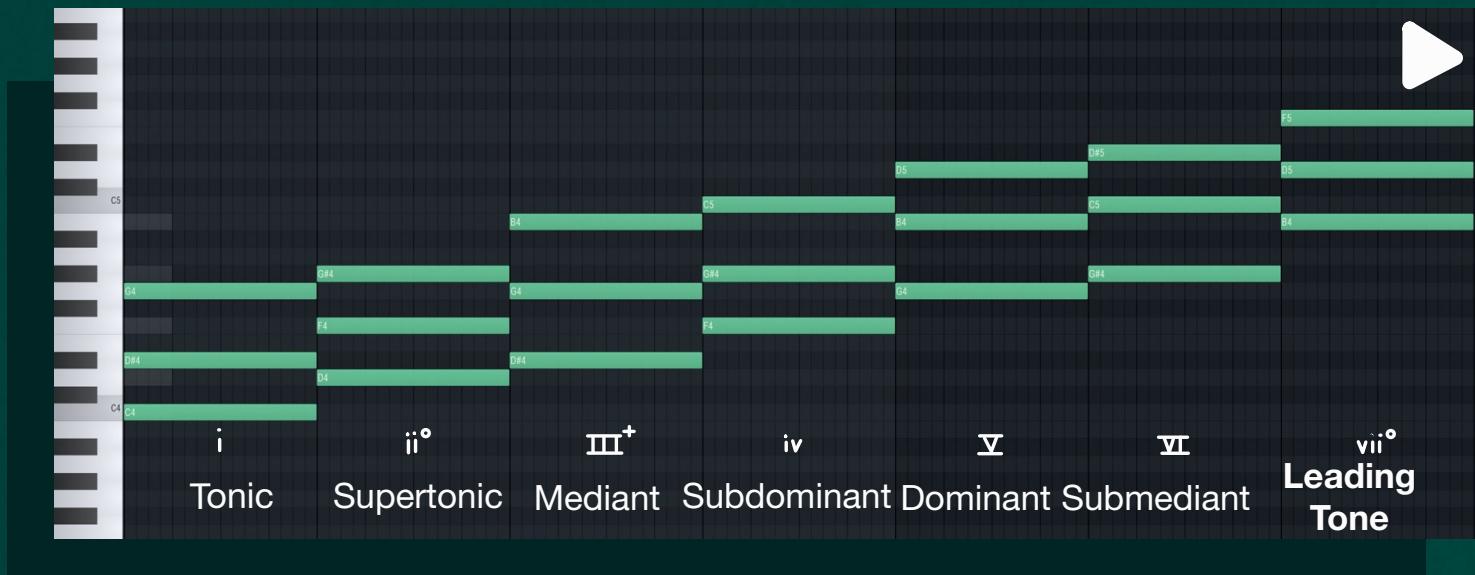
### Submediant chord:

Blurry Tonic prolongation function. Great for introducing a feeling of sadness, especially when used in a descending progression after i.

### Subtonic chord:

Blurry dominant function. While the VII chord is not as dominant as the one in major scales, keep in mind that it still creates some tension when used in a track, so it can be a great help to add movement when needed just like the v chord.

### 13. Scale degrees in a harmonic minor scale (and the chords built on top of them):



### 14. Dominant vs. Diminished vs. Augmented

- The ii dim and vii dim chords, for example, create tension because they contain a diminished fifth, which creates a dissonant and unstable sound that naturally resolves to a more stable chord.
- The V chord creates tension because it is the dominant chord, which is a chord that naturally wants to resolve to the tonic chord.
- The augmented chord, on the other hand, creates tension because it contains an augmented fifth, which sounds dissonant and creates a sense of ambiguity or uncertainty. Unlike the ii dim and vii dim chords, which naturally resolve to a more stable chord, the augmented chord does not have a clear resolution, which makes it a particularly interesting and unique chord to use in certain musical contexts.

## 15. The true magic behind the harmonic minor scale

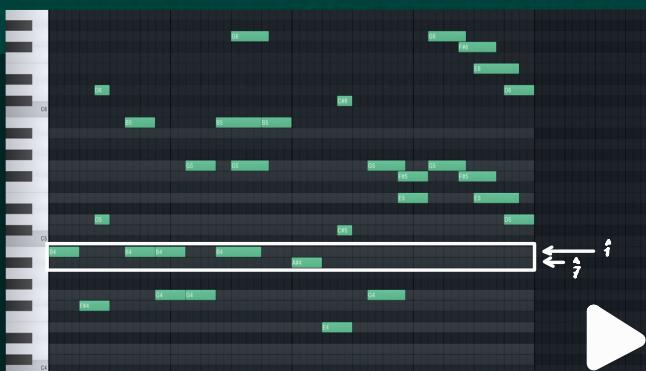
- **Dark Scales:**
- Offers us the possibility to not only go up from tonic to minor 2nd intervals, but also down from tonic to 2 different minor second intervals.



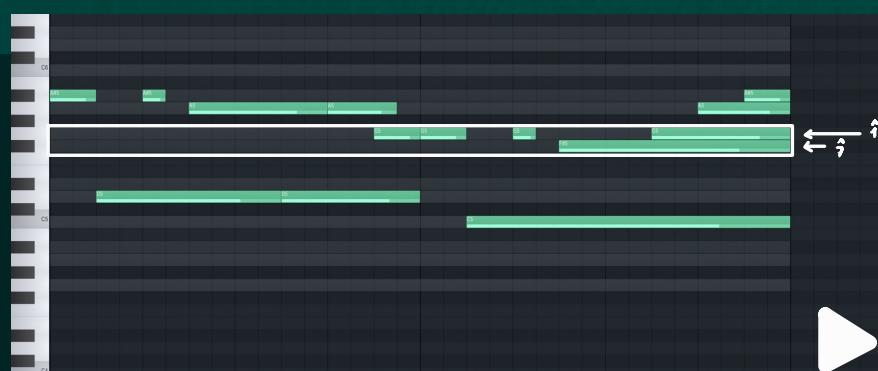
- **Spanish guitar melodies:**

- The inclusion of this leading tone paired with the very, very classic tonic-predominant-dominant progression seems for some reason to be a hack to getting Spanish guitar sounding melodies quickly.
- That progression is as simple as it sounds:
- Tonic = triad built using  $\wedge 1$  as a root
- Predominant = triads built using  $\wedge 4$  &  $\wedge 6$  as roots
- Dominant = triads built using  $\wedge 5$  &  $\wedge 7$  as roots
- Of course those are not all possibilities but these are the ones I've seen most commonly used. (Also I want to mention that technically  $\wedge 6$  is not predominant but tonic function, but since we're on minor scale rules these functions get blurrier to the point I would like to put it under predominant function category but you might disagree and that's totally fine.)

Becky G - PELEAS:



Beck G - UNA MAS:



## 16. Suspended chords:

- Suspended chords are triad chords that replace the third note that is one third interval above root and one third interval below 5th with either a fourth or a second interval. That's it, that's all they are, simply move your third note one scale note up or down and you have created a suspended chord.

Triad chord      Suspended chord      Suspended chord

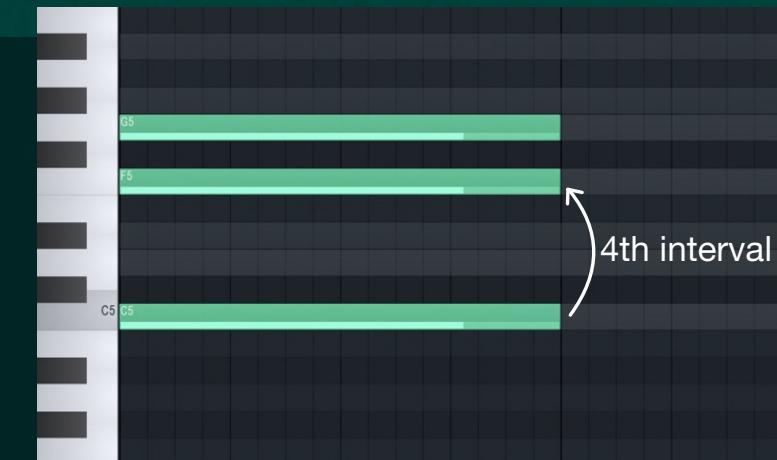
- Sus2 chords** (or suspended chords that are created by the 3rd being replaced by a 2nd interval note above root) are these ones: (This creates a chord that sounds dreamy and ambiguous)

2nd interval

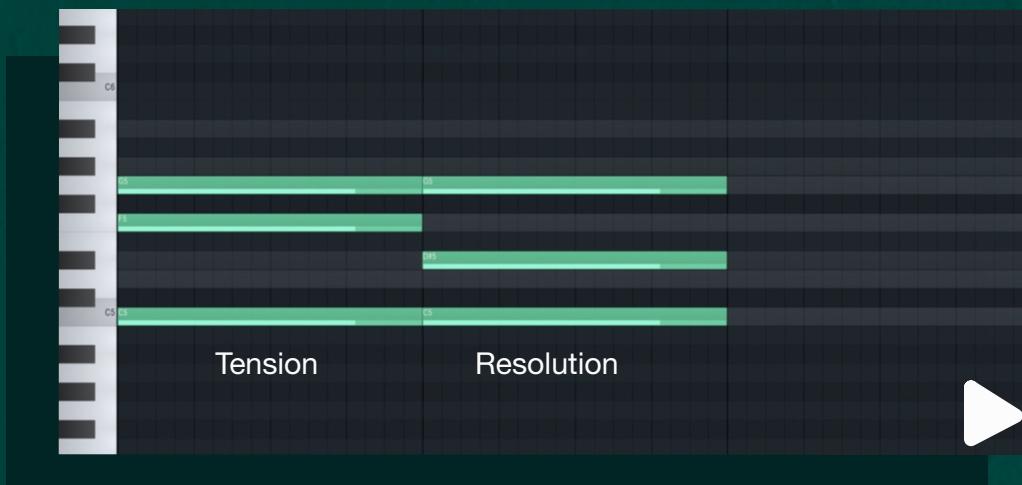
- One common resolution for a sus2 chord is to resolve it to a major or minor chord with the same root note. This creates a sense of resolution and stability, as the missing third is added back into the chord.

Tension      Resolution

- **Sus4 chords** (or suspended chords that are created by the 3rd being replaced by a 4th interval note above root) are these ones: (This creates a chord that sounds tense and unresolved)

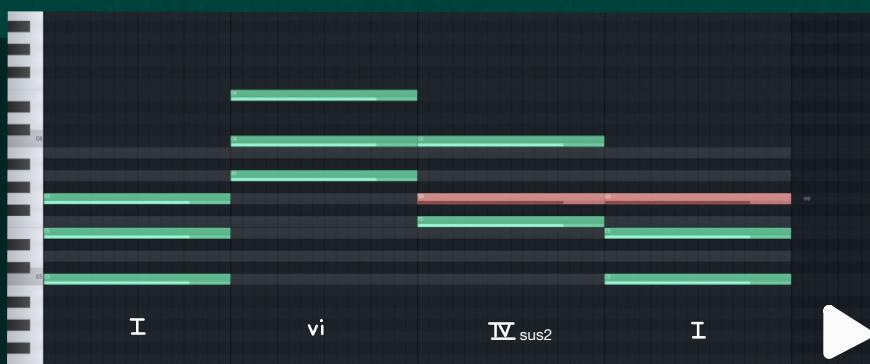


- One common resolution for a sus4 chord is to resolve it to a major or minor chord with the same root note. This creates a sense of resolution and stability, as the missing third is added back into the chord.



- I've personally seen people use suspended chords in 2 big ways:

1. **to change the notes of a chord to achieve a more convenient placement**



2. **To extend tension**



## 17. Chord extensions:



- When I say a chord extension I mean a triad chord that has notes added to it past the normal 5th threshold. So a 4 note chord, past the 7th they turn into 5 note chords (because a 9th chord for example assumes that there is already a 7th there) and past the 9th they become 6 note chords (because a 11th chord for example assumes that there is already a 7th and a 9th there), but all that will become clearer in the next page.
- 6th chords:** Add a richer and more complex sound to chord progressions in genres like jazz.
- 7th chords:** Used to create tension and resolution in jazz and blues music, and are more dissonant than 6th chords.
- 8th chords:** Include the root note, third, fifth, seventh, and eighth intervals, and are less common but add excitement to gospel and R&B music.
- 9th chords:** Used in jazz and blues music to add complexity and interest, and in funk and R&B to create a sense of groove and rhythm.
- 10th chords:** Include the root note, third, fifth, seventh, ninth, and tenth intervals, and are uncommon but used in jazz and gospel music to create interesting progressions.
- 11th chords:** Include the root note, third, fifth, seventh, ninth, and eleventh intervals, and are commonly used in jazz and fusion music to create complex and sophisticated progressions, and in funk and R&B to create a sense of groove and rhythm

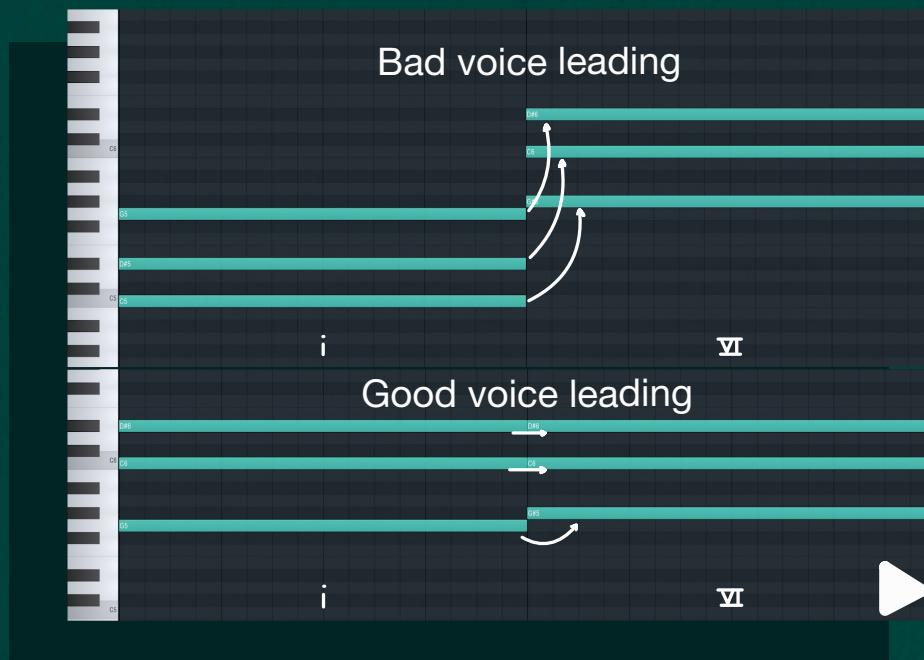
## 18. Inversions

- Chord inversions happen when you move around the notes in your chord up or down. This is not the same as doubling because that implies there being 2 notes, 1 in the old octave and 1 in the new. An inversion means there's now only a note in the new octave, the old one's place is now empty.

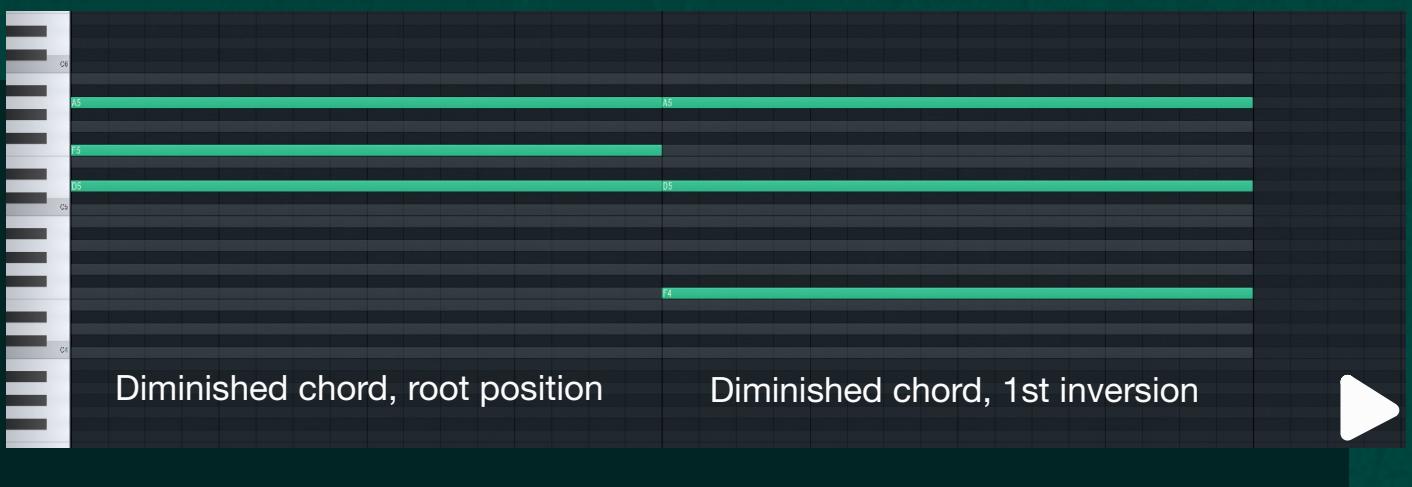
The diagram shows a piano keyboard with five staves. The top staff has two red bars labeled E5 and G5. The second staff has a black bar labeled C6. The third staff has two green bars labeled G5 and B5. The fourth staff has a red bar labeled E5. The bottom staff has two green bars labeled C5 and G5. A curved arrow points from the E5 on the top staff down to the E5 on the fourth staff. Another curved arrow points from the G5 on the third staff down to the G5 on the bottom staff. Labels "Doubled 3rd" and "Inverted 3rd" are placed below the respective staves. A play button icon is in the bottom right corner.

## Why even care about inversions?

1. Inversions can help to create a smoother, more flowing melody by avoiding large jumps between notes.



2. Using inversions can make dissonant chords sound less harsh.



3. Inversions can be used to create a sense of tension and release by creating a feeling of forward momentum and energy in the music.



## My personal favorite ways to write chords for:

**1. Guitar:** a guitar's strings work differently than a keyboards keys, so if you want to make guitar chords sound realistic you gotta move some notes around. The way guitar chords work you usually will end up playing the notes of the chords in this inversion:

The diagram shows a piano keyboard with two columns of notes. The left column, labeled "Regular", shows notes D4, C5, B4, A4, and G4, with labels "5th", "3rd", and "root" below them. The right column, labeled "Realistic", shows notes D5, C5, B4, G4, and C4, with labels "3rd", "root double", "5th", and "root" below them. A play button is in the bottom right corner.

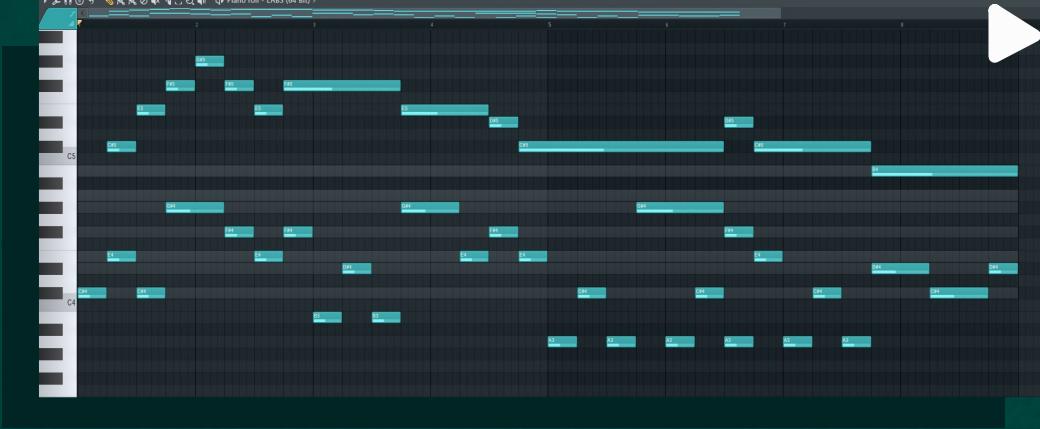
**2. Piano:** To make piano chords sound fuller and more interesting my personal favorite inversion is to play the chords like this:

The diagram shows a piano keyboard with two columns of notes. The left column, labeled "Regular", shows notes D4, C5, B4, A4, and G4, with labels "5th", "3rd", and "root" below them. The right column, labeled "Better (according to me)", shows notes D5, C4, B4, G4, and C4, with labels "3rd", "5th", "root", and "root double" below them. A play button is in the bottom right corner.

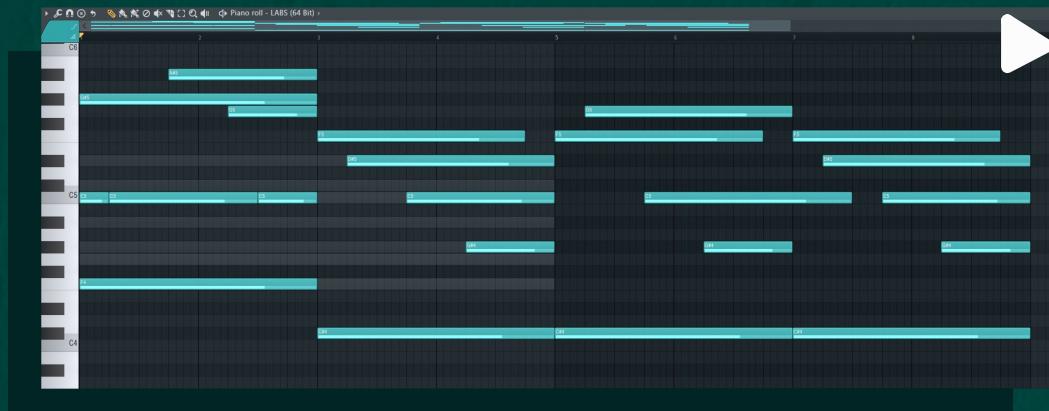
## 20. Some help with top melodies:

- **Up and Downbeats:**
- We've already touched a little bit on the importance of down beats. Down beats essentially refers to Beats 1 and 3 in your grid, this is the place where you want to add chordal notes. Meaning here and here you want to most times use either the root, 3rd or 5th of your chord, the reason behind it is that using it sounds more stable and consonant. The rule technically says that we place a consonant notes in down beats and dissonant in Up beats, but I find it easier and more practical to talk about chordal and non chordal notes.
- And in the other beats, you can use non-chord tones a lot more frequently. I'm telling you. This down beats thing is used literally all the time in trap, hip hop, pop, you name it. So next time you don't know where to start a top melody, start it on a down beat in Beats 1 or 3.
- **Keep it simple:**

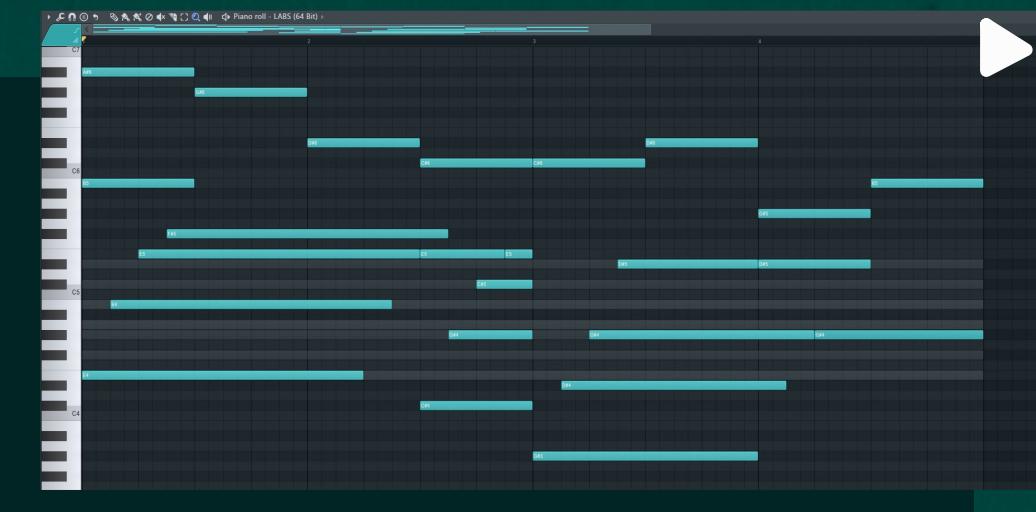
- Juice WRLD - Lean Wit Me: 4 top notes per bar



- Juice WRLD - My Fault: 3 top notes per bar



- Juice WRLD - Legends: 2 top notes per bar



- Go down in the end:

The image displays two piano roll interfaces side-by-side. The top section shows the piano roll for 'Travis Scott - Butterfly Effect', featuring a dark blue background with cyan-colored notes. The bottom section shows the piano roll for 'Juice WRLD - My Fault', also with a dark blue background and cyan notes. Both rolls show a progression of notes over time, with the piano keys on the left indicating pitch.

Travis Scott -  
Butterfly Effect

Juice WRLD -  
My Fault

- Be mindful of your intervals:

This piano roll interface shows the musical score for 'Travis Scott - The Prayer'. The notes are represented by cyan bars on a grid. The piano keys on the left are labeled C7, C6, and C5. The notes are primarily in the middle and upper octaves, with some lower notes appearing towards the end. The piano roll includes a play button in the bottom right corner.

As an example: Travis Scott - The Prayer

- Be mindful of embellishments:

This piano roll interface shows the musical score for 'Juice WRLD - Robbery'. The notes are shown as cyan bars. Two specific sections of the piano roll are highlighted with white ovals: one around measure 1 and another around measure 5. The piano keys on the left are labeled C7, C6, C5, C4, and C3. The piano roll includes a play button in the bottom right corner.

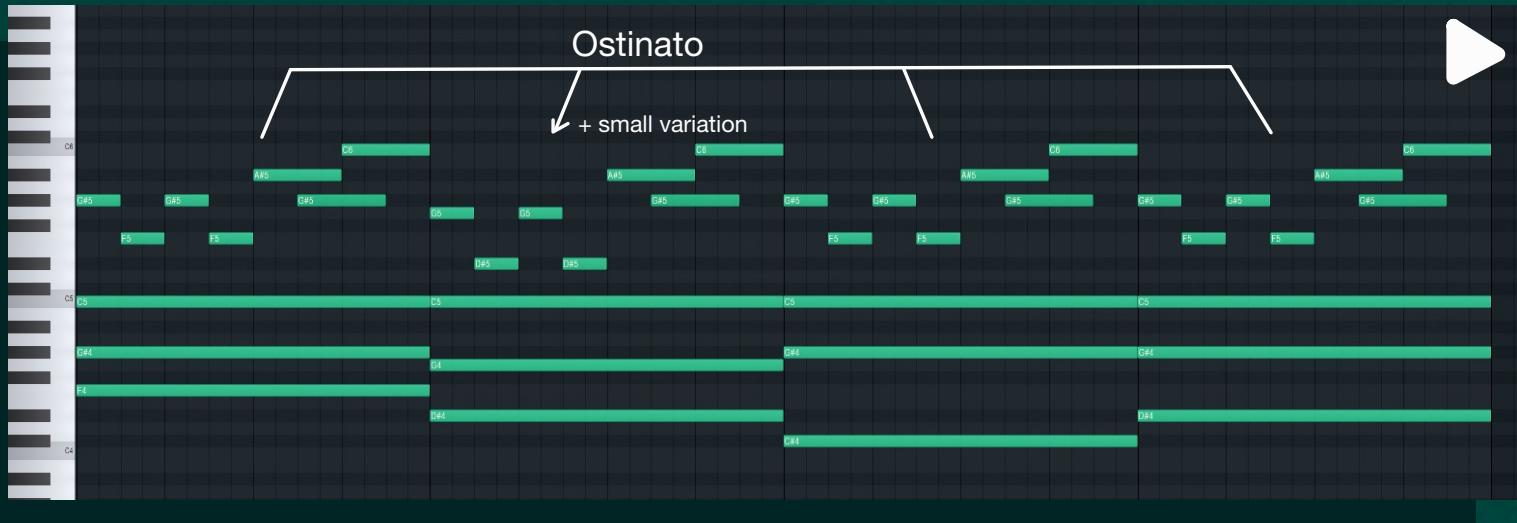
Juice WRLD - Robbery

## Don't shy away from repetition 1:

Some of the most memorable trap melodies out there are simple 4 note melodies being repeated over and over again over simple chord progressions. This very technique has actually its own name, its called Ostinatio. And it is definitely present in some of your favorite songs.

So remember a repeating phrase over changing chords can be very fun and interesting while seeming simple and lazy to the eye.

For example this is the melody of Gorillaz - Silent Running, notice how there's a clear top melody Ostinato (with a small variation on bar 2, but the rest is the same).



## Don't shy away from repetition 2:

Pedal tones are another way repetition in music can play in your favor. A pedal tone is basically a long repeated noted that state the same while other notes change around it. It is not always but most times the lowest note in the melody.

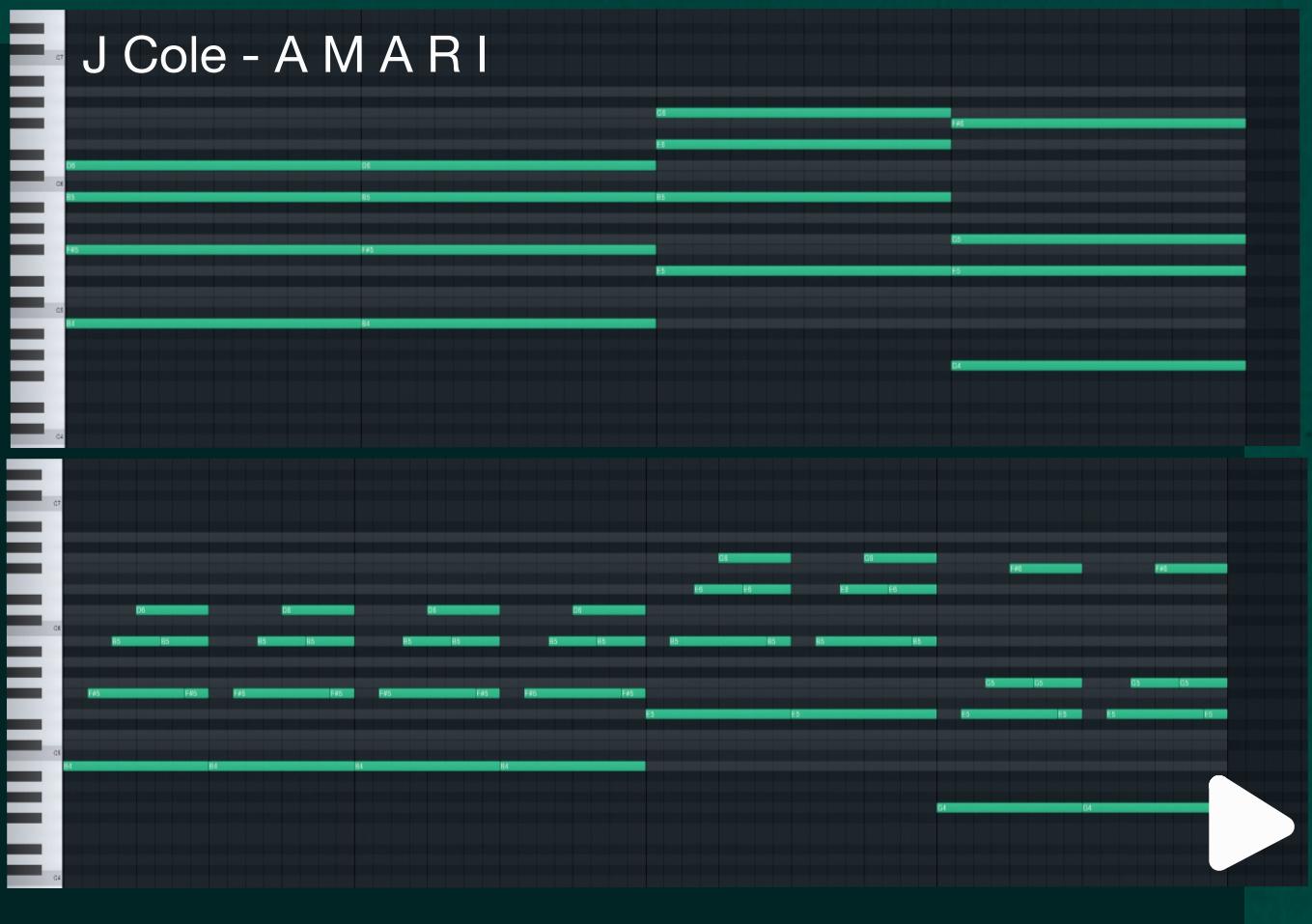
Pedal tones are used often by artists like Drake or XXXTENTACION to create a cool ambience dark feeling. Pedal tones can be achieved by using inversions in your chords, you do that by moving the one note that different chords share to the same octave. Like how both the I chord and the IV chord have the scale degree ^1 somewhere in them, we'll move that to the same octave and so you could get a pedal tone.



## F\*ck top melodies:

You don't always need a top melody to have a complete melody. Very often a simple arpeggio can do the trick. Arpeggio means cutting up the notes of your chords in ascending, descending, or whatever you want pattern to achieve melodies, but without having to resort to necessarily a top melody.

Arpeggios are used especially in guitar progressions. For example A M A R I by J Cole is nothing but a simple up and down guitar arpeggio. Again, types of arpeggios and stuff are definitely very context dependent. So if you wanna learn more about those, I'll be periodically releasing them in my upcoming few projects where I show you how to mix inversions and chord progressions to get to your sound goal.





**REDBOW**