

The Neapolitan (\flat II) or Phrygian II

Aldwell/Schachter, Chapter 28

- Major triad built on the lowered form of scale-degree 2 in minor.
- Most commonly used in first inversion: the "neapolitan 6th chord"
- Normal doubling: the third of the chord (the bass in first inversion); never double the chromatically altered tone
- Soprano voice: $\flat\hat{2}$ and $\hat{4}$ are most common; rarely $\hat{6}$
- Conventional resolution: as a (chromatically intensified) dominant preparation chord, \flat II moves to V or to the cadential $V_4^6 = \frac{5}{3}$.
- Lowered form of $\hat{2}$ acts as a downward "leading tone" to $\hat{1}$ (hence \flat II or "Phrygian II"), although it moves first to $\hat{7}$ (over V), creating a double leading-tone effect around $\hat{1}$.

Recall diatonic ii^{o6} :

Neapolitan creates leading tones
above and below $\hat{1}$:

can go to V via cadential $\frac{5}{3}$:

i ii⁶ V i i \flat II⁶ V i i \flat II⁶ V₄⁶ = $\frac{5}{3}$ i

or via vii^{o7}/V :

usually $\hat{2}$ is in the soprano voice but not always:

i \flat II⁶ vii⁷ V i i \flat II⁶ V₄⁶ = $\frac{5}{3}$ i

but $\hat{6}$ should not occur in the soprano:

Avoid:

i \flat II⁶ V₄⁶ = $\frac{5}{3}$ i i \flat II⁶ V i

N.B.: \flat II is not a chord that can substitute for every ii^{o6} in a piece. The chromatic intensification of the Neapolitan chord is generally reserved for cadences of greater structural importance.

Special usages of the Neapolitan (bII)

- (1) Sometimes borrowed into Major key (mixture)

A musical score in a major key (one flat in the key signature) showing a sequence of chords. The chords are: I (C major), ii⁶ (D minor in first inversion), V₄⁶ (E major in fourth inversion), vi (F minor), bII^{b6} (D-flat major), V₄⁶ (C major in fourth inversion), and I (C major). The bII^{b6} chord is a borrowed chord from the parallel minor key.

I ii⁶ V₄⁶ vi bII^{b6} V₄⁶ I

- (2) Rarely (later 19th century usage) occurs in root position (often via VI)

A musical score in a minor key (three flats in the key signature) showing a sequence of chords. The chords are: i (C minor), VI (F major), bII₃^{b6} (D-flat major in third inversion), V₄^{b6} (E-flat major in fourth inversion), i (C minor), i (C minor), bII₃^{b6} (D-flat major in third inversion), V₄^{b6} (E-flat major in fourth inversion), and i (C minor). The bII₃^{b6} and V₄^{b6} chords are borrowed from the parallel major key.

i VI bII₃^{b6} V₄^{b6} i i bII₃^{b6} V₄^{b6} i

- (3) As a pivot chord in a modulation to VI

A musical score showing a modulation from C minor to F major. The sequence of chords is: C minor (i), C minor in first inversion (i⁶), F major in third inversion (V₃⁶), C minor (i), F major in first inversion (V₆⁶), C minor (i), D-flat major in first inversion (bII^{b6}), E-flat major in first inversion (V₆^{b6}), C minor (i), C minor (i⁶), F major in third inversion (V₃⁶), C minor (i), F major in first inversion (V₆⁶), D-flat major in first inversion (bII^{b6}), E-flat major in first inversion (V₆^{b6}), and F major (I). The bII^{b6} and V₆^{b6} chords are borrowed from the parallel major key.

c: i⁶ V₃⁶ i V₆⁶ i bII^{b6} V₆^{b6} i c: i⁶ V₃⁶ i V₆⁶ i bII^{b6} V₆^{b6} I
A^b: IV⁶

(4) As a chromatic plagal substitute

i V⁶ i iv V₄₌₇⁶⁼⁷ i \flat II⁶ I \sharp

plagal cadence: I - IV - I
 diatonic subset: I - ii⁶ - I
 chrom. substitute (mixture): I - ii⁶₃ - I
 chrom. substitute (Neapolitan): I - \flat II⁶ - I

(5) As a neighbor chord embellishing the tonic (in Major or minor)

neighboring Neapolitan over tonic pedal, as in a coda:

*usually the Neapolitan chord progresses to V:

I \flat II⁶ I I \flat II⁶ I vii⁶ I
 I

(6) \flat II as a key area. Recall how \flat VI formed a V of \flat II – composers exploit this relationship in modulating to \flat II

c: i V₇ \sharp VI $\frac{4}{2}$ I⁶ ii⁶ V₄₌₇⁸⁼⁷ I c: i V₇ \sharp VI $\frac{4}{2}$ \flat II⁶ \flat V₃⁶ I V⁷ I
 D \flat : V $\frac{4}{2}$ A \flat : IV⁶