

## V<sub>7</sub>

The most frequently used seventh chord is V<sub>7</sub>, which is a major-minor seventh chord in both modes. It is so strongly associated with that quality that Mm7ths are often called dominant sevenths.

The most important thing to understand about the V<sub>7</sub> is that the seventh is a dissonant addition to the triad, and that dissonance was generally treated very carefully when this chord rose to prominence. In fact, V<sub>7</sub> had been in use for more than a century before musicians developed the concept of a seventh chord; until then chords were understood to be inherently consonant, and the idea of a dissonant chord would have been an oxymoron.

This results in the most important rule about V<sub>7</sub>: the seventh always resolves down by step.

The musical logic of this is particularly evident from the origin of the seventh as a suspension or a passing tone, as shown below.



Because the seventh in V<sub>7</sub> became so standard, its approach (but not its resolution!) became freer; unlike the dissonances of species counterpoint, it does not need special preparation, and while 7ths as passing tones and suspensions are smoothest, it may also be approached by skip or (preferably small) leap.

## Voice-Leading V<sub>7</sub> - I

Never double the seventh.

V<sub>7</sub> can be complete, in which case there are no doublings, or else it can omit the fifth and double the root.

There are three possible voice leadings for the progression V<sub>7</sub>-I – memorize them!

V <sub>7</sub>	I	leading tone
complete	incomplete (3x root, no 5 <sup>th</sup> )	resolves
incomplete (2x root, no 5 <sup>th</sup> )	complete	resolves
complete	complete	skips (only in inner voice)

V<sub>7</sub> I V<sub>7</sub> I V<sub>7</sub> I

c i i c c c

## Using V<sub>7</sub>

The seventh is often added to a V chord (usually by having the doubled root descend to the seventh as PT), but once it has been present it should not be removed. That is, V to V<sub>7</sub> is good, but V<sub>7</sub> to V (with no seventh) is not.

When there is a dash connecting two figured bass numbers, this means that those intervals occur in the same voice. Thus 8-7 means that the seventh comes specifically from the doubled bass note.

Don't use V<sub>7</sub> in an HC; the instability of the seventh works against the sense of rest needed for the cadence.

In four-voice chorale style,  $\hat{2}-\hat{3}$  may not be harmonized by V<sub>7</sub>-I; why not?