

Review, Considerations & Trouble Spots

Cadence System

1. Pick a cadence, or cadences. You can share the same “I” if you decide to stack cadences together.
2. Start and end with “I”. If you are slightly rebellious, you could start with a different chord, but try to always end with a “I”.
3. Plug in as many or as few chords from each category as suites your taste. Remember, the original cadence chord is always available and deserves preferential treatment.
4. Play and evaluate your progression. If you like it, great! If not, that is fine too. Composition is in most cases a process of experimentation. Your progression is theoretically correct, but not necessarily what you want.

Root Progression System

If you can **count to four** you can **compose**

1. Start with “I” then pick a progression to follow. Remember, anything can follow the “I”, this includes your weak root progressions.
2. Feel free to use any Strong Progression consecutively.
3. To create a bit more pleasing progression, avoid repeating a chord too soon. Try to have a couple of chords in-between. This isn’t set in stone, but your progression will tend to be more pleasing.
4. Remember to end with up a step, or up a fourth. (This is also a very strong cadence)

Music tends to be organized into three basic elements; Melody, Harmony & Rhythm. Many of the rules we have learned will help in creating the harmonic movement needed to keep our music interesting. Eventually you will run into a few trouble spots when you first begin composing.

III^{mi} Chord

From our discussion on functional categories, and strong root movements, you might get the impression that anything can follow the “III^{mi}” and “VI^{mi}” chords since they are both Tonic “I” chord substitutes.

The chord substitutes for the Tonic Category are: “I” (C Major), “VI^{mi}” (A minor), “III^{mi}” (E minor).

Our rule on strong root progressions states: Anything can follow the “I” (including weak root progressions). This holds true for the “I”, but the “III^{mi}” and “VI^{mi}”, though substitutes, need to be handled carefully. The “VI^{mi}” chord probably should not use the weak progressions, the “III^{mi}” might if you consider the following possibilities.

The most idiomatic movements away from our “III^{mi}” chord would be:

1. Up a Fourth (strong possibility)
2. Up a Step (good possibility)
3. Down a Step (possible)
4. Up a Third (weaker possibility)
5. Up a Fifth (weaker possibility)

You **would not** want to move down a Third (especially as an ending progression)

Part of the problem with our “III^{mi}” chord is its weak relationship to the “V⁷” chord. We know that it has two tones in common, but it just falls short as a functional substitute, again because of its missing “tri-tone”. As a Tonic substitute you would use it sparingly, unlike the “VI^{mi}” which is a great substitute for the “I”.