VISUALIZATION FOR JAZZ IMPROVISATION

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Welcome to Visualization

The practice of visualization is used by people in all types of professions. Athletes visualize their peak performance before game time, politicians visualize themselves giving great speeches, and surgeons mentally rehearse every aspect of a procedure before operating on a patient.

When you're visualizing, your mind doesn't know that your body is not actually engaging in the real activity. By working directly with your mind, as opposed to first working with your body and then your mind, you are going straight to the source of creativity; in other words, it's much more efficient for the mind to be teaching the body, rather than the body teaching the mind.

As musicians, we can harness the power of visualization to speed up our progress and improve at a faster rate than ever before.

The best part about visualization: you can do it anywhere. No horn, no gadgets. Just you.

PLAY TRACK 1

Visualization and Music

Ok. So you're soloing over a familiar tune and everything is going great. You're feeling good and then all of a sudden, you hesitate for a moment. You think to yourself, "What chord am I on?"

By the time you figure it out, the chord is long gone. When you have to stop and think like that even for a split second, your flow is broken and your playing suffers.

Practicing visualization reduces the time it takes to recall elements of a tune or progression. In time, any mental roadblocks will disappear. Then, when you go to the practice room or the bandstand, you'll be armed with the knowledge and confidence needed to play at your best with no hesitation.

PLAY TRACK 2

Components of Visualization

The dictionary defines visualization as the ***formation of mental images***. In terms of visualizing music, this means 3 things:

Hearing you **hear** what you're visualizing in your mind

Feeling you **feel** as though you're actually playing what you're visualizing in your fingers

Seeing you **see** in your mind the chord symbols and/or the notes on a staff that relate to what you're visualizing

Anytime you visualize music, you will be engaged in some or all of these three steps simultaneously. You'll be hearing something in your mind, while you feel it in your fingers, and see it in your mind.

Part 1

Visualizing Chord Symbols

&

Chord Tones

CHAPTER 1

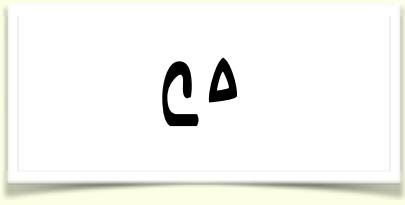
PLAY TRACK 3

Visualizing Chord Symbols

It may take a few days to get comfortable visualizing, but after the initial phase, it will be very easy. To start out, the goal is to learn how to visualize chord symbols. This skill along with the next skill taught, how to visualize chord tones, will provide a solid foundation to access more advanced visualization techniques like visualizing progressions and language, which will be covered extensively later in the book.

1. Sit somewhere comfortable where you will not be disturbed. Later you will be able to do this anywhere, but right now use all the help you can get.

2. In your mind's eye, see the chord symbol for C Major 7. When you visualize, it's advisable to keep things as simple as possible, so even for C major seven, you can visualize the chord symbol without the seven as illustrated below.



Congratulations! You just visualized. See how easy that was? Visualizing chord symbols is the first and necessary step to ingraining this vital information in your mind.

Points to remember about chord symbols

As you begin to visualize chord symbols, there are a few things to keep in mind:

- See the chord symbol really clearly in your mind's eye. It should be dark and prominent, like the images presented throughout the book.
- Visually simplify chords. It's not necessary to see every alteration in a chord like G7b9b13 because as you get better, you'll be using these alterations all over the place, not just where a lead sheet specifies them. It's enough to just visualize the basic chord sound, but that's just my suggestion. Of course feel free to do what works for you.
- Work on enharmonic spellings, for instance, visualize both Gb and F# Major.
- Relax and take it one chord at a time.

Chord symbol variety

There are many symbols for the same chord. Some people notate major as Maj, others a triangle or M7. You can use any symbol you like, however, as I suggested before, the simpler the better. In this case, simpler means shorter. Why shorter? Because the shorter the symbol, the less width it takes up in your mind's eye (it's more compact) and therefore, it's easier to visualize.

A good example of this variation in symbols is the half-diminished chord, also known as the minor 7 b5 chord. Technically, the minor 7 b5 name is more accurate, but, for visualization purposes, the half-diminished symbol is much easier to visualize, hence, I choose this symbol instead.

The main chords practiced throughout this book make up the bulk of the chords you will encounter: Major, Minor, Dominant, and Half-diminished. Of course many other chords exist, however, most are slight variations on these and the study of these primary chords will give you the necessary tools to tackle any chord you encounter on your own.

Here are the primary symbols used throughout the book:

Major 7

Minor 7

Dominant 7

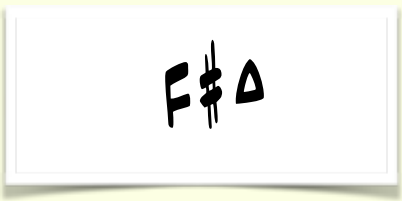
Half-diminished, also known as Minor 7b5,

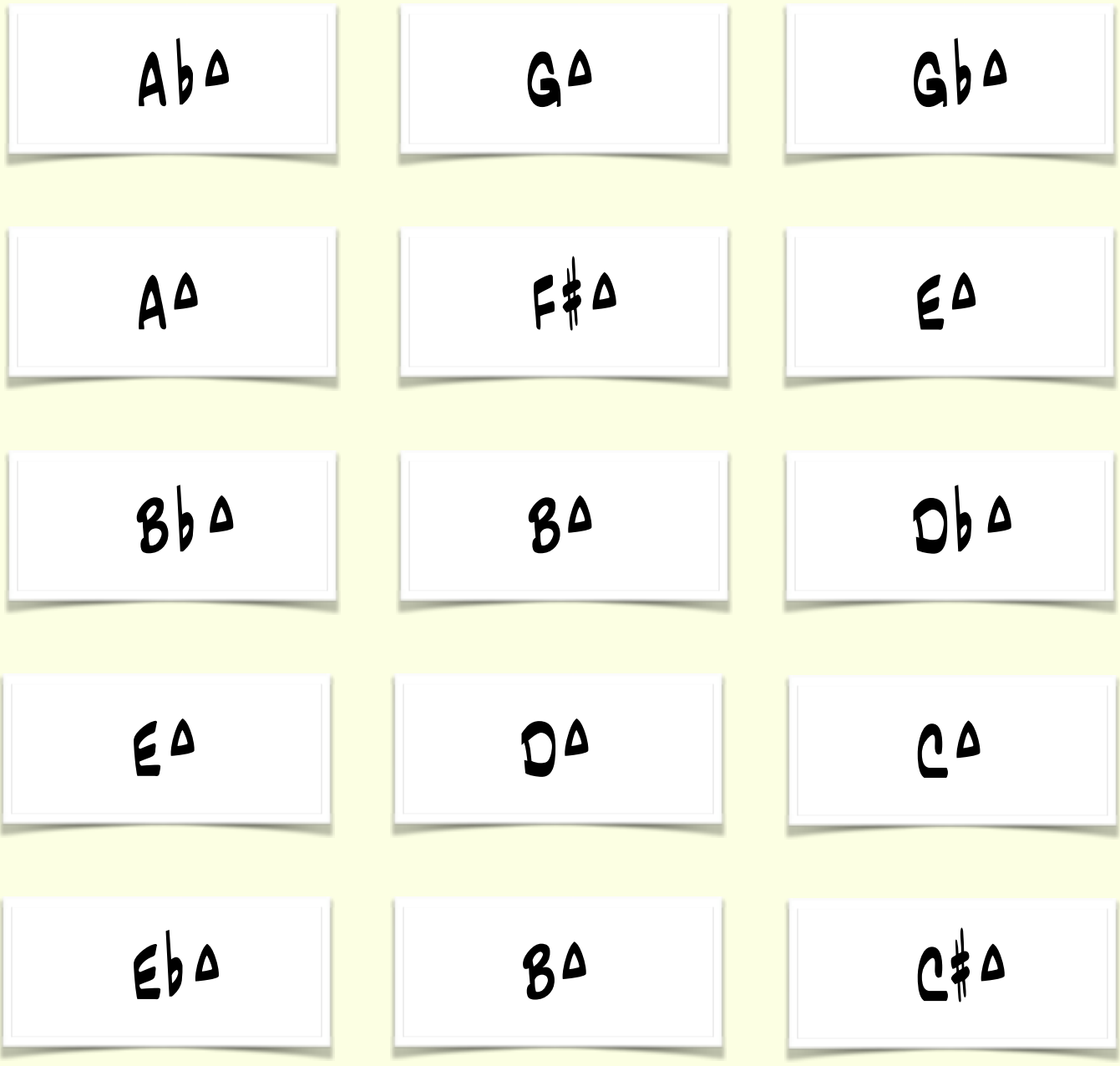
Of course there are more chord symbols than these four. Augmented, diminished, minor major seventh, and many variations of altered dominants, just to name a few. You can visualize any and all chord symbols you wish to, but the main ones we're going to focus on in this volume are major, minor, dominant, and half diminished.

Practice visualizing chord symbols

Now that you've tried visualizing a chord symbol, let's practice it a bit. For each of the following, look at the image, then close your eyes and see the image as clear and bold in your mind. Keep it in there for 5 or 10 seconds before moving onto the next chord. Think of this as mental etching: your goal is to etch every chord symbol into your mind. This may seem like a difficult task at first, but after doing for it a few days, you'll find it quite easy.

As you practice this exercise each day, vary the order you go in: sometimes go vertical through the rows of chords and sometime go horizontal or random. The point is to mix things up and to challenge yourself. This will help you improve more quickly. Let's get started!





This is meant for you to practice and spend time with, so chords will repeat at random. As you can see, we began with major chords. Next we'll progress to dominant chords, then minor, followed by half diminished. And after all that, we'll mix them up for a bit just to give you a little extra practice.

Take your time and burn every image into your mind. Soon you'll be able to visualize any chord symbol with ease.

Bb7	A7	Eb7
B7	C#7	E7
Ab7	Bb7	Db7
E7	C7	G7
Gb7	F7	Eb7
D7	B7	A7
F#7	G#7	D#7

Eb -	D-	Bb -
B -	C# -	E -
Db -	Bb -	G# -
E -	F -	G -
D -	C -	Ab -
G -	B -	A -
F# -	C # -	A # -

A♭ø	G♯ø	B♭ø
C♯ø	F♯ø	E♭ø
G♭ø	Bø	Dø
Cø	Aø	G♭ø
Gø	E♭ø	Eø
Fø	Gø	Cø
Aø	Dø	D♯ø

Eb Ø	C# -	Db -
F 7	F# Ø	Ab Δ
Ab -	Bb 7	E Ø
F -	D Ø	Eb -
A -	Gb Ø	E Ø
C Δ	C 7	B Ø
A Δ	D Ø	D# Ø

D7	Aø	Db7
Db∆	F7	Eb7
A7	Bø	F#∆
Eb∆	B-	Gb∆
Ab7	Cø	F#-
C#-	F#ø	B∆
B-	D∆	C#∆

Db-	C♯	Eb-
Gø	F♯ø	Ebø
Ab7	Bb-	C-
D△	F△	Gbø
C7	Ab△	Cø
A-	D-	Aø
B△	E△	Bø

G♯ø	B△	C-
E♭△	C♯ø	D♭△
A♭7	F♯ø	E♭△
Dø	F-	G♭△
C7	A♭△	B♭△
Fø	G-	E-
D-		

Do you feel comfortable visualizing chord symbols now? Easy, right? This simple technique is extremely powerful and everything we do later will build upon it, so make sure you go over these chord symbols dozens of times.

Practicing without a visual aid

Now we're going to kick things up a notch. No visual will be given to you, just a description of what to visualize. Your job will be to visualize as we did before, spending 5-10 seconds on each. Ready? Let's get started…

- Visualize an F# major 7 chord
- Visualize a D half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize an Eb minor 7 chord
- Visualize a Db major 7 chord
- Visualize an Eb dominant 7 chord
- Visualize an F minor 7 chord
- Visualize an E half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize a C half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize an F# half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize an A major 7 chord
- Visualize a C# half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize a C# minor 7 chord
- Visualize a B major 7 chord
- Visualize an Ab half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize a Bb minor 7 chord
- Visualize a Bb major 7 chord
- Visualize a Bb half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize a Bb dominant 7 chord
- Visualize a C minor 7 chord
- Visualize a G dominant 7 chord
- Visualize a G# minor 7 chord
- Visualize a B minor 7 chord
- Visualize a Db minor 7 chord
- Visualize a C major 7 chord
- Visualize a G major 7 chord
- Visualize a B half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize a D minor 7 chord
- Visualize a D major 7 chord
- Visualize an E half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize an F# minor 7 chord
- Visualize an E minor 7 chord
- Visualize an F half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize a G half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize an E dominant 7 chord
- Visualize a C# major 7 chord
- Visualize an A major 7 chord
- Visualize a Db half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize an A minor 7 chord
- Visualize a C dominant 7 chord

A little more difficult? Make sure you're seeing each symbol as clear in your mind as you did when you were using images. Let's do a few more. I may throw in a few curve balls, so watch out…

- Visualize a G# minor 7 chord
- Visualize a Db diminished 7 chord
- Visualize an F# major 7 chord
- Visualize a Gb major 7 chord
- Visualize an Ab major 7 chord
- Visualize an E minor 7 chord
- Visualize a C minor major 7 chord
- Visualize a B diminished 7 chord
- Visualize an A half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize a D minor major 7 chord
- Visualize a G# half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize an F# minor 7 chord
- Visualize a G major 7 #11 chord
- Visualize a D# half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize an F minor major 7 chord
- Visualize a Bb minor 7 chord

- Visualize a C half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize a C dominant 7 chord
- Visualize a C minor 7 chord
- Visualize an Ab dominant 7 b9 chord
- Visualize a G# minor 7 chord
- Visualize a D major 7 #5 chord
- Visualize a C# minor 7 b5 chord
- Visualize a C major 7 chord
- Visualize a G minor 7 b5 chord
- Visualize an F dominant 7 #9 chord
- Visualize a B minor major 7 chord
- Visualize an E major 7 #11 chord
- Visualize an A half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize a G minor 7 chord
- Visualize a C minor 7 b5 chord
- Visualize an F half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize an Ab half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize a G# half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize a B major 7 chord
- Visualize a D# minor 7 chord
- Visualize a D# half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize a G minor 7 b5 chord
- Visualize an A dominant 7 chord

Frequently practice in this way without the the visual aid and gradually you won't need a picture to look at ever again. This will help you memorize chords faster and understand them more quickly.

CHAPTER 2

PLAY TRACK 4

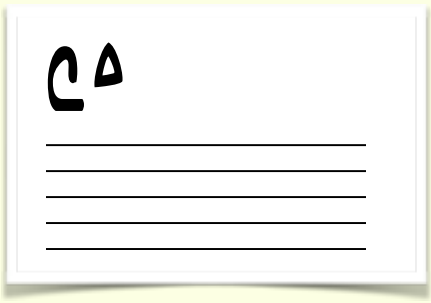
Visualizing Chord Tones

Once you can clearly visualize chord symbols it's time to learn to visualize chord tones. This exercise begins the same way as the previous exercise, by visualizing the chord symbol, and then gradually adds the elements of the chord tone to the picture.

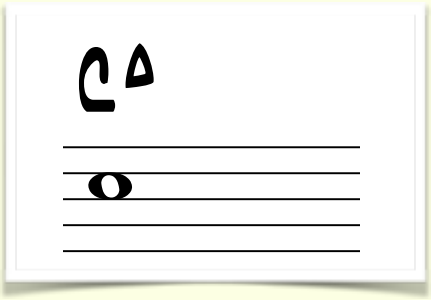
1. Sit somewhere comfortable where you will not be disturbed.

2. In your mind's eye, see the chord symbol for C Major.

3. Add a music staff below the chord symbol to your mental image



4. Once you can clearly visualize the chord symbol with the staff, add the root of the chord to the picture.



5. Now you're going to add an aural sense to the equation. Hear how you think that root sounds on that C Major chord. Try hearing a piano in your mind playing that pitch. Don't worry about the absolute pitch.

6. Next add a tactile sense. Feel exactly how it would feel to play that note on your instrument. If you play saxophone for instance, you would feel, in your mind, your left middle finger pushing down the C key.

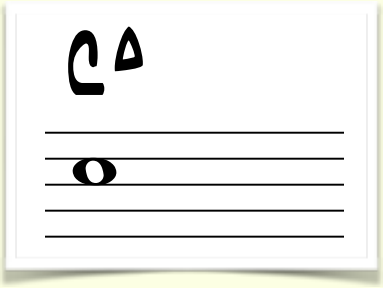
Seeing the staff with the note is NOT crucial, even hearing the note in your head is not overly important. The primary goal is to FEEL in your mind how your fingers and body would be when they're playing the particular note(s) you're visualizing.

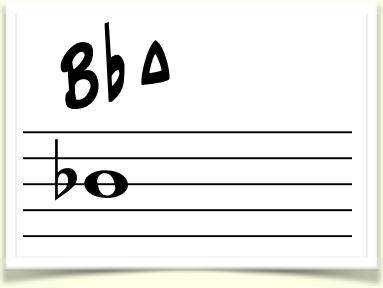
If you managed to follow those steps, you're well on you're way to being able to visualize anything. Now let's get some practice visualizing chord tones. Remember, the most important thing is that you FEEL as if you're actually playing that chord tone on your instrument.

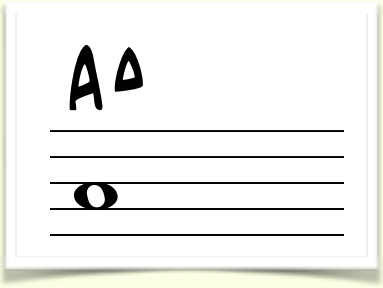
For example, when I visualize the 3rd of G minor, I can feel (in my mind) my finger pressing down the Bb key and I focus as much as humanly possible on connecting my finger with the knowledge that Bb is the 3rd of G minor. In this way, my mind and body learn *what* the third is, *where* it is, and *how* it feels.

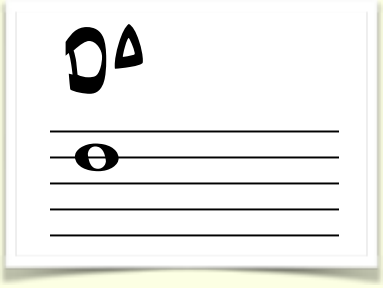
When you practice chord tones, first stick to a specific chord tone like the root of a major chord. Once you get better, start to switch it up. For each of the following, close your eyes if need be, and dwell on the chord symbol and chord tone for 5-10 seconds, making the necessary connections deeper and deeper.
Let's first work on the roots of random major chords. Take your time and make it perfect in your mind.

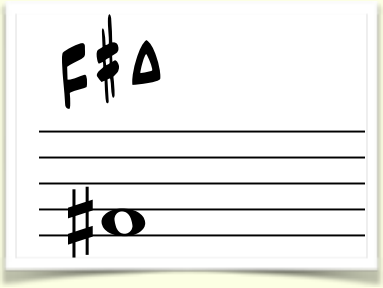
Practice Roots on Major chords





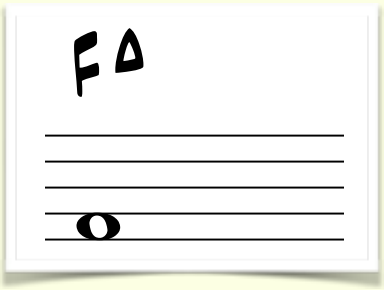


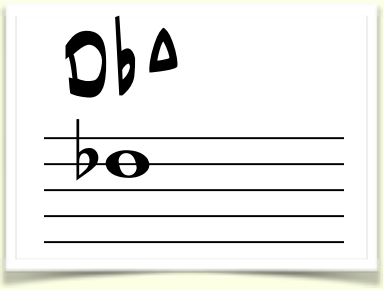


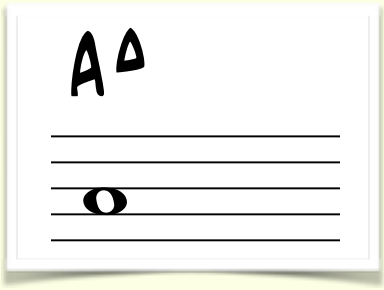


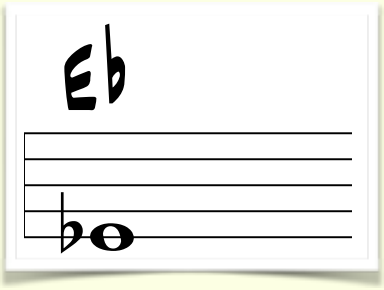
More Practice of Roots on Major chords

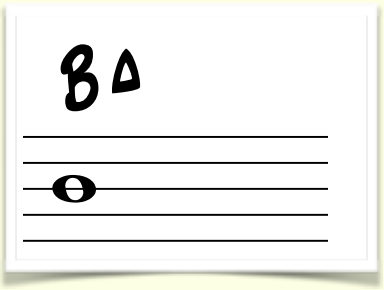
Keep going. This is not a race. The more you dwell on a chord and imprint the idea that a certain chord tone occupies a particular position for a specific chord, the easier it will be to "just know" what these chord tones are.

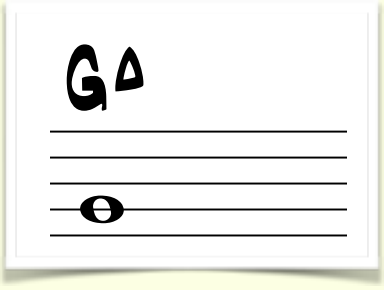


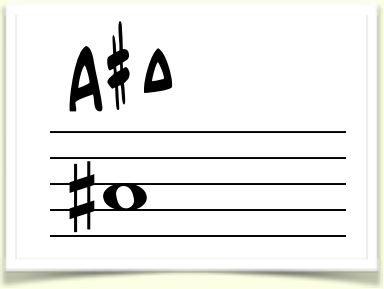


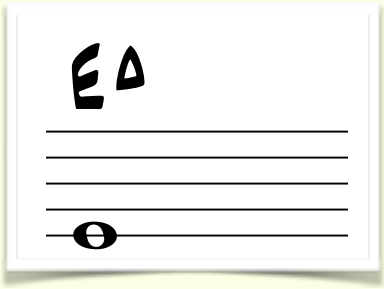


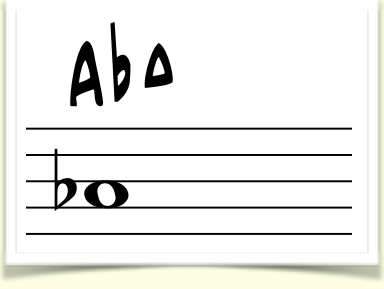


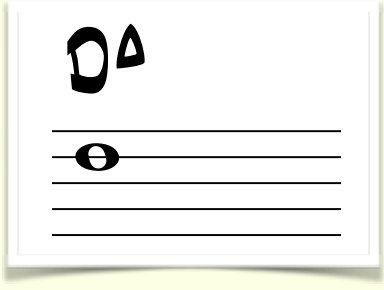


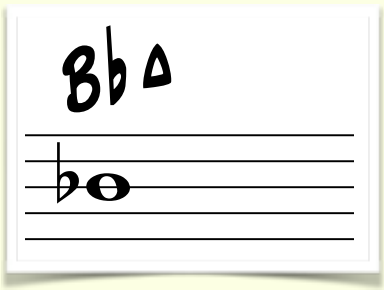


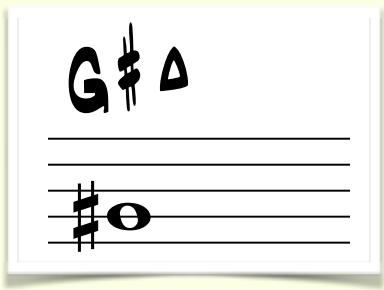






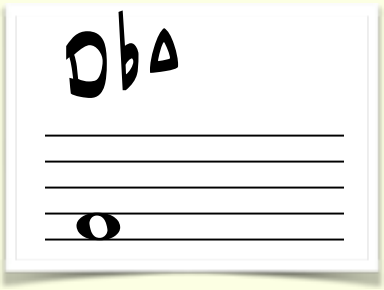


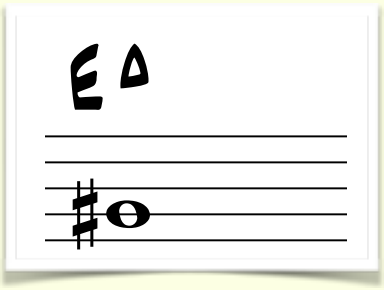


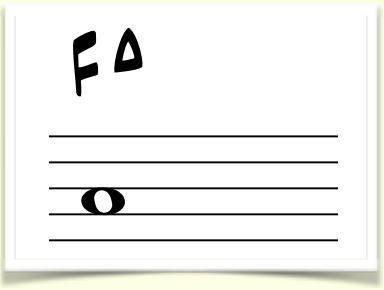


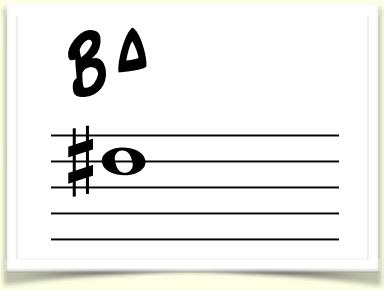
Thirds on Major chords

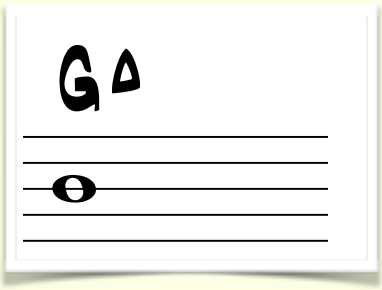
Once you can clearly visualize the roots of major chords, move onto the third. After the third, you can try the fifth, seventh, ninth, eleventh, sharp eleventh, and thirteenth. That's a lot of information, so take one at a time. Here's thirds over major chords:

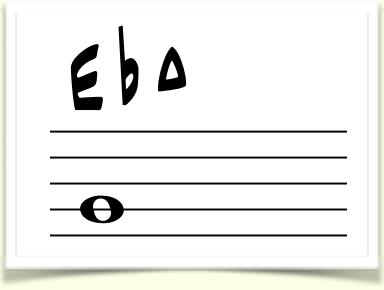


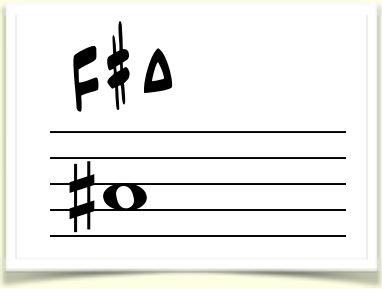


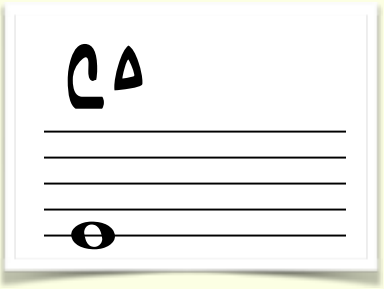


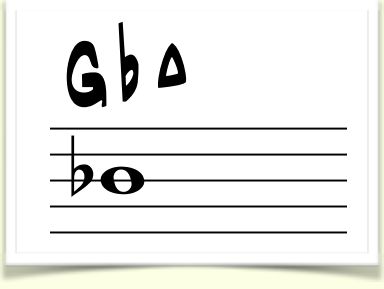


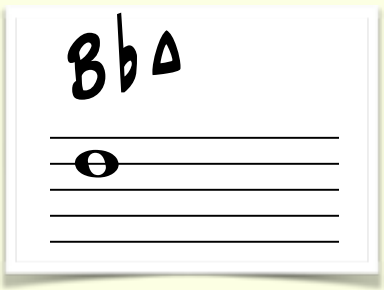


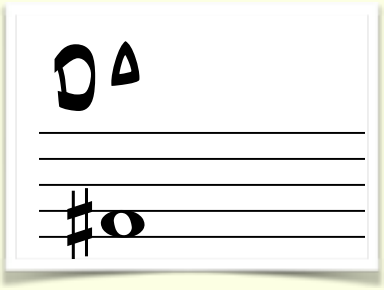


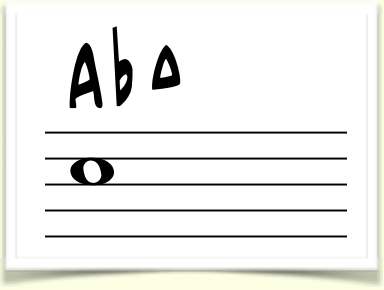












How to practice visualizing chord tones

As you probably already noticed, there's a ton of chord tones you could possibly visualize. For every chord there's 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 and alterations such as b9, #9, #11, and more! How does one go through all this information in a logical way and not feel overwhelmed? Fear not friend, There's a simple process you can use to tackle things the way they were meant to be done: one at a time.

1. Select a chord you want to work on, perhaps one of the following:

2. Select which chord tone you want to focus on, perhaps: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 or b9, #9, b5 or #11, #5 or b13

3. Select a root movement like the ones on the right of the page. Visualize the particular combination you selected through the root movement. For example, if I selected dominant and #5, I would go through each root movement visualizing a dominant chord based upon each root, while at the same time visualizing the #5 chord tone of each dominant chord.

Root movements

Half steps down

C B Bb A Ab G Gb F E Eb D Db

Half steps up

C C# D D# E F F# G G# A A# B

Cycle movement

C F Bb Eb Ab Db Gb/F# B E A D G

Other root movements you could use are: whole steps up/down, minor thirds up/down, or even random. Write down a random string of roots and use those! Anything to challenge yourself and keep things fresh will help you learn this information more quickly.

To further clarify, I selected dominant and #5. Let's say I chose cycle movement as my roots. Then, I'd visualize:

4. C7 first, then I'd visualize the G# (the #5) over the C7
5. After C7 I'd move to F7. I'd clearly visualize F7. Once I've got that chord symbol perfect in my mind, I'd visualize the C# (the #5) over F7.
6. Then, I'd continue around the cycle (Bb7, Eb7 etc.) until I arrive back at C7. I could then repeat the exercise, or move to another chord quality or chord tone.

Mix it up and aim to practice all of the chord qualities and chord tones presented on this page.

Practicing without a visual aid

Just as we learned to visualize chord symbols without the use of a visualize aid, so must we with chord tones. These exercises are crafted specifically to help you with the more challenging chord tones.

Visualize the 7th on the following chords:

- D major
- Bb major
- C# major
- Ab major
- A major
- Gb major
- F major
- G major
- E major
- C major
- Db major
- F# major
- Eb major
- B major

Visualize the 5th on the following chords:

- A half diminished
- D half diminished
- F half diminished
- Bb half diminished
- Ab half diminished
- Eb half diminished
- F# half diminished
- C half diminished
- G half diminished
- G# half diminished
- C# half diminished
- E half diminished
- B half diminished

Visualize the 11th on the following chords:

- C minor
- Bb minor
- Eb minor
- G minor
- E minor
- C# minor
- B minor
- F# minor
- A minor
- Ab minor
- F minor
- D minor

Visualize the 7th on the following chords:

- E dominant
- F# dominant
- C dominant
- Db dominant
- G# dominant
- A dominant
- E dominant
- Ab dominant
- B dominant
- Eb dominant
- Bb dominant
- D dominant
- G dominant

Visualize the #11th on these chords:

- F major
- E major
- C# major
- G major
- A major
- F# major
- D major
- Eb major
- Db major
- B major
- Ab major
- Gb major
- C major
- Bb major

Visualize the b9 on the following chords:

- F# dominant
- G dominant
- A dominant
- C dominant
- B dominant
- D dominant
- Ab dominant
- Bb dominant
- Eb dominant
- E dominant
- Db dominant
- F dominant

By this point, you probably have a pretty good grasp on what you're doing. Use the concepts behind the exercises presented thus far to create your own exercises. Isolate anything you're having trouble with and repeat it until it's effortless.

Part 1 Wrap Up

Visualizing Chord Symbols

- Keep things as simple as possible, so even for C major seven, you can visualize the chord symbol without the seven if you like.
- See chord symbols clearly in your mind's eye; dark and prominent.
- Work on enharmonic spellings, for instance, visualize both Gb and F# Major.
- Make sure to cover: major 7, minor 7, dominant 7, and half diminished 7
- Other chords you can practice are: major minor 7, diminished, augmented, dominant sus, dominant with simple alterations.
- Relax and take it one chord at a time.

Visualizing Chord Tones

- Clearly visualize the chord symbol with the staff, the chord tone on the staff, a sense of sound, and a tactile sense of feeling.
- This feeling is exactly how it would feel to play that note on your instrument.
- Seeing the staff with the note and hearing the note in your head is not crucial. It is something you can try and if you like it and it helps, that's great.
- The primary goal is to feel in your mind how your fingers and body would be when they're playing the particular note(s) you're visualizing.

Can you do the following with ease?

- Visualize an F# major 7 chord
- Visualize a D half diminished 7 chord
- Visualize an Eb minor 7 chord
- Visualize the 5th on E major 7
- Visualize the 7th on Ab dominant 7
- Visualize the 3rd on C# minor 7
- Visualize the 3rd on A major 7
- Visualize the 7th on F half diminished 7

If any of these are difficult, review part 1 before moving ahead. Everything builds on what came before so make sure you have a solid grasp on what has been presented.

Part 2

Visualizing Chord Progressions, Tunes, and Language

CHAPTER 3

PLAY TRACK 5

Visualizing Chord Progressions

If I asked you to name a ii V in the key of F#, how quickly could you conjure up the answer? If it takes you more than a millisecond to think through that progression, chances are you're going to have a hell of a time playing over it.

Common progressions like the ii V must be so ingrained into your brain, that you don't have to put in any thought-effort to recall them. You just know them.

Visualizing these progressions daily will greatly improve your recall of common chord progressions, making it easier to think and play in all keys.

For the following exercises, visualize just the chord symbols. Keep the chord symbol as simple as possible, for instance, do not visualize the "7" in a minor seventh chord or any alterations on dominants. This will help you "see" more quickly in all keys without cluttering the progression in your mind's eye.

The goal is to clearly see in your mind's eye a concise picture of the chord symbols for each progression in all keys. Now, do you see these when you actually improvise? Maybe yes, maybe no. The point is to so thoroughly absorb the progressions into your mind that you know them subconsciously without thinking of them.

You may "see" them in your mind when you recall them during performance, and you may not, but the important thing is that they are simply there when you need them. It's a bit difficult to describe what this actually means, but as you work more and more on the exercises throughout this book, you'll get a feel for it.

In addition to seeing the progression, aim to hear the progressions in your mind as well. Perhaps sit at the piano and play through them to get an idea of what they sound like and try to reproduce those sounds in your mind when visualizing them.

Up to this point we've only visualized one measure, not two, three, or four, so this will take some getting used to. A huge tip that took me years to figure out is learn to see multiple measures in your mind's eye as chunks. In other words, just as when you visualized a C major chord as one picture entity in your mind, you want to get to the point where you see a progression as one picture entity.

To do this, practice "seeing" more than one chord at a time. After visualizing the first measure of a progression, work on seeing two measures in your mind at the same time, then three, then four. Gradually, you'll start to be able to see larger chunks of chords and eventually you'll see the whole tunes as a mere several chunks in your mind.

Seeing chunks like this will greatly help you know the fundamentals of where chords are headed and how they resolve.

So now that you know what to do with them, in the following pages, we're going to practice visualizing some of the most common chord progressions.

The progressions:

1. **ii V I I (four measures)**
2. **ii V I (two measures)**
3. **ii V I VI**
4. **I Vi ii V**
5. **iii Vi ii V I (Variation #1)**
6. **Minor ii V I (two measures)**
7. **Minor ii V I I (four measures)**
8. **iii Vi ii V I (Variation #2)**
9. **ii Vs down in whole steps**
10. **ii Vs down in half steps**
11. **Cycle of Dominants**

Do your own homework

As a jazz musician it's up to you to do your own homework. For all of these progressions, and many more, there's a ton of free information out there. A simple Google search will give you more than enough to understand what it is you're dealing with.

Let's get you started

To help you get started, the next page contains some brief information which will help clarify some common confusion. Remember that theory is theory and not practice. Transcribe and figure out how YOU want to think about chords and progressions. Theory books and articles would have you believe that everyone thinks about all this stuff in the same way, but that's simply not the case.

Use the information out there to get started, but do not be married to it. Trust your ear and realize that there are many ways of thinking about the same progression. This may seem confusing right now, but the more you transcribe and study what your heroes are playing, the more you'll discover.

A really simple example of this "different views on progressions" happens in just a measure of G7.

You could think of D- G7 or D-, depending on where the chord is resolving to. Let's say it's resolving to the tonic C major; you could think of the tritone substitution Db7, or possibly a G7 with a sharp 5, or perhaps a b9. See all that variation? And that's just one measure!

Another great example is the two variations of iii Vi ii Vs presented later in this chapter. It's okay if you don't completely get what I'm talking about right now. I just want to stress to you that progressions are not writ in stone and there are many ways of perceiving them. Over time you will start to understand the flexibility of chords and gain freedom with them.

Another point to bring up is enharmonic spellings. For example, what's better, visualizing a ii V in Gb or a ii V in F#? The answer: whichever works better for you. Throughout the exercises, I'm not going to present all the options, but in some cases I may provide you with multiple options. Remember to do what you want, even if I have not listed the way you prefer to visualize it.

Links about Progressions

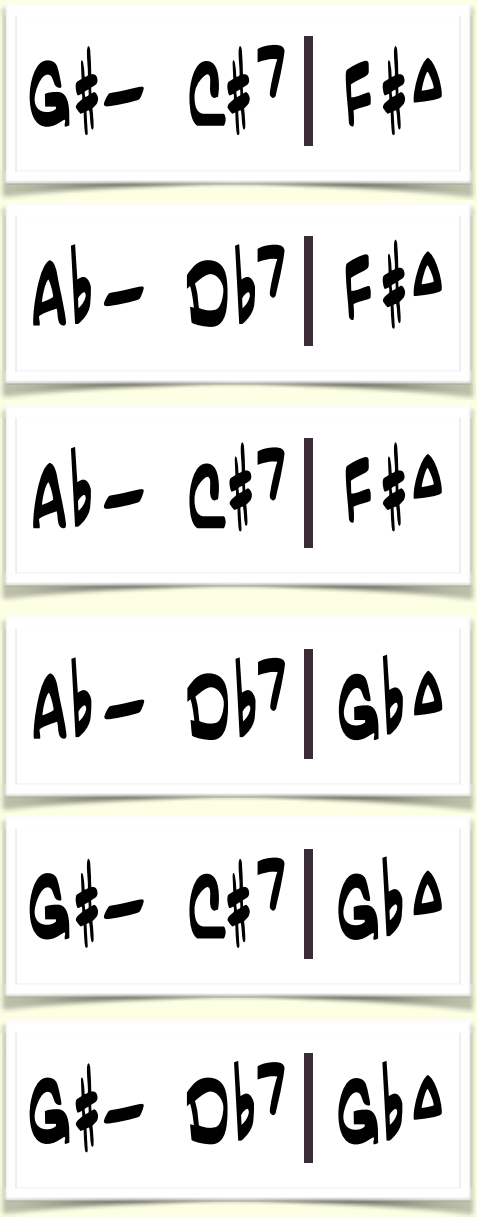
It's up to your to use all the resources available to you to get the best understanding of every chord progression you encounter. Understand it theoretically and aurally. transcribe your favorite musicians playing over the progressions to see how they're actually thinking about each chord. Here are a few Wikipedia links to give you some background information on the basic progressions:

Circle of fifths
ii V
VI ii V I and I VI ii V
ii V in minor

Use Wikipedia, Google, Spotify, Youtube, and any other resources you can think of to learn more about the progressions in jazz. With all this at our fingertips, we're completely spoiled today! Don't be lazy. You're not going to learn everything from one place. You must constantly be seeking more information. If you don't understand something, instead of waiting for someone to tell you, start doing your homework immediately.

Enharmonic Spellings

Here's a quick clarification about the different ways to visualize enharmonic chords. For example, supposing we had a ii V I in F#. This ii V is the same as Gb, so how do we visualize it? Let's look at our options:



There's even more combinations but you get the gist. I usually think of Ab- Db7 Gb major or Ab- Db7 F# major.

Personally, I don't like to think of things like G#-, so instead I replace the ii V in my mind as Ab- Db. I never think of something like Ab- C#7 because it breaks the natural ii V, Ab- Db7. Overtime, it won't matter. You'll be so comfortable that G#- and Ab- will be the same thing.

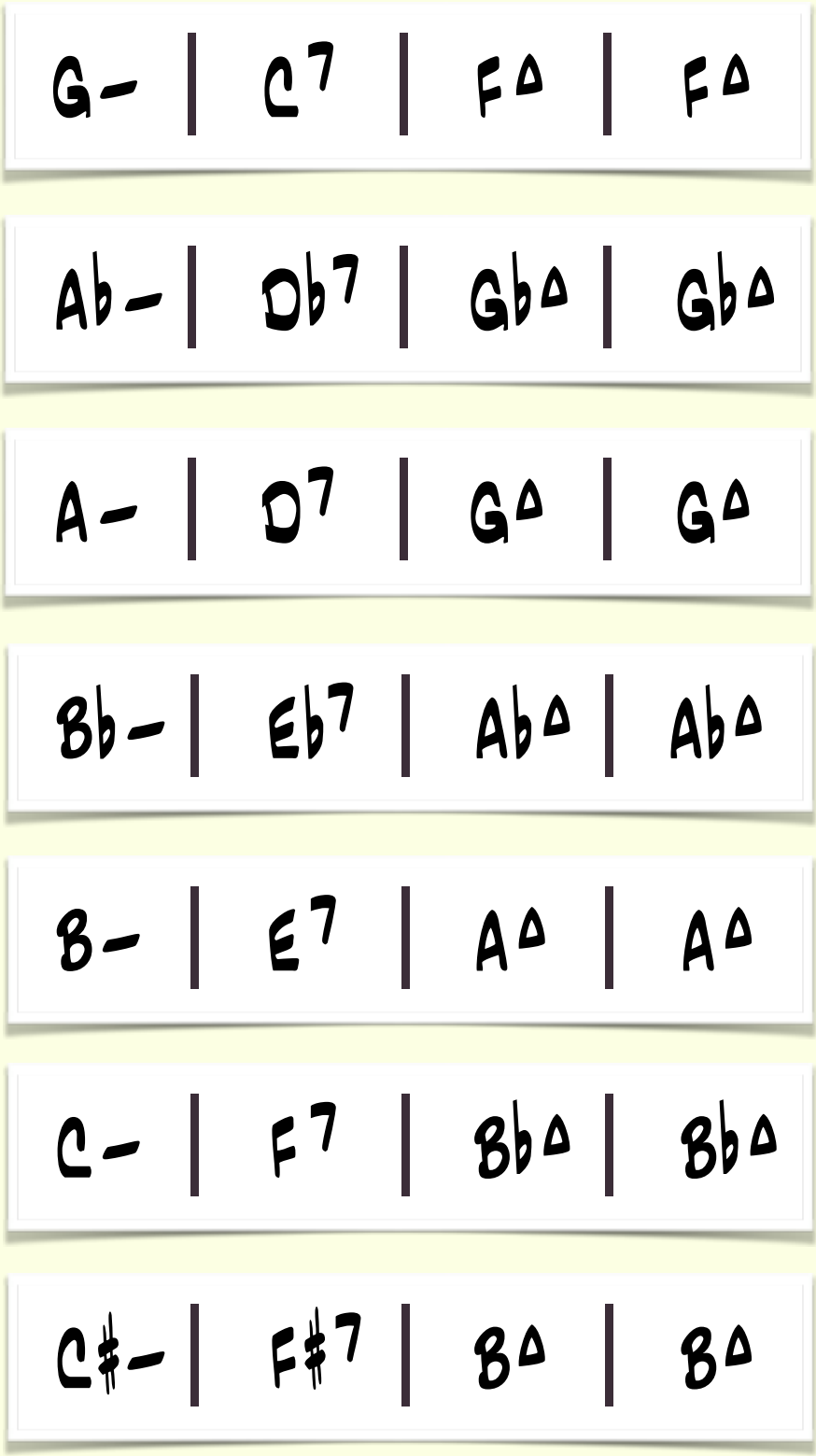
Two Five One One

ii V I I

Start with a simple two-five progression, resolving to the tonic for two measures. Visualize the key of C, then move around until you've visualized the chord symbols in all the keys.

For more information about the ii V progression, refer to the links at the beginning of this chapter. This is the most common chord progression, so make sure to master it.

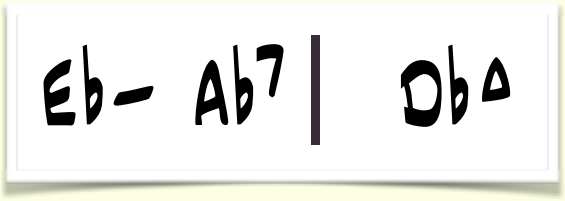
Two Five One One

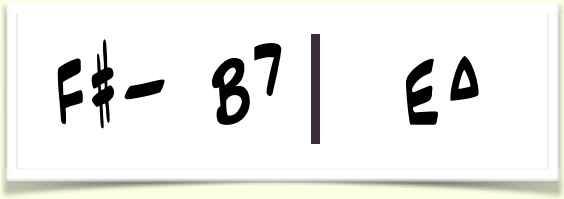


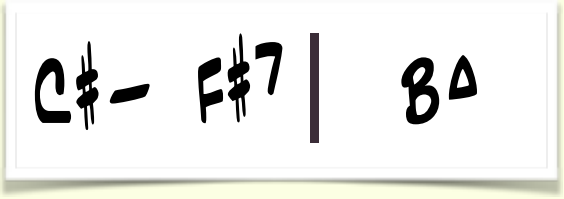
Two Five One

ii V I

Now visualize a one-measure two-five resolving to the tonic for a bar. It should be easy after the last exercise Continue through all the keys.



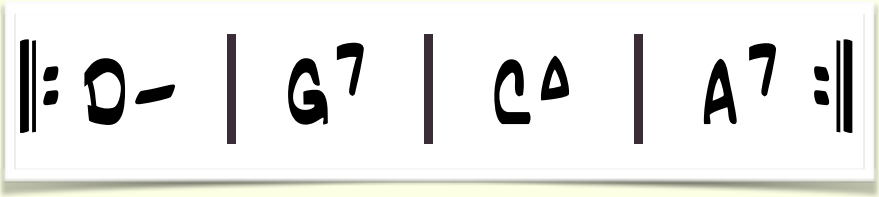


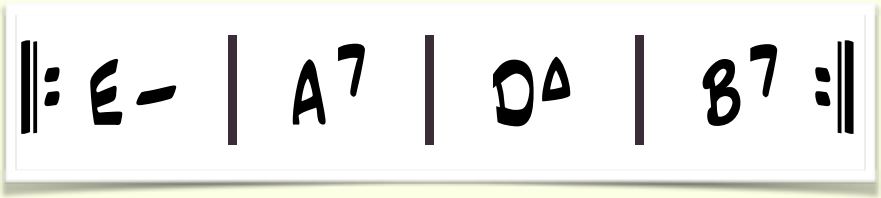


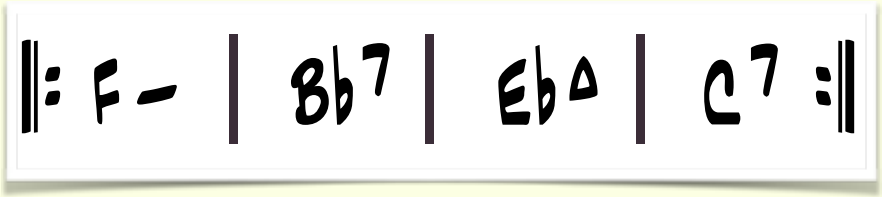
Two Five One Six

ii V I VI

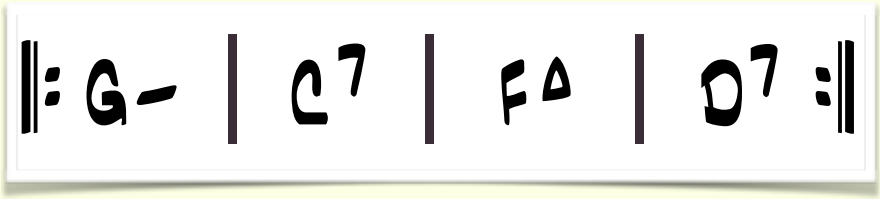
This exercise is the same as #1, however, now you'll visualize the VI dominant chord symbol in measure 4, returning to the ii chord in measure 1. Repeat each key a few times until you're comfortable with the VI chord moving back to the ii chord. It's important in this exercise to repeat it over and over and get familiar with the VI chord flowing naturally back into the ii chord. Then move through all twelve keys.

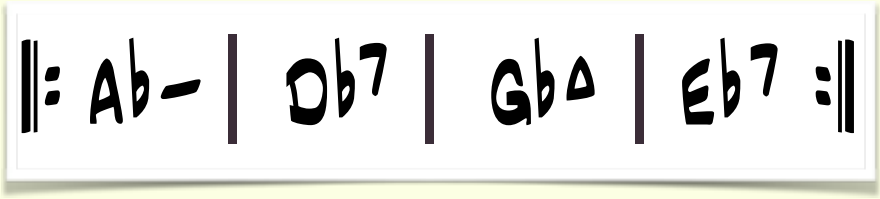


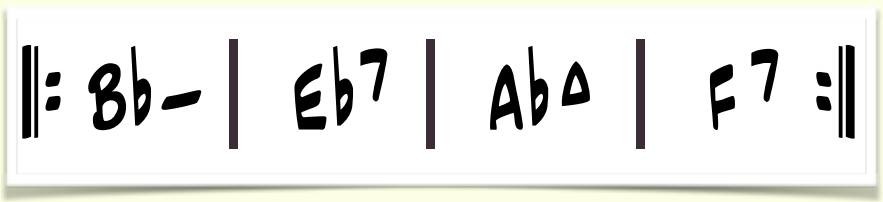


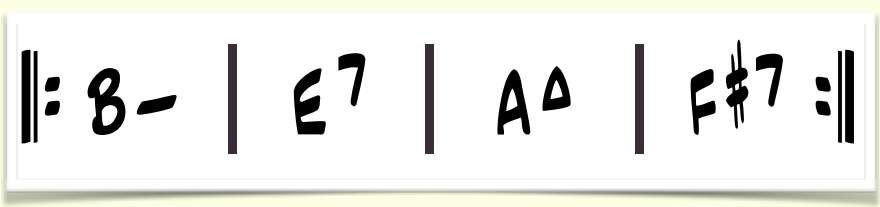


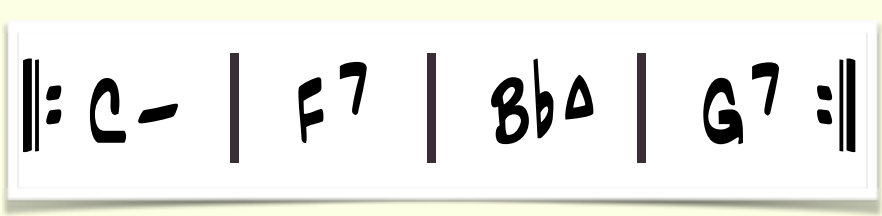
Two Five One Six







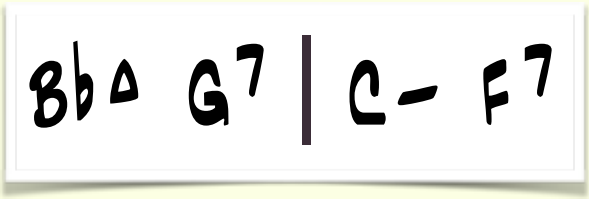


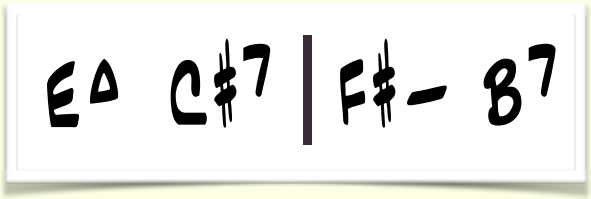


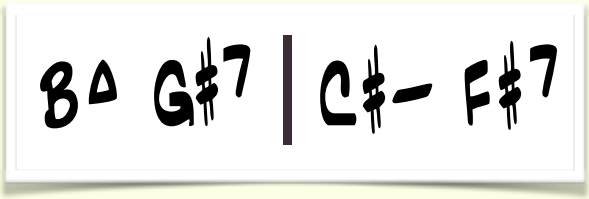
One Six Two Five

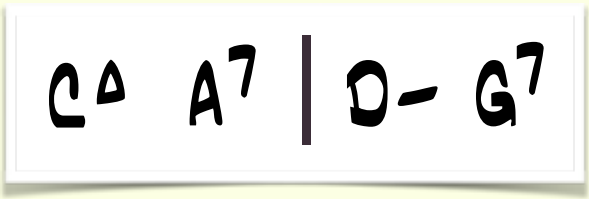
I VI ii V

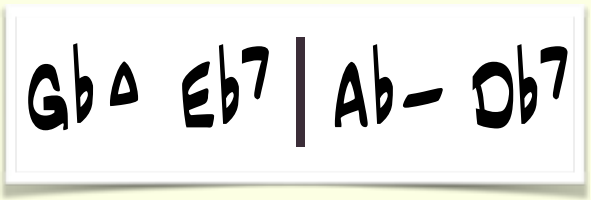
The I VI ii V is everywhere, so make sure to work it out in all keys until there's absolutely no mental effort needed to conjure up this common progression in any situation.

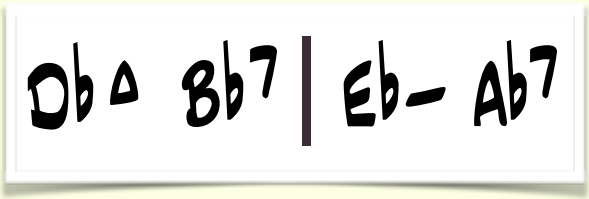


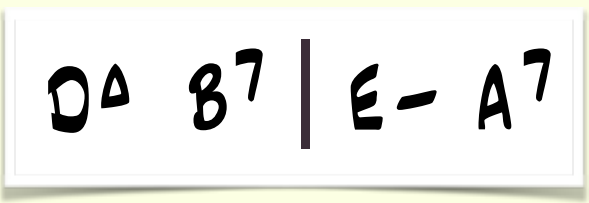


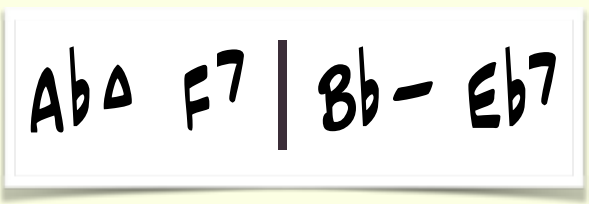


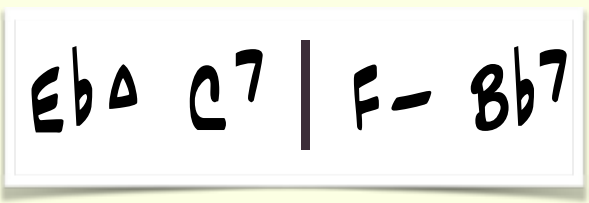


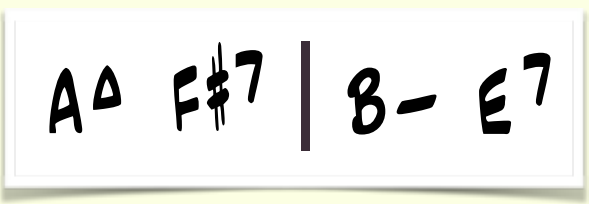










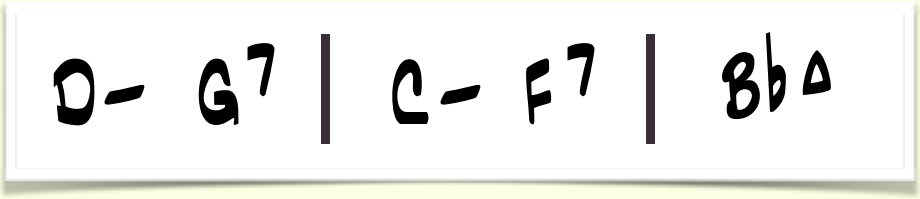


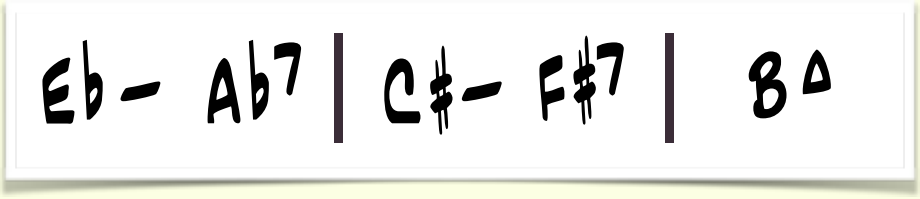
Three Six Two Five One

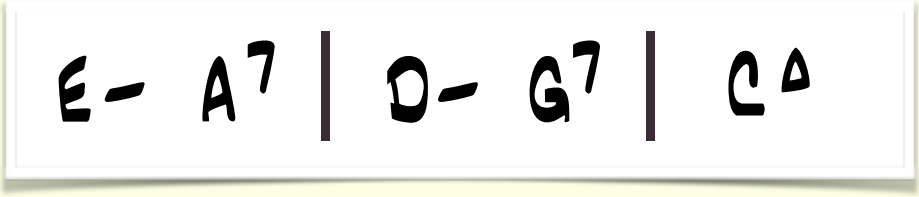
iii VI ii V I

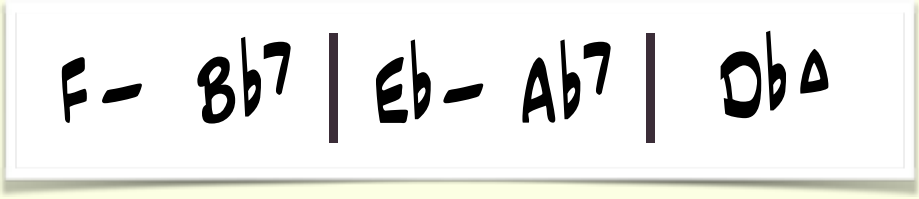
After visualizing a I Vi ii V, substitute the I chord for a iii chord. Make sure you realize that the iii chord in this particular situation does not function like a ii chord, but functions as a iii chord of the major tonic instead. If you're not sure what I'm talking about, you need to do some homework on your progressions. (Refer to the links at the beginning of this chapter). Also, note that the V7 chord on beat three is typically altered to pull the sound toward the ii minor chord.

For iii Vi ii Vs, you can also think of the iii Vi as a minor ii V resolving to the ii chord in measure 2, but we will cover that later.









Three Six Two Five One

F♯- B7	E- A7	DΔ
G- C7	F- B♭7	E♭Δ
G♯- C♯7	F♯- B7	EΔ
A- D7	G- C7	FΔ
B♭- E♭7	A♭- D♭7	G♭Δ
B- E7	A- D7	GΔ
C- F7	B♭- E♭7	A♭Δ
C♯- F♯7	B- E7	AΔ

Two Five One in Minor, Two measures

iiø V7ALT I-

Visualizing minor ii Vs is an absolute necessity, as these progressions are especially troublesome for most people. Good news though: a little visualization on these and you'll have them down in no time.

The V7 chord in this progression is typically altered to include a #5 (same as b13), b9, #9, #11 (same as b5). Different chord voicings will accentuate different altered tensions so it's difficult to specify precisely how an altered chord will sound in every situation.

As we talked about earlier, it's easiest to visualize the most simplified version of a progression as it takes up the least amount of visual space in your mind's eye.

Vs.

Two Five One in Minor, Two measures

iiø V7ALT I-

Dø G7 | C-	G♯ø C♯7 | F♯-
D♯ø G♯7 | C♯-	A♭ø D♭7 | G♭-
E♭ø A♭7 | D♭-	Aø D7 | G-
Eø A7 | D-	B♭ø E♭7 | A♭-
Fø B♭7 | E♭-	Bø E7 | A-
F♯ø B7 | E-	Cø F7 | B♭-
Gø C7 | F-	C♯ø F♯7 | B-

Two Five One One in Minor, Four measures

iiø V7ALT I- I-

Visualizing minor ii Vs where each chord lasts a measure is necessary as well.

Dø	G7	C-	C-
Ebø	Ab7	Db-	Db-
Eø	A7	D-	D-
Fø	Bb7	Eb-	Eb-
F#ø	B7	E-	E-
Gø	C7	F-	F-

Two Five One One in Minor, Four measures

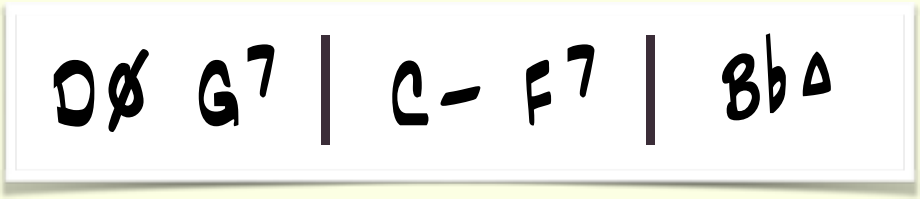
G♯ø	C♯7	F♯-	F♯-
A♭ø	D♭7	G♭-	G♭-
Aø	D7	G-	G-
B♭ø	E♭7	A♭-	A♭-
Bø	E7	A-	A-
Cø	F7	B♭-	B♭-
C♯ø	F♯7	B-	B-

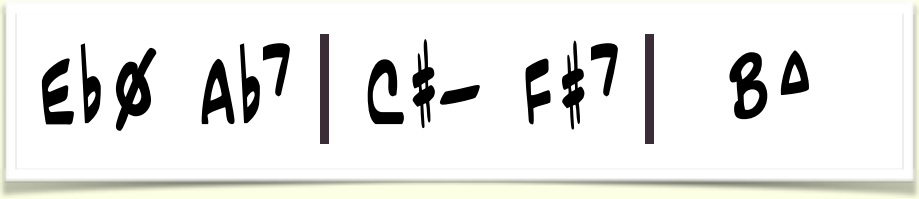
Three Six Two Five One, Variation #2

iii VI ii V I

For iii Vi ii Vs, as we said before, you can also think of the iii Vi as a minor ii V resolving to the ii chord in measure 2. So, In the first measure you'll visualize a minor ii V of the key it's going to (the ii chord) at the start of measure two.

Spend some time transcribing and you'll definitely see that many of your favorite players frequently use this variation. Remember as discussed before that the V7 sound in the first measure will typically have an altered sound, which helps lead into the minor ii chord of measure 2.





Three Six Two Five One, Variation #2

F#ø B7	E- A7	DΔ
Gø C7	F- Bb7	EbΔ
G#ø C#7	F#- B7	EΔ
Aø D7	G- C7	FΔ
Bbø Eb7	Ab- Db7	GbΔ
Bø E7	A- D7	GΔ
Cø F7	Bb- Eb7	AbΔ
C#ø F#7	B- E7	AΔ

Two Fives down in whole steps

ii V ii V...

Up to this point we've visualized chunks of information a few bars at a time. As you progress, try visualizing larger chunks of information, like ii Vs down in whole steps with the goal of anticipating every ii V in your mind.

Two Fives down in whole steps, Group #1

D- G7 | C- F7 | Bb- Eb7

Ab- Db7 | F#- B7 | E- A7

Two Fives down in whole steps, Group #2

Eb- Ab7 | C#- F#7 | B- E7

A- D7 | G- C7 | F- Bb7

Two Fives down in half steps

ii V ii V...

Another common way ii Vs progress is by half step. Visualize ii Vs moving down in half steps and as before, work to anticipate the next ii V so every single ii V naturally leads to the next one in your mind.

Two Fives down in half steps

D- G7 | C#- F#7 | C- F7

B- E7 | Bb- Eb7 | A- D7

Ab- Db7 | G- C7 | F#- B7

F- Bb7 | E- A7 | Eb- Ab7

Cycle of Dominants

V7 V7...

Finding these common large chunks of information and drilling them in your mind so that you can anticipate where the progression is going will help you tremendously. Here's the cycle of dominants, 2 variations:

Cycle of Dominants, 1 measure a piece

G7 | C7 | F7 | Bb7

Eb7 | Ab7 | Db7 | F#7

B7 | E7 | A7 | D7

Cycle of Dominants, 2 beats a piece

G7 C7 | F7 Bb7 | Eb7 Ab7

Db7 F#7 | B7 E7 | A7 D7

CHAPTER 4

PLAY TRACK 6

Visualizing Progressions to Tunes

Once you dial the common chord progressions into your brain, start hammering away on some tunes you're working on. A great place to begin, as always, is with Rhythm Changes. If you're not familiar with Rhythm Changes, start doing your own homework. Just like chords and progressions, there's so much free information out there about tunes.

Of course what you really want to do is learn these tunes straight from the recordings, but for a quick overview of some of the tunes we're looking at in this volume, here's a few Wiki links:

Rhythm Changes Basic Information
Bird Blues Information
Giant Steps and Coltrane Changes

Rather than taking an entire tune and trying to visualize the entire thing, take a chunk of it. Start with just four measures, or four measures and the fifth measure that the fourth measure resolves to.

By practicing this way, you'll start to conceptualize tunes in a more manageable way, making them easier to remember and improvise over.

Any tune that you want to learn or that's giving you trouble, pull apart the essential chunks to the tune and visualize them in all keys until they're completely effortless.

A few tunes to get you going:

1. **Rhythm Changes, first four bars**
2. **Rhythm Changes, first four bars, Variation #2**
3. **Bird Blues, first five bars**
4. **Giant Steps Progression**
5. **All The Things You Are, first eight bars**

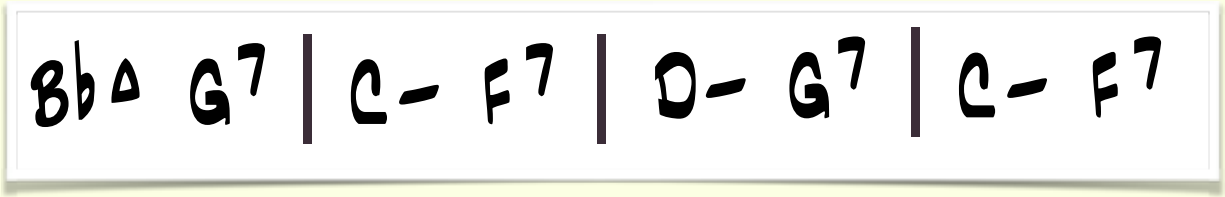
Rhythm Changes, first 4 measures

I VI ii V iii Vi ii V

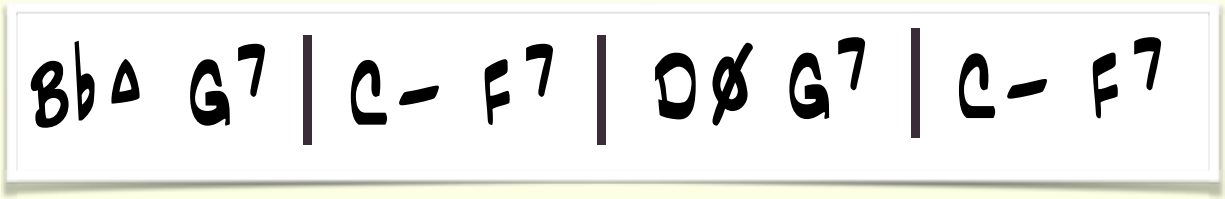
Just as we said many variations of a iii Vi ii V exist, many variations of Rhythm Changes exist. It's to your benefit to transcribe your favorite players and emulate the way they are thinking about these classic changes.

Remember the two variations presented of a iii Vi ii V? These are two ways of many that you can think about the iii Vi ii Vs in Rhythm Changes. Try visualizing both variations and as you transcribe and learn more, visualize the new variations you discover.

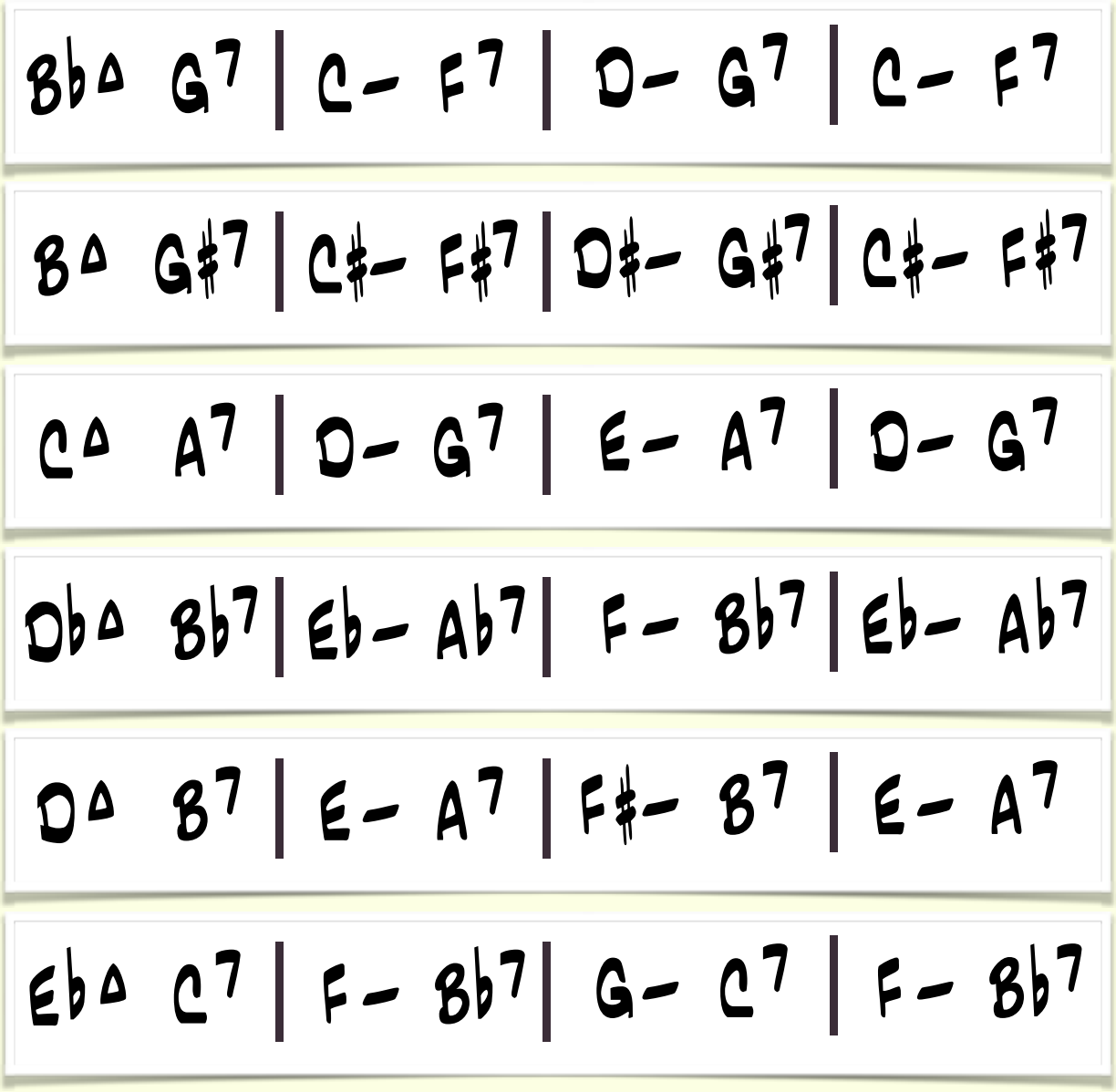
Variation #1



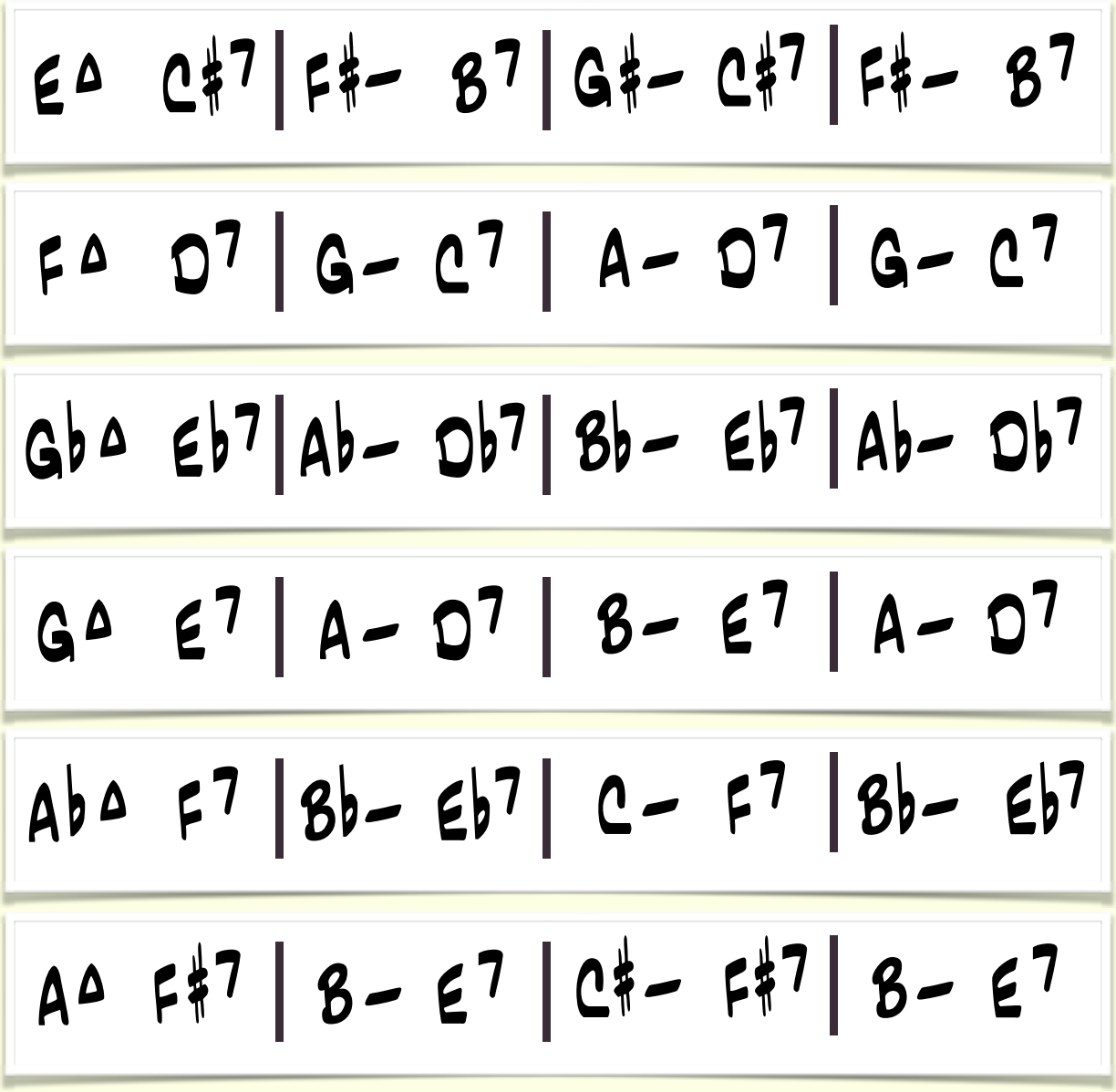
Variation #2



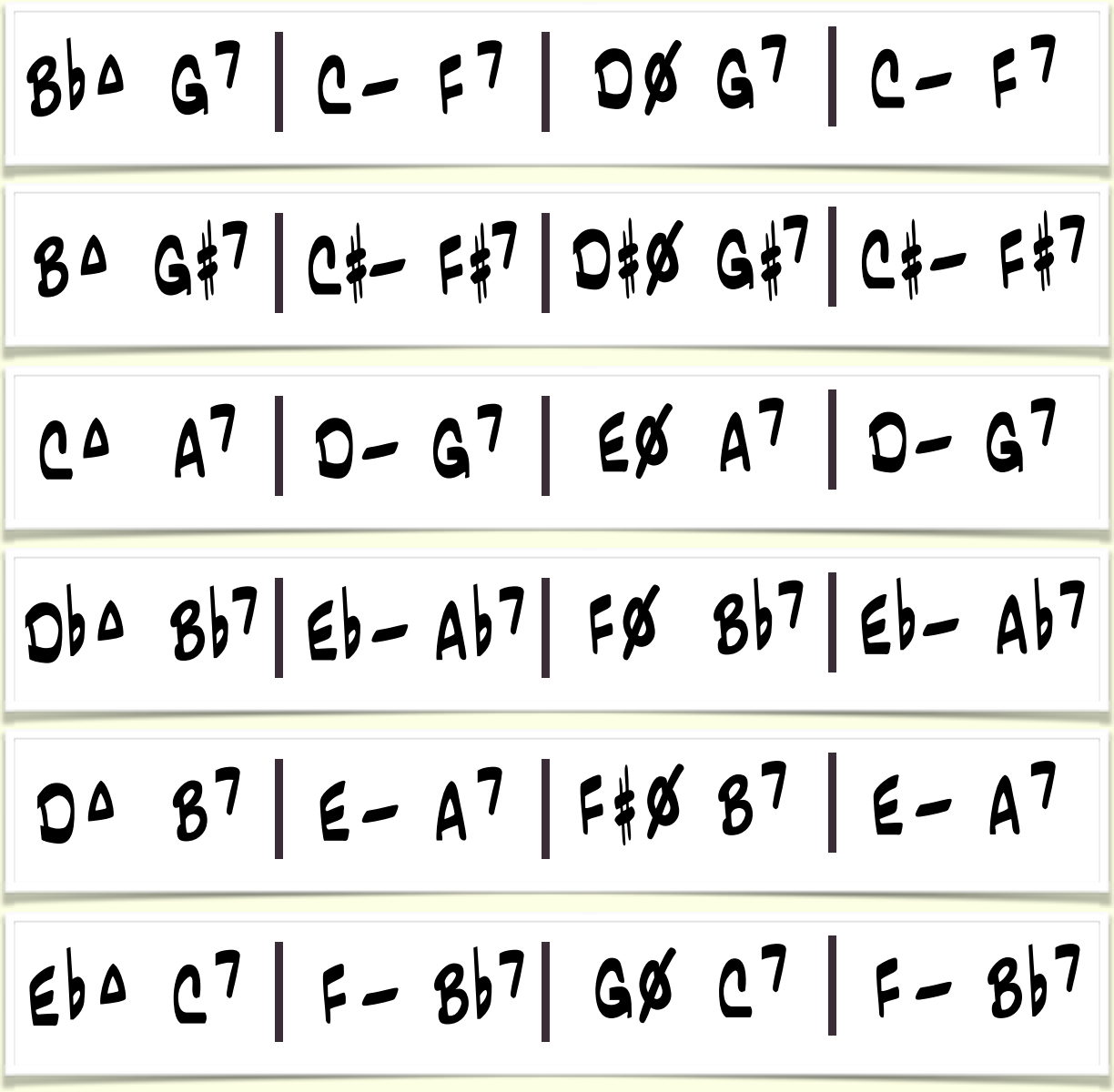
Rhythm Changes, first 4 measures



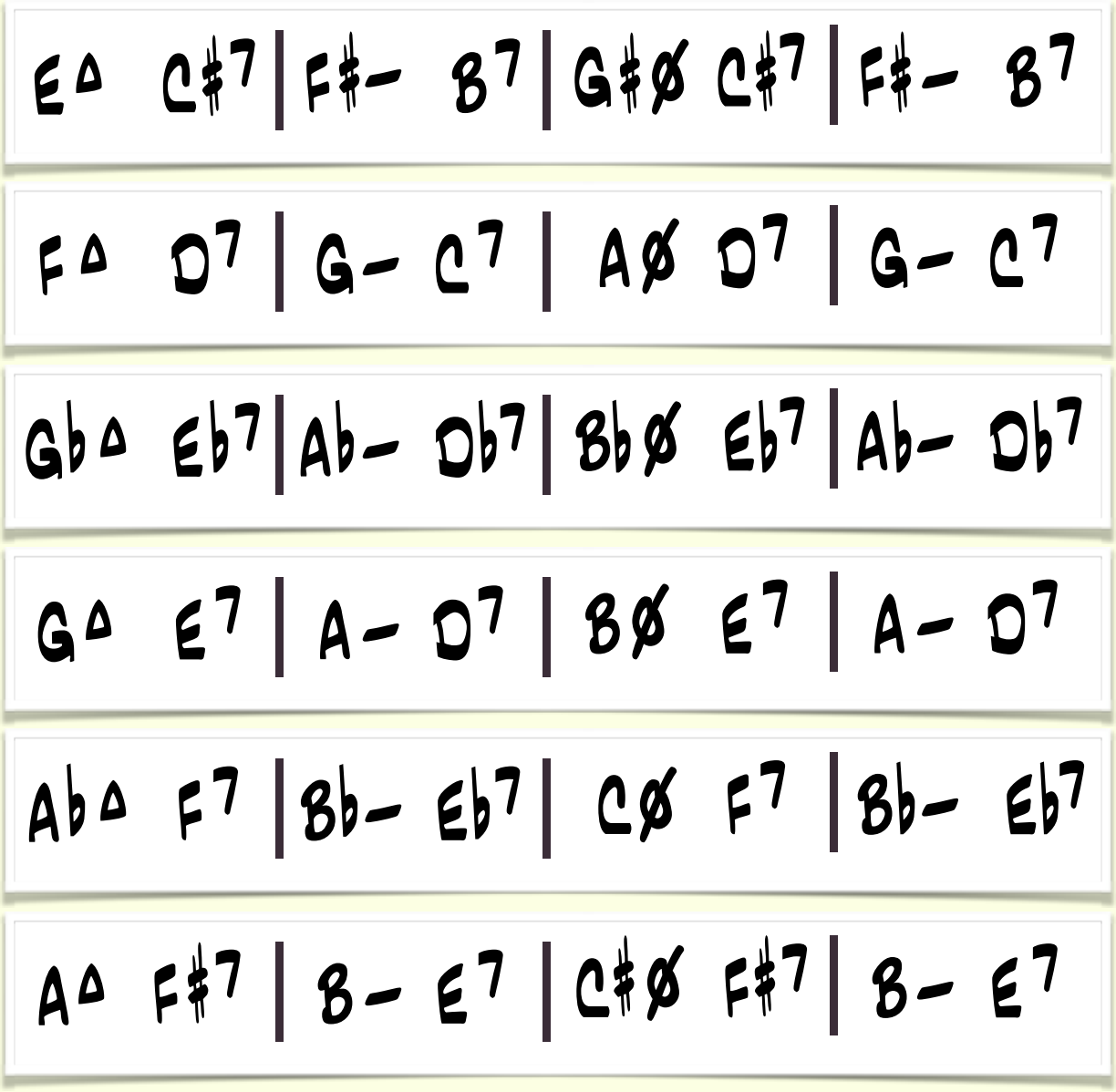
Rhythm Changes, first 4 measures



Rhythm Changes, first 4 measures, Variation #2



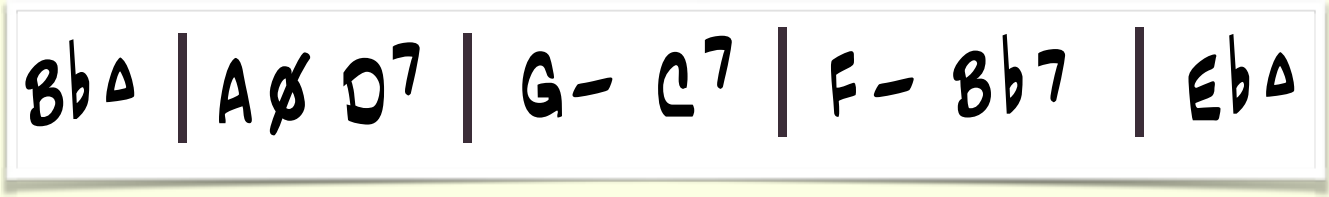
Rhythm Changes, first 4 measures, Variation #2



Bird Blues, first 5 measures

The Bird Blues progression is super common and it will be easy for you because it's quite similar to visualizing ii Vs down in whole steps and iii Vi ii Vs.

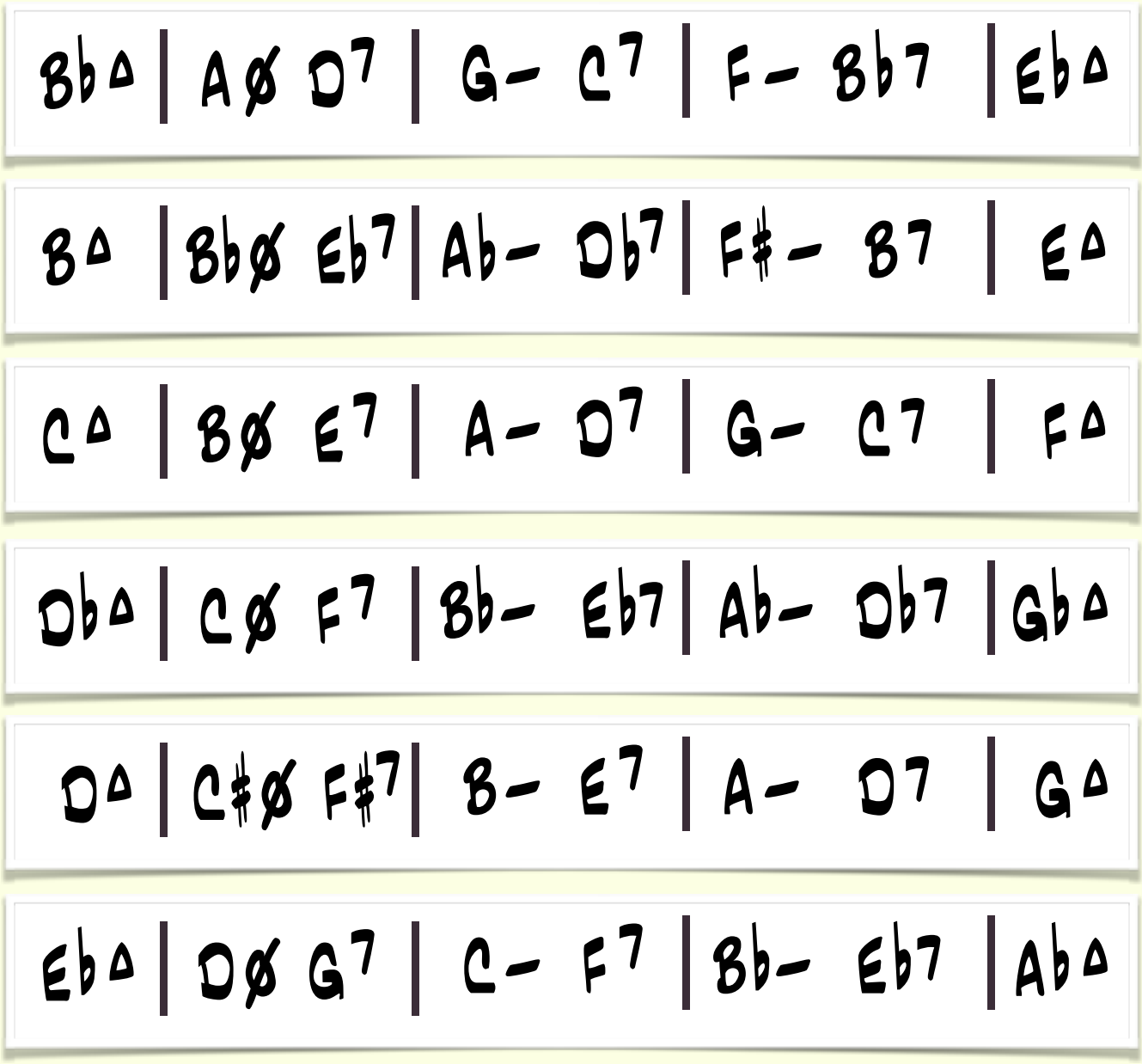
Think of this progression as a way to travel from I major to IV major via ii Vs. You simply move a half step down from the tonic to begin your first ii V (in this case a minor ii V) and then continue to move ii Vs down in whole steps until you arrive at the IV chord in measure 5.



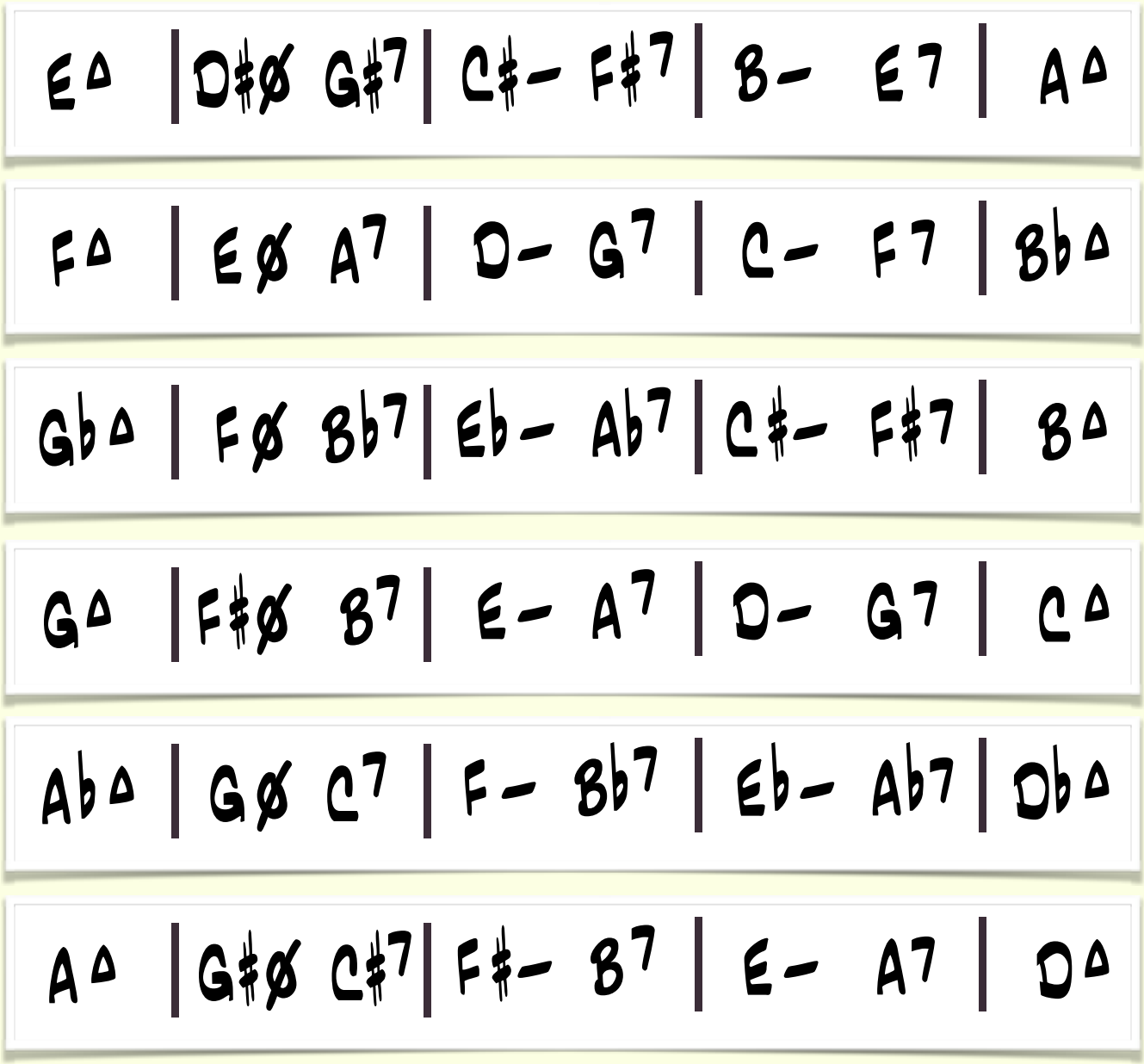
I Major → IV Major

ii Vs

Bird Blues, first 5 measures

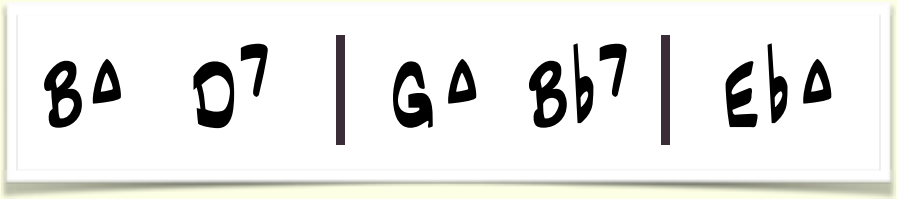


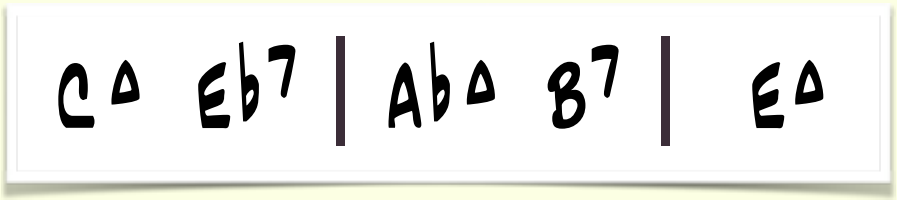
Bird Blues, first 5 measures

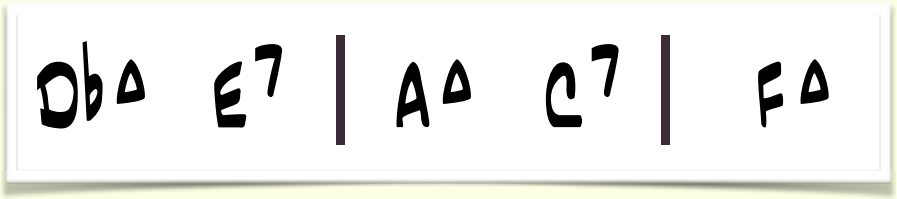


Giant Steps Progression

Everyone seems to think Giant Steps is so difficult, when in reality, this simple progression makes up the bulk of the tune. Just think: Tonic, up a minor 3rd to a dominant chord, resolve to it's major chord, up a minor 3rd to a dominant chord, resolve to it's major chord. Simple.



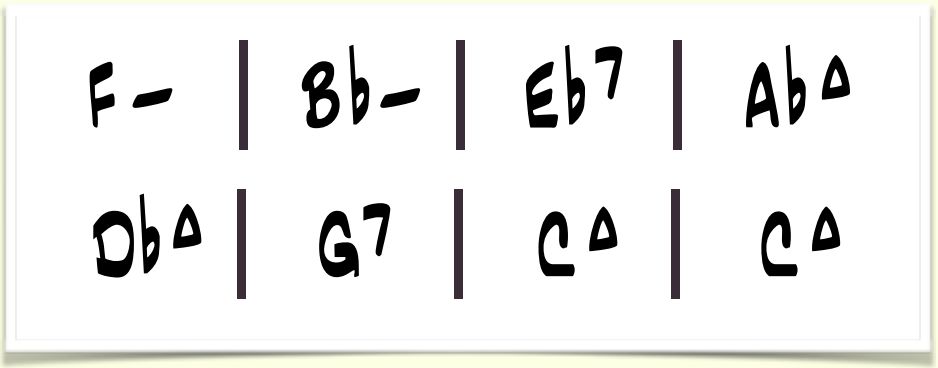


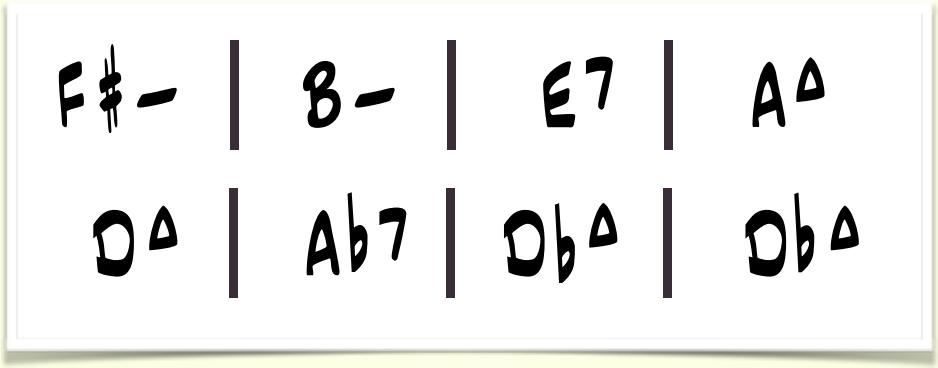


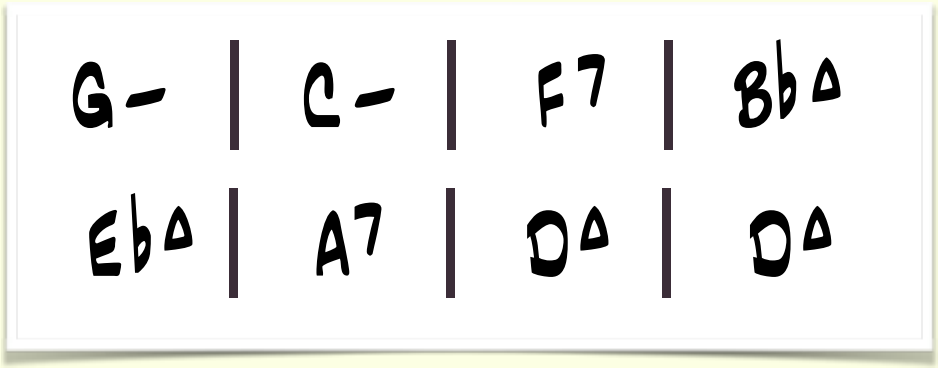
Giant Steps Progression

All The Things You Are, first 8 measures

All The Things You Are is a classic, so visualizing it clearly is a good idea. This is a larger chunk, 8 bars, but it's a natural breaking point in the tune. By thinking about these natural breaking points, you'll know exactly how to split up a tune into its various chunks for visualization.







All The Things You Are, first 8 measures

G#-	C#-	F#7	B$^{\Delta}$
E$^{\Delta}$	Bb7	Eb$^{\Delta}$	Eb$^{\Delta}$

A-	D-	G7	C$^{\Delta}$
F$^{\Delta}$	B7	E$^{\Delta}$	E$^{\Delta}$

Bb-	Eb-	Ab7	Db$^{\Delta}$
Gb$^{\Delta}$	C7	F$^{\Delta}$	F$^{\Delta}$

All The Things You Are, first 8 measures

B-	E-	A7	DΔ
GΔ	C#7	F#Δ	F#Δ

C-	F-	Bb7	EbΔ
AbΔ	D7	GΔ	GΔ

C#-	F#-	B7	EΔ
AΔ	Eb7	AbΔ	AbΔ

All The Things You Are, first 8 measures

D-	G-	C7	FΔ
BbΔ	E7	AΔ	AΔ

Eb-	Ab-	Db7	GbΔ
BΔ	F7	BbΔ	BbΔ

E-	A-	D7	GΔ
CΔ	F#7	BΔ	BΔ

CHAPTER 5

PLAY TRACK 7

Visualizing Language

Once you spend ample time visualizing chord progressions and chord tones, you're ready to start to visualizing language. This doesn't mean you stop visualizing progressions and chord tones, it simply means you've built up the necessary foundation to visualize language.

We talk a lot about ingraining language. A piece of jazz language is a melodic idea that you transcribed from the jazz tradition, hopefully from one of your own personal heroes. It's vital to have an array of ideas at your fingertips for any given harmonic situation, and these ideas should be so ingrained that you can easily make them your own with little effort.

If you truly "own" a piece of language, you can add to it, contract it, combine it with other pieces of language, alter it harmonically, modify it rhythmically, and do a whole lot more things with it, all in the moment as you improvise. But that's only if you truly own it. Visualization can speed up the process of ingraining language to the point where all of this is possible for you.

Learning to visualize a piece of language is similar in process to visualizing one note. Essentially, you want to feel in your mind as though you're playing the line on your instrument. You want to hear the notes in your mind and envision how it would feel to have your fingers press the keys. It's not necessary to see the notes of the line written out on a staff in your mind, however, when you visualize a piece of language, you do want to see the chord symbol that the line is played over in your mind

So, to recap:

- Hear the sound of the line in your head
- Feel the physical sensation of playing the line in your mind
- See the chord symbol of the line in your mind

Sometimes tackling an entire line is overwhelming. In this case, break the line up into manageable parts. You can then put these pieces back together once you're comfortable with each. After visualizing language for a while, you'll easily be able to visualize longer lines.

As you work on a line, it's extremely important to understand how the line, or a piece of the line for that matter, relates to the sound that you're playing over. Always know exactly what chord you are playing over when you work on the piece of language and be aware of what chord tones you're on.

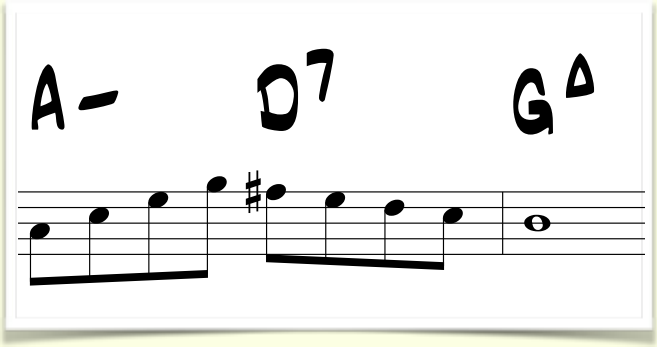
This will help you understand the sound, construction, and flexibility of the line. Of course lines can be applied to many different harmonic situations, but it helps to conceptualize the line in one situation first.

When you take a line in your mind through all keys chromatically, be aware of each chord and chord tone. Go slowly and strive for perfection. Repeat each key until everything is fluid and without any mental strain. Remember, your goal is that visualizing a line in all keys is as easy as visualizing one note.

You can do all this right before going to bed. If it helps you, write out the lines you want to visualize (just write them in one key) and place them on your night stand as a reminder. Each night, spend a few minutes taking each through all keys. They'll marinate in your head as you dream and get ingrained on a subconscious level. This seemingly simple tactic is so powerful. Anything you want to learn, just make it accessible. It's that easy.

Visualizing language step-by-step

Now let's go through exactly how we might visualize a piece of language. Say we have a line like the one below:



Not an especially creative line, but hopefully that will encourage you to start transcribing your own! You must do your own homework and get the lines that you love to become the player you wish to be.

First, understand what the piece of language is all about. Know where it begins, where it shifts, and where it ends. The point is to understand the general idea of the line.

You know it's over a ii V I progression and it starts on the root of the minor chord, arrives at the third of the dominant chord and resolves to the third of the major chord. Just having this basic road map will help you take it through the keys in your mind.

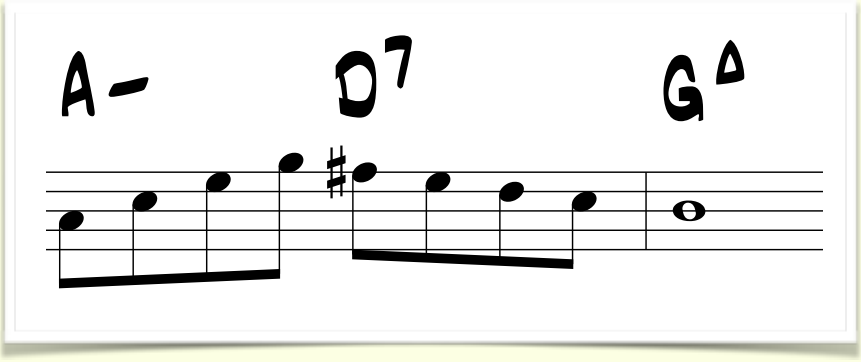
Just as before, close your eyes if need be and focus on reproducing what it would feel like to hear and play the line over the progression.

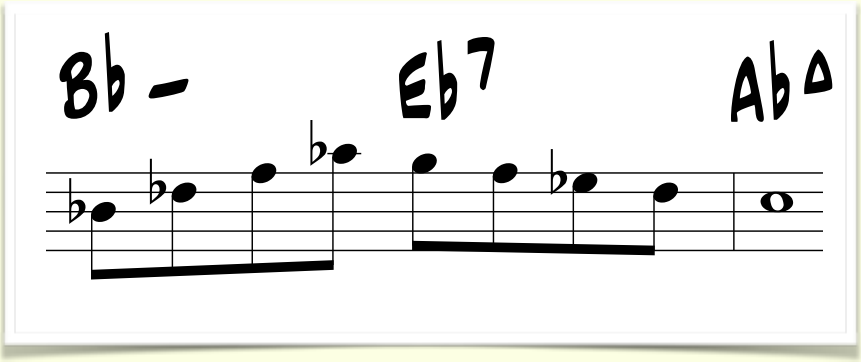
Remember:

- Hear the sound of the line in your head
- Feel the physical sensation of playing the line in your mind
- See the chord symbols of the line in your mind

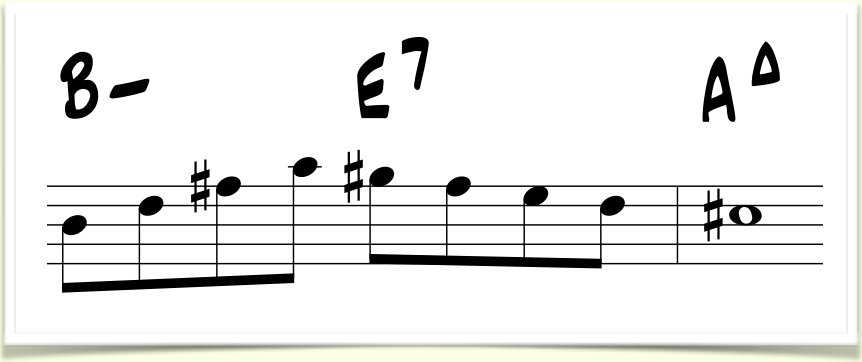
Just as when we were visualizing before, the most important point is that you feel as though you are playing the line in your mind. If you have trouble seeing the chord symbol it's not a big deal, but aim to at least have an intuitive idea of what chord the line fits over. Once you've spent time ingraining the language in the first key, move to the next until you've done all twelve keys.

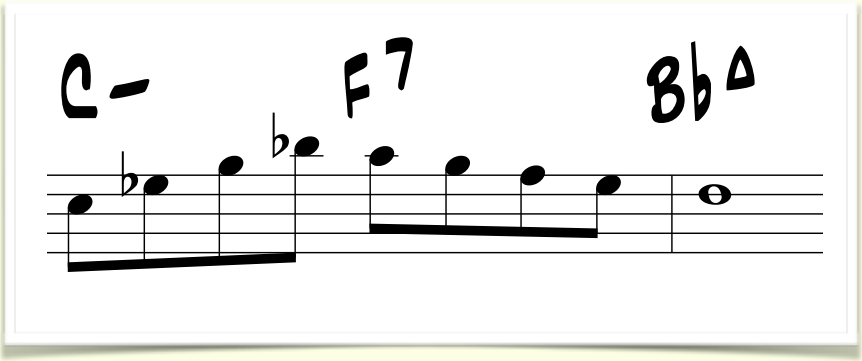
Try to do it all in your mind, but if it helps you, at first write it out in all keys and over time you'll no longer need the extra help of written visuals.

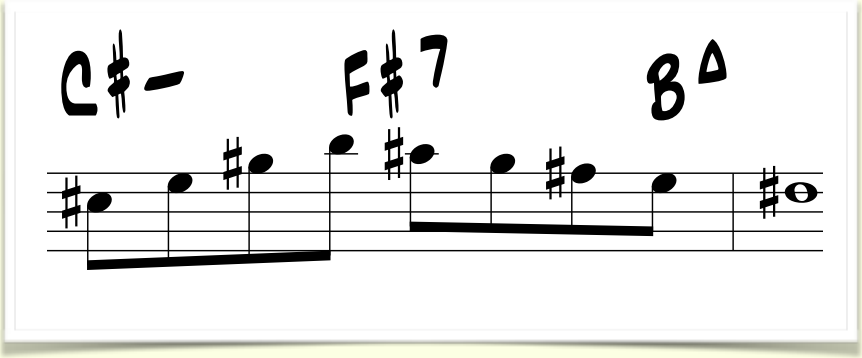


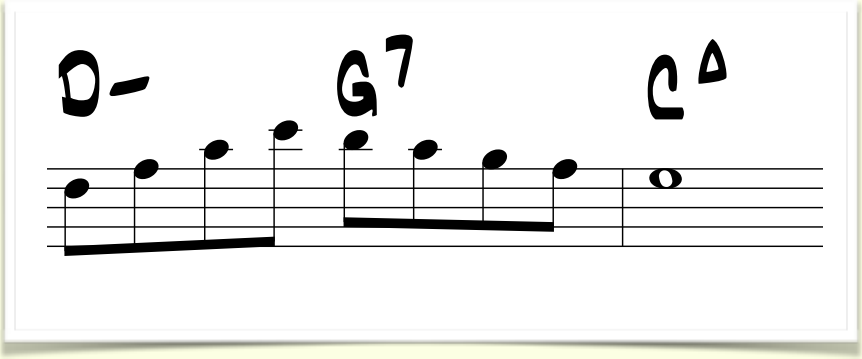


Visualizing language through all keys

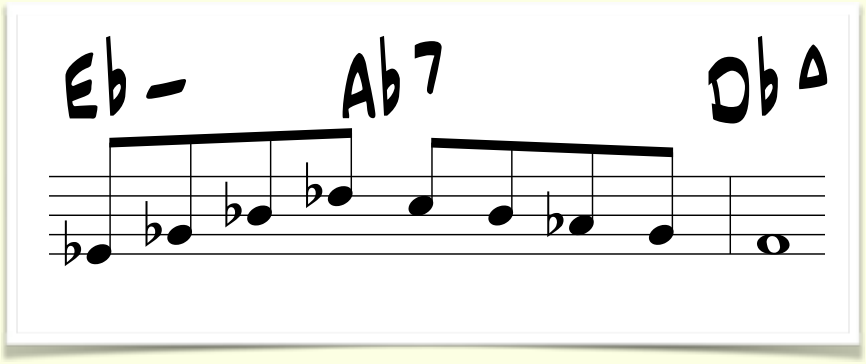


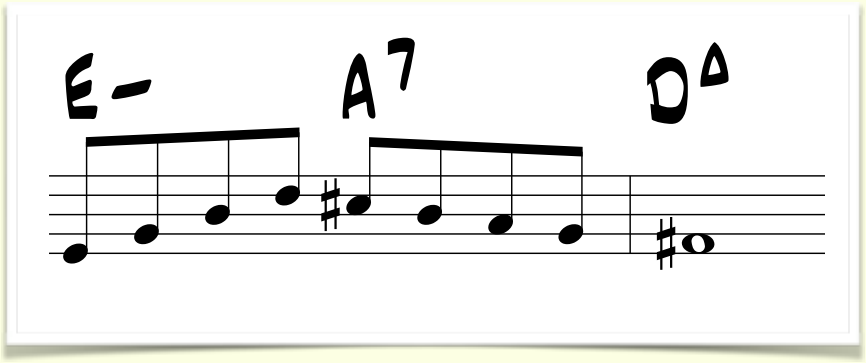


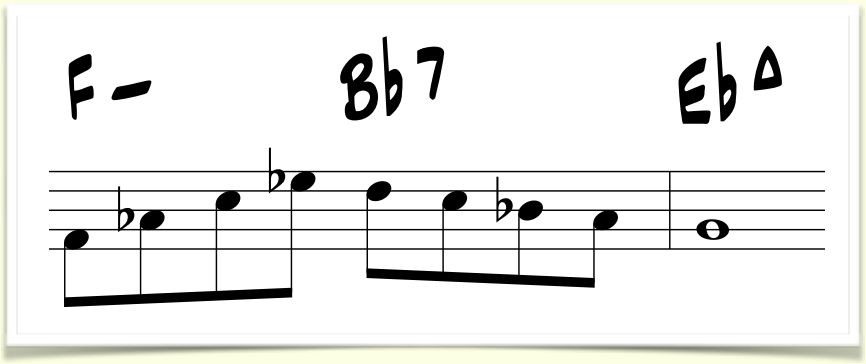


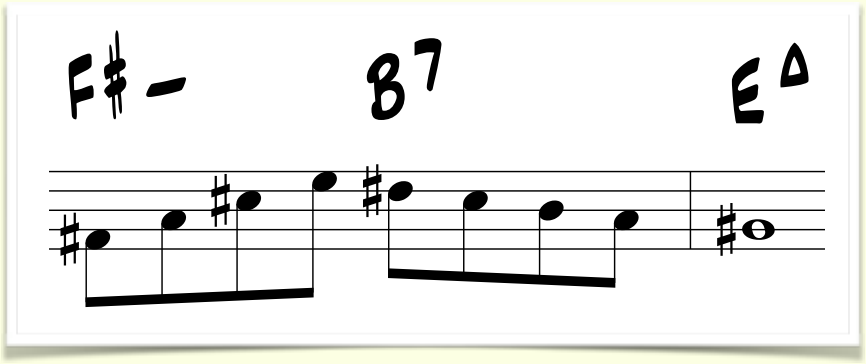


Visualizing language through all keys

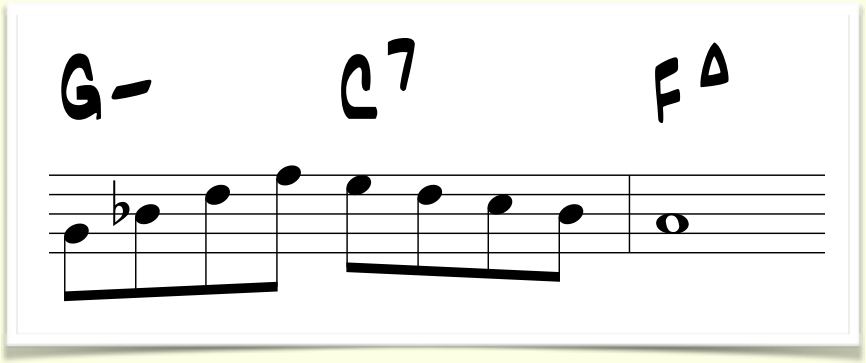


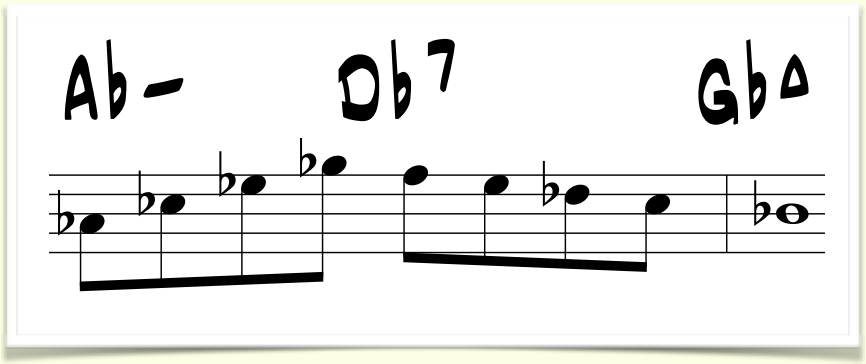


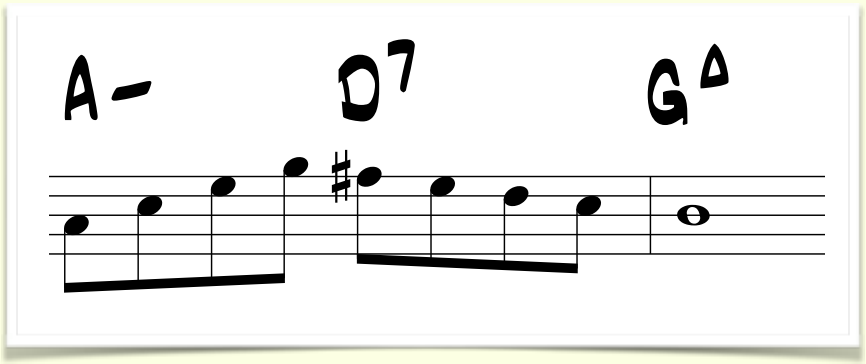


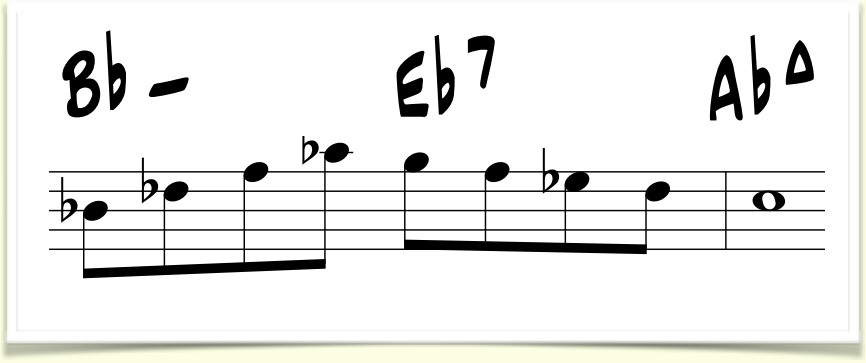


Visualizing language through all keys









PUTTING IT ALL *Together*

PLAY TRACK 8

Now that you can effectively visualize chord symbols, chord tones, chord progressions, tunes, and language, it's time to put it all together. Here are 3 ways you can combine your new knowledge to take your skills to the next level.

Visualizing chord tones over progressions

Go through some of the common chord progressions presented in Chapter 3 and select one you're super comfortable with. Then, visualize the various chord tones over this progression beginning with the root. Once you've visualized the root over each chord in the progression and it's fluid in your mind, move on to practicing the third. Continue doing this until you've gone through all chord tones.

Visualizing language over progressions

Once you visualize chord tones over a progression, try visualizing a piece of language over it. Use the same process as before, go slowly and as always, aim for perfection.

Putting it all together over tunes

1. Start by visualizing the main chunks of the tune, typically four or eight measures, perfecting your ability to anticipate exactly where each and every chord is progressing to.

2. Once the chords are firmly implanted in your mind's eye, visualize chord tones over the progression

3. After chord tones, visualize a piece of language you're currently working on over the specific parts of the tune where it fits. In the places of the tune where you're not visualizing language, you can visualize chord tones.

These are just a few ways you can combine the workable knowledge you now have. Use your creativity and take what you've learned beyond where you found it.

Part 2 Wrap Up

Visualizing Chord Progressions

- Common progressions must be so ingrained that you don't have to put in any thought-effort to recall them.
- Keep chord symbols as simple as possible, for instance, do not visualize the "7" in a minor seventh chord or any alterations on dominants.
- The goal: to see in your mind's eye a concise picture of the chord symbols for each progression in all keys.
- Get to the point where you see a whole progression as one picture entity in your mind.
- Do your own homework. Use Wikipedia, Google, Spotify, Youtube, and any other resources to learn more about the progressions in jazz.
- There are a ton of enharmonic spellings. Don't break up natural ii Vs and figure out what works best for you.

Visualizing Tunes

- Rather than taking an entire tune and trying to visualize the entire thing, take a chunk of it. Your goal is to "see" each chunk in your mind as one image.
- Any tune that you want to learn or that's giving you trouble, pull apart the essential chunks of the tune and visualize them in all keys until they're completely effortless.

Visualizing Language

- A piece of jazz language is a melodic idea that you transcribed from the jazz tradition by one of your own personal heroes.
- Visualization can speed up the process of ingraining language to the point where you "own" the line.
- You want to feel in your mind as though you're playing the line on your instrument. You want to hear the notes in your mind and feel as if your fingers were pressing the keys.
- It's not necessary to see the notes of the line written out on a staff in your mind, but you do want to visualize the chord symbols that the line is played over.
- As you work on a line, it's extremely important to understand how the line relates to the chord that you're playing over.

Can you do the following with ease?

- Visualize a ii V I I, four measures total, in F#
- Visualize a ii V I I, four measures total, in B
- Visualize a ii V I I, four measures total, in Eb
- Visualize a ii V I, two measures total, in D
- Visualize a ii V I, two measures total, in Gb
- Visualize a ii V I, two measures total, in E
- Visualize a ii V I VI, four measures total, in C
- Visualize a ii V I VI, four measures total, in G
- Visualize a ii V I VI, four measures total, in F
- Visualize a ii V I VI, four measures total, in A
- Visualize a minor ii V I, two measures total, in E
- Visualize a minor ii V I, two measures total, in B
- Visualize a minor ii V I, two measures total, in Ab
- Visualize a minor ii V I, two measures total, in D
- Visualize a iii Vi ii V I, three measures total, in F
- Visualize a iii Vi ii V I, three measures total, in Db
- Visualize a iii Vi ii V I, three measures total, in Gb
- Visualize a iii Vi ii V I, three measures total, in Ab
- Visualize ii Vs down in whole steps, start with D- G7
- Visualize ii Vs down in whole steps, start with Eb- Ab7
- Visualize ii Vs down in half steps, start with D- G7
- Visualize ii Vs down in half steps, start with Eb- Ab7
- Visualize dominant chords around the Cycle
- Visualize the first four bars of Rhythm Changes. Take it through all keys.
- Visualize the first eight bars to All The Things You Are. Take it through all keys.
- Visualize the bridge to Rhythm Changes in all keys.
- Visualize a piece of language you've learned in all keys.
- Take a tune you're working on. Visualize all the main chunks of the tune separately through all keys. Then, visualize the 3rd on every chord, followed by the 5th, and the 7th. Next visualize a piece of language over the tune in specific spots where it fits and in the other places, visualize chord tones.

These are some challenging tasks! Take one at a time and see how you do. Remember, aim for perfection, enjoy the process, and continue to improve each and everyday.

IN Closing

If you made it this far, you've done quite a bit of work which will pay off tremendously. You should be proud of yourself! Armed with the new skills and knowledge you posses, you can now visualize anything you may encounter, dramatically speeding up your process of assimilating and learning chords, chord tones, language, progressions, and tunes.

With the mind teaching the body, you're way ahead of the curve. Not only will you find yourself learning musical information more rapidly, you'll actually discover that learning any information regardless whether it's music related or not, will now be easier for you.

That's right, the faculty you've been working so hard to develop will improve all areas of learning in your life, not just music.

We sincerely hope that this guide through visualization has brought you to new heights in your journey and we look forward to more adventures with you in the future!