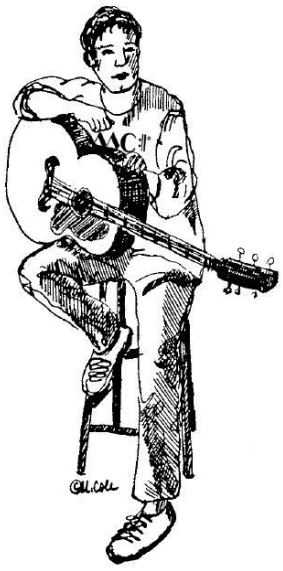
Primary Chords
I, IV, V

During our study of Chord Status, we found that when we build a chord on every tone of C's scale the C, F, and G chords are Major (Mm). These three chords are often referred to by their Scale Degrees as the "I, IV, V Chords," and are identified as the Primary Chords. "Primary" in this case meaning "most important". The reason why these three Primary Chords are important is because they may be used to harmonize **any** melodic line written with a major scale. Because of this, the I, IV, V chords are often over-used in most elementary compositions.



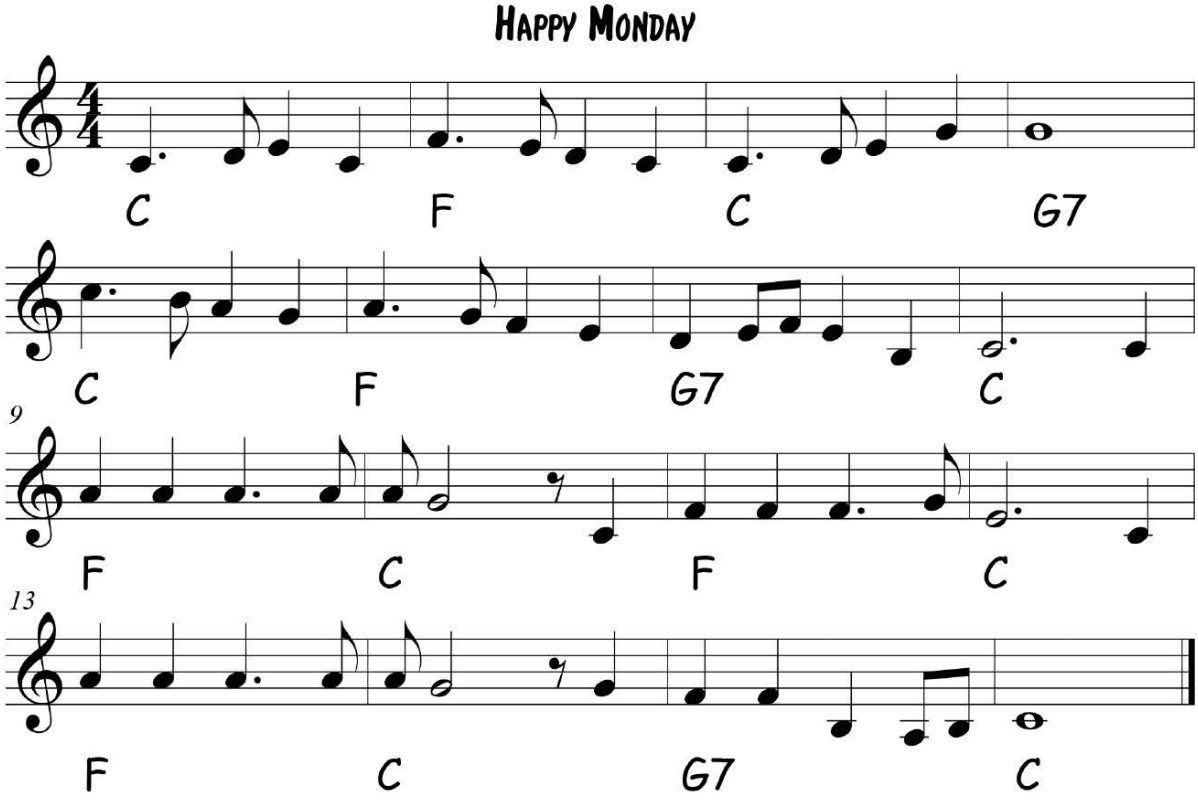
Write the tones of these Primary Chords in C major (if you need help, look back to our study of Scale Degrees):

I : ___ ___ ___

IV : ___ ___ ___

V : ___ ___ ___

Below is a composition that only uses the three Primary I, IV, V Chords for harmony (the left hand). Letters are used to signify which chords have been chosen.



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Secondary Chords
ii, iii, vi, vii^{o}



The Secondary Chords can often be used as "substitute" chords in place of the Primary Chords. Plus, the Secondary Chords give the composition variety, interest, listener-appeal, surprise, and depth! This composer loves using them! The secondary chords are: ii, iii, vi, vii^{o}.

Write the tones of these Secondary Chords in C major (if you need help, look back to our study of Scale Degrees):

ii : ____ ____ ____

iii : ____ ____ ____

vi : ____ ____ ____

vii^{o} : ____ ____ ____

The vii^{o} chord is not classified as a Primary Chord because it is not a Major Chord, but it is not exactly a Secondary Chord either since it will function as a V^{7} chord with the root note missing. The vii^{o} chord is a strange little chord indeed!

Here is how the Secondary Chords can be substituted for the Primary Chords:

Primary Chord	Secondary Options
C E G	a c e or e g b
F A C	d f a or a c e
G B D	e g b or b d f *

* diminished chord functions like a G^{7} chord with the G missing

You see above how each of the Secondary Chord options contains two notes from the Primary Chord. This is why the Secondary Chords can be used as substitutes for Primary Chords.

Do You Know . . .

The C Major chord can be substituted with two minor chords. What are they?

____ minor or ____ minor

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An easy way to remember the two substitute chords for C chord is to think up and down a simple third from C. A “simple third” simply skips one letter in the musical alphabet.



What tone is a simple third above C? ____

What tone is a simple third below C? ____

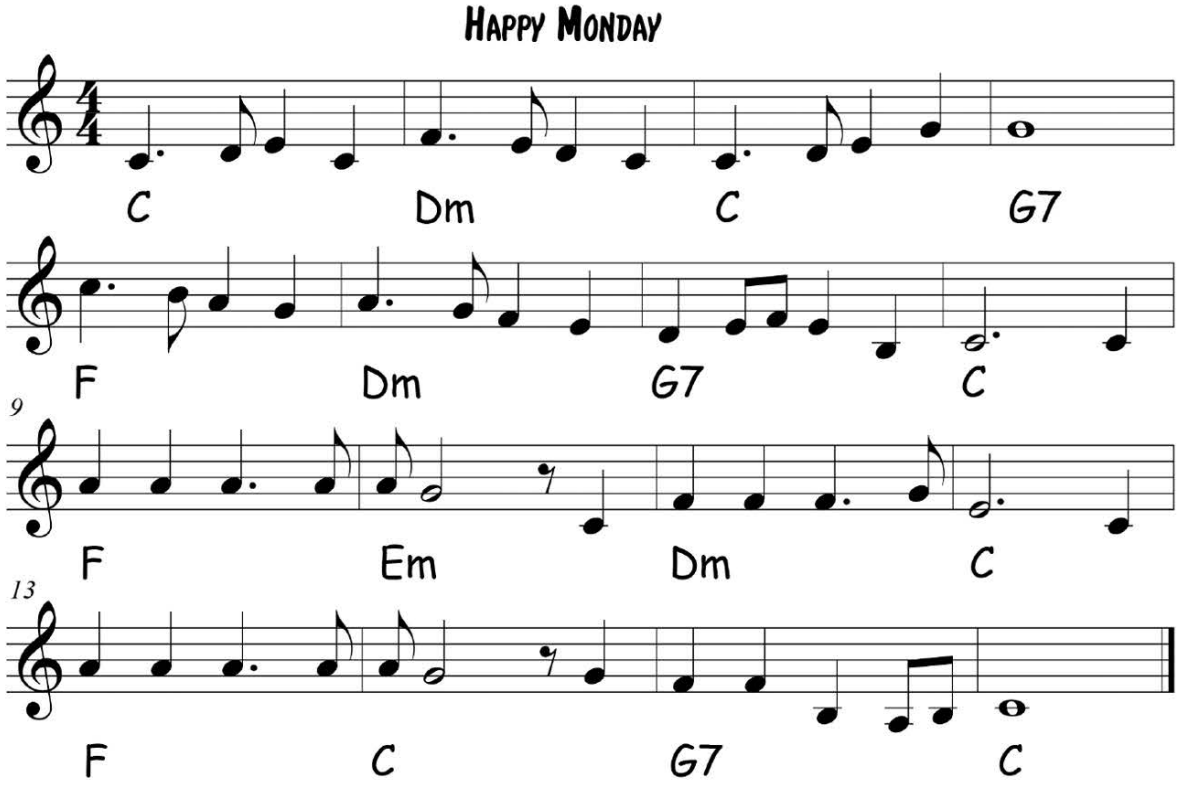
The A minor and E minor secondary chords may be substituted for a C Major chord because A minor and E minor both contain two tones found in the C major chord.

What tones in the A minor chord are also found in the C major chord?
____ & ____

What tones in the E minor chord are also in the C major chord?
____& ____

What two secondary minor chords may be substituted for the F chord?
____ chord & ____ chord

Below, you see “Happy Monday” again, but this time the composer has used some Secondary Chords as well as some Primary Chords for harmony (the left hand). The chords she has chosen are sketched-in using letter names that stand for the chords.



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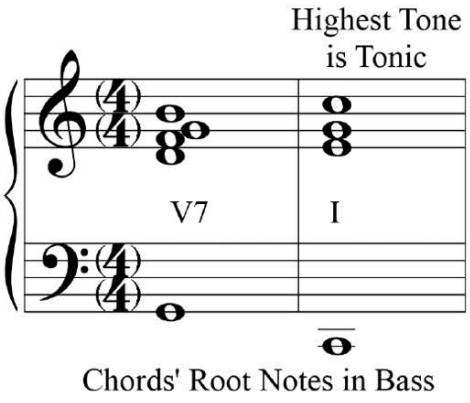
Go to a piano and play the first version of "Happy Monday" which only used Primary Chords for the harmony in the left hand. Then play this version of "Happy Monday" which uses some Secondary Chords as well as Primary Chords for the harmony in the left hand. You may play the chords as block chords (each chord's keys depressed at the same time). Do you hear how the second version which uses some Secondary Chords sounds more interesting?

Cadences

Since we are studying the importance of chords, let's contemplate Cadences for a moment.

A cadence is a chord progression at the end of a phrase* usually involving two chords. There are several types of cadences.

Perfect Authentic Cadence: the V^7 chord to the I chord. Both chords must be in root position and the highest note in the tonic chord must be the tonic note: G B D F to C E G C. The root tones of the V^7 chord and the I chord are the lowest tones played in the bass clef; in the treble clef, the highest tone of the last chord, the I chord, will be the tonic tone. In a perfect authentic cadence, do not substitute the diminished vii chord in place of the V chord. The Perfect Authentic Cadence is the best ending for compositions. It is very powerful and leaves little doubt in the listener's mind that the composition is **over**.



Imperfect Authentic Cadence: the V chord to the I chord. It is like the Perfect Authentic Cadence but one of the chords is **inverted** or the uppermost note in the tonic chord is **not** the tonic. Examples of Imperfect Authentic Cadences: F G B D to E G C, G B D F to G C E, or B D F G to C E G C.

Half Cadence or **Semi-Cadence**: A chord progression that ends on the V (dominant).

Deceptive or **Interrupted Cadence:** the V chord to the vi chord, or the V chord to the IV chord. This cadence is lovely when the V chord moves to the vi chord. The vi chord is being played is a substitute for the I chord. See our study of regarding substituting secondary chords.

Plagal Cadence: the IV chord to the I chord. This cadence is often called the "amen cadence" since it is the cadence used to end many hymns.

* A phrase is a musical sentence usually comprised of four to eight measures. A further discussion of "phrases" is coming up! Stand by!

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Phrases

A phrase is a musical thought or "sentence" and varies in length. Most phrases are usually four measures long but this rule is "not written in stone". Music is comprised of many phrases.

A phrase can have a phrase mark over it, which looks like a long slur mark and tells you to play smoothly, or not. The phrase mark is not essential in indicating a phrase.

At the end of a phrase, your music must have some type of cadence.

Form



Every composition must have at least **two** different melodies, which are called tunes. The first tune is TUNE A; the second tune is TUNE B. You can have more than two different tunes in your composition and can identify additional tunes as TUNE C, TUNE D, etc.

If a composition has only two melodies, the composition is in AB form.

If the composition has an "A" melody and a "B" melody -- and then repeats melody "A" -- the form is ABA or Sonata Form.

If a composition has an "A" melody and then basically repeats that melody but with some changes in rhythms or tones, the first "A" melody is identified as A1, the second melody is identified as A2. A third repeat of melody "A" but with some changes to rhythms or tones would be identified as A3, etc. This same rule applies to "B", "C", "D", etc. melodies, also.

Please note, you do **not** notate Tune A or Tune B in your music when actually writing your music; you mentally keep up with your different melodies as you compose. It's a mental-helper to insure that your composition has "good form". But in some college theory composition classes you might be asked to identify each melody as A_1, A_2, B_1, B_2, etc.

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Test Your Knowledge

1. The most important chord of any major scale is the _____ Chord. (Dominant or Tonic?)

2. Since there are seven tones in every major scale, a chord can be built on each tone of the scale. _____ (yes or no?)

3. Of the chords built on the seven tones of a major scale, three of the chords are Major. Using their Roman Numerals, which three chords are Major? _____ (ii, IV, vi or I, IV, V?)

4. Which three chords are minor? _____ (ii, iii, vi or V^7, I, IV?)

5. Of the chords that can be built on every tone of a major scale, one chord is diminished and will function as a V^7 chord with the root note missing. What chord is diminished? _____ (vii^o or ii?)

6. What two chords can be substituted for the C chord? _____ (B & D or A & E?)

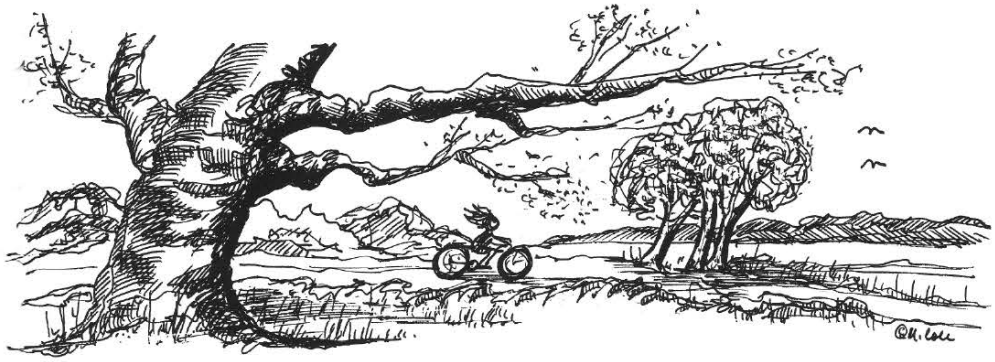
7. A cadence is comprised of _____ (1 or 2?) chords and is used to end a phrase.

8. What is the strongest cadence of all? _____ (perfect authentic cadence or deceptive cadence?)

9. In C's scale, what two tones are "unstable" or "moving" tones? _____ (C & G or F & B?)

10. F and B are unstable because they are a half-step away from one of C's magnet tones. _____ (true or false)

11. Using the knowledge we found in the overtone series, what three tones are the magnet tones in C's scale? _____ (C E G or F A C?)



Answers: **1.** Tonic; **2.** Yes; **3.** I, IV, V; **4.** ii, iii, vi; **5.** vii^o; **6.** A & E; **7.** two; **8.** perfect authentic cadence; **9.** F & B; **10.** true; **11.** C E G

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