

CONSTRUCTING WALKING BASS LINES

1) Use a chord tone on beats 1 and 3.

2) Use a smooth connecting tone on beats 2 and 4. Connecting tones are pitches that give the line a pleasing shape. These notes may be diatonic or chromatic, depending on the situation.

3) When the chord changes connect to that new chord in one of the following ways:

a) by half step up or down:

Example a) shows a bass line in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first measure is D-7 (F#2, G2, A2, B2) and the second measure is G7 (F#2, G2, A2, B2). The bass line consists of quarter notes: F#2, G2, A2, B2 in the first measure, and F#2, G2, A2, B2 in the second measure. The third measure is D-7 (F#2, G2, A2, B2) and the fourth measure is G7 (F#2, G2, A2, B2). The bass line consists of quarter notes: F#2, G2, A2, B2 in the third measure, and F#2, G2, A2, B2 in the fourth measure.

b) by whole step up or down:

Example b) shows a bass line in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first measure is D-7 (F#2, G2, A2, B2) and the second measure is G7 (F#2, G2, A2, B2). The bass line consists of quarter notes: F#2, G2, A2, B2 in the first measure, and F#2, G2, A2, B2 in the second measure. The third measure is D-7 (F#2, G2, A2, B2) and the fourth measure is G7 (F#2, G2, A2, B2). The bass line consists of quarter notes: F#2, G2, A2, B2 in the third measure, and F#2, G2, A2, B2 in the fourth measure.

c) by descending perfect 5th or ascending perfect 4th:

Example c) shows a bass line in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first measure is D-7 (F#2, G2, A2, B2) and the second measure is G7 (F#2, G2, A2, B2). The bass line consists of quarter notes: F#2, G2, A2, B2 in the first measure, and F#2, G2, A2, B2 in the second measure. The third measure is D-7 (F#2, G2, A2, B2) and the fourth measure is G7 (F#2, G2, A2, B2). The bass line consists of quarter notes: F#2, G2, A2, B2 in the third measure, and F#2, G2, A2, B2 in the fourth measure.

Your turn:

Three blank musical staves for practice. Each staff has a bass clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff has a D-7 chord above the first measure and a G7 chord above the second measure. The second staff has a D-7 chord above the first measure and a G7 chord above the second measure. The third staff has a D-7 chord above the first measure and a G7 chord above the second measure.