

Section 4.1.4

CIRCLE-OF-FIFTHS PROGRESSIONS

Perfect fifths

A **perfect fifth** spans five letter names and seven half steps. All major and minor triads have a perfect fifth from the root up to the fifth, so the best way to learn perfect fifths is to thoroughly learn major and minor triads.

PERFECT 5TH = 5 LETTER NAMES...

C=1 D=2 E=3 F=4 G=5

...AND 7 HALF STEPS

PERFECT 5TH (P5)

Perfect fourths

A **perfect fourth** spans four letter names and five half steps. Perfect fourths and perfect fifths are closely related. Consider the perfect fifth C up to G. Raising the bottom note (C) or lowering the top note (G) an octave gives the perfect fourth C down to G. This is called **inverting the interval** or **interval inversion**. Perfect fifths always invert to perfect fourths. For more on fifths, fourths, and other intervals, see **Volume 1, Chapter 3**.

PERFECT 5TH (P5)

RAISE C AN OCTAVE...

...OR LOWER G AN OCTAVE

PERFECT 4TH = 4 LETTER NAMES...

G=1 A=2 B=3 C=4

...AND 5 HALF STEPS

**Circle-of-fifths
progressions**

Perfect fifths down occur frequently in jazz as a connecting interval between chords. The patterns below organize major and minor triads as down a perfect fifth. Memorize the major and minor triads on your instrument. If you are a vocalist, use the piano or guitar. If you play a melody instrument, you should practice playing the notes of each triad up and down over the range of your instrument.

A musical staff in treble clef showing a sequence of major triads. Above the staff, the chords are labeled: G, C, F, Bb, Eb, Ab, Db, F#, B, E, A, D. Brackets group the chords into pairs: G-C-F, Bb-Eb, Ab-Db, F#-B, and E-A-D. The notes of each triad are written on the staff, with accidentals (flats and sharps) indicating the specific notes.

A musical staff in treble clef showing a sequence of minor triads. Above the staff, the chords are labeled: G-, C-, F-, Bb-, Eb-, G#, C#, F#, B-, E-, A-, D-. Brackets group the chords into pairs: Bb-Eb, G#-C#, and F#-B-. The notes of each triad are written on the staff, with accidentals (flats and sharps) indicating the specific notes.