

Section 4.2.4

II-V-I IN MINOR KEYS

The II chord in minor keys

Minor key signatures change the quality and notes available for the II chord and V chord. For example, the II chord in c minor (D minor seventh, flat 5) uses three flats.

C MINOR SCALE (WITH b7 AND b7)

D-7b5

ROOT b9 3RD b11 b5 b13 MIN7

The image shows two staves of music. The top staff is the C minor scale with flats for the 7th and 11th degrees. The bottom staff shows the notes of a D-7b5 chord: D (root), Bb (b9), F (3rd), Ab (b11), Cb (b5), and Eb (b13).

Voicing the II chord in minor keys

The voicing for II in minor keys uses the root, not the ninth, because the ninth forms a “handle-with-care” dissonant minor ninth against the root. The bottom of the stack will still be the third or the seventh.

D-7b5 MIN 9TH

AVOID

D-7b5 3RD

YES

D-7b5 7TH

YES

The image shows three diagrams of a D-7b5 chord. The first diagram shows a voicing with a minor ninth interval (D and Eb) and is labeled 'AVOID'. The second diagram shows a voicing with the root (D) and the third (F), labeled 'YES' and '3RD'. The third diagram shows a voicing with the root (D) and the seventh (Cb), labeled 'YES' and '7TH'.

The V chord in minor keys

The V chord in minor keys follows the natural minor scale plus the leading tone (for c minor: B flat, E flat, A flat, plus B natural). The eleventh is sharpened to avoid the minor ninth interval above the third of the chord (C above B becomes C sharp above B). The fifth of the chord is left out.

G7^{ALT.} (A#)

ROOT b9 #9 3RD #11 5 b13 MIN7

The image shows a single staff of music for a G7^{ALT.} chord. The notes are G (root), Bb (b9), Ab (A#), B (3rd), D# (b11), and Eb (b13). The fifth (D) is omitted.

7 + sharp 9
7 + flat 9

Voicing the altered dominant (V) chord in minor requires two new 7/9 surrounding patterns: 7 + sharp 9 and 7 + flat 9.

G7^{#9}

=MAJ 2ND BELOW ROOT
PLUS MIN 3RD ABOVE

G7^{b9}

=MAJ 2ND BELOW ROOT
PLUS HALF STEP ABOVE

Voicing altered dominant chords

To voice altered dominant chords, start with 7 + sharp 9 OR 7 + flat nine and add 3 + flat 13 above or below. The sharp eleven is usually left out of the four-note voicing, though other voicings are possible.

II-V-I in minor keys

Except for the new voicings of the II and V chords, II-V-I in minor keys resembles II-V-I in major keys. Voicings with thirds on the bottom alternate with voicings with sevenths on the bottom (“stack-of-thirds” versus “pair-of-thirds”). The examples below show the flat nine (A flat), but the sharp nine (A sharp) could be used instead. As always, the roots should be played underneath. To form a minor-major seventh chord, the I chord sometimes uses the leading tone (B natural) instead of B flat.