

# Common Diatonic Chord Progressions in Baroque Harmony

Ted Greene, 1975-03-24

## Major Keys:

The I, IV, and V are the most commonly used chords in major keys, probably due to the fact that they are the only diatonic major triads (the ii, iii, and vi being minor and the vii being diminished). In other words, because the I, IV, and V are all major chords, a generous use of them strongly establishes the feeling of being in a major key. An interesting sidelight to this is that the I, IV, and I, when considered collectively, contain all seven notes of the major scale. Because of all these reasons, *the I, IV, and V are call the PRIMARY TRIADS.*

The ii, iii, vi, and vii<sup>o</sup> are often referred to as the *SECONDARY TRIADS*, but to avoid confusion later with another use of the term “Secondary,” they will be called *NON-PRIMARY TRIADS*. These non-primary triads are sprinkled in with the primary triads to add variety and interest. One of the common ways in which they are used can be illustrated from the following:

Each of the primary triads has a strong relationship to two other triads whose roots are a 3rd higher and lower. Example: A (I) is related to C#m (iii), and F#m (vi). The reason for this is that each of the triads a 3rd above and below a primary triad have two tones in common with it. These common-tone brothers are called *RELATED TRIADS*. Any primary triad may be preceded, followed, or replaced with its related triad(s).

Theoretically, according to the above principle, I is related to iii, vi; IV is related to vi, ii; and V is related to vii<sup>o</sup>, iii. In practice though, composed have favored the following relationships:

<u>Primary</u> I	<u>Related</u> vi, iii	<u>Primary</u> IV	<u>Related</u> ii	<u>Primary</u> V	<u>Related</u> vii, (iii <sub>6</sub> as an appoggiatura chord. Other iii's are rare.)
Tonics		Subdominants		Dominants	

The following is a list of some chord progressions of the Baroque era, all listed with root position triads, although inversions are commonly mixed in was well. Notice that in many cases, the related triads are just elaborating on the I-IV-V type patterns. Also, in any progression, you might wish to try vii<sup>o</sup> or iii<sub>6</sub> for V as they will not be listed to save space. Also, I<sub>4</sub><sup>6</sup> is commonly used before V at ends of phrases.

- 1) I - IV - I
  - 2) I - V - I
  - 3) I - IV - (I) - V - I
  - 4) I - V - (I) - IV - I
  - 5) I - IV - ii - V - I
  - 6) I - IV - vi - ii - V - I
  - 7) vi - ii IV - V - (I)
  - 8) I - vi - V - I
  - 9) (I) - vi - ii - V - I
  - 10) (I) - vi - IV - (V) - I
  - 11) (I) - vi - IV - (ii) - V - I
  - 12) I - iii - IV - (V) - I
  - 13) (I) - iii - IV - (ii) - V - I
  - 14) vi - IV - ii - V - (I)
  - 15) (I) - iii - vi - ii - V - I
  - 16) (I) - iii - vi - IV - ii - V - I
  - 17) (I) - vi - iii - IV - (V) - I
  - 18) (I) - vi - iii - IV - ii - V - I
  - 19) I - V - vi - IV - ii - V - I
  - 20) I - V - vi - iii - IV - V - I (or swap last V and I)
  - 21) I - IV - vii<sup>o</sup> - iii - vi - ii - V - I
- III and other cycle variations or fragments
- 22) ii - vi - (vii<sup>o</sup>) - IV - I
  - 23) ii - V - (I)
  - 24) IV - V - (I)
  - 25) vi - ii - IV - (V) - I
- Non-diatonic:
- 26) II - III - IV - V - I
  - 27) #iv<sup>o</sup> - vii<sup>o</sup> - IV - (V) - I
  - 28) vi - vii<sup>o</sup> - IV - (V) - I
  - 29) #vi<sup>o</sup> - I - IV (and/or ii) - V - I
  - 30) #vi<sup>o</sup> - I
  - 31) (I) - iii - IV - vi - ii - V - (I)
  - 32) I - V - vi - IV - I - (ii) - V - (I)
  - 33) ii - vi - IV - V - (I)
  - 34) I - IV - ii - V - (I)

Remaining progressions are “other root progressions using non-diatonic chords.”

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### Minor Keys:

The concepts in minor keys are similar to the above, but due to use of three different types of minor scales, there are more chords involved. Generally, the PRIMARY TRIADS in minor keys are considered to be i, iv, and V.

Here is a breakdown according to the common use by composers:

<u>Primary</u>	<u>Related</u>	<u>Primary</u>	<u>Related</u>	<u>Primary</u>	<u>Related</u>
i	( $\flat$ vi <sup>o</sup> , VI, III) (I – Picardy 3 <sup>rd</sup> )	iv	ii <sup>o</sup> , $\flat$ II, IV, ii, VI	V	vii <sup>o</sup> , III+ (v, VII)
Tonics		Subdominants		Dominants	

Some common minor key progressions:

- 1) i - iv - i
- 2) i - V - i
- 3) i - iv - (i) - V - I
- 4) i - V - (i) - iv - i
- 5) i - iv - ii<sup>o</sup> - V - i
- 6) i - iv - VI - ii<sup>o</sup> - V - i
- 7) i - VI - V - i
- 8) i - VI - ii<sup>o</sup> - V - i
- 9) i - VI - iv - V - i
- 10) (i) - VI - iv - ii<sup>o</sup> - V - i
- 11) i - III - iv - (V) - i
- 12) (i) - III - iv - ii<sup>o</sup> - V - i
- 13) (i) - III - VI - ii<sup>o</sup> - V - i
- 14) (i) - III - VI - iv - ii<sup>o</sup> - V - i
- 15) (i) - VI - III - iv - (V) - (i)
- 16) (i) - VI - III - iv - ii<sup>o</sup> - V - i
- 17) i - v - VI - ii<sup>o</sup> - V      or      i - v - VI - iv - V
- 18) i - v - VI - iv - ii<sup>o</sup> - V - i
- 19) i - v - VI - III - iv (and/or any kind of ii) - V - i
- 20) i - iv - VII - III - VI - ii<sup>o</sup> - V - I

And other cycle variations or fragments.

- 21) iv - i - ii<sup>o</sup> - (VI) - V - (i)
- 22) ii - iv - (V) - (i)
- 23) (ii<sup>o</sup>) - VI -  $\flat$ II - V - (i)
- 24) ii<sup>o</sup> - VI - iv - (V) - i

- 25) ii<sup>o</sup> - VI - (iv) - (V) - (i)
- 26) V - i
- 27) ii<sup>o</sup> - V - (i)
- 28) iv - V - (i)
- 29) II - V - (i)
- 30) IV - V - (i)
- 31) bII - V - i
- 32) II - ii<sup>o</sup> - V (i)
- 33) ii<sup>o</sup> - II - V (i)
- 34) [VI] - II7b9 - V - (i)
- 35) bII - ii<sup>o</sup> (or iv) - V - (i)
- 36) V7b9 - iv - II7b9 - (i) - V - (i)
- 37) i - bvi<sup>o</sup> - II (and/or ii<sup>o</sup>) - V - (i)
- 38) bvi<sup>o</sup> - ii<sup>o</sup> - V - i<sup>o</sup>

The ii, IV, and vi<sup>o</sup> can be used as substitutes above according to *melodic minor principles*, while vii<sup>o</sup>, III+<sub>6</sub> can be used, like in major keys, for V.

Some other common types of chord progressions result from 1) bass lines, 2) sequences, and 3) successive 1st inversions, all of which have to be covered as separate topics.

[1/2 cadences]

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MAJOR KEYS

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Theoretically, according to the above principle, I is related to iii, vi; IV is related to vi, ii; and V is related to vii°, iii. In practice though, composers have favored the following relationships:

PRIMARY	RELATED	PRIMARY	RELATED	PRIMARY	RELATED
I	vi, iii	IV	ii	V	vii° (iii as an appoggiatura chord, other iii's are rare)
TONICS		SUBDOMINANTS		DOMINANTS	

Following is a list of some chord progressions of the BAROQUE era, all listed with root position triads although inversions are commonly mixed in as well; Notice that in many cases, the related triads are just elaborating on the I IV V type patterns. Also, in any progression, you might wish to try vii° or iii° for V as they will not be listed to save space. Also I & ii is commonly used before V at ends of phrases.

- I IV I I V I I IV (I) V I I V (I) V I I IV ii V I I IV vi ii V I  
 I vi V I I vi ii V I I vi IV V I (I) vi IV ii V I I iii IV (V) I (I) iii IV ii V I  
 (I) iii vi ii V I (I) iii vi IV ii V I (I) vi iii IV (V) I (I) vi iii IV ii V I I V vi IV ii V I I V vi iii IV V I  
 I V vii° iii vi ii V I

MINOR KEYS:

The concepts in minor keys are similar to the above, but due to the use of three different types of minor scales, there are more chords involved. Generally, the PRIMARY TRIADS in minor keys are considered to be i, iv, and v. Here is a breakdown according to the common use by composers:

PRIMARY	RELATED	PRIMARY	RELATED	PRIMARY	RELATED
i	(iv, vii°, v, iii)	iv	ii°, bII, IV, ii, VI	v	vii°, III+ (v, VII)
TONICS	(I-PICARDY 3RD)	SUBDOMINANTS		DOMINANTS	

- Some common minor key progressions: i iv i i v i i iv (i) v i i v (i) iv i i iv ii° v i  
 i iv vi ii° v i i v v i i vi ii° v i i v iv v i (i) vi iv ii° v i i iii iv (v) i (i) iii iv ii° v i  
 (i) iii vi ii° v i (i) iii vi iv ii° v i (i) vi iii iv (v) i (i) vi iii iv ii° v i i v vi iv ii° v i i v vi iii iv v i  
 i iv vii iii vi ii° v i

The ii, IV, and vi° can be used as substitutes above according to MELODIC MINOR PRINCIPLES, while vii°, III+ can be used like in major keys, for V.

Some other common types of chord progressions result from ① BASS LINES ② SEQUENCES, and ③ SUCCESSIVE 1ST INVERSIONS, all of which have to be covered as separate topics.

