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Basic Three-Note Patterns

Note:

Most of the patterns presented hereafter are in the following order:

1. Triads going up—ascending/descending pattern.
 2. Triads going down—ascending/descending pattern.
 3. Triads alternating (one up, one down)—ascending/descending pattern.
- Many alternating patterns are not shown. Figure them out!

Important: Don't forget to do all of the transpositions for each pattern, and reverse the order in alternating patterns. For maximum results, be thorough!

Notation: With regard to the use of accidentals—I have notated sharps and flats in such a manner as to facilitate reading and to help identify each triad as a separate entity. Accordingly, accidentals may be marked more than once within a given measure, and sharps and flats may coexist within a given measure.

1) Major Triads A Whole-Step Apart

Ascending

CMA3 DMA3 EMA3 FMA3 etc.

Descending

etc.

The image shows three staves of musical notation in treble clef. The first staff is labeled 'Ascending' and shows four measures of music. Each measure contains a major triad with notes on a single staff. The triads are C major (C4, E4, G4), D major (D4, F4, A4), E major (E4, G4, B4), and F major (F4, A4, C5). Each note has an accidental: C has a natural sign, E has a natural sign, G has a natural sign; D has a natural sign, F has a natural sign, A has a natural sign; E has a natural sign, G has a natural sign, B has a natural sign; F has a natural sign, A has a natural sign, C has a natural sign. The second staff is labeled 'Descending' and shows four measures of music. Each measure contains a major triad with notes on a single staff. The triads are E major (E4, G4, B4), D major (D4, F4, A4), C major (C4, E4, G4), and B major (B3, D4, F4). Each note has an accidental: E has a natural sign, G has a natural sign, B has a natural sign; D has a natural sign, F has a natural sign, A has a natural sign; C has a natural sign, E has a natural sign, G has a natural sign; B has a natural sign, D has a natural sign, F has a natural sign. The third staff shows four more measures of music, continuing the alternating pattern of ascending and descending triads. The first two measures are ascending: C major (C4, E4, G4) and D major (D4, F4, A4). The next two measures are descending: E major (E4, G4, B4) and D major (D4, F4, A4). Each note has an accidental. The pattern ends with 'etc.'

Interchanging Patterns and Altering the Chord Sequence

Here I have selected a few basic patterns and illustrated some ways to make them more interesting (I hope). In the first example, I alter the basic Two Major Triads a Whole-Step Apart, the central triad being C major. Rather than pair it with D major only, I interchange B \flat major (for D) every other time.

Ascending

CMA7 DMA7 CMA7 B \flat MA7 CMA7 DMA7

CMA7 B \flat MA7 etc.

Descending

CMA7 B \flat MA7 CMA7 DMA7 CMA7 B \flat MA7

CMA7 B \flat MA7 etc.