

HOW TO PRACTICE DOMINANT SCALES WITH PASSING TONES

Stage 1: Practice the individual scales

- The first step is to learn the scales one or two octaves (depending on your instrument and your range on it). Set the metronome at a playable tempo clicking on beats 2 and 4 and begin. As you become more facile, increase the tempo.
- Select a scale and practice its different starting points (root, third, fifth, and seventh). This will reinforce the fingerings.
- Practice all the scales beginning on the third. Take them around the circle of fourths. Next, do all the scales starting on the fifth, then finally the seventh.

Stage 1: Put it all together

It is extremely useful to practice not only individual scales but also to practice possible resolutions. After all, that is what you must do when you improvise.

- When chaining the scales together, concentrate on the resolution.
- Select a target note, (the root, third, fifth, or seventh of the chord to which you are going), and practice resolving smoothly and musically (usually by half or whole step).
- Make up some rules for yourself. Here is an example. “I am going to practice the dominant scale with passing tones around the circle of fourths. The chords are going to move at a rate of one every two measures, and I am going to arrive on the root of each chord by playing a half-step under and a whole-step over.” (Example 14) [CD, Track 4]

Example 14 - Chaining dominant scales around the circle



Drop down an octave when the range gets too high.

etc.

Example 15 gives eight ways to practice the dominant scale with a passing tone around the circle of keys. Remember the target note principle. You can approach the target note in a variety of ways. Examples 15d, g, and h use notes that are present in the scale. 15a and e uses a half-step under and a whole-step over. 15b and 15c use a half-step under and 15f uses a half-step over.

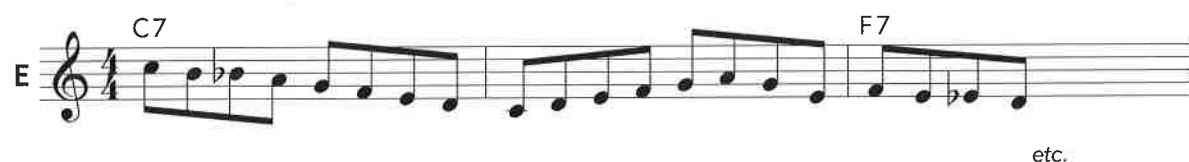
Example 15 - Eight ways to practice dominant scales with a passing tone with resolutions around the circle of keys

A 

B 

C 

D 

E 

F 

G 

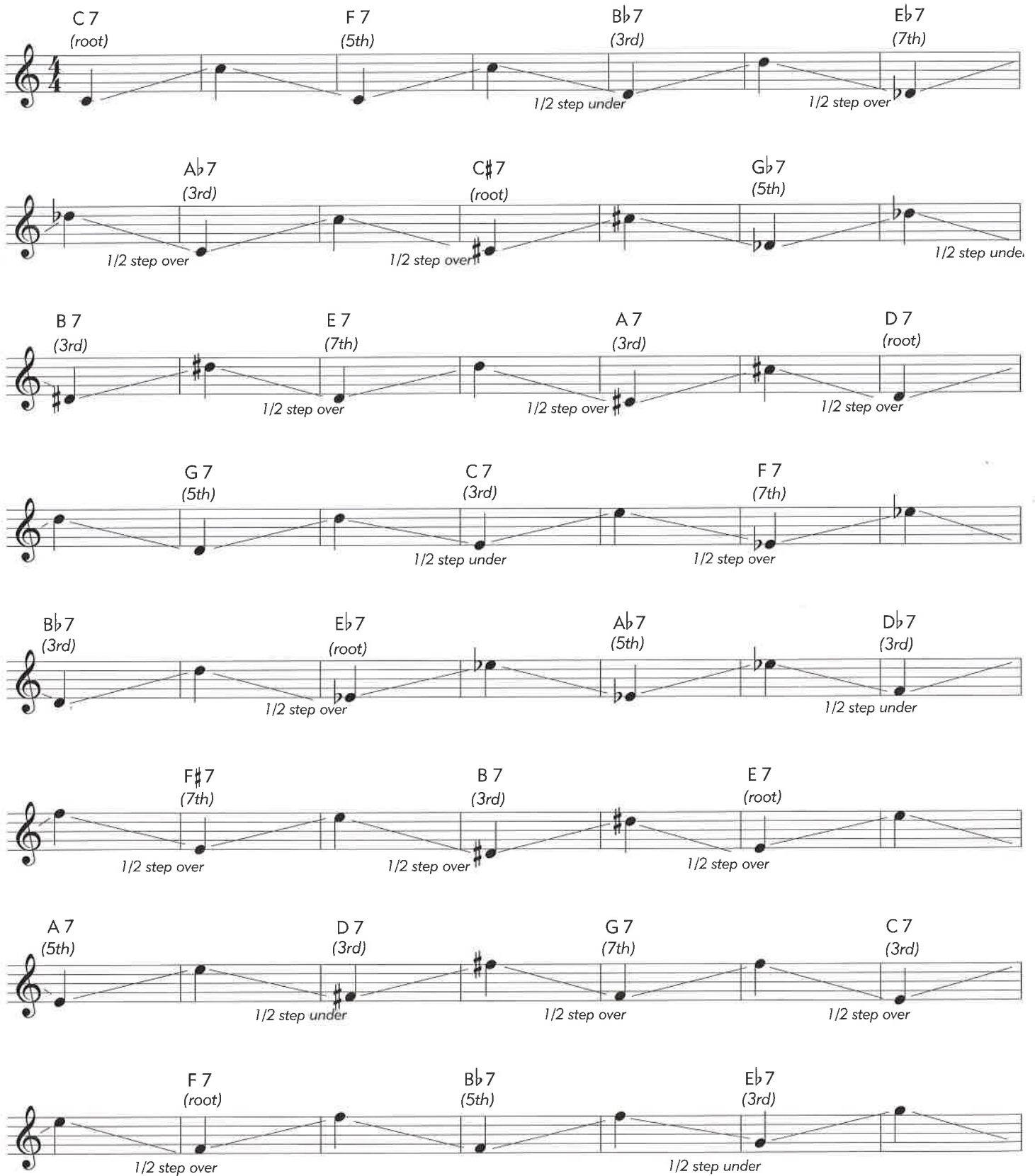
H 

Assignment:

1. Practice the eight different exercises given in Example 15.
2. Using the target note principle, devise your own resolutions and chain these scales together by ascending or descending in half-steps.

Example 17 - Dominant workout

Use a dominant scale with a passing tone between notes 7 & 8. Start on the root, 3rd, 5th and 7th. [use CD, track 7 as a play-along accompaniment]



The following table summarizes the chord sequences and intervallic relationships shown in each staff of the musical notation:

Staff	Chord 1 (Scale Note)	Chord 2 (Scale Note)	Interval	Chord 3 (Scale Note)	Chord 4 (Scale Note)	Interval
1	C7 (root)	F7 (5th)	1/2 step under	Bb7 (3rd)	Eb7 (7th)	1/2 step over
2	Ab7 (3rd)	C#7 (root)	1/2 step over	Gb7 (5th)		1/2 step under
3	B7 (3rd)	E7 (7th)	1/2 step over	A7 (3rd)	D7 (root)	1/2 step over
4	G7 (5th)	C7 (3rd)	1/2 step under	F7 (7th)		1/2 step over
5	Bb7 (3rd)	Eb7 (root)	1/2 step over	Ab7 (5th)	Db7 (3rd)	1/2 step under
6	F#7 (7th)	B7 (3rd)	1/2 step over	E7 (root)		1/2 step over
7	A7 (5th)	D7 (3rd)	1/2 step under	G7 (7th)	C7 (3rd)	1/2 step over
8	F7 (root)	Bb7 (5th)	1/2 step over	Eb7 (3rd)		1/2 step under

Ab7 (7th) Db7 (3rd) F#7 (root) B7 (5th)

1/2 step over 1/2 step over

E7 (3rd) A7 (7th) D7 (3rd)

1/2 step under 1/2 step over 1/2 step over

G7 (root) C7 (5th) F7 (3rd) Bb7 (7th)

1/2 step under 1/2 step over

Eb7 (3rd) Ab7 (root) Db7 (5th)

1/2 step over 1/2 step over 1/2 step under

F#7 (3rd) B7 (7th) E7 (3rd) A7 (root)

1/2 step over 1/2 step over 1/2 step over

D7 (5th) G7 (3rd) C7 (7th)

1/2 step under 1/2 step over 1/2 step over

F7 (3rd) Bb7 (root) Eb7 (5th) Ab7 (3rd)

1/2 step over 1/2 step under

Db7 (7th) Gb7 (3rd) B7 (root)

1/2 step over 1/2 step over 1/2 step over

E7 (5th) A7 (3rd) D7 (7th) G7 (3rd)

1/2 step under 1/2 step over 1/2 step over 1/2 step over

APPLYING DOMINANT SCALES WITH A PASSING TONE TO II-V PROGRESSIONS

Dominant scales work well over dominant chords, but they can be equally effective when used in a II-V context. Quite often, improvisers reduce II-V progressions to simply dominant (V). This technique is particularly useful in fast tempos. Previously we saw how a II can be preceded by a V. In a kind of reverse substitution, the improviser can view a II-V progression as simply dominant. In doing this the scale is started on the root, third, fifth and seventh of the dominant chord and the II chord is ignored. The result is that the improvised line above the II chord often has a more colorful sound. For example, if the dominant scale starts on the root and the underlying harmony is II, the scale begins on the eleventh of the II. Example 18 demonstrates some possibilities.

Example 18 - Dominant with half-step scale applied to II-Vs

The musical notation for Example 18 is presented in four staves, all in 4/4 time. The progression consists of two measures of D-7, G7, and CA. The first measure of each pair contains a melodic line for the D-7 chord, which is a half-step dominant scale starting on the root (D). The second measure of each pair contains a melodic line for the G7 chord, which is a dominant scale starting on the root (G). The CA chord is represented by a single note (C) in the first staff and a whole rest in the other three staves. The notes for the D-7 scale are D, E, F, G, A, B, C, D. The notes for the G7 scale are G, A, B, C, D, E, F, G. The notes for the CA chord are C, E, G.

TRACKS

CONCERT INSTRUMENTS

Track 7 Dominant Chords Around the Circle of Fourths

MEDIUM TEMPO SWING ♩ = 132

4/4

C7 F7 B♭7 E♭7

play 5 x's

A♭7 D♭7 G♭7 B7

E7 A7 D7 G7

Track 8 **KUBA'S BLUES**

MEDIUM UP TEMPO SWING ♩ = 156

Bb7 Eb7 Bb7 F-7 Bb7

play 11 x's

Eb7 Eo7 Bb7 G7#9

C-7 F7 Bb7 G7 C-7 F7