## Harmonic Flow Chart (simplification)

The following Harmonic Flow Chart is intended to "get the young music student going" in understanding the succession of chords in music. IT IS BY NO MEANS THE TELL ALL/END ALL for understanding harmonic progression.



You should work through the chart left to right. This is called "progressing." You may skip over chords as long as you move left to right. You may also progress from IV to ii or vii<sup>o</sup> to V (this is called "dissolving" rather than progressing. This is because you're not actually moving to the right, but moving vertically). When you get to I (at the end) or vi (at the end), you may return back to the far left and progress again to the right. For example, a possible progression would be I -- IV -- I -- IV -- I.

The IV and ii share the same function - that of the subdominant area. Likewise, the V and the vii<sup>o</sup> share the same function - that of the dominant area.

This chart did not develop arbitrarily, but is the result of the tendency for composers to create smooth voice leading. Smooth progressions are created by having frequent common tones between adjacent chords. In Ex. 1, the ties demonstrate the common tones between adjacent chords. Play this progression and hear just how smooth the common tones make the progression. (The use of common tones also provides a means to avoid such grevious part-writing errors as parallel fifths).





Although the chord progression in Ex. 2 is abrupt (and also contains a lot of parallel fifths!), it makes for interesting music to have abrupt progressions from time to time. Progressions by the second are by no means unusable!