

The Dominant Seventh Chord

The V7 chord is a major-minor seventh quality and contains two tones which have the tendency to resolve in specific ways. For this reason, these two tones are called "tendency tones" and are as follows:

(1) **The chord 7th** - It must resolve down by step. This means scale degree 4 will resolve down by step to scale degree 3.

(2) **The leading tone** - In an outer voice, the leading tone will always resolve up by step. In an inner voice, the leading tone may resolve up by step or may resolve "freely" by skipping down a third. Free resolution of the leading tone is only necessary when a complete I chord is desired following the V7.

V7 resolving to an incomplete I chord is not an uncommon occurrence and by no means needs to be avoided. It is actually quite common in the literature. However, another way to resolve a V7 to a complete I chord is to make the V7 incomplete by omitting the 5th and doubling the root.

If the V7 resolves deceptively to vi (VI), the leading tone still resolves up by step doubling the third of the vi chord. This occurs even when the leading tone is in an inner voice. Free resolution of the leading tone in this case is generally avoided.

The diagram illustrates three musical examples of V7 chord resolutions on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs).
 - **Example 1 (labeled 'incomplete'):** Shows a V7 chord (F4, A4, C5, E5) resolving to an I chord (F4, A4, C5). The 7th (E5) resolves down by step to D5. The leading tone (C5) resolves up by step to D5. This is labeled "strict" resolution.
 - **Example 2 (labeled 'complete'):** Shows a V7 chord (F4, A4, C5, E5) resolving to a complete I chord (F4, A4, C5, F5). The 7th (E5) resolves down by step to D5. The leading tone (C5) resolves up by step to D5. This is labeled "free" resolution.
 - **Example 3:** Shows a V7 chord (F4, A4, C5, E5) resolving to a vi chord (F4, A4, C5, F5). The 7th (E5) resolves down by step to D5. The leading tone (C5) resolves up by step to D5, which is labeled "doubled third".

Inversions of the V7

Because the V7 has four notes, three inversions are possible. Each inversion has its own individual melodic characteristic. In each, the tendency tones resolve in the same manner as they do in the V7. The V6/5 and V4/2 emphasize the leading tone and the chord 7th respectively by positioning them in the bass.

V4/3 is generally considered rhythmically weaker than the other inversions. It is normally used as a passing chord (I-V4/3-I6). It may also function as a neighboring chord (I-V4/3-I). In the progression V4/3-I6, the third of the I chord is normally doubled when the chord 7th of the V7 resolves.

While the V7 (in root position) normally involves a skip in the bass (V-I), the voices within the inversions of a V7 all progress stepwise. The result is a much more conjunct sound.

When using the V7 in inversion all four notes should be present. However, it is possible to omit the 5th and double the root in the V6/5 and V4/2. The V4/3 does not allow for the 5th to be omitted because it is the bass note.

Approach to the chord 7th

The chord 7th is best approached by step but four possibilities exist. The chord 7th may be preceded by:

- 1) the same pitch, so that a *suspension* figure results.
- 2) step from above, so that a *passing tone* figure results.
- 3) step from below, so that a *neighbor tone* figure results.
- 4) leap, so that an *appoggiatura* figure results.