

passing⁶ and ⁶/₄ chords

You've seen vii^{o6} as a passing chord to expand tonic:

I vii^{o6} I⁶ ii⁶ V⁷ I

tonic expansion

...and V⁶/₄ as a passing chord to expand tonic:

I V⁶/₄ I⁶ ii⁶ V⁷ I

tonic expansion

Similarly, you can expand any harmony in your phrase by using a passing⁶ chord:

I ii I⁶ ii⁶ V I

predominant expansion

...or a passing⁶/₄ chord:

I ii vi⁶/₄ ii⁶ V I

predominant expansion

We call passing⁶ and ⁶/₄ chords non-functional. For example, in the above predominant expansion, I⁶ does not function like an actual tonic - it's just helping to smoothly connect ii with its first inversion. vi⁶/₄ is not functioning like an actual vi, but likewise just connecting ii and ii⁶.

In this way, if you want to smoothly connect some chord and it's first inversion, there is always a passing⁶ and a passing⁶/₄ chord you may insert between.

So how do you figure out what passing chords can go in between?

Turn the page to find out!

Say we have IV moving to IV^6 , perhaps we're in a region of predominant harmony:

IV 6

First write in the passing note that smooths out the bass...connect the dots, la la la la (and make sure it is on an *unaccented, metrically weak* position):

IV IV^6

Now, if you want to use a passing 6 chord, simply realize your bass is the 3rd of the chord. To figure out the chord root, just walk down a 3rd. In this example that would be $\hat{3}$. Now you know your chord: iii^6

IV iii^6 IV^6

Or, if you want to use a passing 4 chord, simply realize your bass is the 5th of the chord. To figure out the chord root, just walk down a 5th. In this example, that would be $\hat{1}$. Now you know your chord: I_4^6

IV I_4^6 IV^6

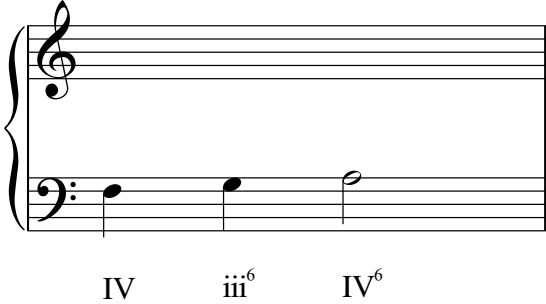
This process will work for any expanded harmony, moving from $\frac{5}{3}$ to 6 , or in reverse from 6 to $\frac{5}{3}$.

Also, note we're not talking about neighbor chords between two root position chords or two first inversion chords. These are *passing* 6 and 4 chords, so your bookends should be root position and first inversion.

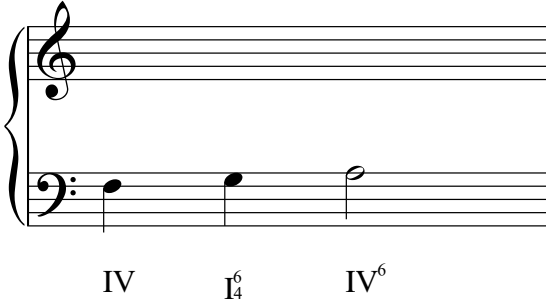
Voice leading

As you now know, always voice lead by root movement of chords while checking that your parallel motion isn't illegal. A little tip with all of these: it's a good thing to build in a voice exchange between the bass and some other voice.

ex: complete the upper voices



A musical staff with a bass clef and a treble clef. The bass clef staff contains three notes: G2, F2, and E2. Below the staff are the chord symbols IV, iii⁶, and IV⁶.



A musical staff with a bass clef and a treble clef. The bass clef staff contains three notes: G2, F2, and E2. Below the staff are the chord symbols IV, I₄⁶, and IV⁶.

Great! This will now create all new possibilities in your writing, and constitutes the main point of this lesson. The next page just tackles answers to advanced questions that often come up at this point.

Advanced questions (and answers) that often come up:

1) Can you do this with V?

Yes, this is not an unresolved LT. It's just like the LT got transferred to another voice.



C: V⁶ IV⁶ V

2) Can you expand ii^{o6} in minor?

Nope. This is the only expansion that cannot work. As usual, there is no such thing as a functional root position ° chord.



a: ii^{o6} VI₄⁶ ii^o

2) Given this passing motion, can you change the color of the predominant on the other side of the passing chord?

Yes, as long as this is done with the correct order of predominants (vi - IV - ii)



C: IV⁶ I₄⁶ ii⁶



ii vi₄⁶ IV

3) Can you add a 7th to the bookends?

Yes, but if present before the passing chord, it can't disappear on the other side - we hear it, remember it, and it must eventually be resolved (and of course it must be prepared when possible).



ii⁷ vi₄⁶ ii₅⁶



ii vi₄⁶ ii₅⁶

ii⁷ vi₄⁶ ii⁶