

sequences

You'll find transition sections of pieces loaded with sequences, as these are especially useful to modulate somewhere. Well you aren't modulating yet! Be patient! For now, we'll study diatonic sequences, those that stay in one key.

Sequences are all about patterns...

They are harmonic progressions in which each voice moves from chord to chord following a **strict pattern**. You'll see what this means by hearing and writing it. At the very beginning of a sequence, the pattern is simply established by good voice leading between the first pair of chords; we'll call these the parents. Then you identify the pattern you just wrote and strictly clone these chords for the rest of the sequence, i.e. create children of the parents.

Preliminary note: the strict pattern in a sequence may give you some odd chord progressions (e.g. IV, vii^o, iii), and some odd voice leading (doubled LTs, A2s in minor, etc). It is not a problem as long as the voice leading works in the first two chords of your sequence! The brain picks up that there is a pattern going on, and it turns out us humans like that sort of thing, even at the expense of strange voice leading later in the sequence.

falling 5ths sequence

Beginning on I, the bass falls down by 5ths, all root position chords, until you're back on I.

Obviously, for vocal music, we can't have 5ths literally falling seven times in a row...

G: I IV vii^o iii vi ii V I

...so instead every other chord goes up a 4th.

This sequence contains it's own predominant and cadence at the end!

G: I IV vii^o iii vi ii V I

Listen to this sequence. The upper voices are shown on one staff here just to make it easier to practice at the piano:

G: I IV vii^o iii vi ii V I

1) Your first job is just business as usual: **create good voice leading between the first pair of chords** in the sequence.

Think of these as the parents for the sequence. Label them if you want. Don't forget who is reproducing!

The parents must be beautiful. If they are, the children will be too. If the parents are flawed, watch out for those children...

parents

G: I IV vii^o iii vi ii V I

2) You have to get to the 3rd chord (the first child) to see the pattern. Do this by **cloning the first parent**.

If the sop. was the 5th of the first parent, the sop. will be the 5th of the first child, etc.

parents *1st child*

sop: sop:
alto: alto:
ten: ten:

G: I IV vii^o iii vi ii V I

3) Now look at the first three chords and figure out **the voice leading DNA** for each voice (ex. sop: stay the same, down a step):

sop:
alto:
tenor:

4) Without any respect for voice leading and doubling thereafter, just **replicate the genetic code**:

G: I IV vii^o iii vi ii V I

Use your muscles!



That's one "pencil and paper" way of writing these, and it will work.
 However, it's amazing what our bodies can intuit with patterns and muscle memory.
 Composers of the 18th Century and beyond certainly learned these by patterns in the hand.
 Don't be afraid of the piano or your instrument of choice - these are easier than you think!
 You'll feel that you really just have two shapes (your parents) that keep repeating.
 Once you write one of these the pencil and paper way, play it and your muscle memory will be happy you did.

How to get out of the sequence, back into the normal cycle of grammar:

do the entire sequence...or find a predominant in the sequence and then move to V.

could have ended
on this predom. /
moved to V after this vi

G: I IV vii° iii vi ii V I

All of these sequences work in minor too...

In minor, *use the natural form* through a sequence until the cadence; then you need a leading tone for your cadential V.

g: i iv VII III VI ii° V i

Here, the pattern doesn't start until the second chord because we don't start on I⁷.

Make sure the 7ths are prepared - i.e., the 3rd of each chord becomes the 7th of the next.

Omit the 5th of every other chord to avoid bad voice leading.

Begin End

G: I IV⁷ vii^{ø7} iii⁷ vi⁷ ii⁷ V⁷ I

ex: do it in 4-parts...

parents *1st child*

G: I IV⁷ vii^{ø7} iii⁷ vi⁷ ii⁷ V⁷ I

falling 5ths melodies



It's no surprise that since sequences are about two parents reproducing over and over, the lines that belong to sequences also will have the immediate feel of something repeating over and over.

Ask yourself if you can sniff out a sequence if you think you see a pattern in a melody!

Every falling 5ths sequence can harmonize this falling line beginning on $\hat{1}$
 (a melody made out of the common tone between the parents):

C:

For other possibilities, study the chorales you made above. The version with only triads also has falling broken 3rds.

down a 4th - up a 2nd:
"Pachabel's Canon"

Canon in C

could have ended
on this predom.



C: I V vi iii IV I ii V I

Neat things to note: this sequence is *almost* like a series of deceptive cadences.
also, every other chord makes a falling 3rds pattern.

ex: do it in 4 parts...

C: I V vi iii IV I ii V I

This will work in minor also - again, use natural minor throughout until you move to your cadential V .

Every other chord can also be first inversion to make a stepwise bass:

C: I V⁶ vi iii⁶ IV I⁶ ii V I



Pachelbel lines are marked by a constant descent by step (just sing the wedding music).

It can harmonize a descent from $\hat{1}$:

Notice then, this is the second way you now know how to harmonize $\hat{1} - \hat{7} - \hat{6} - \hat{5}$, but it continues on...



Or a descent from $\hat{3}$:



Rising by step

Root position chords rising by step.

A repeating 5—6 figure breaks up parallels like a series of anticipations to the next chord.

It is best suited to a 3-part texture:

I^5-6 ii^5-6 iii^5-6 IV^5-6 V I

But we can have it in a 4-part texture if we just accept someone else will be leapy:

I^5-6 ii^5-6 iii^5-6 IV^5-6 V I

Rising by step melodies



Rising by step contains (not surprisingly) rising instead of falling lines.

There are some obvious ones you can spot above.

I'm highlighting this particular one because it will even be possible in Harmony 2 when adding chromaticism to this sequence: