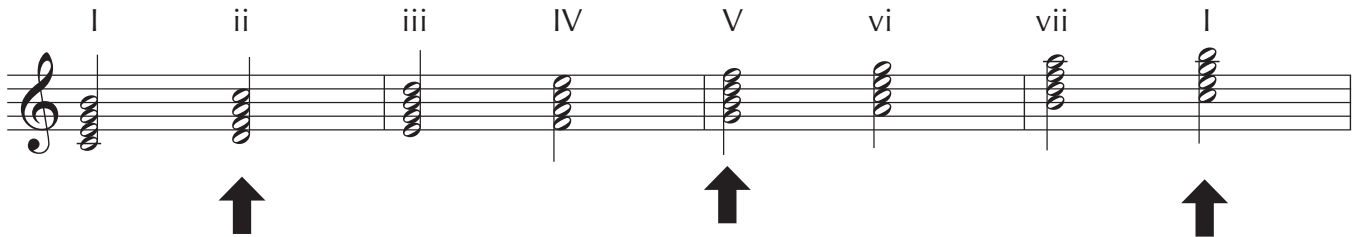


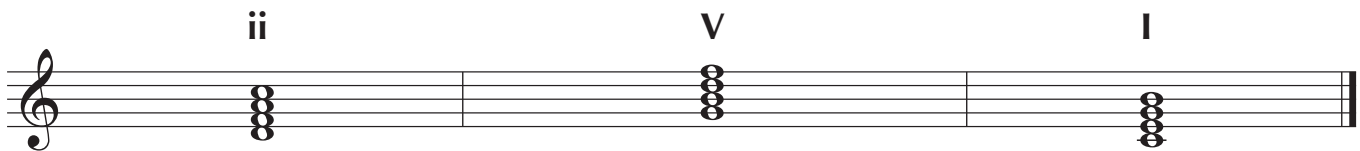
ii-V-I Chord Progressions

We create chord progressions by choosing chords out of the chord scale and placing them in a chosen order. Chords are named by roman numerals, according to which scale degree the chord starts on.

The chord scale for the key of C is written below. The arrows point to the ii (two) chord, V (five) chord) and I (one) chord. The ii-V-I chord progression is the most common chord progression in jazz.



The ii-V-I chords are written on the staff below in the key of C major.



The chord built on the
2nd note of the scale

The chord built on the
5th note of the scale

The chord built on the
1st note of the scale

Practice Assignment: Play the ii-V-I chord progression at the piano in the following major keys:
C G D A E B | F B \flat E \flat A \flat D \flat G \flat

Recognizing ii-V-I Chord Progressions in Music Why does it matter?

ii-V-I chord progressions in music show us what harmony to use when improvising.

For instance, if you see a ii-V-I chord progression in the key of C, you'll know that the C major scale will sound nice when improvising over those measures.

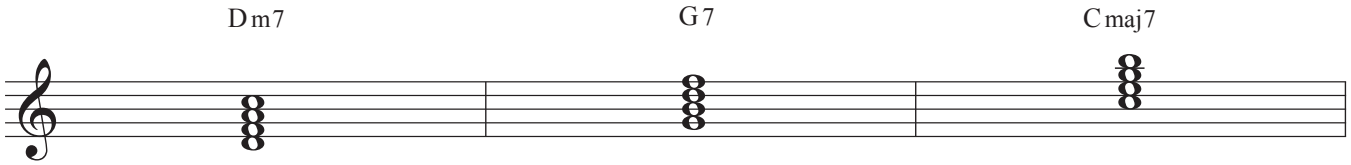
The goal is to become so familiar with ii-V-I chord progressions in all 12 major keys that you recognize them immediately. You will start to recognize them more quickly as you continue practicing.

If you're not there yet, here are some helpful ways to recognize them in your music.

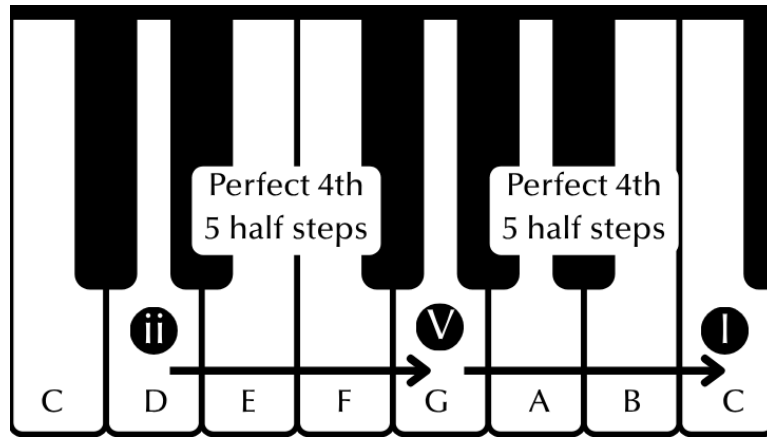
Method 1: Recognizing Ascending Fourths

If you look at the roots of a ii-V-I chord progression at the piano, each note moves up by the interval of a perfect fourth (5 half steps).

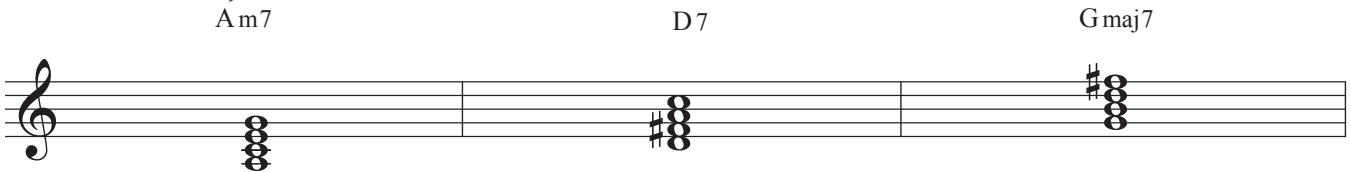
For instance, in the key of C major, the ii-V-I chord progression is Dmin7, G7, Cmaj7.



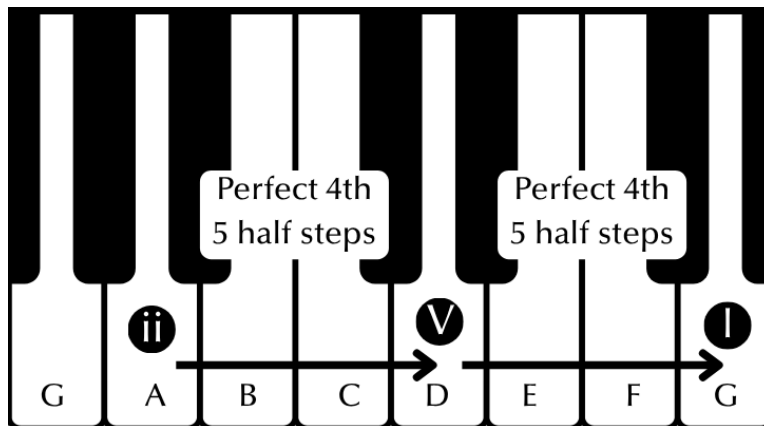
If we start on D and move up a perfect fourth, we get to G. If we move up a perfect fourth from G, we get to C. Remember that a perfect fourth is 5 half steps. A visual representation is included below.



Here is an example from the key of G major. The ii-V-I chord progression in the key of G major is Amin7-D7-Gmaj7.



Here is the visual representation of that ii-V-I chord progression at the piano.



Method 2: Recognizing Chord Qualities

Another way you can recognize a ii-V-I chord progression is through the chord qualities.

The C major chord scale is written below. Each chord is labeled according to chord quality (major 7, dominant 7, minor 7 or half-diminished 7).

As you can see from the arrows below, ii (two) chords are minor 7 chords, V (five) chords are dominant 7 chords, and I (one) chords are major 7 chords.

The diagram shows a treble clef staff with eight chords. Above the staff are Roman numerals: I, ii, iii, IV, V, vi, vii, I. Below the staff are the chord names: major 7, minor 7, minor 7, major 7, dominant 7, minor 7, half-dim 7, major 7. Three black arrows point upwards from the labels 'minor 7', 'dominant 7', and 'major 7' to their respective chords on the staff.

So if you see a minor 7 chord, followed by a dominant 7 chord, followed by a major 7 chord in your music, that's a clue that it's a ii-V-I chord progression.

Example 1 - Excerpt from "Somebody Loves Me"

Here's an excerpt from the song "Somebody Loves Me". You can see that the chords circled below follow the pattern - minor 7 chord, dominant 7 chord, then a major 7 chord.

The musical notation shows a treble clef staff in G major (one sharp). The chords are labeled above the staff: G maj7, A m7, D7, G maj7, and C7. The A m7, D7, and G maj7 chords are circled. The melody consists of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, G4, F4, E4, D4.

If you investigate further, you'll find that the roots of the chords (A-D-G) are all 5 half steps apart, so they also follow the pattern of ascending fourths.

So we know that:

- 1) The roots follow the pattern of ascending fourths (5 half steps apart)
- 2) The chord qualities are minor 7, dominant 7, followed by a major 7 chord.

This is definitely a ii-V-I chord progression!

Because the I (one) chord is G, we know that this is a ii-V-I in the key of G major. If we were improvising, a G major scale would sound nice over those measures!

Incomplete ii-V-I: ii-V Chord Progressions

You will often see incomplete ii-V-I chord progressions in music. These are ii-V chord progressions.

It's almost identical to a ii-V-I chord progression. It just doesn't include the I (one) chord.

Looking at the chord scale below, we would only play the ii (two) chord and the V (five chord).

I ii iii IV V vi vii I
 major 7 minor 7 minor 7 major 7 dominant 7 minor 7 half-dim 7 major 7

Below we have a written example in the key of C. If you simply take off the I (one) chord, then it becomes a ii-V chord progression.

ii V I
 Dm7 G7 Cmaj7

Recognizing ii-V Chord Progressions in Music

The patterns are the exact same as recognizing ii-V-I chord progressions, but now we only have to deal with relationship between two chords (ii-V) instead of three chords (ii-V-I).

The same harmony rules apply as before.

If you see a ii-V chord progression in the key of C, the notes from a C major scale will sound nice for improvising over those measure - *even if we never even play a C major7 chord.*

Why?

Those ii (two) chords and V (five) chords are still being plucked from the C major chord scale, so we are still living in the world of C major. We don't have to play the I (one) chord to still be in the same key.

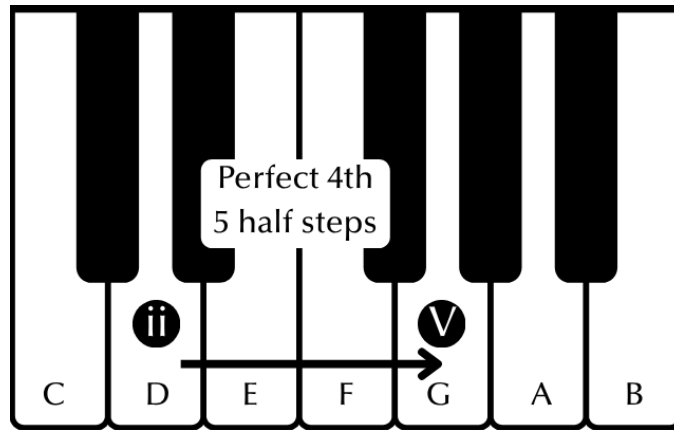
Method 1: Recognizing Ascending Fourths

If you look at the roots of a ii-V chord progression at the piano, each note moves up by the interval of a perfect fourth (5 half steps).

Here's an example from the key of C major.



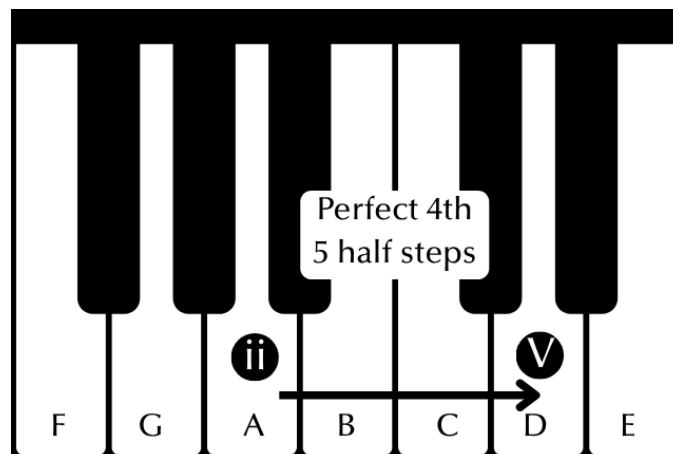
If we start on D and move up a perfect fourth, we get to G. A visual representation is included below.



Here's an example from the key of G major.


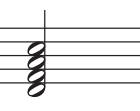
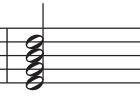
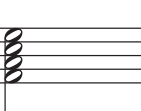
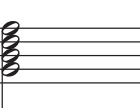
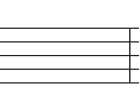
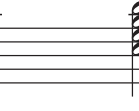
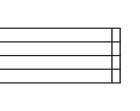


If we start on A and move up a perfect fourth, we get to D. A visual representation is included below.



Method 2: Recognizing Chord Qualities

As you can see from the chord scale below, ii (two) chords are minor 7 chords and V (five) chords are dominant 7 chords.

I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii	I
							
major 7	minor 7	minor 7	major 7	dominant 7	minor 7	half-dim 7	major 7
	↑			↑			

So if you see a minor 7 chord followed by a dominant 7 chord, that's a clue that it's a ii-V chord progression.

Example - Excerpt from "Tea for Two"

In the example below, the Bbm7 and Eb7 chords in the first measure are circled.

Notice that:

- 1) The chord qualities are a minor 7 chord followed by a dominant 7 chord.
- 2) The roots follow the pattern of ascending fourths.

That's a ii-V chord progression!



So now that we know that Bbm7-Eb7 is a ii-V chord progression, we need to find out what the missing I (one) chord is so that we know what scale to use for improvising.

How do we do that?

ii-V Chord Progressions: Finding the Key Center

With ii-V chord progressions, we must ask an important question:

If all I know is the ii (two) chord and the V (chord)... how do I find the I (one) chord?

Method 1: Move up a perfect 4th (5 half steps) from the root of the V (five) chord

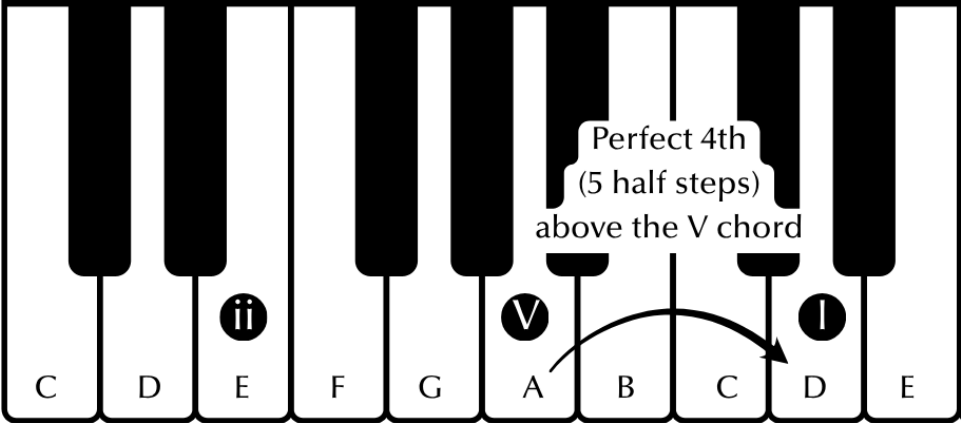
This method helps us find the I (one) chord from the V (five) chord by using the pattern of ascending fourths.

We learned previously that the roots of a ii-V-I chord progression move in ascending perfect fourth intervals (5 half steps).

If we already know the ii (two) and V (five) chords, we simply need to continue that pattern of ascending fourths to find the I (one) chord.

That means we can find the I (one) chord by moving up a perfect fourth (5 half steps) above the root of the V (five) chord.

Example: If our ii-V chords are Em7 and A7, we know that A7 is the V (five) chord. If we move up a perfect fourth (5 half steps) above A, we will find our I (one) chord.



ii
Em7

V
A7

I
Dmaj7

Perfect 4th
(5 half steps)
above the V chord

The missing I (one) chord in this example is Dmaj7.

The I (one) chord gives us our key center. Since Dmaj7 is the missing I (one) chord, we can use an D major scale for improvising over the ii-V chord progression Em7-A7.

Method 2: Move down a whole step from the root of the ii (two) chord

This method helps us find the I (one) chord from the ii (two) chord using scale degrees.

We learned previously that the pattern of half steps and whole steps in a major scale is whole-whole-half-whole-whole-whole-half, as shown below in a C major scale:



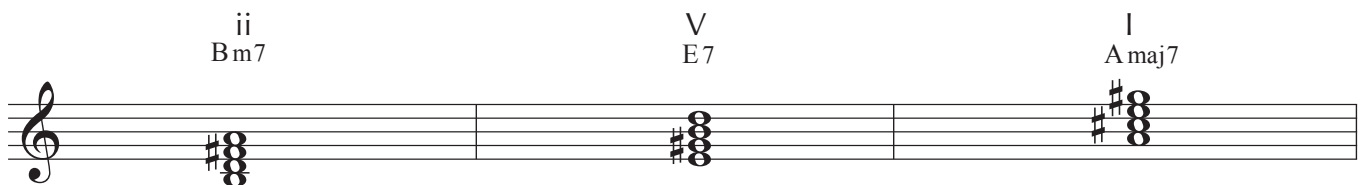
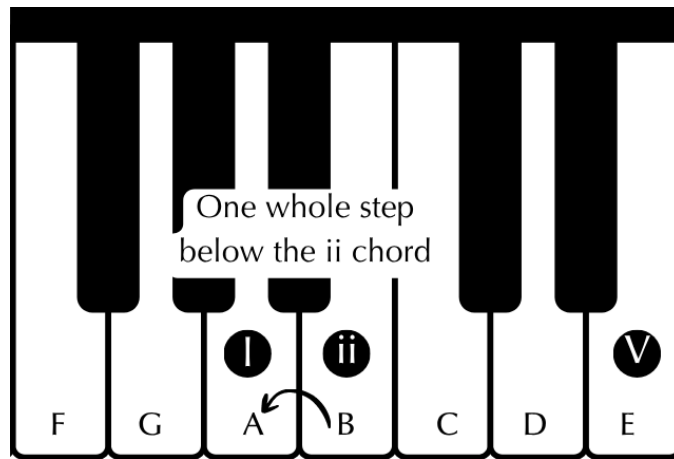
There is only a whole step between the first and second notes of the scale.

A ii (two) chord starts on the second note of the scale.

A I (one) chord starts on the first note of the scale.

Therefore, if you start on the root of the ii (two) chord and go down a whole step, you'll find the root of the I (one) chord.

Example: If our ii-V chords are Bm7 and E7, we know that Bm7 is the ii (two) chord. If we move down a whole step below B, we will find our I (one) chord.



The missing I (one) chord in this example is Amaj7.

The I (one) chord gives us our key center. Since Amaj7 is the missing I (one) chord, we can use an A major scale for improvising over the ii-V chord progression Bm7-E7.

Putting it All Together: Recognizing Multiple ii-V-I Chord Progressions

Example - Excerpt from "Somebody Loves Me"

In the example below, the Em7 and A7 chords in the first measure are circled.

Notice that:

- 1) The chord qualities are a minor 7 chord followed by a dominant 7 chord.
- 2) The roots follow the pattern of ascending fourths.

That's a ii-V chord progression!

Em7-A7 is a ii-V in the key of D major, so a D major scale would sound nice for improvising over measures 1 and 2 where we see that chord progression.

In the same example above, the Am7 and D7 chords have a triangle around them.

Notice that:

- 1) The chord qualities are a minor 7 chord followed by a dominant 7 chord.
- 2) The roots follow the pattern of ascending fourths.

That's a ii-V chord progression!

Am7-D7 is a ii-V chord progression in the key of G major, so a G major scale would sound nice for improvising over measures 3 and 4.

Putting it together

To improvise over these 4 measures, we would need to use two different scales.

Measures 1 and 2 have ii-V chord progressions in the key of D major.

So we would improvise with notes from the D major scale over those measures.

Measures 3 and 4 have a ii-V chord progression in the key of G major.

So we would improvise with notes from the G major scale over those measures.

When improvising, don't just play the scale. Choose notes from these scales to make new melodies.