

(Book 5.) Lesson 3b.

It is important to understand how the chords function in music. This simply means "what is the relationship of a particular chord in regard to the key of the original song and the surrounding harmonies". **(The bold and underlined fonts, show the most common functions.)**

Here is a summary of basic chord functions:

Major triads: **I, IV, V**---in any major key.
V, vi---in any harmonic minor scale
IV, **V**---in any ascending melodic minor scale
iii, vi, vii---in any descending melodic minor scale

Minor triads: **ii, iii, vi**---in any major key
I, IV---in any harmonic minor scale
I, ii---in any ascending melodic minor scale
I, IV, V---in any descending melodic minor scale

Dim triads: vii---in any major key
ii, vii---in any harmonic minor scale
vii---in any ascending melodic minor scale
ii---in any descending melodic minor scale

Aug triads: iii---in any harmonic or ascending melodic minor scale

Major 7th chords: **I, IV**---in any major key
vi---in any harmonic minor scale
iii, vi---in any descending melodic minor scale

Minor 7th chords: **ii**, iii, **vi**---in any major key
IV---in any harmonic minor scale
ii---in any ascending melodic minor scale
I, IV, V---in any descending melodic minor scale

Minor Major 7th: **I**---in any harmonic or ascending melodic minor scale

Minor 7th flat5th: vii---in any major key
ii---in any harmonic minor scale
vi, vii---in any ascending melodic minor
ii---in any descending melodic minor

Diminished 7th: **vii** in harmonic minor
(The dim7 chord is often mislabeled. The dim7 chord is also the upper 4 notes of any dom7b9 chord.)

Aug Major 7th: iii----in any harmonic or melodic minor ascending. (very rarely used)

Dominant 7th structures: (R-3-5-b7) (the dominant chord usually specifies a chord built on the "V" of any Key.)

V---of any major key
V--- of any harmonic minor scale
IV, **V**---of any ascending melodic minor
vii---of any descending melodic minor

("Book Harmony" sometimes teaches the Dominant 7th type of structure as an "aug6th" chord when the chord is not in the Dominant position within the key. For simplicity, I will refer to all Dom7th structures as Dominant 7th chords.)

Assignment:

Examine the chord structures in some popular music and old standards. Attempt to analyze how the chords relate to the over-all key of the song. You may be surprised to find that the chord progressions, in even seemingly sophisticated tunes, are not that much more complex than they would be in simpler compositions.

Because chords and scales have an intertwined relationship, quick analysis is very important. Understanding from which "scale or key" the chord came, allows you to choose appropriate notes when you improvise on the given chord progression.