

## Secondary Dominant Clarification by Ron Hinkle

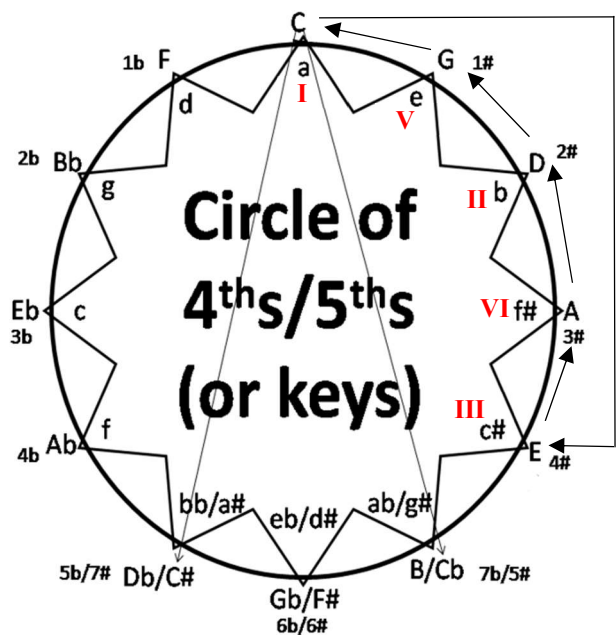
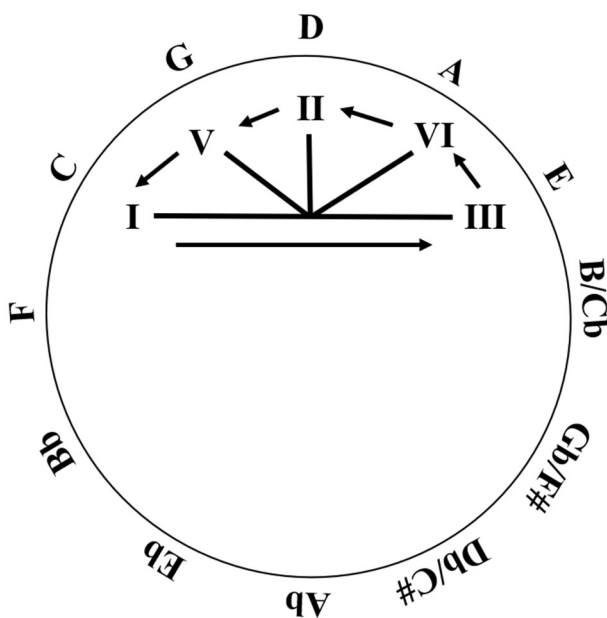
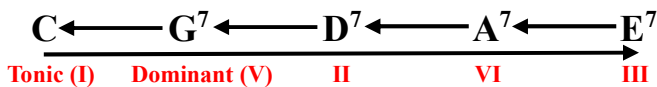
My first *Five Foot Two* lesson caused a little confusion: to begin with, I made a big mistake on it! Thank you to Lukáš Navrkal for catching it! If you downloaded it the day I posted it, you'll want to get the corrected version (posted); this lesson will help clear that up too.

The main confusion is caused by the Circle itself and by the order in which I wrote the chord progression. It is hard to visualize unless you show it correctly. But first I must say, I know you may have the preconceived belief that these things are really difficult to understand, and that can make it *seem* harder than it actually is. Relax and tell yourself it's easy (because it is!). At any rate, after you've worked all the way around the Circle (and had your "ah-ha" moment), I guarantee you will no longer be confused! Oh, the power of knowledge!

I've been meaning to make these graphics for a long time, so without further ado, here it is. You may find these useful in *your* teaching too; please feel free!

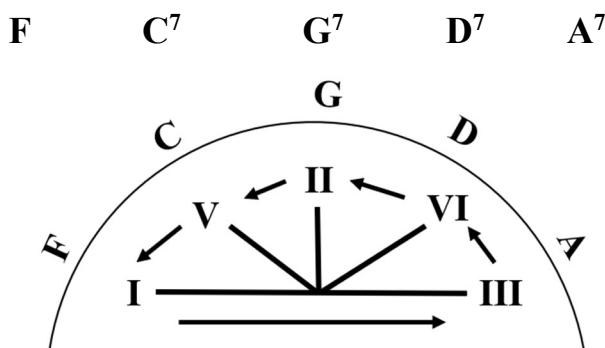
### Key of C

There are many ways you can look at this: it's easier to see it if you "spin the dial" a bit. I have included the written order as I showed it in the original lesson; again, start with the **Tonic**, jump clockwise (right) to the **III**, then work counterclockwise (left) in **III-VI-II-V-I** order (follow the arrows). Drape the text over the Circle:

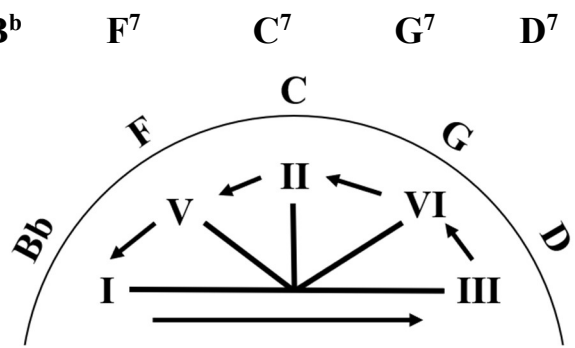


Okay, let's turn the dial some more! We'll go through the keys in counterclockwise order, since that's the way music tends to move harmonically:

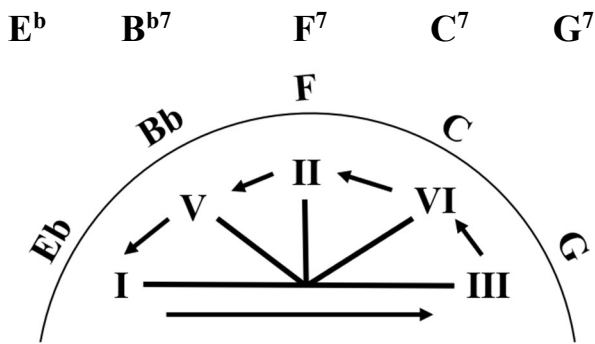
### Key of F:



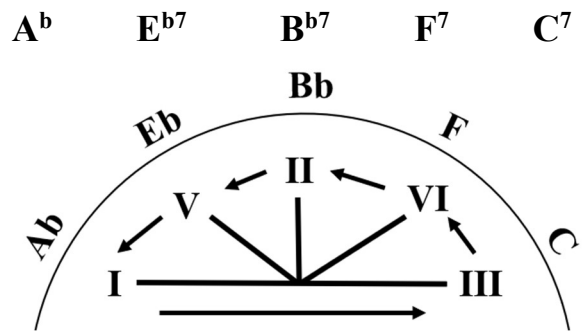
### Key of B<sup>b</sup>:



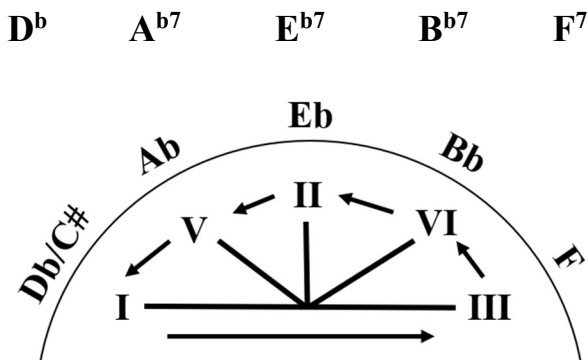
**Key of E<sup>b</sup>:**



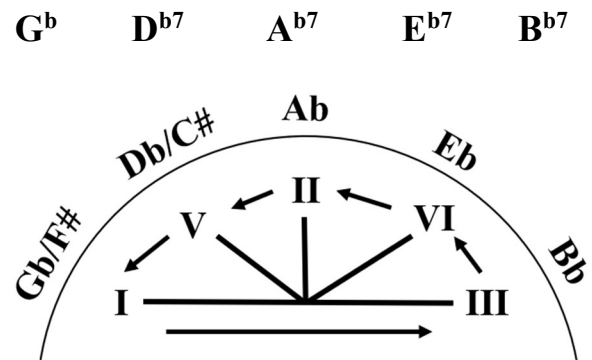
**Key of A<sup>b</sup>:**



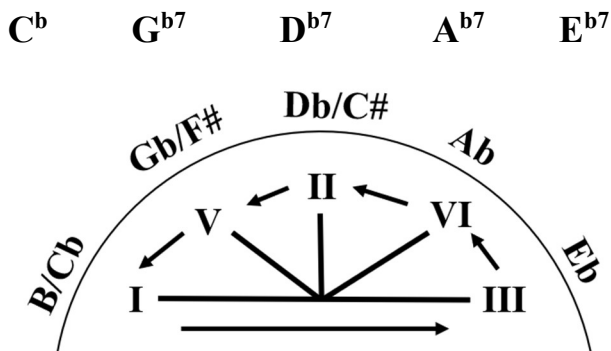
**Key of D<sup>b</sup>:**



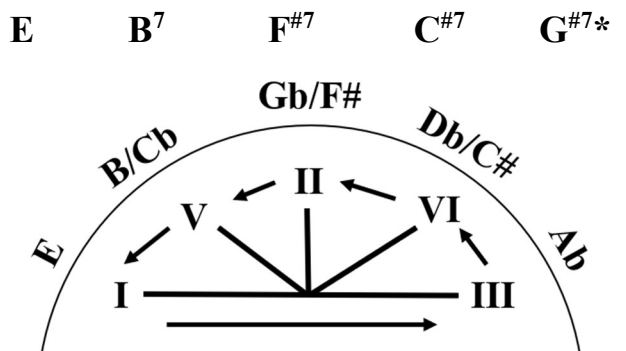
**Key of G<sup>b</sup>:**



**Key of C<sup>b</sup> (B):**

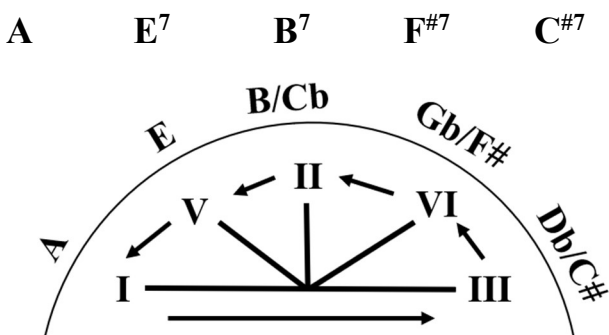


**Key of E:**

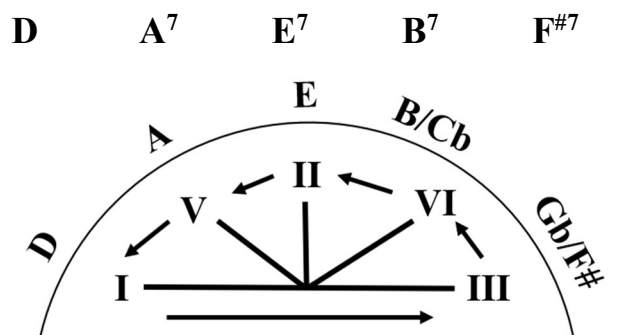


\*You can see that it gets a little tricky in the Circle transition zone: we have to switch over from flats to sharps at some point in order to go all the way around the circle. In the key of C<sup>b</sup>, I stayed with flats to maintain consistency. In the key of E however, I *had* to switch, which meant that the A<sup>b</sup> (III) had to be renamed as G<sup>#</sup> (G<sup>#</sup> is a “theoretical” key, and is “enharmonic” to A<sup>b</sup>—same pitch, different name). Trust me, you’ll never play in these keys, but you *need* to learn them to fully understand this concept and the circular nature of music. Don’t worry: in the next lesson, I will explain how to find these chords!

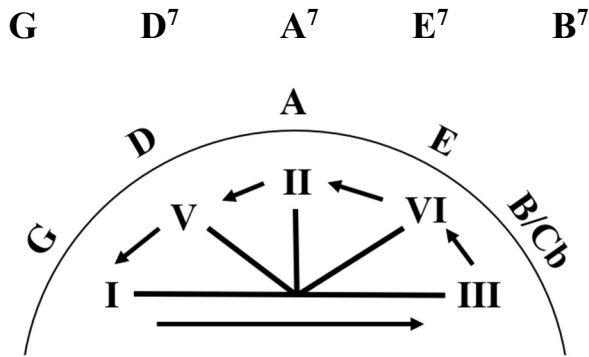
**Key of A:**



**Key of D:**



## Key of G:



And of course, one more turn of the dial brings us back to the key of C, where the cycle starts over *again!* I hope you enjoyed the trip! Feel free to take the trip as often as needed to fully understand; keep twisting the dial!

## Conclusion

Since I have a bit of white space here, let me climb on my soapbox for a moment:

I take this complicated path because I got bored and frustrated with my lack of musical knowledge; growing up in a banjo band (as wonderful as it was) set me on that *fun-but-limited* musical path. I have a Classical, college education on clarinet, and I have always longed to reconcile the “simple” banjo with what I learned there. Will all this make you a better *banjoist*? Well, you’ll have to practice a bit to get all this down, so of course it will!

More importantly, it will make you a better *musician*. If you ever have the chance to play banjo in a Trad Jazz group (my absolute favorite setting), you will find that most *good* musicians have had a Classical education. Being able to speak the same language as they do—and showing them that us banjo players know our stuff as well as they do—is very satisfying. Also, they tend to play in a lot of flat keys, so it helps *a lot* knowing how to do so yourself. On the other end of the spectrum, bands with guitar and fiddle players play in a lot of *sharp* keys! If you limit yourself to a banjo band or to banjo convention jam sessions, you’ll never need this stuff—and of course, *you’ll never learn it.*

Another important point to be made is that this work is the key to “playing by ear.” I haven’t met a banjoist *yet* who doesn’t have *that* as their ultimate goal! I don’t necessarily think about all these chord names as I’m playing; I’m lucky to have a good “natural” ear—which *has certainly been made better with all this work!* Without knowledge, I would be limited to the finite limits of my uneducated gift.

At any rate, I refuse to back down and “simplify.” *In my opinion*, the *dumbing down* of banjo educational literature over the last 100 years is a major reason the banjo has faded and isn’t taken seriously today by the “mainstream” music world—you know, the place where instruments are popular, lots of folks want to play it (and a lot of them get really good at it), and conventions are overflowing with attendees. My ultimate goal is to create better banjo players, making the instrument more attractive to potential players who are looking for a worthwhile challenge.

What I am forever seeking as a teacher is how to take a complex subject (which music most certainly is!) and—*without simplifying*—attempt to make it *easier to understand*. I live to see that light bulb of understanding go off! Sometimes the only way to do that is to show multiple ways to learn and understand it. Rather than give up and say “*he/she will never get it,*” I prefer to dig in and try a different approach to it.

For me, this dogged teaching approach has had the pleasant affect of deepening and broadening my *own* understanding of music. While I’m offering my work as a “shortcut” for others, know that the *best* learning comes from working hard *yourself*. I can only lead you to the water; I can’t make you drink it.

I hope my blunt, serious attitude doesn’t scare you away: ***don’t let it!*** Grab music by the horns and wrestle it to the ground! Only then—when it is truly yours—can you set it free. You’ll be amazed at how much *more fun* you will have when you can play well and better understand this glorious and mysterious artform called music.