

Basic Harmonic Progressions

1. Major Chords

I. Cadences

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In major

C: I IV V I IV V I V vi IV V I

In Harmonic Minor

c: V VI iv V I VI iv V I

In Ascending Melodic Minor

c: IV ii V i iv i V IV ii V i iv i

In Descending Melodic Minor

c: VII iv⁶ V I VI III iv V I III iv V i

2. Minor Chords

In Major

C: ii V I iii IV V I vi IV V I

2

In Harmonic Minor

Chord progression for Harmonic Minor in C major:

c: i iv V i iv V i

In Ascending Melodic Minor

Chord progression for Ascending Melodic Minor in C major:

c: i IV ii V i iv i ii V i iv i

In Descending Melodic Minor

Chord progression for Descending Melodic Minor in C major:

c: i v VI iv V i v VI iv V i iv v VI iv V i

3. Diminished Chords

In Major

Chord progression for Diminished in C major:

C: vii I

In Harmonic Minor

Chord progression for Diminished in C harmonic minor:

c: ii V i vii i

In Ascending Melodic Minor

C: vi vii i iv i

4. Augmented Chord

In Harmonic Minor

C: iii VI iv V i

5. Cadences

I —————> V I —————> V V —————> I

I V⁶ vii⁶/_V V I iii IV V IV I⁶₄ V I

Half Cadence Half Cadence Perfect Cadence

Three musical examples of cadences in G major, each spanning two measures. The first example shows an Imperfect Cadence (V to I⁶). The second shows a Broken Cadence (V to vi). The third shows an Avoided Cadence (V to V_x).

V —————> I⁶

V —————> vi

V —————> V_x

Three musical examples of cadences in G major, each spanning two measures. The first example shows an Imperfect Cadence (IV to I⁶). The second shows a Broken Cadence (IV to vi). The third shows an Avoided Cadence (IV to V⁶/₅).

IV I⁶ V I⁶IV I⁶ V viIV I⁶ V V⁶/₅

Imperfect Cadence

Broken Cadence

Avoided Cadence
(from the dominant to another dominant)

Two measures of music showing an Imperfect Cadence (IV to I) in G major.

IV —————> I

Two measures of music showing a Plagal Cadence (IV to I) in G major.

Plagal Cadence

II. Chords $\frac{7}{+}$

5

1. Normal function of the chord, V to I. The most common exceptional resolutions:

In major: V vi, V \flat VI, V IV⁶, V iv⁶

In minor: V VI, V iv⁶

Diagram illustrating the normal function of the chord V to I, and five common exceptional resolutions in major and minor keys:

- V I
- V vi
- V IV⁶
- V \flat VI
- V iv⁶

2. Normal function V I transposed to all degrees, altered or not, that is, V of ii, V of iii, etc.

Diagram illustrating the normal function V I transposed to all degrees, altered or not:

- V I
- V \flat II
- V ii

3. The chord keeps its appearance, but changes function.

Diagram illustrating the chord keeping its appearance but changing function:

- II \rightarrow I⁶₄
- IV V
- \sharp IV \rightarrow V
- VI \rightarrow V
- VI \rightarrow V
- \flat VII iv⁶ V
- VII \rightarrow I

fairly often used in 2nd inversion (Chabrier)

4. The chord keeps or changes its appearance, because the initial spelling is sometimes conserved, but in reality changes its root by enharmonic change.

Diagram illustrating the chord keeping or changing its appearance due to enharmonic change:

- I \sharp vi⁷
- \flat II V⁹_{F^o}
- \flat II \rightarrow V
- \flat III \sharp vi⁷

(Beethoven)

(Franck)

III vir I⁶
3rd of I

III \rightarrow V I

IV $\sharp\text{ir}$ I
or IV
+ added 6th

\flat VI H F° i V I

H F° V_7 I

(Franck)

II F° I

II F° I

\flat VI $\sharp\text{ir}^7$ I V I

\flat VII \rightarrow V I
or often
 X \rightarrow V I

VII $\sharp\text{iv}^7$ V I
or
 II F°
3rd of V

III. 6th Chords

7

General Remarks

1. The ability to move by conjunct degrees, in the manner of purely melodic tones, and without considering the movement of the bass, is a quality which distinguishes the 6th chord from the other chords. (Cf. Gevaert)
2. The chord vii whose 4th is augmented, and therefore dissonant, nevertheless is placed among the consonant chords because of the double consonance of the 3rd and 6th formed by the two other notes of the chord with the bass. The ear accepts this chord as the equivalent of the other 6th chords. It is a chord which is "consonant by analogy" (cf. Gevaert). In this chord, the diminished fifth (3rd from the bass) can be doubled; it can ascend in one voice as long as the other voice descends.
3. One will notice that in a regular alternation of 6th and root position chords, the best practice is often to put in the soprano the 6th of the 6th chords and the 3rd of the root position chords. On the other hand, in conjunct sequences of 6th chords, one usually puts the 6th in the soprano.
4. When the 6th chord is placed on a good degree, the doubling of the bass is generally the best.
5. Faux-bourdon is one of the origins of the 6th chord.
6. The question of good degrees must never be forgotten in the realization of 6th chords; it must always play a part in the choice of notes to double.

1. Immobile Bass

- A. When the same bass note carries $5\boxed{6}$, $6\boxed{5}$, $5\boxed{6}5$, or $6\boxed{5}6$, the note marked $\boxed{}$ is ornamental.
 —→ 5 and 6 will be in the same voice, and not doubled.

- a. If the chord which follows permits the voice which sounds the 5 and 6 to ascend one more degree, $\boxed{6}$ is a passing note.

5 6 5

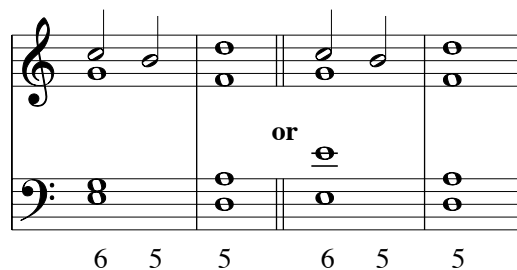
- b. If the chord which follows permits the voice which sounds the 6 and 5 to descend one more degree, $\boxed{5}$ is a passing note.

6 5 5

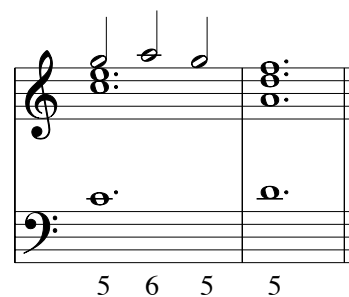
- c. If the ascending or descending conjunct note is not part of the following chord, the most common movement is 5 6 then descending by a 3rd. $\boxed{6}$ is then an échappée.

5 6 5

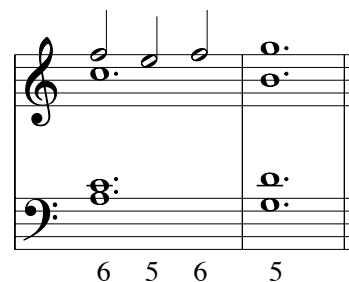
The following formula is rarely found after Monteverdi, who used it fairly frequently.



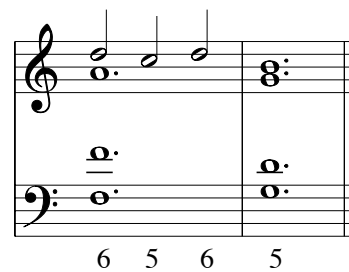
- d. In the formulas 5 $\boxed{6}$ 5 or 6 $\boxed{5}$ 6, the note $\boxed{}$ is an embellishment and is generally followed when it is 5 $\boxed{6}$ 5 by conjunct ascending motion.



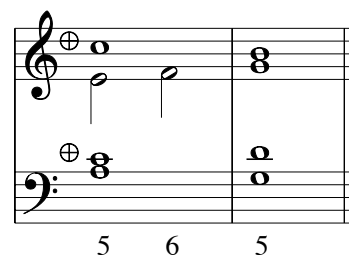
and when it's 6 $\boxed{5}$ 6, by conjunct ascending motion.



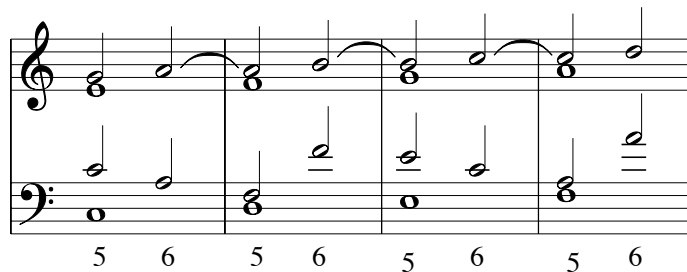
6 $\boxed{5}$ 6 is sometimes also followed by a descending third.



- e. When the figure 6 5 is placed on the 6th degree descending to the 5th degree in the bass, one doubles I in the 6 and 5 (\oplus doubled tonic).



- f. When 6 5 on the same bass repeat in a sequence, the soprano and the alto move parallel to the bass and the tenor doubles in succession the three other parts.

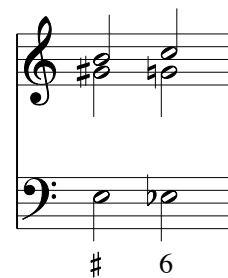


2. Bass by chromatic half step

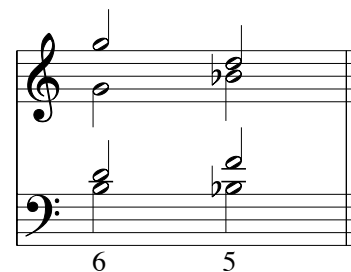
- a. Root position chord followed by a descending chromatic half step by a 6th chord.



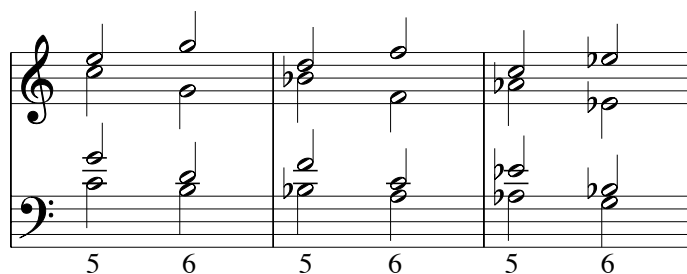
- ① This progression is difficult to realize in four parts if the third of the root position chord and the third of the 6th chord are also separated by a half step.



- b. 6th chord followed by a descending chromatic half step by a root position chord.



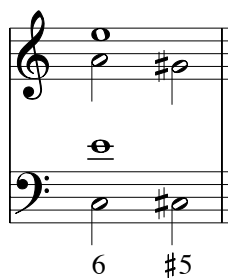
- c. When these progressions form a sequence, the following realization is the best.



- d. When a root position is followed by an ascending chromatic semitone by a 6th chord.



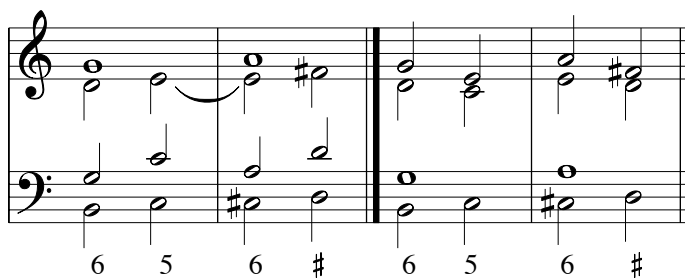
- e. 6th chord followed by ascending chromatic half step by a root position chord.



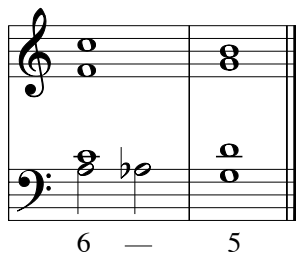
This progression is difficult to realize in four parts.



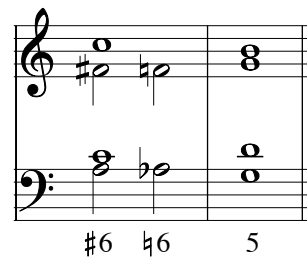
- f. When these progressions form a sequence, the following realizations are used.



- g. When two 6th chords are connected by a descending chromatic movement, double the common note (cf. e of I).



- ② Another example: The movement of the alto is awkward. However, this formula is frequently used.

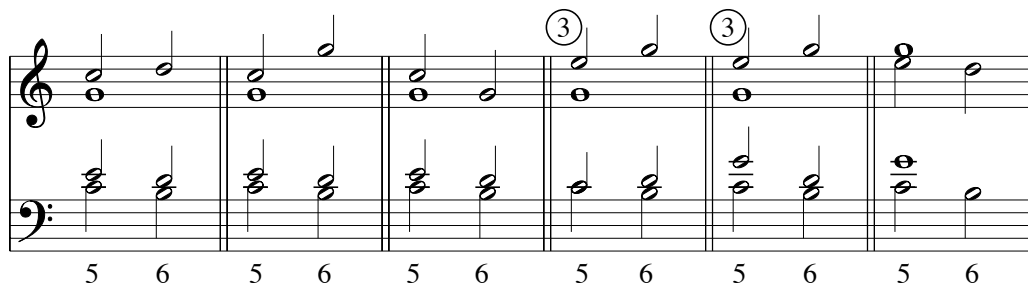


- h. Another chromatic progression frequently used in minor to reach the 5th degree. See ② for the movement of the alto.



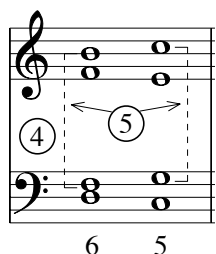
3. Bass by conjunct motion

- a. Root position chord followed by a 6th chord by conjunct descending motion. (③ cf. 3 of the general remarks)

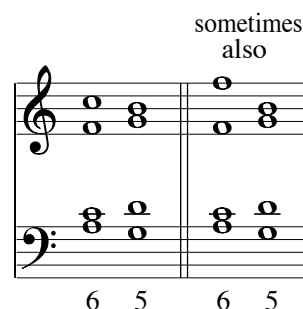


- b. 6th chord followed by root position chord by conjunct descending motion. The best is often to double the 3rd of the 6th chord.

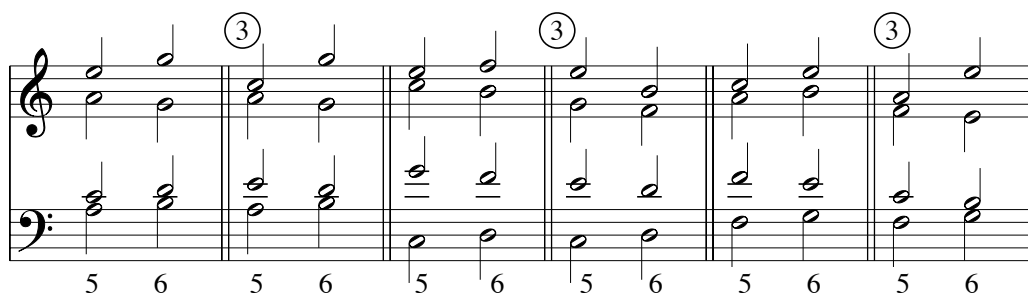
- ④ cf. 2 of the general remarks.
 ⑤ Note that the parallel 4ths contained in this progression can not be inverted.



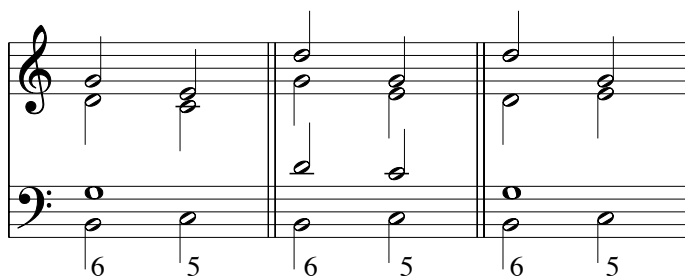
When this progression is made with the 6th and 5th degrees in the bass, one often doubles the tonic in the first chord.



- c. Root position chord followed by 6th chord by conjunct ascending motion.



- d. 6th chord followed by root position chord by conjunct ascending motion.



- e. When this progression is made with the degrees $\text{II}^6 \text{V}$, the resolution shown is often the best.

- ⑥ cf. 4 of the general remarks.

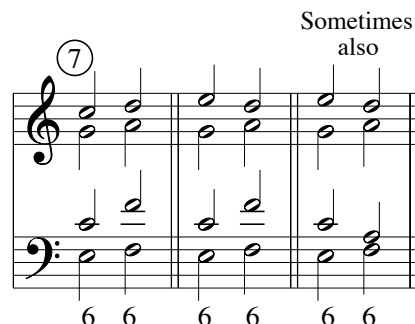


- f. Two 6th chords progressing by conjunct ascending or descending motion.



Often the best is to double the bass of the lowest 6th chord. However, in the progression $\text{I}^6 \text{ii}^6$, it is generally better to double the bass on ii^6 because of the good degree.

- ⑦ General direct motion is permissible in this case.



- g. 6th chords joining by conjunct motion a root position chord and its first inversion.

5 6 6 5 6 6 6 6 6 5 6 6 5 6 6 5 6 6 5

- h. 6th chords joining by conjunct motion two different root position chords.

5 6 5 5 6 5 5 6 5 5 6 5

When these progressions form a regular sequence, the following realizations are the best.

5 6 5 6 5 6 5 6 5 6 5 6

- i. 6th chord used as embellishment of a root position chord.

5 6 5 5 6 5 5 6 5 5 6 5

- j. 6th chord used as embellishment of another 6th chord. Double the bass of the lowest 6th chord.

Rarely used

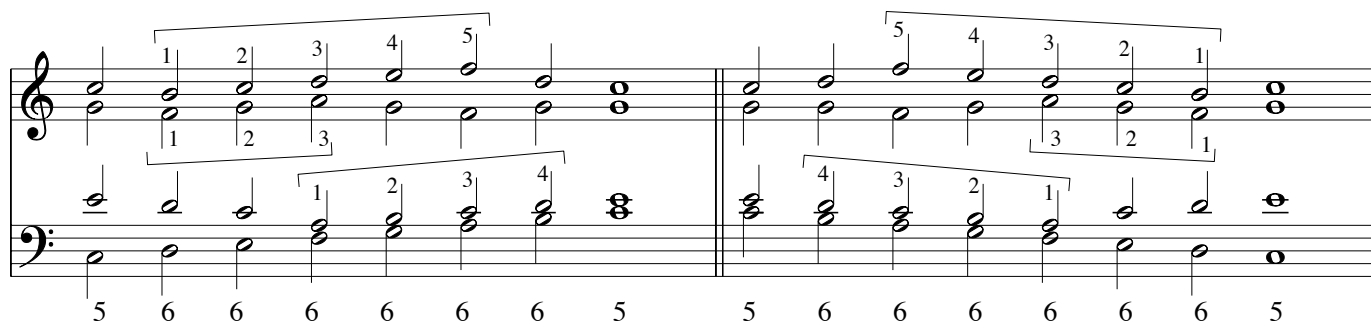
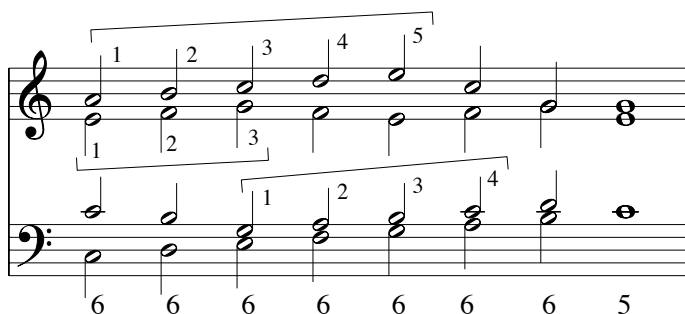
6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6

k. Conjunct series of 6th chords having a melodic character (based on the theory of Paul Vidal)

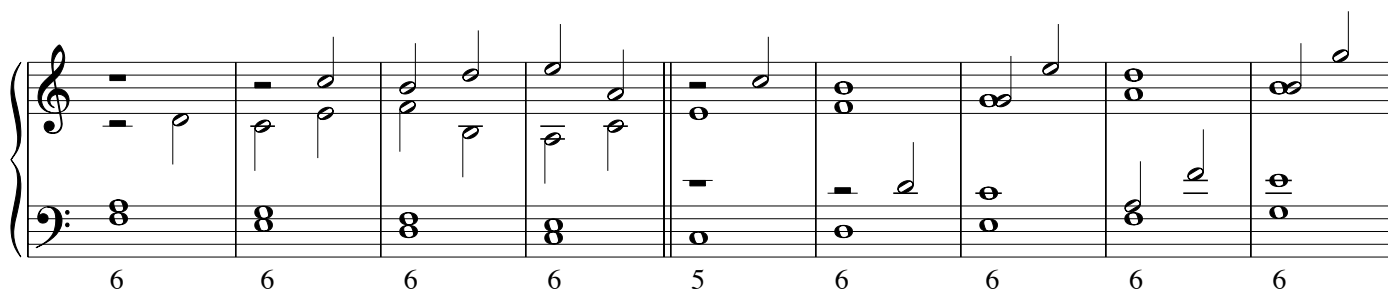
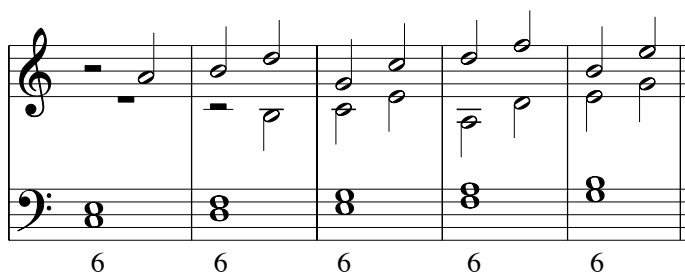
k(1). In three parts the parallelism is possible by conjunct motion.



k(2). In four parts, in short note values, double the bass of the lowest 6th chord, the 6th of the following chord, the third of the third chord, then again, the bass, the 6th, the 3rd, and so on. The soprano will have the 6th 5 times in a row starting with the lowest chord, the alto will have the 3rd 3 times, which will then pass 4 times to the tenor.



k(3). In longer note values, the following realizations are also used; one part makes parallel thirds with the bass, the two other parts alternatively sound the 3rd, 6th, and the bass and form between themselves a canon.



- a. Root position chord followed by ascending 3rd by a 6th chord (root position chord followed by its first inversion) or 6th chord followed by a root position chord by a descending third (6th chord followed by its root position). One can realize by parallel thirds or by exchange of notes with the bass.

1. By parallel 3rds. One will note that the parallel 3rds are generally followed by the 5th of the following chord.

⑨ One can also keep the bass doubled this way.

Exercise 9: Treble staff shows a sequence of notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. Bass staff shows a sequence of notes: C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4. The bass line has a 5th that is doubled in the next chord.

Exercise 10: Treble staff shows a sequence of notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. Bass staff shows a sequence of notes: C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4. The bass line has a 6th that is doubled in the next chord.

2. By exchange of notes. The exchange is followed most often by the third of the following chord. However, when the two fundamental chords progress directly by ascending 5th, the exchange of notes can be followed by the 5th of the following chord. (cf ⑪) One should avoid using this method if it results in a repeated note in the progression of the two chords (⑫). The 3rd of the second chord produced by a movement of an ascending 4th is also rather awkward (⑬) if the rhythm stops on the last chord.

Exercise 11: Treble staff shows a sequence of notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. Bass staff shows a sequence of notes: C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4. The bass line has a 5th that is doubled in the next chord.

Exercise 11: Treble staff shows a sequence of notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. Bass staff shows a sequence of notes: C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4. The bass line has a 5th that is doubled in the next chord.

Exercise 12: Treble staff shows a sequence of notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. Bass staff shows a sequence of notes: C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4. The bass line has a 5th that is doubled in the next chord.

Exercise 13: Treble staff shows a sequence of notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. Bass staff shows a sequence of notes: C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4. The bass line has a 5th that is doubled in the next chord.

awkward if
one stops
on the last
chord

bad

The exchange of notes, by 3rd, is hardly ever used between the dominant and the leading tone, on the chord on the 5th degree. But the exchange by 6th is excellent (14) and one also uses parallel 3rds. (15) One will note, concerning the version in solid notes, that the doubled root in the extremes and approached by conjunct motion does not sound good, especially if it is the tonic.

Exercise 14: Musical notation showing a progression of chords in root position and first inversion. The bass line includes figured bass notation: 5 — 5, 5 — 5, 6 — 5, 5 — 5, 6 — 5, 6 — 5.

Exercise 15: Musical notation showing a progression of chords in root position and first inversion. The bass line includes figured bass notation: 5 — 5, 5 — 5, 6 — 5, 5 — 5, 6 — 5, 6 — 5.

- b. Root position chord followed by descending 3rd by a 6th chord (from V to I^6), formulas of the imperfect cadence. This progression is found frequently on all the degrees with the same realization. (16) One will note the melodic movement of an ascending 4th which occurs in the soprano, either from 5 to 1 or from 2 to 5. (17) Here the leading tone, in the imperfect cadence V I^6 , is resolved by ascending to the 5th of I.

Exercise 16: Musical notation showing a progression of chords in root position and first inversion. The bass line includes figured bass notation: 5 6, 5 6, 5 6, 5 6, 5 6.

Exercise 17: Musical notation showing a progression of chords in root position and first inversion. The bass line includes figured bass notation: 5 6, 5 6, 5 6, 5 6, 5 6.

- c. 6th chord followed by ascending 3rd by a root position chord. The progression is very common; reverse the preceding formulas (b.).
- d. Two 6th chords progressing by ascending or descending 3rd. (Progression having a rather melodic and weak character.)

Exercise d: Musical notation showing two 6th chords progressing by ascending or descending 3rd. The bass line includes figured bass notation: 6 6, 6 6, 6 6, 6 6, 6 5, 6 6, 6 6, 6 6, 6 6, 6 6.

- e. The following sequence is often used (cf. a).

Exercise e: Musical notation showing a sequence of chords in root position and first inversion. The bass line includes figured bass notation: 5 — 5, 5 — 5, 5 — 5.

5. Bass by 4th.

- a. Root position chord followed by descending 4th by a 6th chord. Often one doubles the 3rd of the first chord and keeps it in two parts. Fairly weak progression.

less good than the preceding

5 6 5 6

- b. Root position chord followed by ascending 4th by a 6th chord. Fairly weak progression.

⑮ From I to ii⁶ one usually doubles the bass on the ii⁶, even by direct movement with the bass.

(rare) ⑮

5 6 5 6

- c. 6th chord followed by descending 4th by a root position chord. A weak progression, little used except with the degrees ii⁶ I. In this case, ii⁶ replaces IV and it is a form of the plagal cadence.

5 6 5 5 6 5

ii I ii i

(for IV) (for IV)

- d. 6th chord followed by ascending 4th by a root position chord. Rather weak progression, of melodic character. One often doubles the 6th of the first chord and keeps it in two parts.

6 5

- e. Two 6th chords proceeding by descending 4th (rather strong progression).

6 6 6 6

- f. Two 6th chords connected by ascending 4th (fairly strong progression)

6 6 6 6

IV. $\frac{6}{4}$ Chords

The $\frac{6}{4}$ chord is almost always the result of simultaneous melodic ornaments: sometimes it is formed by appoggiaturas, sometimes by embellishments, sometimes by passing notes. The manner of employing and realizing the $\frac{6}{4}$ chord will depend on the analysis.

A. $\frac{6}{4}$ as appoggiatura

1. On a single bass note, the figures $\frac{6}{4} 5$ indicate that the 6th and 4th are appoggiaturas of the 5th and 3rd. The 4th and the 6th, being appoggiaturas, will resolve by descending by conjunct motion, 4 to 3 and 6 to 5. Neither the 4th nor the 6th will be doubled. The 4th will be prepared or approached by conjunct descending motion; it will not be doubled.

Used as imperfect cadence. (There is a kind of exchange between the resolution of the 4th and that of the 6th.)

perfect cadence

However, in the $\frac{6}{4}$ is of long duration, the following realizations will be used: Note that 4 goes to 3 and 6 goes to 5. The preparation is the same as above. The 4th is sometimes doubled.

2. The $\frac{6}{4}$ is also appoggiatura on the 2nd inversion of the IInd degree (most often in minor). The 4th can be attacked and doubled. Here, it is the bass note which is appoggiatura and must not be doubled. Moreover, it is a diminished 5th and, for this reason as well, should not be doubled.

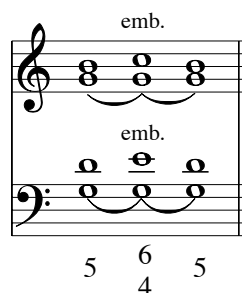
This chord is sometimes followed by the $\frac{6}{4}$ of I.

a bit harsh

18

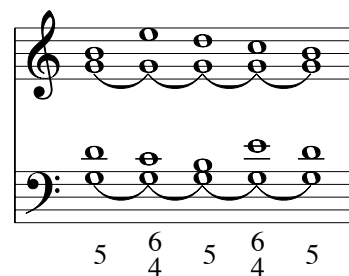
B. $\frac{6}{4}$ as embellishment

1. On the same bass note: $5\frac{6}{4}5$. The 3rd goes from 4th to 3rd, the 5th goes from 6th to 5th. The 4th and the 6th being ornamental will not be doubled. The 4th does not need to be prepared, because the bass is held.



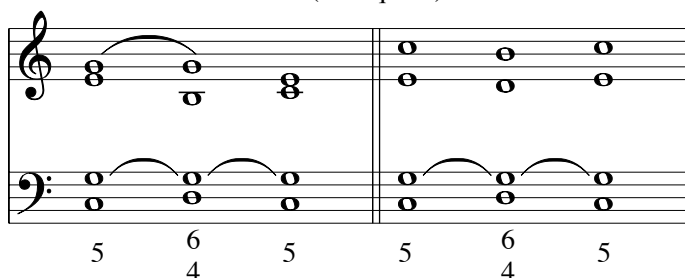
Sometimes

3 → 6 → 5
5 → 4 → 3
(exchange)



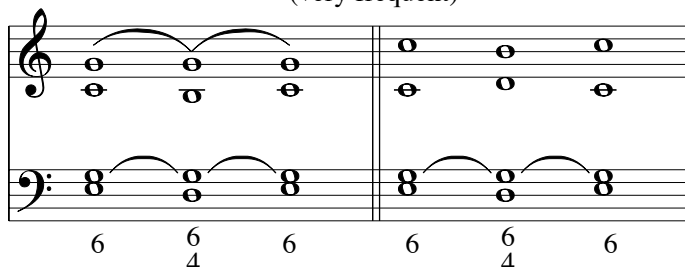
(infrequent)

1. The bass ascends a degree and returns to the starting pitch. The 4th is doubled or not: it is the second bass note that is the embellishment. It will not be doubled, or by a voice which is also embellishment.



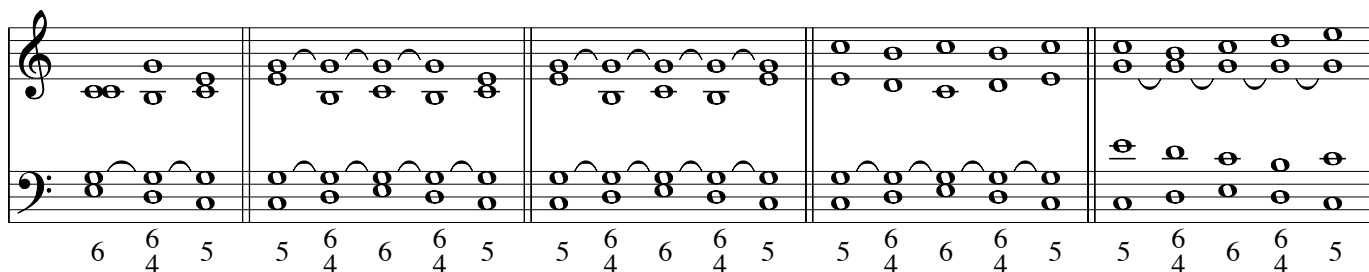
(very frequent)

The bass descends a degree and returns to the starting pitch. The 4th may be doubled or not: it is the second note of the bass which is the embellishment. It will not be doubled, or by a voice which is also embellishment.

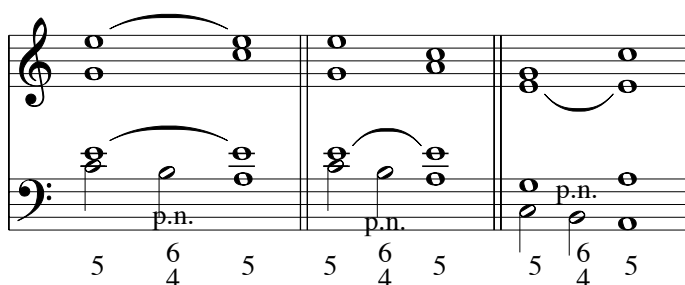


C. $\frac{6}{4}$ as passing note

1. Between a root position chord and its first inversion, or vice-versa, or by a voice forming a passing note.



2. Between two root position chords a descending third apart. The bass note is a passing note and will not be doubled; the 4th or the 6th will be. Only the last bass note will be doubled.



One can also
double the 3rd
in the two root
position chords.

Sometimes the formula is repeated twice. No bass
note will be doubled except the last. One will
double the 3rd of the first root position chord ①
and the 5th of the second root position chord ②.
Notice that the 5th of each chord goes to the 3rd of
the the following root position chord.

5 6 5 6 5 5 6 5 6 5 5 6 5 6 5