

Root-Position Voice-Leading

Repeated Roots

- When you have a repeated root-position chord, the voice-leading is pretty simple
- Just move the three upper voices to different pitches within the same chord, making sure the root is still doubled and the voices don't cross:



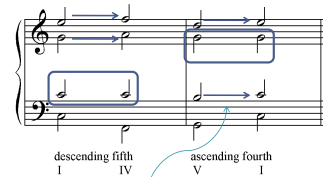
2 Roots, 1 Third, 1 Fifth

Roots a 4th or a 5th apart

- The most fundamental kind of root motion in tonal music is the descending fifth progression
 - For example, the V-I progression
 - This is the same as an ascending fourth progression
 - Ascending fifths / descending fourths are also common
- There are three good methods for writing root progressions that move by fourths or fifths:
 1. The "common tone" method
 2. The "same direction" method
 3. The "leaping third" method

Method 1 (common tone)

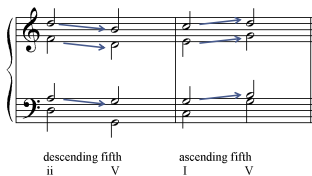
1. Keep the common tone
2. Move the other voices by step (in the same direction)



Notice how the leading tone resolves UP (B to C)

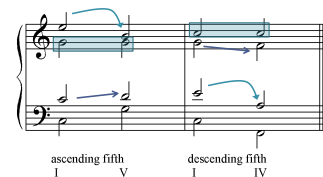
Method 2 (same direction)

1. Move all three upper voices in the same direction (with no leaps larger than a third)
 - (down for descending fifths, up for ascending fifths)



Method 3 (leaping third)

1. Keep the common tone
2. Move the third of the first chord to the third of the second chord
3. Move the remaining voice by step



Roots a 3rd (or 6th) apart

- Voice-leading between two chords with roots a third (or sixth) apart is very smooth
- 1. Keep two common tones
- 2. Move the remaining voice by step

ascending third descending third
I iii vi IV

Roots a 2nd (or 7th) apart

- There are no common tones between chords with roots a 2nd (or less commonly, a 7th) apart
- Move all voices in the OPPOSITE DIRECTION AS THE BASS to the nearest chord tone

Parallel fifths Parallel octaves
ascending second ascending second
I ii I ii

The deceptive progression

- Since V-I is so common, the progression V-vi always sounds surprising—it is called the *deceptive progression*
- Often, in the deceptive progression, the leading tone resolves UP, creating a vi chord with a doubled third—this is a common exception

V vi

Voice-leading for inverted chords

- Many of the voice-leading principles for root-position chords also apply to inverted chords (keep common tones / write smooth lines)
- For first inversion chords, you can double anything—as long as it isn't the leading tone
 - It is most common to double the soprano or the bass with an inner voice
- For second inversion chords, you should always double the bass note (the fifth)
- HINT: to avoid parallel octaves, don't double the same two voices in adjacent chords