

Chord Progressions Primer

THE MAJOR SCALE AND PROGRESSION THEORY


If you looked at Theory 1, you've seen how chords are constructed. Now it's time to put all these chords into action by exploring their relationship to each other. To vastly understate it, this is a complicated, or at least tedious, task. There are so many chords, the combinations of them are virtually unending. So we'll start with the old standby, the MAJOR SCALE and how it affects chord progressions.


Remember there are 7 notes in the major scale, made up of different intervals. Well, you can build chords on each of these notes. Some of them are minor chords, some of them are major chords, some of them are diminished chords. The first chart you look at will be triad major chords, which are basically chords made up of the 1 - 3 - 5 notes of the major scale.



So a C major triad would be C - E - G because C is the tonic, E is the major 3rd and the G is the perfect 5th of the C major scale. If it is a minor triad chord, simply flatten the 3rd. So a C minor triad would be C - Eb - G. Get it?

The second chart you will look at in Major Scale Progression section is the 7th chord progression chart. This essentially is the same thing as the triad chord chart but many people use 7th chords to add interest or depth to the chords in their progressions. 7th chords add more personality, per se, to the mix. These chords follow the same pattern as the triad chart but we add some 7ths and flatted 7ths to the chords. You'll see where to do this.

Every progression chart in this Unit will follow the same format. So let's go over how to read these things so you can learn all they have to offer you.

-  = line 1: scale tones or intervals (in Roman Numerals) of the scale that the chords are being built upon
1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th intervals
- = line 2: the significance of this tone, the position it holds in the key, we'll talk about this later when we start looking at different progressions within the key

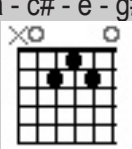
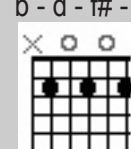
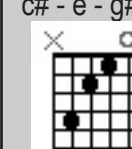
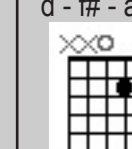
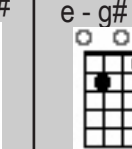
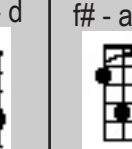
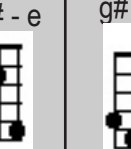
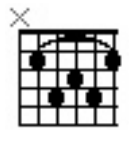
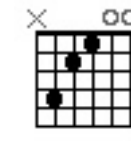
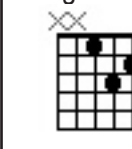
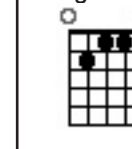
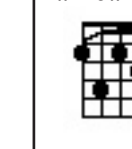
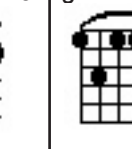
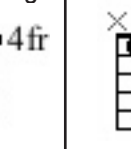
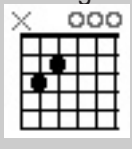
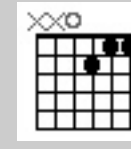
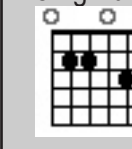
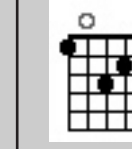
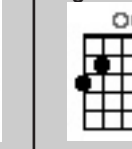
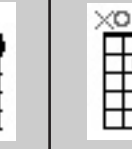
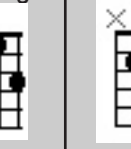
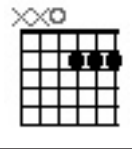
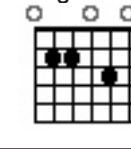
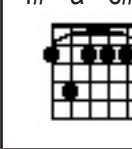
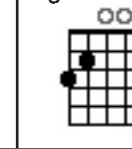
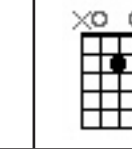
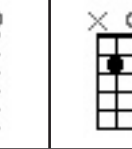
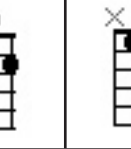
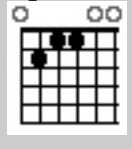
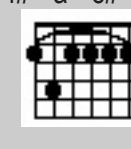

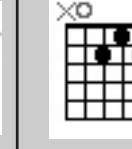
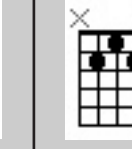
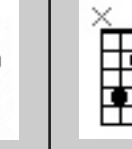
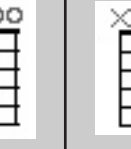
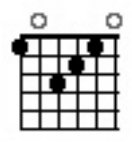
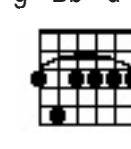
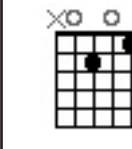
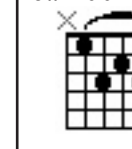
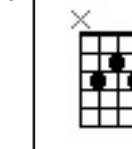
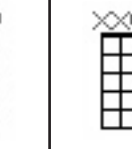
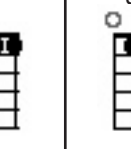
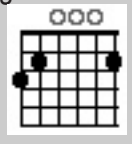
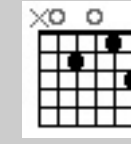
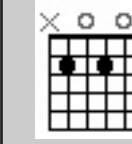
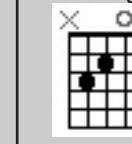

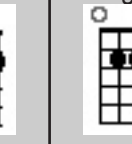

-  = line 1: flavor of the chord ... major, minor, diminished, dominant, whatever
- = line 2: the intervals that make up the chord for that scale tone

-  = line 1: name of the chord in the progression or key, all of these chords will work in this key (which is chord I)
-  = line 2: the chord notes that make up that chord in the progression, equivalent of the intervals above in red
- = line 3: chord example. This is simply 1 way to play the chords in the progression. In Theory 1, I show you all the places on the fretboard where you can play these chords. Any of those places will work.

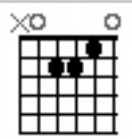
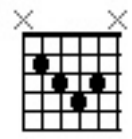
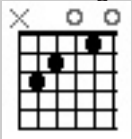
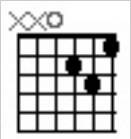
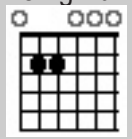
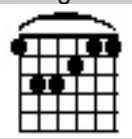
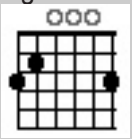
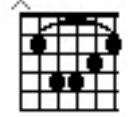
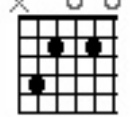
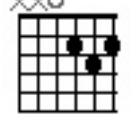
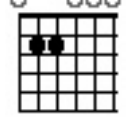
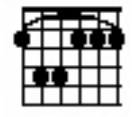
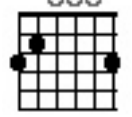
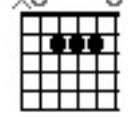
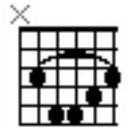

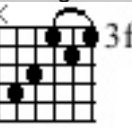
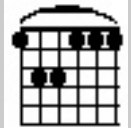
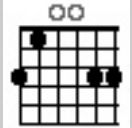
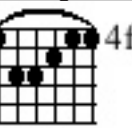
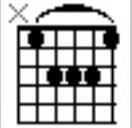
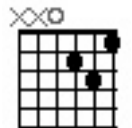
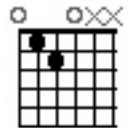
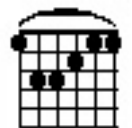
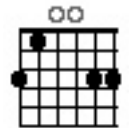
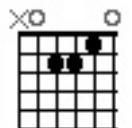
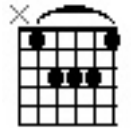
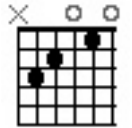
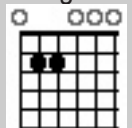
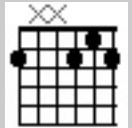
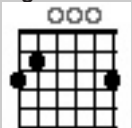
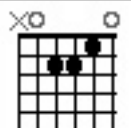
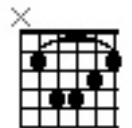
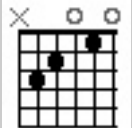

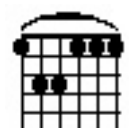
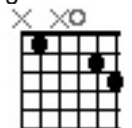
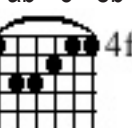
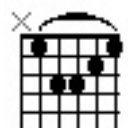
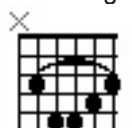
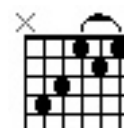
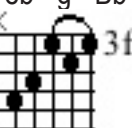
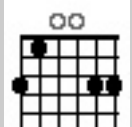
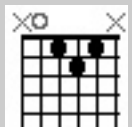
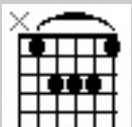
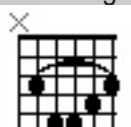
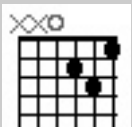
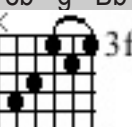
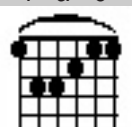
TRIADS THAT CAN BE BUILT ON EACH NOTE OF THE MAJOR SCALE

I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii ^o
tonic	supertonic	mediant	subdominant	dominant	submediant	leading tone
MAJOR	minor	minor	MAJOR	MAJOR	minor	diminished
1-3-5	1-b3-5	1-b3-5	1-3-5	1-3-5	1-b3-5	1-b3-b5
A a - c# - e 	Bm b - d - f# 	C#m c# - e - g# 4fr 	D d - f# - a 	E e - g# - b 	F#m f# - a - c# 	G# ^o g# - b - d 4fr
B b - d# - f# 	C#m c# - e - g# 4fr 	D#m d# - gb - a# 6fr 	E e - g# - b 	F# f# - a# - c# 	G#m g# - b - d# 4fr 	A# ^o a# - db - e
C c - e - g 	Dm d - f - a 	Em e - g - b 	F f - a - c 	G g - b - d 	Am a - c - e 	B ^o b - d - f
D d - f# - a 	Em e - g - b 	F#m f# - a - c# 	G g - b - d 	A a - c# - e 	Bm b - d - f# 	C# ^o c# - e - g
E e - g# - b 	F#m f# - a - c# 	G#m g# - b - d# 4fr 	A a - c# - e 	B b - d# - f# 	C#m c# - e - g# 4fr 	D# ^o d# - gb - a
F f - a - c 	Gm g - Bb - d 	Am a - c - e 	Bb a# - db - f 	C c - e - g 	Dm d - f - a 	E ^o e - g - Bb
G g - b - d 	Am a - c - e 	Bm b - d - f# 	C c - e - g 	D d - f# - a 	Em e - g - b 	F# ^o f# - a - c 5fr

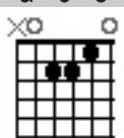
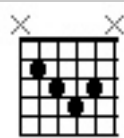
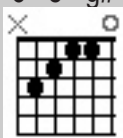
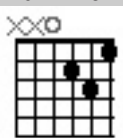
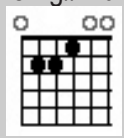
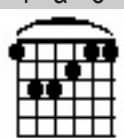
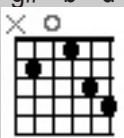
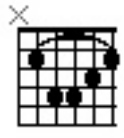
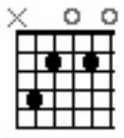
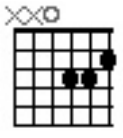
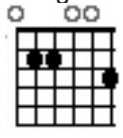
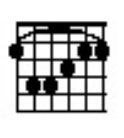
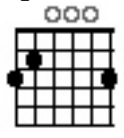
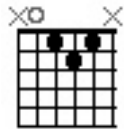
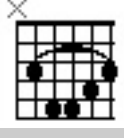
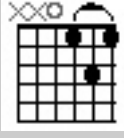
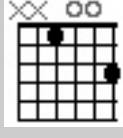
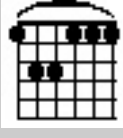
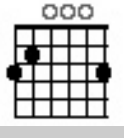
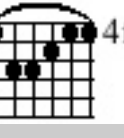
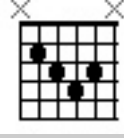
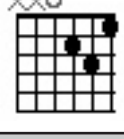
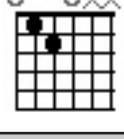
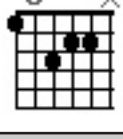
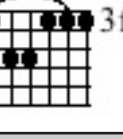
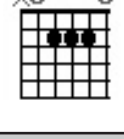
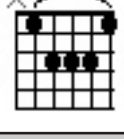
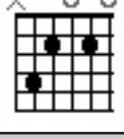
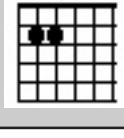
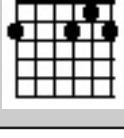
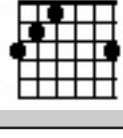
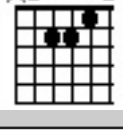
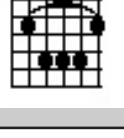
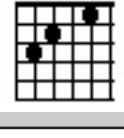
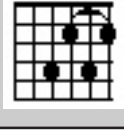
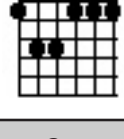
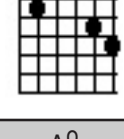
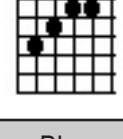
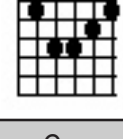
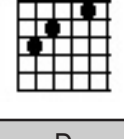
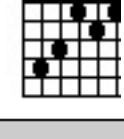
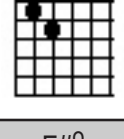
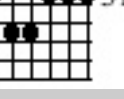
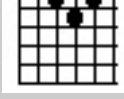
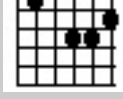
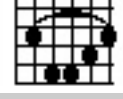
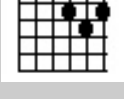
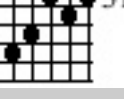
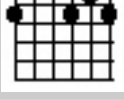
7 CHORDS THAT CAN BE BUILT ON EACH NOTE OF THE MAJOR SCALE

I7	ii7	iii7	IV7	V7	vi7	vii ^o
tonic	supertonic	mediant	subdominant	dominant	submediant	leading tone
MAJOR 7	minor 7	minor 7	MAJOR 7	dominant 7	minor 7	1/2 dim 7
1-3-5-7	1-b3-5-b7	1-b3-5-b7	1-3-5-7	1-3-5-b7	1-b3-5-b7	1-b3-b5-b7
Amaj7 a - c# - e - g# 	Bm7 b - d - f# - a 	C#m7 c# - e - g# - b 	Dmaj7 d - f# - a - c# 	E7 e - g# - b - d 	F#m7 f# - a - c# - e 	G# ^o 7 g# - b - d - f 
Bmaj7 b - d# - f# - a# 	C#m7 c# - e - g# - b 	D#m7 d# - gb - a# - db 	Emaj7 e - g# - b - d# 	F#7 f# - a# - c# - e 	G#m7 g# - b - d# - gb 	A# ^o 7 a# - db - e - g 
Cmaj7 c - e - g - b 	Dm7 d - f - a - c 	Em7 e - g - b - d 	Fmaj7 f - a - c - e 	G7 g - b - d - f 	Am7 a - c - e - g 	B ^o 7 b - d - f - g# 
Dmaj7 d - f# - a - c# 	Em7 e - g - b - d 	F#m7 f# - a - c# - e 	Gmaj7 g - b - d - f# 	A7 a - c# - e - g 	Bm7 b - d - f# - a 	C# ^o 7 c# - e - g - a# 
Emaj7 e - g# - b - d# 	F#m7 f# - a - c# - e 	G#m7 g# - b - d# - gb 	Amaj7 a - c# - e - g# 	B7 b - d# - f# - a 	C#m7 c# - e - g# - b 	D# ^o 7 d# - gb - a - c 
Fmaj7 f - a - c - e 	Gm7 g - Bb - d - f 	Am7 a - c - e - g 	Bbmaj7 a# - db - f - ab 	C7 c - e - g - Bb 	Dm7 d - f - a - c 	E ^o 7 e - g - Bb - c# 
Gmaj7 g - b - d - f# 	Am7 a - c - e - g 	Bm7 b - d - f# - a 	Cmaj7 c - e - g - b 	D7 d - f# - a - c 	Em7 e - g - b - d 	F# ^o 7 f# - a - c - d# 

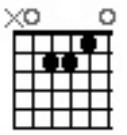
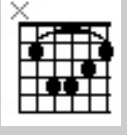
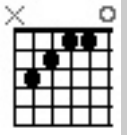
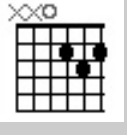
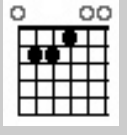
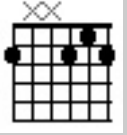
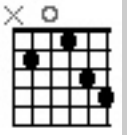
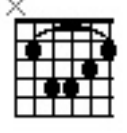
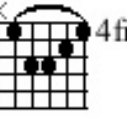
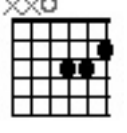
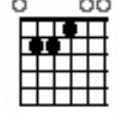
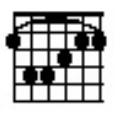
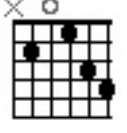
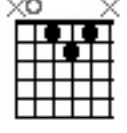
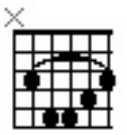
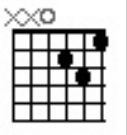
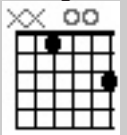
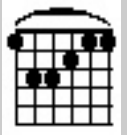
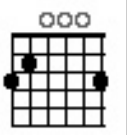
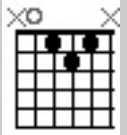
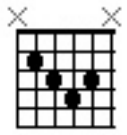
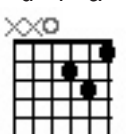
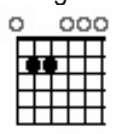
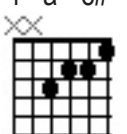
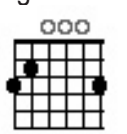
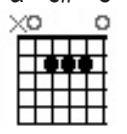
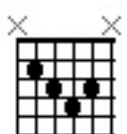
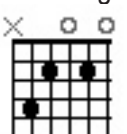
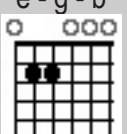
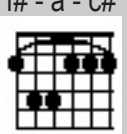
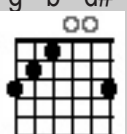
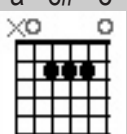
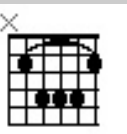
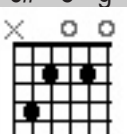
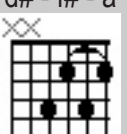
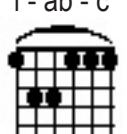
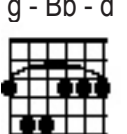
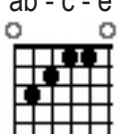
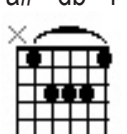
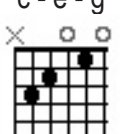

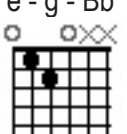
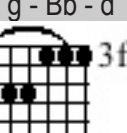
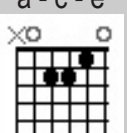
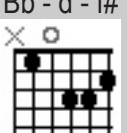
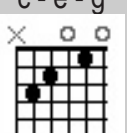
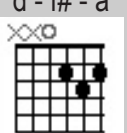
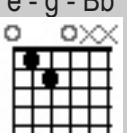
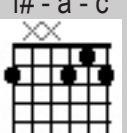
TRIADS THAT CAN BE BUILT ON EACH NOTE OF THE RELATIVE MINOR SCALE

i	II ^o	III	iv	v	VI	VII
tonic	supertonic	mediant	subdominant	dominant	submediant	leading tone
minor	diminished	MAJOR	minor	minor	MAJOR	MAJOR
1-b3-5	1-b3-b5	1-3-5	1-b3-5	1-b3-5	1-3-5	1-3-5
Am a - c - e 	B ^o b - d - f 	C c - e - g 	Dm d - f - a 	Em e - g - b 	F eb - g - Bb 	G g - b - d 
Bm b - d - f# 	C# ^o c# - e - g 	D d - f# - a 	Em e - g - b 	F#m f# - a - c# 	G g - b - d 	A a - c# - e 
Cm c - eb - g 	D ^o d - f - ab 	Eb eb - g - Bb 3fr 	Fm f - ab - c 	Gm g - Bb - d 	Ab eb - g - Bb 4fr 	Bb Bb - d - f 
Dm d - f - a 	E ^o e - g - Bb 	F f - a - c 	Gm g - Bb - d 	Am a - c - e 	Bb Bb - d - f 	C c - e - g 
Em e - g - b 	F# ^o f# - a - c 	G g - b - d 	Am a - c - e 	Bm b - d - f# 	C c - e - g 	D d - f# - a 
Fm f - ab - c 	G ^o g - Bb - db 	Ab ab - c - eb 4fr 	Bbm a# - db - f 	Cm c - eb - g 	Db d - f - a - c 	Eb eb - g - Bb 3fr 
Gm g - Bb - d 	A ^o a - c - eb 	Bb Bb - d - f 	Cm c - eb - g 	Dm d - f - a 	Eb eb - g - Bb 3fr 	F f - a - c 

TRIADS THAT CAN BE BUILT ON EACH NOTE OF THE HARMONIC MINOR SCALE

i	II ^o	III	iv	V	VI	#VII ^o
tonic	supertonic	mediant	subdominant	dominant	submediant	leading tone
minor	diminished	MAJOR aug.	minor	MAJOR	MAJOR	# diminished
1-b3-5	1-b3-b5	1-3-#5	1-b3-5	1-3-5	1-3-5	1-b3-b5
Am a - c - e 	B ^o b - d - f 	C+ c - e - g# 	Dm d - f - a 	E e - g# - b 	F f - a - c 	G# ^o g# - b - d 
Bm b - d - f# 	C# ^o c# - e - g 	D+ d - f# - a# 	Em e - g - b 	F# f# - a# - c# 	G g - b - d 	A# ^o a# - db - e 
Cm c - eb - g 	D ^o d - f - ab 	Eb+ eb - g - B 	Fm f - ab - c 	G g - b - d 	Ab eb - g - Bb  4fr	B ^o b - d - f 
Dm d - f - a 	E ^o e - g - Bb 	F+ f - a - c# 	Gm g - Bb - d  3fr	A a - c# - e 	Bb Bb - d - f 	C# ^o c# - e - g 
Em e - g - b 	F# ^o f# - a - c 	G+ g - b - d# 	Am a - c - e 	B b - d# - f# 	C c - e - g 	D# ^o d# - f# - a 
Fm f - ab - c 	G ^o g - Bb - db 	Ab+ ab - c - e 	Bbm a# - db - f 	C c - e - g 	Db d - f - a - c 	E ^o e - g - Bb 
Gm g - Bb - d  3fr	A ^o a - c - eb 	Bb+ Bb - d - f# 	Cm c - eb - g 	D d - f# - a 	Eb eb - g - Bb  3fr	F# ^o f# - a - c 

TRIADS THAT CAN BE BUILT ON EACH NOTE OF THE MELODIC MINOR SCALE

i	ii	III	IV	V	#vi ^o	#VII ^o
tonic	supertonic	mediant	subdominant	dominant	submediant	leading tone
minor	minor	MAJOR aug.	MAJOR	MAJOR	# minor dim.	# minor dim.
1-b3-5	1-b3-5	1-3-#5	1-3-5	1-3-5	1-b3-b5	1-b3-b5
Am a - c - e 	Bm b - d - f# 	C+ c - e - g# 	D d - f# - a 	E e - g# - b 	F# ^o f# - a - c 	G# ^o g# - b - d 
Bm b - d - f# 	C#m c# - e - g# 4fr 	D+ d - f# - a# 	E e - g# - b 	F# f# - a# - c# 	G# ^o g# - b - d 	A# ^o a# - db - e 
Cm c - eb - g 	Dm d - f - a 	Eb+ eb - g - B 	F f - a - c 	G g - b - d 	A ^o a - c - eb 	B ^o b - d - f 
Dm d - f - a 	Em e - g - b 	F+ f - a - c# 	G g - b - d 	A a - c# - e 	B ^o b - d - f 	C# ^o c# - e - g 
Em e - g - b 	F#m f# - a - c# 	G+ g - b - d# 	A a - c# - e 	B b - d# - f# 	C# ^o c# - e - g 	D# ^o d# - f# - a 
Fm f - ab - c 	Gm g - Bb - d 	Ab+ ab - c - e 	Bb a# - db - f 	C c - e - g 	D ^o d - f - ab 	E ^o e - g - Bb 
Gm g - Bb - d 3fr 	Am a - c - e 	Bb+ Bb - d - f# 	C c - e - g 	D d - f# - a 	E ^o e - g - Bb 	F# ^o f# - a - c 

COMMENTS:

At this point probably a few questions arise.

1. There are so many chords how can I remember all of these?
2. The melodic and harmonic minor chord scales don't sound right. What the deal?
3. Can there be 7th chords in the minor scales?
4. Progressions don't sound like that, why not and how do I figure out how they relate?

Answers:

1. There are ways to remember the chords. They are called moveable chords. I didn't put them in the charts because I think it's a good idea to explore as many fingerings as possible. There may be ones that you prefer and can go back to frequently to add some variety to your playing. After this question / answer session I'll give you moveable forms.
2. This answer kind of goes along with the answer to number 4. First of all, these two scales are not what we are used to hearing anyway. When you add chords to them, some of the chords seem out of place or awkward. Don't worry about it. Some of them are awkward and rarely used. The important thing for you to understand is the relationship certain chords have with one another. After the moveable chord forms we'll talk about the progressions themselves and different ones that lend themselves to a more natural feel.
3. Absolutely, the same rules apply to the minor scales and any other scale as to the major scale. Adding a 7th will add fullness to the chord and is often done in jazz music.
4. We rarely here a progression in order. Progressions jump around, they mix with each other. They go from 2 to 5 to 1 or whatever. The charts above simply tell us what chords work in what key, how to create those chords and the intervals that make up those chords and keys. When we look at the Circle of 5ths you'll understand how to figure out what key you're in by what chords are being played.

EXERCISES FOR THE CHORD SCALE CHARTS

1. play the sequence in order 1-2-3-4-5-6-7
2. play it again breaking them up 1-2 ... 2-3 ... 3-4 ... 4-5 ... 5-6 ... 6-7 ... 7-1 (these are cadences)
3. now mix them up a bit 1-3 ... 2-4 ... 3-5 ... 4-6 ... 5-7 ... 6-1 ... 7-2
4. create your own combinations and take notes in the Journal on the following page.