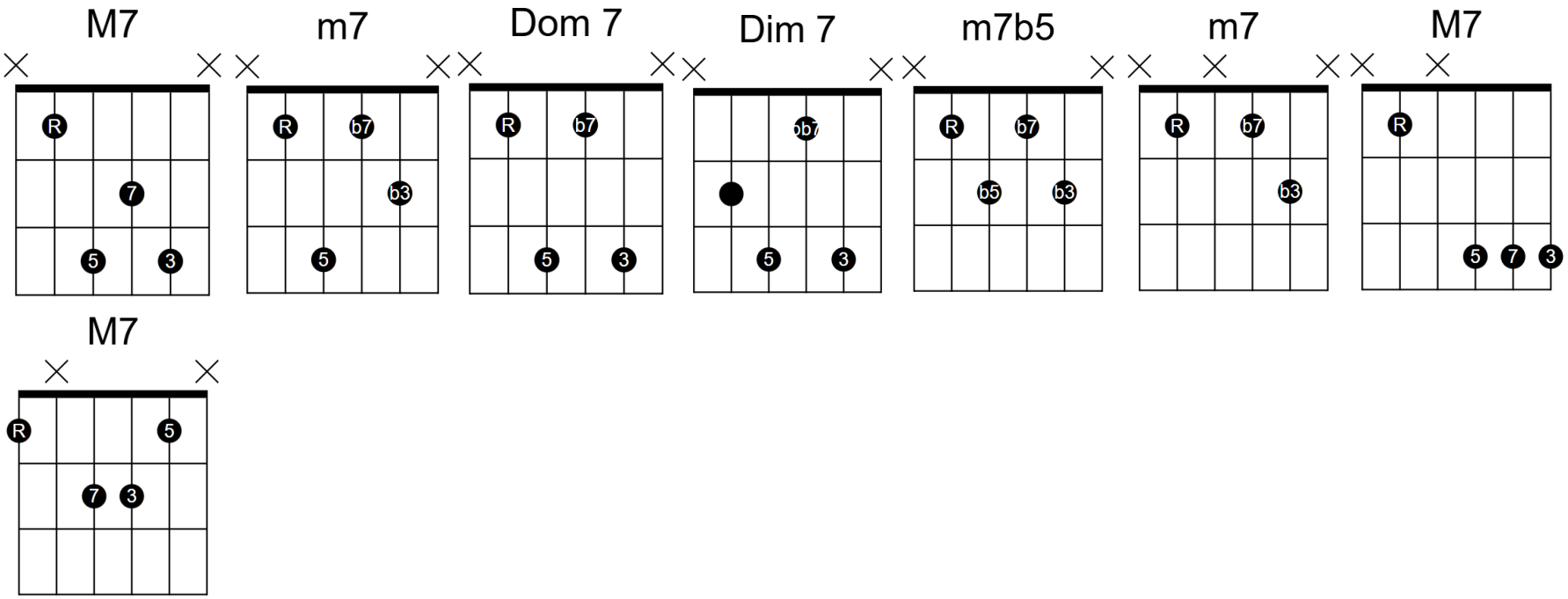
Guide Tones



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ppYNb8_CUg

Take Autumn Leaves; Progression:

```
|-Cm7-F7-BbM7-EbM7-Am7b5-D7-Gm-Gm6-||-m7--7---M7--M7--b5--7---m7--m6--||
|-8---6--6----6----4-----3--3--3---||---------------------------------||
|-8---8--7----7----5-----5--3--3---||-8---8---7---7---5---5---3---3---||
|-8---7--7----5----5-----4--3--2---||-8---7---7---5---5---4---3---2---||
|-----8-------6----5-----5---------||-b3--b7--3---7---b3--b7--b3--b3--||
|-8------6-----------------3--3---||-b7--3---7---3---b7--3---b7--6---||

|-Am7b5-D7alt-Gm7-Gm6-|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
|-5-----5-----3---3---|---------------------|---------------------|
|-5-----4-----3---2---|---------------------|---------------------|
|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
|---------------------|-----------------|---------------------|

|-Cm7-F7-BbM7-EbM7-Am7b5-D7alt-Gm7-Gm6-|-Am7b5-D7alt-Gm7-Gm6-|
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
|-13--13-12---12---10----10----8---8---|-10----10----8---8---|
|-13--12-12---10---10-----9----8---7---|-10-----9----8---7---|
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
```

```
|-Cm7-F7-BbM7-EbM7-Am7b5-D7alt-|-Gm7-C7-|-Fm7-Bb7-EbM7-|-Am7b5-D7alt-|-Gm7-|-Gm6-|
|------------------------------|--------|--------------|-------------|-----|-----|
|------------------------------|--------|--------------|-------------|-----|-----|
|-13--13-12---12---10----10----|-8---8--|-6---6---5----|-10----10----|-8---|-8---|
|-13--12-12---10---10-----9----|-8---7--|-6---5---5----|-10-----9----|-8---|-7---|
|------------------------------|--------|--------------|-------------|-----|-----|
```

Autumn Leaves 3rd and root

```
|-Cm7-|-5--|-BbM7-|-EbM7-|-Am7b5-|-D7-|-6---|-6--|-Am7b5-|-D7-|-Gm7-|-Gm7-|-Cm7-|-F7-|-BbM7-|-EbM7-|-----|
|-----|----|------|-8----|-------|-7--|-----|----|-------|----|-----|-----|-----|----|------|------|--------|
|-8---|----|-7----|------|-5-----|----|-----|----|-------|----|-----|-----|-----|----|------|------|--------|
|-----|----|------|------|-------|----|-5---|-5--|--------|---|-----|-----|-----|----|------|------|-----|
|-----|-8--|------|-6----|-------|-5--|-----|----|-------|----|-----|-----|-----|----|------|------|-------|
|-8---|-F7-|-6----|------|-5-----|----|-Gm7-|----|-------|----|-----|-----|-----|----|------|------|------|
```

```
|-Am7b5-|-D7-|-6--C7-|-Fm7-Bb7-|-EbM7-|-Am7b5-D7-|-6---|-6-|
|-------|-7--|----5--|-8-------|-8----|-------7--|-----|---|
|-5-----|----|-------|-----7---|------|-5--------|-----|---|
|-------|----|-5-----|---------|------|----------|-----|---|
|-------|-5--|-------|-8-------|-6----|-------5--|-5---|-5-|
|-5-----|----|-Gm7-8-|-----6---|------|-5--------|-Gm7-|---|
```

Take Fly Me To The Moon; Progression:

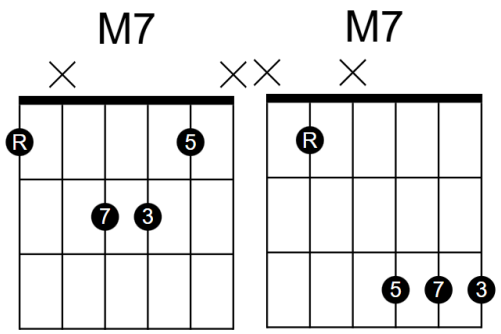
```
|-8---------7-------------------------------|-8-------7-----------|
|-8----6----6---5---------------------------|-8---6---6--5-----------|
|-9----5----7---4---------------------------|-----5------4------|
|-7---------5---5---------------------------|------------------|
|------5--------3---------------------------|-b3--b7--3---3----------|
|-Am7--Dm7--G7--CM7--FM7--Bm7b5--E7---Am6---|-b7--b3--b7--7--------------------------------|
```

Rhythm Changes
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s52xdHRL9oQ&t=1342s
A Section:
1-6-2-5 in Bb twice; then 2-5 to Eb; another 1-6-2-5 in Bb but sub the 3 for the 1: 3-6-2-5 twice;
Then

```
|-BbM7-Gm--Cm7-F7-|---|-Fm7-Bb7-EbM7-|-Dm7-Gm-Cm7-F7-|---|--------------|
|-----------------|---|--------------|---------------|---|-------|
|-7----10--8---8--|-%-|-8---7---7----|-10--10-8---8--|-%-|-------------|
|-7-----8--8---7--|-%-|-6---6---5----|-10---8-8---7--|-%-|------------|
|------10------8--|---|-8-------6----|-----10-----8--|---|----------|
|-6--------8------|---|-----6--------|-10-----8------|---|---------|
```

B Section: Chain of dominants
D7 (the V of VI); G7 (V of II); C7 (V of V); F7 (V); Bb

```
|----|----|-G7-|-G7-|-C7-|-C7-|-F7-|-F7-|-BbM7-|or |-D7-|-D7-|-G7-|-G7-|-C7-|-C7-|-F7-|-F7-|---|
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|------|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---------|
|-5--|----|-4--|----|-3--|----|-2--|----|-2----|---|-11-|----|-8--|----|-7--|----|-6--|----|------|
|-4--|----|-3--|----|-2--|----|-1--|----|-0----|---|-10-|----|-7--|----|-8--|----|-5--|----|----------|
|-5--|----|----|----|-3--|----|----|----|-1----|---|----|----|-8--|----|----|----|-6--|----|-------|
|-D7-|-D7-|-3--|----|----|----|-1--|----|------|---|-10-|----|----|----|-8--|----|----|----|---------|
```



To master identifying the 3rd and 7th (often called **guide tones**), you should combine physical fretboard visualization with active listening and performance exercises. In jazz and blues, these two notes are considered the most critical because they define the chord's quality (Major, Minor, or Dominant).

1. Master "Shell Voicings"

The most effective physical way to see these notes is through **shell voicings**, which reduce chords to just their essential parts: the Root, 3rd, and 7th.

- **Root on 6th String:** The 7th is on the 4th string, and the 3rd is on the 3rd string.
- **Root on 5th String:** The 3rd is on the 4th string, and the 7th is on the 3rd string.
- **Practice Tip:** Play a standard jazz progression (like a ii-V-I) using only these three-note shapes.

```
|------------|----------|-----------------------------------|
|------------|-6--6--5--|-----------------------------------|
|-10--10--9--|-5--4--4--|-------------------------------------------|
|-10---9--9--|----------|-----------------------------------|
|-----10-----|-5--5--3--|-----------------------------------|
|-10------8--|----------|-----------------------------------|
```

- Once comfortable, remove the root and play only the 3rd and 7th as "guide-tone" melodies.

2. Visualization via CAGED Shapes

Use the **CAGED system** to locate chord tones within larger shapes you already know.

- Identify the 3rd and 7th relative to the root in each of the five shapes.
- For example, a Major 7th is always one half-step below the root, and a minor 3rd is always three frets up from the root on the same string.
- Practice finding all the 3rds of a specific chord across the entire fretboard before moving to the 7ths.

3. Progressive Training Exercises

- **The "One Note" Drill:** Use a backing track and play **only** the 3rd of every chord as it passes. Repeat the exercise for the 7th. This forces you to "hear" the change specifically through that interval.
- **Voice Leading:** Connect the 3rd or 7th of one chord to the closest 3rd or 7th of the next chord. In many jazz standards, the 7th of one chord resolves downward by a half-step to become the 3rd of the next.
- **Targeting in Solos:** When improvising, treat the 3rd and 7th as "landing zones." Use scales to bridge the gap between them, ensuring you hit these specific tones on the strong beats (beats 1 and 3).

4. Ear Training & Mental Math

- **Singing:** Sing the 3rd and 7th over a backing track. If you can sing it, you can hear it, which makes finding it on the fretboard instinctive rather than mechanical.
- **Flash Cards:** Memorize the note names for the 3rd and 7th of all 12 keys (e.g., "The 3rd of G7 is B, the 7th is F") so you don't have to calculate them while playing.

What are common voice leading errors to avoid when connecting guide tones?

When connecting guide tones (the 3rd and 7th), the primary goal is to create smooth, logical movement between chords. Avoiding common voice leading errors ensures your transitions sound musical and professional rather than disjointed.

Common errors to avoid include:

1. Excessive Leaping Between Chords

- **The Error:** Moving individual voices (the 3rd or 7th) by intervals larger than a **major 3rd**.
- **The Fix:** Effective voice leading favors "lazy" movement. Aim for **stepwise motion** (half or whole steps) or keeping the note the same (common tone).

2. Failing to Resolve the 7th Downward

- **The Error:** Resolving the 7th of a chord upward or skipping away from it.
- **The Fix:** In standard functional harmony (like a ii-V-I), the **7th of the current chord should resolve downward by step** to become the 3rd of the next chord. For example, in a G7 to Cmaj7 progression, the F (7th of G7) resolves down to E (3rd of Cmaj7).

3. Ignoring Parallel Fifths and Octaves

- **The Error:** Moving two voices in the same direction at the exact same interval (parallel 5ths or 8ths).
- **The Fix:** While more common in classical theory, avoiding these on guitar helps maintain the independence of each melodic line.
- Use **contrary motion** (voices moving in opposite directions) or **oblique motion** (one voice stays while the other moves) to create more sophisticated textures.

4. Over-reliance on "Guitaristic" Shapes

- **The Error:** Jumping between standard bar chord shapes or scale patterns because they are visually familiar, which often causes massive melodic leaps.

- **The Fix:** Focus on the internal notes rather than the grip. Practice connecting guide tones within a **single position** (spanning no more than 3-4 frets) to ensure you are hearing the note-to-note transitions.

5. Doubling the 3rd or 7th unnecessarily

- **The Error:** Playing the 3rd or 7th in multiple octaves simultaneously within a small voicing.
- **The Fix:** These notes are highly "colorful" and descriptive; doubling them can make a chord sound muddy or unbalanced. Instead, **double the root or the 5th** if you need more notes in your voicing.

6. Mismanaging Altered Notes

- **The Error:** Resolving a sharpened (#) or flattened (b) note against its natural direction.
- **The Fix:** Generally, **altered notes should resolve in the direction of their alteration** (e.g., a b9 should resolve downward, and a #11 should resolve upward) to sound most natural to the ear.

Give examples of smooth voice leading resolutions between common chord changes

To see smooth voice leading in action, look at how the 3rd and 7th "swap" roles.

In the most common chord progressions, the **7th of one chord drops by a half-step to become the 3rd of the next.**

Here are three essential examples of smooth resolutions for the guitar.

1. The Jazz ii-V-I $Dm7 \rightarrow G7 \rightarrow Cmaj7$

This is the "gold standard" of voice leading. Notice how the voices barely move, yet the chord quality changes completely.
Guitar Visualization: If you play these on the 4th and 3rd strings, your fingers will move by only one fret at a time, creating a "descending staircase" effect.

Chord	3rd	7th	Voice Leading Action
Dm7	**F**	**C**	—
G7	**B**	**F**	The **C** (7th) from Dm7 drops a half-step to **B** (3rd). The **F** stays the same.
Cmaj7	**E**	**B**	The **F** (7th) from G7 drops a half-step to **E** (3rd). The **B** stays the same.

2. The Blues IV to I $F7 \rightarrow Bb7$

In a blues progression, moving from the IV chord back to the I chord uses a very satisfying "contraction."

Chord	3rd	7th	Voice Leading Action
F7 (IV)	**A**	**Eb**	—

Bb7 (I)	**D**	**Ab**	The **A** (3rd) drops a half-step to **Ab** (7th). The **Eb** (7th) drops a half-step to **D** (3rd).

Result: Both notes move downward by a half-step. This is the smoothest possible way to transition between these two dominant chords.

3. Minor ii-V-i $Bm7b5 \rightarrow E7 \rightarrow Am7$

Minor progressions often feel more "dramatic" because the intervals can be slightly larger, but the guide tones still guide the way.

Chord	3rd	7th	Voice Leading Action
Bm7b5	**D**	**A**	—
E7	**G#**	**D**	The **A** (7th) drops a half-step to **G#** (3rd). The **D** stays the same.
Am7	**C**	**G**	The **G#** (3rd) drops a half-step to **G** (7th). The **D** (7th) drops a step to **C** (3rd).

Practice Exercise: The "Guide Tone Path"

To internalize this, try this drill on your guitar:

1. Play a **Dm7** shell voicing (Root on 5th string, 5th fret).
2. Identify your **3rd (F)** and **7th (C)**.
3. Transition to **G7** by keeping your finger on the **F** but moving the **C** down to **B**.
4. Transition to **Cmaj7** by keeping your finger on the **B** but moving the **F** down to **E**.

To keep this as clear as possible, we will focus on the **DGB strings** (strings 4, 3, and 2). This is the "sweet spot" for voice leading because it removes the heavy bass and lets you hear the harmony clearly.

1. The Jazz ii-V-I $Dm7 \rightarrow G7 \rightarrow Cmaj7$

In this example, watch how the notes on the 2nd and 3rd strings alternate between staying still and moving by just **one fret**.

```
     Dm7     G7      Cmaj7
|-------------------|
|--6(F)--6(F)-5(E)--| <--- This voice is the 3rd -> 7th -> 3rd
|--5(C)--4(B)-4(B)--| <--- This voice is the 7th -> 3rd -> 7th
|-------------------|
|--5(D)--5(D)-3(C)--| <--- Roots (Optional)
|--------3(G)-------|
```

The **C** drops to **B**, then the **F** drops to **E**. It's a "cascading" resolution.

2. The Blues IV7 to $F7 \rightarrow Bb7$

This is the classic "Parallel Shift."

In a blues, when you move from the IV chord to the I chord, both the 3rd and the 7th slide down by exactly one fret.
This creates that "greasy," smooth blues sound. Both essential tones move in tandem.

```
    F7       Bb7
|---------------|
|--10(A)--9(Ab)-| <--- 3rd of F7 moves to 7th of Bb7
|---8(Eb)-7(D)--| <--- 7th of F7 moves to 3rd of Bb7
|---------------|
|---8(F)--------|
|---------6(Bb)-|
```

3. The Minor ii-V-i $Bm7b5 \rightarrow E7 \rightarrow Am7$

This utilizes the same "one-note-at-a-time" movement but with a darker, minor tonality.
The **G#** in the E7 chord is the "Leading Tone."
It feels like it *must* resolve and dropping it to the **G** natural of the Am7 creates a very sophisticated, "jazzy" release of tension.

```
   Bm7b5     E7      Am7
E|-------------------|
B|--3(D)--3(D)--1(C)-| <--- 3rd -> 7th -> 3rd
G|--2(A)--1(G#)-0(G)-| <--- 7th -> 3rd -> 7th
D|-------------------|
A|--2(B)--------0(A)-|
E|--------0(E)-------|
```

3. The Minor ii-V-i $Bm7b5 \rightarrow E7 \rightarrow Am7$

How to Practice These Tabs

1. **Isolate the Guide Tones:** Play just the notes on the **G and B strings** first. Listen to how they sound like a little melody.
2. **Add the Root:** Once you hear the melody, add the root note on the A or E string to provide context.
3. **The "Strum-Switch" Test:** Strum the first chord, then try to move *only* the finger that needs to change for the next chord. If you can do it without looking, you've mastered the physical "pathway" of the voice leading.

To practice identifying and connecting chord tones, use this **Jazz-Blues 12-bar progression in G**.

This sequence combines the "bluesy" IV-I shift with the "jazzy" ii-V-I turnaround.

Focus on the **G and B strings**, where the 3rd and 7th (guide tones) reside. Note how one voice often stays still while the other moves by a single fret.

12-Bar Guide Tone Practice Routine

Key: G Major | Tempo: 80-100 BPM

Bar	Chord	Voice 1 (B string)	Voice 2 (G string)	Movement Description
1-4	**G7**	**B (12f)**	**F (10f)**	Establishing the I chord guide tones.
5-6	**C7**	**Bb (11f)**	**E (9f)**	**Blues Shift:** Both voices slide down 1 fret.
7-8	**G7**	**B (12f)**	**F (10f)**	**Blues Return:** Both voices slide back up 1 fret.
9	**Am7**	**C (13f)**	**G (12f)**	Start of the ii-V-I.
10	**D7**	**C (13f)**	**F# (11f)**	**ii to V:** Top voice stays; bottom drops 1 fret.
11	**Gmaj7**	**B (12f)**	**F# (11f)**	**V to I:** Bottom voice stays; top drops 1 fret.
12	**D7**	**C (13f)**	**F# (11f)**	**Turnaround:** Back to the V chord for the loop.

The "Smallest Movement" Method
This tab uses only the essential guide tones. Play these over a backing track to hear how they perfectly define the harmony without needing the full chord shape.

```
|------------------------|
|-12-11-12-13--13-12--13--|
|-10--9-10-12--11-11--11--|
|------------------------|
|------------------------|
|-G7-C7-G7-Am7-D7-GM7-D7--|
```

Practice Strategy

1. **Isolate the "Swap":** In the last 4 bars (Am7 to D7 to Gmaj7), notice how only **one finger moves at a time**. This is the most efficient way to navigate the fretboard in jazz-blues styles.

2. **Add the Bass:** Once comfortable, use your thumb or a pick to play the **root note** on the low E or A string for each chord.

3. **Hum the Tone:** Try to hum the note on the B string while playing the full progression. This connects your ear to the "top" voice of the harmony.