Tissimo

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Modulation

A piece does not have to stay in one key. **Modulation** means moving to a new key — a new home note — in the middle of the music. Most pieces leave home at least once, and the way back is half the fun.

THE CLUE: A NEW LEADING TONE

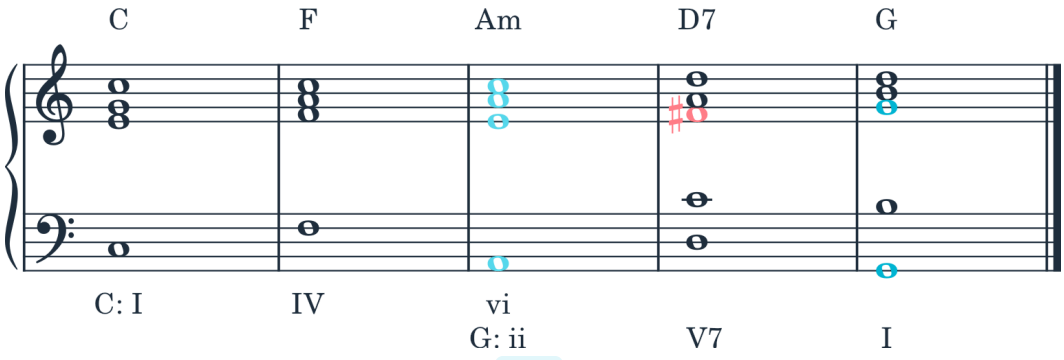
Each key has its own **leading tone**, the note a half step below home. When a piece in C major starts using **F♯** again and again, and that F♯ keeps rising to G, the music has moved to **G major**. One passing sharp is only a visitor (Handout 235); a sharp that **stays** and ends with a cadence in the new key is a modulation.

C major → G major
New note **F♯**, G's leading tone. The key signature of G has exactly this one sharp.

C major → A minor
New note **G♯**, the leading tone of A minor (harmonic minor, Handout 25). Same key signature, new home.

THE PIVOT CHORD

The smoothest way over is a chord that **belongs to both keys**. A minor is **vi** in C major and also **ii** in G major, so your ear hears it in C, and the next chord reinterprets it. After the **pivot** comes **D7**, the V7 of G, with its **F♯**. It resolves to **G**, the new home. Read the two lines of numerals: the pivot is the one chord with both.



C: I – IV – **vi = ii** – V7 – I :G

WHERE MUSIC LIKES TO GO

Modulations usually go to a **close key** — one whose key signature differs by at most one sharp or flat. Those are the neighbors on the circle of fifths (Handout 56), plus their relative minors. The two favorite trips from a major key: up to the **dominant**, and over to the **relative minor**. A typical journey:

C major → **G major** → **A minor** → **C major**

home — F♯ appears — the dominant — G♯ appears — the relative minor — F♮ and G♮ return — home again

Close keys of C major: **G** +F♯ · **F** +B♭ · **A minor** same signature · **E minor** +F♯ · **D minor** +B♭

Try it Play the pivot progression and stop on Am: it still sounds like C major. Play on: D7 and G turn it around. Then open the *Minuet in G* (**Handout 238**) and follow its key map: G major, to D major (the dominant), and home to G. In each new key, find the clue note. Practice: Exercise 86.

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