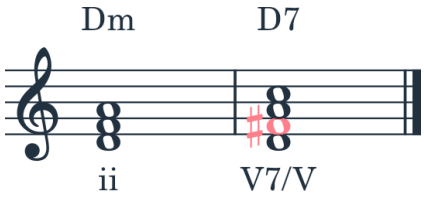
Secondary dominants

Every key has one dominant 7th: in C major, **G7** (Handout 212). But music can **borrow** a dominant for another chord — a chord that points at G, or at Dm, and for a moment makes it sound like home. These are **secondary dominants**. (Borrowing a chord from the parallel minor is different: Handout 384.)

BORROW A DOMINANT

In C major the chord on D is **minor**: D–F–A (ii; the chords of a key: Handout 357). Raise the F to **F♯** and add C on top, and it becomes **D7**, a real dominant 7th.

D7 is the V7 of **G**, so musicians call it **V7/V**, "five of five." The **F♯** is G's own leading tone, borrowed for a moment: it sits a half step under G and pulls up.

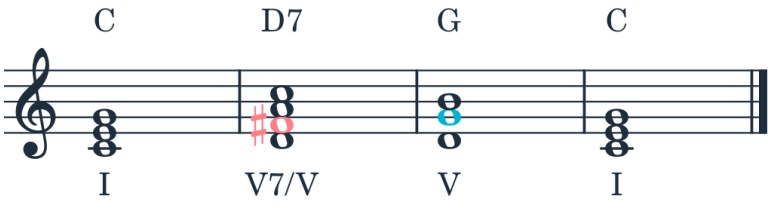


one note changes: F → F♯

FIVE OF FIVE IN ACTION

Play **C – D7 – G – C**. When D7 arrives, the coral **F♯** climbs a half step to the **G**, and for a beat G sounds like the tonic. Then G does its usual job and leads home to C.

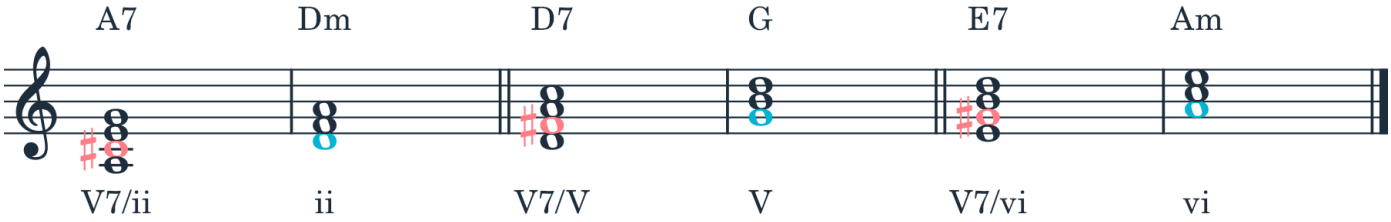
The 7th of D7, the **C**, steps **down** to B — the same two-voice engine you met in G7 → C, one key over.



I – V7/V – V – I

MORE BORROWED DOMINANTS · AND HOW TO SPOT ONE

Any major or minor chord in the key can get its own dominant. In C major, **A7** points to Dm (V7/ii), **D7** to G (V7/V), **E7** to Am (V7/vi). Each one carries a sharp the key does not own, and each sharp rises a half step onto the **root** of the next chord. In real music: Bach's Prelude in C, bars 6, 10 and 20 (Handout 377); Chopin's Prelude in A, bar 12 (Handout 380).



1. Find a **note the key does not own** — in C major usually a sharp: C♯, F♯, G♯.
2. Check that it **rises a half step**. That is a borrowed leading tone; the note it lands on names the target chord.
3. Name the chord: **V7/** + the target's numeral. The root sits a **5th above** the target's root.

Try it Play the three pairs above and sing the coral note up into the cyan one. Then play **C – A7 – Dm – G7 – C** and **C – E7 – Am – D7 – G7 – C**. Chopin does it too: in bar 47 of the Fantaisie-Impromptu, B♭7 → E♭m is V7/ii in D♭ major, and its clue is a D natural rising to E♭. More chromatic chords: Handouts 384, 386, 387; Exercise 73.

LISTEN
Scan to hear every example
tissimo.co/worksheets/secondary-dominants

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