

# Cadences

What is a **cadence**? What are they for?

Cadences in music serve a number of purposes. First and foremost, they help to define the key at a given moment in a piece of music. They can often work as 'musical punctuation marks'. When setting music to words, cadences can often correspond with the end of a verse, or for example at the end of every other line.

Cadences can be simply defined as the closing progression of two chords at the end of a musical phrase.

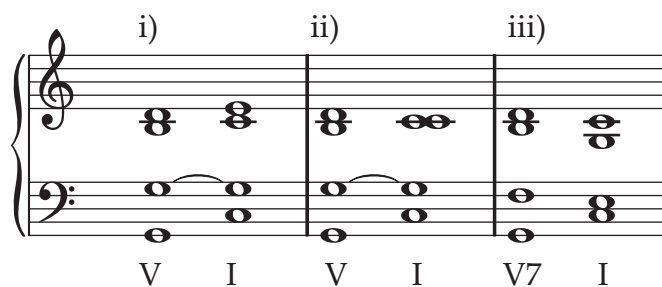
There are **four main types of cadence** that you will come to deal with in writing basic harmony:

## 1) Perfect Cadence (Full-close)

Perfect cadences, (or full-close in some american sources), are by far the most common cadences in all tonal music, and you will come across them in works from the Renaissance onwards.

Perfect cadences are always formed by the progression V - I, in both major and minor keys. The addition of the seventh is optional, but as we shall later, in strict writing it is not permissible to use sevenths without preparation. For now don't worry about using sevenths - I'll explain how to do this later.

Perfect Cadences in C major



## Voice Leading

As I mentioned before, there are a few part leading rules that we need to observe. Firstly, the voices need to move as little as possible, without causing parallel octaves or fifths, and any notes in common should be held over in the same voice.

In example i, we can see that both chords have the notes G in common, so here we have tied it over in the tenor voice. The bass voice must leap, because the root of the chords are a fifth/fourth apart.

Ideally, the leading note, b, should always rise one step to the tonic (although this is not always possible, as seen in the third example above). D, the supertonic, may either rise or fall. If it does fall, this would mean that tonic C major chord is left without a third (E), as we see in example ii. This does sometimes happen, but is usually avoided, unless you're doing species counterpoint exercises.

Example iii we will come back to!

## Minor keys

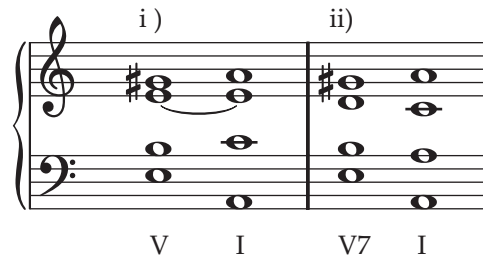
Minor keys are treated in exactly the same way, but we must always remember that the dominant chord is always major at the cadence in tonal music. If you're familiar with the **harmonic minor** scale you'll know that the seventh degree is always raised. It has the name *harmonic* minor scale for the obvious reason that it is used most frequently when writing *harmony*!

### Harmonic Minor Scale on A



leading note is always raised  
at cadences in minor keys.

### Perfect Cadences in A minor



Here you can see the same ideas at work. In example i, the note in common is E, and is held over in the alto. Again, G-sharp, the leading note leads up to the tonic (hence the name!) and the supertonic, B, moves up to C. We will come back to ii later.

In all these examples, you may have noticed that we have obeyed all our rules perfectly:

- No parallel fifths or octaves
- All voices move the smallest distance possible (one step or less in all parts except the bass - which must move).

## Homework

Write perfect cadences in four voices, as shown above, being careful to follow all the rules/guidelines, in the following keys:

Major:

G major, D major, F major

Minor:

G minor, C minor and B minor