

Tutorial 1C: Melodic Color



Welcome! In this tutorial you'll learn how to:

1. Find and use color tones in solos
2. Find and use color intervals in solos
3. Handle the 4th degree effectively

Enjoy the learning – sea you at the shore!

Other Level 1 Tutorials

- 1A: Virtual Practice
- 1B: Chords and Scales
- 1D: Rhythmic Variety
- 1E: Flexible Scale Levels
- 1F: Using Expression
- 1G: Develop Motifs/Phrases
- 1J: Chords, Keys, Progressions

► Using melodic color in your solo ideas is one of the best “bang for the buck” techniques there is. By emphasizing color notes and intervals, you create more interest in your lines and more opportunities to hang on to the “fun” notes.

Part 1 – Finding/Using Color Tones

A) What is a color tone?

*It's a tone in the scale that sounds more tense than others. In major, dominant, and minor scales, color tones are always the 2, 4, 6, and 7 of the scale.

Color tones for C Major: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

C **D** E **F** G **A** **B** C

For C dominant: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

C **D** E **F** G **A** **Bb** C

For C minor: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

C **D** Eb **F** G **A** **Bb** C

- ▶ **TRY IT – Basic:** In each major scale in the circle of 4ths, name the color tone pitches (2, 4, 6, 7). **Medium:** Do this for each Mixolydian scale, **Challenge:** Do this for each Dorian scale.

B) Why should I use color tones?

*To add melodic color and interest to your solos.

*To prolong musical tension in a phrase.

C) How do I emphasize them?



*Play them on downbeats or hold them out. This example plays the 2, 6, #4, 2, and 7 on downbeats:

2 3 6 5 #4 6 2 1 7



*“Unlearn” the natural tendency to rely on resting tones (1, 3, 5) in solo melodies. If you play 1, 3, 5 arpeggios too often in solos, you over-emphasize resting tones, and your solos may sound boring.

- ▶ **TRY IT – Basic:** Around the circle of 4ths, play each flexible 8th-note Lydian scale at quarter note = 120, with fermatas on color tones but not on resting tones. **Medium** **Challenge**

Part 2 – Using Color Intervals

A) What is a color interval?

*It's an interval where both notes are color tones, sometimes with a fairly wide skip. For emphasis, you can hold the second note of the color interval.

Here are the color intervals in C Major (upward skips):

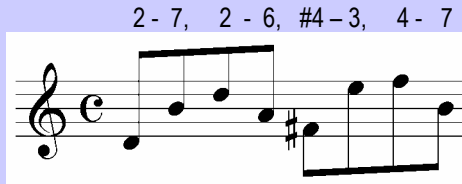
D to F# (2-#4);

F# to A or B (#4 to 6 or 7);

B to D (7-2);

A to D (6-2);

D to A or B (2-6 or 7).



You can transpose these intervals to all other keys in major, minor, and dominant, and reverse the skips.

B) Why should I use color intervals?

*Color intervals can greatly enhance the color and interest in your melodic lines. Unless you concentrate on practicing and including them, they usually don't occur naturally to you.

- ▶ **TRY IT – Basic:** Play all the color intervals (upwards skips) in the key of C. **Medium:** Do the same with downward skips. **Challenge:** Do upward skips in all keys in the circle of 4ths.

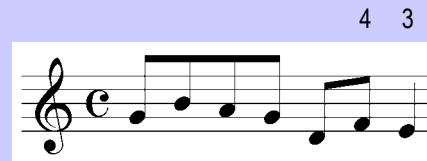
Part 3 – Handling the Fourth Degree

A) What's the problem with the 4th degree?

*In major and dominant chords, the 4 conflicts with the 3 of the current major chord. (The fourth sounds like the root of next chord in the circle of fourths, a dominant resolution.)

B) How do I fix it?

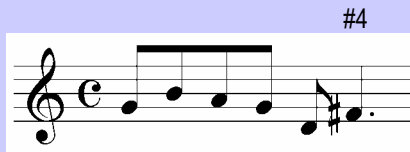
*Play the 4th and then the 3rd, such as F to E in C Major.



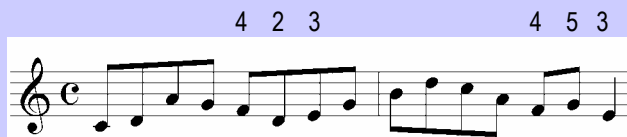
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(Part 3 – Handling the Fourth Degree)

*Or, *sharp* the fourth (as in the Lydian scale) so the fourth doesn't need to resolve.



*Or, *delay* the resolution of the natural fourth, such as 4 to 2 to 3, or 4 to 5 to 3.



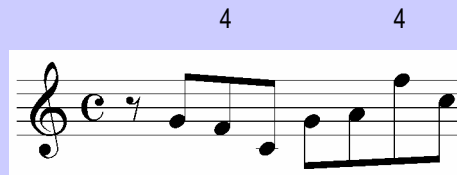
- ▶ **TRY IT – Basic:** In each major scale around the circle of 4ths, name the fourth degree and two different ways to resolve each fourth. For example, in C Major, F is the fourth; it can resolve to E, or first to D then to E. **Medium:** Play each flexible major scale and pause on each 3, then resolve it to the 4. **Challenge:** Do the same, using 4-2-3 and 4-5-3 resolutions.

*In minor, the natural 4th degree is *fine* to emphasize, unlike major or dominant. Some players avoid the fourth in minor, mistakenly thinking it's like the fourth in major. Don't neglect the fourth in your minor-key solos; use it to add welcome color.

C) What are suspended chords (C7sus)?

*A suspended chord (sus) is usually one where the 4th is substituted for the 3rd, such as Csus (major) or C7sus (dominant). On these chords you emphasize the natural 4th, not the 3rd.


*Unlike classical music, jazz often prolongs suspended chords or leaves them unresolved. A sample melody with a C7sus chord:



That's all for Tutorial 1C!

Next is the Quiz – to get started, go to the next page.

QUIZ – 1C: Melodic Color

Click on the letter for the best answer for each question. You'll hear a C Maj6 arpeggio if you're right. If you miss 2 or less, you pass the Tutorial!
Or, click Back  to review the Tutorial before taking the Quiz.

- 1) What note is different between a C7 and a C7sus?
A) 5th B) 7th C) 3rd D) root
- 2) Which note is not a color tone in Bbm7?
A) G B) Eb C) F D) C
- 3) Which note is a color tone in Ab Major?
A) C B) Eb C) A D) G
- 4) A color interval is:
A) used only in major chords and scales B) two consecutive color tones C) an interval wider than a 5th D) all of these
- 5) To emphasize color tones, play them:
A) on offbeats B) on downbeats C) in minor chords D) in major chords
- 6) What is not a good way to handle the 4th degree in major?
A) hold it B) sharp it C) 4 – 3 D) 4 – 5 – 3
- 7) What scale degrees are the color tones?
A) 2 4 5 7 B) 3 4 6 7 C) 2 4 6 8 D) 2 4 6 7
- 8) Which is a resting tone in F#Maj7?
A) G# B) D# C) A# D) E#



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