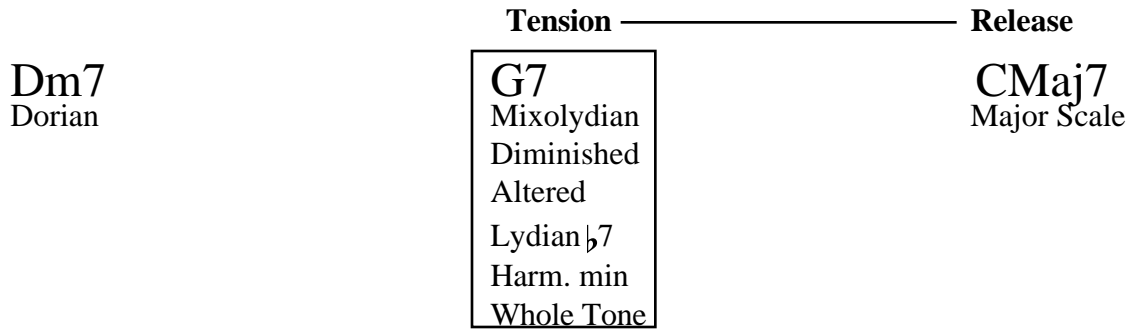


# Minor ii-V-i options

In jazz studies we spend a great deal of time practicing voicings and the scales that relate to them. The first step is to learn Dorian scale over the ii chord, Mixolydian scale over the V chord and Major scale over the I chord. The next step is to explore what we can do over the V chord in order to create a tension that then releases when the I chord is played. To create tension over dominant chords, scales such as Diminished, Altered, Harmonic minor, Lydian  $\flat 7$ , Whole-tone, etc. are used.



Sound wise, the minor ii-V-i progression differs from the Major ii-V-I in that the tension starts already on the ii chord. To create that tension there are different scales that can be used to cover both the ii chord and the V chord. When a scale covers several chords it's called a **blanket scale**. What you will notice with blanket scales is that some notes sound better than other notes and some you have to compromise with to make them fit. It helps to think about the blanket scales as a **sound** that creates tension over several chords. It is very important to experiment with sounds in jazz, it gives you a more open minded approach, both to improvisation and composition.

In this article we will explore how the **major, melodic minor, harmonic minor and diminished scales** are used in a minor ii-V-i progression. There are many other scales that can be used and should be studied, but the four scales mentioned above will serve as a solid foundation for understanding the minor ii-V-i sound.

## MAJOR SCALE

Using the major scale over a ii-V-i progression is an easy way of covering the important notes in the chords.

**RULE:** Use the major scale a half step above the ii chord.

EX: Dmin7 $\flat 5$       G7 $\flat 9$       Cmin7      Use:  $E\flat$  Major scale

The diagram shows a musical staff with a treble clef. Above the staff, the chords are labeled: Dm7( $\flat 5$ ), G7 $\flat 9$ , and Cmin7. A bracket spans from the start of the Dm7( $\flat 5$ ) chord to the end of the Cmin7 chord, indicating the range of the major scale. The notes of the  $E\flat$  major scale are written on the staff: D $\flat$ , E $\flat$ , F, G, A, B $\flat$ , C. Below the staff, vertical lines indicate the notes of the chords: Dm7( $\flat 5$ ) has notes D $\flat$  and F $\flat$  (labeled  $\flat 5$ ); G7 $\flat 9$  has notes G $\flat$ , B $\flat$ , and D $\flat$  (labeled  $\flat 9$  and  $\# 9$ ); Cmin7 has notes C $\flat$  and E $\flat$  (labeled  $\flat 13$ ).

## HARMONIC MINOR SCALE

The Harmonic minor scale creates a solid sound over both the ii and V chord.

**RULE:** Use the Harmonic minor of the ii-v-i key. On other words, ii-V-i in C, use C Harmonic minor. ii-V-i in F, use F Harmonic minor etc.

EX: Dmin7<sup>b</sup>5      G7<sup>b</sup>9      Cmin7      Use: **C Harmonic minor**

Dm7(<sup>b</sup>5)      G7<sup>b</sup>9      Cmin7

<sup>b</sup>5      <sup>b</sup>13      <sup>b</sup>9

## MELODIC MINOR SCALE

The Melodic minor scale is also known in jazz as an Altered scale. The reason being that it covers all the altered notes. In order to use the melodic minor sound over a ii-V-i we have to use different scales for the ii chord and the V chord.

**RULE FOR THE ii CHORD:** Use the Melodic minor scale a minor third up. Also think of it as the sixth mode of the melodic minor scale.

EX: Dmin7<sup>b</sup>5      Use: **F Melodic minor**

**RULE FOR THE V CHORD:** Use the Melodic minor scale a half step up. A melodic minor scale a half step up has several different names, Altered, Super Locrian, Diminished Whole-tone.

EX: G7Alt.      Use: **A<sup>b</sup> Melodic minor**

**F Melodic minor**      **A<sup>b</sup> Melodic minor**

Dm7(<sup>b</sup>5)      G7Alt      Cmin7

<sup>b</sup>5      <sup>b</sup>9      #9      #11      <sup>b</sup>13

Using the melodic minor scale this way does not make it a blanket scale, but it does create a uniform sound over the ii and the V chord. The more you practice it, the sooner you will discover the common tones.

## DIMINISHED SCALE

Remember that a Diminished scale used over the V chord is Half/Whole Diminished (alternating half and whole steps).

**RULE:** Use the Diminished scale, starting on the root of the V chord.

EX: Dm7 $\flat$ 5      G7 $\flat$ 9      Cmin7      Use: **G Half/Whole Diminished**

Musical notation for the first example. The scale is written in treble clef. Above the staff, the chords are labeled: Dm7( $\flat$ 5), G13( $\flat$ 9), and Cmin7. Below the staff, the notes are labeled with their scale degrees:  $\flat$  5, 13,  $\sharp$ 11,  $\sharp$ 9,  $\flat$  9. A bracket underlines the notes from G to C, indicating the G Half/Whole Diminished scale.

Play the following 16 bars slowly and listen to the change in sound as the scales change. Find tunes with minor ii-V-i progressions and practice them using all these scales. If you combine parts of the scales you soon will discover that the combinations of sound and notes are endless.

Good Luck,

Musical notation for 16 bars of practice, organized into four rows of four bars each. Each bar is labeled with a scale and a chord. The scales are: G Half/Whole Diminished, A $\flat$  Melodic minor, B Melodic minor, and A Major scale. The chords are: Dm7( $\flat$ 5), G13( $\flat$ 9), Cmi9, Fm7( $\flat$ 5), B $\flat$ 7( $\flat$ 9), E $\flat$ mi9, A $\flat$ m7( $\flat$ 5), D $\flat$ 7( $\flat$ 9), G $\flat$ mi9, Bm7( $\flat$ 5), E7( $\flat$ 9), and Ami9.

Note: The enharmonic spelling are done so the accidentals fit the key of the progression.