

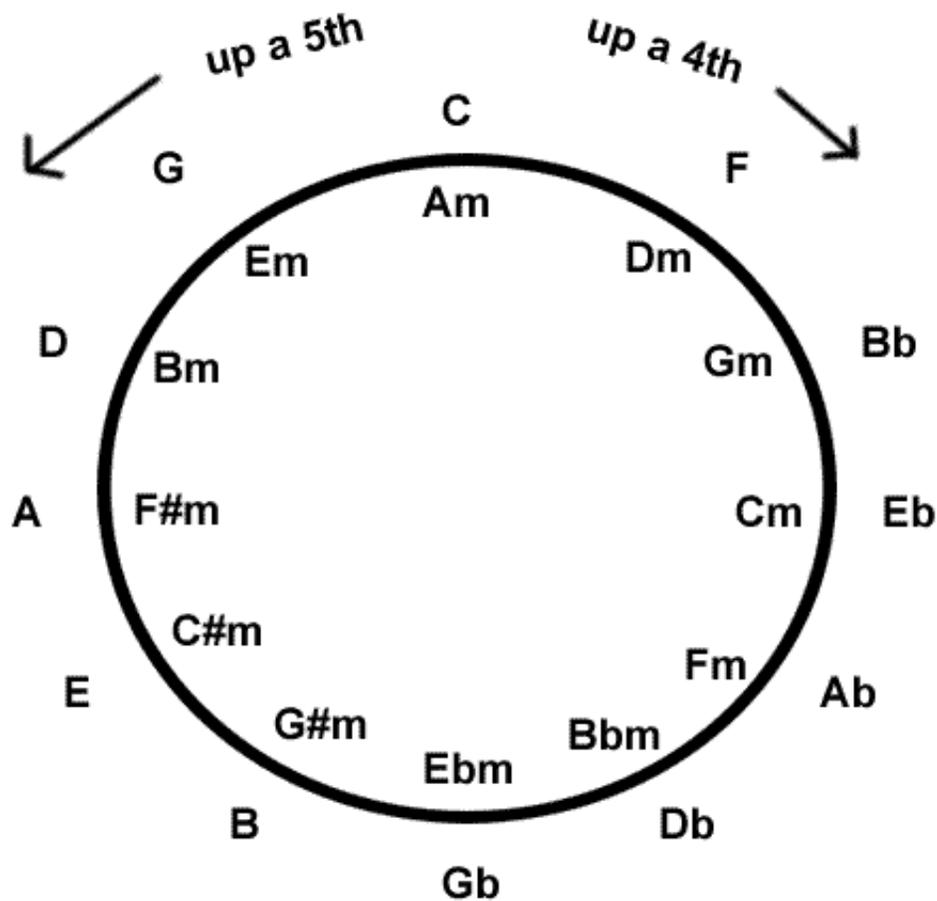


Video Reference: Chapter 3 - "Circle of 5ths"

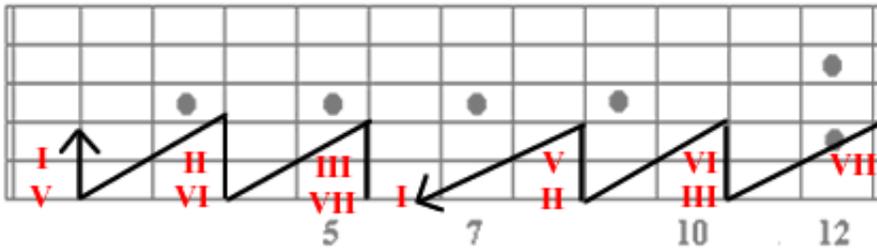
## The Circle of Fifths/5ths

### Why learn about "The Circle of Fifths"?

An understanding of this topic, combined with this root pattern diagram:



makes it easy to play several frequently-used chord progressions automatically in ANY key!



The Circle of Fifths, also called the Circle of Fourths, arranges the twelve musical tones so that a step counter-clockwise takes you up a fifth, and a step clockwise takes you up a fourth.

For example:

- Counter-clockwise: G is a fifth above C, B is a fifth above E, etc.
- Clockwise: F is a fourth above C, Bb is a fourth above F, etc.
- This arrangement makes chord families visual. If C is your I chord, F (IV) is next to it on the right and G (V) is next to it on the left. The next chords out are D (II) and Bb (bVII), the two next-most-likely-to-occur chords in the key of C, other than relative minors.

**Relative minors** are inside the circle (Am is the relative minor to C). The relative minor chord is a minor third (three frets) below its relative major. The two chords contain most of the same notes and are closely related.

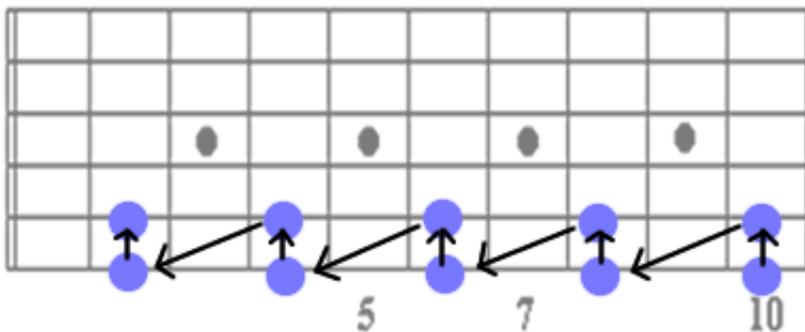
If I, IV, and V chords make up the immediate family, their relative minors are the extended family. They are often used in common chord progressions. Thus, in the key of C: C (I), F (IV) and G (V) are an immediate chord family and the relative minors are Am (relative minor to C), Dm (relative to F) and Em (relative to G).

**Transposing:** Transposition means changing a song's key. The circle diagram is a useful tool that can help you transpose. For instance, if you find a tune written out in a songbook in Eb or Db, you can change it to a more guitar-friendly key (C, G, D, E, etc.) by looking at the distance on the circle between the given key and your key, where C is three counter-clockwise steps away from Eb on the circle, so to transpose from Eb to C you move every chord in the tune three counter-clockwise steps. Ab becomes F, Cm becomes Am, Bb becomes G, etc.

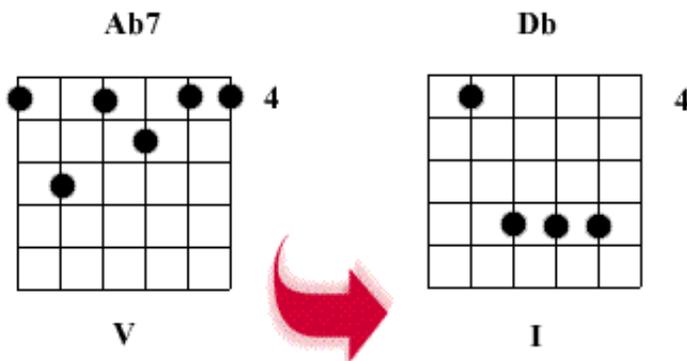
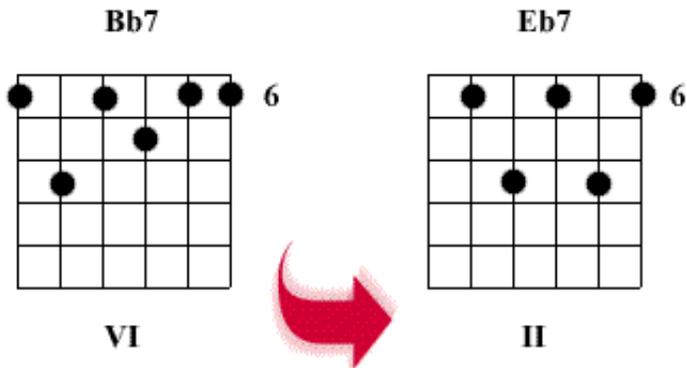
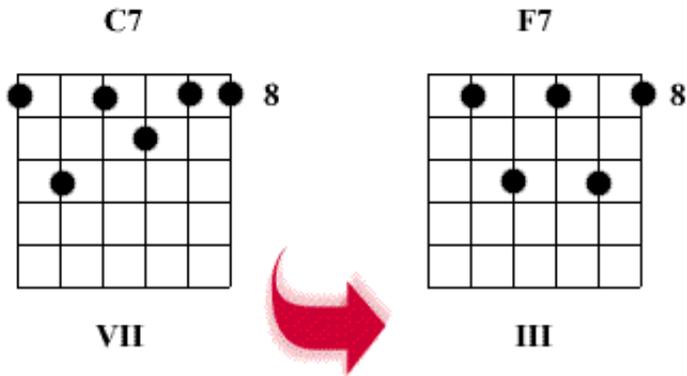
## How Does This Work?

- Circle-of-fifths progressions: Thousands of songs, from turn of the century ragtime to contemporary rock, are based on circle-of-fifths motion. In a circle-of-fifths progression you leave the I chord and come back by clockwise motion, going up by fourths until you are "home" at the I chord. For example, the key of C:
  - A (VI) - D (II) - G (V) - C (I)

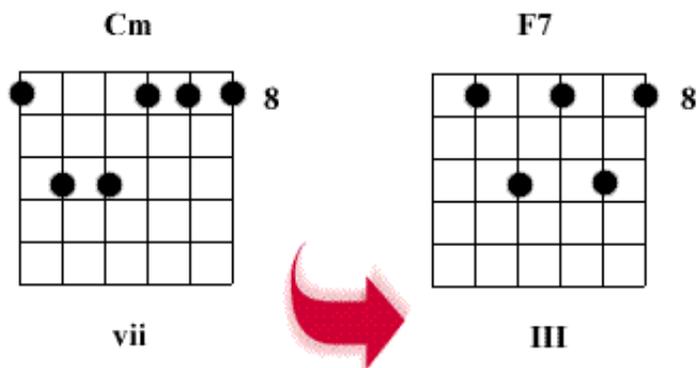
- In the above VI - II - V - I progression you jump to the VI chord (A) and then go clockwise to the II chord (D). This is going up a fourth; D is a fourth above A. Next you play V (G) which is a step clockwise on the circle and is up a fourth from D (G is the fourth note in the D scale). Go another step clockwise (up another fourth) to I (C) and you are home.
- Every chord is a fourth above the previous chord - that's circle-of-fifths motion. But in relation to C, you played VI - II - V - I.
- In another circle-of-fifths progression, the VI and II chords are minor (written as vi and ii). Again in the key of C:
  - C (I) - Am (vi) - Dm (ii) - G7 (V)
  - This variety of vi - ii - V - I is so common it has many names among the pros: standard changes, dimstore progression, ice cream changes, etc. (songs like "Every Breath You Take" and "Blue Moon" for example).
  - In many I - vi - ii - V progressions, IV is substituted for ii, which changes the progression to I - vi - IV - V, or in the key of C: C - Am - F - G7. It's a subtle change, because IV and ii are very similar chords; ii is the relative minor to IV.
  - The second half of the previous progression, ii - V - I, is the basis for many tunes and is also called a 'turnaround' (a one or two bar phrase at the end of a verse or chorus that sets up a repeat of the verse or chorus).
  - Some progressions go a step farther back on the circle:
    - E (III) - A7 (VI) - D7 (II) - G7 (V) - C (I)
  - Some go even farther back, to the VII chord. Key of C:
    - C (I) - B7 (VII) - E7 (III) - A7 (VI) - D7 (II) - G7 (V) - C (I)
- Circle-of-fifths/fourths movement on the fretboard follows a zig-zag pattern:



- Starting with a 6th string root/note you go 'up a fourth' (one step clockwise on the circle) by going 'up a string' to the 5th string/same fret.
- Starting with a 5th string root/note you get to the root of the IV chord (one step clockwise on the circle) by going 'down a string' to the 6th string/two frets lower.
- That means you play circle-of-fifths progressions when you follow the zig-zag chart above, assigning chords to each root note. For example, you could play a VII - III - VI - II - V - I progression in Db like this, starting from the VII chord:



◦ OR, with some minor chords:

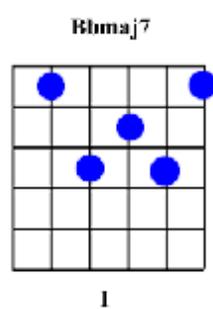
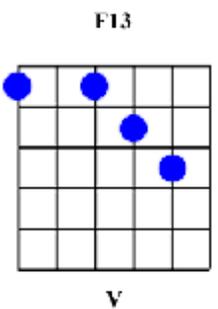
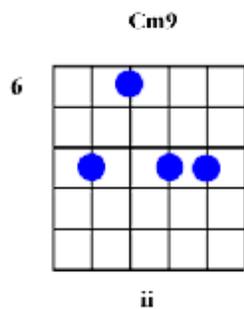
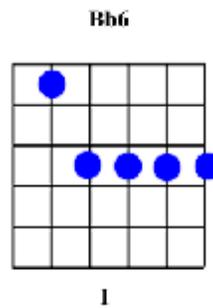
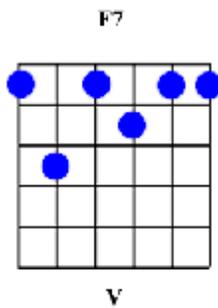
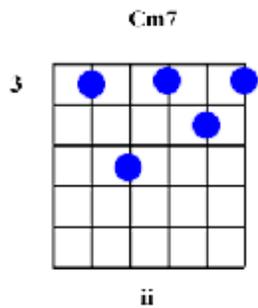
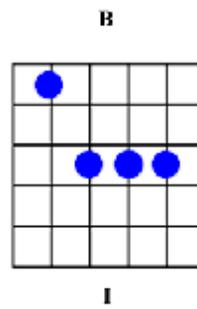
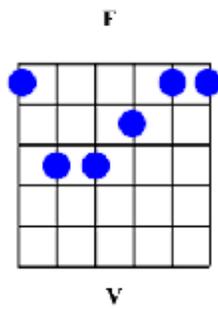
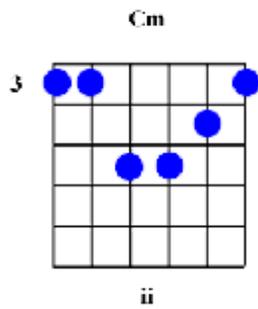
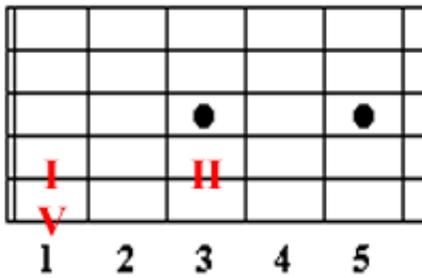


ust as the I-IV-V root patterns help you locate chord families automatically on the fretboard, this will also allow you to to using the circle-of-fifths chord movement. In the exercises below, you play chords based on the root notes that are pictured on the fretboard.

# Play It!

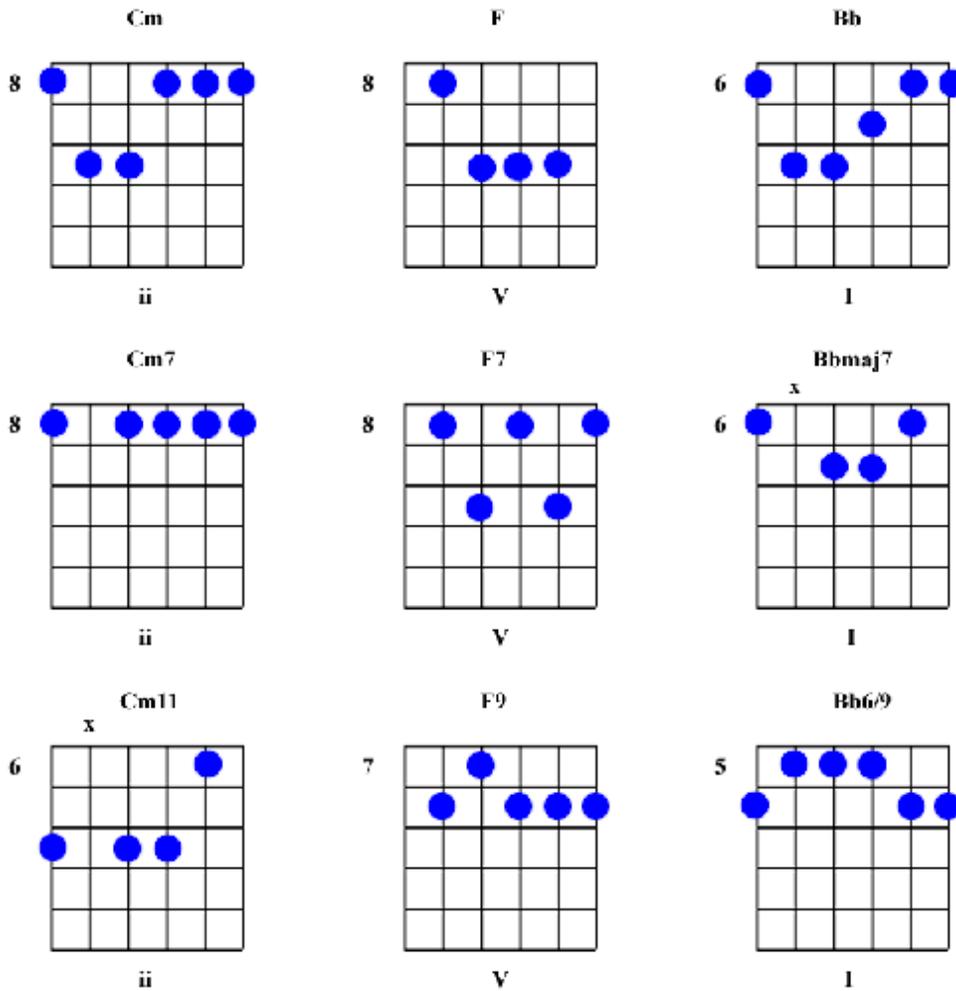
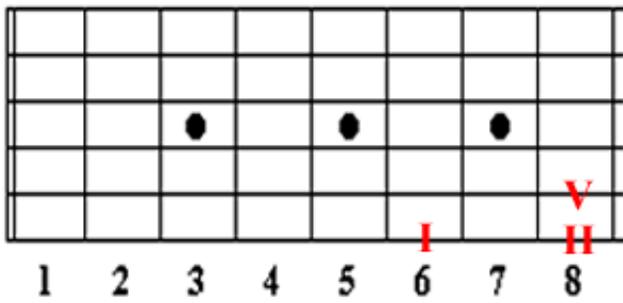
## ii-V-I:

1. These are phrases in the key of B. They have a 5th string root/I chord.



## ii-V-I:

2. These are phrases in Bb and have a 6th string root/I chord.



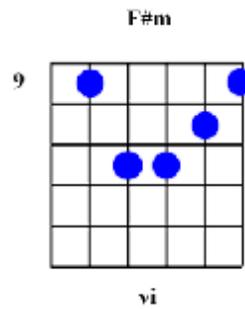
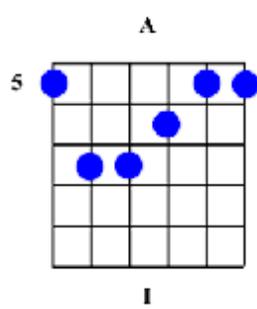
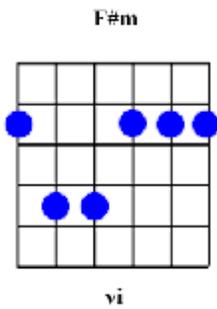
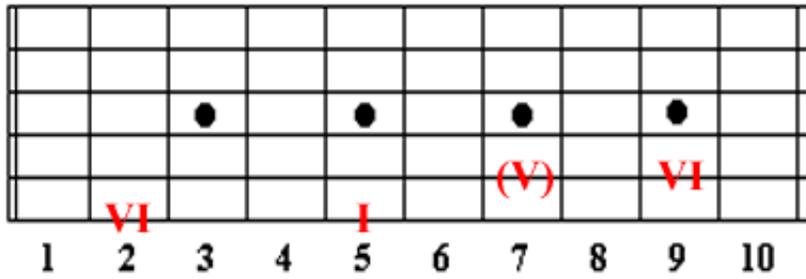
The lowest note in each of the above chords is its root, and all the ii-V-I progressions above follow the zig-zag fretboard root patterns from what we learned dealing with what we learned in the circle-of-fifths.

**Relative Minors:**

These can be found automatically. Check back at our circle-of-fifths lesson to see the root patterns. There will be a duplicate reference at the bottom of this page:

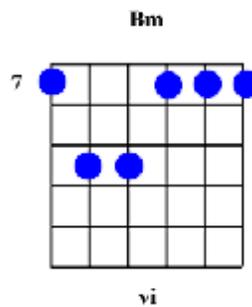
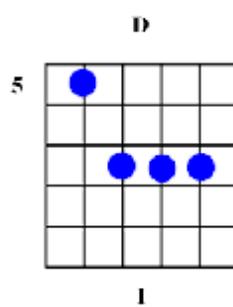
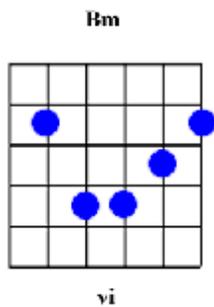
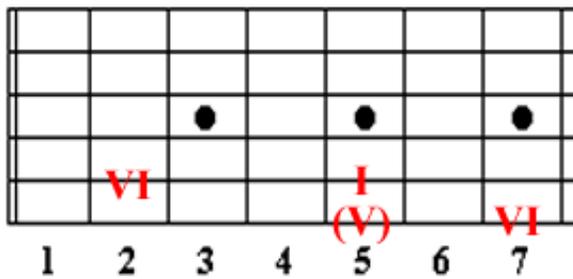
## 1. 6th string root/I chord:

### Key of A



## 2. 5th string root/I chord:

### Key of D



As the fretboard root pattern chart indicates, there are two ways to find the relative minor. Both ways work for a 6th string/I chord and a 5th string/I chord.

Play a minor chord whose root is three frets lower than the root of the I chord.

