

Chapter 7 – Walking Bass Note Melodies

To be completely honest, the concept of adding walking bass notes is much easier than you might think.

What you'll be looking for here are possible notes that match the chord you are working with using the notes found within a chord in various positions.

There ARE other ways to do this, but I've found this is the easiest and still usually provides a nice series of walking bass notes.

Step 1 – Find our chord tones, in other words – the notes that are required to form the chord in question.

Let's use the Am7 chord as one chord. We'll be playing it like this though: 5x5555

Step 2 – We need to know our major scales. If you don't know the major scales, don't panic. I include them for you.

The first thing we are going to do is develop walking bass lines using only the chord tones, or notes required in a progression.

Our progression is going to be Am7 to D9 because they aren't too familiar.

D9 in this case is played like this: x5455x

Because we are only working with the triad tones, we will be using the 1st, 3rd, and 5th tones.

Back to our first step. We need to know the chord tones of both Am7 and D9.

Am7 is A, G, C, and E. However, we just need to use the 1st, 3rd, and 5th tones. Those would be the A, C, and E.

D9 is D, F#/Gb, C, E, and A. However, we just need to use the 1st, 3rd, and 5th tones. Those would be the D, F#, and A.

Now, we need to use our major scale to find the notes that are playable in the simple 1, 3, 5 tone family. Remember only to use triad chord tones at first and get used to using the root, 3 and 5 of the chords and resolve only to the next root.

Here's the A Major scale:

Am7

Chord tones
1 3 5 3

There are a few possibilities, but we want to establish a low bass melody. That means we need to work with only the Low E and A strings. The Am7 will use the notes as followed:

Am7

Chord tones
1 3 5 3

Tone 1 is the A note root. Tone 3 is the C note. THIS is the note we're adding so that we can easily resolve to the next root note. We know that the next root note will be D, as in D9. Tone 5 is our E note. Last we take tone 3 back to our upcoming root of D for the next chord.

In essence, we're really only using our A root and our E. Hmm...that's our 1st and 5th. What does that remind you of? A power chord. However, to create the walk back and forth to the next chord, we add the 3rd so that we can resolve to the next root note chord.

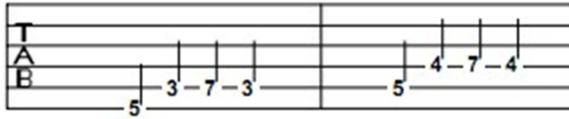
That's the D9 chord. Let's use the same major scale here in D:

Remember, you don't REALLY need to learn the major scales to play this. It's just a helpful guide into the possible additional notes you can play.

The D9 can use the notes as followed:

Tone 1 is our root note. It's a D. Tone 3 is our F#/Gb note. We can use it based on the A Major scale because it IS included within that A Major scale. That means we can create a resolve to that chord here. EVEN if the notes aren't required to form the chord, we can still use it to create a suspense in the walking melody because it falls in the scale sequence. Tone 5 is our A note. It walks right back into the previous chord we were playing, BUT it's not within the Tone 3 resolve. That's ok. Because we've switched these two around, it still works. As long as you have the same required notes AND they are part of the scale sequence they'll work. This is when a little experimentation comes in handy. We have still RESOLVED the Am7 to D9 – back to Am7.

Here they are together:



Chord tones

1 3 5 3 1 3 5 3

To play this example, you can literally do anything. You can strum the chords a few times and then add the walking notes or you can just walk the notes and then add some strumming. It's up to you. The video will show you some alternate bass notes that can be applied.