

Minor Key Chord Functions

The categories below organize the chords in a major or minor key according to their tendencies for movement or repose. Think of it this way: tonic chords suggest an arrival or resolution; dominant chords suggest tension and perhaps antagonism that gets resolved to the tonic chord; subdominant chords are, in a sense, neutral, although they may each have different tendencies such as a moderate suggestion of repose or a moderate suggestion of tension. Maybe a baseball analogy would help. Think of the tonic as home plate (you start there and end there), dominants as third base, and subdominants as first and second base. By the way, you can sometimes arrive on a tonic without starting there, as is often the case with tonicized chords. Additionally, it is also possible to return to the tonic without passing through the dominant, as would be the case with the Plagal cadence.

Subdominant Minor

IV min7 (Fmin7)

II min7b5 (DØ)

IV min6 (Fmin6)

bVII7 (Bb7)

bII maj7 (Dbmaj7)

Dominant

V7 (G7)

bII7 (Db7)

VIIo7 (Bo7)

Tonic

I- (Cmi)

I-6 (Cmin6)

I-maj7 (Cmin maj7)