**Diatonic Seventh Chords**

**What are they?**

Diatonic seventh chords are the seventh chords you can create using only the notes in a particular key.

Remember, diatonic means "from the key." So a diatonic chord is one that only uses notes in the key signature. No accidentals!

In harmonic progressions, diatonic sevenths can be used anywhere you can use a diatonic triad with the same root.

With the diatonic seventh chords, we add a fourth root movement: the common root. However, this root movement can only be used to increase tension, so going from a seventh chord to a triad is avoided.

**Respect the seventh!**

When using these chords in four-part writing — in fact, when you use any seventh chord in four-part writing, you must always, always remember to...

The seventh of the chord is most often approached by the common note.

However, it is okay to approach the seventh from below by a step or a leap, or from above by a step.

You must never approach the seventh by a leap from above!

When using triads with diatonic sevenths, the seventh is always resolved down by step. Always!

So, if you have a seventh chord, you must resolve the seventh to the root of the next chord. Never resolve the seventh any other way. Doing so will cause you certain death!

In fact, these chords can be approached and resolved using any of the same three root movements as triads use.

There are eight possible types of seventh chords in tertial harmony, but the composers of the common practice period only used five:

- Major seventh
- Minor seventh
- Half-diminished seventh
- Fully diminished seventh
- Major triad
- Minor triad
- Diminished triad

Seventh chords have four notes, so doubling in four-part harmony is not an issue... but if you need to use irregular doubling, double the root and omit the fifth.