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# Music Lab

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## Form & Substitution — Unit Five

Although I-ii-V-I is a very basic progression, it can be useful to get started in musical theatre composition. The progression breaks down into two parts, the early part of the phrase, or the I, and the cadence, ii-V-I.

First, let us consider the cadence possibilities. Depending on the structure of your song, you may use one of the following cadences:

- Authentic Cadence: V-I. This cadence may be preceded by a predominant (often either a ii or IV).
- Deceptive Cadence: V-vi. This cadence is often used to create a turnaround to a tag.
- Half Cadence: I-V. This cadence is often used to create a feeling of continuation into the next section.
- Plagal Cadence: IV-I. This cadence is often used in pop music to create an alternative to V-I.

The cadence at the end of a phrase is also noteworthy for an increase in the speed of the harmonic rhythm, for example, which might move from one chord per measure, to two at the cadence so that ii-V would be within one bar.

Substitutions include the following suggestions:

- Instead of ii, consider using IV, a secondary dominant, or a diminished seventh
- Instead of V, consider using a IV, a tritone substitution, or a ii-V within the scope of the tritone sub
- Instead of a final I, consider using a slash chord a minor second away, an inversion of I, or a major 7th

Many other substitutions are possible. Have fun exploring different alternatives.

The beginning of your phrase may include all kinds of harmonies in addition to or instead of I. One possibility would be to prolong the tonic either by moving between inversions, using neighboring chords, or a thumb line (particularly common practice in the golden age scores of musical theatre.) Alternatively, explore chords which move from the tonic (or the first chord in your phrase) toward the predominant which begins the cadence. Remember that the harmonic rhythm usually increases as the phrase moves toward the cadence, so be careful how much chordal movement you use at the beginning of a phrase.

One idea to be very mindful of is the idea of two voice counterpoint between the vocal melody and the bass line. Contrary motion is the most interesting choice between these two voices. A second choice would be oblique. The least interesting choice is usually similar motion (either direct or parallel) unless that is an intentional choice on your part.

Another possibility to consider is the use of a melodic answer. This accompaniment figure usually occurs at the end of a vocal phrase and offers a short response, such as descending woodwinds, to the vocal phrase. This may be particularly effective if you are using a comping accompaniment style and wish to either simply answer a vocal line or reference another dramatic motive at the end of a particular phrase.

Above all, remember that once you have a piano arrangement drafted for a song, go on to the next song! There will be time in the future to continue to play with harmonic choices, substitutions, rhythms, feel, and other elements of the song, but these choices may be influenced by other elements of the score that may not yet be written. So, move forward to complete your score and then bring the perspective of a complete score to reconsider your piano arrangement choices. Have fun!