

## Rhythmic patterns in chord progressions

Most of the exercises introduced thus far have provided a limited representation of the role of rhythm, and where this has occurred it has largely been achieved by the use of grouping and proportion in diagrams (see, for instance, the example which draw on the music of Purcell in [Adding bass lines and getting into four harmonic parts], or Mussorgsky and Holst in [The octatonic scale/second mode of limited transposition]). Harmony Signing was never intended to be conveyed on paper or computer screens: it is a gestural language employed to link movement to musical sound, performed by human beings in response to one another in the same room. The diagrams provided on this website, as well as those and the musical notation presented in the books *Every Child a Composer* and *First Instruments*, are a means to an end, never an end in themselves, and should always be viewed as such. However, in order to convey the progressions and pitched potential of employing Harmony Signing as well as its critical reliance on Kodály hand-signs, representing these components has necessarily taken precedence in what has been dealt with.

Viewing the **Videos** will have illustrated that rhythm and its gestural control have by no means been absent from the exercises demonstrated. Nor, indeed, should they be: every lesson and every warm-up in a choral rehearsal should complement pitched exercises with rhythmic activity, such as clapping, body percussion, and counting games. The parts of the brain that respond to and control rhythm must not be neglected!

This section of the website proposes some ways in which rhythmic activity can enrich and extend the musical vocabulary of exercises that present chord progressions. Chord choice and sequence can be provided with new meaning, energy, and structural relevance through incorporation of the element of rhythm.

We could begin by providing a means of exploring the capacity of the 12-bar Blues to act as the basis for vocal composition or instrumental improvisation. The Blues pattern can be represented as follows, harnessing in a specific order the three positions of the Primary Triads:

I	I	I	I
IV	IV	I	I
V	IV	I	V <sup>7</sup>

Let's start by singing these to a vocalisation such as 'BA' that commences with a percussive consonant – 4 crotchet (quarter-note) beats on each chord.

Once the progression is clear and confidently memorised, we can add vocal percussion as well as a more lively, scat-style performance of the chords to a rhythm such as the following, spread over each four bars:

Ba--Ba-- Baa----- | BaBa! – Ba Baa----- ||

The rhythm will be repeated six times in relation to the 12 bars of the Blue progression (take care with the third line, bars 9-12, because they need to cope with the most rapid changes of chord).



- Listen to the 2 beats/1 beat pattern of the song *Now, Oh now, I needs must part* by John Dowland and work out how to represent it through Harmony Signing. This recording will help: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AweUIsBL7zs>
- Set up a Calypso rhythm with the beat structure 1-2-3/1-2-3/1-2/1-2/1-2 and decide on a chord progression that fits this for the music you would like to play