

Building and Resolving Diminished 7th Chords

Cheat Sheet

A $\text{vii}^\circ 7$ chord is made up entirely of stacked minor 3rds. It is not found naturally in a major key (an accidental must be added). It is found naturally in a minor key when built on the raised 7th scale degree.

A $\text{vii}^\circ 7$ chord is made up of a $\text{m3} + \text{m3} + \text{M3}$, and is found naturally when built on the 7th scale degree of a major key or the second scale degree of a minor key.

Both of these chords can be used as a substitute for the dominant.

(notice how there is only one note difference between V and $\text{vii}^\circ 7$...that's why they are good substitutes)

Piano

$\text{vii}^\circ 7$ $\text{vii}^\circ 6_5$ $\text{vii}^\circ 4_3$ $\text{vii}^\circ 4_2$ $\text{vii}^\circ 7$ $\text{vii}^\circ 6_5$ $\text{vii}^\circ 4_3$ $\text{vii}^\circ 4_2$

To resolve a diminished 7th chord, the leading tone (which is the root) must resolve up. The rest of the chord members resolve down. There is a little flexibility with the third of the chord to resolve up if needed.

Be careful with half-diminished - you can end up with parallel fifths. You should always resolve the leading tone up, the 7th and 5th down, and think carefully about the 3rd. If in doubt, resolve it up.

Leading tone up, everything else down.

Pno.

$6^\#_5$ (the 3rd is negotiable) 7

a: $\text{vii}^\circ 6_5$

i^6

Db^\flat : $\text{vii}^\circ 7$

I