



Chapter 9: Bass Lines

Walking bass lines and other fun additions to your playing!

When you are trying to figure out a bass line from the chord symbols, you don't have a lot of choices. Most notes other than the Root should not be played on the bottom of your chord if you want to keep that same chords sound. Every other note you play will change the flavor of your chord. The safest choice is the fifth of the chord, this is for two reasons:

- a) if you go around the circle of fifths, the 5th of a chord will lead right back to the root.
- b) For reasons to do with the overtone series, the fifth blends in to the root and isn't all that different. For a quick explanation, you can visit this link: <http://www.phy.mtu.edu/~suits/overtone.html>.

The image shows two examples of walking bass lines in 4/4 time. Each example consists of a grand staff with a treble clef and a bass clef. The bass clef part contains a continuous eighth-note line, while the treble clef part contains chords. Below the bass clef, the notes are labeled with 'R' for the root and '5' for the fifth.

Example 1: Chords C and F. The bass line for C consists of notes C, E, G, C, E, G, C, E. The bass line for F consists of notes F, A, C, F, A, C, F, A.

Example 2: Chords C, G7, and G7(v2). The bass line for C consists of notes C, E, G, C, E, G, C, E. The bass line for G7 consists of notes G, B, D, G, B, D, G, B. The bass line for G7(v2) consists of notes G, B, D, G, B, D, G, B.