

Walking Bass Lines

“Walking bass” is an approach to creating bass lines commonly used in jazz, blues and occasionally in other styles of music such as rockabilly, R&B and country.

Here is a standard approach to creating a walking bass line in common time:

- Beat One: play the root of the chord
- Beat Two: play a chord note (often the 3rd)
- Beat Three: play the fifth of the chord
- Beat Four: play a chromatic approach note

Chromatic Approach Note: A note one semitone above or one semitone below the note it precedes. For example, the chromatic approach notes to the note C are D flat (one semitone above) or B (one semitone below).

Walking Bass Practice



Turn on a swing style drum beat on your keyboard and set it to a moderate tempo. Using the above chord progression:

- 1) Play the root of each chord using continuous quarter notes.
- 2) Using half notes, play the root on beat one and the fifth on beat three for every measure.
- 3) Using quarter notes, play the root on beats one, two and three, then play a chromatic approach note on beat four, for every measure.
- 4) Using quarter notes, play the root on beats one and two, the fifth on beat three and a chromatic approach note on beat four.
- 5) Repeat step 4 adding a third (or other chord note) on beat two.

Congratulations - Now you are playing walking bass!