

Diminished Scales

Major, Minor & Whole Tone

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*The name of the game is not change,
the name of the game is development!*

Stay right with it!

Definition and partition of consonance, dissonance and chromatics

The four notes from the chord are consonant. The diatonic leading notes to the chord are dissonant. The remaining four notes are chromatic. The four chromatic notes lead to the chord notes and to the leading notes as well. When the chromatic notes lead to the chord notes they can be seen as the altered leading notes.

Major sixth chord Tonic function:

Consonance (1-3-5-6) Dissonance (7-9-11-b13)

C⁶

Dissonant resolution:

B[°] C⁶

Chromatic resolution:

F^{#6} C⁶

Chromatic resolution to dissonance:

F^{#6} B[°]

Combining consonant and dissonant notes gives the diminished major scale:

Minor sixth chord Tonic function:

Consonance (1-b3-5-6) Dissonance (7-9-11-b13)

Cm⁶

Dissonant resolution:

B[°] Cm⁶

Chromatic resolution:

F^{#7} Cm⁶

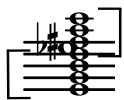
Chromatic resolution to dissonance:

F^{#7} B[°]

Combining consonant and dissonant notes gives the diminished minor scale:


Major seventh chord

Tonic function:

Consonance (3-5-7-9)  Dissonance (b10, #11, 13, 15)


Cmaj7

Dissonant resolution:



F#⁰ Cmaj7

Chromatic resolution:



D^b6 Cmaj7

Chromatic resolution to dissonance:




D^b6 F#⁰

Combining the consonant and dissonant notes gives the diminished major scale
a perfect fifth above the root of the Tonic chord (i.e. G major scale on Cmaj7):



Dominant ninth chord, Natural dominant function:

Consonance (3-5-b7-9)  Dissonance (b10, #11, 13, 15)

C7⁹

Dissonant resolution:



F#⁰ Gm⁶

Chromatic resolution:



D^b7 Gm⁶

Chromatic resolution to dissonance:



D^b7 F#⁰

Combining consonance and dissonance gives the diminished minor scale
a perfect fifth above the root of the Dominant chord (i.e. G minor scale on C7/9):



Altered Dominant ninth chord:

Consonance (3-#5-b7-b9) Dissonance (#9-#11-13-15)

C7 #5/b9

Dissonant resolution:

C° D♭m⁶

Chromatic resolution:

G⁷ D♭m⁶

Chromatic resolution to dissonance:

G⁷ C°

Combining consonant and dissonant notes gives the diminished minor scale a half step above the root of the Dominant chord (i.e. D \flat minor scale on C7alt.):

Diminished Dominant chord:

Consonance (1-3-b5-b7) Dissonance (9-11-b13-14)

C7^{b5}

Dissonant resolution:

B° C7^{b5}

Chromatic resolution:

A7^{b5} C7^{b5}

Chromatic resolution to dissonance:

A7^{b5} B°

Combining consonant and dissonant notes gives diminished whole tone scale:

The Diminished Major Scale

The diminished major scale consists of a major 6 chord and a diminished chord:



The division of the diminished major scale into 2 chords makes it easy to make a variety of scale exercises:



Remember to practice each exercise that you create not only from the root of the chord, but also from the third, the fifth and the sixth!

Combine your exercises and continue to develop new ways of approaching the scale:



The diminished major scale is mainly used as a tonic sound and can be used on any diatonic chord. But it is also used on the #II chord and as a #11 sound on the tonic.

Two musical staves showing the diminished major scale for C major. The first staff shows the scale with chords Dm^7 , $G7^{\flat 9}$, and $C\Delta^7$. The second staff shows the scale with chords Em^7 , Am^7 , Dm^7 , $G7^{\flat 9}$, and $C\Delta^7$. Both staves have a bracket under the first three notes labeled "C major".

Here is the scale for the #II chord. This scale is a diminished major scale found a perfect fifth above the root of the Tonic:

Two musical staves showing the #II diminished major scale for G major. The first staff shows the scale with chords $D\#\dim$, Dm^7 , $G7^{\flat 9}$, and $C\Delta^7$. The second staff shows the scale with chords $D\#\dim$, Dm^7 , $G7^{\flat 9}$, and $C\Delta^7$. Both staves have a bracket under the first three notes labeled "G major".

The scale for the #11 sound is also found a perfect fifth above the root of the tonic:

A musical staff showing the #11 diminished major scale for G major. The scale is shown with a bracket under the first three notes labeled "G major".

As you can see, the #11 implies the #9, which adds a beautiful color to the major chord.

Two musical staves in 4/4 time showing the #11 diminished major scale for C major. The first staff shows the scale with chords Em^7 , $D\#\dim$, and Dm^7 . The second staff shows the scale with chords $G7^{\flat 9}$, $C\Delta^{\#\ 11}$, and C major. Both staves have brackets under the first three notes labeled "C major".

As a bluesy sound you can play the diminished major scale a whole note below the tonic:

A musical staff in 4/4 time showing the diminished major scale for $B\flat$ major. The scale is shown with a bracket under the first three notes labeled "Bb major".

The Diminished Minor Scale

The diminished minor scale consists of a minor 6 chord and a diminished chord:

The diminished minor scale is used as a minor tonic sound but can also be used as the scale for a number of other chord functions.

Here is an example of the diatonic minor sound:

The diminished minor scale can also be used to alternate diatonic minor chords in major. Here is an example of diminished minor scales on III, VI and II in the key of C major:

On the diatonic chord of the VII degree, which is a half diminished chord, we find the diminished minor scale a minor third above the root of the chord. So, the diminished minor scale for Bm7b5 could be D:

Besides of being used on minor chords and half diminished chords, the diminished minor scale can be used on 2 dominant chords: the natural dominant chord and the altered dominant chord.

The natural dominant chord has a perfect 5th and a major 9th. The notes from the 3rd to the 9th form a minor 6th chord which gives the scale:

Musical notation showing the natural dominant chord D^9 (chords: D^9 , Omit the root, $A\flat m^6$, D^9) and the corresponding diminished minor scale.

The A diminished minor scale also contributes with a $\#11$ and 13 to the D^9 chord which further establishes it as a natural dominant chord.

So, the diminished scale for a natural dominant is a minor scale a fifth above the root of the dominant chord.

Here is an example:

Musical notation example showing the relationship between $C\Delta^7$, D^7 , Dm^7 , and $G^7\flat^9$ chords. The scale is shown as C major and A minor.

The altered dominant has an altered fifth and altered ninth. Again the notes from the 3rd to the 9th form a minor 6th chord that gives the scale:

Musical notation showing the altered dominant chord $D^7\text{alt.}$ (chords: $D^7\text{alt.}$, Omit the root, $E\flat m^6$, $D^7\text{alt.}$) and the corresponding diminished minor scale ($E\flat$ minor).

The $E\flat$ diminished minor scale contributes with $\#9$, $\#11$ and 13 to the $D^7\flat^9\#5$ chord.

So, the diminished scale for an altered dominant is a minor scale a half note above the root of the dominant chord.

Musical notation example showing the relationship between $D^7\text{alt.}$, $A^7\text{alt.}$, $D^7\text{alt.}$, and $G\Delta^7$ chords. The scale is shown as $E\flat$ minor and $B\flat$ minor.

The Diminished Whole Tone Scale

Another altered dominant is the dominant chord with a b5 and a major 9. The scale for this chord consists of the diminished dominant seventh chord and a diminished chord:

The image shows two staves of music. The first staff contains two chords: C7^{b5} and Bdim. The second staff shows the scale for these chords, starting on C and ending on C.

Here is an example:

The image shows two staves of music. The first staff shows a harmonic progression: Gm⁷, C7^{b5}, and F^{Δ7}. The second staff shows the same progression with a melodic line.

Now, find a million ways to practice the 3 different scales.

Remember that every scale has 4 consonant notes: the root, the third, the fifth and the sixth or seventh.

All the exercises should be practiced upwards and downwards to the 4 consonant notes.

Then create harmonic progressions and practice to use the scales.

The following pages will display some exercises to practice and some examples of how to use the scales in different progressions/songs.

Exercises

As the diminished scale consists of 2 groups of notes/chords, it is easy to make a lot of combinations.

Start out by combining 1 note from each group, then 2 notes from each group and so on.

C major



From the root

From the third



From the fifth

From the sixth

Here are some examples of exercises in C diminished minor combining 2 notes from each group:

C minor



Up in thirds



Down in thirds



Up and down in thirds



Up and down in thirds



Up and down in fifths



Up and down in fifths

Here is an exercise in C diminished whole tone combining 3 notes from each group:

C7b5



Up in thirds



Here are some exercises in C diminished major combining 4 notes from each group:

C major



Up in thirds



Down in thirds



Down in thirds



Up and down in thirds



Variation

Here are some examples of exercises in different meters on the scale of C diminished minor:



Here are some examples that emphasize the diminished/dissonant notes in the scales:

G⁷alt. C^Δ G⁷alt. C^Δ

Ab minor Ab minor

G⁷alt. C^Δ G⁷alt. C^Δ

Ab minor Ab minor

G⁷alt. C^Δ G⁷alt. C^Δ

Ab minor Ab minor

G⁷alt. C^Δ G⁷alt. C^Δ

Ab minor Ab minor

G⁷alt. C^Δ#11 G⁷alt. C^Δ#11

Ab minor G major Ab minor G major

G⁷alt. C^Δ#11 G⁷alt. C^Δ#11

Ab minor G major Ab minor G major

G⁷alt. C^Δ#11

Ab minor G major

G⁷alt. C^Δ#11

Ab minor G major

All The Things You Are

Fm⁷ Bbm⁷ Eb⁷₉ Ab^Δ Ab⁷₉

Ab major E minor Ab major A minor

Db^Δ G⁷₉ C^Δ C^Δ

Ab major Ab minor G major C major

Cm⁷ Fm⁷ Bb⁷₉ Eb^Δ Eb⁷₉

Eb major B minor Eb major E minor

Ab^Δ D⁷₉ G^Δ G^Δ

Ab major Eb minor D major G major

Am⁷ D⁷₉ G^Δ G^Δ

G major Eb minor D major

F[♯]m⁷₅ B⁷₉ E^Δ C⁷₉

A minor C minor E major Db minor

Fm⁷ Bbm⁷ Eb⁷₉ Ab^Δ Ab⁷₉

Ab major E minor Ab major A minor

Db^Δ Dbm⁶ Cm⁷ Bdim

Ab major Db minor Ab major Eb major

Bbm⁷ Eb⁷₉ Ab^Δ

Ab major E minor Eb major