

The following chord substitutions work in a variety of musical situations and will not clash with what the other musicians are playing.

Major to Major 2: For any major chord, substitute a major 2 chord to get a contemporary Pop sound. This chord substitution for major chords works great for creating pop or contemporary sounding progressions, and it works in practically every musical context that a major chord would be used.

Original Progression

Progression with Substituted Chords

Minor 7th to Minor 11th: For any minor 7th chord, substitute a minor 11th chord to get a contemporary Pop sound. This chord substitution for minor chords gives minor chords an added depth and richness. It works in almost every musical context where a minor chord is used, so let your ear be your guide for the occasional time it might not work.

Original Progression

Progression with Substituted Chords

Cm7 to Ebmaj7: For any minor 7th chord, substitute a major 7th built on the 3rd in a jazz setting.

This chord substitution for minor chords is very useful in a jazz setting when soloing or playing rhythm. Using the major 7th substitution in a minor context gives the minor chord the sound of a much more complex minor 9th chord.

As before, let your ear be your guide as to when it works best. This chord substitution is particularly helpful when soloing because it immediately gives you many more options to play over a particular chord progression. For example, over a Cm7 chord, you could play an Ebmaj7 arpeggio or chord.



Cm7 3fr. Dm7(b5) 5fr. G+7 3fr.

Cm7 Ebmaj7 arpeggio

Dominant 7th to Min7(b5): For any dominant 7th chord, substitute a min7(b5) chord built on the 3rd in a jazz setting.




This chord substitution for dominant 7th chords is very useful in a jazz setting when soloing or playing rhythm because both chords share many common tones. For example, over a C7 chord I can play or solo using an Em7(b5) chord.

C7

Original Progression

Em7(b5) **Em7(b5)**









Other Chord Possibilities Over a C7





C7(b9) to C#dim: For any 7(b9) chord, substitute a diminished chord built one half-step up. In Jazz, a dominant 7th chord can be embellished a number of ways. One of the most common is to change the chord to a 7(b9) chord. For example, in the key of F, the C7 chord is routinely changed to a C7(b9) chord. So, 7(b9) chords are quite common in Jazz.

This chord substitution works on 7(b9) chords. A diminished chord built one half step can be used in place of any 7(b9) chord. For example, if the music says C7(b9), you can substitute a C#dim, and it is going to sound great. This works because both of these chords share many common tones.

Gm7 **C7(b9)** **Fmaj7**

Gm7 **C#dim7** **Fmaj7**

Major 7 chord substitutions

A Major 7 chord can be replaced by the III^m7 and the VI^m7 chords. In the case of a C Major 7th chord, these chords would be the E^m7 and A^m7. The reason this works is that these chord share three common tones, and when used appropriately keep the C Major 7 tonality. Compare the notes that make up these three chords:

C Major 7	C	E	G	B
E minor 7	E	G	B	D
A minor 7	A	C	E	G

The tritone substitution

The tritone substitution is very common in Jazz, and it is the substitution of a Dominant 7 chord with the Dominant 7 chord **three whole tones** above the root. Three whole tones is the same as the b5. For example, a G7 chord can be substituted with the D^b7 chord. (D^b7 is the flat 5th of G). Here is an example of the use the tritone substitution to create a descending chromatic movement:

Dm7 (G7 substitution) D^b7 C Major 7

T	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	1
A	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4
B	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2
	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	3

Minor 7 substitution

Any minor 7 chord can be substituted with its relative Major chord (3rd note in the **minor** scale). For example, a D^m7 can be replaced by an F Major 7. Compare the notes of these chords to see why this works:

D minor 7	D	F	A	C
F Major 7	F	A	C	E

Chord substitutions for a I-IV-V blues progression

- **ii-V sub:** Substitute ii for IV, so that you have a ii-V turnaround. For example, if you're playing in the key of C, the V chord is G7 and the ii chord is Dm7. So instead of C-F-G7, play C-Dm7-G7. This is far and away the easiest and most common substitution, and in fact it's the standard turnaround in jazz.
- **Secondary Dominants:** Use secondary dominants, i.e. V chords of V chords. Again, if you're playing in the key of C, the V chord is G7 and the V of G is D7, so instead of playing C-F-G7, play C-D7-G7 instead. You can extend this as much as you want, i.e. use V chords of V chords of V chords, etc. Entire songs have been written around this idea ("Salty Dog" comes to mind).
- **Tritone Subs:** In general, you can make what's called a "tritone substitution" on any dominant chord (i.e. any 7th chord). It works like this: if the root of the V chord is X, replace the chord with a 7th chord whose root is a tritone away from X. So in the key of C, again the V chord is a G7. The note that's a tritone away from G is D \flat , so replace the G7 with a D \flat 7. Combined with the ii-for-IV substitution, the turnaround goes from C-F-G to C-Dm7-D \flat 7, which has some really nice voice-leading in the bass notes. Combine tritone subs with secondary dominants and you can have a field day with different patterns and substitutions.
- **Diminished Subs:** Every diminished chord is a 7th chord with a flatted 9 in four different ways. For example, the diminished chord with the notes D \flat -E-G-B \flat is, simultaneously, a C7-9, an E \flat 7-9, an F \sharp 7-9, and an A7-9. This offers a dizzying array of substitutional opportunities, and it also means that diminished scales and arpeggios sound great over 7th chords.
- **Median Subs:** Another general substitution is called a "median substitution". For this, you replace a chord whose root note is X with a chord whose root note is a third above or a third below X. You want to stay within the diatonic harmony of the key you're playing in, so the new chord may not be the same type of chord as the original. For example, if you're playing in the key of C, you can replace the I chord (C Major) with a iii chord (Em7) or a vi chord (Am7), because iii is a third above I and vi is a third below I. In fact, the ii-for-IV substitution I mentioned first is just a median sub (ii being a third below IV).

Original Chord	Substitute Chords	Original Chord	Substitute Chords
I	VIIm; IIIIm	C	Am; Em
IV	IIIm; VIIm	F	Dm; Am
V7	VIIo; IIIIm; bII7	G7	Bo; Em; Db7

Some of these substitutions sound better in a jazz context than a pure blues context, but either way they'll spice up your playing. Also, the same principles apply to your soloing: for example, if you're soloing over a G7, feel free to play a D \flat pentatonic or mixolydian scale, which will still sound good but adds a bit of unexpected colour.