

Chord Substitution

At some point the basic three-chord progression of I-IV-V gets stale. To enliven the harmonic movement of a piece, minor chords within the key can be used in place of any of the three basic chords. This is possible because each of the seven possible melody tones appears within three chords of the key.

This table demonstrates this for the key of "G".

Melody Tone	Chords in which the Melody Tone Appears	Chord Spellings
G	G, Em, C	G – B – D E – G – B C – E – G
A	Am, D, F#dim	A – C – E F# – A – C D – F# – A
B	Bm, G, Em	B – D – F# G – B – D E – G – B
C	C, Am, F#dim	C – E – G A – C – E F# – A – C
D	D, G, Bm	D – F# – A B – D – F# G – B – D
E	Em, C, Am	E – G – B C – E – G A – C – E
F#	F#dim, D, Bm	F# – A – C D – F# – A B – D – F#

Usually one of the three chords will clearly not be a viable choice. The arranger picks the chord that best suited the mood of the piece at the moment.