

How to Use Diminished 7th Chords in place of Dominant 7th chords

(From the Axe-Files of Gordon Lustig)

Here is a standard ii-V-I progression in six different keys. Play vers. 1 first and listen to how it sounds; quite ordinary. Then play vers. 2 and you'll notice the V chord now has much more richness and a darker, more complex texture.

A DIMINISHED 7th CHORD IS SIMPLY THE 3rd, 5th, 7th, b9th of the V7(b9) CHORD WITHOUT THE ROOT!) So, when you see a chord such as A7, Bb7, E7, etc. play a diminished chord one half-step higher than the name of the chord. For example: If you see an A7 chord, a half-step above "A" is A# or Bb, so you would play a Bb diminished 7 chord, written: Bb°7.

The image displays three systems of musical notation, each representing a ii-V-I progression in a different key. Each system consists of two staves: 'Vers. 1' (top) and 'Vers. 2' (bottom). Above each staff are chord diagrams for the chords in the progression. The key signature for each system is indicated by a number (5, 9, 9) on the left side of the first staff.

- System 1 (Key 5):**
 - Vers. 1: Bm7, E7, A, Em7, A7, D
 - Vers. 2: Bm7, E7(b9), Amaj9, Em7, A7(b9), D6
- System 2 (Key 9):**
 - Vers. 1: Am7, D7, G, Dm7, G7, C
 - Vers. 2: Am7, D7(b9), Gmaj7, G6, Dm7, G7(b9), Cmaj7, C6
- System 3 (Key 9):**
 - Vers. 1: Gm7, C7, F, Cm7, F7, Bb
 - Vers. 2: Gm7, C7(b9), Fmaj7, Cm7, F7(b9), Bbmaj9, Bb6

For an explanation of the various I chords in this exercise, please see the page titled, "Why the Fancy Shmancy Major Chords?"