

# Blues C.E.S.H. Figures

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CESH = “Chromatic Embellishment of Static Harmony”.

“Static Harmony” means that the chord’s root (present or implied) stays constant and the quality of the chord does not change.

There are only five qualities of chords in tonal music: Major, minor, 7th, half-diminished, and diminished (or six – if you count quartals).

## Minor Quality Example

A minor quality chord is defined only by its root and third. Any additions to the chord do not change the fact that it is, and remains, a minor quality chord.

### Minor Quality Chords

- minor triad
- minor 6
- minor 7
- minor Major 7
- minor 9
- minor Major 9
- minor 69
- minor 11
- minor 13

The addition of a 6,  $\flat 7$ ,  $\natural 7$ , 9, 11 or 13 does not change the minor quality into another of the other four qualities. They’re icing on the cake – more flavors and colors.

The chromatic embellishments in minors largely revolve around descending from the root or ascending from the fifth.

The root moves down three half-steps in sequence or the fifth moves up two half-steps and back.

### C Minor Descending from the Root:

A1 and A2 show C moving down to B then down to  $B\flat$  landing finally the A note – while keeping  $E\flat$  and G constant.

In A1, the line is on the bottom note.

In A2, the descending chromatic line moves inside of the 2nd inversion Cm triad.

C Minor Ascending from the Fifth:

B1 and B2 show G moving up to G# then up to A and back down to G#

5 - #5 - 6 - #5  
G - G# - A - G#

This is the familiar “Secret Agent” line cliché.

While the Cm#5 could be considered a change to an Ab major triad, the context is clearly minor throughout the entire figure.

B1 has the moving line on top, while B2 has that line on the bottom.

Note that in both the minor CESH situations, the A is the target.

Eb Major Ascending from the Fifth:

Ascending from the Fifth also occurs with major chords.

C1 has the moving line on top, whereas C2 has it on the bottom.

**Blues CESH Figures:**

While there also exists the Major chord with the chromatic line descending from the root, this article is concerned with the Blues CESH Figures.

The examples mentioned above (A1 though C2) are included here simply to familiarize the reader with the general concept of CESH figures, ie. They add interest and motion while leaving the underlying current harmony unchanged.

The same is true of Blues CESH figures. The chromatic motions (or semi-chromatic in the case of R-3/3-R motions) add interest and motion while leaving the underlying harmony intact.

Rather than moving externally though, as in the minor and major examples (page v), the Blues CESH figures move internally from chord component to chord component.

The Root moves to the third (and vice-versa), the third may move to the fifth or the fifth to the third, and you can go back and forth between the fifth and the  $\flat 7$ .

This is illustrated in figures 1 through 3.

Single Line Combinations:

Figures 4 through 7 show the permutations available for combining these three elements, beginning with the 'Root moving up to Third' sequence (C - D - D# - E).

4 = up-dn-up

5 = up-dn-dn

6 = up-up-dn

7 = up-up-up

Figures 8 through 11 show the permutations available for combining these three elements, beginning with the 'Third moving down to Root' sequence (E - E $\flat$  - D - C).

8 = dn-dn-dn

9 = dn-up-dn

10 = dn-up-up

11 = dn-dn-up

Figures 12 through 15 show the permutations available for combining these three elements, beginning with the 'Fifth moving up to the  $\flat 7$ ' sequence (G - G# - A - B $\flat$ ).

12 = up-up-up

13 = up-up-dn

14 = up-dn-up

15 = up-dn-dn

Figures 16 through 19 show the permutations available for combining these three elements, beginning with the ' $\flat 7$  moving down to Fifth' sequence (B $\flat$  - A - A $\flat$  - G).

16 = dn-dn-dn

17 = dn-dn-up

18 = dn-up-up

19 = dn-up-dn

The beauty of all these single line figures 4 through 19, is that they all work great over a C7 chord, no matter how you play them!

This manner of improvising over 7th chords gained popularity during the Stride Piano era (James P. Johnson / Fats Waller) and is still used today in the Blues, Country, and in the style now known as ‘Honky Tonk Piano’.

Figures 20 through 28 are primarily studies in double-stops (the exceptions being 23, 27, and 28 which are triads).

Figures 20 and 24 are the most common, with 22 and 25 the next. Figures 22 and 26 are rare.

Figure 23 shows the full “Blues CESH Progression” as block chords beginning in root position (figures 27 and 28 begin, respectively, in first and second inversions).

Figures 29 through 37 are actual licks.

Figure 29 is a common cadential descent in thirds derived from figure 20 bar 2. Figure 30 is the same descent inverted to sixths.

Figure 31 is another cadential motion derived from figure 20 bar 2, but see-sawing off the A.

Figure 32 is also cadential see-saw lick with the 5- $\flat$ 7 pair working its way down chromatically to arrive at the 3-5 pair. This one see-saws off the high C.

Figure 33 uses a high pedaled Root while the motion in the bottom goes back and forth between the  $\flat$ 3 and the Fifth. Note that, in this lick, the  $\flat$ 3 always precedes the M3 and never follows it.

Figure 34 see-saws off the lower C. The interior chromatic line moves from the third to the fifth (from figure 2 bar 1) with the high pedal C. This lick is often preceded by a lower C pickup note on the “and of the four”.

Figure 35 is, like figure 34, also often preceded by the lower C pickup note, thus the lick essentially begins as a lower C see-saw figure. The high C pedal juxtaposed against the moving chromatic notes is a feature here as well (ref fig 2 bar 2).

In figures 35 and 36 (as with figure 33,) the  $\flat$ 3 always precedes the M3 and never follows it.

Figure 36 is a common variation of figure 35.

Figure 37 combines a common shuffle pattern with figure 20 bar 2.

Crushes should be used where possible / convenient (they are not always available depending on the chord).

# Common C.E.S.H. Figures

A1 Cm CmM7/G# (Cm/G#) Cm7/Bb (Cm/Bb) Cm6/A (Cm/A)

A2 Cm CmM7 Cm7 Cm6

B1 Cm Cm#5 (Abmaj/C) Cm6 Cm#5 (Abmaj/C)

B2 Cm Cm#5 (Abmaj) Cm6 Cm#5 (Abmaj)

C1 Ebmaj Eb+ Eb6 Ebmaj Eb+ Eb6 Eb+

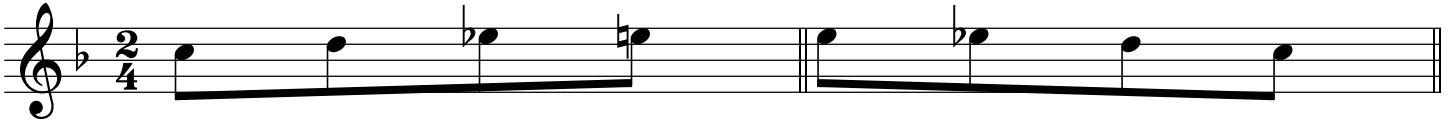
C2 Ebmaj Eb+ Eb6 Ebmaj Eb+ Eb6 Eb+

# Blues C.E.S.H. Figures

over C7

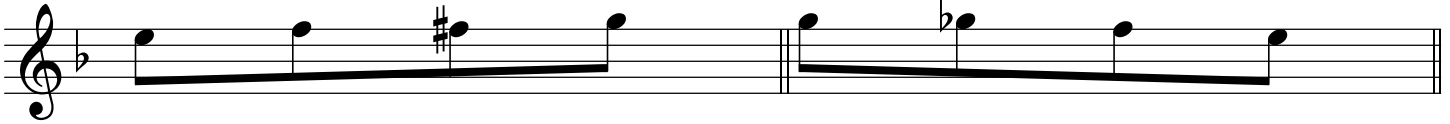
1. Root up to M3

M3 down to Root



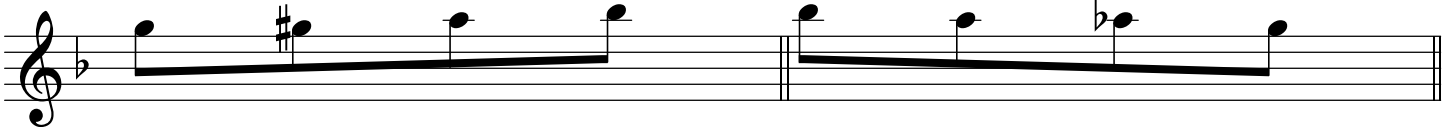
2. M3 up to P5

P5 down to M3



3. P5 up to b7

b7 down to P5

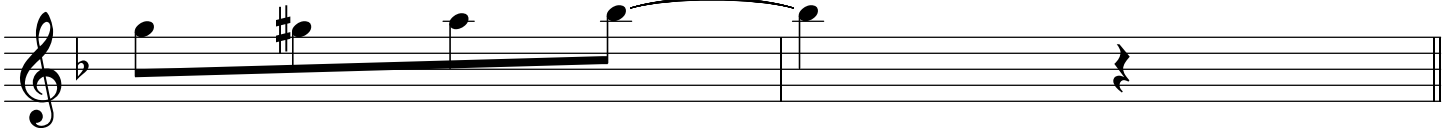


4. R-3 up

5-3 down

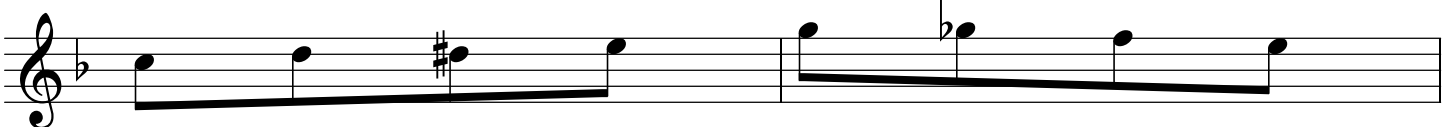


5-b7 up

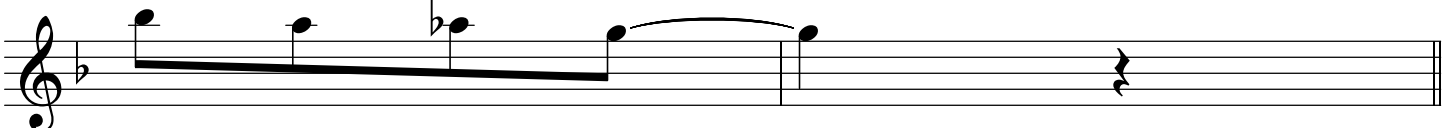


5. R-3 up

5-3 down



b7- 5 down



6. R-3 up 3-5 up

b7- 5 down

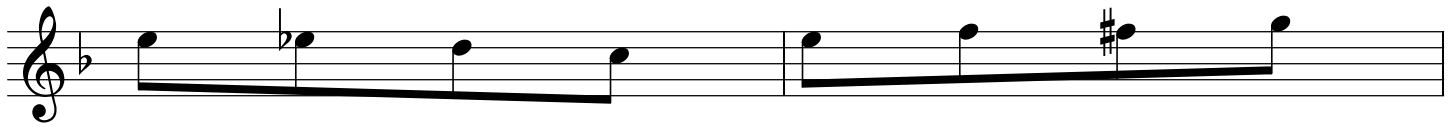
7. R-3 up 3-5 up

5-b7 up

8. 3-R down 5-3 down

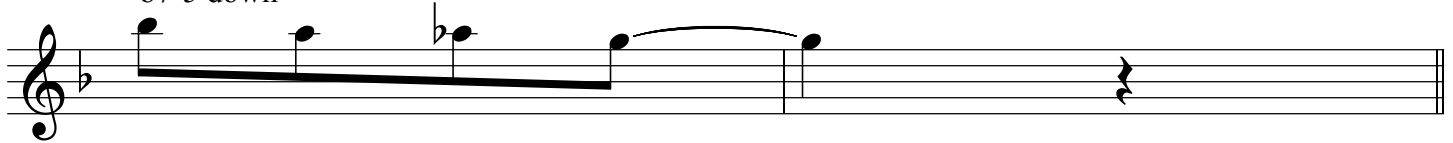
b7-5 down

9. 3-R down 3-5 up



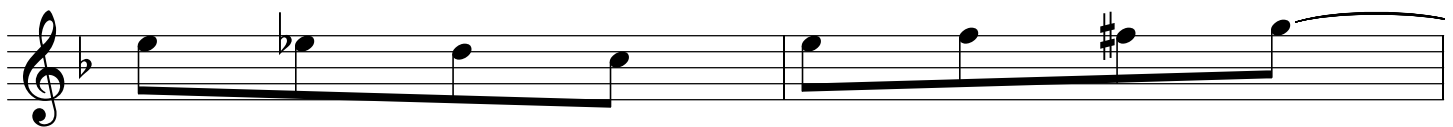
Musical notation for exercise 9, first staff: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb). The staff contains two measures. The first measure has a descending eighth-note triplet: G4, F#4, E4. The second measure has an ascending eighth-note triplet: G4, A4, B4. A slur covers the entire two-measure phrase.

b7-5 down



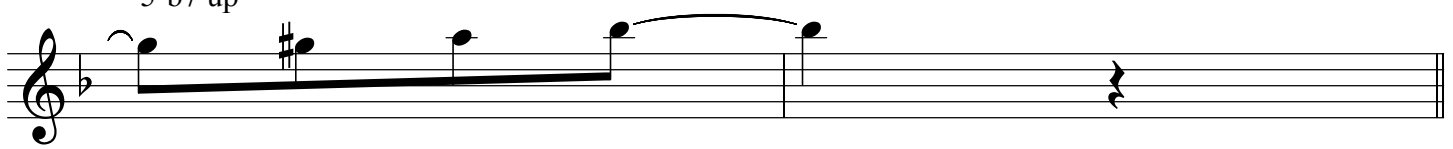
Musical notation for exercise 9, second staff: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb). The staff contains two measures. The first measure has a descending eighth-note triplet: G4, F#4, E4. The second measure has an ascending eighth-note triplet: G4, A4, B4. A slur covers the entire two-measure phrase. The staff ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

10. 3-R down 3-5 up




Musical notation for exercise 10, first staff: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb). The staff contains two measures. The first measure has a descending eighth-note triplet: G4, F#4, E4. The second measure has an ascending eighth-note triplet: G4, A4, B4. A slur covers the entire two-measure phrase.

5-b7 up



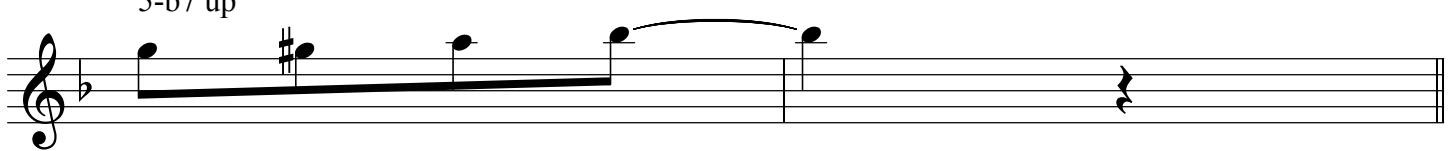
Musical notation for exercise 10, second staff: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb). The staff contains two measures. The first measure has an ascending eighth-note triplet: G4, A4, B4. The second measure has a descending eighth-note triplet: G4, F#4, E4. A slur covers the entire two-measure phrase. The staff ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

11. 3-R down 5-3 down



Musical notation for exercise 11, first staff: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb). The staff contains two measures. The first measure has a descending eighth-note triplet: G4, F#4, E4. The second measure has a descending eighth-note triplet: G4, F#4, E4. A slur covers the entire two-measure phrase.

5-b7 up



Musical notation for exercise 11, second staff: Treble clef, key signature of one flat (Bb). The staff contains two measures. The first measure has an ascending eighth-note triplet: G4, A4, B4. The second measure has a descending eighth-note triplet: G4, F#4, E4. A slur covers the entire two-measure phrase. The staff ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.



12. 5-b7 up 3-5 up

R-3 up

13. 5-b7 up 3-5 up

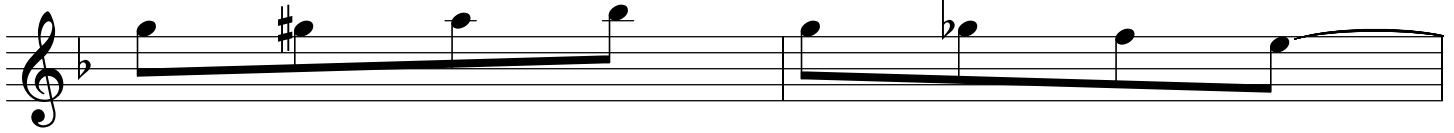
3-R down

14. 5-b7 up 5-3 down

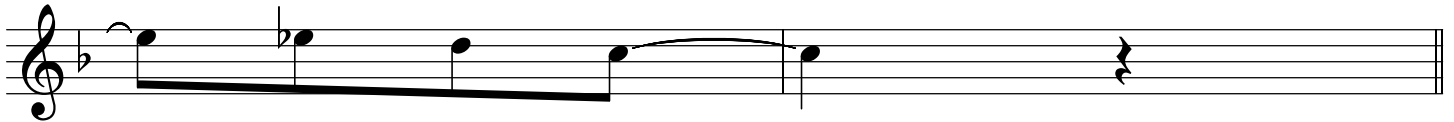
R-3 up

15. 5-b7 up

5-3 down

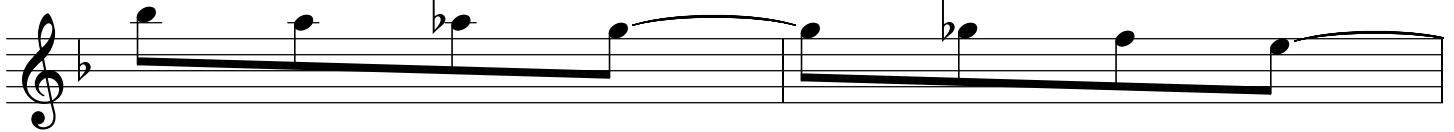


3-R down

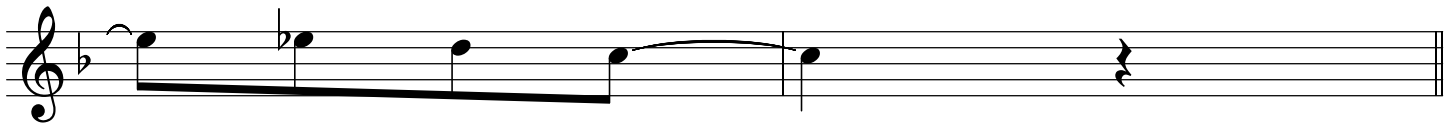


16. b7-5 down

5-3 down

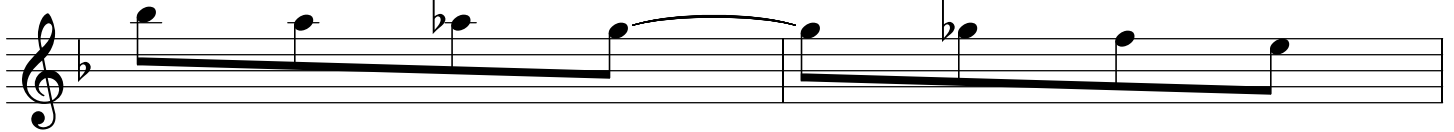


3-R down

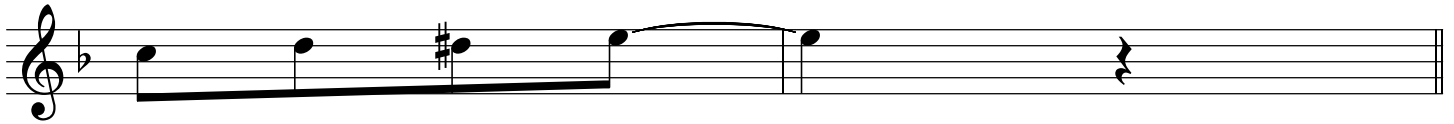


17. b7-5 down

5-3 down



R-3 up



18. b7-5 down 3-5 up

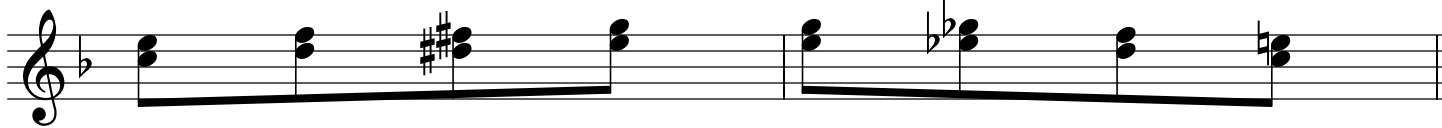
R-3 up

19. b7-5 down 3-5 up

3-R down

20. R-3 up to 3-5

3-5 down to R-3



21. 3-5 up to 5-b7

5-b7 down to 3-5



22. R-5 up to 3-b7

3-b7 down to R-5



23. R-3-5 up to 3-5-b7

3-5-b7 down to R-3-5



Imaj    iiø7/b7    Idim7    I7                    I7    Idim7    iiø7/b7    Imaj

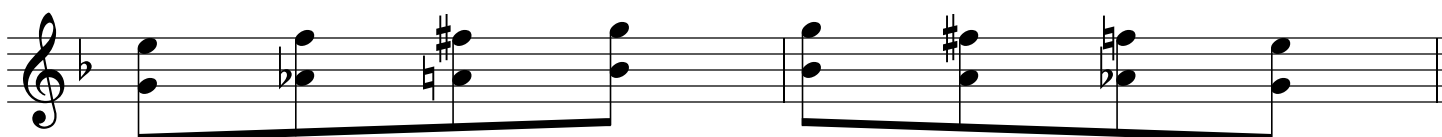
24. 3-8 up to 5-10

5-10 down to 3-8



25. 5-10 up to b7-12

b7-12 down to 5-10



26. 5-8 up to b7-10

b7-10 down to 5-8



27. 3-5-8 up to 5-b7-10

5-b7-10 down to 3-5-8

Imaj iiø7/b7 Idim7 I7 I7 Idim7 iiø7/b7 Imaj

28. 5-8-10 up to b7-10-12

b7-10-12 down to 5-8-10

Imaj iiø7/b7 Idim7 I7 I7 Idim7 iiø7/b7 Imaj

29.

30.

31.

32.

33.

34.

35.

36.

37.