

Chord Progressions for Tenor Drumming: an Introduction

When we think of tenor drumming, we often only think of the rhythm that is happening. In reality, it is also possible to make a significant contribution from a harmonic perspective with tenor (and bass) drums.

We can tune our drums to play music that is harmonically relevant to the tune in addition to being rhythmically relevant the other percussion scores.

I like to reflect on the value of an upright base player in a jazz ensemble or bass player rock band bass guitar player rock band. Bass string instruments are low frequency and similar range to the tenor drum, and they can be deeply impactful. If you think of music that has a “bass drop” moment, you know how cool it can be!

This is all well in good but how do we do it? How do we write and voice our tenor and bass scores so that they are like a walking bass line or a bass guitar score? The answer is **chord progressions**.

Every tune has an underlying structure of chords that gives it a unique feeling and moves you through the tune. If the wrong chords are played on a guitar along with with a tune it will sound wrong - even to someone who doesn't play guitar.

To write down some progressions I'm going to use numbers instead of note names. This means that they can be written in different keys and it also means that they can be translated to different tuning schemes. For example, some people think of tuning the bass drum to concert B flat, and others think of calling it A.

Chords we will use

There are several chords that can be played on the notes that of the Great Highland Bagpipe. We are going to focus on three of them: the ONE chord, the FOUR chord, and the FIVE chord. They each correspond to the scale steps in A Major. The bagpipe notes, in order, are A, B, C, D, E, F, and G.

We are also going to focus on only the root, of each chord. “Root” is a music theory term that means “the scale step the chord starts on”. The root of the ONE chord is A on bagpipes, the root of the FOUR chord is D on bagpipes, and the root of the FIVE chord is E on bagpipes.

There more than one different functional tuning schema used for tenor drums, so for simplicity, I will use colour coding to make things clear.

Chord	Roman Numeral	Bagpipe Note of Root	Colour Code	Concert pitch
ONE	I	A	RED	B \flat
FOUR	IV	D	BLUE	E \flat
FIVE	V	E	GREEN	F natural

The SEVEN chord is used in Cabar Feidh and Bob Cooper of Winnipeg. It uses a root note which is very uncommon on tenor drums (bagpipe B). However, bagpipe D is in the SEVEN chord so we will play a drum tuned to bagpipe D when we come across the SEVEN chord, and we will colour code it blue, like the FOUR chord, when it comes up in this book.

Additionally, bagpipe A is in the FOUR chord, so if you only have two drums, or if you want to maintain an easy to remember pattern, it will sound fine if you use a drum tuned to bagpipe A (red) in places with the FOUR chord (e.g. 3rd part of Cabar Feidh, bar 4).

Some bands name/tune their drum notes so that the note that is in tune with the drones is what they call “B flat” (I typically call it “bagpipe A”). Both systems have merit. Here is how the B flat tuning scheme fits with the bagpipe notes and the 3 chords above:

ONE chord - bagpipe A (“B \flat ” if using B flat tuning)
 FOUR chord - bagpipe D (“E \flat ” if using B flat tuning)
 FIVE chord - bagpipe E (“F \natural ” if using B flat tuning)

How you can use chord progressions

Step 1: tune your drums

- **ONE**: bagpipe A (smallest drum) THIS IS CONCERT B \flat
- **FIVE**: bagpipe E (medium drum) THIS IS CONCERT F natural
- **FOUR**: bagpipe D (biggest drum) THIS IS CONCERT E \flat

The notes in the chords are the notes that will sound harmonically pleasing with that section of the tune.

Step 2: play along with the tune! There are several different ways to explore

- You can try playing quarter notes (two per chord in the 4/4 examples in this book)
- You can try playing an eighth note grid (4 notes per chord, 8 per bar)
- You can play one “piano time” iteration for each chord
- You can try playing your existing drum scores with new voicing that matches the chord progressions

In this introduction, we are mostly working with the root only (except in the SEVEN chord), but

It's important not to try to do everything at once. This introduction is an exploration so that you can hear how your drums sound when they are playing notes that really fit well with the tune. This is called “harmonic relevance”.

other notes from each chord fit as well!

Chord Progressions for a few tunes

Scotland the Brave (4/4)

1. | ONE ONE | ONE ONE | FOUR ONE | FIVE FIVE |
| ONE ONE | ONE ONE | FOUR ONE | FIVE ONE |
2. | ONE ONE | ONE ONE | FOUR ONE | FIVE FIVE |
| ONE ONE | ONE ONE | FOUR ONE | FIVE ONE |

The Rowan Tree (4/4)

1. | ONE ONE | ONE ONE | FOUR FOUR | FOUR FIVE |
| ONE ONE | ONE FOUR | FOUR FIVE | ONE ONE |
2. | ONE ONE | FOUR FOUR | ONE ONE | ONE FIVE |
| ONE ONE | ONE FOUR | FOUR FIVE | ONE ONE |

Wings (4/4)

1. | ONE ONE | FOUR ONE | FOUR ONE | FIVE FIVE |
| ONE ONE | FOUR ONE | FOUR FIVE | ONE ONE |
2. | ONE ONE | FOUR ONE | FOUR ONE | FIVE FIVE |
| ONE ONE | FOUR ONE | FOUR FIVE | ONE ONE |

The Diamond Anniversary (4/4)

1. | ONE ONE | ONE FOUR | ONE FOUR | FIVE FIVE |
| ONE ONE | ONE FOUR | ONE FIVE | ONE ONE |
2. | FOUR ONE | FOUR ONE | FOUR ONE | FIVE FIVE |
| ONE ONE | ONE FOUR | ONE FIVE | ONE ONE |

Cabar Feidh (4/4)

A helpful tip is that the FOUR chord has bagpipe A in it, so in the 3rd part, it would be ok to play the Red note in bar 4 so it matches all the other bar 4s and 8s.

1. | SEVEN SEVEN | SEVEN SEVEN | ONE ONE | ONE ONE |
 | SEVEN SEVEN | SEVEN SEVEN | ONE ONE | ONE ONE |
2. | SEVEN SEVEN | SEVEN SEVEN | ONE ONE | ONE ONE |
 | SEVEN SEVEN | SEVEN SEVEN | ONE ONE | ONE ONE |
3. | ONE ONE | ONE SEVEN | FOUR FOUR | FOUR FOUR |
 | ONE ONE | ONE SEVEN | ONE SEVEN | ONE ONE |
4. | SEVEN SEVEN | SEVEN SEVEN | ONE ONE | ONE ONE |
 | SEVEN SEVEN | SEVEN SEVEN | ONE ONE | ONE ONE |

Bob Cooper of Winnipeg (4/4)

The SEVEN chord has a bagpipe D in it, so if a drum tuned to bagpipe D plays during the SEVEN chords, it will sound fine!

1. | FOUR FOUR | SEVEN SEVEN | FOUR FOUR | SEVEN ONE |
 | FOUR FOUR | SEVEN SEVEN | FOUR FOUR | ONE FOUR |
2. | FOUR FOUR | SEVEN SEVEN | FOUR FOUR | SEVEN ONE |
 | FOUR FOUR | SEVEN SEVEN | FOUR FOUR | ONE FOUR |
3. | FOUR FOUR | SEVEN SEVEN | FOUR FOUR | SEVEN ONE |
 | FOUR FOUR | SEVEN SEVEN | FOUR FOUR | ONE FOUR |
4. | FOUR FOUR | SEVEN SEVEN | FOUR FOUR | SEVEN ONE |
 | FOUR FOUR | SEVEN SEVEN | FOUR FOUR | ONE FOUR |

Let's try it!

1. Scotland the Brave with quarter note beats

Two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first staff starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are: G4 (ONE), A4 (ONE), B4 (ONE), C5 (ONE), D5 (FOUR), E5 (ONE), F5 (FIVE), G5 (FIVE). The second staff starts with a bass clef and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are: G3 (ONE), A3 (ONE), B3 (ONE), C4 (ONE), D4 (FOUR), E4 (ONE), F4 (FIVE), G4 (ONE).

2. Scotland the Brave with eighth note beats (grid)

Two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first staff starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are: G4 (ONE), A4 (ONE), B4 (ONE), C5 (ONE), D5 (FOUR), E5 (ONE), F5 (FIVE), G5 (FIVE). The second staff starts with a bass clef and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are: G3 (ONE), A3 (ONE), B3 (ONE), C4 (ONE), D4 (FOUR), E4 (ONE), F4 (FIVE), G4 (ONE).

3. Wings with piano time and singles

Four staves of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first staff is labeled 'time...' and starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are: G4 (ONE), A4 (ONE), B4 (FOUR), C5 (ONE), D5 (FOUR), E5 (ONE), F5 (FIVE), G5 (FIVE). The second staff is labeled 'singles...' and starts with a bass clef and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are: G3 (ONE), A3 (ONE), B3 (FOUR), C4 (ONE), D4 (FOUR), E4 (FIVE), F4 (ONE), G4 (ONE). The third staff is labeled 'time...' and starts with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are: G4 (ONE), A4 (ONE), B4 (FOUR), C5 (ONE), D5 (FOUR), E5 (ONE), F5 (FIVE), G5 (FIVE). The fourth staff is labeled 'singles...' and starts with a bass clef and a 4/4 time signature. The notes are: G3 (ONE), A3 (ONE), B3 (FOUR), C4 (ONE), D4 (FOUR), E4 (FIVE), F4 (ONE), G4 (ONE).

4a. KSPB 4/4 Number 1 with Scotland the Brave , Rowan Tree and Wings
(UPDATED from workshop!!)

KSPB 4/4 Number 1

Scotland The Brave

KSPB MIDSECTION

Rowan Tree

KSPB 4/4 Number 1

Wings

KSPB MIDSECTION

The image displays three musical scores for the songs 'Scotland The Brave', 'Rowan Tree', and 'Wings'. Each score is written in bass clef with a 4/4 time signature. The notes are grouped into measures, and these measures are highlighted with colored rectangular blocks. A legend in the top right corner, titled 'Consistent tuning', defines the colors: red for Bb, green for F (natural), and blue for Eb. The scores are arranged vertically, with 'Scotland The Brave' at the top, 'Rowan Tree' in the middle, and 'Wings' at the bottom. Each score includes a 'KSPB MIDSECTION' label and a 'KSPB' logo.

Consistent tuning

- Bb
- F (natural)
- Eb

5. KSPB 4/4 Number 2 with The Diamond Anniversary March (tune twice through)

KSPB 4/4 Number 2

Diamond Anniversary x2



KSPB MIDSECTION

The musical score is written in 4/4 time and consists of two systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The music is color-coded by chord: red for Bb, green for F (natural), and blue for Eb. The first system has 8 measures, and the second system has 8 measures. The piece is repeated twice through. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Concert tuning
■ Bb
■ F (natural)
■ Eb

6a. KSPB 4/4 Number 1 with Bob Cooper of Winnipeg with 4/4 #1

KSPB 4/4 Number 1
Bob Cooper of Winnipeg KSPB MIDSECTION

 ← important
 ← optional



Consistent tuning
■ Bb
■ F (natural)
■ Eb

6b. KSPB 4/4 Number 1 with Bob Cooper of Winnipeg with 4/4 #2

KSPB 4/4 Number 2

Bob Cooper of Winnipeg KSPB MIDSECTION

The image shows a handwritten musical score for a piece titled "KSPB 4/4 Number 2" by Bob Cooper of Winnipeg. The score is written in bass clef with a 4/4 time signature. It consists of seven systems of music. Each system has a main line of notes and a secondary line below it. The notes are decorated with colored highlights: red, green, and blue. The red highlights are under the notes, while the green and blue highlights are above them. There are also various annotations, including circles with numbers and symbols, and arrows pointing to specific notes. The title "KSPB MIDSECTION" is written in the top right corner of the score.



 ← important
 ← optional

Consistent string
Red Bb
Green F (natural)
Blue Eb




7. KSPB Cabar Feidh Voicing Exercise

Cabar Feidh with Flourish

KSPB MID SECTION

 ← important
 ← optional

Concert tuning

-  Bb
-  F (natural)
-  Eb

KSPB Jig Set - Chords

Paddy Be Easy (9/8)

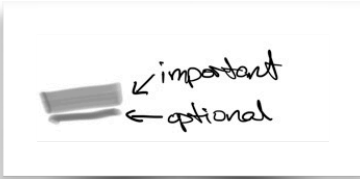
- ||: ONE ONE FOUR | ONE ONE FOUR | ONE ONE FOUR | FOUR FOUR FOUR |
| ONE ONE FOUR | ONE ONE FOUR | ONE ONE FOUR | FOUR FOUR FOUR |
- | FOUR FOUR ONE | FOUR FOUR ONE | FOUR FOUR ONE | FOUR FOUR FOUR |
| FOUR FOUR ONE | FOUR FOUR ONE | FOUR FOUR ONE | FOUR FOUR FOUR :||

The Sky Boat Song (6/8)

- | FOUR FOUR | ONE ONE | FOUR SEVEN | ONE ONE |
| FOUR FOUR | ONE ONE | FOUR SEVEN | ONE ONE |
- | FOUR FOUR | ONE ONE | FOUR FOUR | SEVEN SEVEN |
| FOUR FOUR | ONE ONE | FOUR FOUR | SEVEN ONE |
| FOUR FOUR | ONE ONE | FOUR SEVEN | FOUR FOUR ||

The Bathgate Highland Gathering (9/8)

- ||: ONE FOUR FOUR | ONE FOUR FOUR | SEVEN FOUR FOUR | FOUR ONE ONE |
| ONE FOUR FOUR | ONE FOUR FOUR | SEVEN FOUR FOUR | ONE FOUR FOUR :||
- | ONE FOUR FOUR | FOUR SEVEN SEVEN | SEVEN FOUR FOUR | FOUR ONE ONE |
| ONE FOUR FOUR | FOUR SEVEN SEVEN | SEVEN FOUR FOUR | ONE FOUR FOUR |
| ONE FOUR FOUR | FOUR SEVEN SEVEN | SEVEN FOUR FOUR | FOUR ONE ONE |
| ONE FOUR FOUR | ONE FOUR FOUR | SEVEN FOUR FOUR | ONE FOUR FOUR |



KSPB Paddy Be Easy

120 bpm

Reagan Jones

Four staves of musical notation in bass clef, 9/8 time signature. The notation includes notes with stems and beams, and rests. Chords are indicated by colored boxes: red for Bb, green for F (natural), and blue for Eb. Some notes have a greater-than sign (>) above them, indicating accents. The piece ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

KSPB Skye Boat Song R 24

40 bpm
2 tenor parts

KSPB Midsection
Reagan Jones

Five staves of musical notation in bass clef, 6/8 time signature. The notation includes notes with stems and beams, and rests. Chords are indicated by colored boxes: red for Bb, green for F (natural), and blue for Eb. Some notes have a greater-than sign (>) above them, indicating accents. The piece ends with a double bar line.

Bathgate Highland Gathering

KSPB MID SECTION

← important
← optional

Concert tuning

- Bb
- F (natural)
- Eb