TalkingBass

Walking Bass VOCABULARY

A Guide For Bass Players

Stop Memorising Theory...
Start Making Music

TALKINGBASS · FREE LESSON MATERIAL

Walking Bass Vocabulary

Your first real lines — building phrases over a 1–6–2–5 in C major

Walking bass isn't about knowing more theory — it's about building a **vocabulary** of little phrases that sound good over certain chords, and choosing when to use them. In a 4/4 walking line there are only four notes in a bar, and only so many smooth ways from one chord to the next. Learn a handful of those journeys and you're not calculating anything — you're just making choices. This handout gives you your first four phrases, in standard notation and TAB.

> **Watch the lessons**
>
> This is the follow-up to *The First Step To Walking Bass* (roots, fifths & the two-feel). If you're brand new to walking bass, start there first: talkingbass.net/the-right-way-to-start-walking-bass-no-theory-needed/

The progression

Everything here happens over a 1–6–2–5 in C major — one of the most common sequences in music, and a perfect practice loop. It gives you the three most common seventh chords in one place.

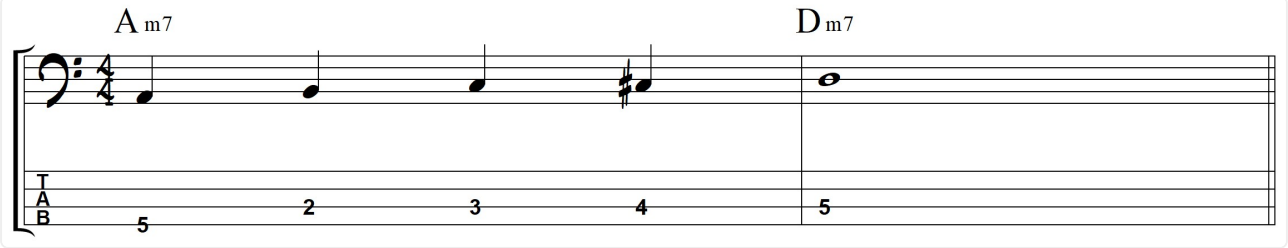
Cmaj7 — Am7 — Dm7 — G7

Start in a **two-feel** — roots and fifths, one or two notes a bar — and keep it as your home base. Every now and then, swap in a full walking bar using one of the phrases below. Not every bar. You *choose* when.

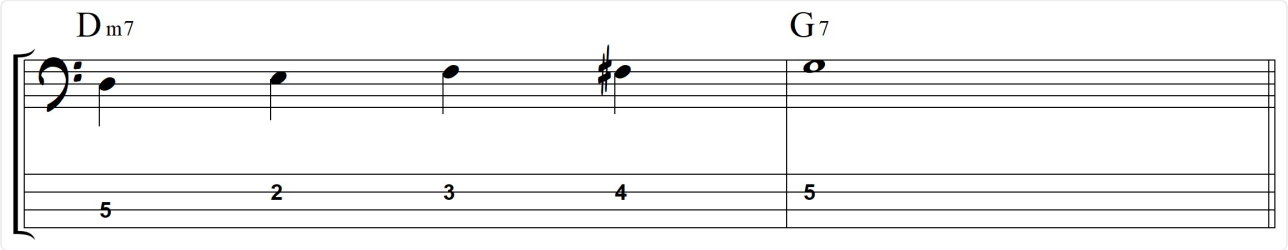
Phrase 1 — the ascending line

Works over any minor 7 or dominant 7 chord moving up a fourth to the next chord (Am7→Dm7, Dm7→G7, G7→Cmaj7 — all up a fourth, the most common movement in music). Root, second, minor third, major third, landing on the next root.

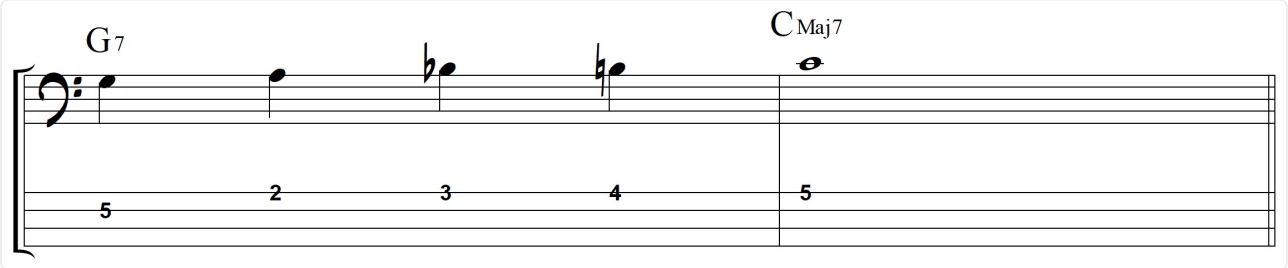
A – B – C – C♯ – (D)



Ascending line: Am7 to Dm7



Ascending line: Dm7 to G7 — the same shape moved up



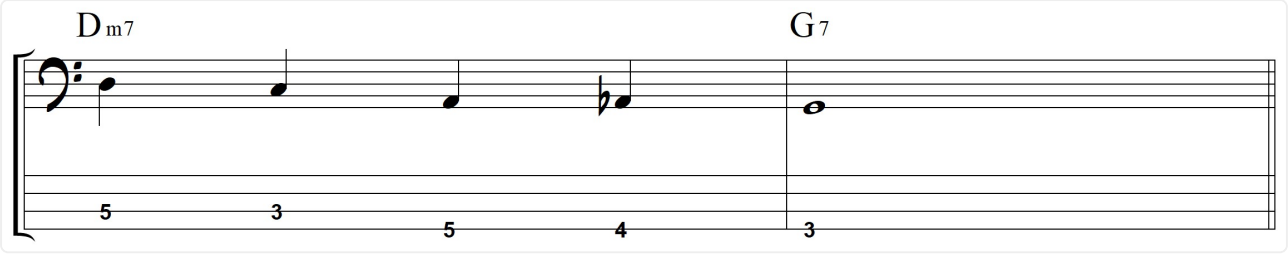
Ascending line: G7 to Cmaj7 — the same shape again

Learn each across two strings (comfortable fingering) and on one string (great for feeling the distances). Then combine — walk two or three bars in a row for one flowing ascent through the progression.

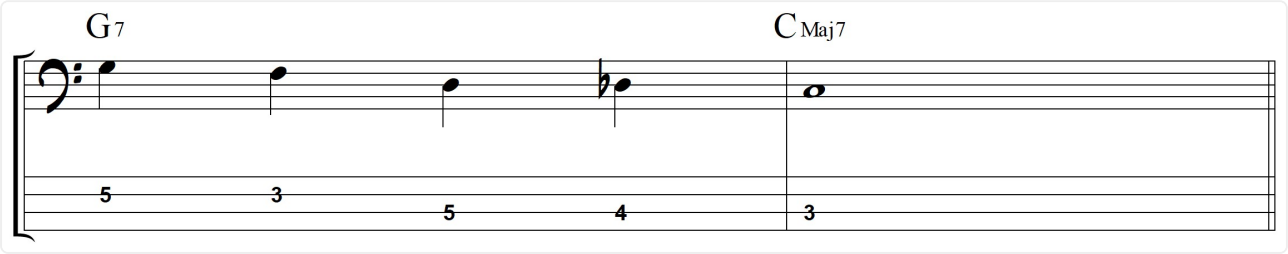
Phrase 2 — the descending line

The mirror image: same chords a fourth apart, but descending to the root below instead of climbing above. Root, flat seven, six, flat six, down to the five — landing on the next root an octave lower.

A – G – E – E♭ – (D)



Descending line: Dm7 to G7

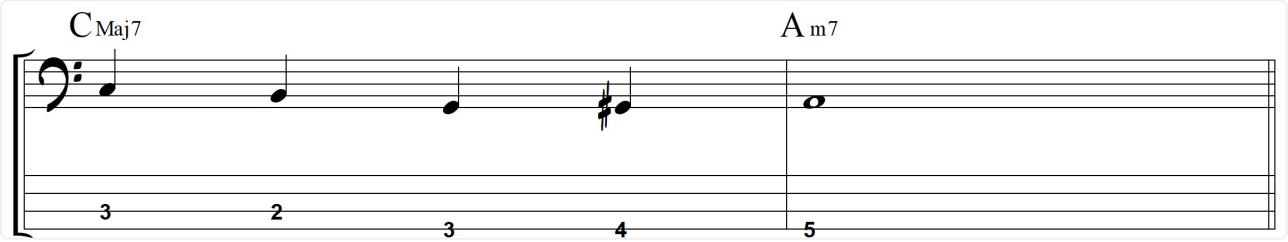


Descending line: G7 to Cmaj7 — the same descending shape moved

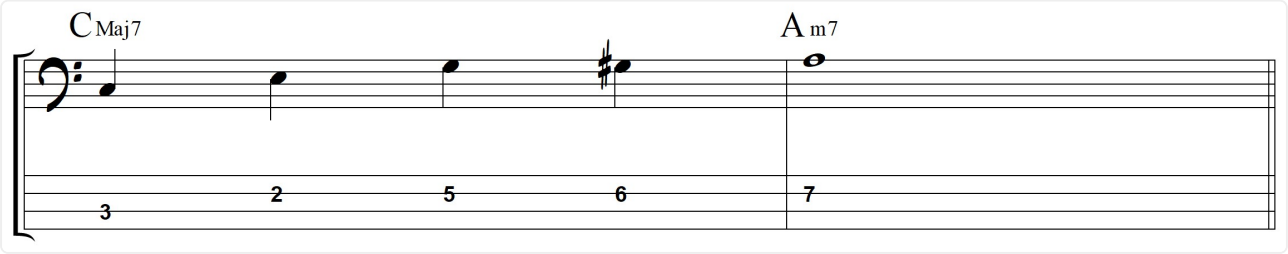
Now you have a choice in both directions. Two phrases — one up, one down — is already a real vocabulary. Mix them into your two-feel and choose which fits the direction you want to go.

Phrases 3 & 4 — lines for Cmaj7 to Am7

The progression also moves from chord one to chord six (Cmaj7→Am7) — a different root movement, so it wants its own vocabulary. Here are two lines for that move: one descending, one ascending, so again you can choose the direction.



Descending line: Cmaj7 to Am7



Ascending line: Cmaj7 to Am7

Learn each across two strings and on one string, then drop them into your two-feel over the Cmaj7 bar — sometimes walking down into the Am7, sometimes up.

How to practise

- Start in a plain two-feel over the whole 1–6–2–5. Get it looping comfortably.
- Add **one** walking phrase at a time — a single bar here and there. Keep the rest two-feel.
- Learn every phrase in two places: across two strings, and along one string.
- Mix directions freely. The choice of up or down is the whole skill.
- Build up until the whole progression can flow as a full walking line — then keep collecting new phrases.

> **Want the complete method?**
>
> **Simple Steps To Walking Bass** takes you from these first phrases to confident, flowing lines over any progression — dozens of phrases, full choruses, and walking lines over real tunes. Find it at talkingbass.net/courses/simple-steps-to-walking-bass/

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