Consider C7. It has the familiar sound of a chord wanting to resolve one step round the cycle.

If we remove the 5th, the chord doesn’t lose any of its ‘dominantness’, i.e. it still wants to resolve to F.

We can see then that the 5th is pretty much a dispensable chord tone.

That leaves us then with the Root, the 3rd and the 7th. Since the root is normally taken care of by the bass player, the 3rd and 7th are the important notes. The 3rd gives a chord its major or minor tonality, and the 7th gives it its feeling either of tension or of stability. We refer to the 3rd and 7th of a chord as its guide tones.

If, when a chord changes we move from one guide tone to the nearest guide tone of the new chord, we get a nice smooth line that ‘guides’ us through the harmony, like in this II, V, I sequence.

The guide tone lines on a simple blues in C would look like this.

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Below is a sequence you might see for the standard 'Autumn Leaves'. Write in the missing guide tones. Remember, always aim to go to the next nearest guide tone of the new chord. It may, however, be necessary in this exercise to jump to the 'other' guide tone (or up by an octave) sometimes to keep the notes within the stave.