

CHORD CHANGE PILLAR NOTES

How to choose the melody note that anchors each chord section — and what effect each choice creates

A **pillar note** is the melody note you deliberately place at a chord change — the note that anchors the new chord section. Every chord change in a song is an opportunity to choose: do you resolve, create forward motion, or escalate tension?

HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR PILLAR NOTES — 3 RULES

1
SMOOTH HANDOFF

Choose a note that **IS in the incoming chord** for a smooth, supported landing at the change. The listener feels the chord change happen without friction.

2
FORWARD MOTION

Choose an **unstable chord tone** (the 7th of a dominant chord, the 3rd of a tense chord) for grounded tension with forward pull. The chord catches the note but it still wants to move.

3
MAXIMUM CLARITY

Choose the **root of the new chord** for maximum clarity and a decisive arrival. Strongest resolution — makes the chord change unmistakable and confident.

PILLAR NOTE TABLE — COMMON CHORDS IN C MAJOR

CHORD	STRONG PILLAR NOTE	EMOTIONAL EFFECT	WEAK PILLAR NOTE	EMOTIONAL EFFECT
C	DO (root)	Grounded anchor — "we've arrived"	TI	Restless even at rest — pulls away from the chord
G7	SO or TI	Irresistible pull toward home — dominant tension	FA	Extreme tension — FA over G7 is the loudest alarm bell in the key
Am	LA (root)	Dark, bittersweet arrival — minor tonic feeling	DO	Floats above the minor — unstable, searching quality
F	FA (root) or DO	Warm, spacious arrival — F is the "breath" chord	TI	Bittersweet friction — TI clashes with the subdominant

VOICE LEADING TIP — STEPWISE PILLAR NOTES

DO → TI → LA → SO

Pillar notes that move by **step** (or half-step) between chord changes create smooth, singable lines that feel inevitable. This descending stepwise motion (DO → TI → LA → SO) is one of the most common patterns in pop and soul — it gives the melody a natural gravitational flow even as the chords shift underneath.