

## **Mastering the 2-5-1 Progression on Saxophone**

### **Why practice 2-5-1s?**

The 2-5-1 progression is without doubt the most common chord sequence in jazz. It shows up in hundreds of standards, from bebop to ballads, and if you're playing from any chord chart, chances are you'll encounter more than one. Having a great-sounding phrase ready for a 2-5-1 will instantly lift your improvisation and give you a sense of harmonic confidence.

This sheet gives you a strong 2-5-1 phrase to use and gets you practicing it in all 12 keys around the cycle of fourths — just like we do in the video. The idea is to make this phrase second nature, so you can play it fluently in any key, at any tempo.

### **The Phrase in C Major**

Let's start with a 2-5-1 in C major:

#### **Chords:**

| Dm7 (ii) | G7 (V) | Cmaj7 (I) |

#### **Notes (Concert Pitch):**

- Over **Dm7**: D E F G A B C D

- Over **G7**: E F G E
- Over **Cmaj7**: B C D B G E
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- So the full line:  
**D E F G A B C D | E F G E | B C D B G E**

This phrase outlines the harmony beautifully: it uses the Dorian mode over Dm7, hits the 7th of G7 (F), and resolves neatly to the major 7 (B) and 3rd (E) of the Cmaj7 chord. Now let's transpose that phrase through the cycle of fourths, keeping the intervallic shape consistent in each key.

## **Now Let's Practice It in All 12 Keys**

Root movement: Cycle of 4ths

**All 12 Keys – Cycle of Fourths C Major**

**Dm7 – G7 – Cmaj7**

**D E F G A B C D | E F G E | B C D B G E**

**C Major: D E F G A B C D | E F G E | B C D B G E**

**F Major: G A B $\flat$  C D E F G | A B $\flat$  C A | E F G E C A**

**B $\flat$  Major: C D E $\flat$  F G A B $\flat$  C | D E $\flat$  F D | A B $\flat$  C A F D**

**Eb Major: F G Ab Bb C D Eb F | G Ab Bb G | D Eb F D Bb G**

**Ab Major: Bb C Db Eb F G Ab Bb | C Db Eb C | G Ab Bb G Eb C**

**Db Major: Eb F Gb Ab Bb C Db Eb | F Gb Ab F | C Db Eb C Ab F**

**Gb Major: Ab Bb Cb Db Eb F Gb Ab | Bb Cb Db Bb | F Gb Ab F Db Bb**

**B Major: C# D# E F# G# A# B C# | D# E F# D# | A# B C# A# F# D#**

**E Major: F# G# A B C# D# E F# | G# A B G# | D# E F# D# B G#**

**A Major: B C# D E F# G# A B | C# D E C# | G# A B G# E C#**

**D Major: E F# G A B C# D E | F# G A F# | C# D E C# A F#**

**G Major: A B C D E F# G A | B C D B | F# G A F# D B**

## **Final Thoughts**

Practicing a well-crafted 2-5-1 lick like this — and doing it in all twelve keys — is one of the smartest ways to build fluency in jazz improvisation. It trains your ear, your fingers, and your understanding of harmony all at once.

But don't stop there — use the **free backing track** to try playing:

- Your **own lick** over each 2-5-1,
- Just the **chord tones** of each chord,
- Or even explore other classic **2-5-1 phrases** you've picked up.

This kind of repetition with variation is where real mastery comes from. And above all — **have fun** with it. Enjoy the sound, enjoy the challenge, and remember:

**Always practice in all twelve keys.**

Your future solos will thank you for it!