

Guide to Playing Dominant Seventh Arpeggios

for ABRSM Grade 8 Piano - © Fergus Black 2011

Start with diminished sevenths! I have prepared a separate guide for diminished sevenths, and you should start with that.

As with all scales and arpeggios, play legato - for the pianist that means joining the bottoms of the notes together. Aim for an even legato.

♩ = 66 in the recommended minimum speed for ABRSM Grade 8. I have shown two octaves in the examples, but four octaves are required for the exam.

Remember that the Dominant does not start on the key note, so “The Dominant Seventh Arpeggio of C” starts on G, and has the notes G-B-D-F. The Dominant Seventh of C major and C minor are the same, so it is just “... of C”.

As you go through, make sure the note names are known for each arpeggio: I play a game with my students called "Guess the Notes", which is tongue-in-cheek, because it shouldn't be guessing at all: with the piano lid **shut**, they should be able to tell me the names of the notes in the arpeggio they are going to play (down, as well as up).

I tackle them in three groups:

Group 1

The Dominant Sevenths of C, D and F are just like the Hanon Diminished Sevenths – they start on a white note. You start on the fifth finger of the left hand, and the thumb in the right. You put both thumbs on the first quaver of each group of four.

The Dominant Seventh of C:

Starts on G

Put both thumbs on G (not the first one!)

♩ = 66

Musical notation for the Dominant Seventh of C arpeggio in 4/4 time. The piece is in C major. The right hand starts on G4 (thumb) and the left hand starts on G3 (5th finger). The notation shows two octaves of the arpeggio: G-B-D-F (up), G-B-D-F (down), G-B-D-F (up), and G-B-D-F (down). Each group of four notes is marked with a thumb on the first note. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 66. The piece ends with a double bar line and a key signature change to C minor.

Dominant Seventh of D

Starts on A

Put both thumbs on A (not the first one!)

♩ = 66

Musical notation for the Dominant Seventh of D arpeggio in 4/4 time. The piece is in D major. The right hand starts on A4 (thumb) and the left hand starts on A3 (5th finger). The notation shows two octaves of the arpeggio: A-B-D-F# (up), A-B-D-F# (down), A-B-D-F# (up), and A-B-D-F# (down). Each group of four notes is marked with a thumb on the first note. The tempo is marked as ♩ = 66. The piece ends with a double bar line and a key signature change to D minor.

Dominant Seventh of F

Starts on C

Put both thumbs on C (not the first one!)

Musical score for the Dominant Seventh of F arpeggio. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 66. The score is written for piano in F major (one flat). The right hand starts on C4 with a sequence of notes: C4 (thumb), D4 (1), E4 (2), F4 (3), G4 (4), F4 (3), E4 (2), D4 (1), C4 (thumb). The left hand starts on C3 with a sequence of notes: C3 (thumb), B2 (4), A2 (3), G2 (2), F2 (1), G2 (2), A2 (3), B2 (4), C3 (thumb). The piece concludes with a final chord in F major.

Group 2

The Dominant Sevenths of B, A \flat and D \flat These three arpeggios have only one white note, so that is where the thumbs go in both hands:

The Dominant Seventh of B

Starts on F \sharp .

Put both thumbs on E.

Musical score for the Dominant Seventh of B arpeggio. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 66. The score is written for piano in B major (three sharps). The right hand starts on F \sharp 4 with a sequence of notes: F \sharp 4 (thumb), G \sharp 4 (2), A \sharp 4 (3), B4 (4), A \sharp 4 (3), G \sharp 4 (2), F \sharp 4 (thumb). The left hand starts on E3 with a sequence of notes: E3 (thumb), D \sharp 3 (4), C \sharp 3 (3), B3 (2), A \sharp 3 (1), B3 (2), C \sharp 3 (3), D \sharp 3 (4), E3 (thumb). The piece concludes with a final chord in B major.

The Dominant Seventh of A \flat

Starts on E \flat

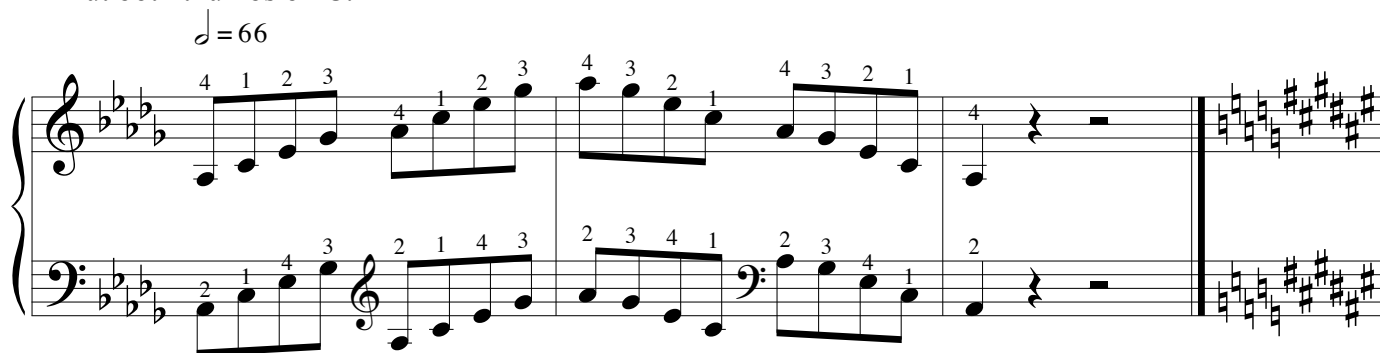
Put both thumbs on G

N.B. I have shown the fingering pattern for multiple octaves. You can substitute a more convenient finger for the opening black note of the right hand, using the 2nd finger instead of the 4th for the first RH E \flat , for example.

Musical score for the Dominant Seventh of A \flat arpeggio. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 66. The score is written for piano in A \flat major (three flats). The right hand starts on G4 with a sequence of notes: G4 (thumb), F \flat 4 (4), E \flat 4 (1), D \flat 4 (2), C \flat 4 (3), D \flat 4 (2), E \flat 4 (1), F \flat 4 (4), G4 (thumb). The left hand starts on G3 with a sequence of notes: G3 (thumb), F \flat 3 (2), E \flat 3 (1), D \flat 3 (4), C \flat 3 (3), D \flat 3 (2), E \flat 3 (1), F \flat 3 (2), G3 (thumb). The piece concludes with a final chord in A \flat major.

The Dominant 7th of D \flat
Starts on A \flat .
Put both thumbs on C.

$\text{♩} = 66$

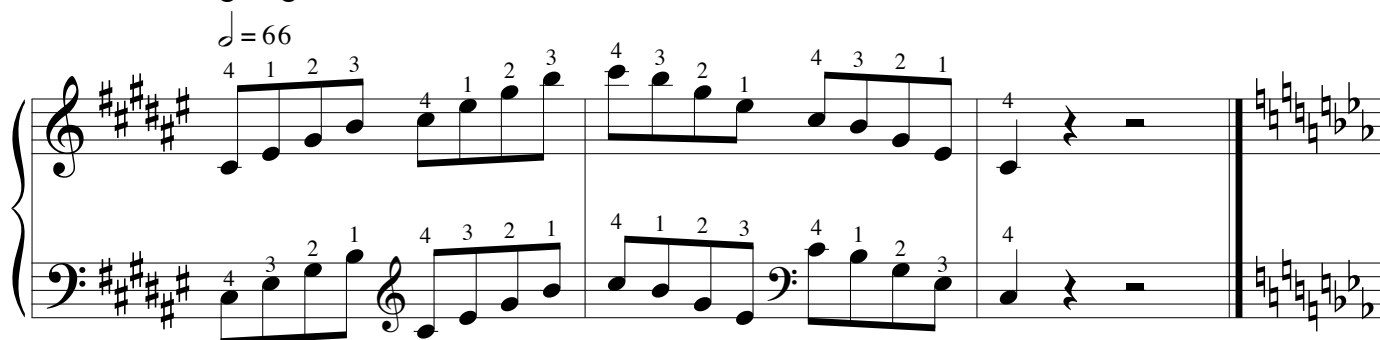


Group 3

Dominant Sevenths of F \sharp and E \flat These arpeggios have two white notes, and the thumbs in the two hands are on different notes. It is worth insisting on this - I find that most students will revert to putting both thumbs on the same note, and the result will be choppy and a bit jerky. Since we are aiming for an even legato, this won't do. Practise these hands separately to begin with. Put them slowly together. Half-speed is fine!

The Dominant 7th of F-sharp
starts on C \sharp .
Put RH thumb on E \sharp
Put LH thumb on B \sharp
Both 4th fingers go on C \sharp

$\text{♩} = 66$



The Dominant 7th of E \flat
starts on B \flat
Put RH thumb on D
Put LH thumb on F
The 3rd and 4th fingers in both hands go on the A \flat and the B \flat

$\text{♩} = 66$

