Sequences - Descending

Sequences are repeating chord patterns (usually involving a two-chord pattern). Although some sequences follow the prototypical chord progression, some do not.

I. Descending fifths (descending seconds)

The descending fifths sequence derives its name from the fact that the bass line can be written out as a string of descending fifths. However, due to the restrictions of register, every other falling fifth is changed to a rising fourth (the inversion).

This sequence is also called “descending seconds” because the two-chord pattern is transposed down a diatonic second.

A. In major

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{pattern} & \text{repetition} & \text{repetition} & \text{repetition} \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
C: & I & IV & vii^o & iii & vi & ii & V & I \\
T & \ldots & \ldots & \ldots & \ldots & \ldots & \ldots & \ldots & \ldots \\
PD & D & T \\
\end{array}
\]

B. In minor

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{pattern} & \text{repetition} & \text{repetition} & \text{repetition} \\
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{cccc}
c: & i & iv & VII & III & VI & ii^o & V & i \\
T & \ldots & \ldots & \ldots & \ldots & \ldots & \ldots & \ldots & \ldots \\
PD & D & T \\
\end{array}
\]

NOTE: In sequences, diminished triads are in root position, which is not normally allowed.
Sequences - Descending

II. Descending thirds

This sequence is called “descending thirds” because the two-chord pattern is transposed down a diatonic third. Unlike the descending fifths sequence, the descending thirds sequence does not have a built in cadence. Therefore, the sequence is often followed by cadential motion.

A. In major

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pattern</th>
<th>repetition</th>
<th>repetition</th>
<th>cadence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
```

B. In minor

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>pattern</th>
<th>repetition</th>
<th>repetition</th>
<th>cadence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
```

C. In inversion – The descending thirds sequence is often heard with every other chord in inversion.