Secondary Dominant and Secondary Leading Tone Chords Summary

Secondary dominants and secondary leading tone chords function the same way: they tonicize (give special emphasis to) the major or minor chord that usually comes next. The secondary dominant acts like the dominant (V) of the tonicized chord and its root is a 4th below or 5th above the root of the tonicized chord. The secondary leading tone chord acts like a diminished vii° chord of the tonicized chord and its root is a half step (like a leading tone) below the root of the tonicized chord.

Regular Resolutions

Here are examples of secondary dominant chords in the key of C:

Chord Symbol	Roman Numeral	Tonicized Chord (where it resolves)	Root Resolves
C^7 (C-E-G-Bb)	V7/IV	F (IV)	↑ 4th/ ↓ 5th
$D^{(7)}$ (D-F#-A)	$V^{(7)}$/V	G (V)	↑ 4th/ ↓ 5th
$E^{(7)}$ (E-G#-B)	$V^{(7)}$/vi	Am (vi)	↑ 4th/ ↓ 5th
$A^{(7)}$ (A-C#-E)	$V^{(7)}$/ii	Dm (ii)	↑ 4th/ ↓ 5th
$B^{(7)}$ (B-D#-F#)	$V^{(7)}$/iii	Em (iii)	↑ 4th/ ↓ 5th

Here are examples of secondary leading tone chords in the key of C:

Chord Symbol	Roman Numeral	Tonicized Chord (where it resolves)	Root Resolves
$C\#^{o(7)}$ (C#-E-G)	$vii^{o(7)}$/ii	Dm (ii)	↑ half-step
$D\#^{o(7)}$ (D#-F#-A)	$vii^{o(7)}$/iii	Em (iii)	↑ half-step
$E^{o(7)}$ (E-G-Bb)	$vii^{o(7)}$/IV	F (IV)	↑ half-step
$F\#^{o(7)}$ (F#-A-C)	$vii^{o(7)}$/V	G (V)	↑ half-step
$G\#^{o(7)}$ (G#-B-D)	$vii^{o(7)}$/vi	Am (vi)	↑ half-step

Deceptive Resolutions

Only secondary dominants (not secondary leading tone chords) can resolve deceptively in the same way the V resolves deceptively up to vi or VI (the root moves up a step or half step to the next tone in the key). The resolved-to chord must be major or minor.

In spite of how the chord resolves, it is still labeled as a standard secondary dominant. The V/V is still labeled a V/V even if it resolves deceptively to iii.

Here are examples in the key of C:

Chord Symbol	Roman Numeral	Deceptive Chord (where it resolves)	Root Resolves
C^7 (C-E-G-Bb)	V7/IV	Dm (ii)	↑ step
$D^{(7)}$ (D-F#-A)	$V^{(7)}$/V	Em (iii)	↑ step
$E^{(7)}$ (E-G#-B)	$V^{(7)}$/vi	F (IV)	↑ half-step
$B^{(7)}$ (B-D#-F#)	$V^{(7)}$/iii	C (I)	↑ half step