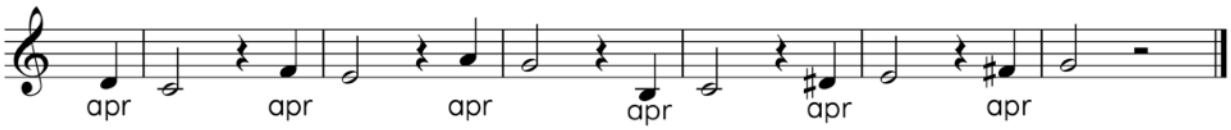
Rob's Piano Room - Module 4 - PDF
Approach Notes, 'Surrounds', and Appogiaturas

Main points

An approach tone is a non chord tone, on its own, that leads directly to a chord tone.

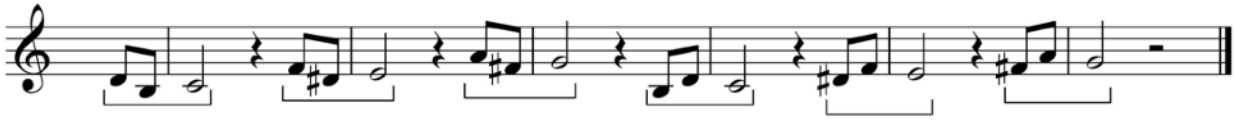
We could think of it as a neighbour tone without the first chord tone.

Like neighbour tones, approach tones above the chord tone (upper approaches) tend to come from the scale of the key, while lower approaches tend to be a semitone below the note they lead to

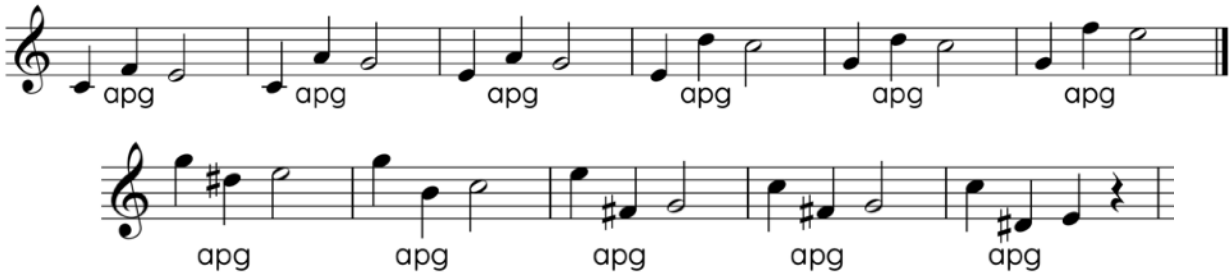


Note that the approaches shown here are at the beginning of the phrase as when they are within the phrase they end up becoming neighbours or appoggiaturas (see below)

A surround (also called rotation or double approach) is a combination of two approach tones, one below, one above that then lead to the chord tone. Either upper or lower may come first.



An appoggiatura is created when we start on a chord tone, move in either direction PAST another chord tone (to its approach, above or below) then coming back to the second chord tone.

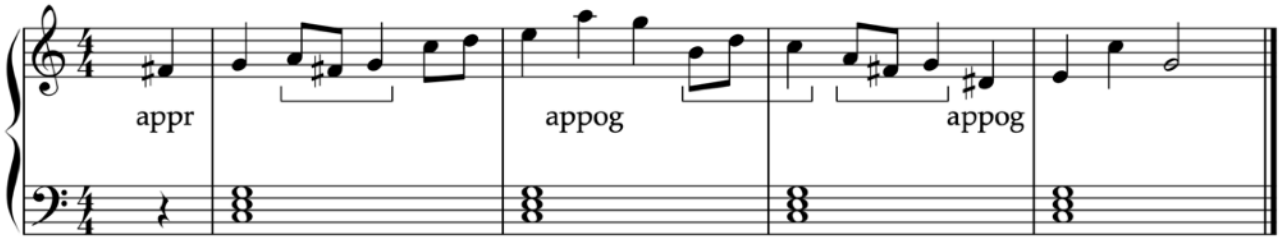
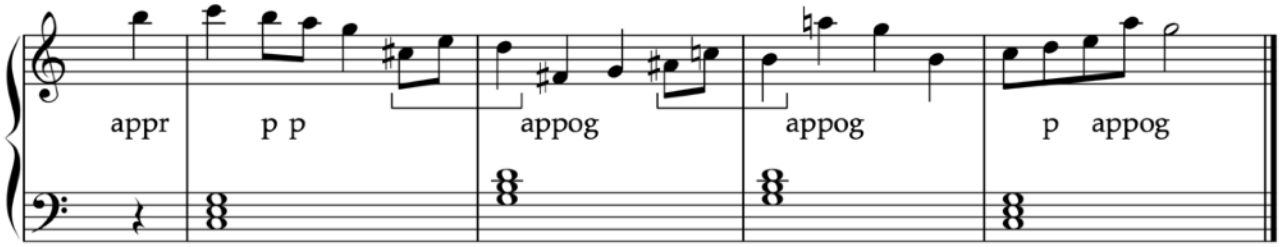
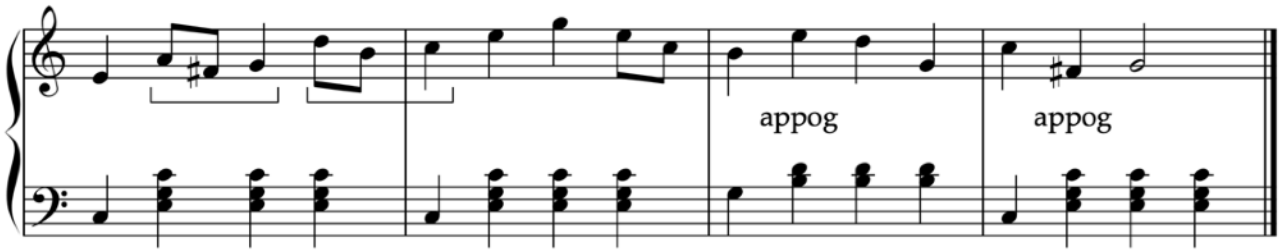
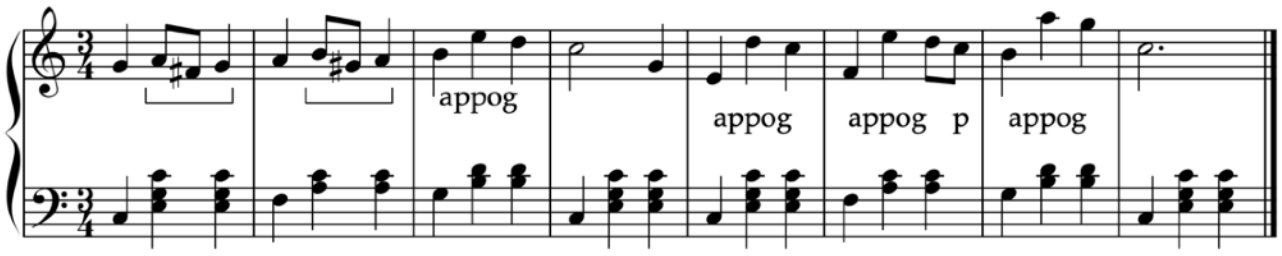


Exercises (We will stay in C for the first few modules, if you are able to try other keys, feel free)

Ex. 1 Find upper and lower approaches to the triad notes of each of our chords. As stated above, we will use them, and you can see them below in our examples, but we will not practice them as methodically as they usually show up at the beginning of a phrase

Ex. 2 Find surrounds to the triad notes of each of our chords (both lower-upper, and upper-lower) and practice playing on the I chord, then with our I-V-I, I-IV-I, and I-IV-V-I progressions as we did in modules 2 and 3. (First freely out of time, then in time once you are comfortable) Or, look at the examples below, and use them to come up with your own.

Ex. 3 Find appoggiaturas from different chord tones with each of our chords, and practice playing on the I chord, then with our I-V-I, I-IV-I, and I-IV-V-I progressions as we did in modules 2 and 3. (First freely out of time, then in time once you are comfortable) Or, look at the examples below, and use them to come up with your own.

Ex. 4 Once you are comfortable with passing tones, neighbour tones, approaches, surrounds, and appoggiaturas, try making examples using any and all of these devices. Remember, just skipping from chord tone to chord tone always remains an option. Try on the I chord and then using our progressions, first out of tempo, and then in time once you are comfortable.

Module 4 Examples