

# One Chord Only - D Minor

By Jim Stinnett

One Chord Only - D Minor is the third lesson in this four-part series on walking bass. In this session, let us tackle one of the most challenging concepts to grasp. Actually, I have found that many students are often misled when presented with the answer to the question of, "how do I play over one chord, d minor?" To simply "improvise using D Dorian" is a very bad explanation of good modal playing.

The answer is to make melodies. Short, one-bar phrases that become your building blocks for good lines are the key element in this situation. You do not need an abundance of phrases. You just need to master some basics ones.

As with each previous lesson, it is vital that you transpose these examples to other keys. With much practice, the process of making melodies will greatly enhance your ability to play good lines over all chord changes.

## Part 1 - Basic Melodies

Here are some typical one-measure melodies. Be sure to play these with the accompanying audio play-along as it is imperative that you learn to hear these melodies in context.

### Ex. 1 - D Minor Melodies



Instructions:

- Notice that a double bar is placed at the end of each measure. This is to indicate that each measure is a single phrase. Play each measure over and over to become familiar with the sound of the shape before proceeding to the next one. Memorize the sound and fingering.
- After all eight phrases are memorized, play phrase one and two together to create a two-bar phrase.
- Then, play phrases two and three together. Do this with all consecutively numbered phrases.
- Now, let's do it again, creating a two-bar phrase by using measure one followed by measure three and then measure one with measure four. Use all of the subsequent one-bar phrases by pairing each with measure one.
- Play a four-bar phrase by playing measures one, two, three, and four in a row. Continue this process by playing measures 2-3-4-5 together, then 3-4-5-6, and so on.

Notice how each new combination of phrases creates a different overall shape and thus varying degrees of tension and resolution in your line.



Obviously, you can create numerous two, four, and eight-bar melodies by choosing various combinations of one-measure phrases. If you will focus your practice on the specific one-measure patterns, you will quickly memorize the sounds. The goal is to develop muscle memory in connection with a specific sound. With repetition, you will begin to internalize the sounds of these small phrases. This will lead you to a point of freedom where you are simply pulling melodies from your internal ear to create long and interesting lines. By having control of short melodic phrases, you will be able to react spontaneously to the music around.

The great players often play eight, sixteen, and thirty-two measure phrases. By transcribing the lines of great bassists such as Paul Chambers, Ron Carter, and Ray Brown, you can easily see how their lines are developed from small phrases and how they are capable of playing a song with phrasing happening on multiple levels. To see a great example of this, check out Paul Chambers' line on "Autumn Leaves" as notated in Rob Gourlay's book, *Walking In The Footsteps Of Paul Chambers*.

Here again, I want to caution you. You do not need an abundance of phrases. You just need to master some basic ones. Your ear will take over from there.

### Part 3 - 64 Measures Of D Minor

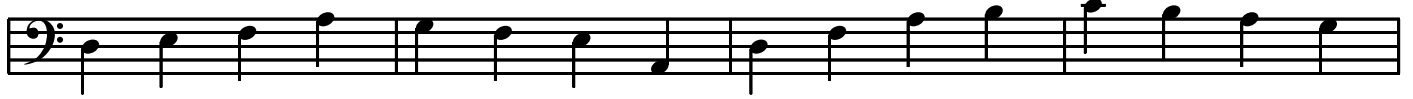
#### Ex. 5 - D Minor: Slow Tempo

The image displays six staves of musical notation in bass clef, representing a 64-measure exercise in D minor. Each staff contains a sequence of notes, primarily quarter notes, with some eighth notes and rests. The notation includes various accidentals such as flats (F, C, G) and naturals (F, C, G) to indicate the D minor scale and its harmonic structure. The exercise is designed to be played at a slow tempo.



Ex. 6 - D Minor: Fast Tempo

This musical score consists of ten staves of music, all written in bass clef. The key signature is D minor, indicated by two flats (B-flat and F-flat). The tempo is marked as 'Fast'. The notation includes a variety of rhythmic values such as eighth and sixteenth notes, as well as rests. The melody is primarily eighth-note based, with some sixteenth-note passages. The score concludes with a double bar line and repeat dots at the end of the final staff.



Notice how at this faster tempo the phrases become longer. Still, you can see the basic melodies being used.

## Conclusion

Making melodies is great fun. Practice until these one-bar phrases become yours to play at will. When you are comfortable enough to improvise with the arrangement of these short melodies, your lines will sound great and always fresh. Even more importantly, your lines will feel right as your phrasing will be strong and obvious.

The next and final lesson in this series will be "The Quarter Note Melody."

For a more in-depth study of these concepts, see Jim's books titled *Creating Jazz Bass Lines* and *Reading Bass Parts - Volume 1* available at: [JimStinnett.com](http://JimStinnett.com).