

## Understanding how to form and use melodic fills

After forming chords and using rhythm well the next step is to add colour using melodic fills. As the title suggest these fill in where there is a gap rather than going on all the time. Look for opportunities in songs where there is no singing or when there are sustained notes to play a fill.

There are three main ways of finding good notes to play for fills. The first is to use chord notes. Whenever you play any of the notes of the chord written in the music they will fit. You can play chord notes going up (ascending) or going down (descending). They don't even have to be the next note in the arpeggio—you could miss one out. Here are some chord notes you could use over a C major chord:

27



Using chord notes is good but it will always sound a little clichéd on its own because you don't introduce any tension of clashing notes into the music. The next step on from chord notes is to use the notes of the scale in between them. These added in between notes are called passing notes. Again they can be ascending or descending. The passing notes in the example below are larger than the chord notes. Again these would fit with a C major chord:



The last melodic feature you can use for fills is the auxiliary note. An auxiliary note is a note above or below a chord note. This is similar to a passing note but instead of going up (or down) to the next chord note you return to the one you've just played. The examples below would fit with a C major chord again:



The best way of using these techniques is to combine them. Chord notes with a leap followed by passing notes or auxiliary notes are very effective. Too many passing notes just becomes like scale practice so try combining leaps to chord notes and a few auxiliary notes.

Once you are familiar with all of these devices you can try two things to push your playing further:

1. Combine these devices with the use of a different rhythm
2. Try playing in 3rds and 6ths (that is playing a note either 3 or 6 notes below the one you're starting on)

Both of these will add colour and variety to your playing. Have a go and good luck!