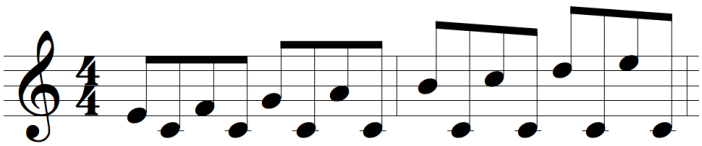
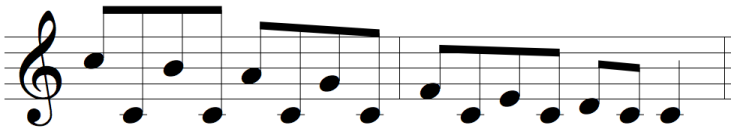
Pivoting

One of the most exciting patterns available to us is called *pivoting*. In this pattern you typically start with a linear pattern such as a scale or sequence, then insert repeating tones into the original pattern. You are basically alternating between two patterns, one which forms a line, and the other which repeats. Here is an example:

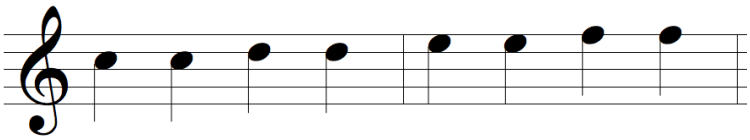


You see an ascending scale type pattern which starts on E, then on every other note there is a C note which is repeated.

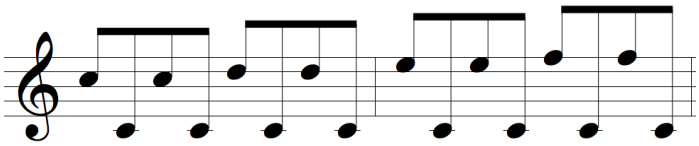
Pivoting patterns can also move downward like this:



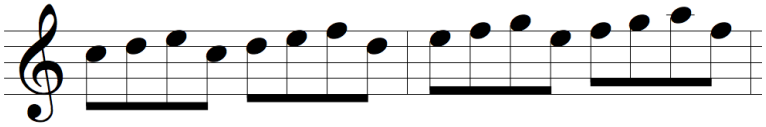
In both of these examples, a simple scale pattern alternated against a repeating middle C note. An infinite number of other variation are also possible. The moving part of the pivoting pattern can also be a sequence. Let's start with a simple sequence such as this:



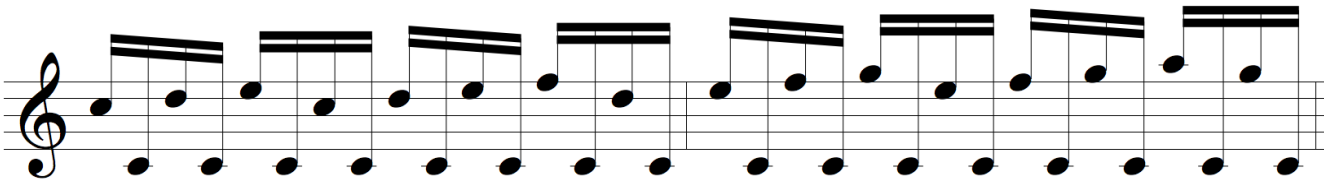
Now, we insert a single repeating tone in between every note of our sequence:



Next let's start with a slightly more complex sequence:



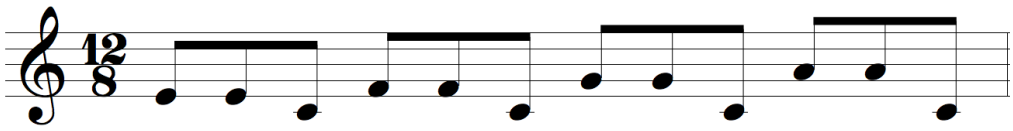
Again we insert a repeating tone in between every note of our sequence:



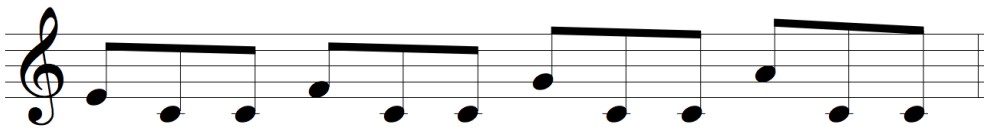
Before we dive deeper into even more pivoting possibilities, there are some guidelines that should be followed when writing effective sequences.

1) The repeated note must be a chord tone. If there is more than one repeated note, they must be tied to a chord tone just as if you were composing a melody.
2) The repeated note (or notes) should stay in one place and should not move up or down. In other words, they should not try to form a sequence.
3) The moving portion of the pivoting pattern must always occur on a stronger beat than the repeating portion. Motion attracts attention which, to our ears, is perceived as rhythmic emphasis.
4) The distance between the linear portion and the repeating portion generally should not exceed an octave, and generally should not be less than a third (although occasionally we may break this rule for the sake of example)

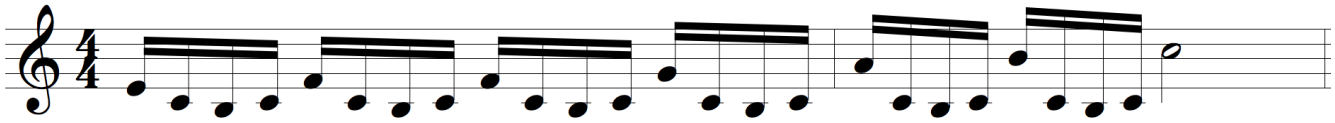
In the above examples there is always a 1:1 relationship between the number of notes in the line portion of the pattern vs. the number of notes in the repeating portion of the pattern. This also can be varied. In the example below, there is a 2:1 relationship between the linear portion vs the repeating portion.



Similarly, we can also use a 1:2 relationship as seen here:



As mentioned before, the repeating portion can contain more than one note. The safest way to do this is with a neighbor tone:



Here we have a very simple scalar pattern alternating against a three note neighbor tone figure anchored on C.

In fact, the repeating portion can be very complex, as long as it anchors off a single chord tone: