



9sus4 CHORD BACKING TRACK PRACTICE GUIDE

A static 9sus4 chord is a great sound to build confidence for a young improvisor. The tonal ambiguity of the chord gives the soloist few options for “wrong” notes, and can free up the mind to focus on other soloing concepts such as phrasing, melodic contour, and building confidence communicating with a rhythm section and the even their audience. Lets take a moment to analyze this chords structure to see why it is advantageously ambiguous.

D9sus4

Musical notation for a D9sus4 chord. It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef, showing a root position D major triad (D, F#, A) with a G note added above the A. The bottom staff is in bass clef, showing a C major triad (C, E, G) with a D note added above the G. A brace groups the two staves together. Numerals 1, 4, 4, 8 are written above the notes in blue ink.

Let's take a look at the intervals that make up this chord from the root. We have a Perfect 5th above the Root, a minor 7, Major 9th (Major 2nd), and a Perfect 11th (Perfect 4th). Notice there is no 3rd OR 6th in the chord.

There are many scales that have a Root, Major 2nd, Perfect 4th, Perfect 5th, and minor 7th. Let's look at a five note scale that uses all the chord tones by rearranging the notes.

Option 1) A C D E G - A minor pentatonic

This option is simply a respelling of the chord tones. Notice we went up a 5th from the root to find the key to play this scale.

Option 2) D F G A C - D minor pentatonic

This option will give a minor twist to the sound through introducing a minor third to the sound that isn't in the chord. A popular approach for rock players.

Option 3) E G A B D - E minor pentatonic

This scale adds a Major 6th (B) to the scale tones that already exist. Be sure and emphasize the B when playing around with this scale. Think about the minor pentatonic scale a Major 2nd higher than the root of the chord.

Option 4) B D E F# A - B minor pentatonic

Now we add a Major 3rd (F#) to our Major 6th (B) for a brighter sound. Just think the minor pentatonic that is down a minor 3rd from the root of the original chord.

The next 4 options are simply the minor pentatonic scales we've already looked at, but turned into blues scales by added an extra note (b5) to the scale.

Option 5) A C D Eb E G - A Blues

Option 6) D F G Ab A C - D Blues

Option 7) E G A Bb B D - E Blues

Option 8) B D E F F# A - B Blues

The next option is a little odd

Option 9) F# A B C C# E - F# Blues

If you want to really stir the pot, you can try this scale. The C# provides a bit of dissonance that will give you an outside side

The next four options are 7 note scales. All of them are modes of major scales you probably already know.

Option 10) D E F G A B C - D Dorian

This is a common option. Sounds a lot like the D minor pentatonic because they share many notes. If you have trouble thinking about a Dorian mode, just think of C major.

Option 11) D E F# G A B C - D Mixolydian

This option works quite well and is perhaps the most popular in recordings you will hear over this chord. Listen to Herbie Hancock's "Maiden Voyage" to hear many sounds with this material. You can also think of the G major to play the same notes.

Option 12) D E F G A Bb C - D Minor

This produces quite a dark sound on the chord. If it helps think F major.

Option 13) D E F# G A Bb C - Mixolydian b6

This last option is a mode of the G Jazz Minor Scale (Melodic Minor). It contains a Major 3rd but a minor 6th giving it a conflicted, yet mysterious sound.

Check out the the [Advanced Concepts](#) video section for more ideas on the 9sus4 chord.