Altered Dominants lesson 1

All dominant family chords contain the following chord tones: 1, 3, b7

Unaltered or “major key dominants” may also contain: 5, 9, 11, 13

e.g. A7, A9, A11, A13, A7sus4, G/A (1 b7 9 13)

Altered or “minor key dominants” may contain: b5\*, #5, b9, 9, #9, #11\*, 13

\*b5 & #11 are the same but consider 7b5: 1 3 b5 b7 vs 7#1: 1 3 5 b7 #11

e.g A7b9, A7#9, A7#5, A7b5, A13b9, A9#11, A7#5b9, A7#5#9, A7b5b9, A7b5#9

The function of any dominant chords is to resolve

1. up a fourth (down a fifth) - e.g. A7 to D or Dm
2. down a minor second (up a major seventh) – e.g. Eb7 to D or Dm

In diatonic harmony, unaltered dominants are used in major keys e.g.:

| ii Em9 V A13 | I Dma9 |

And altered dominants are used in minor keys:

| ii Em7b5 V A7#5b9 | I Dmi6 |

However in Jazz it’s common to use an altered dominant in a major key e.g.:

|ii Em9 V A7#5b9 | I Dma9 |