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# Major Scale Mastery

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## Remember:

A whole step is when you skip a fret. A half step is from one fret to the next fret (without skipping). Whole and half steps can ascend (go up the fretboard) or descend (go down the fretboard). Read and play the following examples:

### Whole Step, Ascending    Whole Step, Descending    Half Step, Ascending    Half Step, Descending

-----	-----	-----	-----
-----	-----	-----	-----
-----	-----	-----	-----
-----	-----	-----	-----
-----	-----	-----	-----
-3-5-	-5-3-	-4-5-	-5-4-

## The Major Scale Formula

There is a specific formula of whole and half steps that make up the major scale. The formula for the major scale is:

Whole | Whole | Half | Whole | Whole | Whole | Half

Here's the formula for the major scale in action. Take your guitar and play the following example. It's the G major scale on one string (the 6th string).

G major scale on one String using the whole/half step formula for the major scale:

-----
-----
-----
-----
-----
-3-5-7-8-10-12-14-15-

The distance between 3-5 is a whole step. Between 5-7 is a whole step. 7-8 is a half step. 8-10 is

half step. 10-12 is a whole step. 12-14 is a whole step. 14-15 is half step. You need to memorize the major scale formula: W | W | H | W | W | W | H. This will make your life much easier when we move into the minor scales.

## The Seven “Secret” Notes

Every major scale has seven different notes. These notes change depending on which scale you are playing. For example, the seven notes of the C major scale are C, D, E, F, G, A, B. And the seven notes of the D major scale are D, E, F#, G, A, B, C#. (Hint: # is pronounced, “sharp.”)

Even though the notes of the scale change depending on which note you start on, you can build any scale using the whole-half formula. So, if you start on G (6th string, 3rd fret) and follow the formula for the major scale, you'll get the G major scale. If you start on F# (6th string, 2nd fret) and follow the formula for the major scale, you'll get the F# major scale.

## Everybody Gets A Name

Just like every unique person has a specific name, each of the seven notes of the scale has a name, too. Fortunately, the names of the notes of the scale are much easier to remember than those of humans! Each of the names of the different notes of the scale are called, degrees. (No, not like the ones on your thermometer.) A scale degree is just the name of the note as it falls in order from lowest to highest pitch.

Let's take the G major scale for example. The notes of a G major scale are G, A, B, C, D, E, F#. If we give each letter name a number, starting with the lowest pitch G, we would label them like this:

**G = 1, A = 2, B = 3, C = 4, D = 5, E = 6, F# = 7**

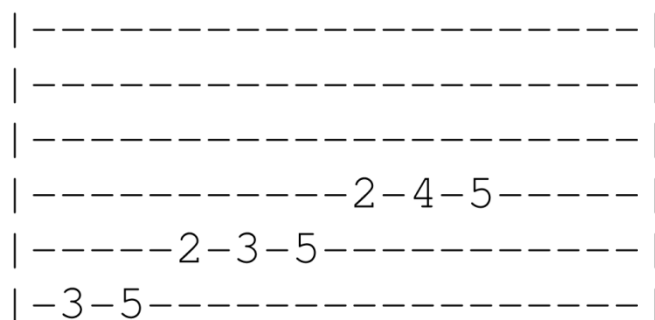
Now, that each note is numbered, the G is called the 1st degree of the G major scale. A is the 2nd degree. B is the 3rd degree. C is the 4th degree. D is the 5th degree. E is the 6th degree and F# is the 7th degree.

One important point to remember is that scale degree names change depending on which scale they belong. For example, D is the 5th degree in the G major scale. But it's the 4th degree in the A major scale. D is the 6th degree in the F major scale. And so on and so forth. The thing to understand is that every note of the scale can be labeled with a name according to where it falls in the scale.

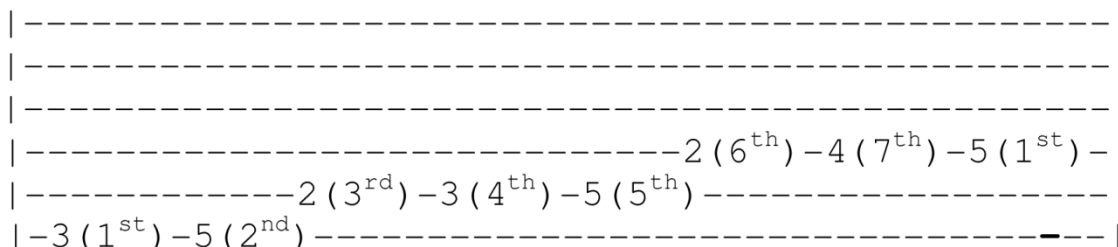
This is important because in order to modify the major scale to create the minor scale, you'll need to know which scale degrees to change.

One last note. (No pun intended.) Most of time, you won't hear people speak about scale degrees, they actually drop the word degree. In other words, if someone wants to know what the 5th degree of the scale of G major is, he or she would probably just say, What's the 5th in G? Not, What's the 5th degree in the G major scale? This is a key point to remember. To make sure you fully understand the concept, here's the G Major scale with each degree identified for you. Try playing these examples on your guitar.

### G major scale on three strings:



### G major scale on three strings with each scale degree identified for you:



### Some Things Never Change

Some things always remain the same. Like the notes of a scale. The notes of the G major scale will, always, always, always be G, A, B, C, D, E, F#. That much you can count on.

It's important to understand that the notes of G major scale (or any scale for that matter) will always be the same. Now, you could definitely use the whole-half formula for the major scale to know which notes belong to any scale. But playing a major scale and actually knowing which notes you're playing are sometimes two different things.

For example, if you start on G and use your whole-half formula for the major scale, you would play G, A, B, C, D, E, F#. But how did I know the letter names of the scale? Simple. I know the key

signature for the key of G major. If you haven't memorized your key signatures you'll want to start today. Have that information tucked away in your memory will serve you well in the future.

## Please Read This!

**Important Note About The Movable Positions And Tab:** As soon as you start practicing the scales in this book you will notice something: the movable fretboard patterns and the tab do NOT always match. This is on purpose. The reason is simple: there are several different ways to play the same scale. This will expose you to a least two. You can play both variations and see which one you like best. I've tried to indicate when the movable pattern and the tab do NOT match. Please keep your eyes peeled for this as you go through each position.

**Important Note About The Modes:** You will also see that I've labeled each position for you with the position number AND the corresponding mode. Try to keep in mind that each position of the major scale corresponds to a particular mode. Also, remember that each mode can be transposed from one key to another. For more info on modes, use the AGS Guide Book and watch the section on the DVD's entitled, Modes.

**Time To Play!** Ok, we've talked about a lot of abstract theoretical concepts. Hopefully, you're not getting too bogged down in the technical jargon and forgotten that all this is really to help you play music! Let's wrap our discussion up quickly so you can get to playing, right away.

As you know, there are seven different notes in each major scale. If you start on the tonic (tonal center) of the key of A major, you'd start on A. Easy enough, right? And because you're memorizing your key signatures, you know that A major has three sharps. And because you're memorizing the order of sharps, you know that the sharps in the key of A are, F#, C#, G#. So, knowing all that, you now know that A major has these notes: A, B, C#, D, E, F#, G#. Well, here's the thing that 99% of all learn-how-to-play guitar books conveniently forget to mention. Because there are seven different notes in every major scale, there are actually seven different positions on your fretboard to play every major scale! Think of it like this. If you start on A and play all the notes of the A major scale, you would play A, B, C#, D, E, F#, G#. We'll call that 1st position, because you're starting on the first note of the scale. But what if you started on the second note, B, and play the exact same notes? You'd play B, C#, D, E, F#, G#, A. It's still the notes of the A major scale, you're just starting on a different note. We call this 2nd position because B is the 2nd note of the key of A. Third position starts on C# because it's the third note of the A major scale. If you start on D and play the notes of the A major scale, we call that 4th position. And so on and so forth. It's true! Every major scale can be played in seven different positions on the fretboard. That's one of the insider secrets that professional guitarists use to play over the entire fretboard. The vast majority of books that I've come across in my 16 years of playing only show you one position. Not me. I'm holding nothing back. I'm going to pull back the curtain and expose all the tricks I know to help you learn how to play a solo over the entire fretboard, in any key. Now here's another insider tip for you. There are movable patterns for each of the seven positions. And once you memorize them you can play all 15 major keys! In order to teach you how to play the major scale in all positions, we're going to use the A major scale. It's a very common scale that you're going to come across all the time in your guitar playing.

## How To Use The Pictures And Diagrams

The following diagrams will give you all seven positions of the A major scale. The movable patterns will give you the movable patterns that you can use for any major scale, in any key. Remember, there are a lot of other scales. We're focusing on the major scale in this book.

So, what you'll want to do is practice the A major as I've given you here for each position. Start with position 1, first. Play the tab exactly as it's written. It would be a good idea to use a metronome to help you keep a steady beat. As you learn the notes of the A major scale in first position, start to look at the movable pattern, too. Try to get into your fingers and brain where your fingers need to go next.

Then, once you've mastered the first position for the A major scale, try to take the moveable pattern for that 1st position and move it to a different starting note. For example G (6th string, 3rd fret). When you play the 1st position, movable pattern on G, you'll be playing the G major scale in 1st position.

After you've gotten comfortable with that, try moving it to other starting notes all over the fretboard. Remember the movable pattern won't change. Just by changing the starting note, you'll be transposing that pattern into different keys.

So, let's get started! Roll up your sleeves, grab your guitar and dive in. The more you practice these different patterns, the more flexible and knowledgeable you'll be. And the more fun you'll have playing your guitar!

One last thing. You'll definitely want to spend some time playing the different positions in this book before moving on. Because everything we discuss about the minor scales, pentatonic scales and the modes will be based on the foundation laid down for you in this book.

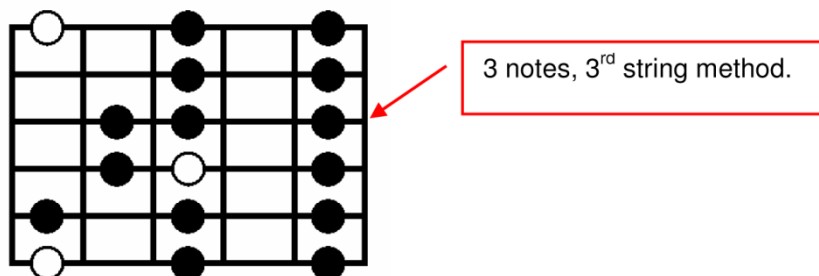
Happy playing!

Dan Denley



## The Movable Patterns Of The Major Scale Using A Major As An Example

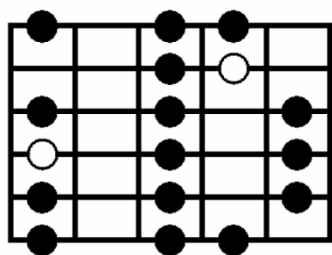
### Movable pattern #1 major scale: Ionian mode



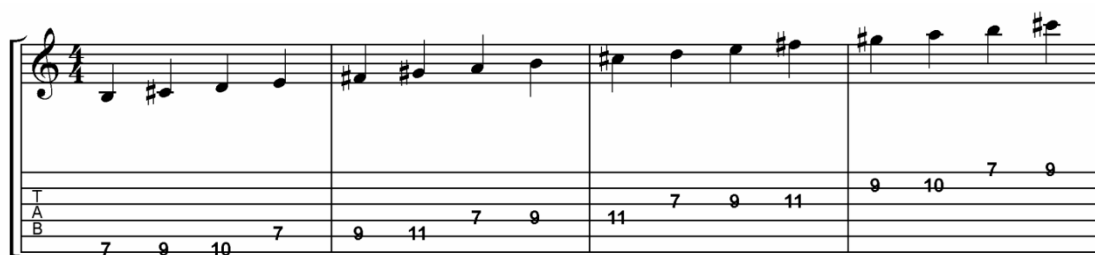
### 1st position, A major: A Ionian



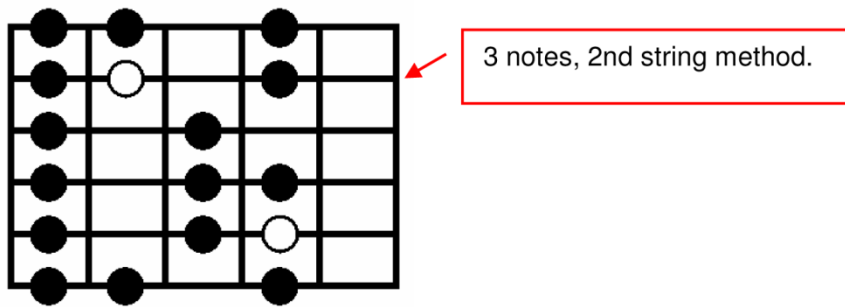
## Movable pattern #2, major scale: Dorian mode



## 2nd position, A major: B Dorian



## Movable pattern #3, major scale: Phrygian mode

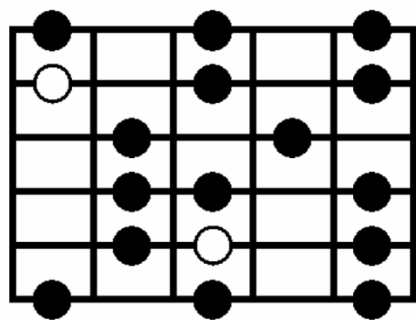


## 3rd position, A major: C# Phrygian

3 notes, 3<sup>rd</sup> string method.

3 notes, 3<sup>rd</sup> string method.

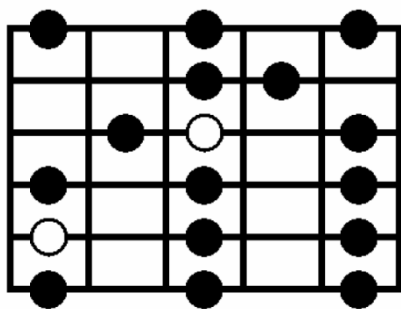
## Movable pattern #4, major scale; Lydian mode



3 notes, 2nd string method.

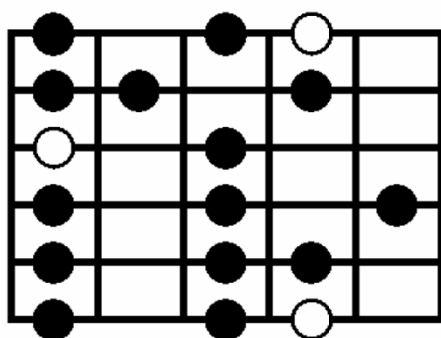
## 4th position, A major: D Lydian

## Movable pattern #5, major scale: Mixolydian mode



## 5th position, A major: E Mixolydian

## Movable pattern #6, major scale: Aeolian mode



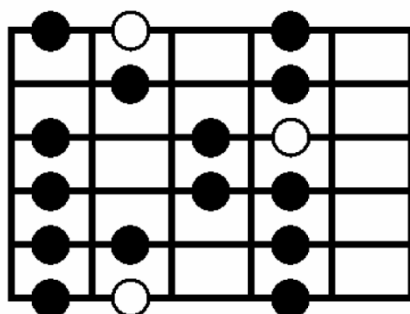
3 notes, 2<sup>nd</sup> string method.

## 6th position, A major: F# Aeolian (Same as F# Natural Minor)

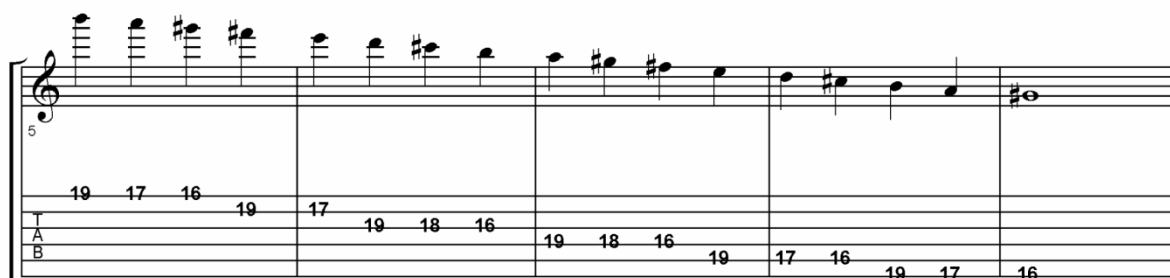
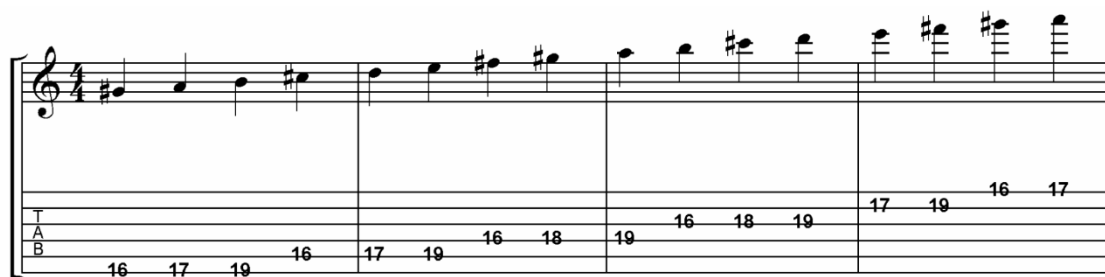
3 notes, 3<sup>rd</sup> string method.

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## Movable pattern #7, major scale: Locrian mode



## 7th position, A major: G# Locrian



## Practical, Real-World, Nuts-And-Bolts Examples Of How To Use The Major Scale:

I never want to be accused of giving you the theory, but not enough practical examples of how to use it. So, here are three chord progressions that I've written that are built on major scale harmony. Each chord progression comes from the major scale. But each is in a different key. I've done the leg-work for you by matching the chord progression to the scale that you should use to improvise over.

### How To Use Each Example

Play each chord progression. Create your own rhythmic patterns. Then, grab a friend and have him play the chord progression while you solo over the top. Or you could grab a tape recorder from RadioShack and record the rhythm guitar part (that's the chord progression). Playback the rhythm section and play the scale over it. Improvise your own solo using bends, trills, vibrato, slides, etc. Each scale is in that I've given you is in 1st position (i.e., they all start on the tonic, or root note of the scale.) Try to use the moveable patterns as well. Use them to move out of the 1st position. Try to incorporate as many different positions as you can. But most importantly... Have fun!



## Example 1: G Major

Play this chord progression.

A musical staff in G major (one sharp) and common time. The first measure is a whole rest. The second measure contains a slash indicating a barre. The third measure contains a slash indicating a barre. The fourth measure contains a slash indicating a barre. Above the staff, three guitar chord diagrams are shown: GM (G Major) for the first measure, DM (D Major) for the second measure, and GM (G Major) for the third measure. Below the staff, the Roman numerals I, V, and I are written under the second, third, and fourth measures respectively.

Use this scale to improvise:

A musical staff in G major (one sharp) and common time. The first measure contains a whole rest. The second measure contains a slash indicating a barre. The third measure contains a slash indicating a barre. The fourth measure contains a slash indicating a barre. Below the staff, the scale is written in tablature: 3 5 7 3 5 7 4 5 7 4 5 3 5 7 3 5.

A musical staff in G major (one sharp) and common time. The first measure contains a whole rest. The second measure contains a slash indicating a barre. The third measure contains a slash indicating a barre. The fourth measure contains a slash indicating a barre. Below the staff, the scale is written in tablature: 7 5 3 7 5 3 5 4 7 5 4 7 5 3 7 5 3.

## Example 2: C Major

Play this chord progression.

Diagram illustrating the C Major chord progression. The progression consists of three measures: C (I), Am (vi), and C (I). Each measure is accompanied by a guitar fretboard diagram showing the chord fingering. The C Major chord is shown with the root on the 5th string, 2nd fret. The Am chord is shown with the root on the 5th string, 2nd fret. The musical notation below shows the progression in treble clef, 4/4 time, with the chords indicated by Roman numerals I, vi, and I.

Use this scale to improvise:

Diagram illustrating the C Major scale and its descending form. The scale is shown in treble clef, 4/4 time, with the notes C, D, E, F, G, A, B, and C. The descending scale is shown in the same clef and time, with the notes C, B, A, G, F, E, D, and C. The fretboard diagrams below the scale show the fingerings for each note, with the root C on the 5th string, 2nd fret. The descending scale is shown with the root C on the 5th string, 2nd fret, and the notes B, A, G, F, E, D, and C on the 4th, 3rd, 2nd, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th strings respectively.

### Example 3: D Major

Play this chord progression.

A musical staff in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The staff contains three measures. The first measure has a whole rest. The second and third measures contain a series of diagonal slashes, indicating a continuous strummed pattern. Above the staff, three guitar chord diagrams are shown, corresponding to the measures. The first diagram is labeled 'DM' and shows a D major chord with the root on the open D string. The second diagram is labeled 'GM' and shows a G major chord with the root on the open G string. The third diagram is labeled 'DM' and shows a D major chord with the root on the open D string. Below the staff, the Roman numerals 'I', 'IV', and 'I' are written under the respective measures.

Use this scale to improvise:

Two musical staves in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The first staff shows the ascending D major scale (D-E-F#-G-A-B-C#-D) across four measures. The second staff shows the descending D major scale (C#-B-A-G-F#-E-D) across four measures. Below each staff, a guitar fretboard diagram is provided, showing the fingerings for each note. The first staff's fretboard diagram shows the ascending scale with fingerings: 10, 12, 14, 10, 12, 14, 11, 12, 14, 11, 12, 10, 12, 14, 10, 12. The second staff's fretboard diagram shows the descending scale with fingerings: 14, 12, 10, 14, 12, 10, 12, 11, 14, 12, 11, 14, 12, 10, 14, 12, 10.