

Lesson 1

SCALES

What are scales?

Scales are the basic building blocks in music. Keys are defined by the notes in the various scales. We derive both our melodies and our chords from the scales.

The daily practice of scales will build your technique and allow you to express yourself on the guitar with increasing ease.

There are two main types of scale – major and minor. Both are 7 note scales, and we will be learning the major scale to start off with. The sequence of 7 notes repeats, so once you have ascended through the scale from 1 to 7, the 8th note (or *octave*) is the 1st note repeated.

Introducing the major scale

The major scale is the basis for most western music including pop, classical and folk. Chances are most of the catchy melodies you know use this scale as their basis, so it's the best place to start.

There are five places you can play the major scale on the guitar fretboard, and they fit together - flowing one into the other. We will learn them sequentially as the C shape, A shape, G shape, E shape and D shape.

When you have learned all 5 of these patterns you will be able to play over the entire length of the fingerboard in any key. This will allow you to play a huge range of material and also, to understand the organization of music on the guitar fretboard.

The best way to learn the 5 patterns is one at a time, noting along the way how they fit together. We'll start with the first shape, the C shape in this lesson.

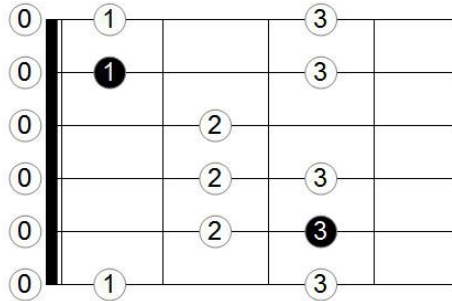
'Root' notes

When playing the scale, it's important to start on what is called the *root* of the scale.

The *root* is the note with the *same name as the key*. For example, in the key of A, the root note is the note A, in the key of Bb, the root is the note Bb ; and so on.

The C pattern

We will first learn the pattern as an open shape, in the key of C.



Fingerings are shown as numbers inside the circles. Root notes are shown as black circles. Remember to play the open strings which are written as zeros in a circle.

How to practice this scale:

- Practice for 5-10 minutes every day this week
- Use the fingerings given in the diagram
- As you practice, be sure to play slowly with a very even tempo. Make sure to sound the notes clearly and let each one ring until you pluck the next note of the scale
- Start from the low root note (fret 3, string 5)
- Play all the way up to the top note of the pattern and then, without stopping at the top, play the scale back down to the bottom again. Go down below the root note to the open E string, then back up

CHORDS AND PROGRESSIONS

A chord progression is a series of chords one after the other. A song usually consists of a chord progression and a melody (or melodies), over the top. To make a chord progression, we need a selection of chords to choose from.

Making chords from the major scale

In western music we use the notes in the major scale to generate a selection of chords.

**When we use the notes from one scale as the basis of our music,
then we are playing in a 'key'.**

The name of the *key* is the same as the name of the major scale we are using. So for example, if we use the notes from the C major scale to form our chords and melodies, then we are in the key of C.

If we take C major as our example, then the C major scale contains the following seven notes repeating.

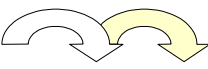
| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C | D | E | F | G | A | B |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

if we repeat several octaves of C major we have

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C | D | E | F | G | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | A | B |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

To form a chord from the scale, we select a starting note, say 1, and then we make what is called a *triad* by adding to it a 3rd and a 5th above that note. So if we started from C we would get

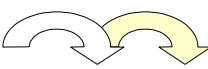
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------|---|----------|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C | D | E | F | G | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | A | B | C |
| | | | | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1 | | | | | | | |



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| C | E | G |
| 1 | 3 | 5 |

If we started from D would would have

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C | D | E | F | G | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | A | B | C | D | E | F | G | A | B | C |
| | | | | | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 1 | | | | | | |



| | | |
|---|---|---|
| D | F | A |
| 2 | 4 | 6 |

If we continue this process, we generate the following chords:

Chords for C Major

| Starting tone | Scale tones used | Notes in chord | Chord name | Quality of chord | In roman numerals |
|---------------|------------------|----------------|------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | 1 3 5 | C E G | C | Major | I |
| 2 | 2 4 6 | D F A | Dm | Minor | ii |
| 3 | 3 5 7 | E G B | Em | Minor | iii |
| 4 | 4 6 1 | F A C | F | Major | IV |
| 5 | 5 7 2 | G B D | G | Major | V |
| 6 | 6 1 3 | A C E | Am | Minor | vi |
| 7 | 7 2 4 | B D F | Bdim | Diminished | vii ^o |

- So as you can see from this chart, when we form triads from each successive scale tone, we generate a series of chords. The first six are majors and minors.
- The last chord is a diminished chord. Whilst diminished chords have their place, we will be ignoring them for now.
- Also, you will see a column displaying the chords as roman numerals – this will be discussed further in the next lesson.

The selection of major and minor chords we have generated – C, Dm, Em, F, G, and Am, all use notes taken from the C major scale. So we can use these chords to play in the key of C. These six chords will be used in the study.

STUDY

Jamming with the major scale

This study, “Psych-folk rock”, is in the key of C, and uses the first five notes of the C major scale in open position.

Notice how we are using some chords as punctuation – C major and F maj7.

Learn this piece phrase by phrase, getting down one phrase before you move to the next. Then put the phrases together as a whole. Start very slowly, then increase your playing speed little by little. Be sure to use the scale fingerings given earlier in this lesson and pick every note.

First play the piece written overleaf. Then play accompaniment using the chord symbols above each bar and the strumming pattern below:

D D U U D
1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +