

Major Scale Riffs

A *riff* can be described as a sort of ‘musical sentence’, and in order to improvise with the Major scale, a musical vocabulary needs to be developed by copying and memorizing collection of standard riffs. There are many riffs that have been passed on from generation to generation of guitarists, and some of these standard Major scale riffs will be presented in the following sections.

‘The Major Scale Riff’

‘*The Major Scale Riff*’ is named so specifically for this lesson, but this riff has been around for years and variations of it are heard in many classic songs. The example below is played in the Key of ‘A’ Major, using notes from the ‘A’ Major box pattern. Various techniques are applied in this riff, including *hammering*, *pulling-off*, and *vibrato* techniques. The next section provides a step-by-step approach.

‘The Major Scale Riff’

The guitar tab for 'The Major Scale Riff' is as follows:

- String 1: 7 5 7 5 (with a slur over the notes)
- String 2: 7 5 7 5 (with a slur over the notes)
- String 3: 7 6 7 6 (with a slur over the notes)
- String 4: 7 (with a horizontal line underneath)
- String 5: (empty)
- String 6: (empty)

Below the strings, the following techniques are indicated:

- String 1: 3 1 3 1 (with a slur over the notes)
- String 2: 3 1 3 1 (with a slur over the notes)
- String 3: 3 2 3 2 (with a slur over the notes)
- String 4: 3 (with a horizontal line underneath)

Step-by-Step Approach

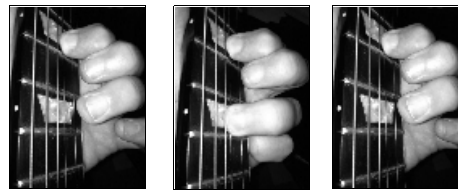
Hammer/Pull-off Combo The curve over three notes ('5-7-5') indicates a *hammer/pull-off combo*, where only the first note ('5') is actually plucked, the second note ('7') is hammered, and the third note ('5') is pulled off. Note how all notes played will 'fit' within the 'A' Major Scale box pattern.

Align Fingers Note the proper finger numbers to fret with shown below the tab. For faster pull-offs, keep the first finger pressed or 'anchored' along the fifth fret when playing the top two strings while keeping the second finger anchored along the third string.

Vibrato Notated with a wavy line, *vibrato* is a combination of slightly shaking and sustaining a note. Being able to combine the slide with *vibrato* will take time as the fretting fingers gradually become stronger. Initially, focus on sustaining the last note played before adding vibrato.

Arch Fingers for Tone For better clarity and tone, keep the fretting fingers arched and try to fret as close as possible to each fret.

Hammer/Pull-Off



Keep the first finger 'planted' while the third finger 'hammers' then 'pulls-off' the seventh

Arch Fingers For Better Tone



For better clarity and tone, keep the fretting fingers arched and try to fret as close as possible to each fret, especially those that require the third and fourth