

The Major Scale

The *Major scale* can be described as having a pleasant or ‘happy’ tone or mood in its overall sound. Rather than the traditional method of learning the Major scale in its chronological order (*‘Do, re, mi’... etc.*), this lesson will instead focus more on capturing the *intended mood* of the scale. This will be done by learning to play various riffs within a specific box pattern which also ‘fits’ well with the fretting hand.

Playing the Scale

(Use a pick) The Tab below shows an example of how to play the Major scale in ascending and descending order. The proper finger numbers to fret each note with are shown below each Tab. To get a proper sense of *phrasing*, let the last note played in each section ring or sustain.

Major Scale - Ascending

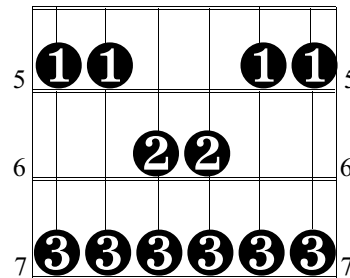
Major Scale - Descending

1						5	7	5	5									
2							5	7		7	5							
3								6	7			6	7					
4									6	7				6	7			
5									5	7					7	5		
6	5	7														7	5	
	1	3	1	3	2	3	2	3	1	3	1	3	1	1	3	1	3	1

Box Patterns

The diagram to the right shows the Major scale in a *box pattern* form. A *box pattern* is essentially an ‘aerial view’ of a scale going across the six strings, with the sixth ‘bottom’ string being on the far left and the first ‘top’ string being on the far right. The finger numbers to fret with are shown in circles. All of the notes played from the previous section will ‘fit’ within this box pattern. There are several box patterns to play the Major scale, however this pattern will be referred to here as the *standard major scale box pattern*.

Major Scale Box Pattern



Fifth fret position

Associating Moods With Scales

One advantage to learning the above Major scale box pattern is that the intended ‘happy’ mood of the scale can clearly be heard, especially when compared to learning more standard major scale exercises such as the *‘Do, Re, Mi...’* approach. Associating moods with scales develops the ability to learn songs and melodies ‘by ear’. In time, by simply recognizing the mood of a guitar solo as being either happy or pleasant, a guitarist can associate that mood with the Major scale and immediately begin to ‘jam-along’ or improvise with the track without having to rely on any sort of written notation.

Getting Fretting Fingers in Shape

For beginners, the primary objective early on is to develop finger strength and flexibility. Not only will playing the Major scale box pattern be a great exercise for the fingers, the same pattern will actually be used in many classic guitar solos. Make sure all fingers are as close to the frets as possible when playing the pattern, especially when fretting with the second and third fingers.