

The Major Scale

One of the most common scales that you will come across being used in Western music is the major scale. You may have learned the solfege for this scale in school: DO-RE-MI-FA-SOL-LA-TI-DO.

If you do not know, a scale in music is simply a collection of notes. In the case of the major scale, there is 7 notes. We will cover the scale fingerings in 2 keys for this example, however I highly encourage you to learn the scale in all 12 major keys.

There are 6 different fingerings that I commonly use and teach all of my students for this scale. 3 of these fingerings will start on the fifth string, and the other 3 will start on the sixth string. You may ask why you should learn the scale with 6 different fingerings... When you are trying to unlock the matrix that makes up a guitar fretboard, these 6 fingerings will greatly help you visualize and understand whats going on. They will also greatly help you later when you want to add more scales to your library of musical knowledge since you can use them as a framework to base those other scale positions on.

To quickly summarize the labeling of the positions and how you should approach them:

- The fraction that the position is labeled as represents what finger you should start with / and what string you should start on. So 3/5 means start on the fifth string with your ring (third) finger.
- You should try to assign a finger to each fret in order to minimize the movement of your hand, and keep a better technique. Generally the positions only cover 4 frets, however when you have a wide stretch (2 frets between each note on the string), you should always try to use your middle finger on the middle note. This will allow your hand to relax a little bit more and minimize the strain on your hand. Dropping the thumb down and pushing your elbow forward to get your hand under the neck more will greatly help with this as well.
- Learn the root notes on the fifth and sixth strings well. They will be your guide to apply these fingerings!

The 2 keys that we covering for this example are the key of C major (fifth string positions) and the key of G major (sixth string positions). The fingerings will be similar, but the big thing is to observe the notes that make up each key, and the order that they come in.

The notes that make up C major are: C D E F G A B

The notes that make up G major are: G A B C D E F#

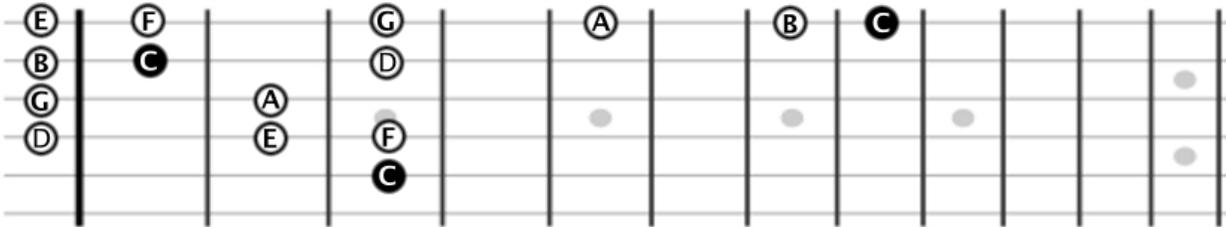
Lastly, if you aren't familiar with the musical alphabet, we use the notes A-G and then it repeats itself. If you see a (#) symbol, that means the note is "sharp" and should be raised 1 fret from where the normal note is. If you see a (b) symbol, that means that the note is "flat" and should be lowered 1 fret from where the normal note is. If the note is on an open string and needs to be lowered, then you will have to move down to the next string (thicker) on either the 4th frets for strings E,A,D, and B, or to the 3rd fret on string G.

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The dark circles represent the root note locations. These are where you would start/stop the fingerings if you are playing the scale as an exercise in most cases. It is very important to learn these locations!

This position should start with your ring finger if playing in this position. If playing above the 3rd fret, then start with your pinky and use your index finger to play the notes that would be on the open string.

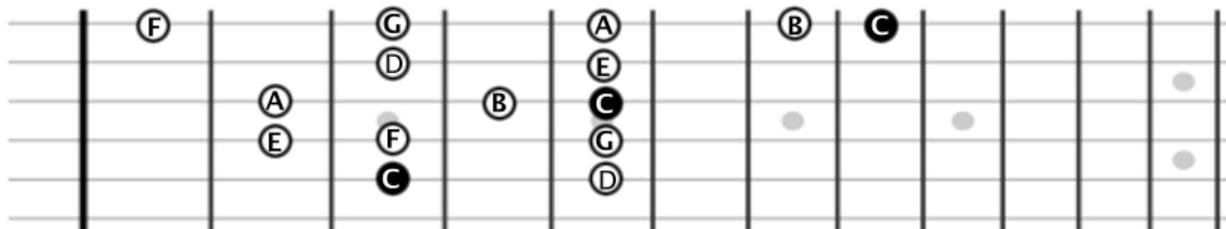
3/5 Position – 4/5 if played in a higher position on the fretboard



T A B
3 0 2 3 0 2 0 1 3 0 1 3 5 7 8

This position should start with your middle finger.

2/5 Position



T A B
3 5 2 3 5 2 4 5 3 5 1 3 5 7 8

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This position should start with your index finger. Your middle finger will cover all the middle notes until you get to the first string to ease tension on your hand as mentioned earlier.

1/5 Position

C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C

T															
A															
B	3	5	7	3	5	7	4	5	7	5	6	8	5	7	8

This position should start with your ring finger if playing in this position just like the 3/5 position. If playing above the 3rd fret, then start with your pinky and use your index finger to play the notes that would be on the open string.

3/6 Position – 4/6 if played in a higher position on the fretboard

G A B C D E F# G A B C D E F# G

T															
A															
B	3	0	2	3	0	2	4	0	2	0	1	3	0	2	3

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Again, also be sure to learn the notes in every major key and learn the fingerings for those keys!

Most common keys:

The other name for the key, but much harder to think about...

C: C D E F G A B

Db: Db Eb F Gb Ab Bb C ————— C#: C# D# E#(F) F# G# A# B#(C)

D: D E F# G A B C#

Eb: Eb F G Ab Bb C D ————— D#: D# E#(F) F##(G) G# A# B#(C) C##(D)

E: E F# G# A B C# D#

F: F G A Bb C D E

F#: F# G# A# B C# D# E#(F) ——— Gb: Gb Ab Bb Cb(B) Db Eb F

G: G A B C D E F#

Ab: Ab Bb C Db Eb F G ————— G#: G# A# B#(C) C# D# E#(F) F##(G)

A: A B C# D E F# G#

Bb: Bb C D Eb F G A ————— A#: A# B#(C) C##(D) D# E#(F) F##(G) G## (A)

B: B C# D# E F# G# A#

Two common way of practicing in every key:

Chromatically: C-Db-D-Eb-E-F-F#-G-Ab-A-Bb-B

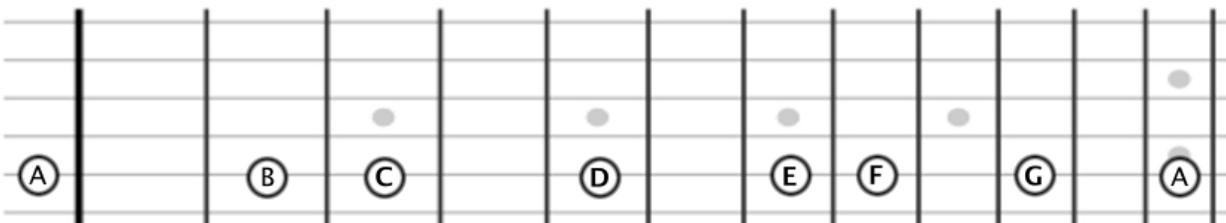
Cycle of 4ths: C-F-Bb-Eb-Ab-Db-F#-B-E-A-D-G

Cycle of 5ths: C-G-D-A-E-B-F#-Db-Ab-Eb-Bb-F

I would encourage doing all three since they are all great approaches, however I feel the most useful is the cycle of 4ths.

Also be sure to learn the notes that are on the fifth and sixth strings in order to apply these fingerings wherever you'd like!

Fifth String Natural Note Positions



Sixth String Natural Note Positions

