RY NAYLOR GUITAR SINCE 2010

CAGED CLARITY

CONNECT THE DOTS TO FINALLY 'SEE' THE GUITAR USING THE CAGED SYSTEM

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Introduction

After you've learnt all the notes on the fretboard, the next stage in fretboard mastery is readily having chords, arpeggios, pentatonic and diatonic scale patterns under your fingers.

But what is the best approach for learning all of this?

There is no doubt that fretboard fluidity has to be built up in stages and, as such, the fretboard inevitably has to be broken up into smaller chunks to give you a sporting chance!

It's at this point that we often see two distinct camps: **3 note-per-string** and **CAGED**.

Players continue to argue it out on YouTube and guitar forums as to which method is best.

There's no denying the value of the 3 note-per-string approach (in which we learn 7 scale patterns from each note of a diatonic scale, with each pattern having 3 notes to each string), but, personally, I have gotten *much* more value from CAGED.

The main reason for this is because with CAGED we can (with practice) effortlessly visualise 3-note triads, arpeggios, pentatonic scales and 7-note diatonic scales from **one chord shape** (or even as little as a two-note octave shape).

The same cannot be said for the 3 note-per-string method.

CAGED gives context and additional insight into the chord and scale patterns that you may have already learnt.

We can begin to better understand the relationship between chords and scales to give us more confidence when it comes to improvising and writing solos.

If you want to play a solo over a specific chord or chord progression the CAGED approach will give you several different soloing strategies.

We'll start with the fundamentals of CAGED before applying it to form chord shapes, arpeggios, pentatonic and diatonic scales all over the fretboard.

People often refer to the **'CAGED system'**, but I'm not such a fan of that term as it suggests that it was devised by someone, that it was someone's creation.

In reality, no-one came up with this. The tuning of the guitar strings just creates these patterns on the fretboard, like a roadmap. Someone at some stage clearly started promoting it as a teaching method, but it is an innate feature of standard tuning.

CAGED is not the *only* way to do things but, for me, it's the most logical and there's *so* much we can learn from it. I hope to give a little insight into its possibilities with **'CAGED Clarity'**.

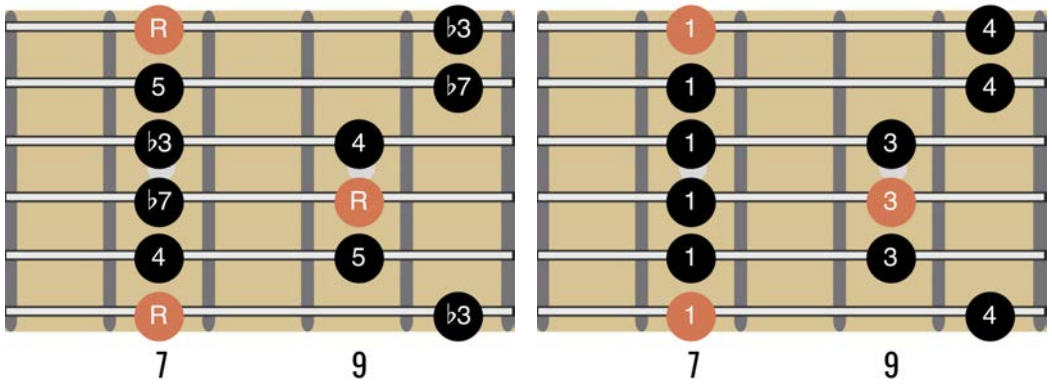
What You Can Expect

CAGED is a way of layering fretboard patterns on top of one another and grouping them together to allow you to see the big picture.

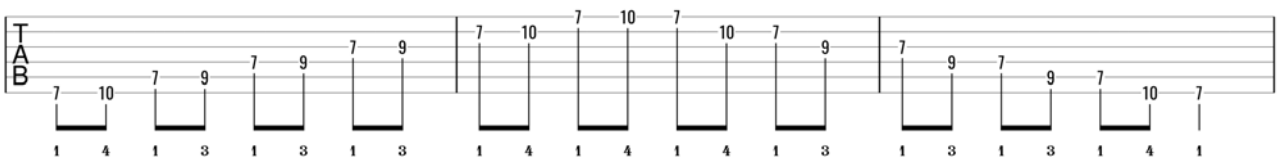
At each stage we will work progressively through each of these layers.

There are 'rhythm guitar' layers (barre chords and triad forms) and 'lead guitar' layers (arpeggios/ pentatonics/diatonic scales).

After the introduction, we'll break down each of the ten CAGED Shapes (five major and five minor). You will be presented with something like this:



Em-Shape minor pentatonic scale intervals and recommended fingering



Playing the Em-Shape minor pentatonic scale from the Root

The first fretboard diagram presents the intervals of the given layer, and beside that the second fretboard shows my recommended fingering (these are my preferred approach, but I would encourage you to experiment and find what works best for you).

Beneath that will be a TAB showing you how to play through the layer from the Root note. These scale patterns are full range, in that they will go as high and as low as possible in the given CAGED Shape.

The numbers sitting beneath the TAB the recommended fretting hand fingering numbers.

I am assuming that you are familiar with the spellings of chords, arpeggios and scales. These will be reviewed in this eBook, but if you are not confident, I would recommend you check out my **'Guitar Rut Busters - Essential Theory'** video course.

For consistency I use the term 'Root' to represent both the Root note of chords, but also the tonic of arpeggios and scales. Technically, the starting note of a scale *should* be named the 'tonic' (1) but, for ease and transference between scales and chords, I've kept it as 'Root' (R).

The layers we will learn are:

- **Octave Shape**
- **Barre Chord**
- **Major/Minor Arpeggio** - playing the 3 chord tones melodically
- **Triads** - from the arpeggio notes we can create mini-chord shapes across three strings
- **Pentatonic Scale** - from 3 notes to 5, giving more melodic possibilities
- **Diatonic Scale** (major/natural minor) - from 5 notes to 7, giving you the most notes available for your soloing and melody creation.

Not wanting to overwhelm you, I have omitted the study of seventh and other chord forms, as well as more advanced arpeggios and modal scales.

These too can be studied with the CAGED approach, but I think it is important to firstly be confident with the fundamentals.

How to work with CAGED Clarity?

The CAGED Shapes are presented in order to show you how they link up along the fretboard.

I would recommend you read through the eBook once and play through the layers and examples to get an overview.

I would then suggest you work with one form before trying to memorise too much. The guide provides all the diagrams and TABs that you will need to keep you busy for a few months!

Try to memorise the intervals to allow to to easily switch between chord layers and soloing layers.

There are suggestions for practice room exercises on pages 88-95.

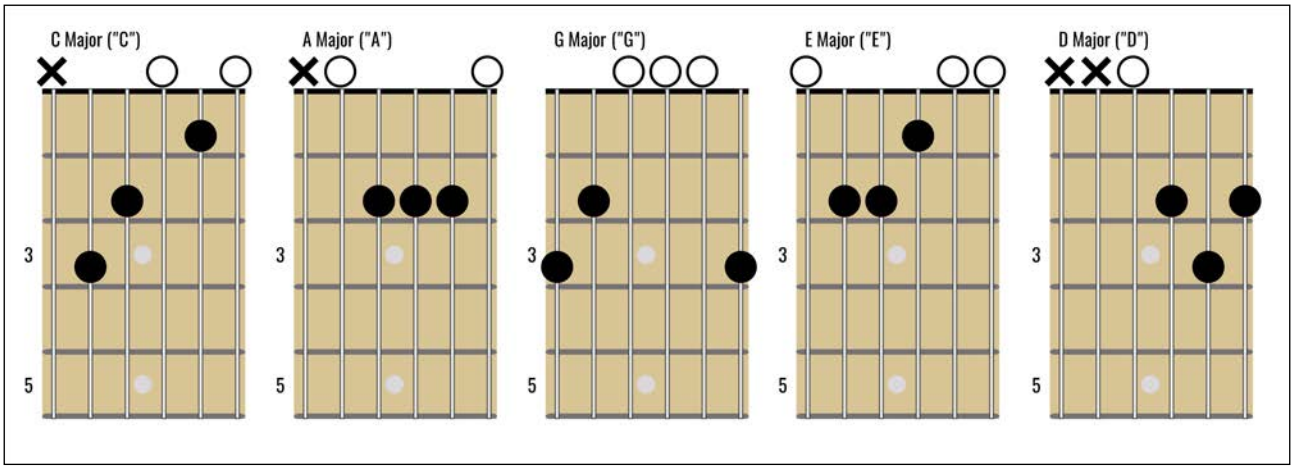
You will also find printable one-page summaries of the CAGED Shapes and the manner in which they link up in the appendices at the end of the book.

Why the name 'CAGED'?

But what is CAGED? Why that name?

It all begins with some open chords, probably some of the first things you ever learnt.

Each letter of the word 'CAGED' refers to one of 5 open position chord forms, namely C, A, G, E and D major:

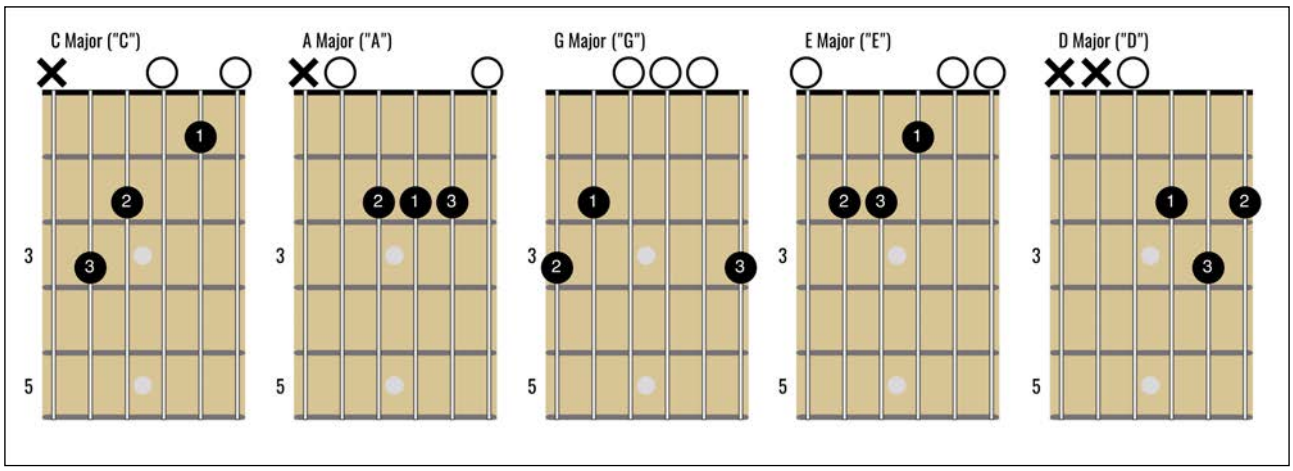


Going forward, I'll refer to these chord forms as the **'CAGED open chords'**.

These are the five major chords that can be played in the open position without requiring a barre finger. As such they can actually be played anywhere on the fretboard if we have the strength and dexterity to use the index (finger 1) as a barre finger.

> Remember that *every* shape on the fretboard that doesn't use open strings is *entirely* moveable.

The first stage is to make sure these are memorised. These would be my recommended fingerings for each chord:



Root Octave Shapes

So we have the chord forms memorised...what's next?

You need to understand exactly where the Root notes are found and be able to visualise the octaves of the Root notes within each of these chords.

To review, the Root is the main note upon which a chord is built and it is the note which names the chord.

The Root of an A major chord is A. The Root note of an A minor (Am) chord is also an A.

The chord *quality* (whether major, minor, dominant...) does not affect the Root note.

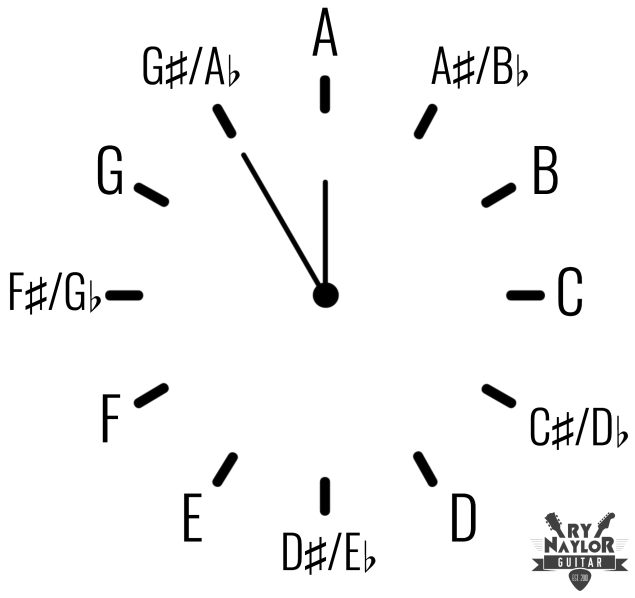
Once we identify the location of the Root, we can theoretically play any chord anywhere on the neck if we place the root on the correct fret.

CAGED is applicable in both the major and minor realms and so we don't want to get too attached to open chords. **Octave shapes** will better serve us. With them we can more easily switch between the major and minor patterns.

An octave is the distance between the first and eighth note of any diatonic scale (for example, C major - **C** D E F G A B **C**). The prefix *oct-* referring to the 8 notes that make up one octave (C to C).

An octave spans 8 alphabet letters, but it is the distance of **12 frets horizontally** on one string. The double inlay dots found on most guitars at the 12th fret represent the octave of the open string

notes. Why 12 frets? Because we have the sharp/flat notes to include as well (as seen in my note clock):

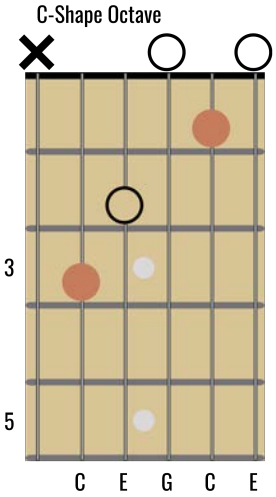


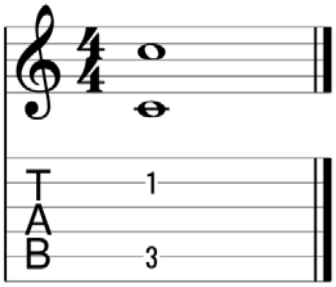
The Note Clock

As we shall see, for each of the CAGED open chords, the Root is the note found on the lowest string played (in pitch).

C-Shape Octave (Strings 5-2)

The Root note of the C chord is found on string 5(A) at the 3rd fret.



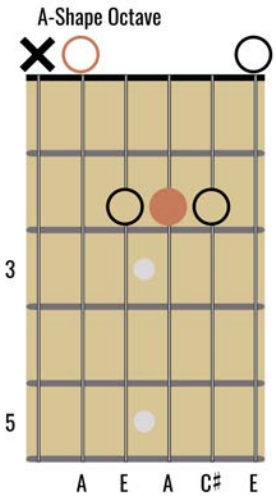


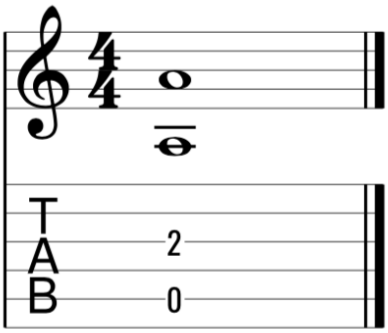
The octave of the Root note on string 5(A) is found two frets lower on string 2(B). We have an octave shape skipping over two strings.

Notice how the shape of the chord and the octave shape is in a diagonal plane towards the headstock.

A-Shape Octave (Strings 5-3)

The Root note of the A chord is also found on string 5(A), the open A string.





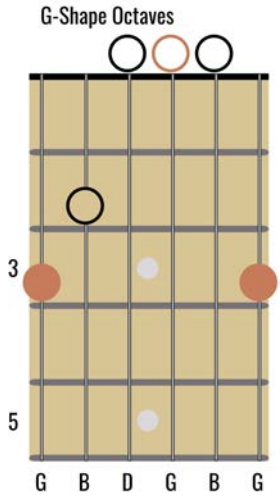
The octave of the Root note on string 5(A) is found two frets higher on string 3(G). This octave shape is skipping over just one string this time.

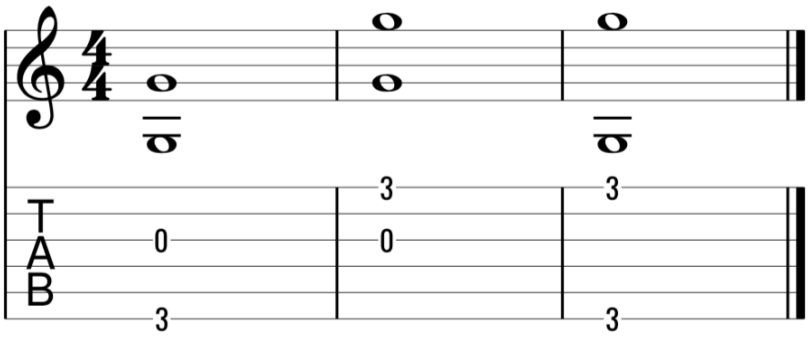
In contrast to the C chord (which also has its root note on string 5(A)) see how the A chord and its octave shape in in a diagonal plane towards the guitar body.

G-Shape Octaves (Strings 6-3, 3-1, 6-1)

The Root note of the G chord is found on string 6(E) at the 3rd fret.

The open G major chord has three octave shapes within it.





The first octave shape is found between strings 6(E) and 3(G). The octave of the G note on string 6(E) is found three frets lower on string 3(G) (the open G string).

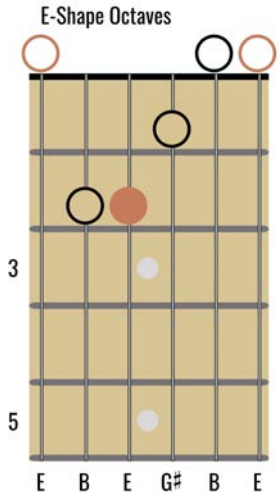
The second octave shape is found between strings 3(G) and 1(E). The octave of the open G note on string 3(G) is found three frets higher on string 1(E).

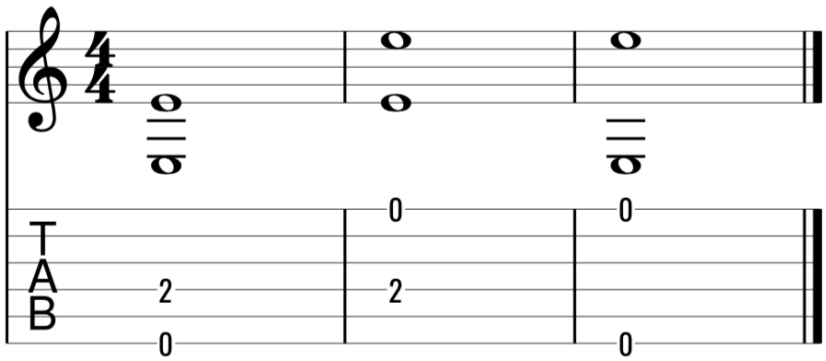
Therefore, there exists a *two octave* shape between the G note on string 6(E) and the G note on string 1(E).

Any note on string 6(E) can be found two octaves higher in the same fret on string 1(E).

E-Shape Octaves (Strings 6-4, 4-1, 6-1)

As with the G-shape, we can think of there being three octave shapes within the open E chord.





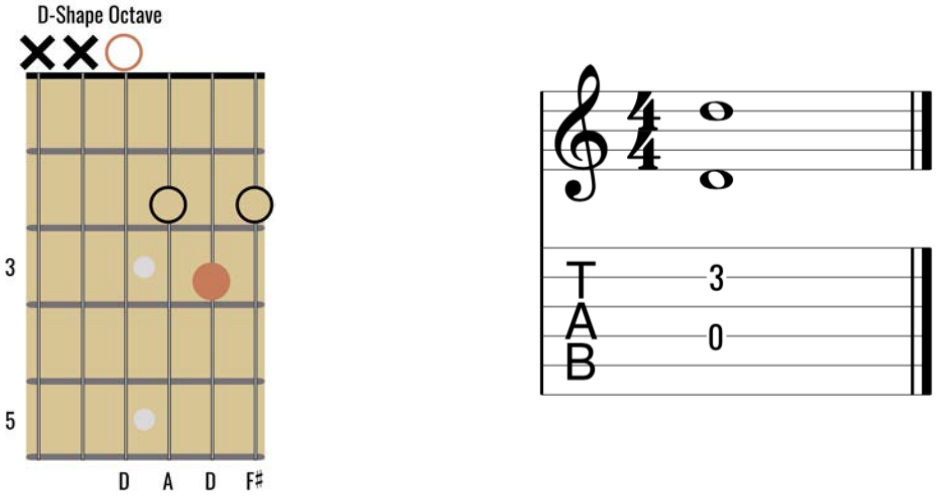
The first octave shape is found between strings 6(E) and 4(D). The octave of the open E note on string 6(E) is found two frets higher on string 4(D).

The second octave shape is found between strings 4(D) and 1(E). The octave of the E note on string 4(D) is found two frets lower on string 1(E) (the open E string).

There is, therefore, a *two octave* shape between the G note on string 6(E) and string 1(E).

D-Shape Octave (String 4-2)

The octave found within the open D major chord is between string 4(D) and string 2(B).



The octave of the open D note on string 4(D) is found three frets higher on string 2(B).

You might notice that there are some similarities to the octave shapes found in each chord form. These shapes can, in fact, be linked together to form a chain of the same note name (in differing octaves) across the entire fretboard.

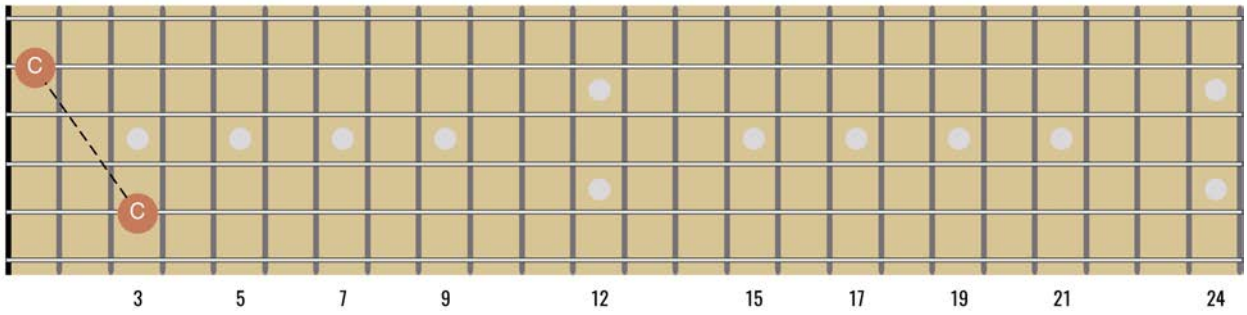
From here on out we're going to be talking in terms of 'C-shape' or 'A-shape' etc.
Every fretboard pattern will be linked to an octave shape, derived from the CAGED open chords.

Linking the Octave Shapes - The Backbone of CAGED

Any of the octave shapes that we identified previously can freely be moved up and down the fretboard.

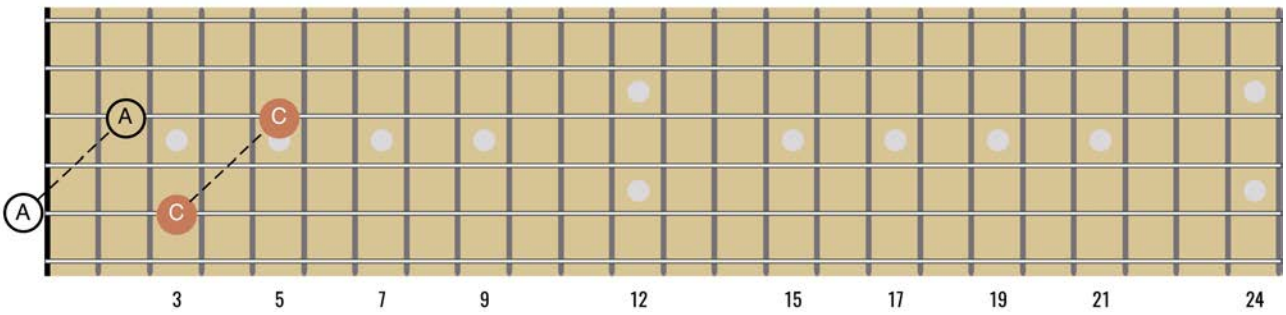
We're going to see how we can move the octave shapes to help us find all of the C notes on the fretboard.

We have already established the C notes in the *open position* (defined as the first four frets), found within the C-shape octave.



We can move each of the other octave shapes up the fretboard horizontally and place them upon a C note to quickly be able to visualise all the C notes within a 4-fret "segment".

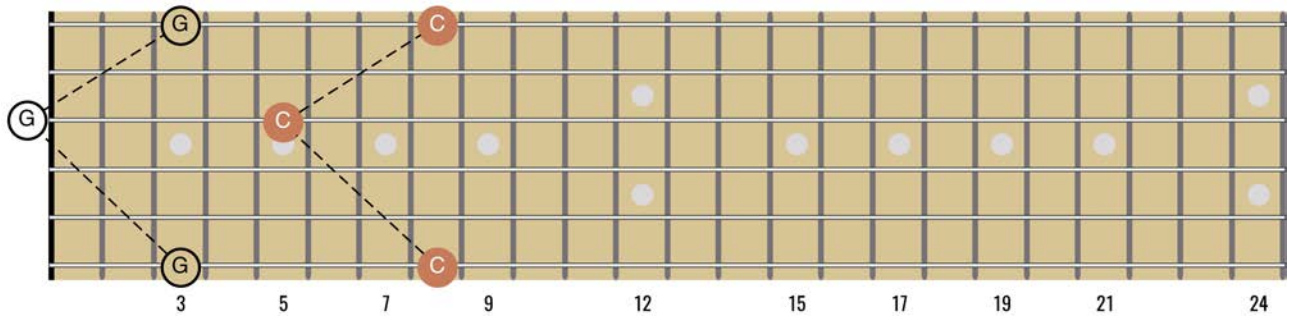
The A-shape octave can be raised 3 frets onto the C note at the 3rd fret of string 5(A).



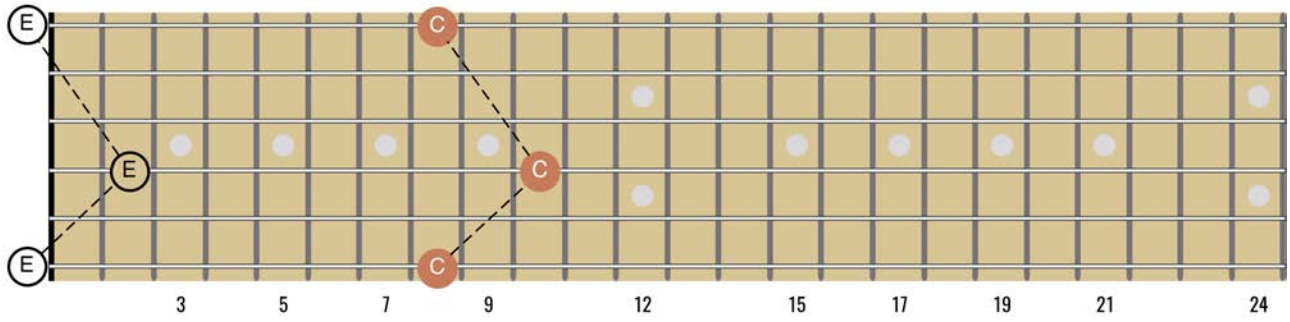
****Important****

The octave between the two C notes will still be named the 'A-shape' despite it being between two C notes. The name of the octave is always derived from the CAGED open chord form.

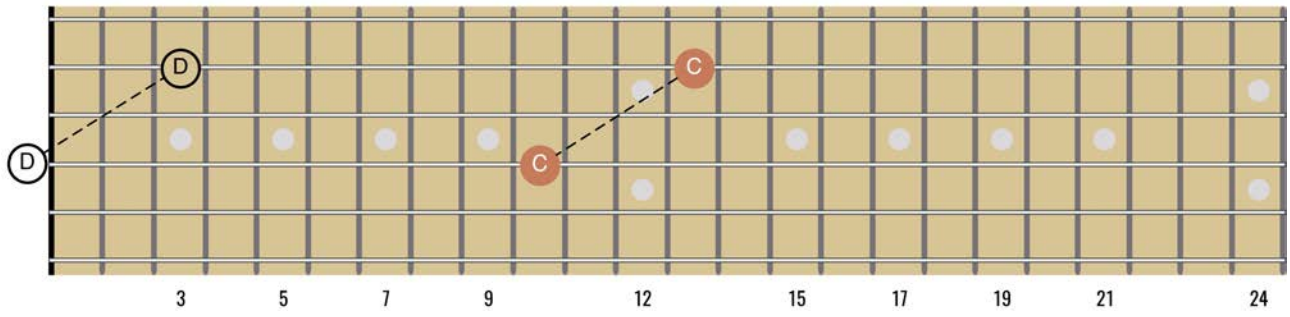
The G-shape octave can be raised 5 frets onto the C note at the 8th fret of string 6(E):



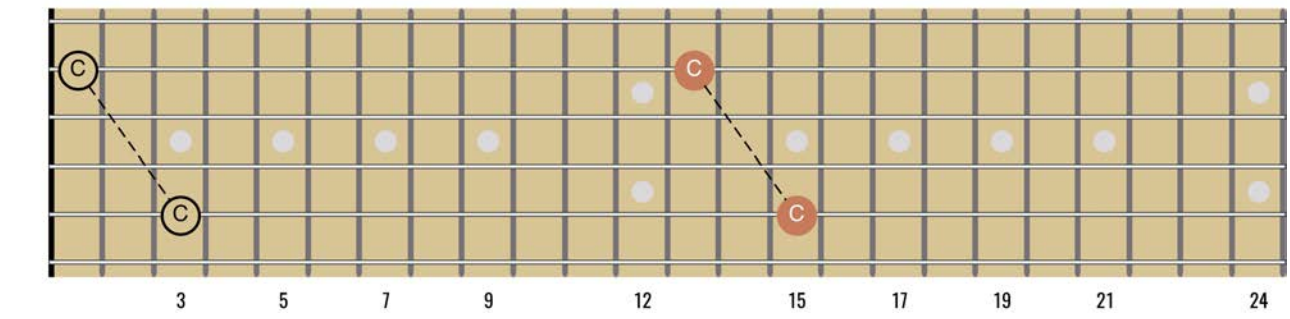
The E-shape octave can be raised 8 frets onto the C note at the 8th fret of string 6(E):



The D-shape octave can be raised 10 frets onto the C note at the 10th fret of string 4(D):

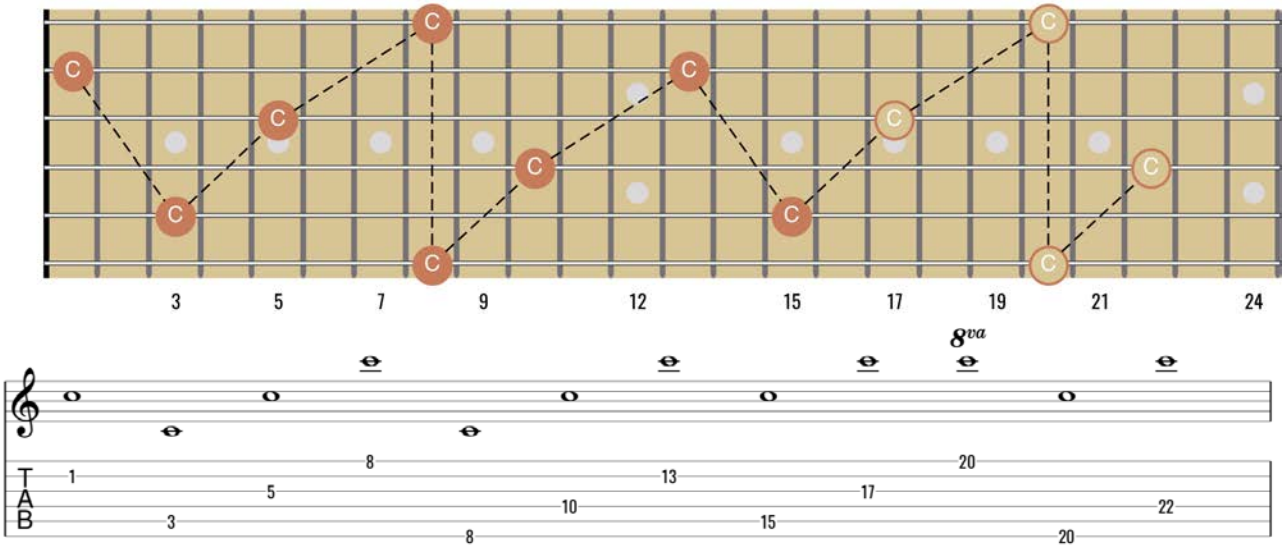


The open position C-shape can be raised one octave onto the C note at the 15th fret of string 5(A).



Any note, chord or pattern can be found an octave higher by moving horizontally 12 frets.

All of these octave shapes can then be linked together to form one long chain of C notes across the fretboard:



C Octaves

See how the octave sequence continues one octave higher in the same shapes beyond the 12th fret.

Linking the Octave Shapes

The ability to link the octave shapes forms the backbone of the CAGED system. These shapes can be used as stepping stones for instantly finding any given note across the fretboard.

There is a sequence to the octave patterns that allows us to move up the fretboard through the different shapes:

1. When on 2(B) move to 5(A) *(5-2 octave)* = ***C**-Shape*
2. When on 5(A) move to 3(G) *(5-3 octave)* = ***A**-Shape*
3. When on 3(G) move to 1(E) *(3-1 octave)* = ***G**-Shape*
4. When on 1(E) move to 6(E) *(6-1 two octave pattern) = G-Shape/E-Shape*
5. When on 6(E), move to 4(D) *(6-4 octave)* = ***E**-Shape*
6. When on 4(D), move to 2(B) *(4-2 octave)* = ***D**-Shape*

See how (at least for the C note) the sequence of octave shapes spells out **CAGED**. The word CAGED gives us the order in which the octave shapes link up horizontally.

C-Shape - A-Shape - G-Shape - E-Shape - D-Shape (CAGED)

This sequence will not change, although the starting 'shape' will vary according to the particular note that you have chosen to start the sequence. You identify the string upon which the chosen note is closest to the headstock (i.e. the lowest fret) and start the sequence from that given string.

In that way the "CAGED system" could also have been called the "AGEDC system" or the "EDCAG system". Not quite as easy to say or remember!

You should, though, be familiar with the order of the octave shapes when we don't start from the C-shape. We would therefore have another four possibilities:

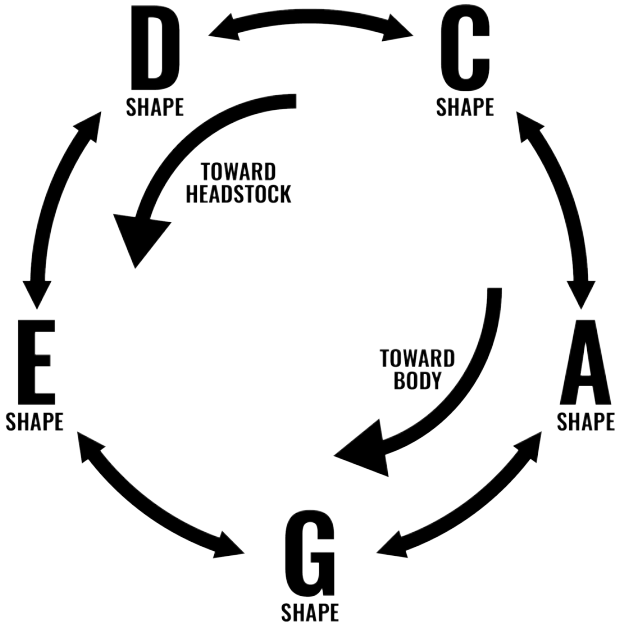
A-Shape - G-Shape - E-Shape - D-Shape - C-Shape (AGEDC)

G-Shape - E-Shape - D-Shape - C-Shape - A-Shape (GEDCA)

E-Shape - D-Shape - C-Shape - A-Shape - G-Shape (EDCAG)

D-Shape - C-Shape - A-Shape - G-Shape - E-Shape (DCAGE)

You could think of it as a cycle on which you can move in either direction. Moving clockwise would be moving higher up the fretboard (towards the body). Moving counter-clockwise would be moving lower on the fretboard (towards the headstock).

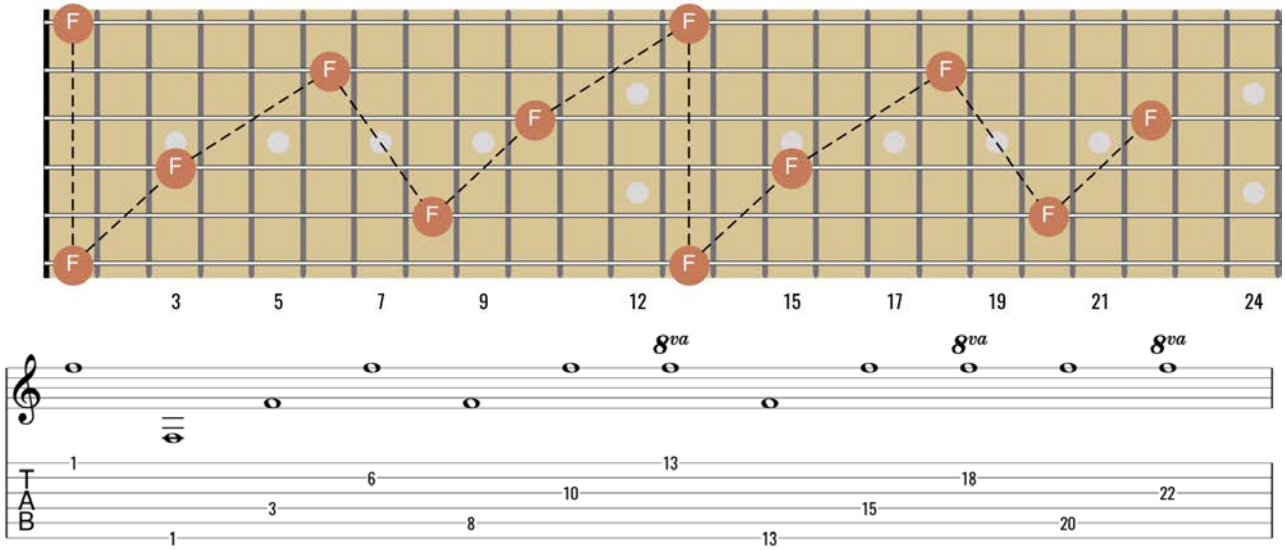


The CAGED Cycle

Taking some other examples, if we want to find all the F notes, we can begin on string 1(E).

When on string 1(E) we will move down two octaves to string 6(E), and then we follow through the octave patterns:

- When on 6(E), move to 4(D) *(6-4 octave) = E-Shape*
- When on 4(D), move to 2(B) *(4-2 octave) = D-Shape*
- When on 2(B) move to 5(A) *(5-2 octave) = C-Shape*
- When on 5(A) move to 3(G) *(5-3 octave) = A-Shape*
- When on 3(G) move to 1(E) *(3-1 octave) = G-Shape*
- When on 1(E) move to 6(E) *(6-1 two octave pattern) = G-Shape/E-Shape*

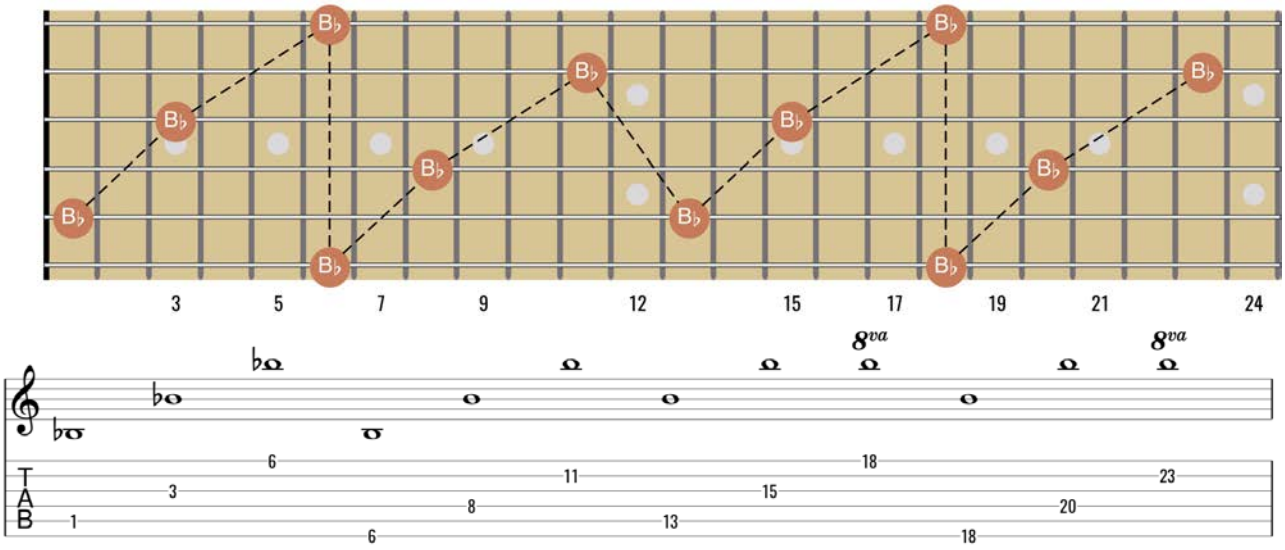


F Octaves

The sequence will continue until you run out of space on the fretboard.

As a final example, let's find all the B♭ notes. Again, start with finding the lowest fret in which we find a B♭. This will be the 1st fret of string 5(A). Our octave sequence this time will start from number 4. (*When on 5(A) move to 3(G)*) and the sequence continues from that point.

- When on 5(A) move to 3(G) *(5-3 octave) = A-Shape*
- When on 3(G) move to 1(E) *(3-1 octave) = G-Shape*
- When on 1(E) move to 6(E) *(6-1 two octave pattern) = G-Shape/E-Shape*
- When on 6(E), move to 4(D) *(6-4 octave) = E-Shape*
- When on 4(D), move to 2(B) *(4-2 octave) = D-Shape*
- When on 2(B) move to 5(A) *(5-2 octave) = C-Shape*



B♭ Octaves

Whatever note (whether natural, sharp or flat) will work in exactly the same way across the fretboard.

Practice Exercise

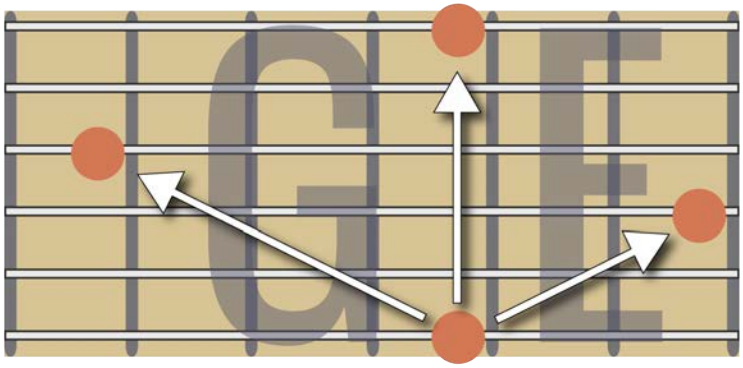
Practise the sequence starting from any note at random. You'll find that with a little practice, it is possible to memorise the sequence and see the notes all over the fretboard. This is an essential skill to gain fluidity with the CAGED approach.

Diagonal Octave Patterns

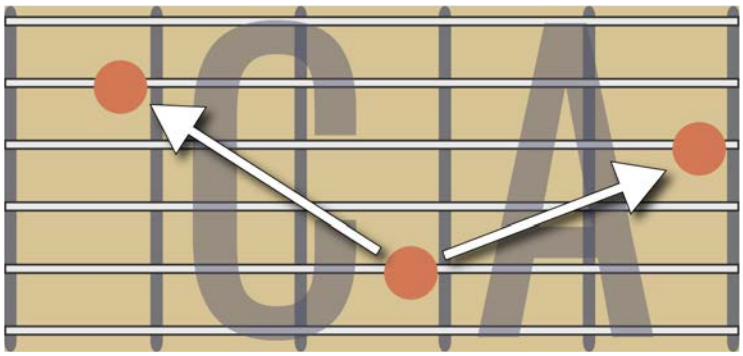
From any note on the fretboard there are two possible directions the fretting hand can move to find the octave above. We can work either towards the guitar body or towards the headstock.

You want to be confident with the octave shape in either diagonal plane.

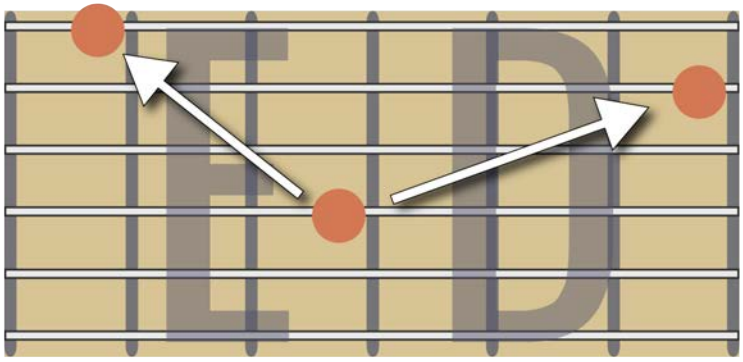
Any note rooted on string 6(E) falls within either the G-shape or the E-shape octaves:



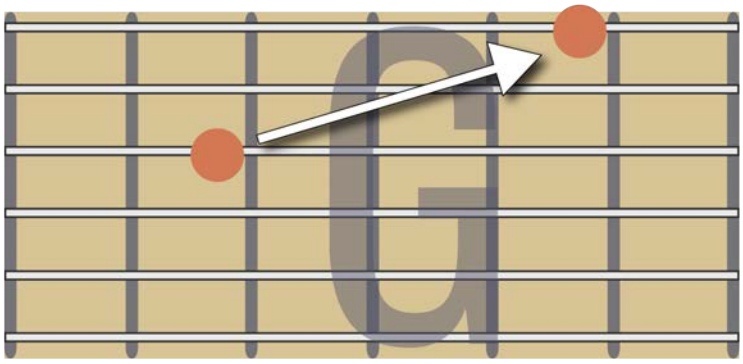
Any note rooted on string 5(A) falls within either the C-shape or the A-shape octaves:



Any note rooted on string 4(D) falls within either the E-shape or the D-shape octaves:



The exception is any note rooted on string 3(G) which will only have one octave, found within the G-shape.



Practice Exercise

Choose notes at random on different strings and play the octaves in both diagonals.

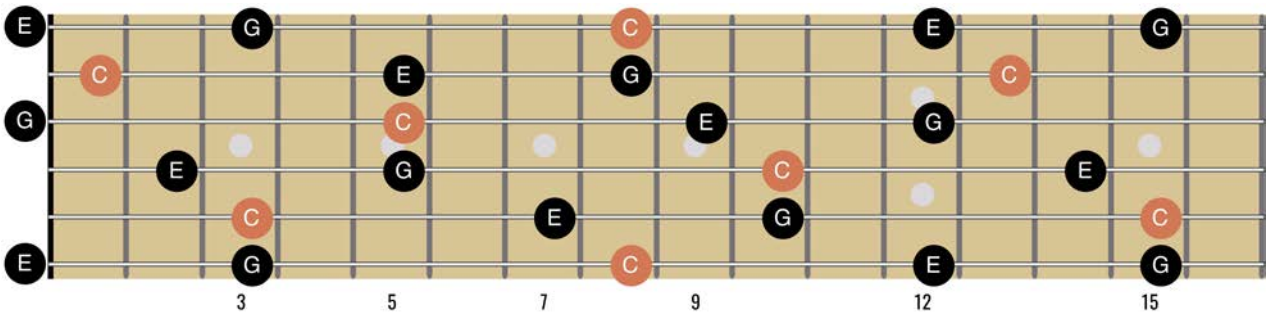
As you do so you will need to change the finger with which you fret the note to be able to reach the octave note...player's choice!

Seeing the CAGED Chords

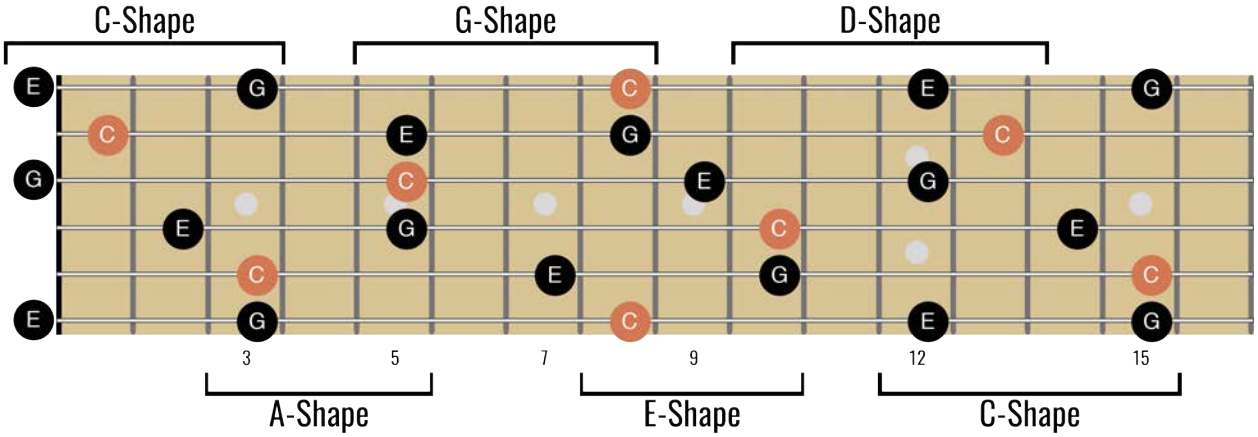
Now we've established the octave shapes, let's quickly demonstrate the power of this approach.

The C major chord consists of the notes **C**, **E** and **G**. **C** is the root note, **E** is the 3rd (major 3rd above the root) and **G** is the 5th (perfect 5th above the root note).

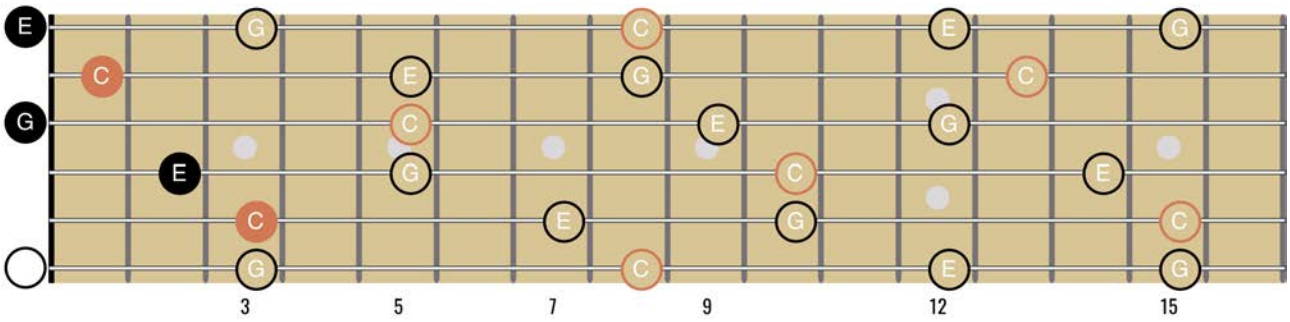
If we map out all of those notes on the fretboard (up to the 16th fret), it looks a little something like this:



Maybe as you look at it you can start to see some of the CAGED open chords.

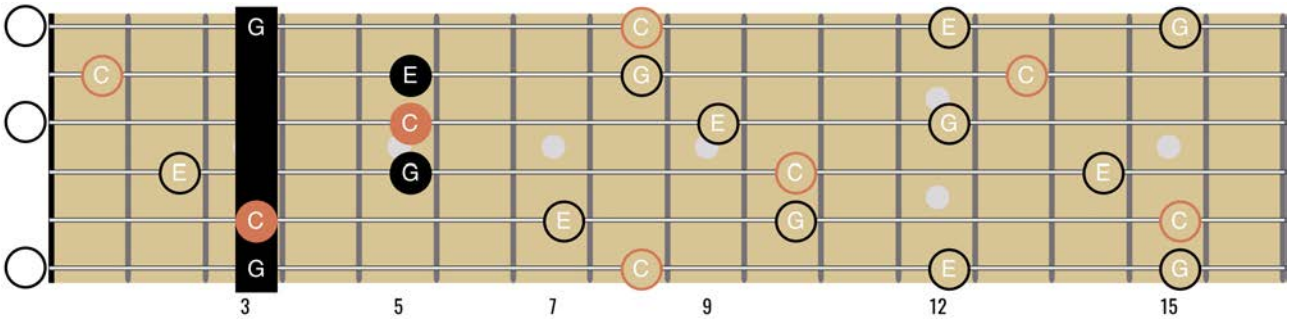


In the first 3 frets we can see the open C major chord:



If we look at the notes between the 3rd and 6th frets we can see an A-shape chord.

If we imagine a capo across the 3rd fret (over the C root note), the shape becomes a little clearer:



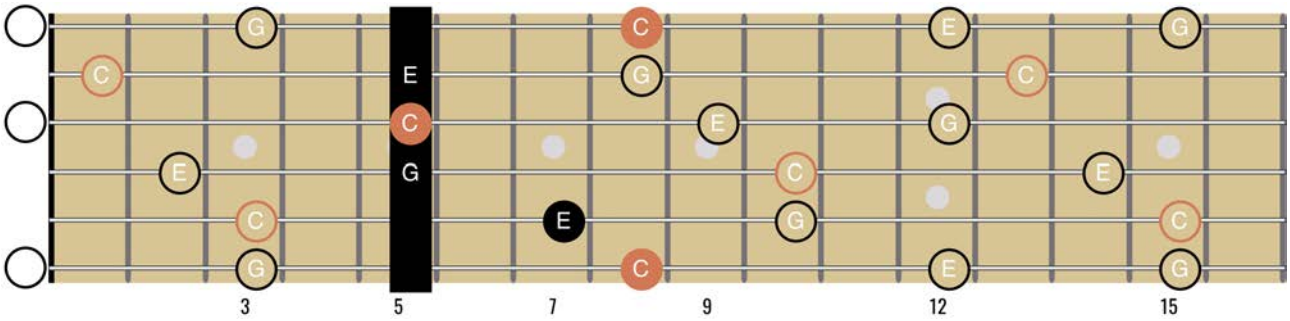
Naming Chords when Using a Capo

If we were playing a song and using a capo at the 3rd fret we would nearly always call this grip an 'A chord'. But the note pitches are actually the notes of a C chord.

This is done for ease and to avoid confusion for the player but, from this point on, you should be clear that this is a C chord in an A-shape, ***not*** an A chord.

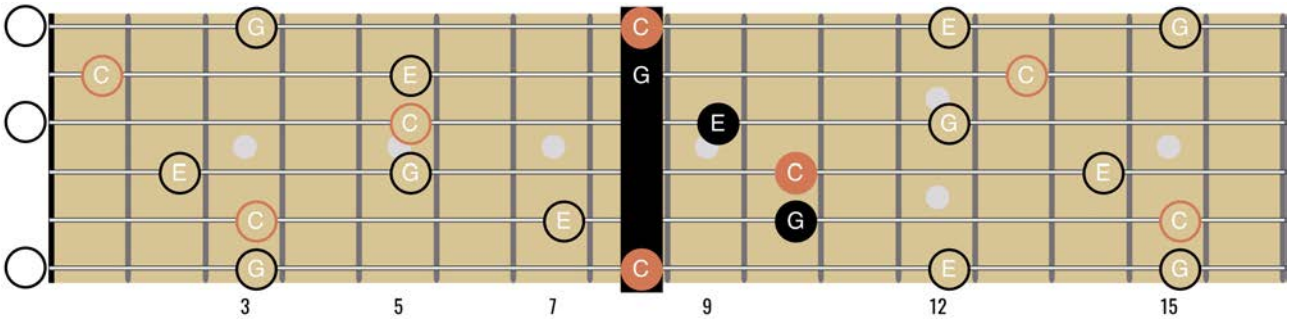
If you are playing with other musicians playing different instruments, you need to be able to transpose capo chords (i.e. be able to identify the actual root note and chord name).

Continuing up the fretboard, if we were to capo at the 5th fret (again, over next C root note up the neck) a C major chord in a G-shape is clearly visible between the 5th and 8th frets:

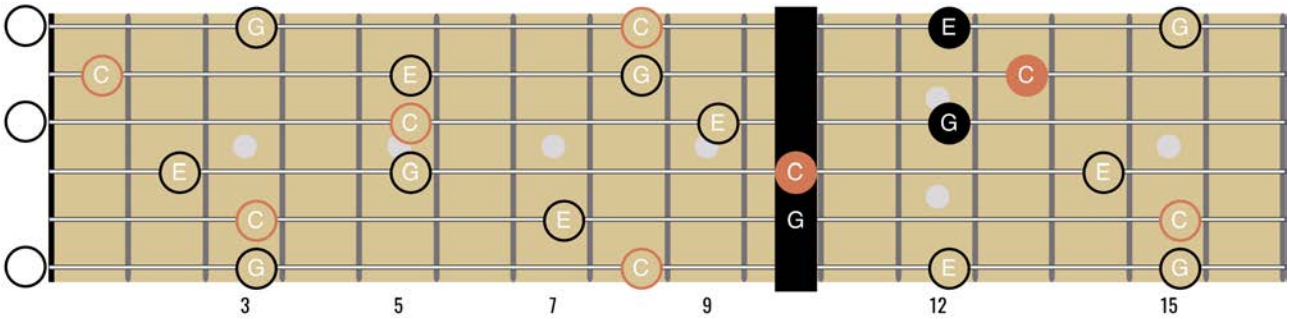


Again, we would probably call this a G chord when playing with a capo at the 5th fret, but know that it is a C chord in a G-shape.

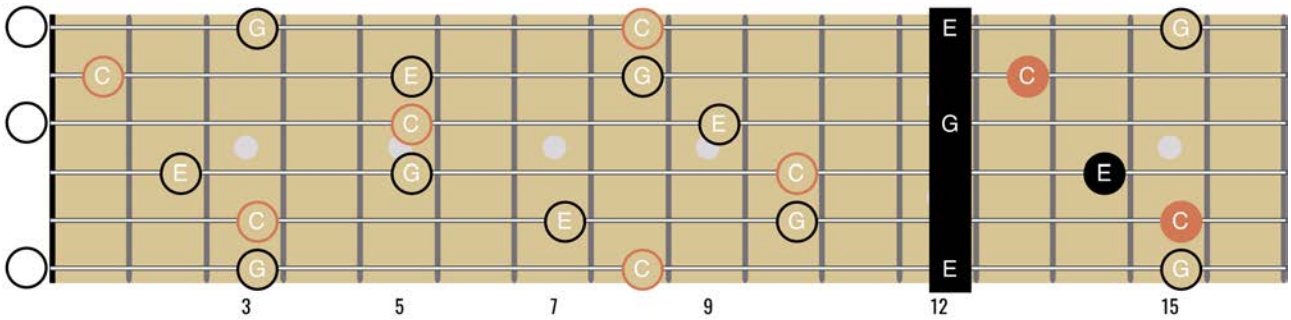
If we move the capo placement over the next root notes up the neck at the 8th fret, there is a C major chord in an E-shape between the 8th and 10th frets:



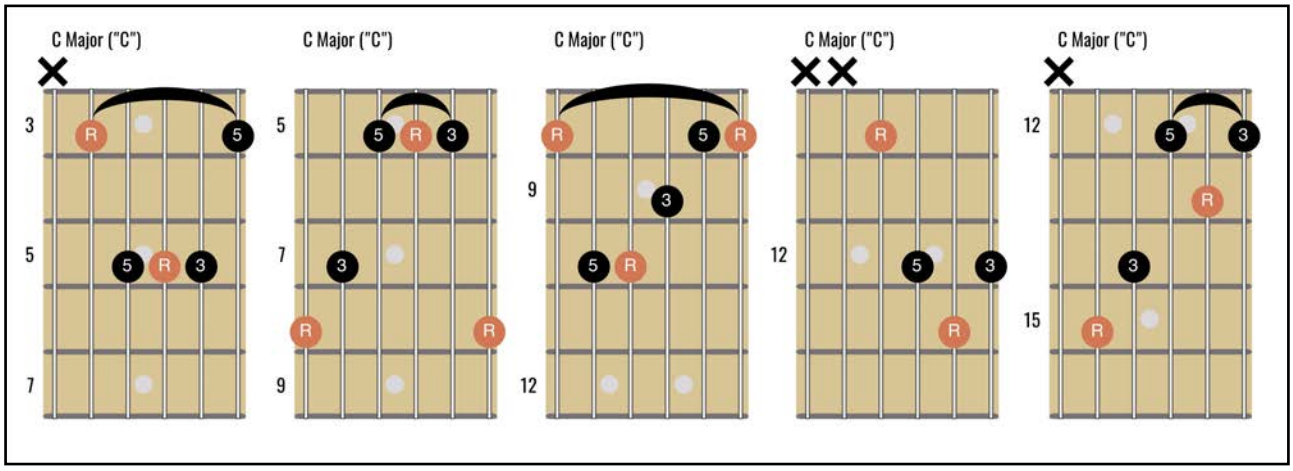
If we move the capo placement over the next root notes up the neck at the 10th fret, there is a C major chord in a D-shape between the 10th and 13th frets:



To complete a full set we could capo at the 12th fret and then we have a C chord in a C-shape, one octave above the open chord:



In addition to the open chord shape, by following the octave shapes up the neck we are able to play the C chord in five new ways:



How we create barre chord forms from the CAGED open chords is to lift the index finger (finger 1) from the grip and then use the remaining fretting hand fingers (middle, ring and pinky, fingers 2, 3 and 4) to fret the chord shape.

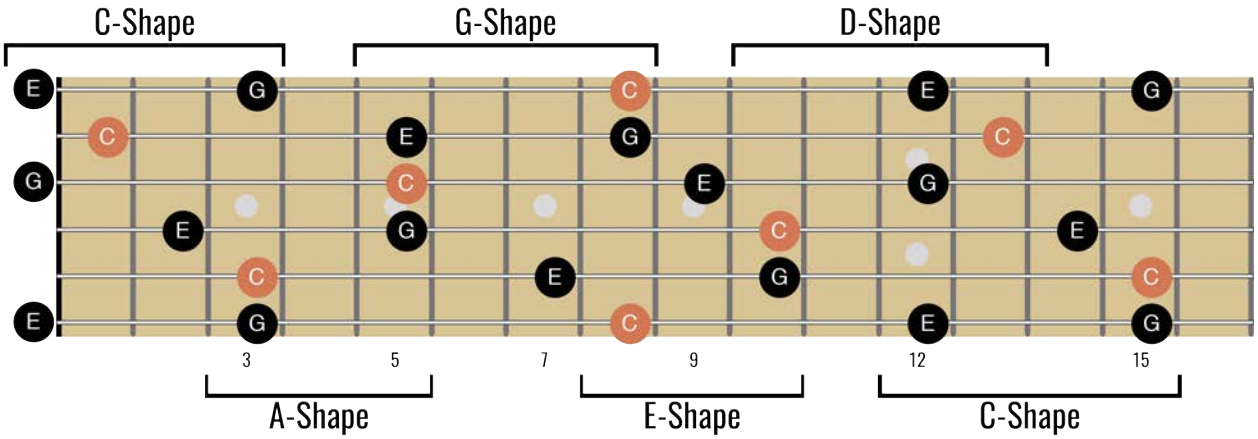
Some of the chord shapes are easier to fret than others and, for that reason, we do not see the full grips commonly used.

We'll discuss technique and recommended fingerings as we delve deeper into each shape. I would always encourage you to keep trying to form the chord shapes to work on your fretting hand dexterity.

Practice Exercise

Working from the other octave shapes that we looked at earlier (or choosing a note at random) see if you can play the barre versions of the CAGED open chord forms around each octave shape.

In doing so you are learning new ways to approach playing chord progressions.



But that's just a teaser as to the power of the CAGED approach.

Behind every chord shape there is an arpeggio, triads, a pentatonic scale and a 7-note diatonic scale.

Ready for more?

Let's start with the major shapes.

Exploring the Major Shapes

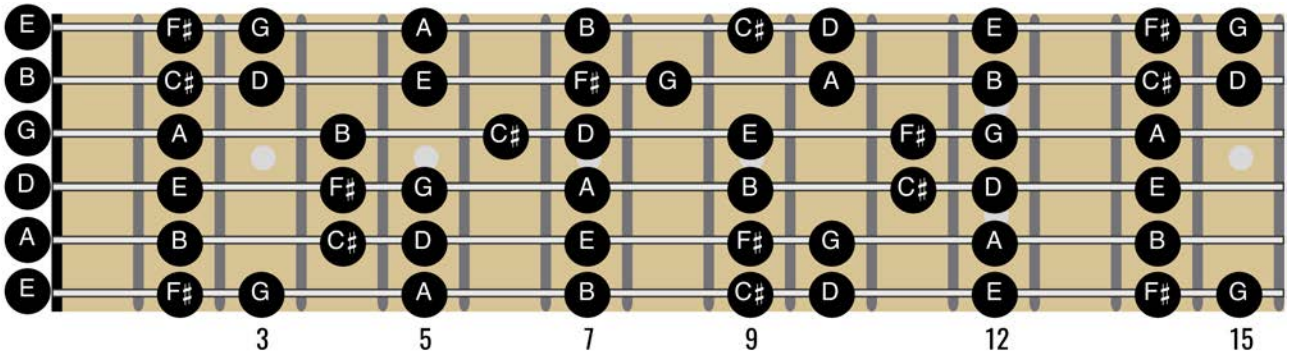
OK, with the octave shapes memorised it's time to build upon them, layer by layer.

We're going to work progressively through each shape (C-A-G-E-D) and I will be demonstrating examples rooted around the note **D**.

The D Major Scale

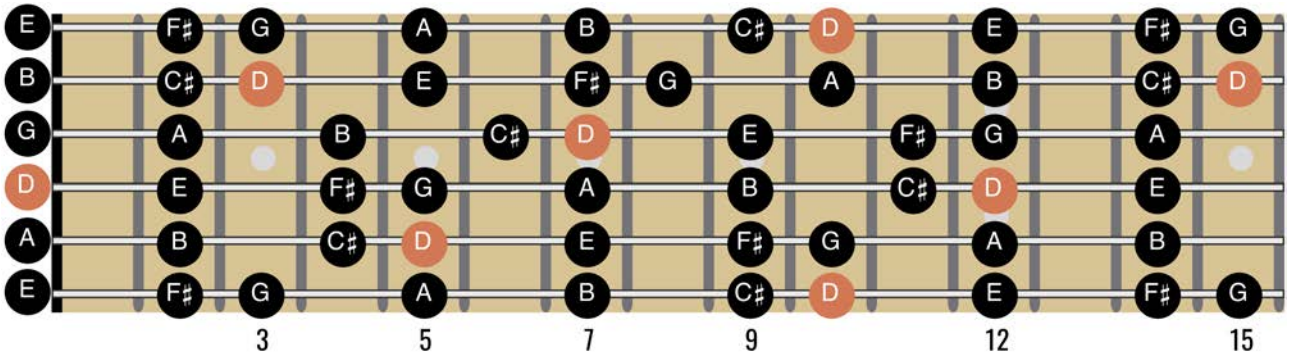
	Whole		Whole		Half		Whole		Whole		Whole		Half	
R	-	2	-	3	-	4	-	5	-	6	-	7	-	R
D	-	E	-	F♯	-	G	-	A	-	B	-	C♯	-	D

The D major scale across the fretboard looks like this:

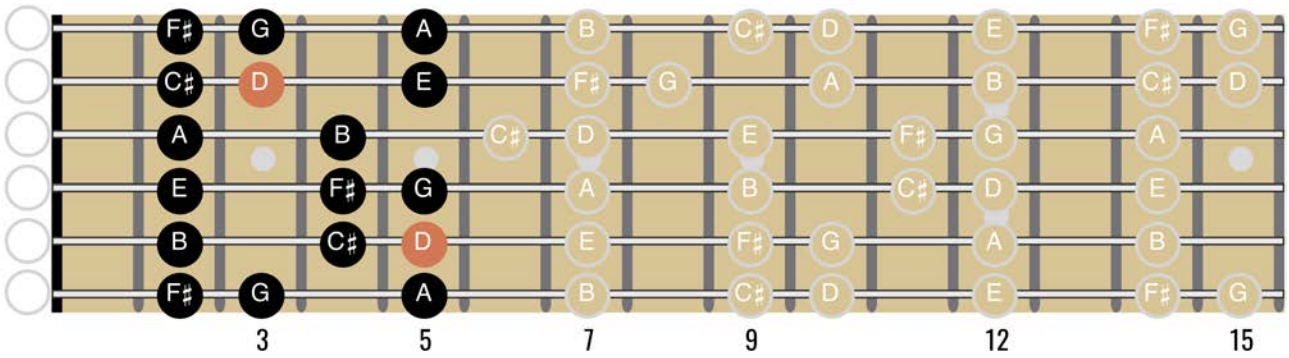


Instant overwhelm! We need to break this down into segments to even stand a chance of memorising all this.

If we highlight all the Root notes, we can begin to see the CAGED octave shapes and think about breaking the scale up into sections which are centred around the octave shapes.



We can see the D-shape octave in the open position, but the first shape that will be playable in its entirety is the C-shape between the 2nd and 5th frets.



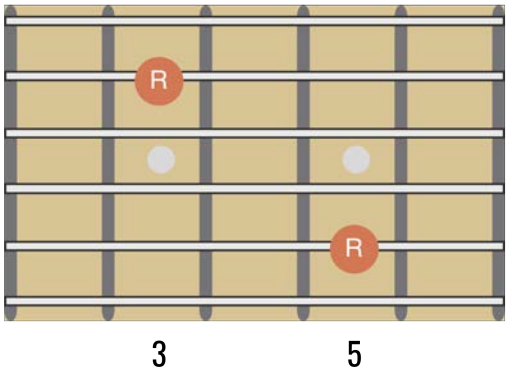
Just before we launch in, I just wanted to stress the importance of learning everything that follows in different positions on the fretboard.

For this reason, the following fretboards will be presented using the intervals rather than specific note pitches. In that way it makes the patterns easier to transpose to different Root notes and keys.

The intervals will remain the same, wherever we place the shapes/layers.

C-Shape

C-Shape Octave Shape

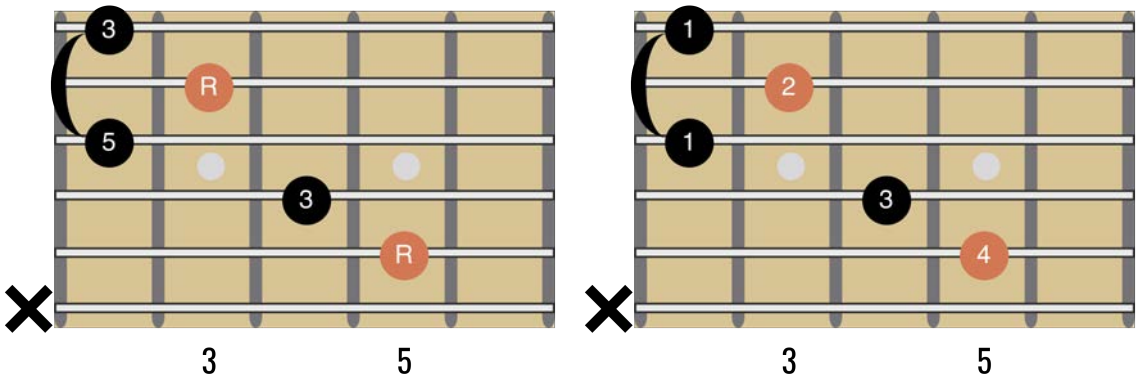


C-Shape octave

To review, *any* note found on String 5(A) can be played an octave higher by going back (towards the nut) two frets on string 2(B).

C-Shape Major Chord

Around the octave shape we can superimpose the shape of an open position C major chord:



C-Shape major barre chord intervals and fingering



When doing so there is a barre finger required to fret strings 1(E) and 3(G) which are open strings in the open position C major. Finger 2 will grab the Root note on string 2(B). Finger 3 will fret the major 3rd on string 4(D) and finger 4 will fret the Root note on string 5(A).

It is as if we are playing a C chord with a capo at the 2nd fret. The root note is now a D at the 5th fret of string 5(A) so this is a D major chord (but in the C-shape).

Remember, with a barre chord form, we are able to play any major (or minor) chord.

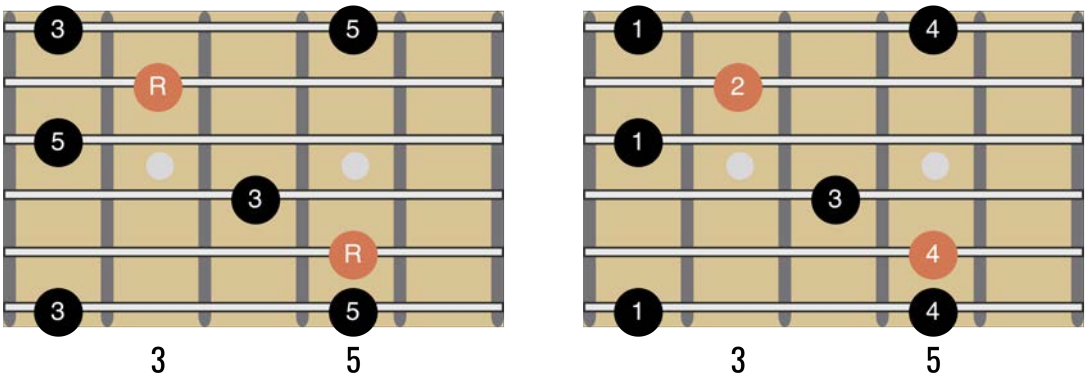
All 12 chromatic notes are found in the first 12 frets of each string.

Identify which string the Root note is found. Then you can move the entire shape onto a different Root note on the same string.

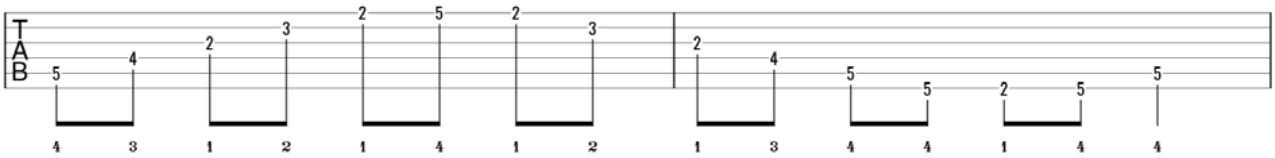
C-Shape Major Arpeggio

An **arpeggio** is playing through the notes of a chord melodically, i.e one note at a time rather than all at once (which would be playing the chord).

The C-shape chord is one of the easiest when it comes to playing arpeggios because the intervals of the chord (Root - major 3rd - perfect 5th) are found in order across the strings when we start from string 5(A).



C-Shape major arpeggio and recommended fingering



Playing the C-Shape major arpeggio from the Root

The arpeggio falls nicely inside a 4-fret radius and we can reach for the perfect 5th on string 1(E) at the 5th fret with finger 3 or 4.

Whilst the Root note is on string 5(A), the arpeggio can continue in the lower octave on string 6(E). Notice how the notes on string 6(E) will always be the same as string 1(E).

Seems obvious but often overlooked when learning patterns on the fretboard.

As suggested in the TAB above, as you play through the arpeggio I would recommend doing so from the Root note and play as high as you can within the shape before descending back to the Root note. If the shape extends below the Root note, play down to the lowest note before returning back to the Root note so your eyes, fingers and ears become more accustomed to where the Root note is.

Why are arpeggios important?

Arpeggios are notes of the chord played individually and, as such, they are the strongest tones to be highlighting when soloing.

As you begin improvising, these notes should be seen as destinations or targets for your soloing.

The notes are found within the chord, so inevitably they will sound good.

C-Shape Major Triads

One of the immediate benefits of the CAGED approach for rhythm playing is the ease at which we can visualise triad shapes.

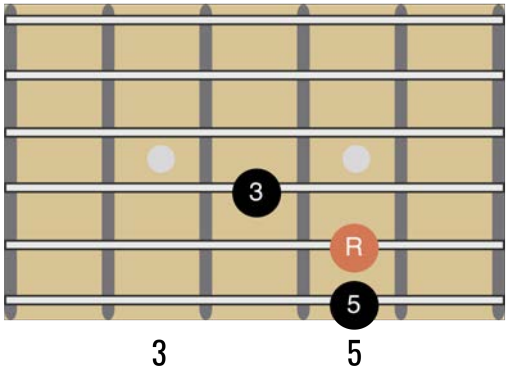
Barre chord forms can be awkward to fret and we might not want such a full sounding chord across 5 or 6 strings.

Triads are smaller chord forms that can instantly bring a fresh and clean sound to your rhythm playing.

The major triad consists of three (hence tri-) elements:

- The Root note (“R”, the note D),
- Major third above the Root (“3”, the note F♯)
- Perfect 5th above the Root (“5”, the note A).

There are four possible grips for these three notes across the 6 strings.

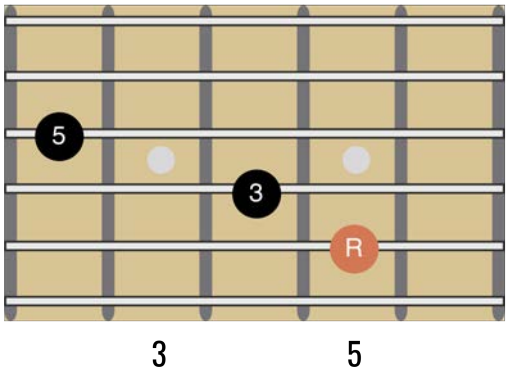


C-Shape major triad 1 of 4

With our Root note on String 5(A) this first shape has the 5th as the lowest note in what is called a 'second inversion' of the triad (or D/A - D chord over an A bass note).

These triad shapes are known as closed voicings in that the notes will appear in order (5-R-3, R-3-5, 3-5-R, 5-R-3) and are as close as they possible can be to one another within one octave.

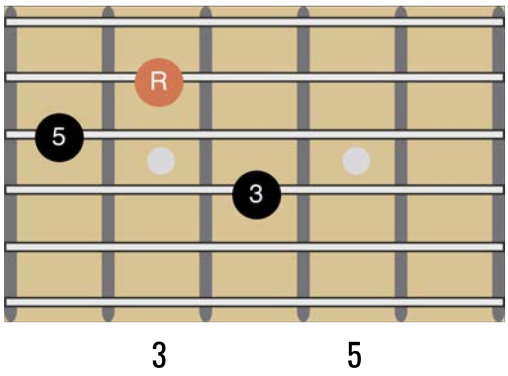
Raising the 5th an octave from string 6(E) to string 3(G) gives us a closed voicing of a Root position major triad (i.e. the Root is the lowest note played):



C-Shape major triad 2 of 4

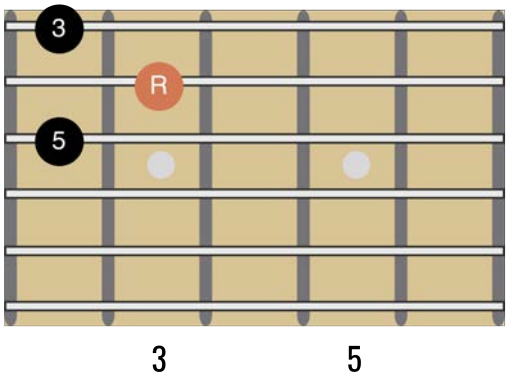
Remember to try and visualise the full chord shape as you play this to know where the other chord tones are.

Raising the Root an octave from String 5(A) to string 2(B) creates a great voicing of a 'first inversion' triad (D/F♯) in which the third of the chord is the lowest note played:



C-Shape major triad 3 of 4

Raising the 3rd an octave from String 4(D) to string 1(E) creates the much-loved D major chord, except that without playing the open string 4(D) this is a moveable second inversion major triad shape (D/A).



C-Shape major triad 4 of 4

To go deeper into triad shapes I would suggest checking out my video course, **TRIADS: Inside Out.**

C-Shape Major Pentatonic

This is where things get interesting.

Let's take it back to the major arpeggio pattern. We have three notes, the Root (R) major 3rd (3) and perfect 5th (5). Playing those three notes together gives us the sound of the major triad.

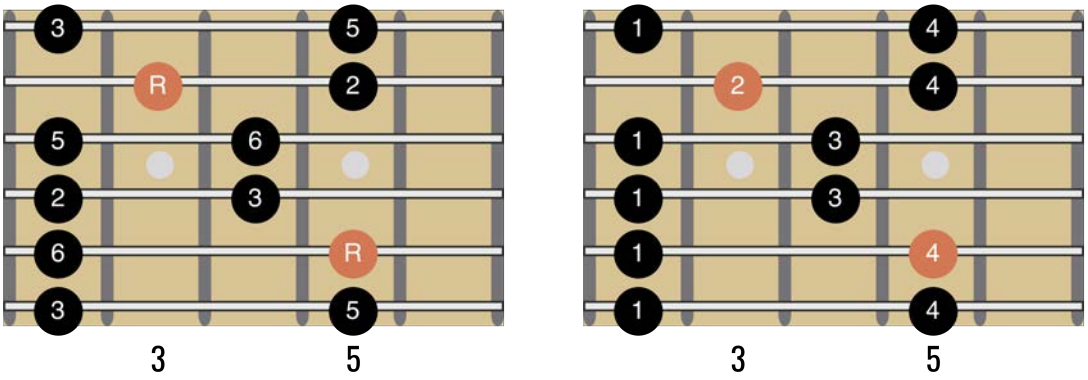
But, if we add an additional two notes we will have a total of five notes...'penta'-tonic.

Pentatonic scales are perhaps *the* most commonly used scale when it comes to riff-based rhythm playing and soloing in popular music.

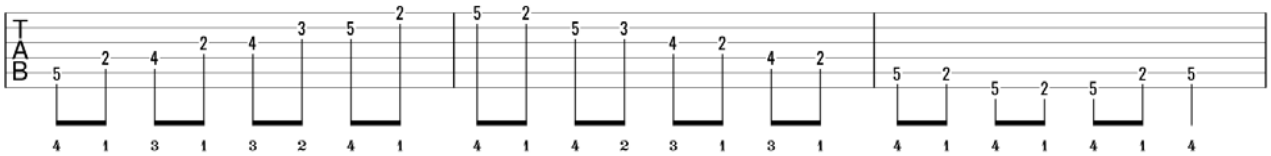
Adding the major 2nd and major 6th above the Root note will give the five notes of the major pentatonic:

The D Major Pentatonic Scale

Whole	Whole	Minor 3rd	Whole	Minor 3rd	
R	2	3	5	6	R
D	E	F♯	A	B	D



C-Shape major pentatonic scale intervals and recommended fingering



Playing the C-Shape major pentatonic scale from the Root

You may have seen this named "position 3" of the major pentatonic.

It is named as such because the lowest note in pitch found within the scale pattern is the 3rd note of the scale, the major 3rd (the F♯ in the 2nd fret of string 6(E)).

However, if you name it by the CAGED form (i.e. 'C-Shape major pentatonic') it relates it in your mind to the octave shape and all the other information that you've learnt around that - triads, arpeggio etc.

Like with the arpeggio pattern, my recommendation is to start and end upon the Root note (as per the TAB above with recommended fingerings).

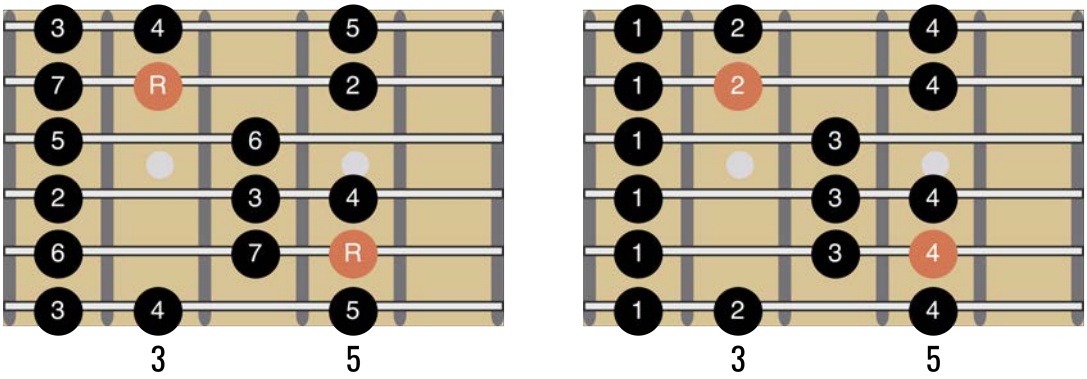
C-Shape Major Scale

From the five notes of the major pentatonic we add an additional two to give us a seven note diatonic scale (with each letter of the musical alphabet being present within one octave).

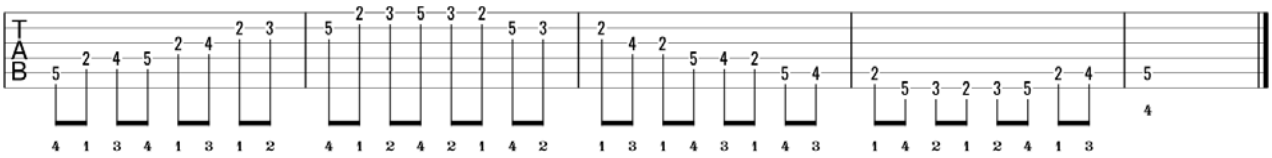
The two notes we add are the perfect 4th and major 7th to give us the sound of the major scale (also known as the ionian mode).

The D Major Scale (Ionian Mode)

	Whole		Whole		Half		Whole		Whole		Whole		Half	
R	-	2	-	3	-	4	-	5	-	6	-	7	-	R
D	-	E	-	F♯	-	G	-	A	-	B	-	C♯	-	D



C-Shape major scale intervals and recommended fingering



Playing the C-Shape major scale from the Root

Other Modes?

If you're further long in your study of scales, specifically modes, here's a little food for thought:

The other major modes (lydian, mixolydian) can be created from the major pentatonic in the exact same way.

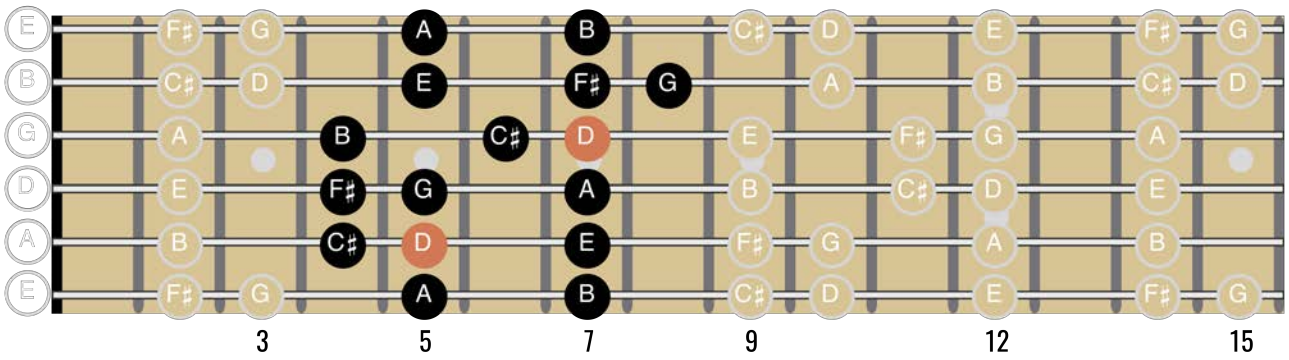
For the lydian mode we would add an augmented 4th (♯4) and major 7th (7).
For the mixolydian mode we add the perfect 4th (4) and minor 7th (♭7).

So you see how from visualising an octave shape we can progressively add intervals to memorise a whole lot!

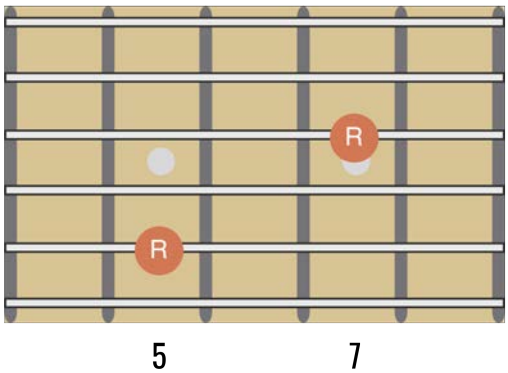
So what next? I would encourage you to move each shape around the neck as much as possible so you don't become reliant on visualising anything in one particular area of the fretboard.

Let's move on up to the next shape. After C will *always* come A...

A-Shape



A-Shape Octave Shape

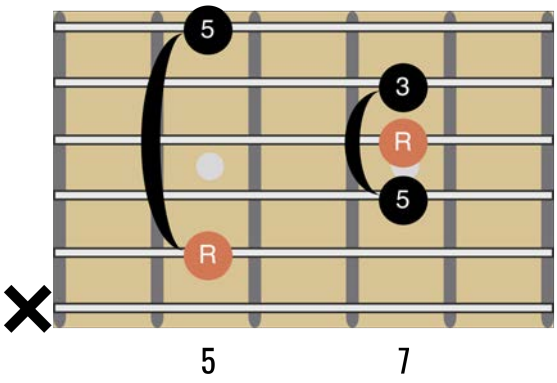


A-Shape octave

The octave of any note on string 5(A) can be found two frets higher (towards the body) on string 3(G). As with the C-Shape, this will be our starting point for the visualisation of chords, arpeggios, major pentatonic and 7-note diatonic scales.

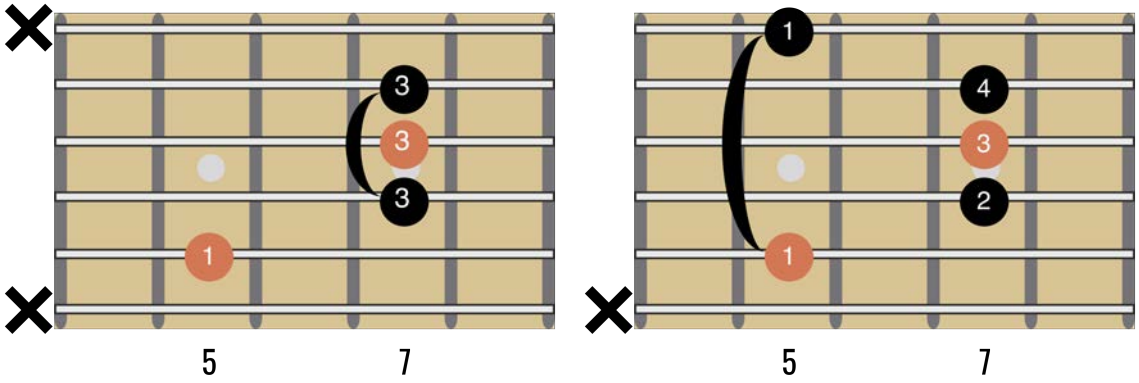
A-Shape Major Chord

Around the octave shape we can superimpose the shape of an open position A chord.



A-Shape Major barre chord intervals

For the full 'expression' of the chord you would use a barre finger to fret the 5th fret of strings 5(A) and 1(E). I often play with finger 3 across strings 4(D) to 2(B) which will mute string 1(E) (unless you have crazy back-bending fingers).



A-Shape Major chord fingering alternatives



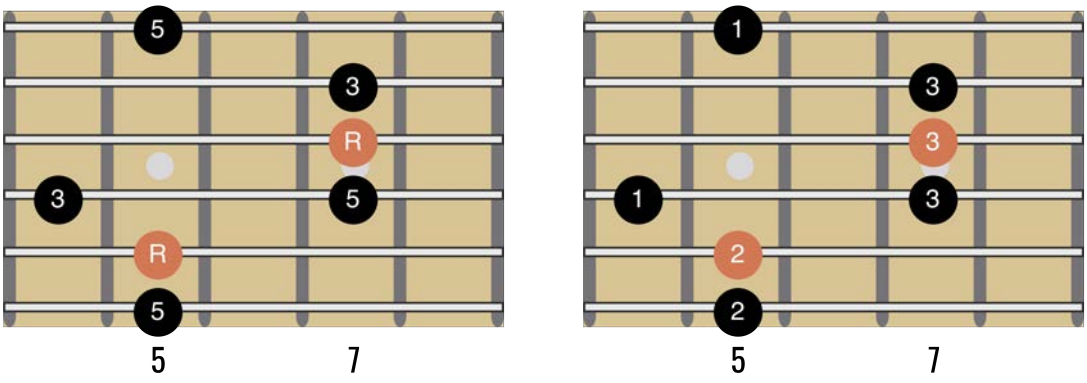


Another common alternative is to use fingers 2,3 and 4 to fret the notes in the 7th fret. That's OK when the chord is in the lower, wider frets, but a barre finger 3 becomes more useful as we climb higher up the neck.

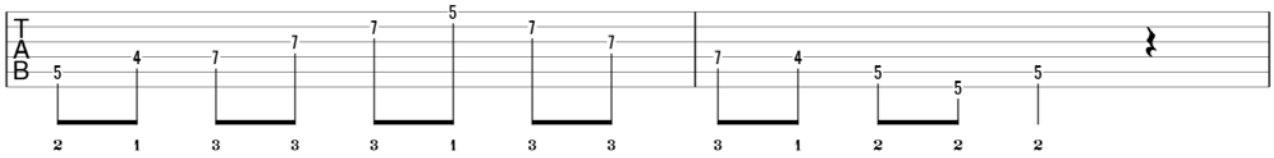
With both grips it is as if we are playing an A chord with a capo at the 5th fret. The root note is now a D at the 5th fret of string 5(A) so this is a D major chord (but in the A-shape).

A-Shape Major Arpeggio

The intervals of the major arpeggio (Root-major 3rd-perfect 5th = R-3-5) almost appear in order with the exception of the major 3rd between string 5(A) and 4(D).



A-Shape major arpeggio and recommended fingering



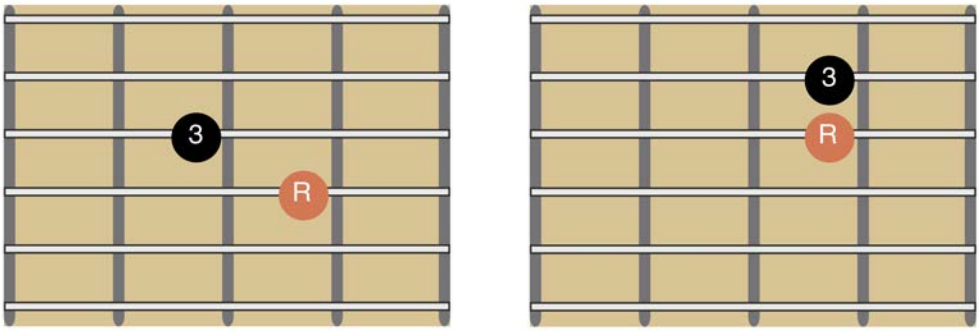
Playing the A-Shape major arpeggio from the Root

A major 3rd is found in the 4th fret of string 4(D) (a useful diagonal shape to memorise - see below).

To play the arpeggio in order you want to start with finger 2 on the Root, using finger 1 on the 3rd and then I like to finger roll across the 7th fret with finger 3, and then play the 5 on string 1(E) with finger 1. You will also be using a finger roll with finger 2 across strings 5(A) and 6(E).

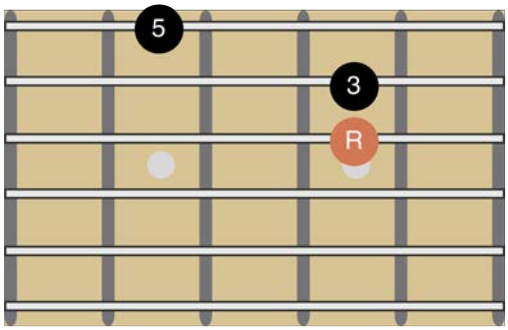
Interval Insight: The Major 3rd

The major 3rd above any Root note will always be one fret lower on the string below (towards the floor), except between strings 3(G) and 2(B), for which the major 3rd is in the same fret.:



A-Shape Major Triads

Taking the arpeggio notes as a guide there are two common closed voicing major triads within the A-shape:



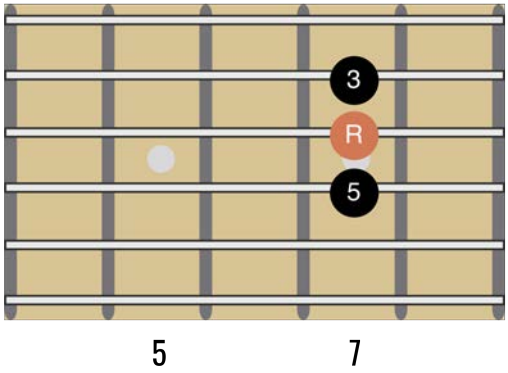
5 7

A-Shape major triad 1 of 2

We find a root position major triad across strings 3(G)-1(E).

Remember that a root position triad is when we have the Root note as the lowest sounding note (lowest in pitch, not physically on the fretboard).

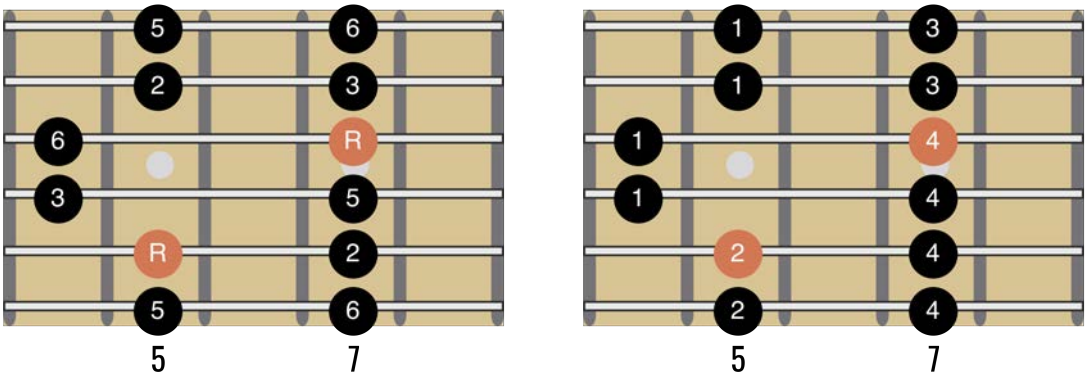
Lowering the 5th an octave from string 1(E) to string 4(D) gives us a closed voicing of a second inversion major triad (i.e. the 5th is the lowest note played):



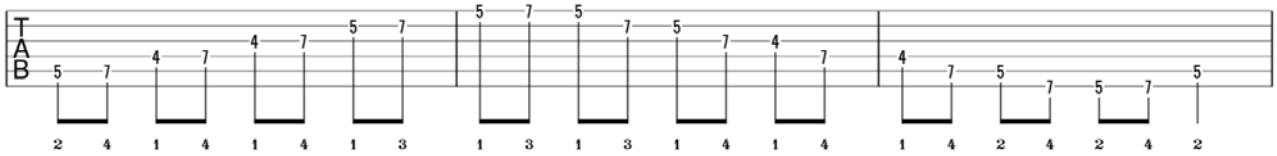
A-Shape major triad 2 of 2

A-Shape Major Pentatonic

Once again, using the major arpeggio as our starting point, we can add the major 2nd and major 6th for the five notes of the major pentatonic scale.



A-Shape major pentatonic scale intervals and recommended fingering



Playing the A-Shape major pentatonic scale from the Root

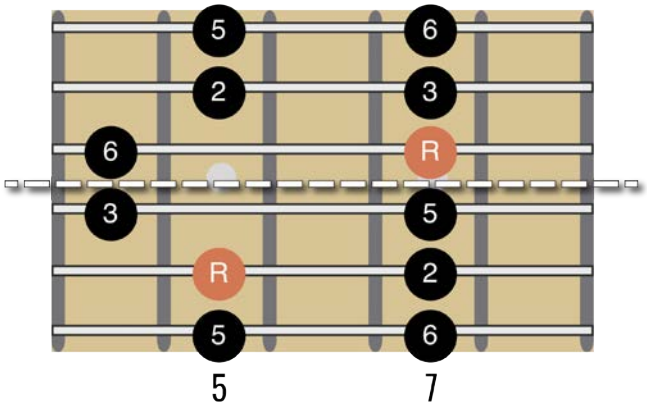
You may have seen this named "position 4" of the major pentatonic. It is named as such because the lowest note in pitch found within the scale pattern is the 4th note of the scale, the perfect 5th.

You may also see this referred to as "Root 5"/"Root 5th" major pentatonic. I don't like that term though because, as we've already seen, there are two different pentatonic patterns that are rooted upon string 5(A).

Once again, as you learn the pattern you should start and end upon the Root note. This particular pattern requires a position shift for the thin strings. The hand begins in the fourth position but as you

move to string 2(B) the hand will move into the fifth position, with finger 1 fretting notes in the 5th fret. Be careful with the position shifting as you play up and down the scale.

As a potential aid in your visualisation, the A-shape major. pentatonic is the only pentatonic pattern which is symmetrical.

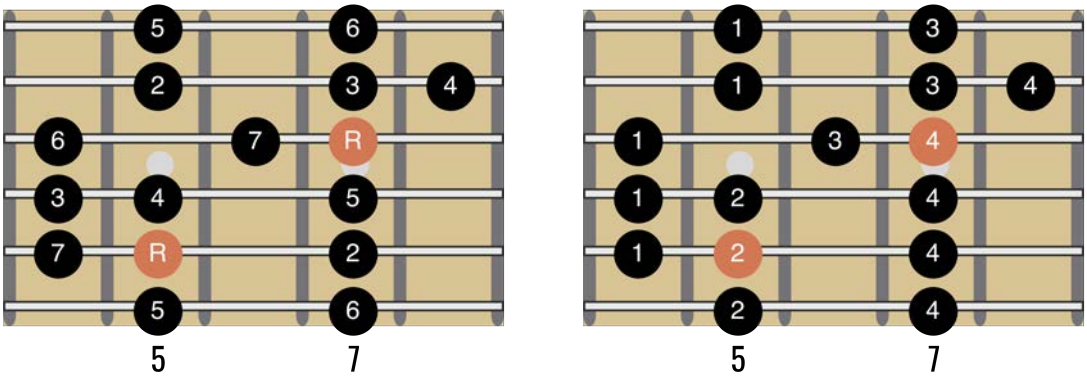


A-Shape major pentatonic scale symmetry

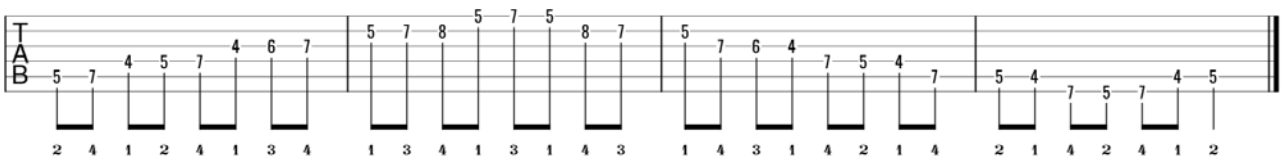
If we imagine a horizontal line between strings 4(D) and 3(G), the scale pattern is a mirror image. That might help you.

A-Shape Major Scale

The final layer is adding the 4th and 7th scale degrees to the major pentatonic to form the 7-note major scale pattern:



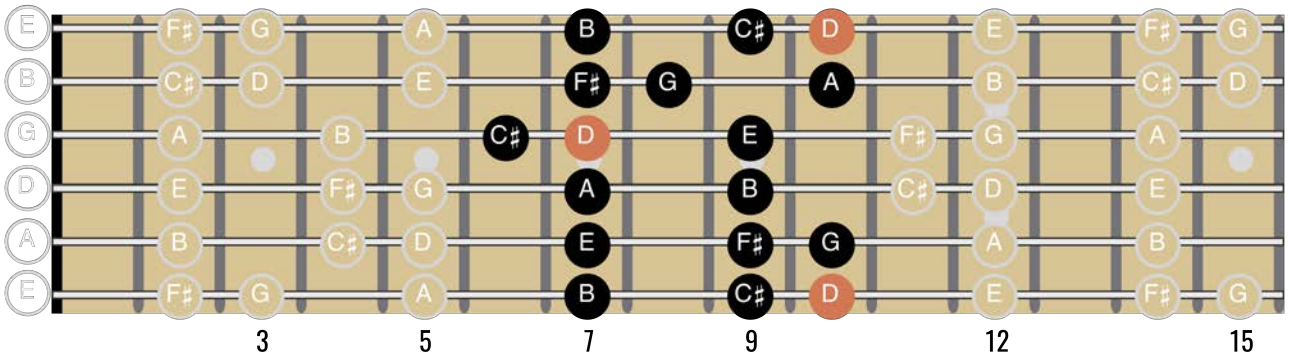
A-Shape major scale intervals and recommended fingering



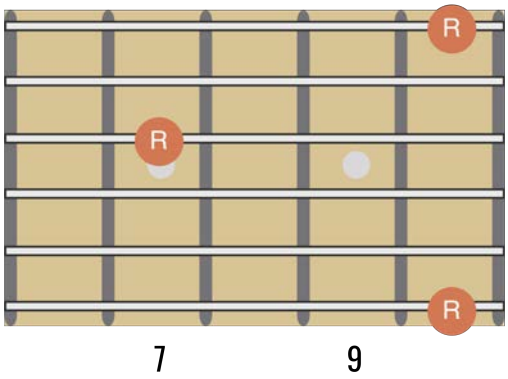
Playing the A-Shape major scale from the Root

As with the pentatonic scale, there is a position shift of the fretting hand on strings 2(B) and 1(E). This scale pattern takes us a little higher in pitch that the C-shape pattern, up to the major 6th scale degree.

G-Shape



G-Shape Octave Shapes



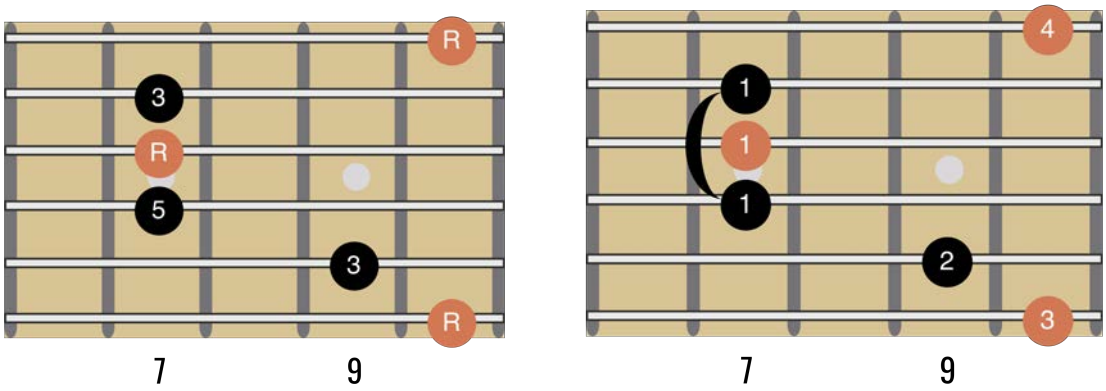
G-Shape octaves

The first octave shape is found between strings 6(E) and 3(G). The octave of any note on string 6(E) is found three frets lower on string 3(G).

The second octave shape is found between strings 3(G) and 1(E). The octave of any note on string 3(G) is found three frets higher on string 1(E).

Any note on string 6(E) can be found two octaves higher in the same fret on string 1(E).

G-Shape Major Chord

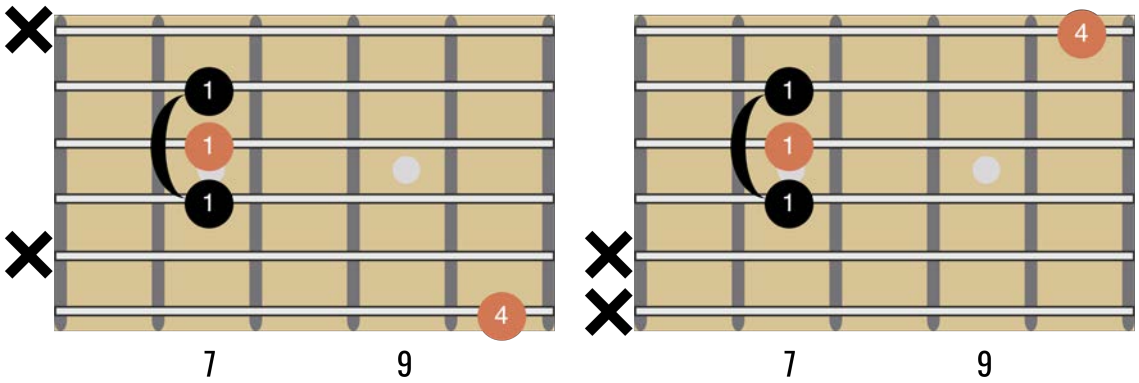


G-Shape major barre chord intervals and possible fingering



With the octave shapes as the visual reference, we can form a major chord that resembles an open 'folk' G major chord.

A challenge for the fretting hand to play the full grip, here are a couple of variations that you might like to use:



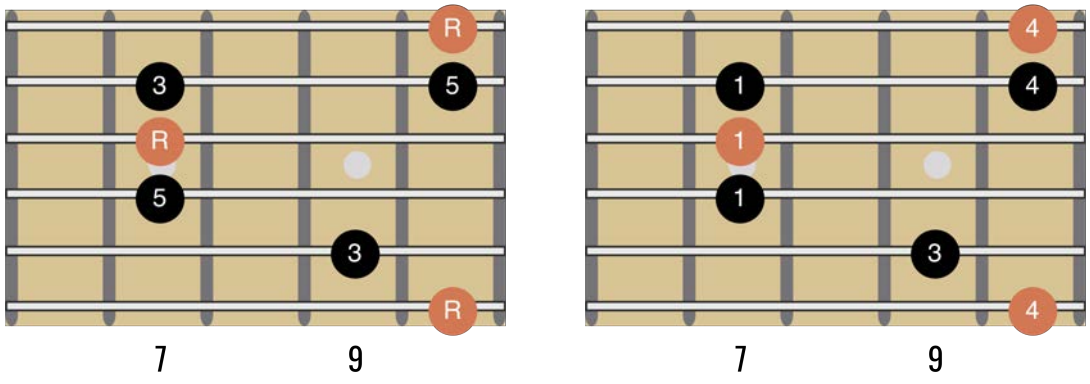
G-Shape major barre chord fingering variations



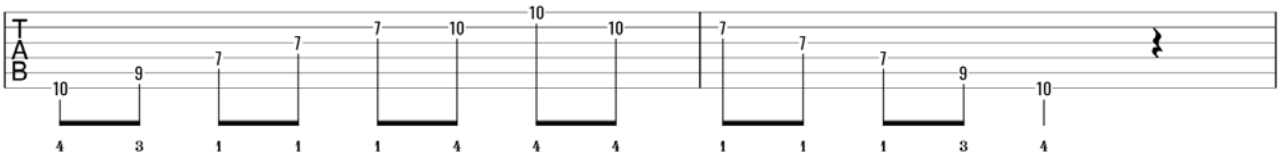


The key thing here is to be visualising the chord shape to inform the other triads and scales that follow.

G-Shape Major Arpeggio



G-Shape major arpeggio and recommended fingering

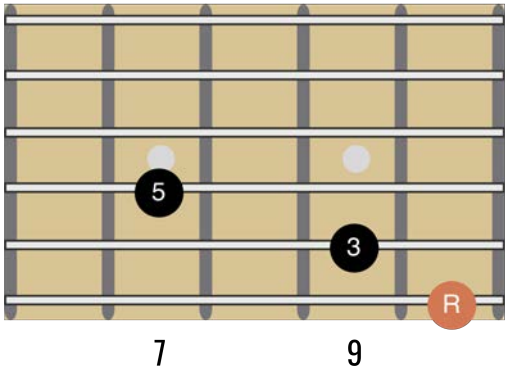


Playing the G-Shape major arpeggio from the Root

The G-shape barre chord is almost a full arpeggio. All that's missing is the perfect 5th in the second octave found 3 frets above the major 3rd on string 2(B).

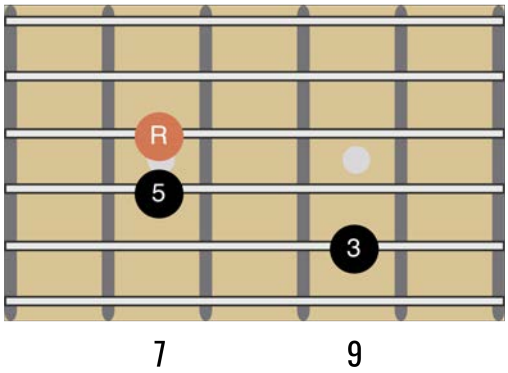
G-Shape Major Triads

From the major arpeggio we can easily visualise and play three different triad shapes. Here is the first. This is a root position major triad. Maybe not used so much in rhythm playing, but it's important to know it's there:



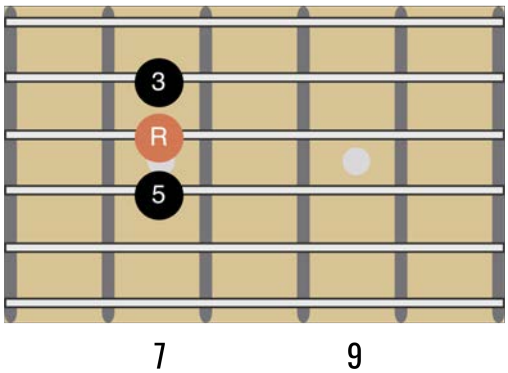
G-Shape Major Triad 1 of 3

Raising the Root note an octave with the 6-3 octave shape gives a first inversion major triad:



G-Shape Major Triad 2 of 3

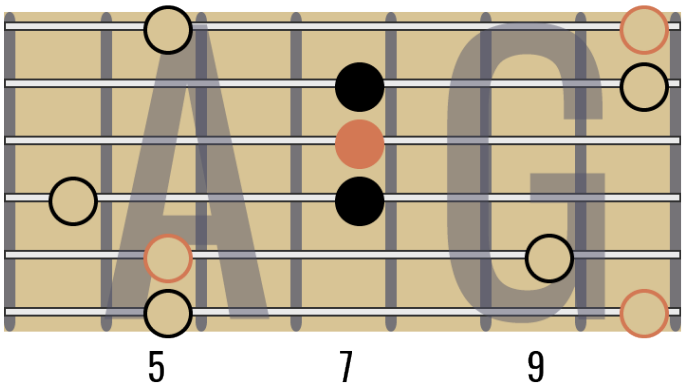
Raising the major 3rd an octave with the 5-2 octave shape Root note an octave gives a second inversion major triad:



G-Shape Major Triad 3 of 3

This triad shape can be thought upon as coming from either the A-Shape or the G-Shape.

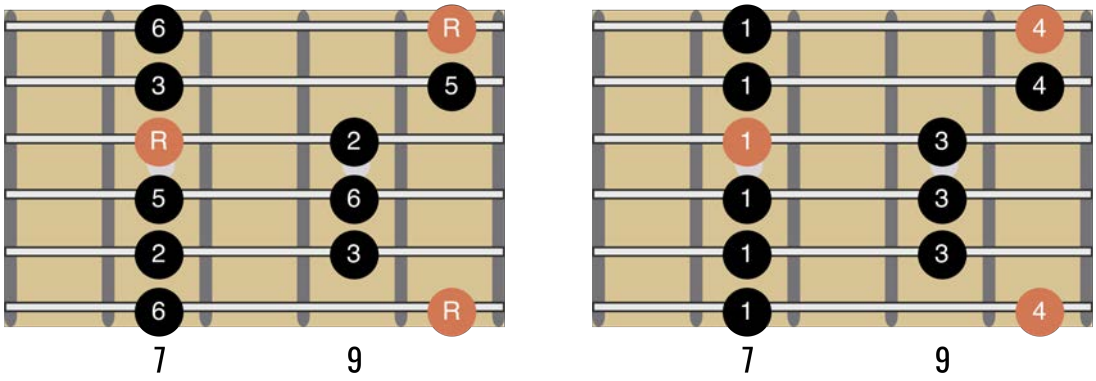
Either way, it serves as a good visual aid to link the two forms together:



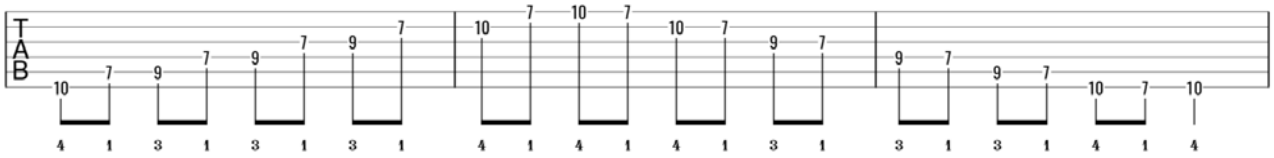
Using the triad form as a visual link between the two forms

G-Shape Major Pentatonic

As before, using the major arpeggio as our starting point, we can add the major 2nd and major 6th for the five notes of the major pentatonic scale.



G-Shape major pentatonic scale intervals and recommended fingering



Playing the G-Shape major pentatonic scale from the Root

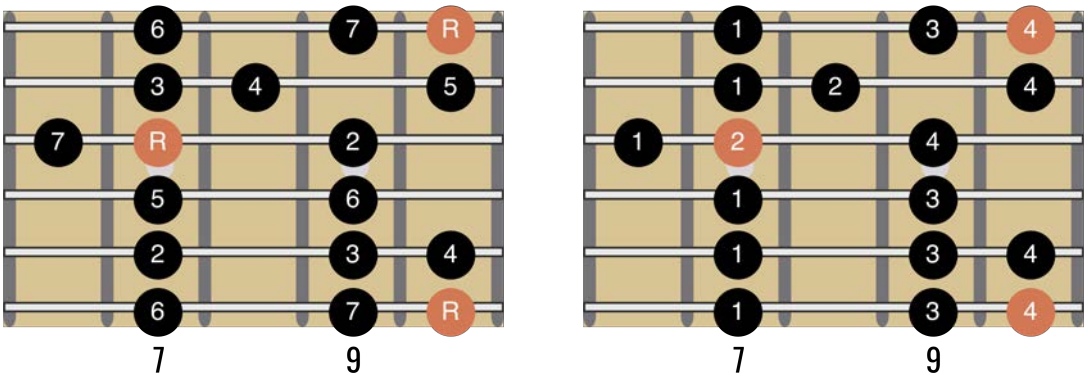
You may have seen this named "position 5" of the major pentatonic. It is named as such because the lowest note in pitch found within the scale pattern is the 5th note of the scale, the major 6th.

Often dismissed as that one scale pattern that everyone learns, the position 1 minor pentatonic 'box' is actually also a major pentatonic pattern in the G-Shape.

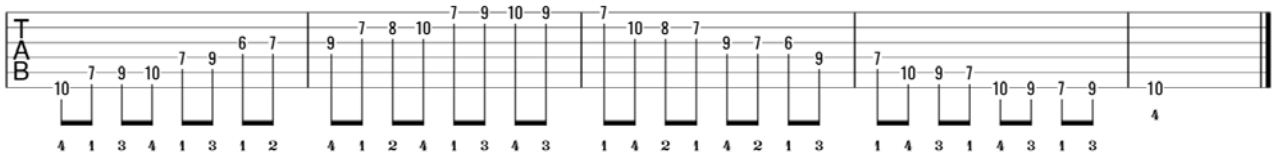
We just need to shift the emphasis onto the notes of the major arpeggio and you have a great pattern for your lead playing.

G-Shape Major Scale

The final stage of our CAGED visualisation is the 7-note diatonic scale.



G-Shape major scale intervals and recommended fingering

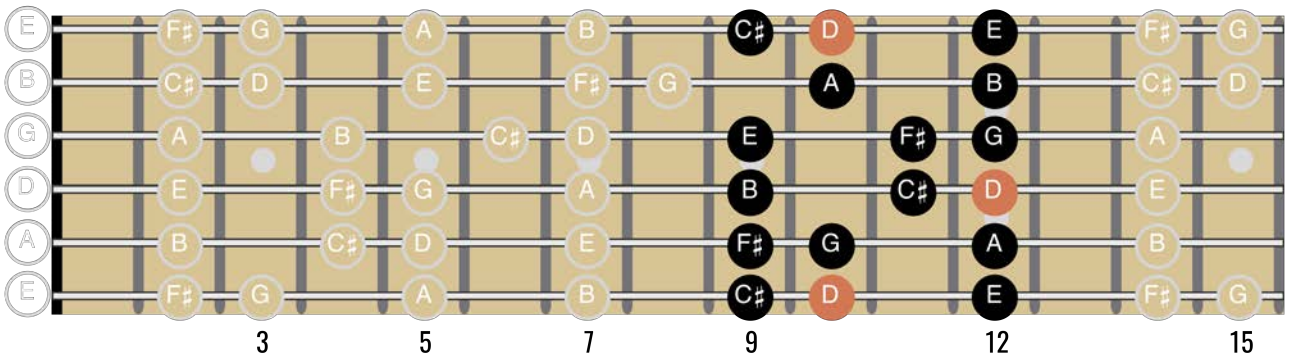


Playing the G-Shape major scale from the Root

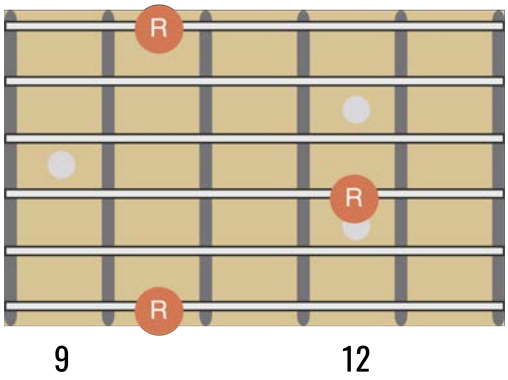
Using the scale pattern requires another position shift. The major 7th in the first octave falls behind the major pentatonic pattern, so the hand shifts back a position as you fret the notes on string 3(G) with fingers 1, 2 and 4.

Spend a little time with that position shift as you ascend and descend the scale pattern.

E-Shape



E-Shape Octave Shapes

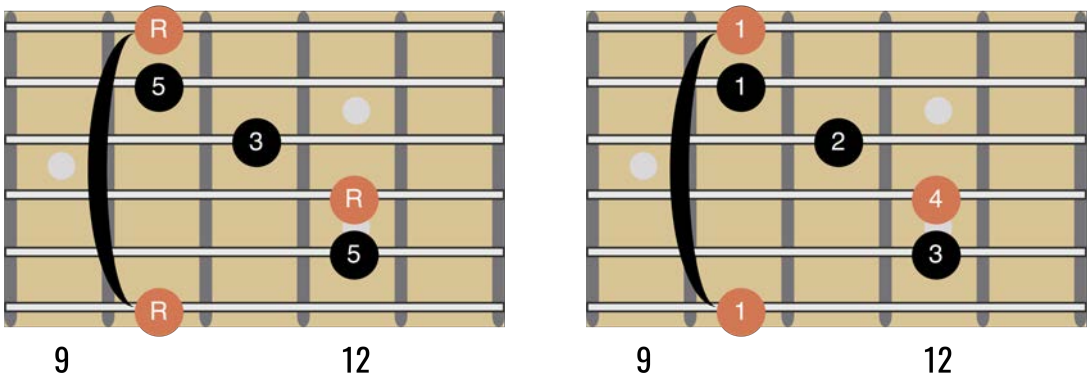


E-Shape octaves

To review, the octave of *any* note found on string 6(E) is found two frets higher (towards the body) on string 4(D).

The octave of *that* note on string 4(D) can be found two frets lower on string 1(E).

E-Shape Major Chord



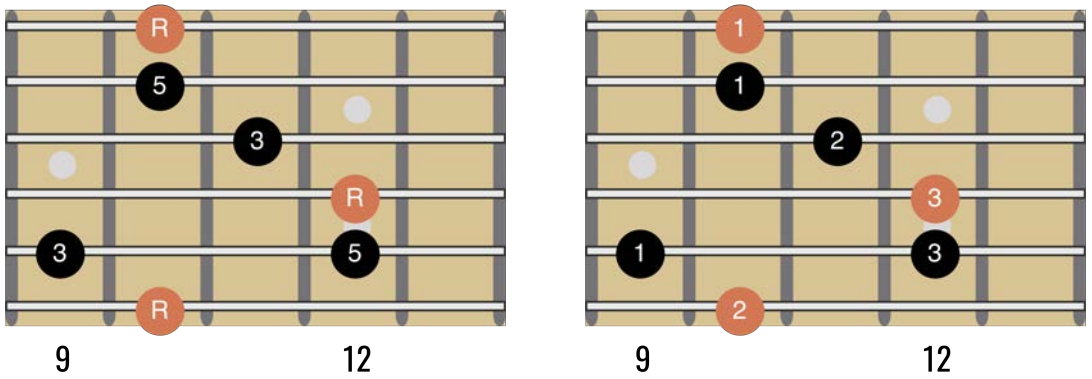
E-Shape major barre chord intervals and fingering



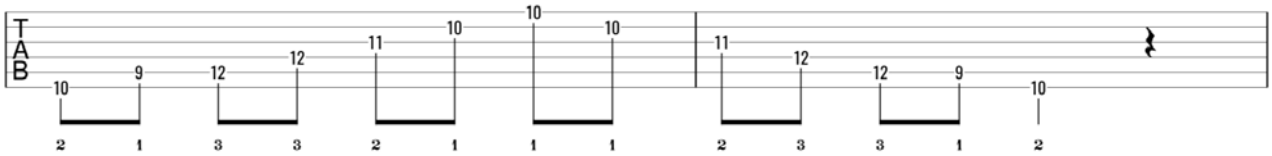
With the octave shapes as the visual reference, we can form a major chord that resembles an open E major chord (with the barre finger 1 acting as the capo).

The E-shape major barre is formed by playing an open E chord with fingers 2, 3 and 4. The index finger (1) is then free to act as a capo and can be placed upon any Root note on string 6(E).

E-Shape Major Arpeggio



E-Shape major arpeggio and recommended fingering



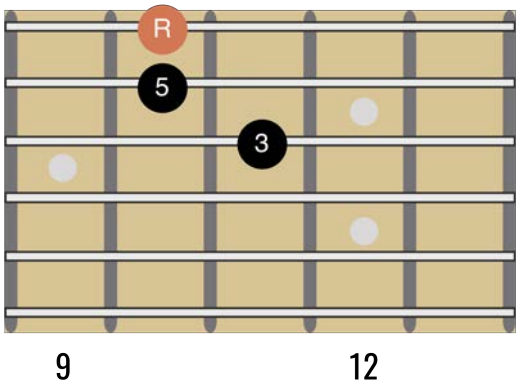
Playing the E-Shape Major Arpeggio from the Root

If we add a major 3rd above the Root at the 9th fret of string 5(A), we have all the notes in order of a two octave major arpeggio (R-3-5).

My preferred fingering here is to reach for the 5th in the first octave with finger 3 and then roll onto the octave Root on string 4(D). You'll also roll with finger 1 on strings 2(B) and 1(E)

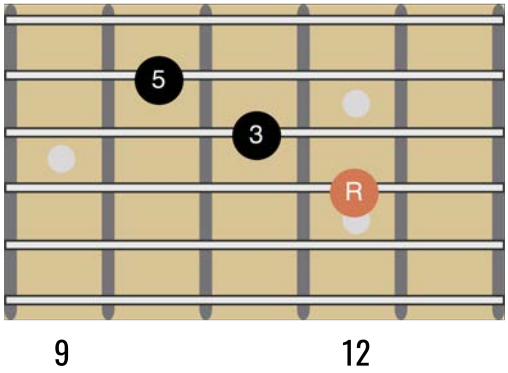
E-Shape Major Triads

The first shape is a first inversion major triad with the major 3rd being the lowest note (in pitch):



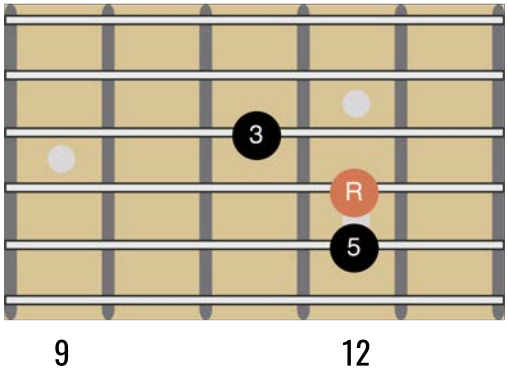
E-Shape major Triad 1 of 3

If we lower the Root note from string 1(E) onto string 4(D) with the 4-1 octave shape, we have a Root position major triad across strings 4(D), 3(G) and 2(B):



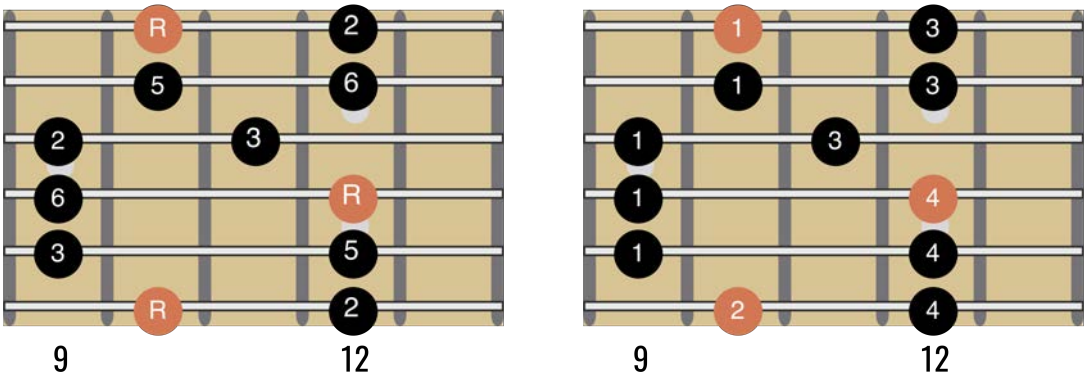
E-Shape major triad 2 of 3

Lowering the 5th onto string 5(A) with a 5-2 octave shape gives us the third chord within the E-Shape, a second inversion major triad.

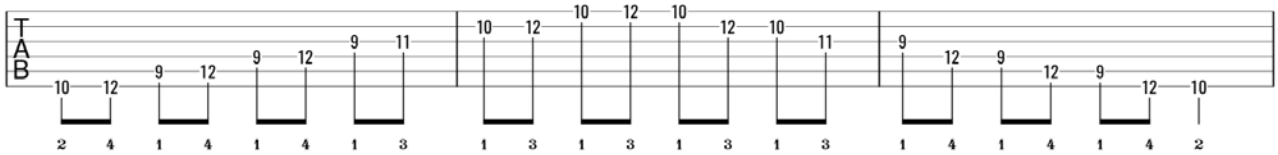


E-Shape major triad 3 of 3

E-Shape Major Pentatonic



E-Shape major pentatonic scale intervals and recommended fingering

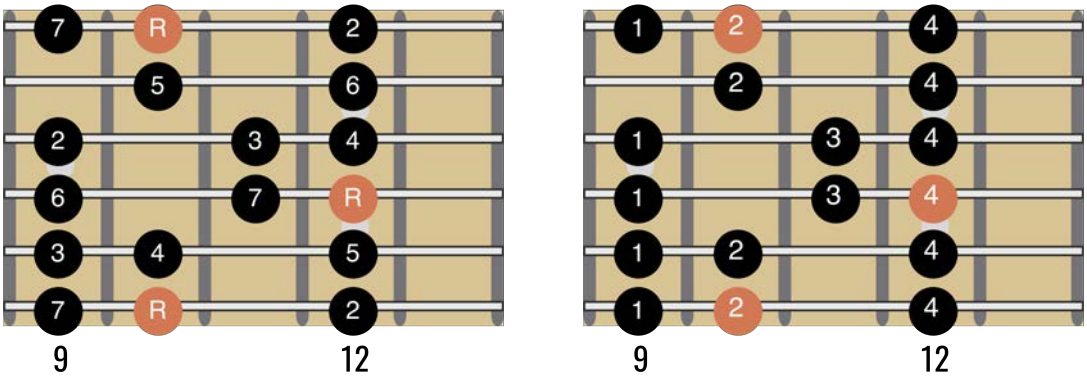


Playing the E-Shape major pentatonic scale

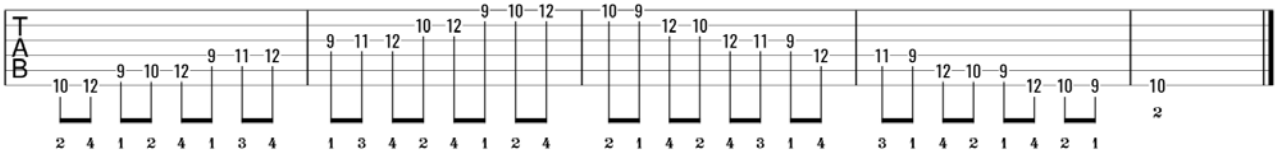
This is the box pattern for the major pentatonic that is often introduced first as it starts upon the Root note. For that reason, you may have seen this named "position 1" of the major pentatonic, or maybe "Root 6"/"Root 6th".

Look out for position shift on strings 2(B) and 1(E). You could stay strictly in the same position and use fingers 2 and 4 for these notes. I often find myself bending the major 2nd on string 1(E) into the 3rd so I'll always opt for a 1-3 fingering.

E-Shape Major Scale



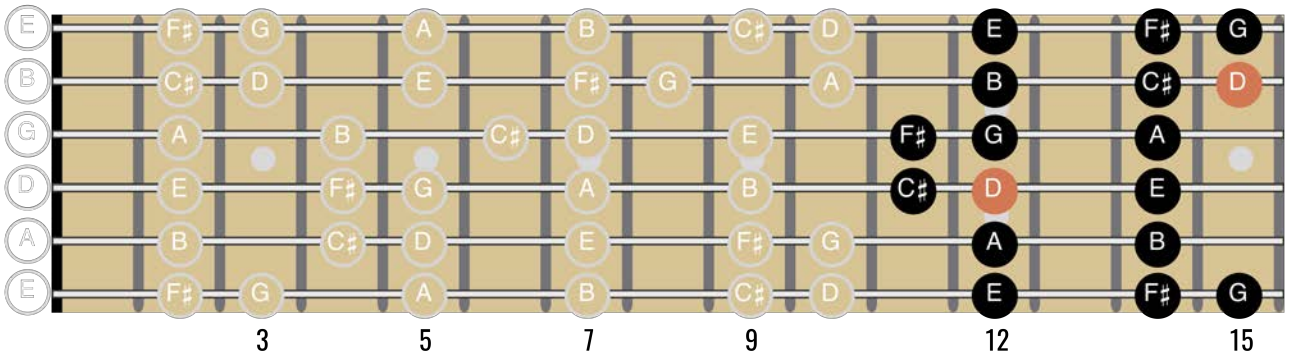
E-Shape Major Scale Intervals and recommended fingering



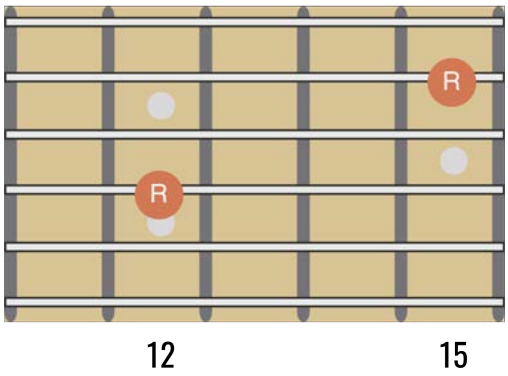
Playing the E-Shape Major Scale from the Root

Unlike the major pentatonic pattern, the major scale finds the fretting hand firmly in the same position. In the example of the D major scale, the fretting hand can stay within the ninth position.

D-Shape



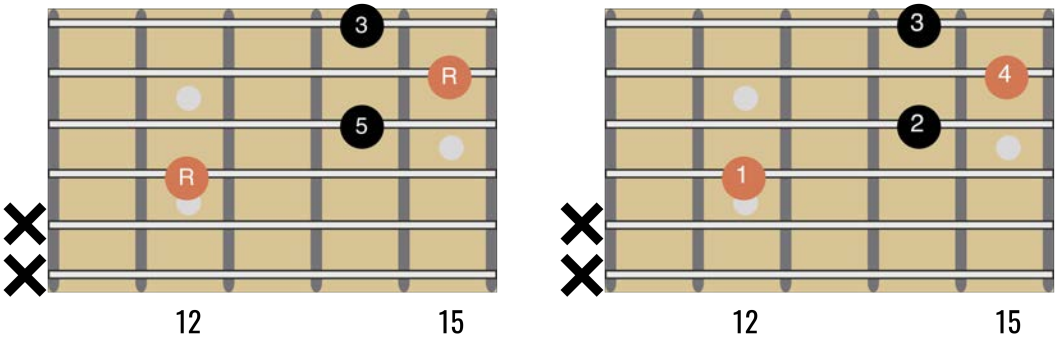
D-Shape Octave Shape



D-Shape octave

The octave of any note on string 4(D) is found three frets higher on string 2(B).

D-Shape Major Chord



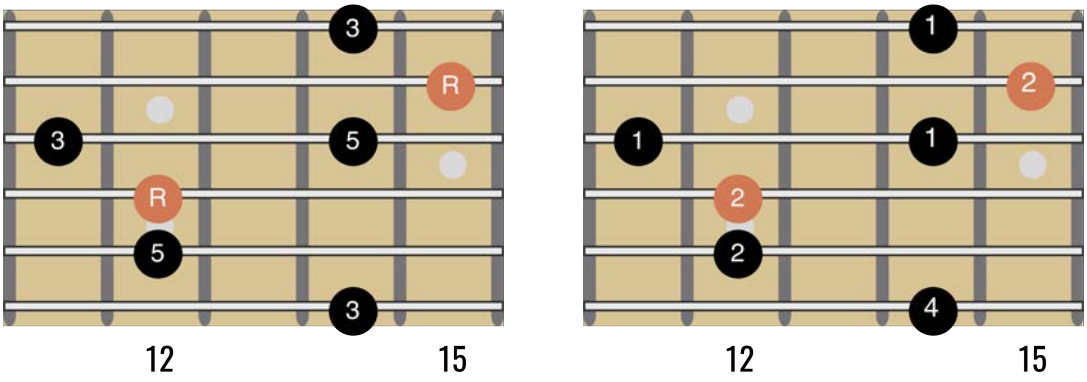
D-Shape major barre chord intervals and possible fingering



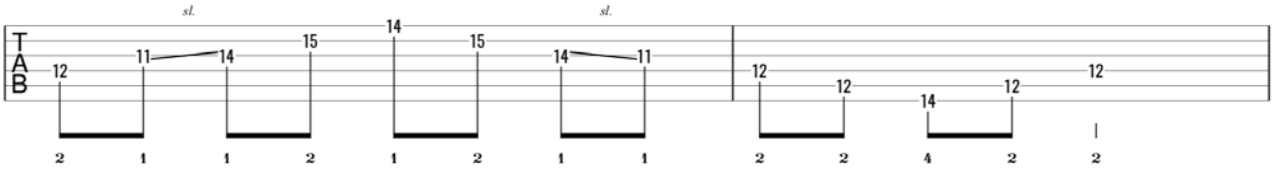
We can form a major chord that resembles an open D major chord.

With finger 1 acting as the capo it can also fret string 5(A) in the same fret as the Root note.

D-Shape Major Arpeggio



D-Shape major arpeggio and recommended fingering



Playing the D-Shape Major Arpeggio from the Root

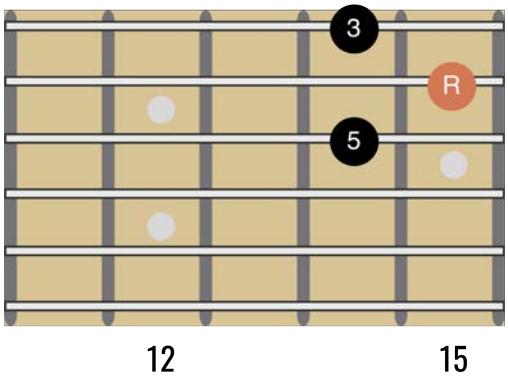
If we add a major 3rd at the 11th fret of string 3(G), we have all the notes in order of the major arpeggio (R-3-5).

You can continue the arpeggio down below the tonic on the bass strings.

As seen in the tab, if you practise this arpeggio up and down I would recommend a position shift. After fretting the 3rd on string 3(G), finger 1 can slide up 3 frets to the 5th interval and then fingers 1 and 2 fret the higher strings.

D-Shape Major Triads

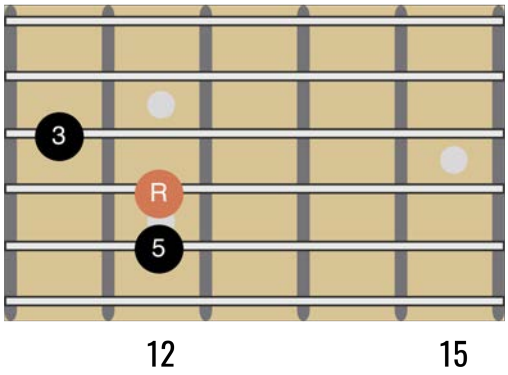
The familiar D-shape chord is a closed voicing major triad in a second inversion:



D-Shape major triad 1 of 3

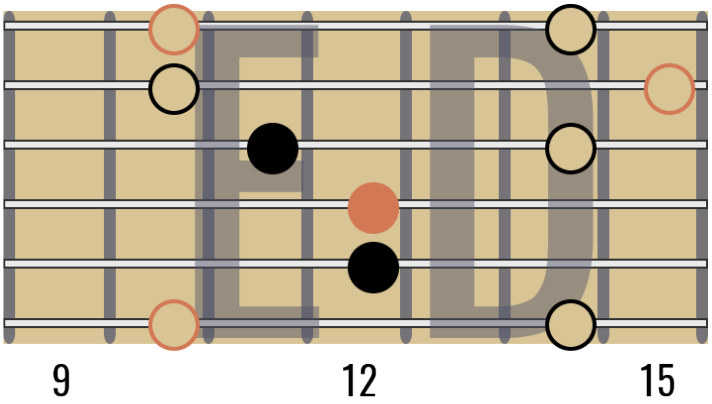
Due to the arrangement of the intervals, there is no triad shape on string set 2 (strings 2/3/4). The arrangement of notes (R-5-R) would give a D5 chord ("*D power chord*").

We can lower each of the intervals down an octave for the second triad within the D-shape.



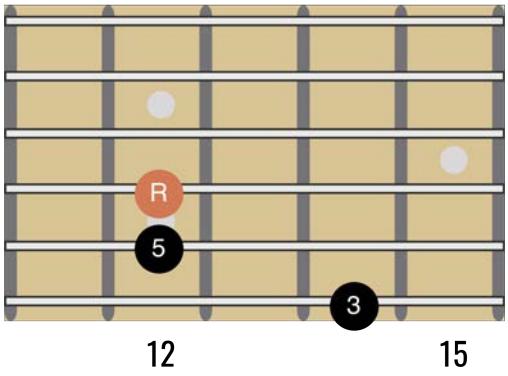
D-Shape major triad 2 of 3

This triad shape can be thought upon as coming from either the E-Shape or the D-Shape. Again, it serves as a good visual aid to link the two forms together.



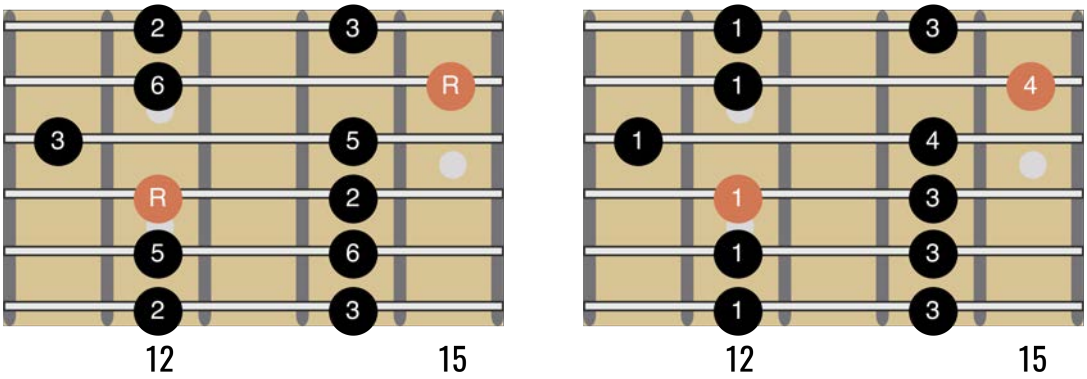
Using the triad form as a visual link between the two forms

Lowering the 3rd interval with the 6-3 octave shape gives us the third major triad in a first inversion.

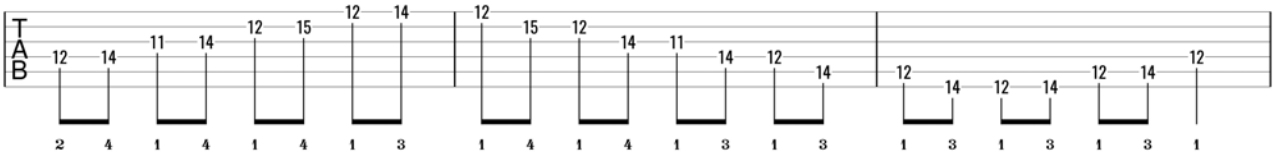


D-Shape major triad 3 of 3

D-Shape Major Pentatonic



D-Shape major pentatonic scale intervals and recommended fingering

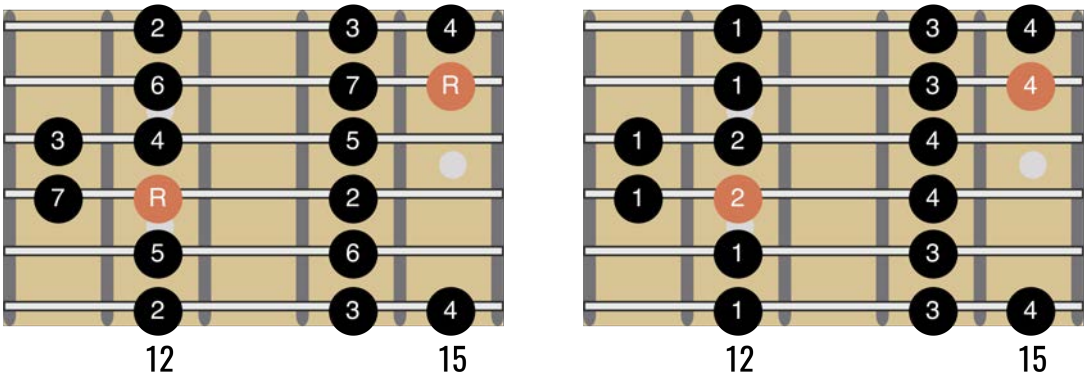


Playing the D-Shape major pentatonic scale from the Root

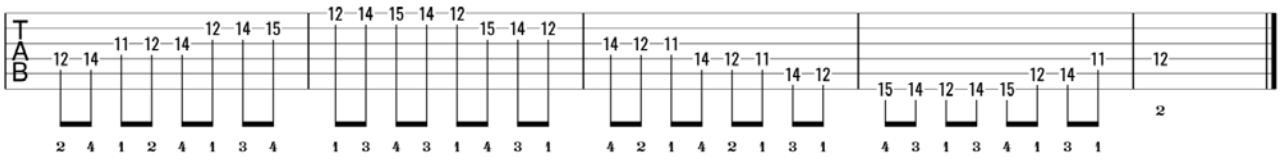
You may have seen this named “position 2” of the major pentatonic (as it starts upon the second note of the pentatonic scale), or maybe “Root 4”/“Root 4th”.

The fretting hand is predominantly in the 12th position, except on string 3(G) when it needs to drop back one fret as you fret the 3rd and 5th intervals with fingers 1 and 4. Depending on your reach you could play fingers 1 and 3 on strings 3(G) and 2(B).

D-Shape Major Scale



D-Shape major scale intervals and recommended fingering



Playing the D-Shape major scale from the Root

For this scale pattern, there is some position shifting again to look out for. As you start on the Root note, make sure you do so with finger 2.

As you move onto string 2(B) you move the fretting hand up one fret into the twelfth position.

Be careful too as you descend. You shift back on string 3(G) into the eleventh position but move back up one fret as you move onto string 5(A) to allow you to fret the 4th interval on string 6(E) at the 15th fret.

Summary

Phew! That's a lot to learn but, just like everything else, with a little focused practice this will all start coming together.

There are ideas on how best to practise learning this stuff on page 88-95.

As the table below summarises, the notes of the major chord (**R-3-5**) are present in both the 5-note major pentatonic and the 7-note major scale.

MAJOR							
Major Chord/Triad/Arpeggio	**R**		**3**		**5**		
Major Pentatonic	**R**	**2**	**3**		**5**	**6**	
Major Scale (Ionian Mode)	**R**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**

Therein lays the value of the CAGED approach. We can glean *so* much in one position of the neck from just one octave/chord shape.

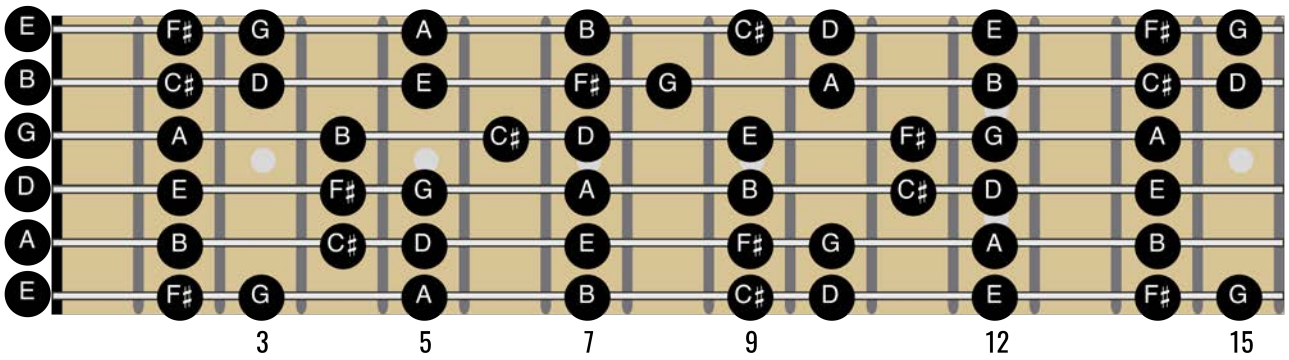
Exploring the Minor Shapes

Our approach for the minor shapes will be the same as the major shapes as, again, we can build upon the octave shape layer by layer.

The notes of a minor triad (**R-♭3-5**). are present in both the minor pentatonic and the 7-note minor scale.

MINOR							
Minor Chord/Triad/Arpeggio	**R**		**♭ 3**		**5**		
Minor Pentatonic	**R**		**♭ 3**	**4**	**5**		**♭ 7**
Natural Minor Scale	**R**	**2**	**♭ 3**	**4**	**5**	**♭ 6**	**♭ 7**

For our minor patterns, we are going to use the example of the B natural minor scale (also known as the B aeolian mode).

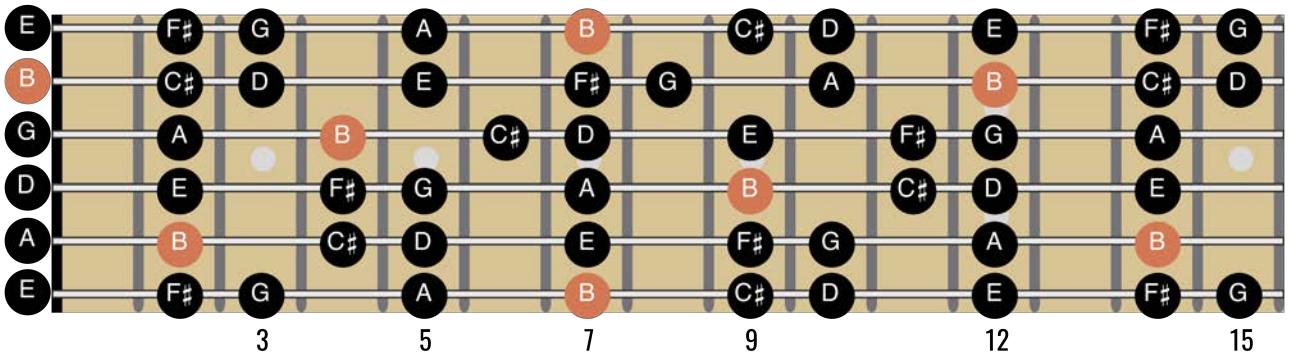


You may have noticed that B natural minor shares the same notes as D major.

The B Natural Minor Scale

Whole	Half	Whole	Whole	Half	Whole	Whole
R - 2	- ♭3	- 4	- 5	- ♭6	- ♭7	- 8
B - C♯	- D	- E	- F♯	- G	- A	- B

They are known as **relative keys**. They share exactly the same notes, but the intervals are different because we consider B the Root note and not D.



B Natural Minor

You should be very familiar with the octave shapes now, so we shall not repeat that again here. We'll jump straight into the minor barre chord grips to begin the different layers.

The shape nearest the nut that does not require any open strings will be the A-shape.

Relative Keys and CAGED

You may be familiar with the relative minor being formed upon the 6th major scale degree.

For example, A minor is the relative minor of C major (CDEFG*A*BC).

We might expect that to work with the CAGED shapes.

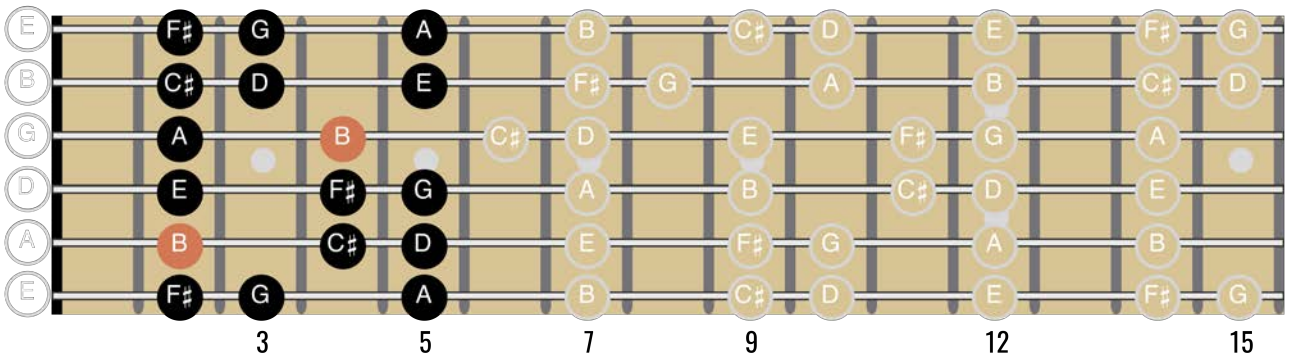
The C-shape does happen to share the same notes as the Am-Shape.

But...for the most part this relativity does not work with the CAGED shapes.

C-Shape	=	Am-Shape
A-Shape	=	Gm-Shape
G-Shape	=	Em-Shape
E-Shape	=	Dm-Shape
D-Shape	=	Cm-Shape

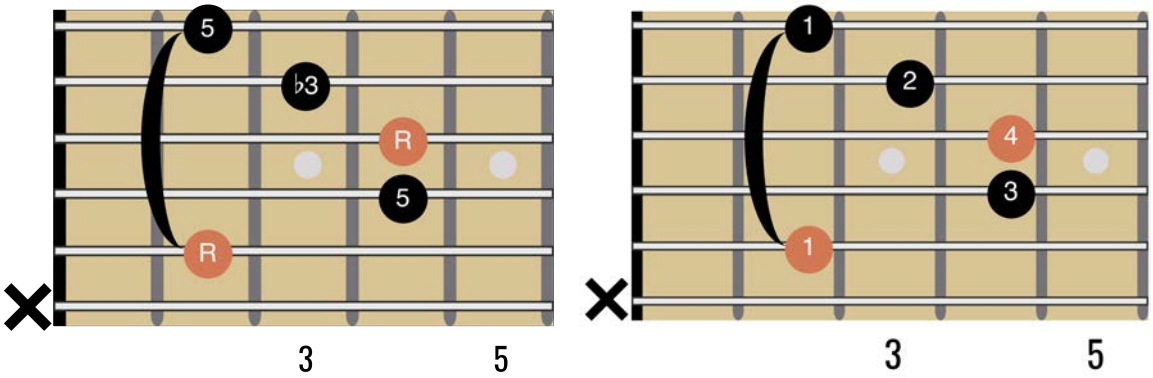
This will become clearer as we explore the minor shapes.

Am-Shape



Am-Shape Chord

Around the 5-3 octave shape we can superimpose the shape of an open position A minor chord.



Am-Shape barre chord intervals and fingering

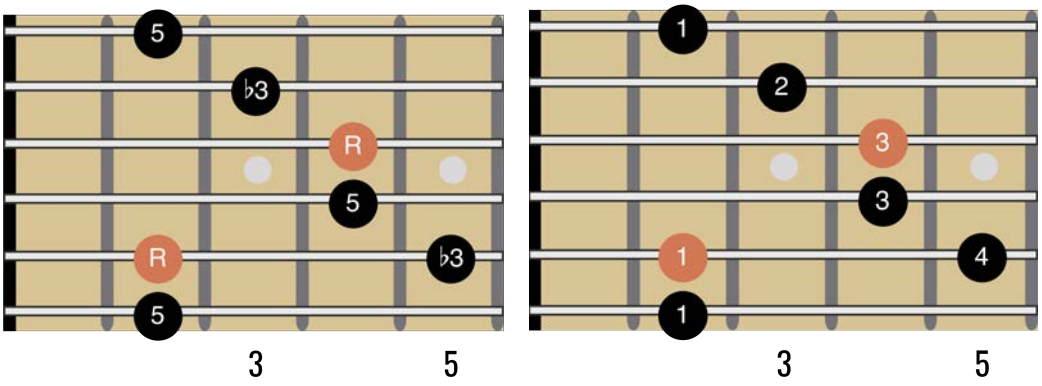


The pad of the barre finger 1 is placed on string 5(A) and will fret both string 5(A) and string 1(E).

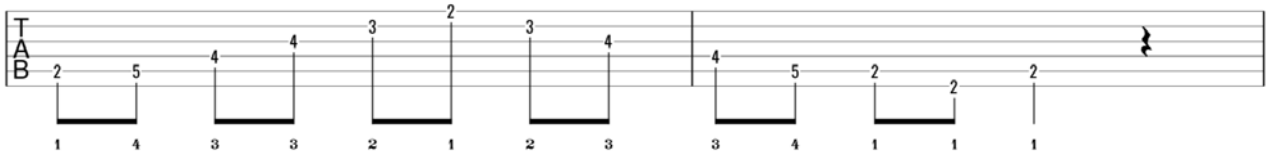
It is as if we are playing an Am chord with a capo at the 2nd fret. The root note is now the B so this is a Bm chord (but in the Am-shape).

To prevent string 6(E) from ringing, you should try making contact with it with the tip of the barre finger to mute it. Successfully doing this means you don't need to worry about missing string 6(E) when strumming.

Am-Shape Arpeggio



Am-Shape arpeggio and recommended fingering



Playing the Am-Shape arpeggio from the Root

The minor barre chord form gives us most of the notes of the minor arpeggio pattern. We need to add the minor 3rd (♭3) at the 5th fret of string 5(A).

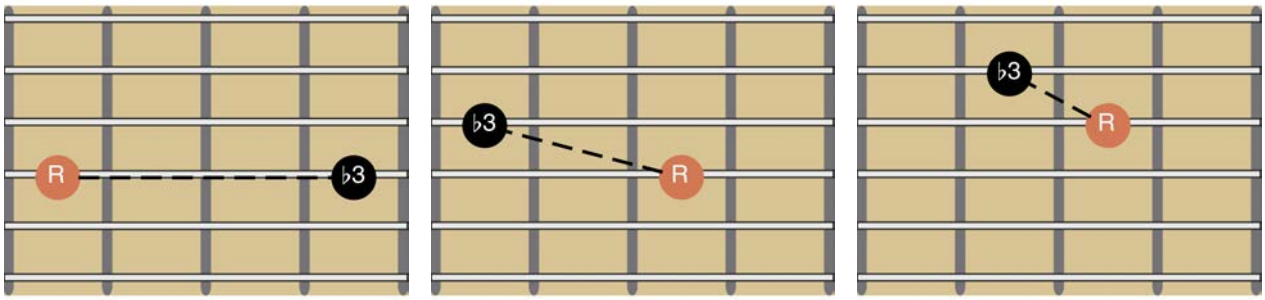
This arpeggio pattern takes us as high as the perfect 5th at the 2nd fret of string 1(E).

Just as we have the perfect 5th on string 1(E), we can also add the 5th on string 6(E) at the 2nd fret, directly underneath the Root note. You can fret this note with a finger roll from the Root note on string 5(A).

Interval Insight: The Minor 3rd

Horizontally on one string, the minor 3rd is found three frets higher, towards the body.

Vertically, the minor 3rd above any Root note will always be two fret lower on the string below (towards the floor), except between strings 3(G) and 2(B), for which the major 3rd is one fret lower.:



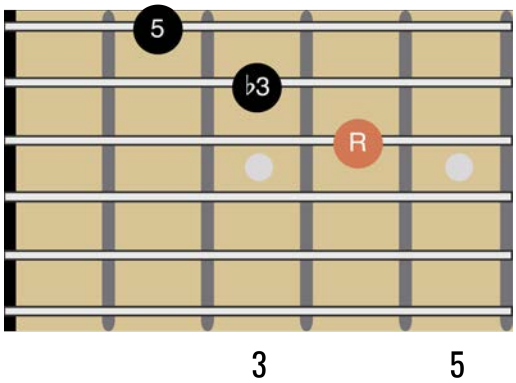
Am-Shape Minor Triads

Taking the arpeggio notes as a guide there are three common closed voicing minor triads within the Am-shape.

The minor triad consists of the Root note (B), a minor third above the Root (D) and a perfect 5th above the Root (F♯).

There are three possible grips for these three notes across the 6 strings within the Am-shape.

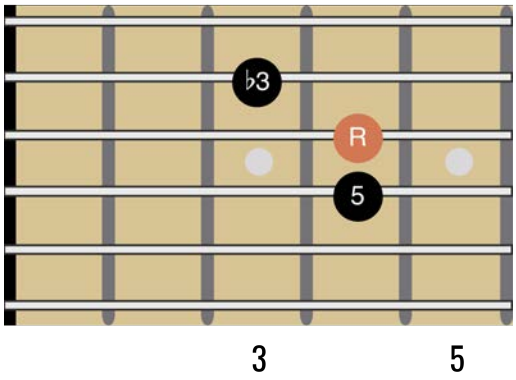
We find a root position triad across strings 3(G)-1(E).



Am-Shape triad 1 of 3

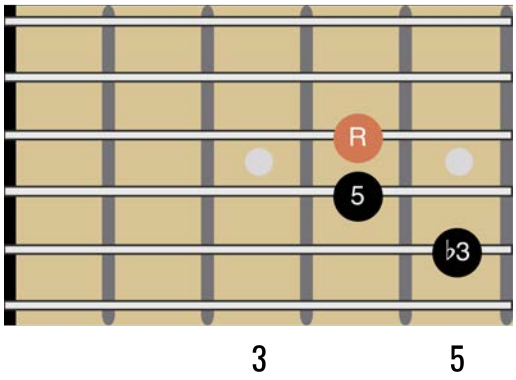
The same rules apply for minor triads as for major. A Root position triad is when we have the Root note as the lowest sounding note (lowest in pitch).

Lowering the 5th an octave from string 1(E) to string 4(D) gives us a closed voicing second inversion minor triad (i.e. the 5th is the lowest note played):



Am-Shape triad 2 of 3

Again, lowering the ♭3 this time an octave from string 2(B) to string 5(A) gives us a closed voicing first inversion minor triad (i.e. the minor 3rd is the lowest note played):



Am-Shape triad 3 of 3

We can lower the Root note one octave onto string 6(E) forms a root position minor triad, but this is part of the Gm-Shape (coming up!).

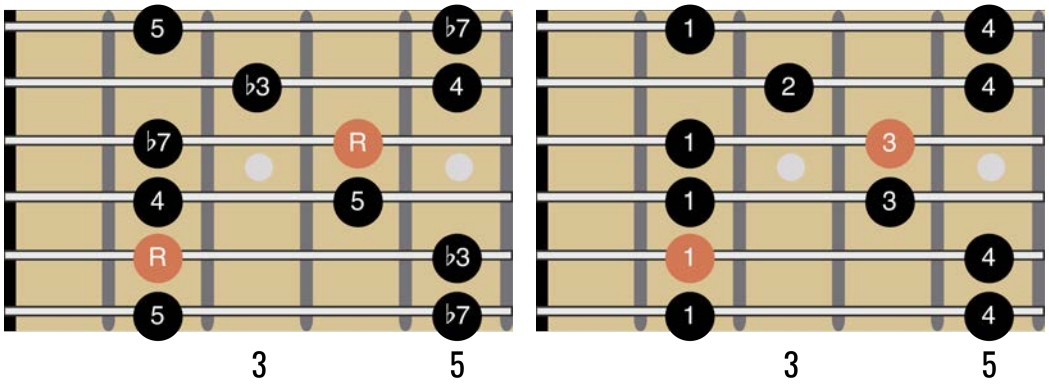
Am-Shape Minor Pentatonic

The intervals that are added to the 3-note arpeggio to form the 5-note pentatonic scale differ for major and minor.

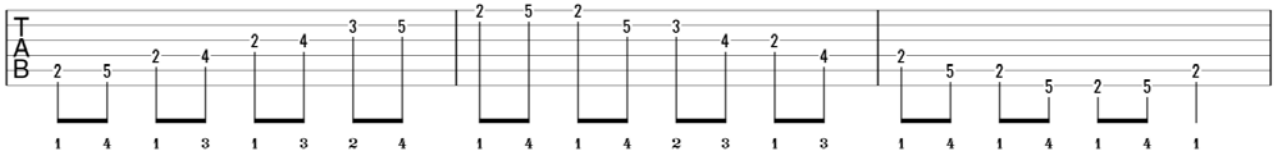
For the *minor* pentatonic we add the perfect 4th (4) and minor 7th (♭7) above the Root note:

The B Minor Pentatonic Scale

Minor 3rd		Whole		Whole		Minor 3rd		Whole	
R	-	♭3	-	4	-	5	-	♭7	-	8
B	-	D	-	E	-	F♯	-	A	-	B



Am-Shape minor pentatonic scale intervals and recommended fingering



Playing the Am-Shape minor pentatonic scale from the Root

You may have seen this named "position 4" of the minor pentatonic (as it starts upon the fourth note of the minor pentatonic scale), or maybe "Root 5"/"Root 5th" minor pentatonic.

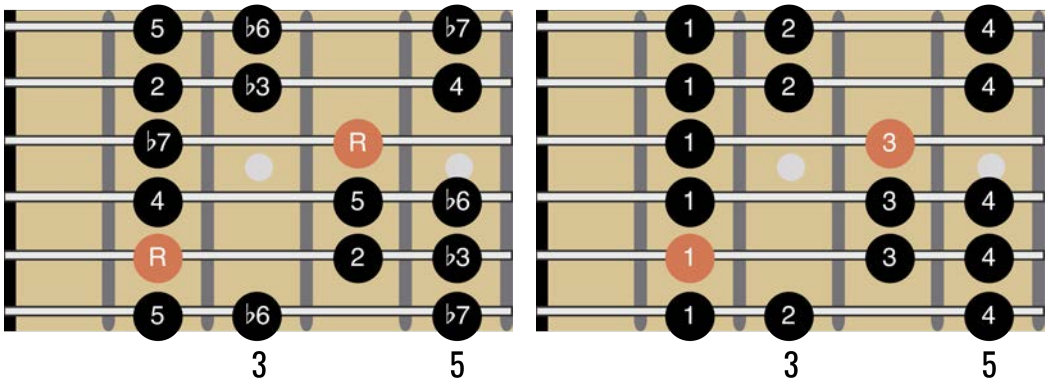
As you can see from the fretboard diagram, this pentatonic pattern falls nicely within one playing position. The hand does not need to shift as we move up and down the scale.

Am-Shape Minor Scale

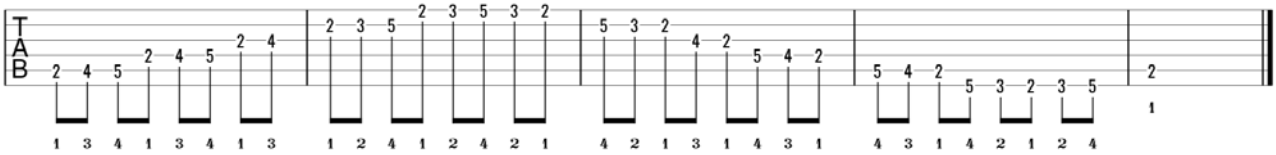
From the five notes of the minor pentatonic we add an additional two to give us a seven note diatonic scale (with each letter of the musical alphabet being present within one octave).

The two notes we add are the major 2nd and minor 6th to give us the sound of the natural minor scale (also known as the aeolian mode).

Whole	Half	Whole	Whole	Half	Whole	Whole
R - 2 - ♭3 - 4 - 5 - ♭6 - ♭7 - 8						
B - C♯ - D - E - F♯ - G - A - B						



Am-Shape minor scale intervals and recommended fingering



Playing the Am-Shape natural minor scale from the Root

As with the minor pentatonic pattern, this minor scale pattern falls nicely under the fretting hand.

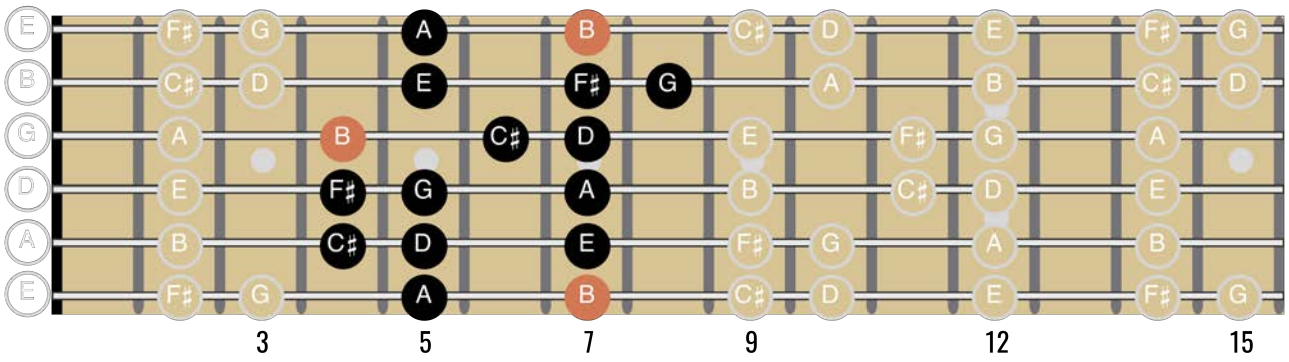
Minor Modes?

As we saw with the major modes, the other minor modes (dorian, phrygian) can be created from the minor pentatonic in the exact same way as we created the natural minor scale (aeolian mode).

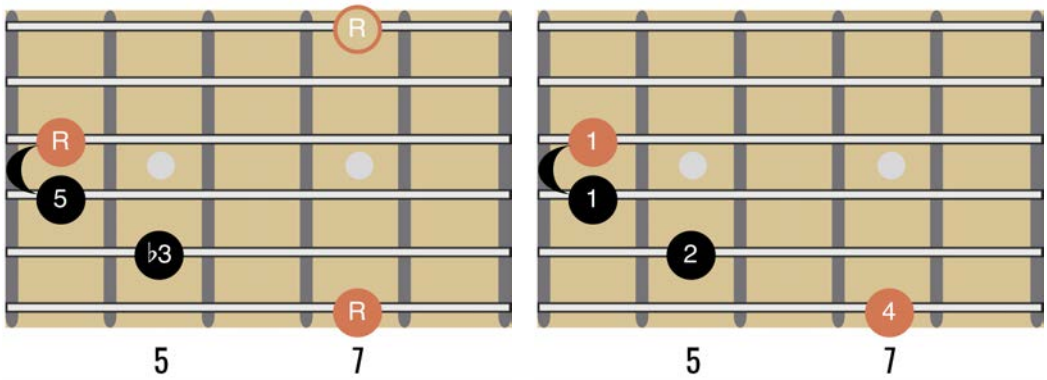
For the dorian mode we would add a major 2nd (2) and major 6th (6).

For the phrygian mode we add the minor 2nd (♭2) and minor 6th (♭6).

Gm-Shape



Gm-Shape Chord



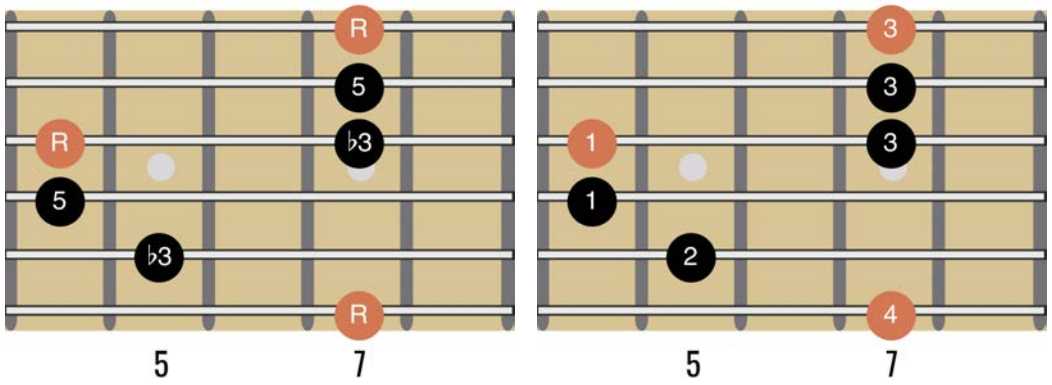
Gm-Shape barre chord intervals and fingering



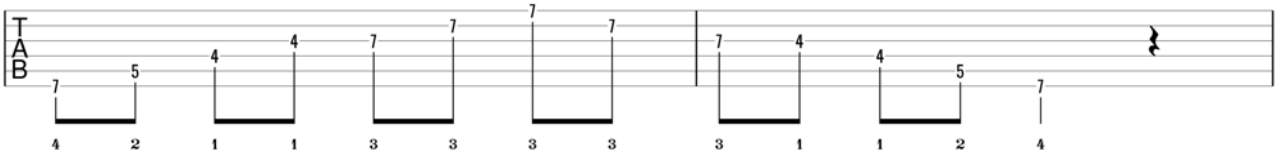
Much like the G-shape, the nature of the Gm-shape does not lend itself to an easy barre chord.

For useable chord forms, the triad shapes will be more useful (see below).

Gm-Shape Arpeggio



Gm-Shape arpeggio and recommended fingering



Playing the Gm-Shape arpeggio from the Root

The Gm-shape arpeggio is also a little demanding to play and, realistically, you're unlikely to use it often. It never hurts though to try and play through patterns like these to help your technique and fretboard visualisation.

The arpeggio will start on string 6(E) using finger 4 to allow you to fret the notes on strings 5(A) and 4(D) with fingers 2 and 1.

Then you roll finger 1 onto string 3(G) to fret the Root note.

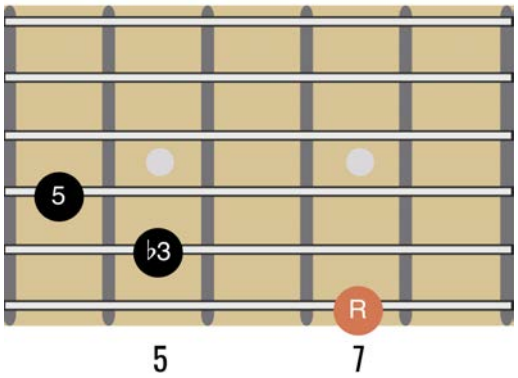
My preference is to use finger 3 to roll across strings 3(G)-1(E), so the hand needs to shift slightly into the fifth position to do so.

As you descend, you will use the same fingering and slide the hand back into the fourth position to fret the Root note on string 3(G) with finger 1.

Gm-Shape Minor Triads

There are three possible grips for the minor triad within the Gm-shape.

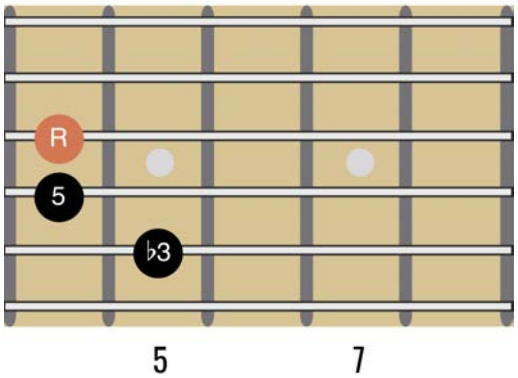
The first shape is a root position triad across strings 6(E)-4(D).



Gm-Shape triad 1 of 3

You'll need to fret the Root with finger 4, minor 3rd with finger 2 and the fifth with finger 1.

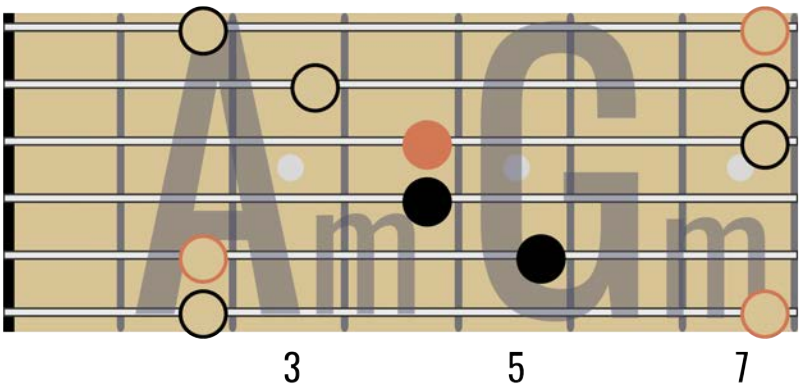
Raising the root note an octave gives a first inversion minor triad across strings 5(A)-3(G).



Gm-Shape triad 2 of 3

We saw that this was also a triad shape within the Am-shape.

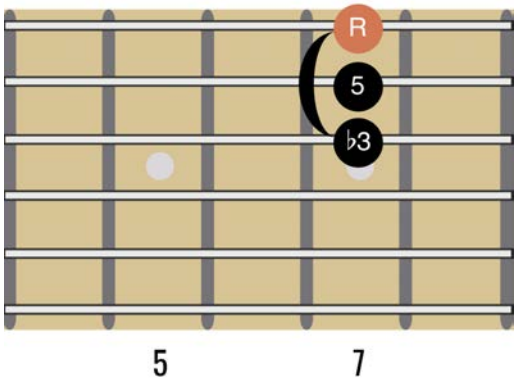
As we saw with the major forms, these triad forms can be useful to visually link the two shapes on the fretboard.



Using the triad form as a visual link between the two forms

Due to the layout of the intervals, there is no triad shape within the Gm-shape across strings 4(D)-2(B).

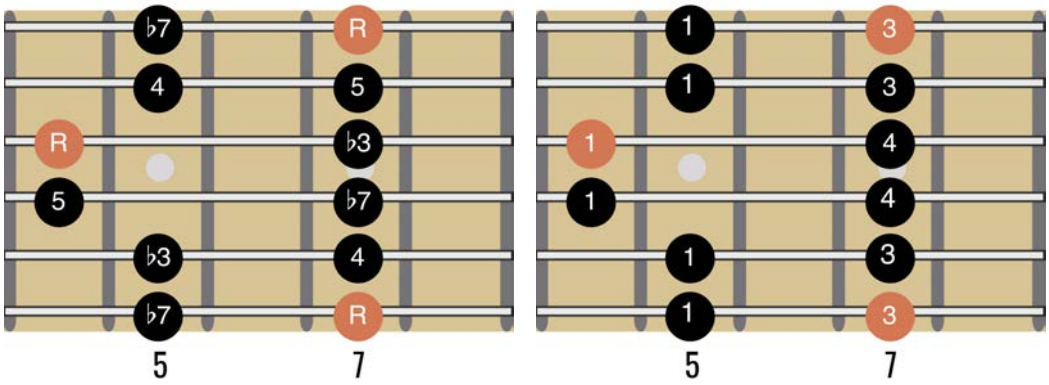
There is though another first inversion minor triad across strings 3(G) to 1(E). I'd recommend using finger 1 to play this:



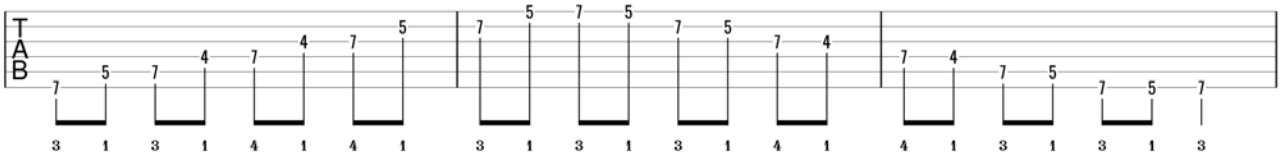
Gm-Shape triad 3 of 3

Gm-Shape Minor Pentatonic

As before, using the minor arpeggio as our starting point, we can the perfect 4th and minor 7th for the five notes of the minor pentatonic scale.



Gm-Shape minor pentatonic scale intervals and recommended fingering



Playing the Gm-Shape minor pentatonic scale from the Root

You may have seen this named "position 5" of the minor pentatonic as the lowest note in pitch found within the scale pattern is the 5th note of the scale, the minor 7th.

For playing comfort, I tend to start with finger 3 upon the Root note on String 6(E), placing the fretting hand in the fifth position.

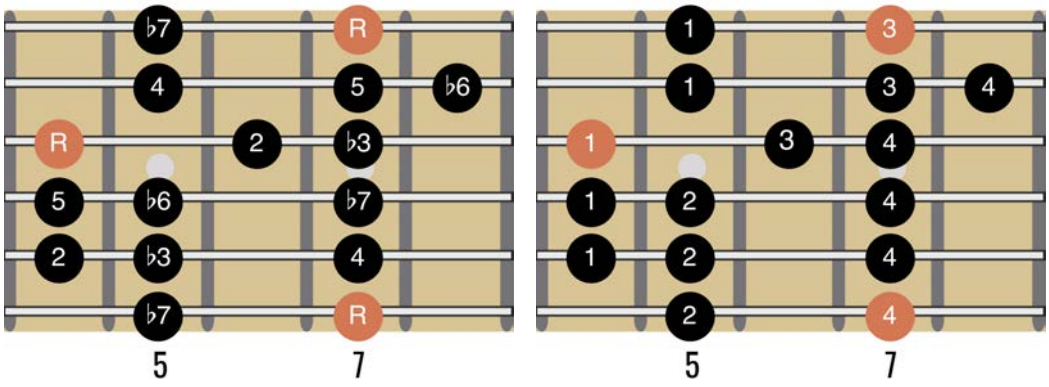
As you ascend onto string 4(D) the fretting hand will shift back slightly into the fourth position to fret the perfect 5th and allow you to fret the minor 7th with finger 4.

The hand position stays the same on string 3(G) but, again as we move onto strings 2(B) and 1(E) I prefer to use fingers 1 and 3 again.

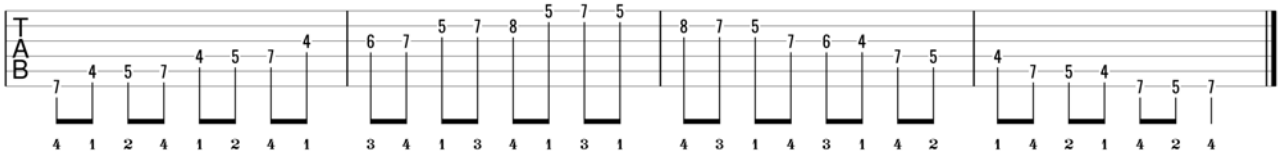
Notice how this differs from the recommended fingering from the A-shape major pentatonic. They are the same notes, but the manner in which you'll play the scales and use the notes requires a different fingering approach.

Gm-Shape Minor Scale

Once again, we can add the major 2nd and minor 6th to the minor pentatonic for the natural minor scale.



Gm-Shape minor scale intervals and recommended fingering

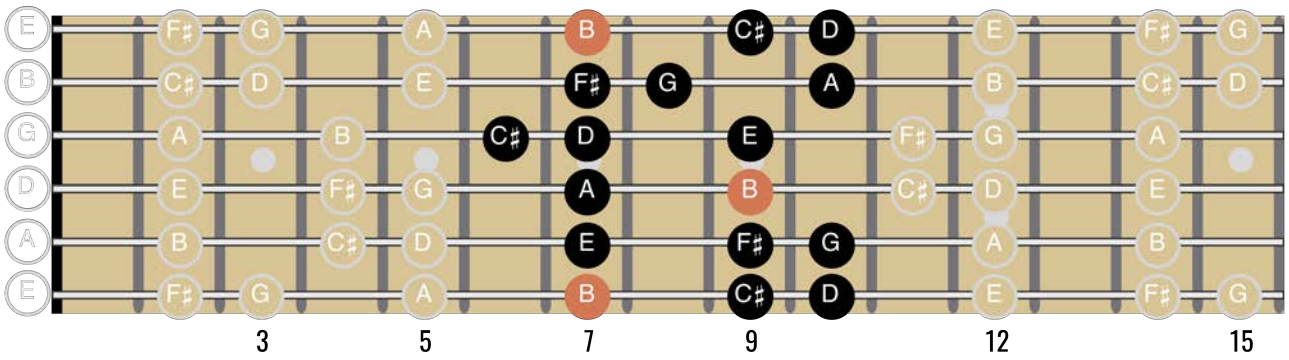


Playing the Gm-Shape natural minor scale from the Root

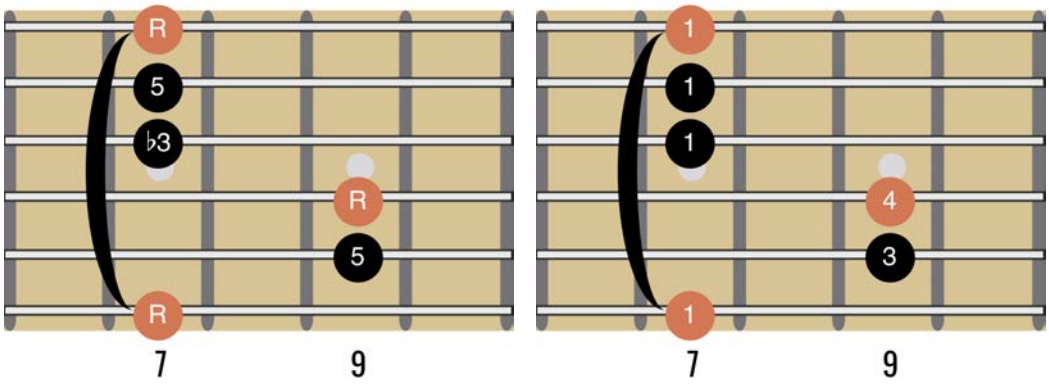
Unlike my preferred fingering for the minor pentatonic, this scale pattern requires you to start with finger 4 on the Root note on string 6(E).

The fretting hand can remain in the fourth position until string 2(B), upon which the hand moves up to the fifth position.

Em-Shape



Em-Shape Chord



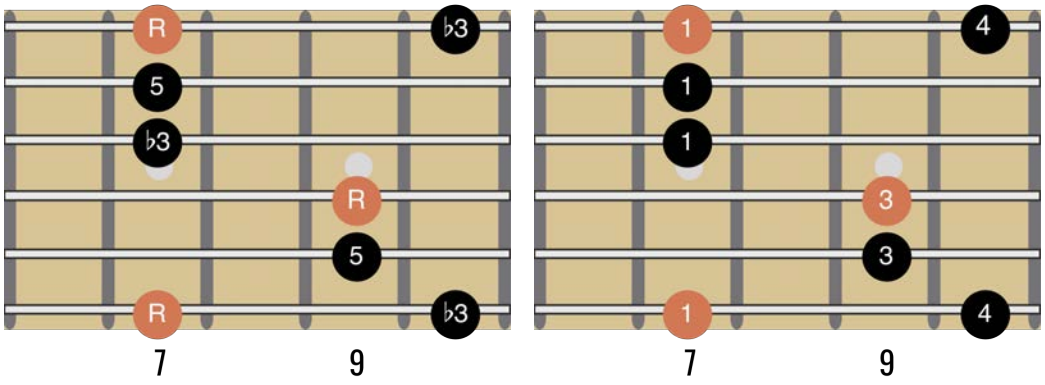
Em-Shape barre chord intervals and fingering



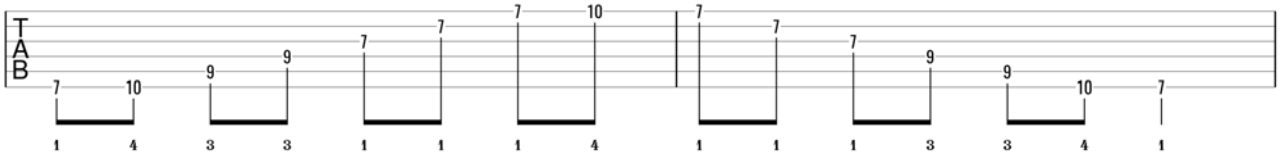
With the octave shapes as the visual reference, we can form a major chord that resembles an open E minor chord (with the barre finger 1 acting as the capo).

The Em-shape barre is formed by playing an open Em chord with fingers 3 and 4. Finger 1 is then free to act as a capo and can be placed upon any root note on string 6(E).

Em-Shape Arpeggio



Em-Shape arpeggio and recommended fingering



Playing the Em-Shape arpeggio from the Root

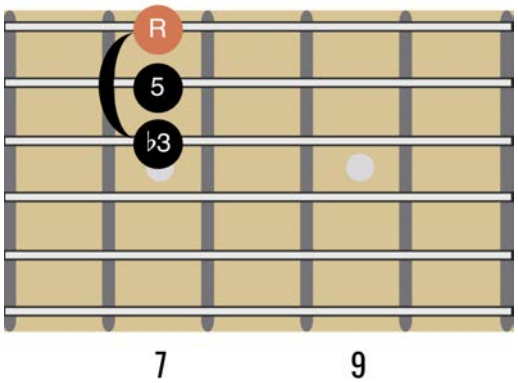
The Em-barre chord has almost all the notes for a minor arpeggio across the six strings, with the exception of the minor 3rd which is found three frets above the Root note on string 6(E).

This minor 3rd can also be added at the 10th fret of string 1(E).

Some more finger rolls to work your technique here. Finger 3 will roll between strings 5(A) and 4(D), and finger 1 will be responsible for the notes across strings 3(G)-1(E).

Em-Shape Minor Triads

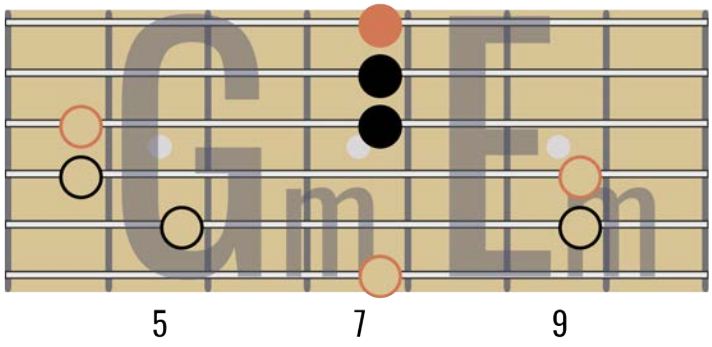
There are four possible triad shapes found within the Em-shape:



Em-Shape triad 1 of 4

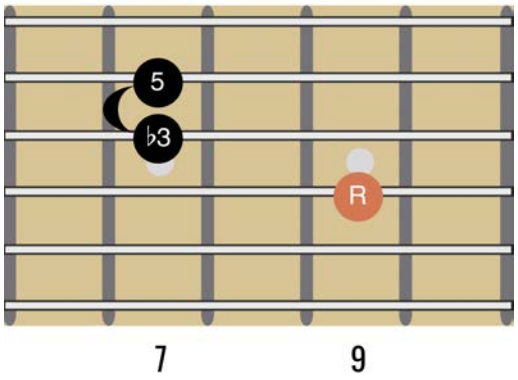
On the thinnest strings we have a first inversion minor triad. I would play this with a mini-barre finger 1.

This shape can be a useful link between the Gm-shape and the Em-shape:



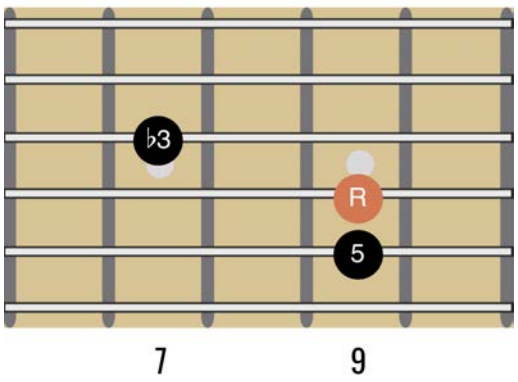
Using the triad form as a visual link between the two forms

Lowering the Root note down an octave gives a root position minor triad.



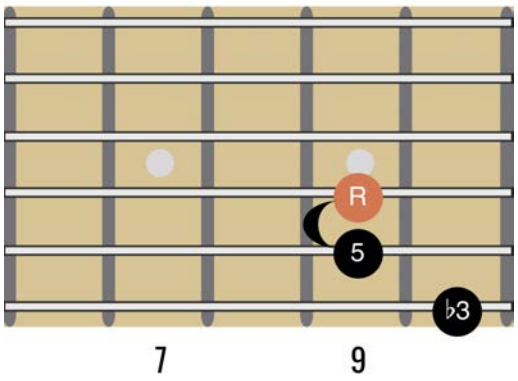
Em-Shape triad 2 of 4

Lowering the 5th down an octave onto string 5(A) gives a second inversion minor triad.



Em-Shape triad 3 of 4

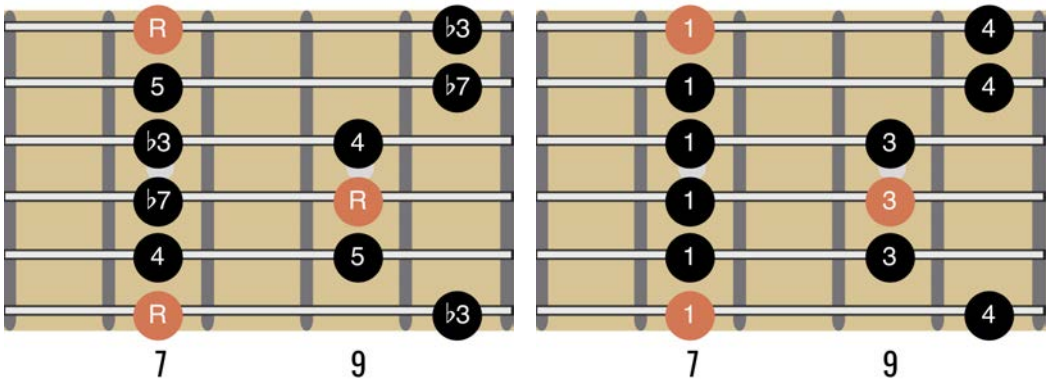
And, unlike the E-shape, we can form a fourth triad within the Em-shape if we lower the minor 3rd down an octave onto string 6(E) for another first inversion minor triad.



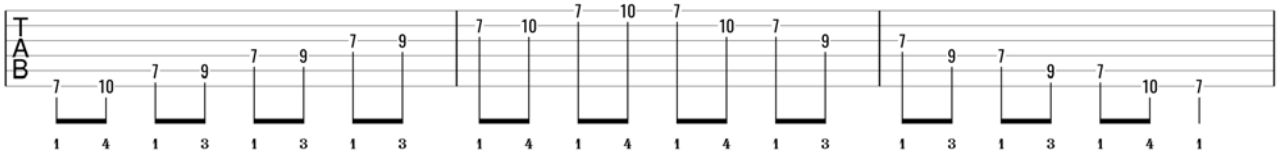
Em-Shape triad 4 of 4

Em-Shape Minor Pentatonic

Perhaps the first scale your ever learnt:



Em-Shape minor pentatonic scale intervals and recommended fingering

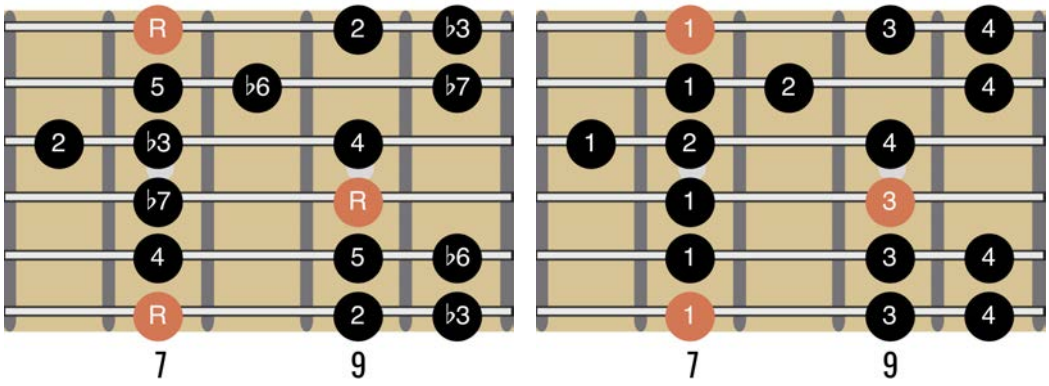


Playing the Em-Shape minor pentatonic scale from the Root

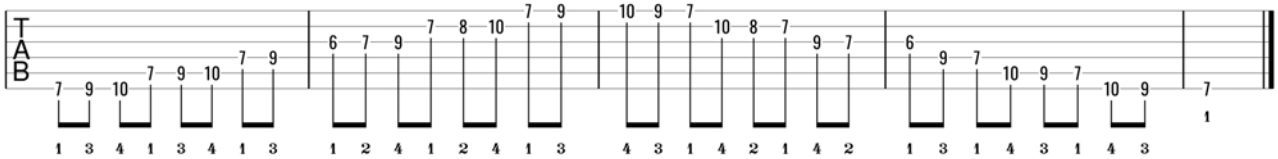
The good ol' position 1 / Root 6 minor pentatonic scale forms part of the Em-shape in the CAGED approach.

Hopefully you'll think upon this one a little differently now and see how much you can play from this one scale pattern.

Em-Shape Minor Scale



Em-Shape minor scale intervals and recommended fingering



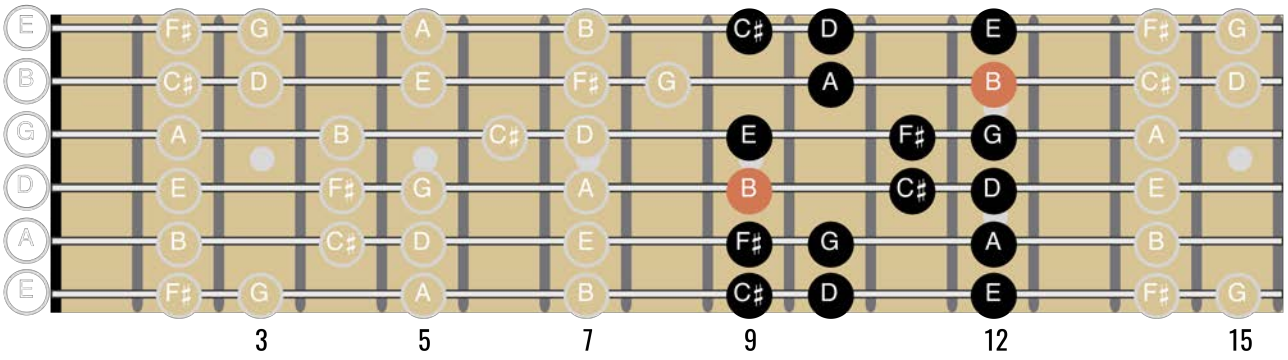
Playing the Em-Shape natural minor scale from the Root

There's just one position shift you need to watch out for with the Em-shape natural minor scale.

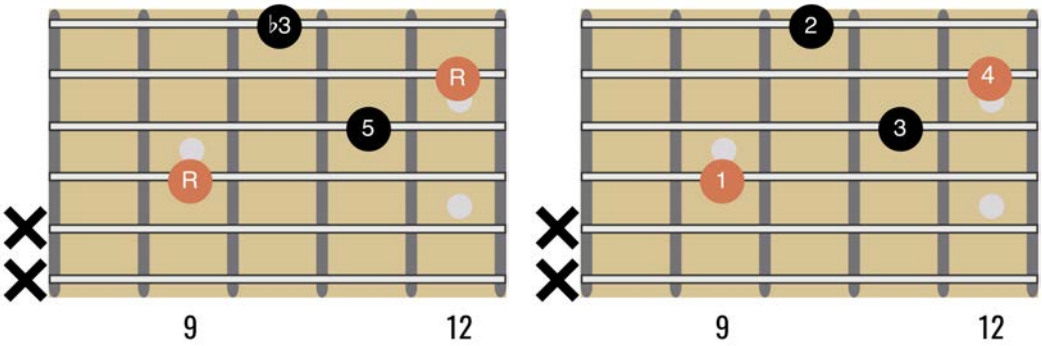
The fretting hand can comfortably play the first octave of scale in the 7th position.

There is a shift back into the 6th position as you move onto string 3(G) but the fretting hand moves immediately back into the 7th position to fret the notes on strings 2(B) and 1(E).

Dm-Shape



Dm-Shape Chord



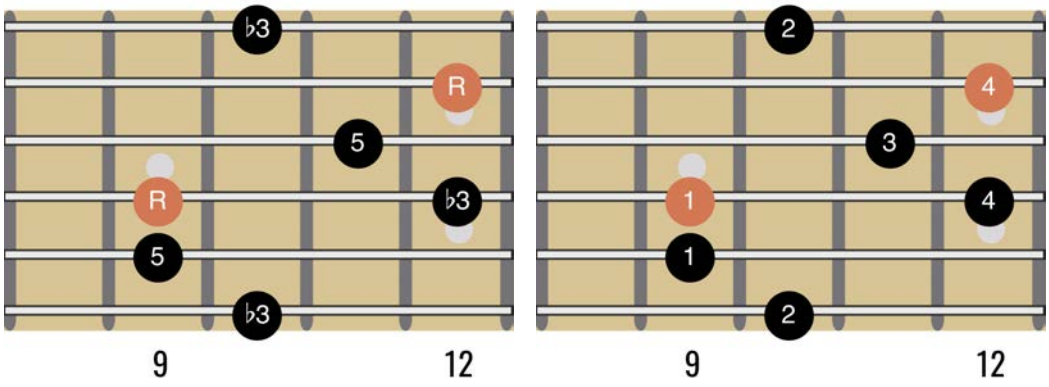
Dm-Shape barre chord intervals and fingering



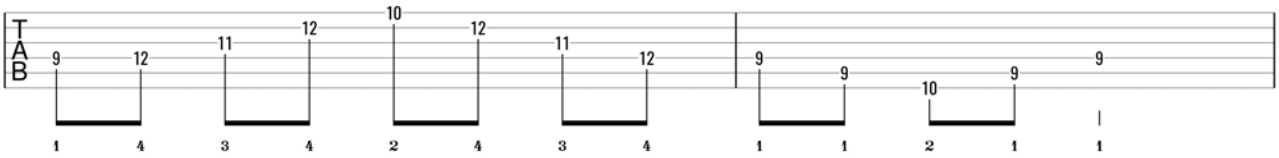
We can form a minor chord that resembles an open D minor chord.

Finger 1 is not strictly a barre finger here. You can though also fret the perfect 5th on string 5(A) in the same fret as the Root note.

Dm-Shape Arpeggio



Dm-Shape arpeggio and recommended fingering

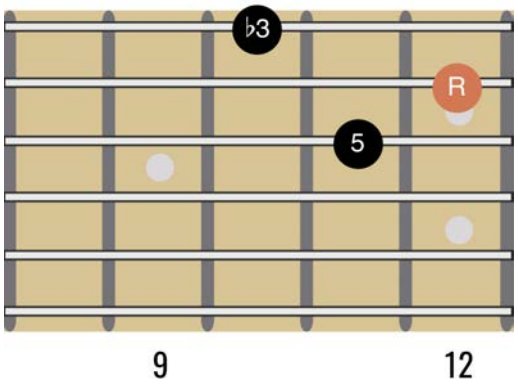


Playing the Dm-Shape arpeggio from the Root

Playing through this arpeggio pattern is a great exercise for your fretting hand!

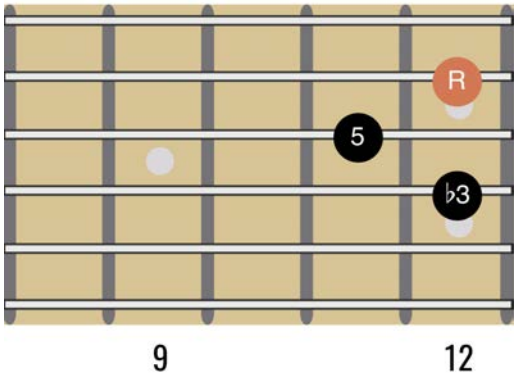
Dm-Shape Minor Triads

The familiar open Dm chord grip is the first triad shape within the Dm-Shape. It is a second inversion minor triad:



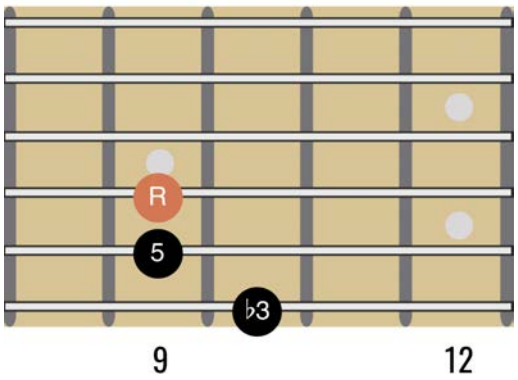
Dm-Shape triad 1 of 3

Lowering the minor 3rd down one octave onto string 4(D) gives a first inversion minor triad across strings 4(D)-2(B).



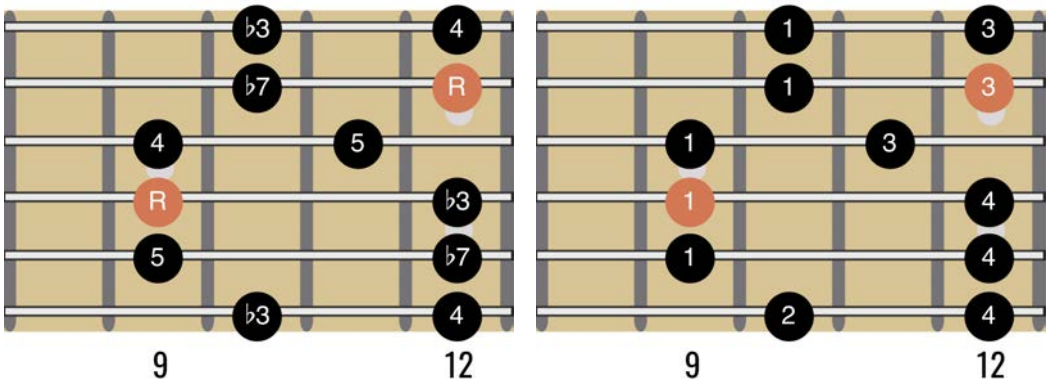
Dm-Shape triad 2 of 3

There is no triad shape across strings 5(A)-3(G) but we can find another first inversion minor triad across strings 6(E)-4(D).

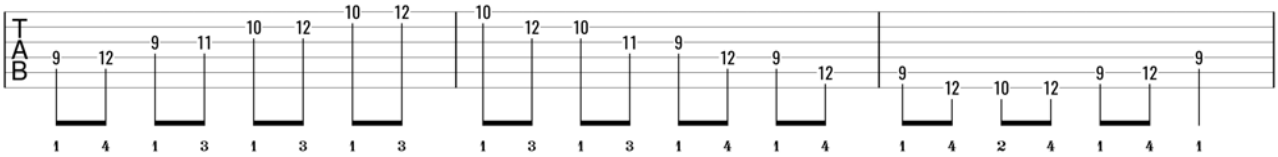


Dm-Shape triad 3 of 3

Dm-Shape Minor Pentatonic



Dm-Shape minor pentatonic scale intervals and recommended fingering



Playing the Dm-Shape minor pentatonic scale from the Root

“Position 2” of the minor pentatonic scale is the Dm-Shape pentatonic scale.

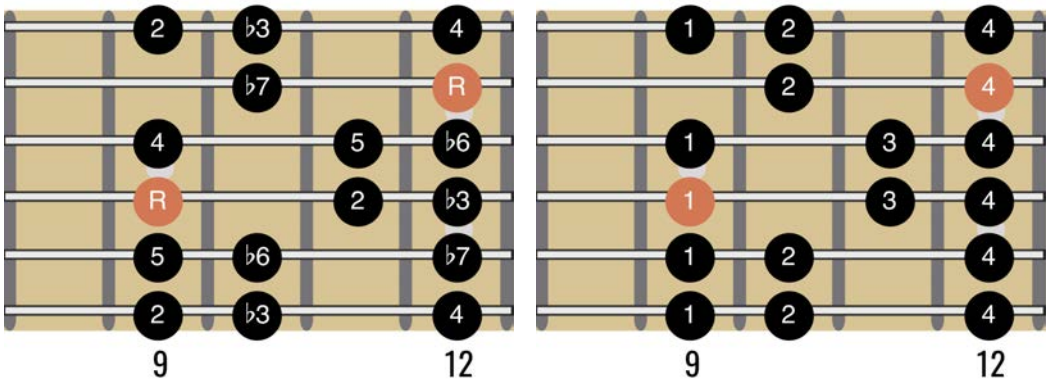
Look out for position shift on strings 2(B) and 1(E). We begin upon the Root note on string 4(D) in the ninth position, but then move up into the tenth position on strings 2(B) and 1(E).

You could stay strictly in the same position and use fingers 2 and 4 on the high strings, but that would have you using the pinky upon the Root note, which can feel a little awkward.

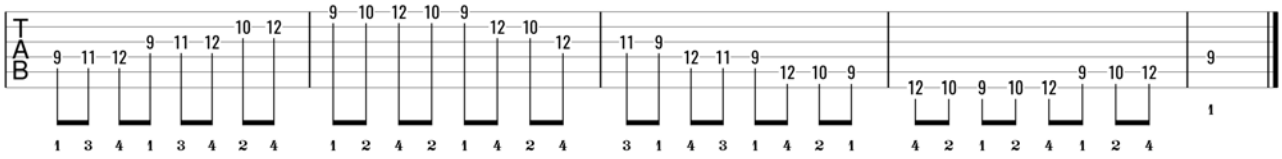
The licks that you’re likely to come up with in this shape will feel more comfortable using finger 3 on the Root note of string 2(B).

I often find myself bending the perfect 4th on string 1(E) into the perfect 5th so I’ll always opt for a 1-3 fingering.

Dm-Shape Minor Scale



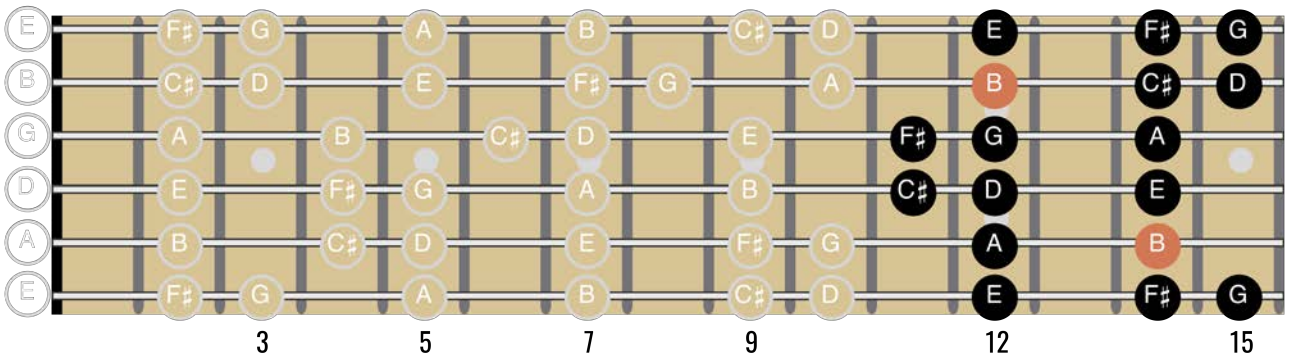
Dm-Shape minor pentatonic scale intervals and recommended fingering



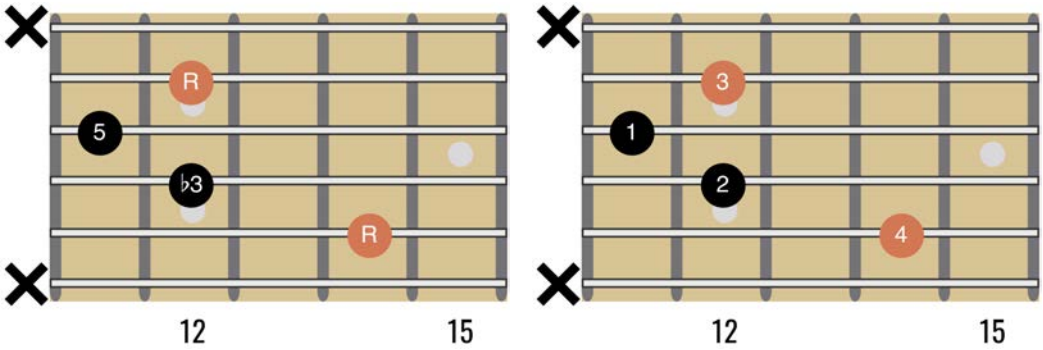
Playing the Dm-Shape minor pentatonic scale from the Root

As for the E-Shape diatonic scale, the natural minor scale finds the fretting hand firmly in the same position. In this example of the B natural minor scale, the fretting hand can stay within the ninth position.

Cm-Shape



Cm-Shape Chord

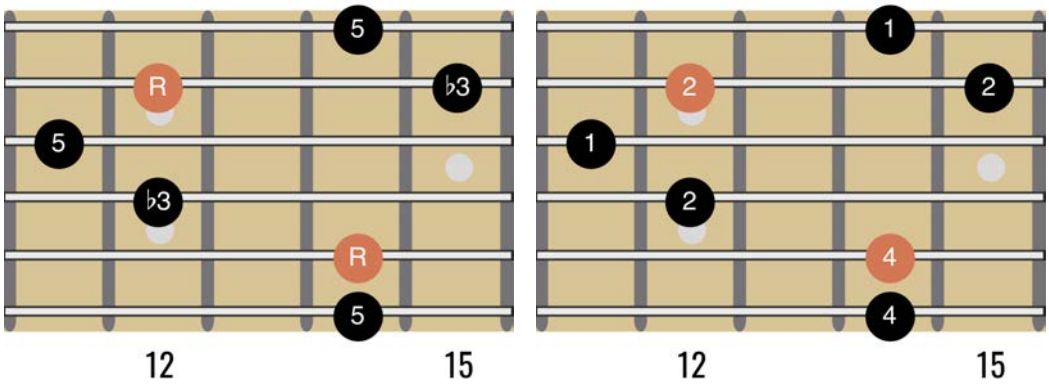


Cm-Shape 'Barre' Chord intervals and fingering

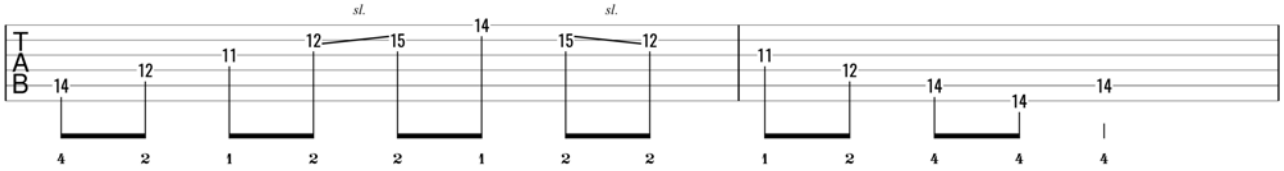


Whilst possible for the fretting hand, this is not a commonly used grip. Once again, the emphasis here is on visualisation. If we're able to see this shape upon the fretboard it can help our mind and fingers locate the other rhythm and lead layers.

Cm-Shape Arpeggio



Cm-Shape arpeggio and recommended fingering



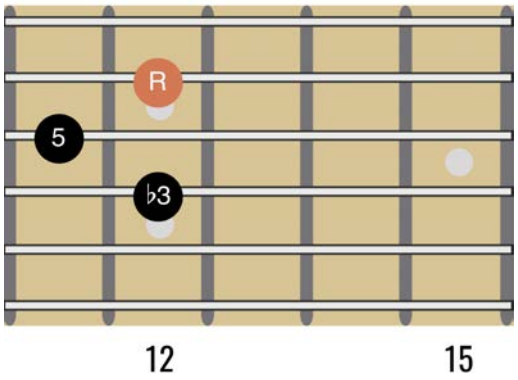
Playing the Cm-Shape arpeggio from the Root

Staying strictly within the Cm-Shape, this arpeggio pattern requires the fretting hand to shift from the Root note in the eleventh position (as we are using finger 2) to the fourteenth position to fret the minor 3rd. Finger 1 can then fret the perfect 5th on string 1(E).

You're more likely to fret the minor 3rd on string 1(E) at the 10th fret with finger 1 and then use finger 4 to fret the perfect 5th.

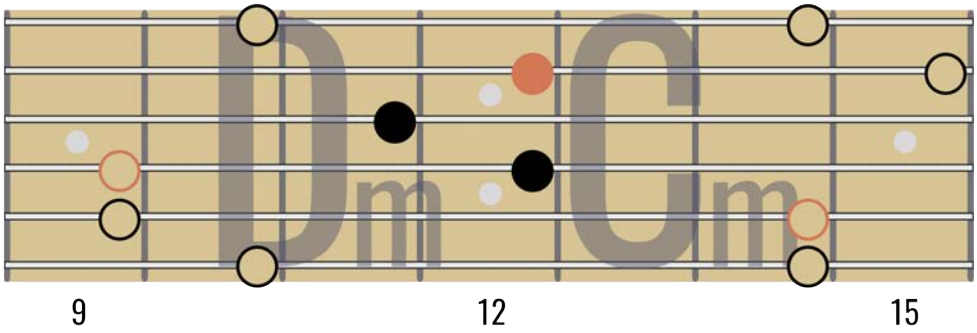
Cm-Shape Minor Triads

We have three closed voicing triads within the Cm-Shape.



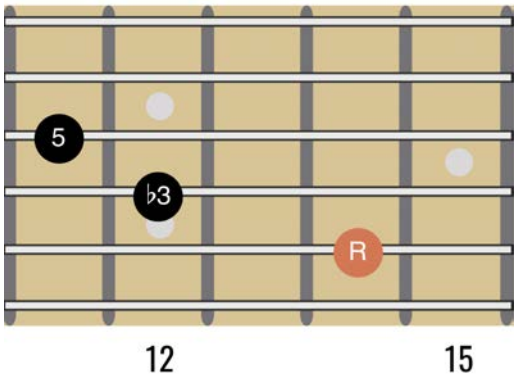
Cm-Shape triad 1 of 3

The first of which is found across strings 4(D)-2(B). This first inversion minor triad can help link up the Dm-Shape and Cm-Shape.



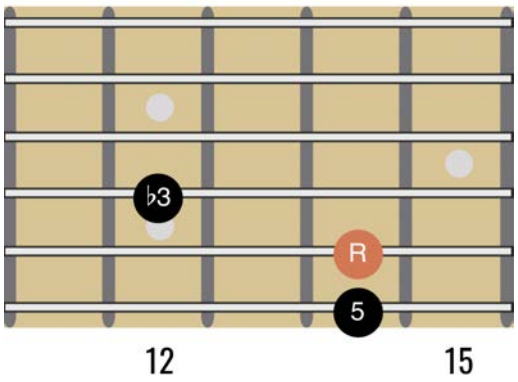
Using the triad form as a visual link between the two Shapes

Lowering the Root note down one octave with the 5-2 octave shape, gives a Root position minor triad.



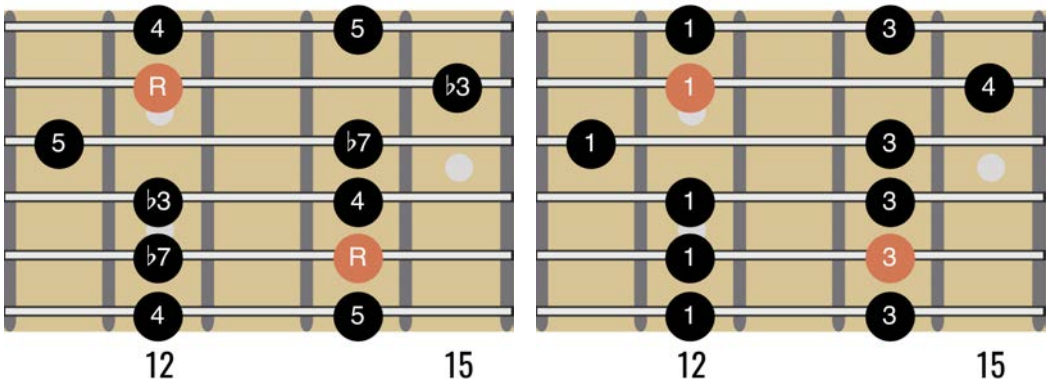
Cm-Shape triad 2 of 3

We can also lower the 5th down one octave with the 6-3 octave shape for a second inversion minor triad.

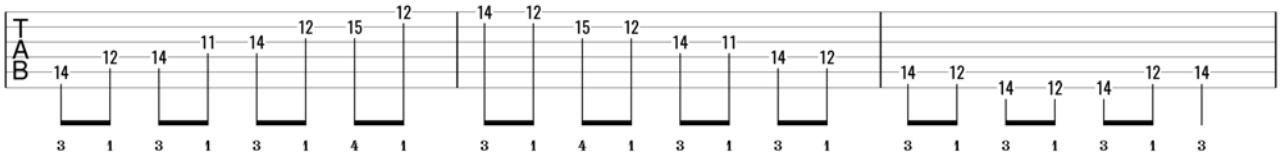


Cm-Shape triad 3 of 3

Cm-Shape Minor Pentatonic



Cm-Shape minor pentatonic scale intervals and recommended fingering



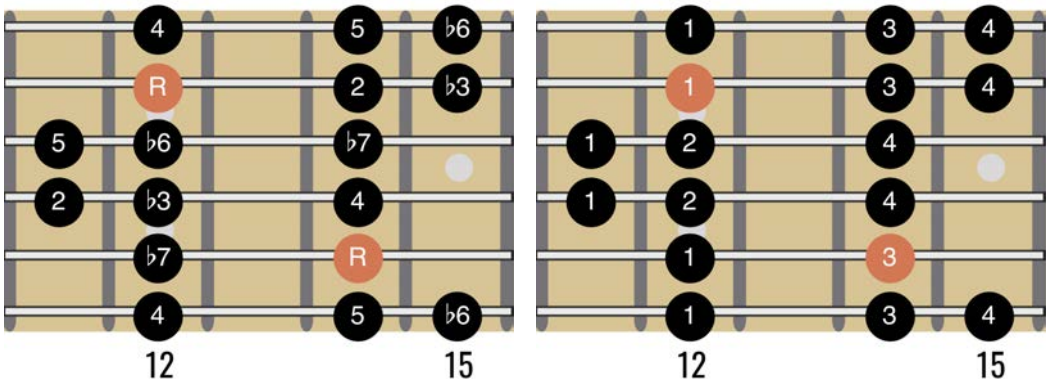
Playing the Cm-Shape minor pentatonic scale from the Root

"Position 3" of the minor pentatonic scale is the Cm-Shape pentatonic scale. Again, it is named position 3 as its lowest note is the 3rd note of the pentatonic scale, the perfect 4th (4).

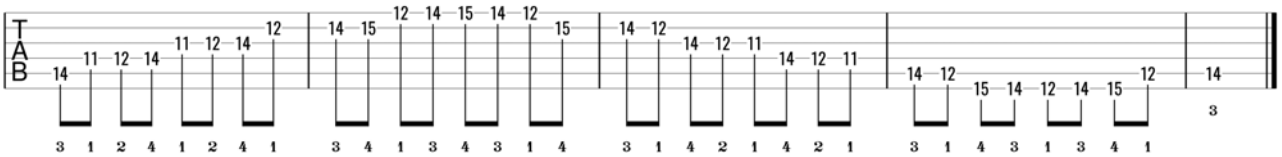
My preferred fingering here is to stay predominantly in the twelfth position, with a shift back into the eleventh position as you move onto string 3(G).

In doing so though I still use finger 3 for the ♭7. Depending on the lick being played, I'll either use finger 3 or 4 for the ♭3 on string 2(B).

Cm-Shape Minor Scale



Cm-Shape minor pentatonic scale intervals and recommended fingering



Playing the Cm-Shape minor pentatonic scale from the Root

Like with the minor pentatonic pattern, I like to begin upon the Root with finger 3.

Ascending the scale, we immediately shift back into the eleventh position to enable a 1-2-4 fingering across both strings 4(D) and 3(G).

You shift back into the twelfth position for a 1-3-4 fingering across strings 2(B) and 1(E).

As you descend you make the same position shifts, making sure you're in the twelfth position as you hit string 5(A) to enable the 1-3-4 fingering on string 6(E).

Summary

For each of the minor Shapes, the layers can be superimposed in the same way.

The notes of a minor triad (**R-♭3-5**). are present in both the minor pentatonic and the 7-note minor scale.

MINOR							
Minor Chord/Triad/Arpeggio	**R**		**♭ 3**		**5**		
Minor Pentatonic	**R**		**♭ 3**	**4**	**5**		**♭ 7**
Natural Minor Scale	**R**	**2**	**♭ 3**	**4**	**5**	**♭ 6**	**♭ 7**

The minor barre chord and triad forms are great visual anchors for our lead layers.

We just need some focused practice to learn each layer and see how they link up to give us ultimate freedom across the fretboard.

Let's consider some ideas for your practice to help with that.

Ideas for your Practice

OK, so where's best to start practising and actually using all this?

Octave Shapes

First and foremost I would recommend memorising the octave shapes.

The Root notes are the initial anchor points to visualise everything else, so this needs to be rock solid.

Memorising the octave shapes allows you to see at a glance all the Root notes available to you.

At each practice session, choose 3 or 4 notes and play through the CAGED octaves discussed on pages 17-22.

- When on 6(E), move to 4(D) *(6-4 octave) = E-Shape*
- When on 4(D), move to 2(B) *(4-2 octave) = D-Shape*
- When on 2(B) move to 5(A) *(5-2 octave) = C-Shape*
- When on 5(A) move to 3(G) *(5-3 octave) = A-Shape*
- When on 3(G) move to 1(E) *(3-1 octave) = G-Shape*
- When on 1(E) move to 6(E) *(6-1 two octave pattern) = G-Shape/E-Shape*

Ensure that you work through all 12 chromatic notes, and always start from the lowest fret possible (nearest the nut).

Barre Chords

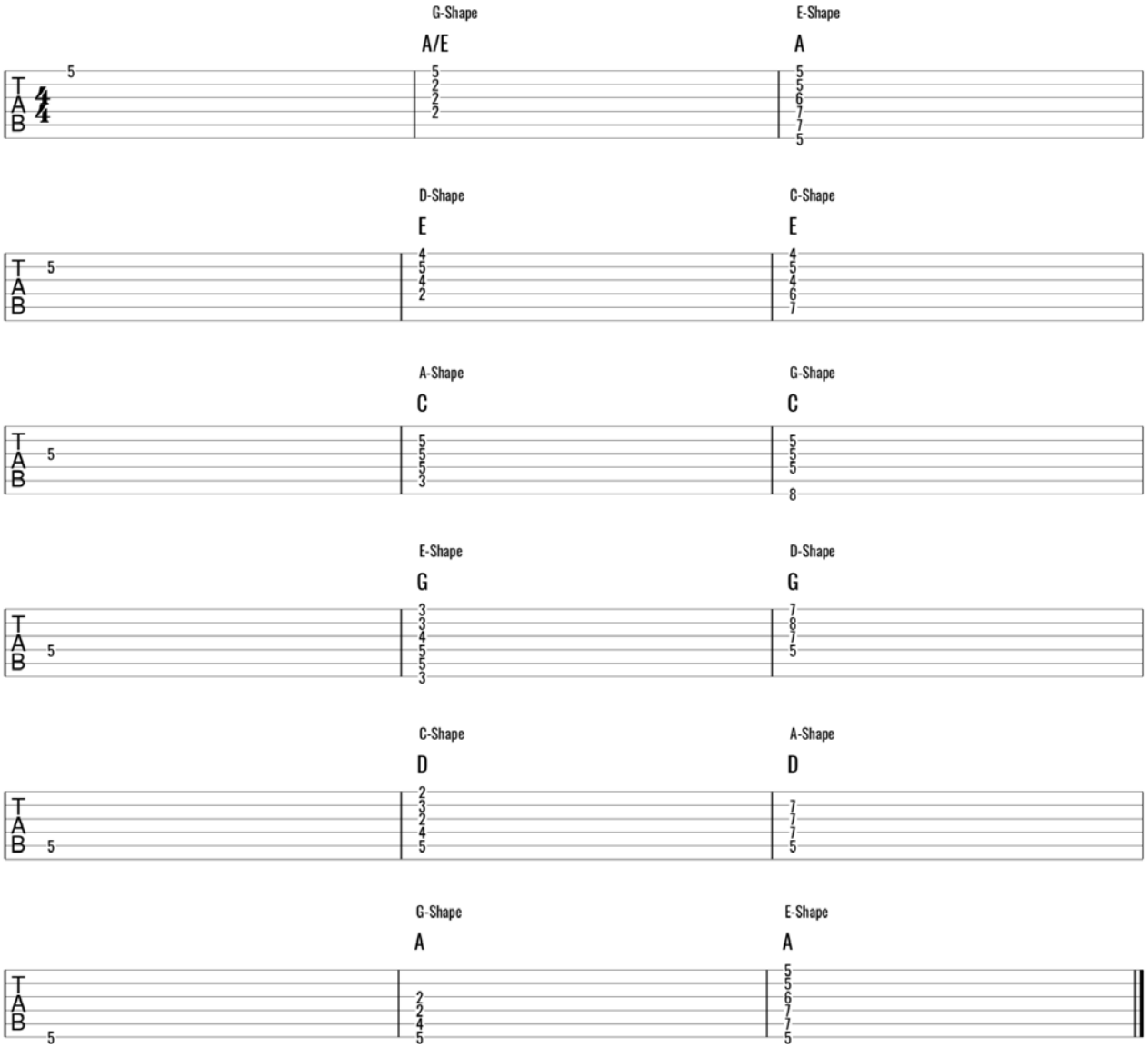
The Root notes are the initial anchor points, but the barre chord shapes are *even bigger* visual anchors.

Wherever you are on the neck, you should be able to find a Root note and form the corresponding barre chord shape (or at the very least, be able to see it on the fretboard).

The exercise here is choosing a note at random and a chord quality (major or minor) and check that you can form the corresponding barre chord shape when that given note is your Root.

Remember that there will always be two chord forms, one on either side of the note (towards the headstock and towards the body).

Taking the examples of all the notes across the 5th fret from string 1(E) to 6(E), you first play the note and then form the two major chord forms around that note:



Take your time to do this mindfully and start seeing how the chord shapes link to one another.

This is invaluable as we start adding in the lead playing layers.

Memorising the Shapes and Layers

You don't need to learn all of this all at once. In fact, I would recommend *against* trying to do so.

There is *a lot* here that you're going to be using for the rest of your playing careers, so there's no rush to get it all learnt this week!

Now you've got the overview of the CAGED approach you can start to add it progressively into your playing.

To be able to use any scale, there first needs to be some focused practice to get them memorised in the fingers.

I would recommend starting with the E/Em-Shapes rooted on string 6(E).

There's a good chance you probably have the 'position 1' major and minor pentatonic memorised, but now you can start linking those to the barre chords and the other layers.

We're now thinking 'E-Shape' rather than 'Position 1' or 'Root 6'.

With any Shape you should **always be changing your Root note** at each practice session (or every 2 sessions). You want to ensure that you can play through these layers from any Root anywhere on the neck.

If you can, you want to record or loop the chosen Root note as a reference for your ears.

Then:

- Play the barre chord to anchor the visualisation
- Play through each of the triads found within that Shape
- Play the arpeggio up and down from the Root
- Play the pentatonic scale up and down
- Play the diatonic scale up and down

Once you can do that you can start mixing things up a bit to test yourself. Play up one layer and descend with another.

Go up the diatonic scale and down the pentatonic scale. Then back up the pentatonic scale and down the arpeggio. Try any and all combinations of the layers.

Also, don't neglect the intervals. At every stage you want to know the intervals that you are playing (i.e. how they relate to the Root note). Try saying the intervals as you play them.

The aim here is to get everything burnt into your brain and your fingers.

Once you are confident with both the E-Shape and Em-Shape, I would recommend working in the same way with the A-Shape/Am-Shape.

Doing so will mean you'll be confident in two different areas of the fretboard with the same Root note.

In the appendices you will find fretboard diagrams summarising each Shape for you to reference in your practice (see pages 97-128).

Linking the Shapes

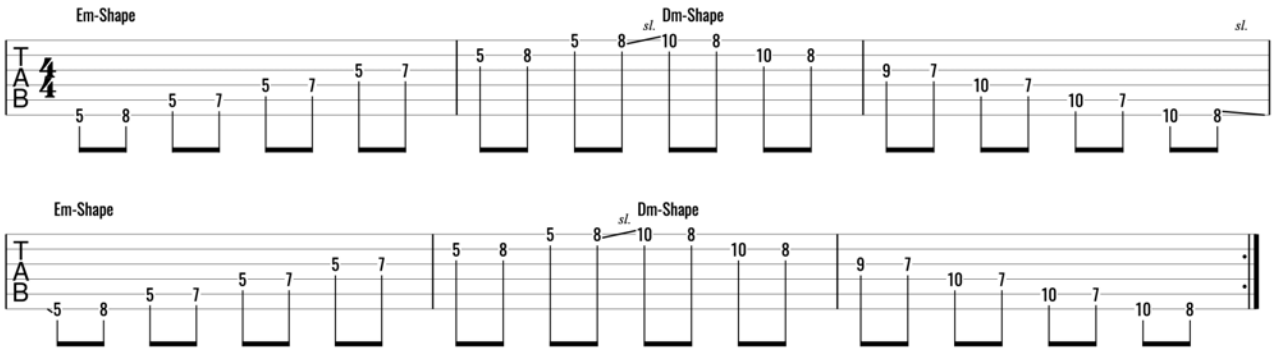
As you get confident with a Shape you can start to work on linking it to its 'neighbouring' Shapes.

For example, once you've got the Em-Shape memorised, you can start working on adding the Dm-Shape.

The exercise here it to ascend one Shape and then slide into the next Shape. You descend that shape and then return back to the starting Shape. You can repeat that 3 or 4 times in a circular manner.

The example below uses the minor pentatonic with an A Root note.

We start in the Em-Shape and go up the A minor pentatonic scale. Then from the 8th fret of String 1(E) we slide into the 10th fret so we're now in the Dm-Shape of the A minor pentatonic and descend:



You can really test yourself and try to ascend and descend the length of the fretboard sliding through all five of the CAGED Shapes.

Again, in the appendices you will find fretboard diagrams showing how the Shapes link up to help with this exercise.

Working with a Chord Progression

This is where things really get interesting and you start really seeing the benefits of the CAGED approach.

"How do you improvise over a chord progression?" is a question I get asked a lot!

The quick answer is to establish the key of the progression and play within that key (using the correct scale).

But that demands a decent level of music theory knowledge to see a progression and know instinctively which key the progression is, and therefore which scale(s) could be used.

So what if we could work to each individual chord and be rock solid on the notes that will work.

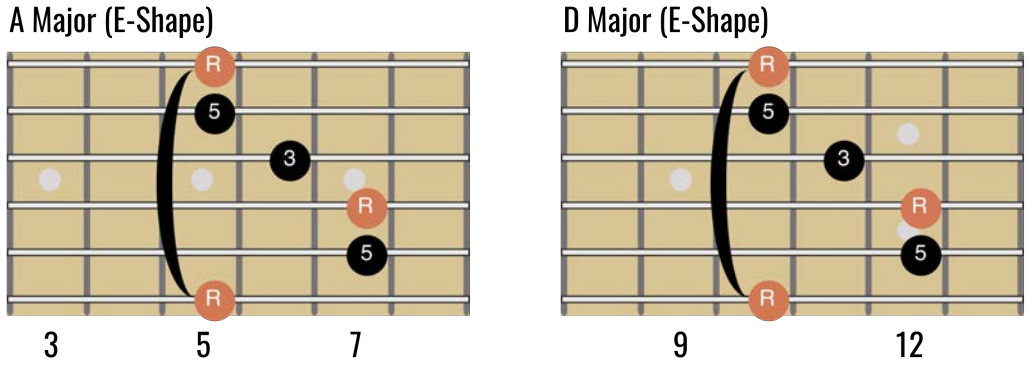
CAGED allows us to do this! With it, we have now linked chords to arpeggios and scales.

The best way to develop this skill is to start with a two-chord vamp and, as you gain confidence you can start to add a longer progression of three, four or more chords.

You want to force yourself to stay within the same fretboard position and use different CAGED Shapes (instead of moving up and down the neck using the same Shape).

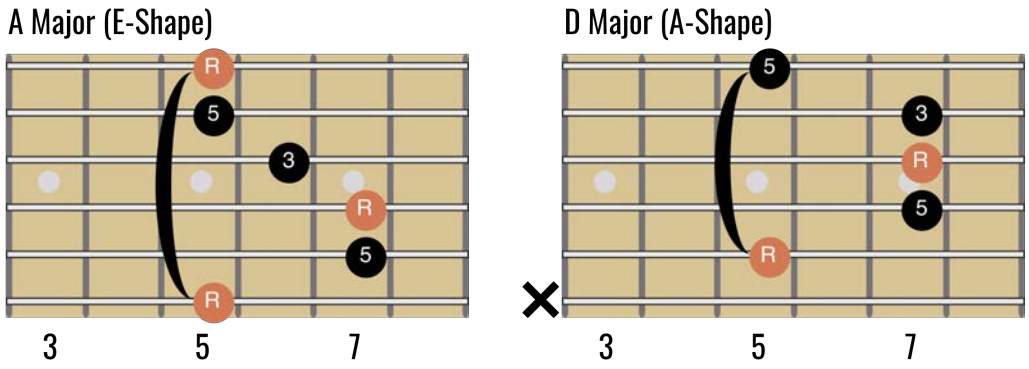
Taking the example of a I-IV progression in the key of A major, the chords of A and D.

We could play that progression with E-Shape barre chords:



But what we want to do is to limit ourselves to one area of the fretboard. Doing so prevents you from simply playing the same licks and melodic ideas over the two chords.

We're going to play the A major in the E-shape and the D major in the A-Shape like this:

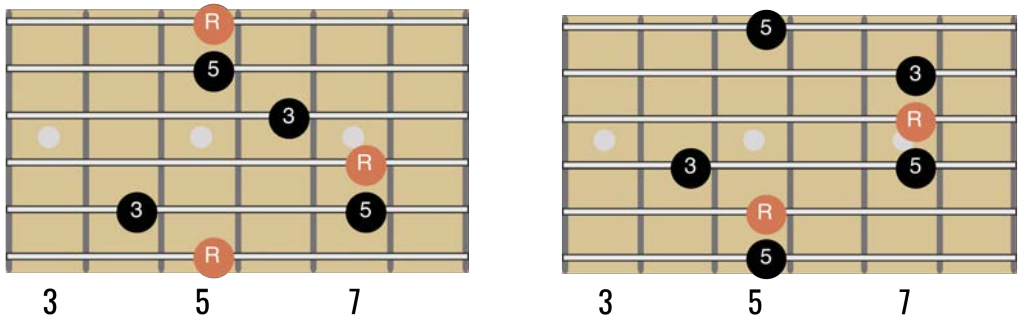


Stage 1 is to play the progression and be *seeing* the chords on the neck.

Ideally, you'll then be able to loop the progression or have a jamming buddy play it.

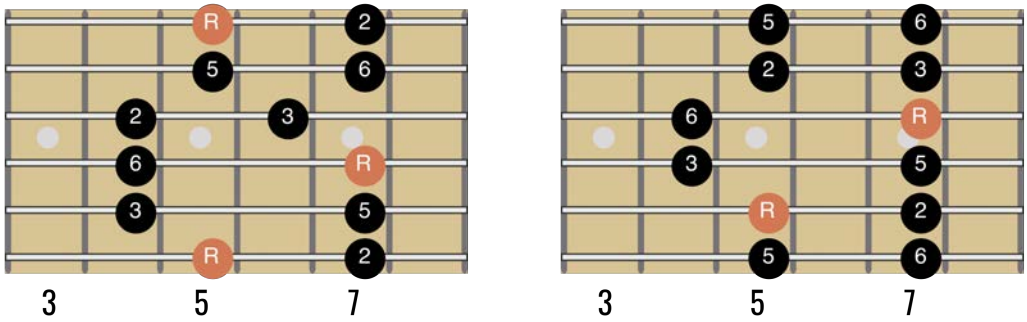
Now you've got the chord forms in your brain, you can start trying a little improvisation.

Think first about the arpeggios/chord tones over each of the chords. Start with hitting the Root notes as the chords change, then work in the 3rds and 5ths.



You don't need to fill the space with notes just yet.

Once you're confident seeing the chord tones, trying working in some of the pentatonic scales. As you do so, you want to be ending your musical phrases upon on the chord tones. They're like the full stop (period) giving your musical sentences their ending.



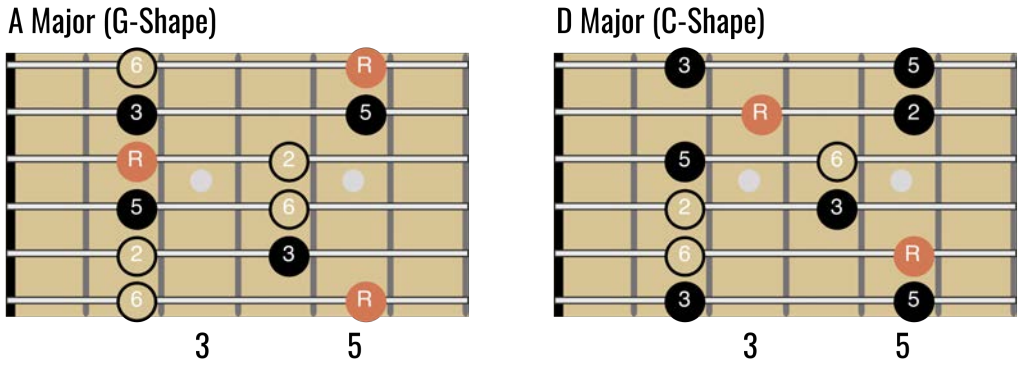
For now, I would recommend using predominantly arpeggios and pentatonic scales.

As you try and add a seven note scale, there's a possibility that you'll hit notes that don't sound right. That's when we enter into the world of modes.

You'll probably find that if you work through the arpeggios and pentatonic, a 7-note scale that works through all the chords might start to present itself.

How to develop this exercise

- Stay within the same area of the fretboard and add a third/fourth chord and approach the improvisation in the same way - chord tones/pentatonic scales. This is going to work for both the major and minor chords.
- Use the same two chord progression, but work in a different area of the fretboard. For example:



Playing the progression using different CAGED Shapes

- Extend your range of note choices into 2 Shapes as you play over the progression. Again, play the chords first to be clear on where the lead layers are to be found.
- Work it as a rhythm guitar exercise, exploring ways to play through progressions using the CAGED chord shapes (and the triad shapes therein).

Closing Words

Hopefully this ebook has answered your questions about the CAGED approach and how it can be applied.

There is more that can be learnt. There is *always* more to learn! Almost all chords, arpeggios and scales can fall within the CAGED framework.

As I stated at the beginning, there is already a lot here to learn and I didn't want to overload you with information.

These visualisation techniques will help you in whatever genre of music you play and it will undoubtedly help decipher other players' techniques and licks.

I am always available to take any questions or feedback by email: contact@rynaylorguitar.com.

Practise well 🙏

Ry

www.rynaylorguitar.com
October 2019

Appendices

The following charts are designed to help summarise the content of this book and be an easy reference for your practice sessions. There are full colour and printer-friendly black and white charts.

In the following pages you will find:

- Summary charts for each Major Shape, containing:
    - Moveable Chord Shape
    - Major Arpeggio
    - Major Pentatonic
    - Major Scale

- Summary charts for each Minor Shape, containing:
    - Moveable Chord Shape
    - Minor Arpeggio
    - Minor Pentatonic
    - Natural Minor Scale

- Horizontal Fretboard Diagrams showing how each lead layer links up along the fretboard through the different Shapes.

    - Minor Arpeggio
    - Minor Pentatonic
    - Natural Minor Scale
    - Major Arpeggio
    - Major Pentatonic
    - Major Scale

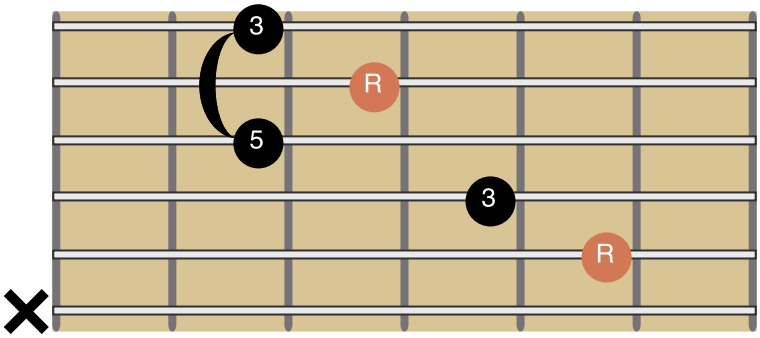
Each chart begins with the E/Em-Shape with the Root note as the lowest note on String 6(E).

There will be a different starting shape on the fretboard depending on which Root note you choose, but the Shapes always link up in the same way:

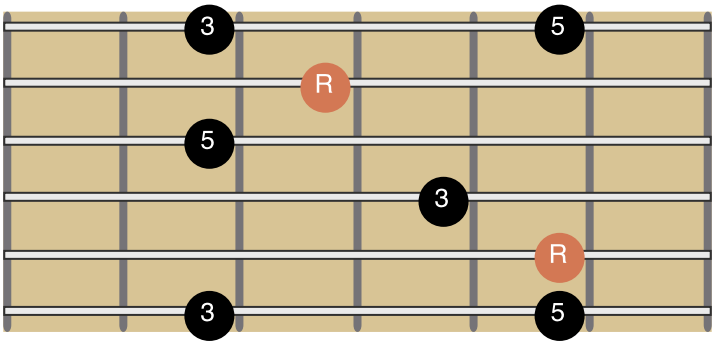
C-A-G-E-D-**C-A-G-E-D**-C-A-G-E-D...

C-Shape

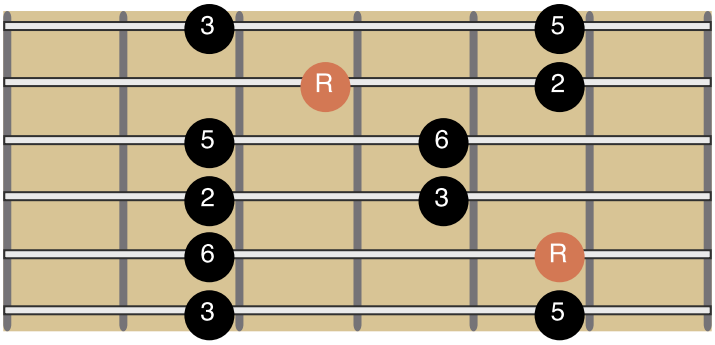
Major Chord



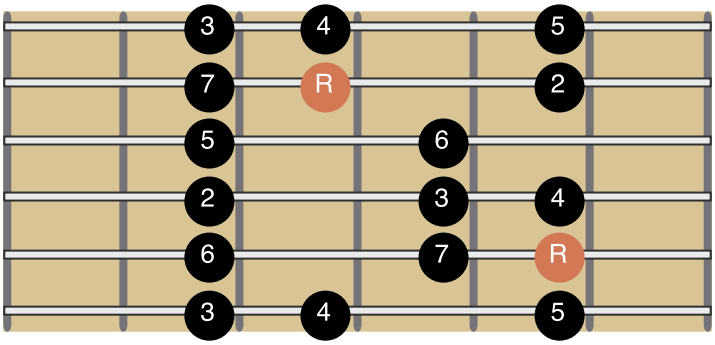
Major Arpeggio



Major Pentatonic

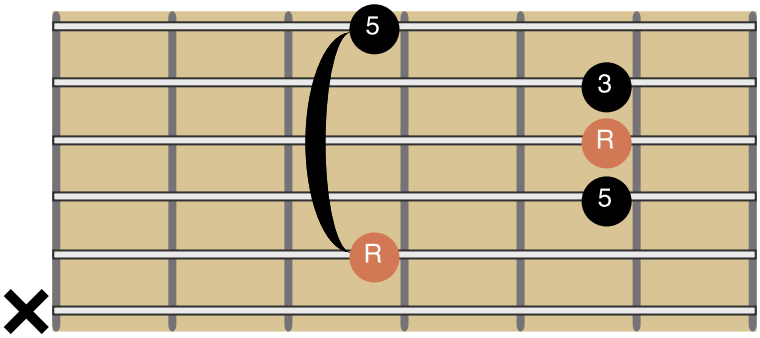


Major Scale

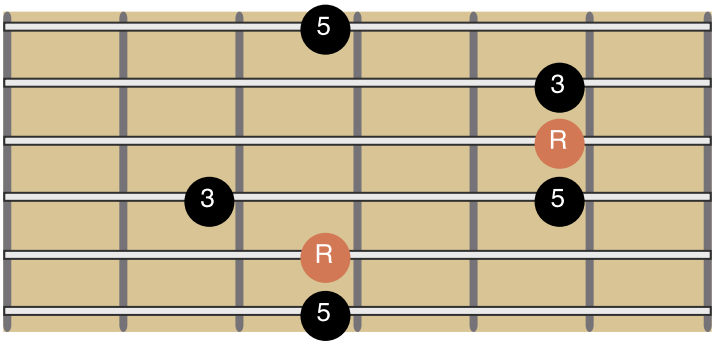


A-Shape

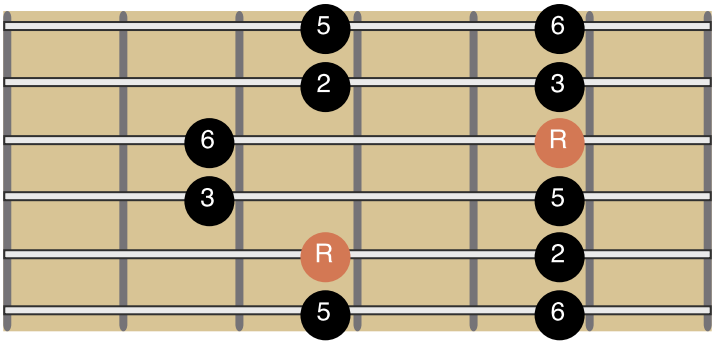
Major Chord



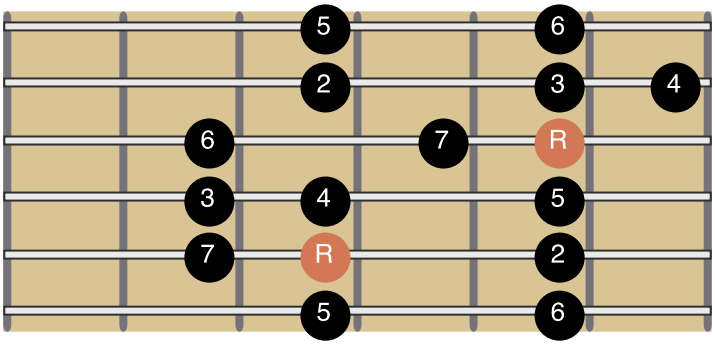
Major Arpeggio



Major Pentatonic

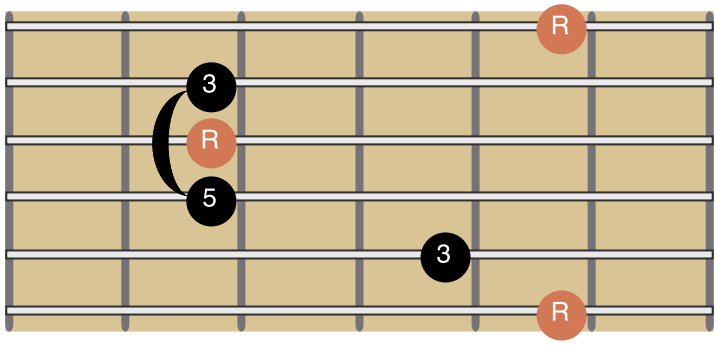


Major Scale

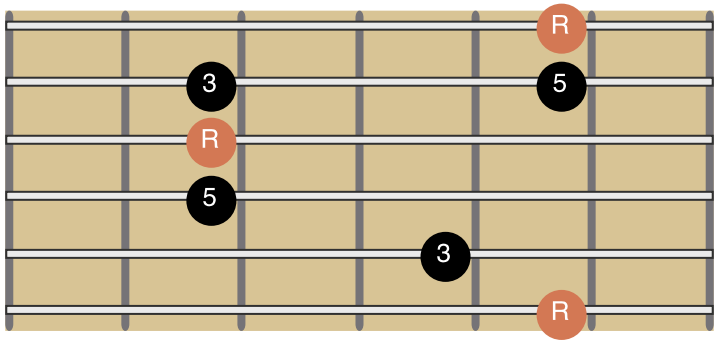


G-Shape

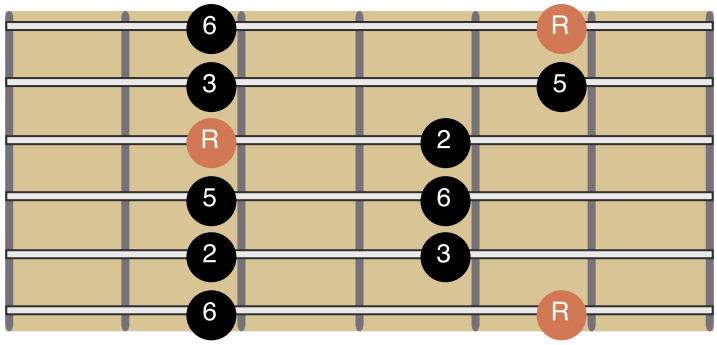
Major Chord



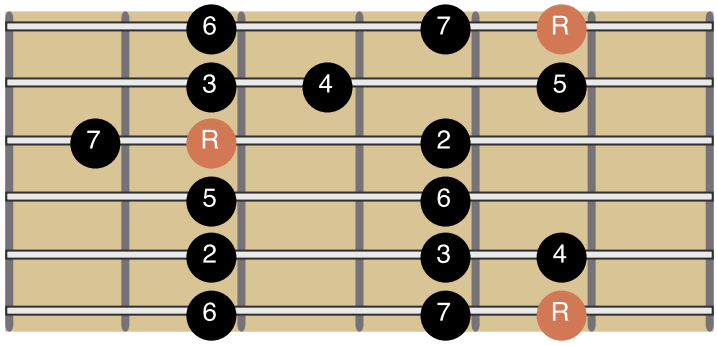
Major Arpeggio



Major Pentatonic

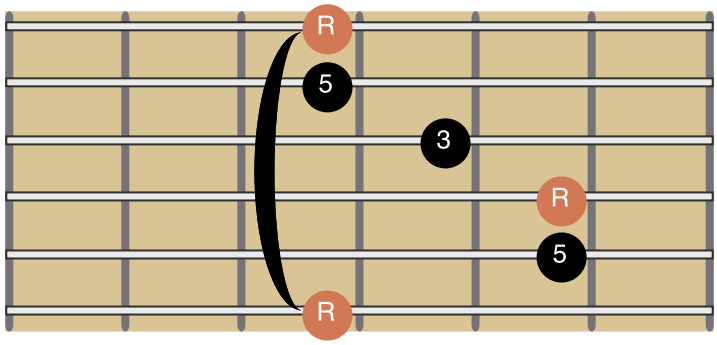


Major Scale

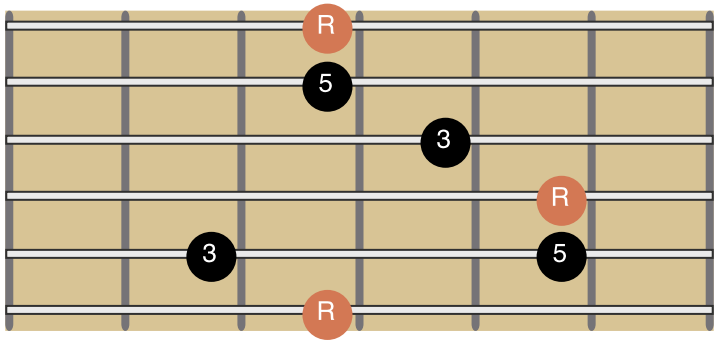


E-Shape

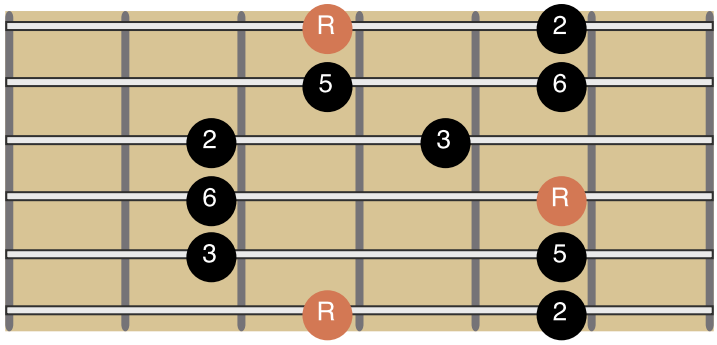
Major Chord



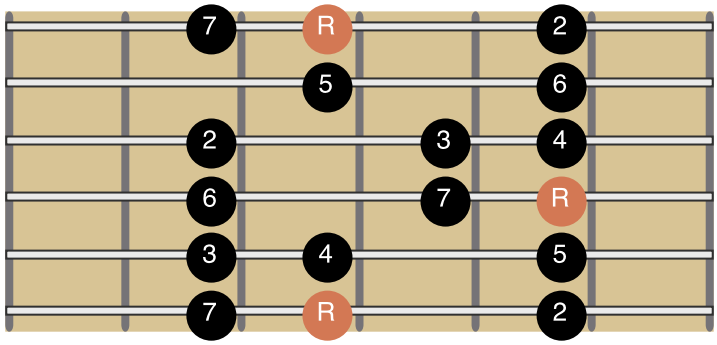
Major Arpeggio



Major Pentatonic

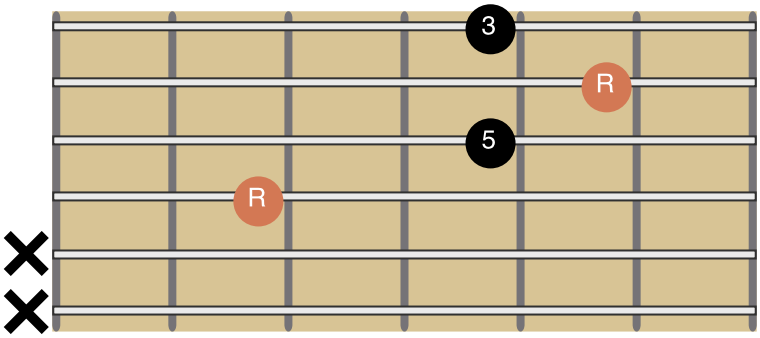


Major Scale

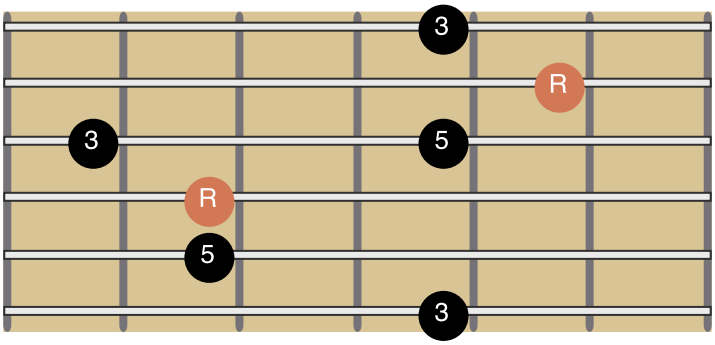


D-Shape

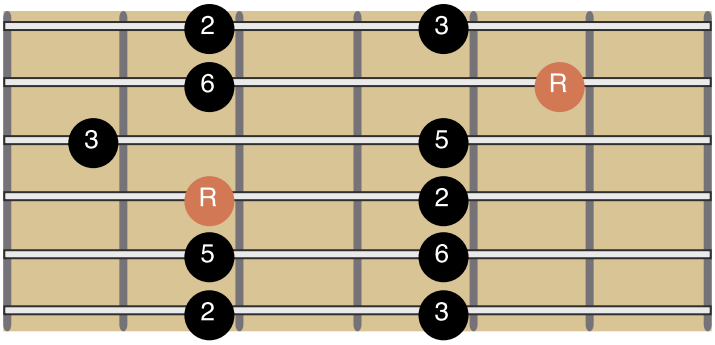
Major Chord



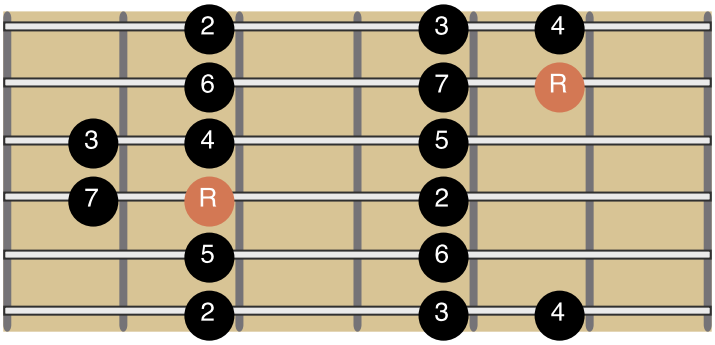
Major Arpeggio



Major Pentatonic

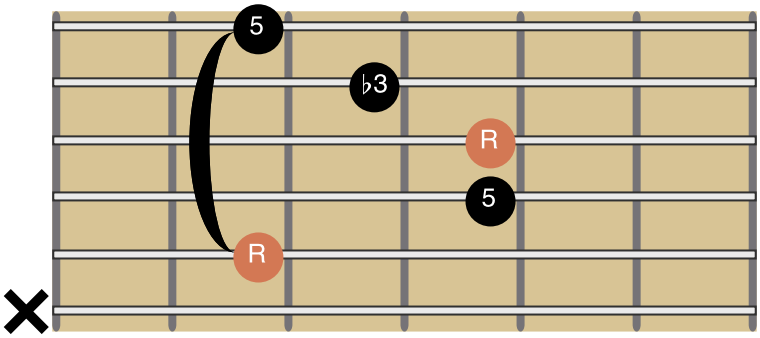


Major Scale

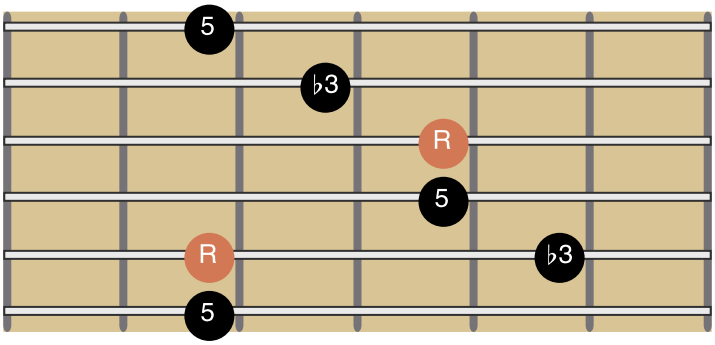


Am-Shape

Minor Chord



Minor Arpeggio



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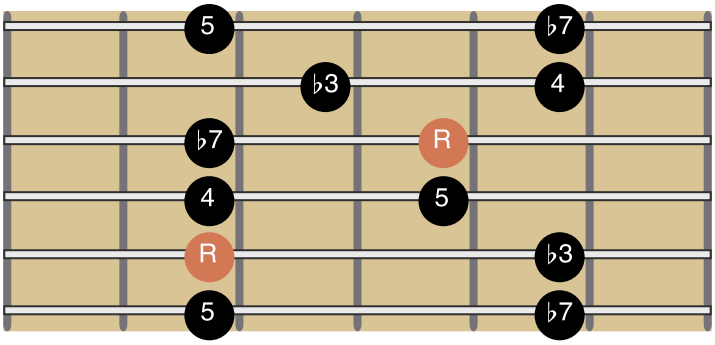
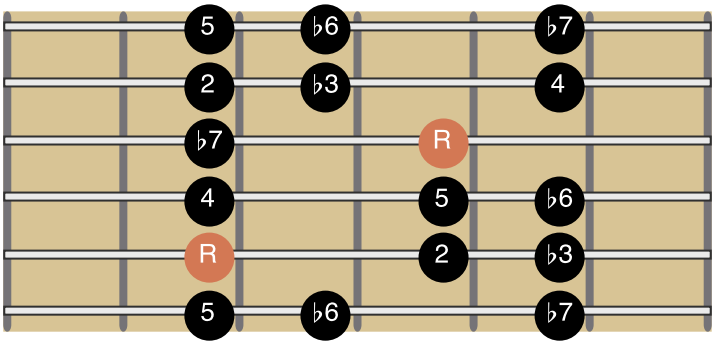
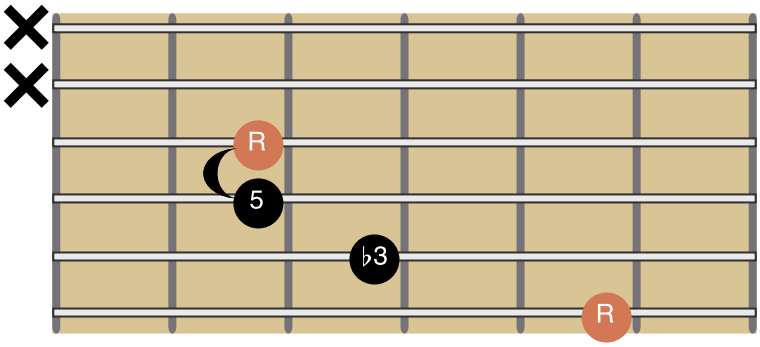


Natural Minor Scale

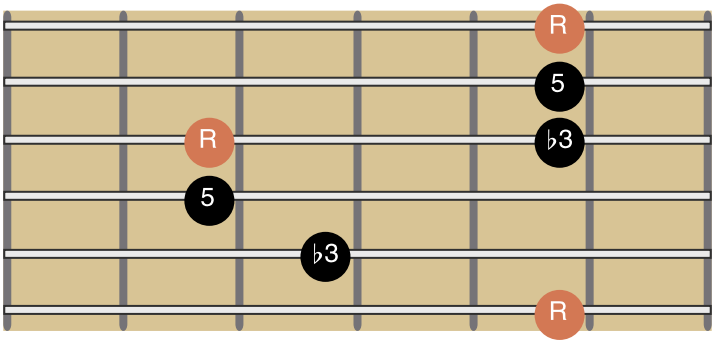


Gm-Shape

Minor Chord



Minor Arpeggio



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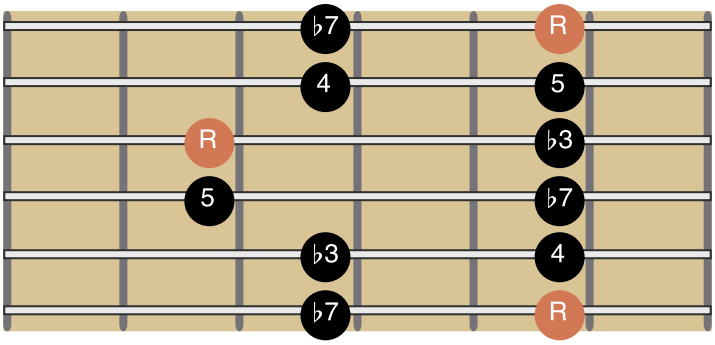

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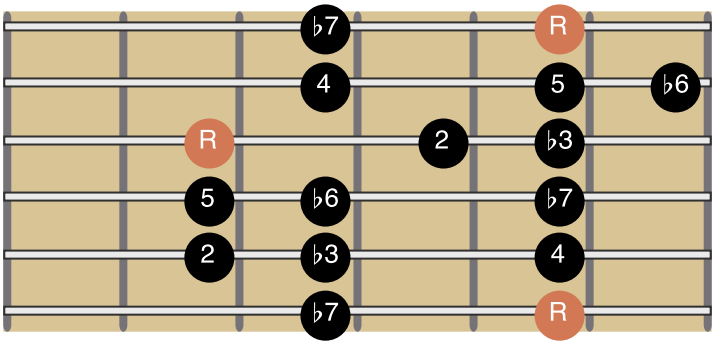
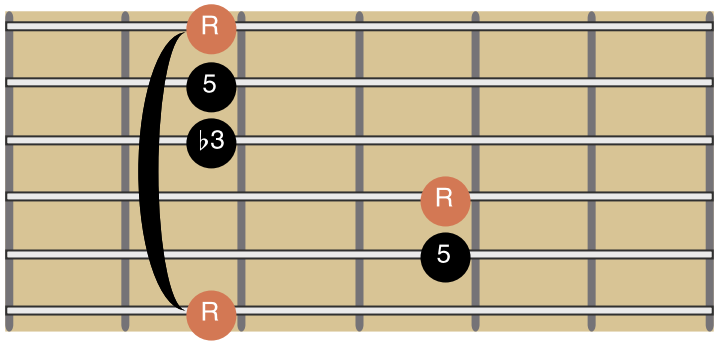
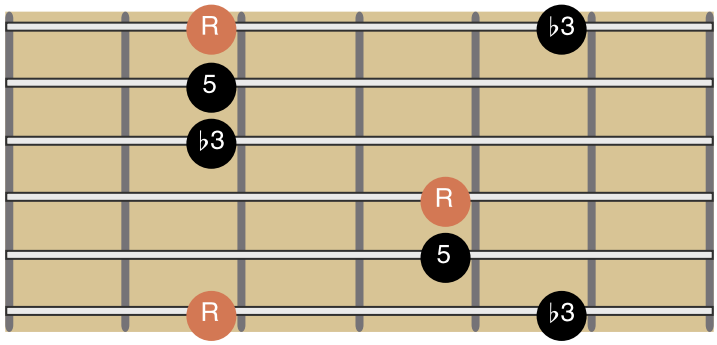


Em-Shape

Minor Chord



Minor Arpeggio



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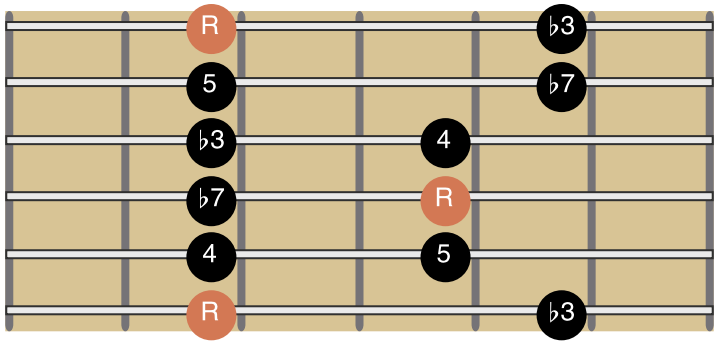
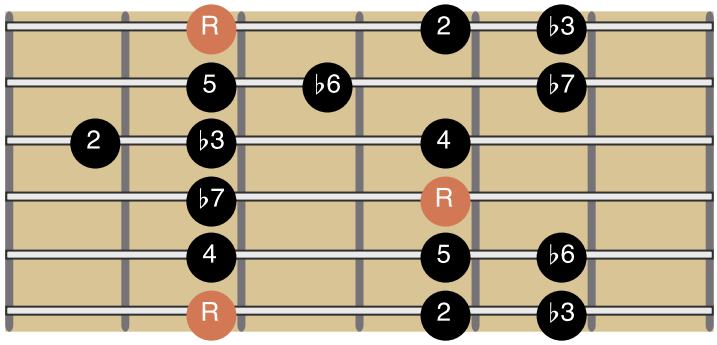
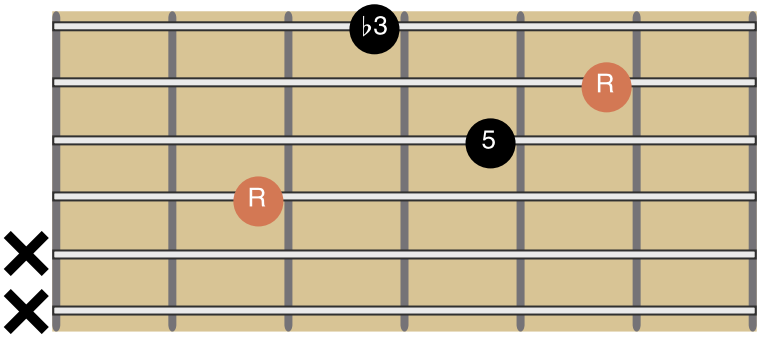


Natural Minor Scale

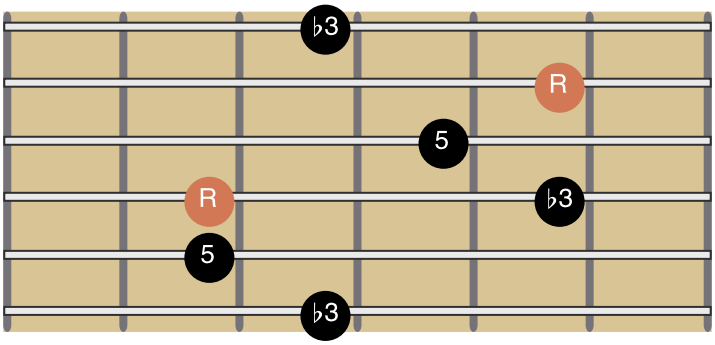


Dm-Shape

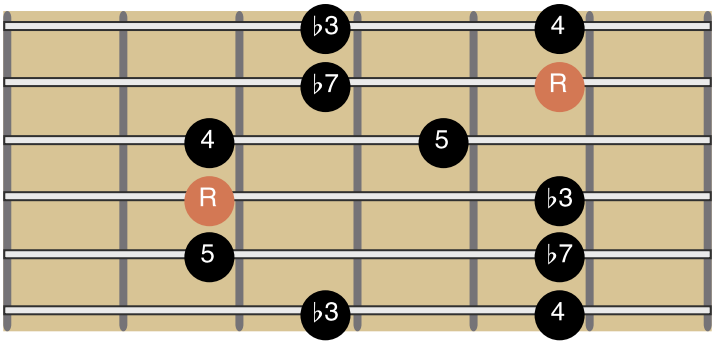
Minor Chord



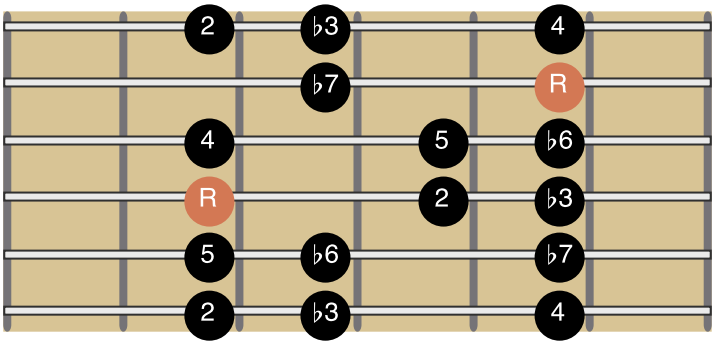
Minor Arpeggio



Minor Pentatonic

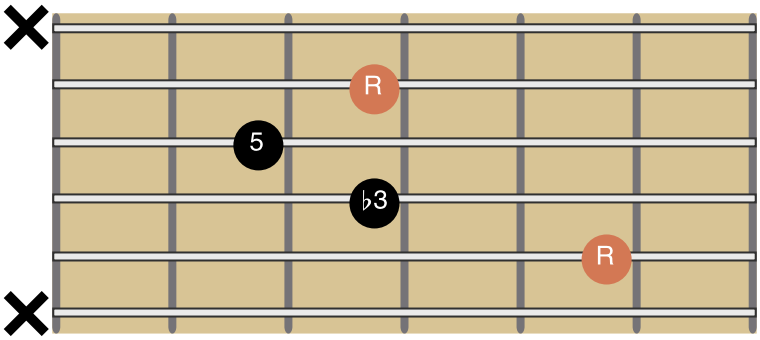


Natural Minor Scale

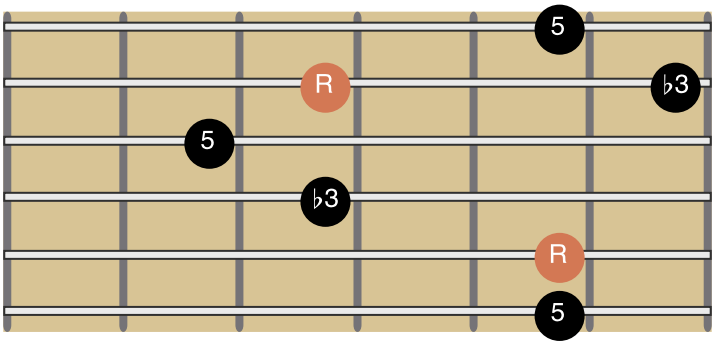


Cm-Shape

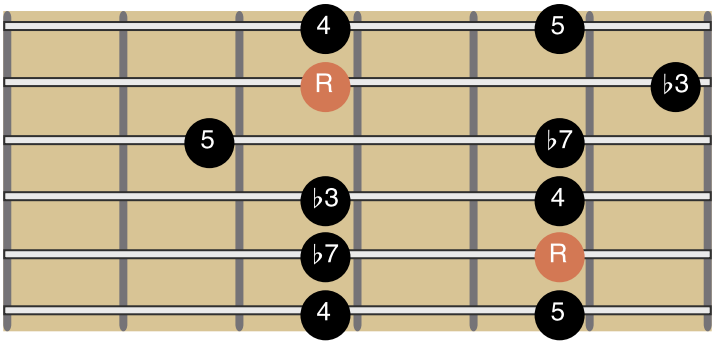
Minor Chord



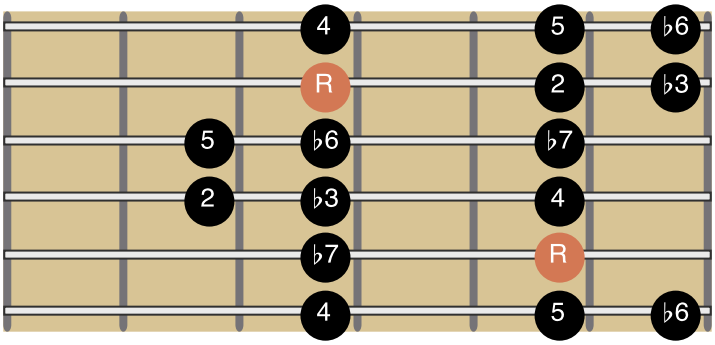
Minor Arpeggio

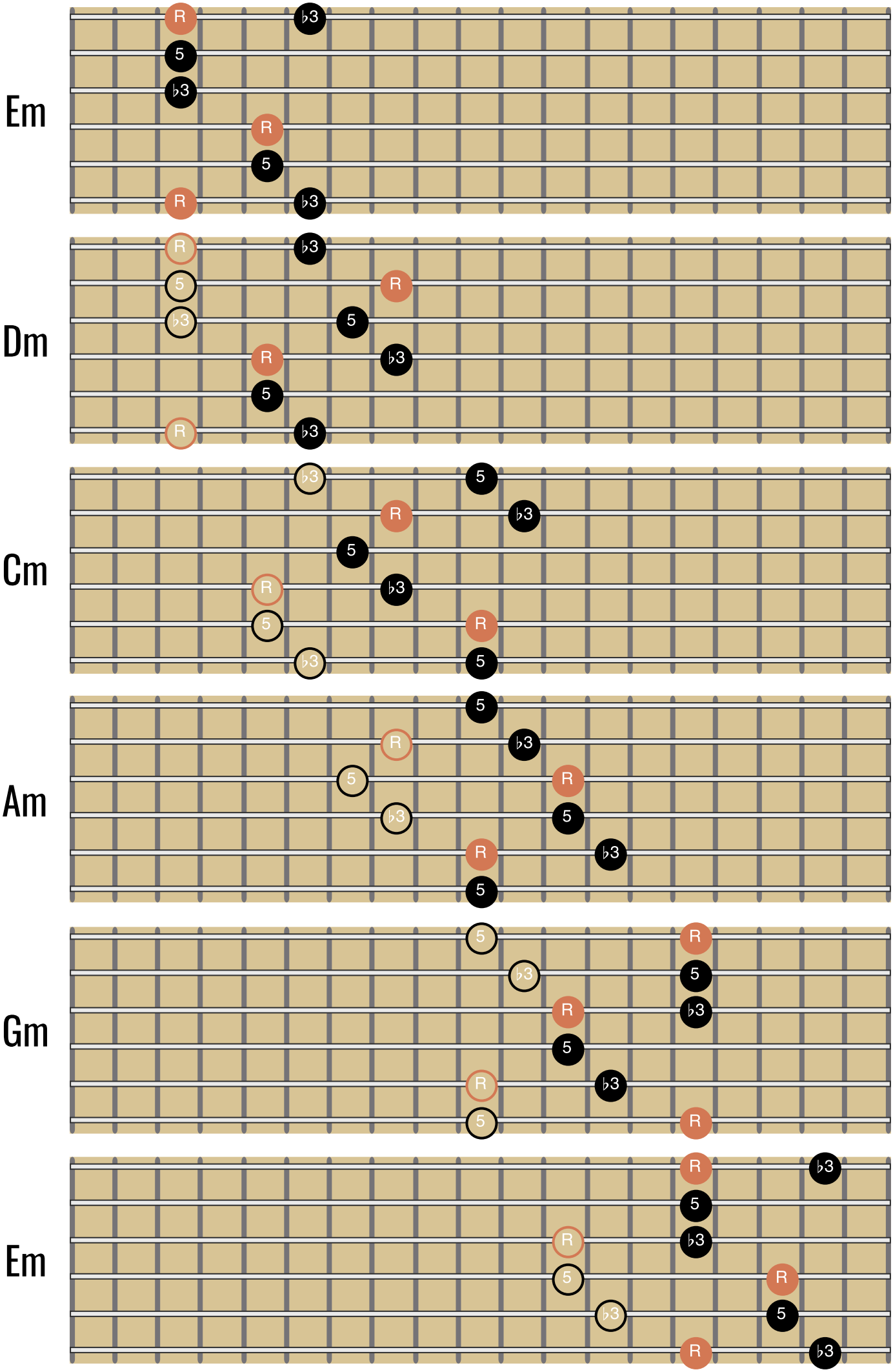


Minor Pentatonic



Natural Minor Scale




Em
R
♭3
5
♭3
R
5
R
♭3
Dm
R
♭3
5
♭3
R
5
R
♭3
R
5
♭3
Cm
♭3
5
R
♭3
5
R
♭3
5
R
♭3
5
Am
5
R
♭3
5
R
♭3
5
R
♭3
5
Gm
5
♭3
R
5
R
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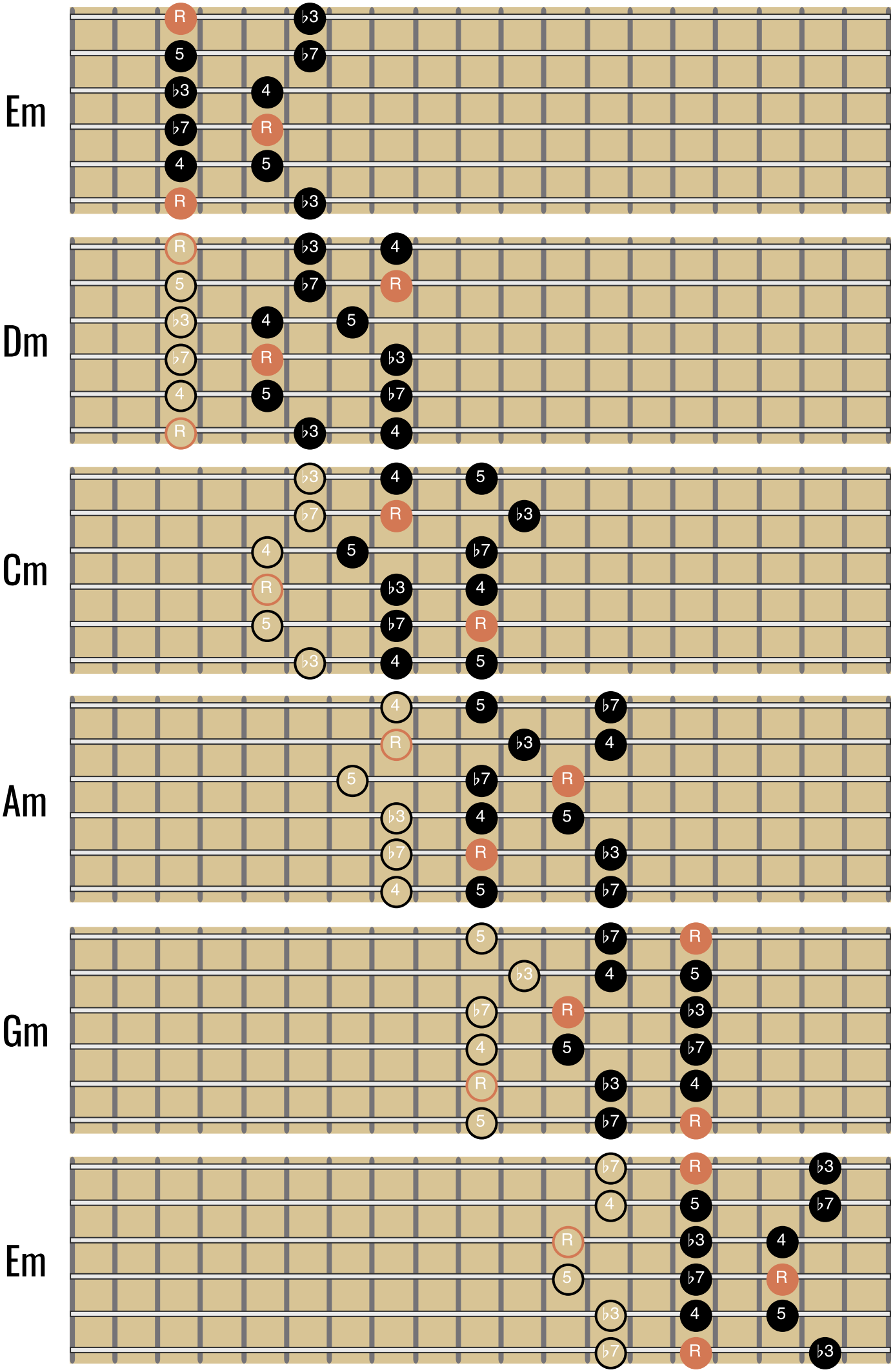
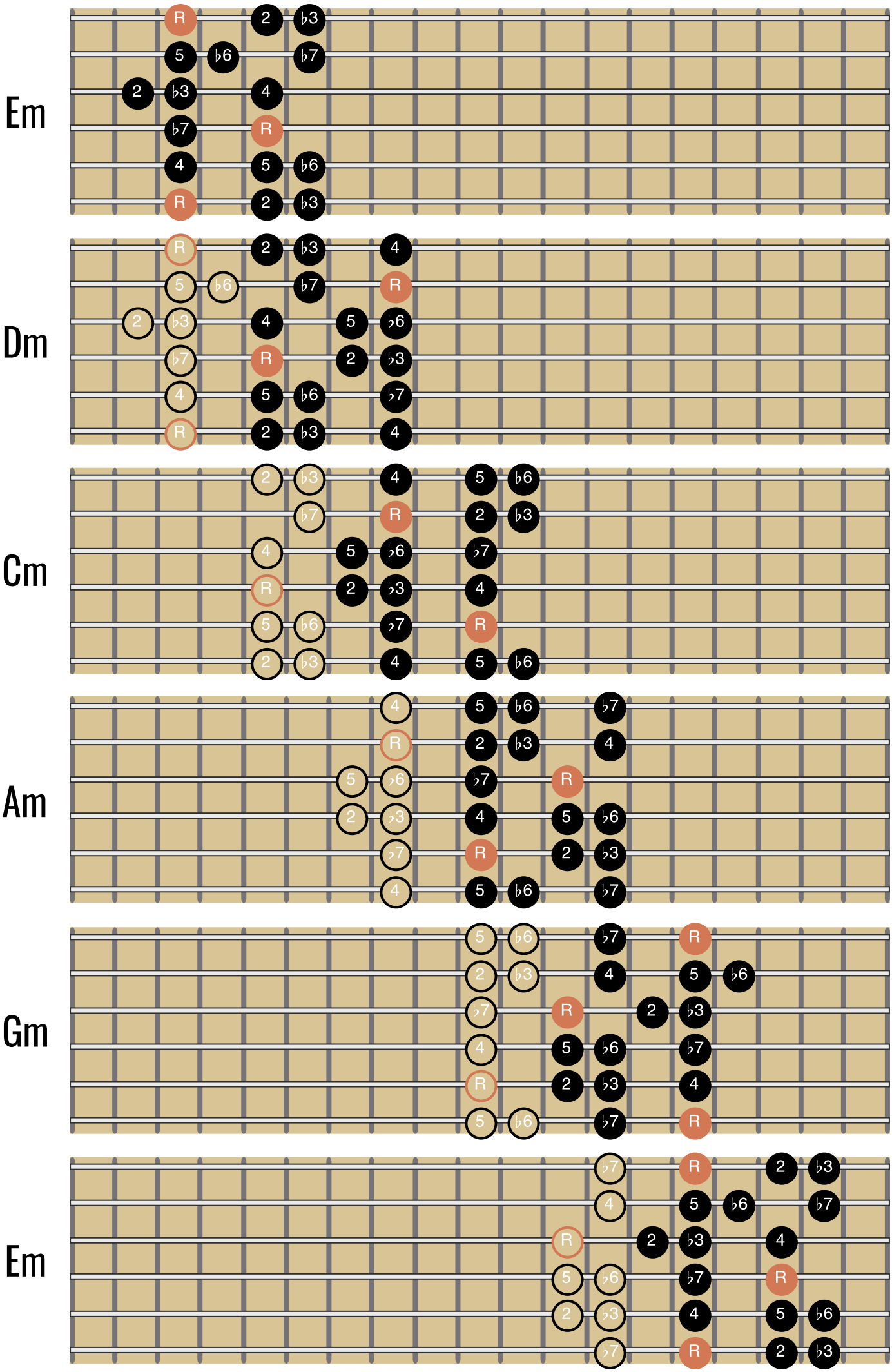
♭3
R
5
♭3


Em
R ♭3
5 ♭7
♭3 4
♭7 R
4 5
R ♭3
Dm
R ♭3 4
5 ♭7 R
♭3 4 5
♭7 R ♭3
4 5 ♭7
R ♭3 4
Cm
♭3 4 5
♭7 R ♭3
4 5 ♭7
R ♭3 4
5 ♭7 R
♭3 4 5
Am
4 5 ♭7
R ♭3 4
5 ♭7 R
♭3 4 5
♭7 R ♭3
4 5 ♭7
Gm
5 ♭7 R
♭3 4 5
♭7 R ♭3
4 5 ♭7
R ♭3 4
5 ♭7 R
Em
♭7 R ♭3
4 5 ♭7
R ♭3 4
5 ♭7 R
♭3 4 5
♭7 R ♭3


Em
R 2 ♭3
5 ♭6 ♭7
2 ♭3 4
♭7 R
4 5 ♭6
R 2 ♭3
Dm
R 2 ♭3 4
5 ♭6 ♭7 R
2 ♭3 4 5 ♭6
♭7 R 2 ♭3
4 5 ♭6 ♭7
R 2 ♭3 4
Cm
2 ♭3 4 5 ♭6
♭7 R 2 ♭3
4 5 ♭6 ♭7
R 2 ♭3 4
5 ♭6 ♭7 R
2 ♭3 4 5 ♭6
Am
4 5 ♭6 ♭7
R 2 ♭3 4
5 ♭6 ♭7 R
2 ♭3 4 5 ♭6
♭7 R 2 ♭3
4 5 ♭6 ♭7
Gm
5 ♭6 ♭7 R
2 ♭3 4 5 ♭6
♭7 R 2 ♭3
4 5 ♭6 ♭7
R 2 ♭3 4
5 ♭6 ♭7 R
Em
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4 5 ♭6 ♭7
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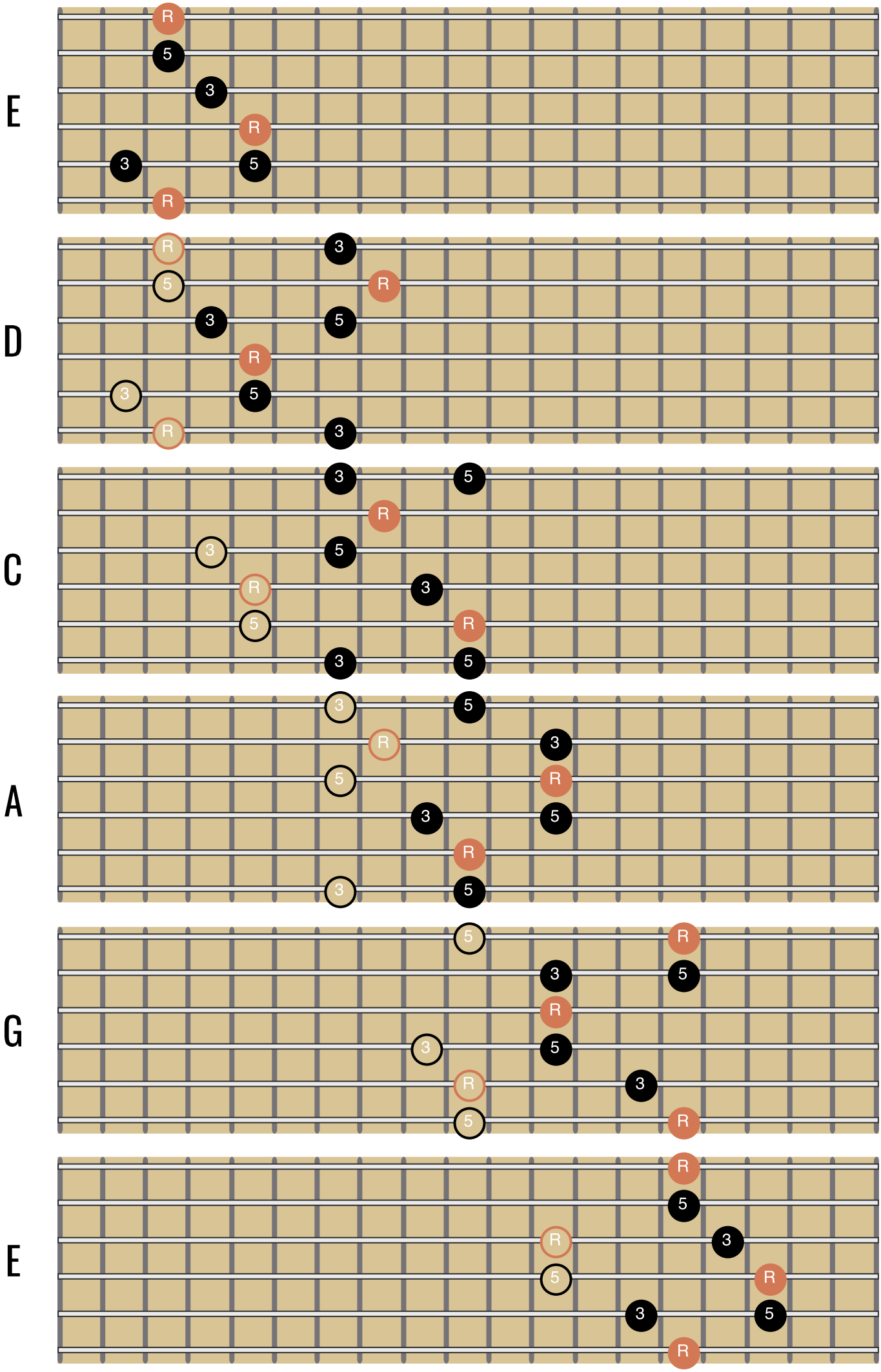
5 ♭6 ♭7 R
2 ♭3 4 5 ♭6
♭7 R 2 ♭3


E
R
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D
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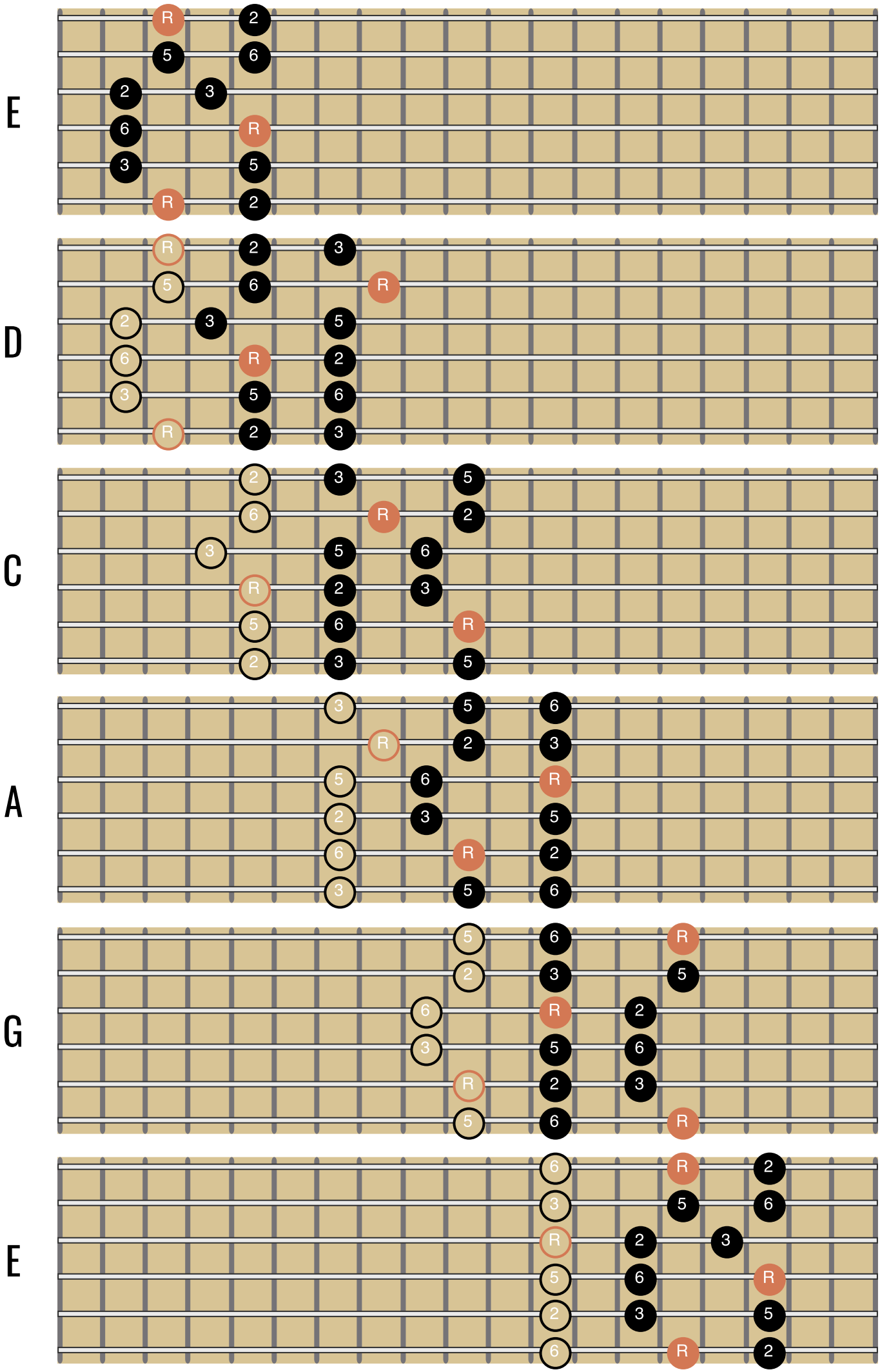
E
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R 2
D
R 2 3
5 6 R
2 3 5
6 R 2
3 5 6
R 2 3
C
2 3 5
6 R 2
3 5 6
R 2 3
5 6 R
2 3 5
A
3 5 6
R 2 3
5 6 R
2 3 5
6 R 2
3 5 6
G
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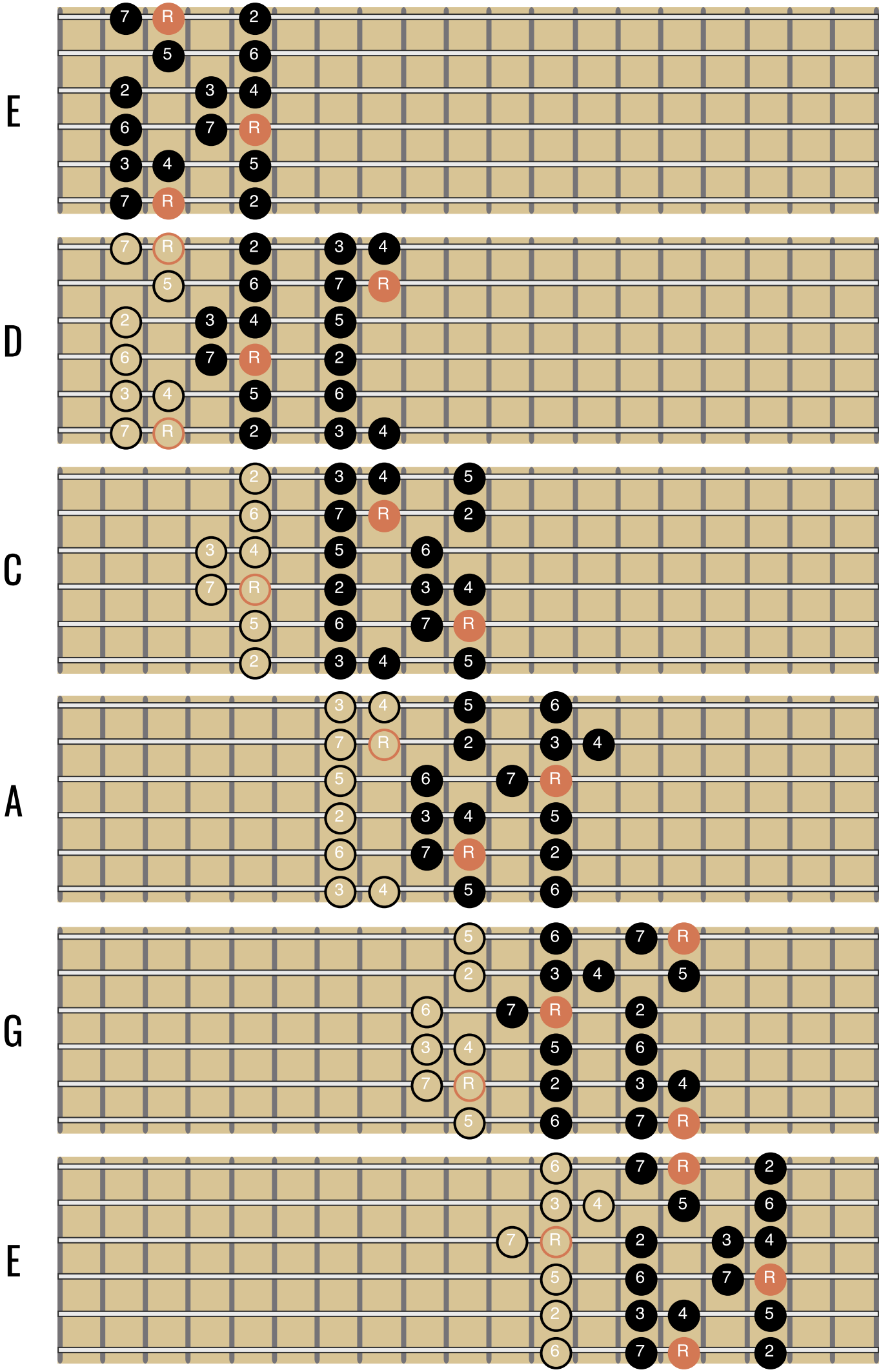
5 6 R
2 3 5
6 R 2


E
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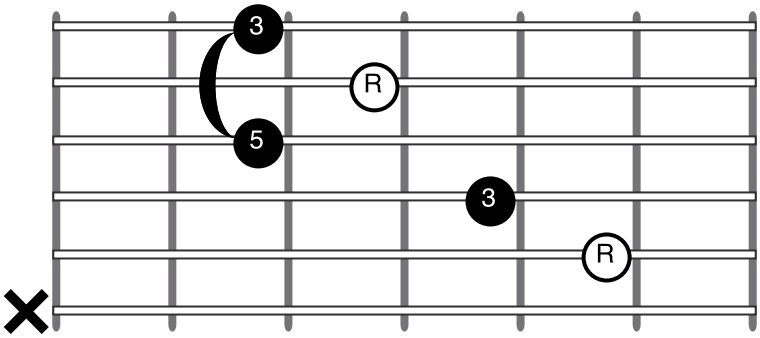
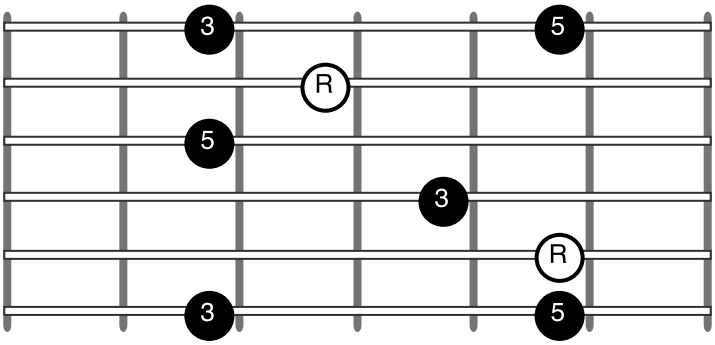
E

C-Shape

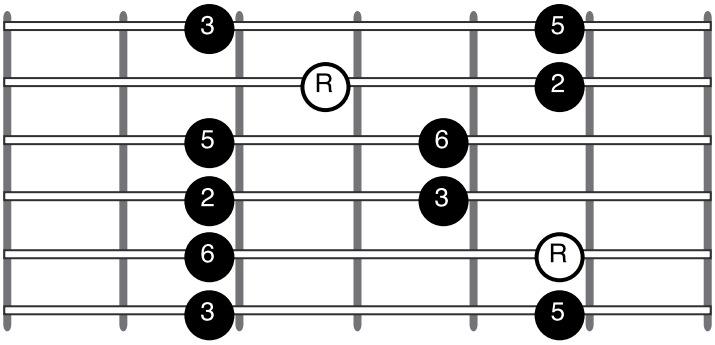
Major Chord



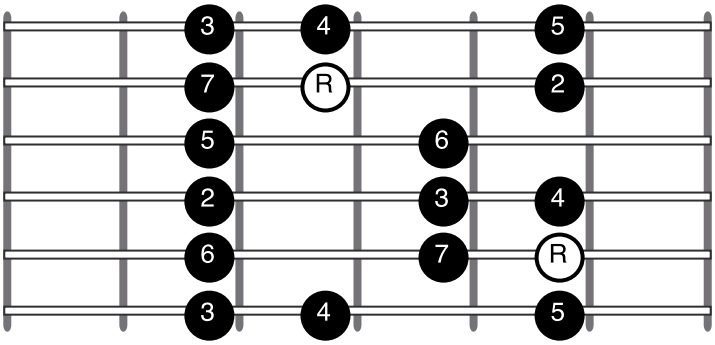
Major Arpeggio



Major Pentatonic

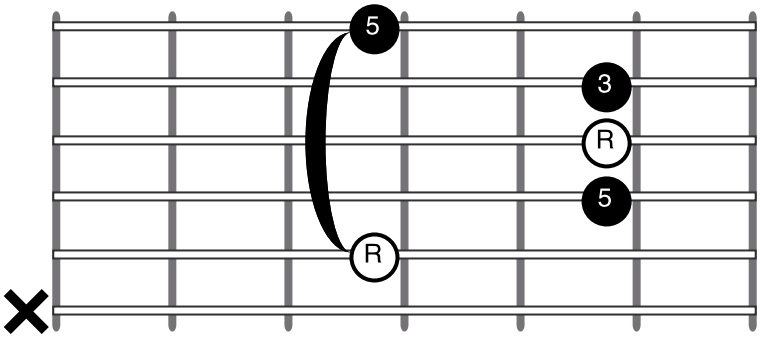


Major Scale

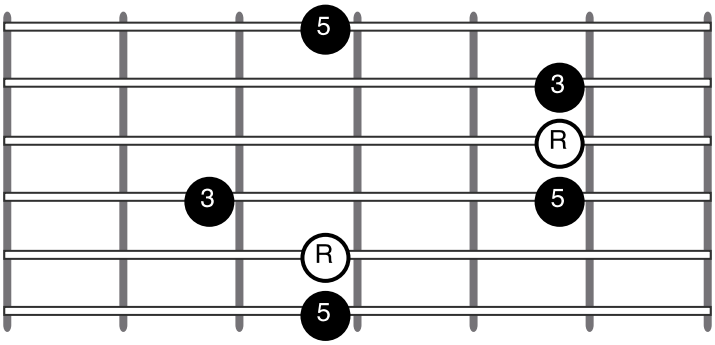


A-Shape

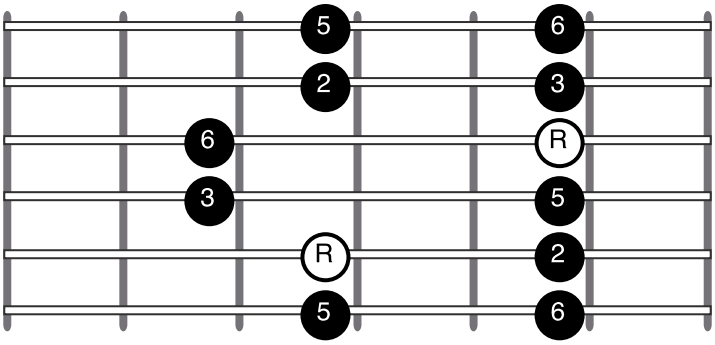
Major Chord



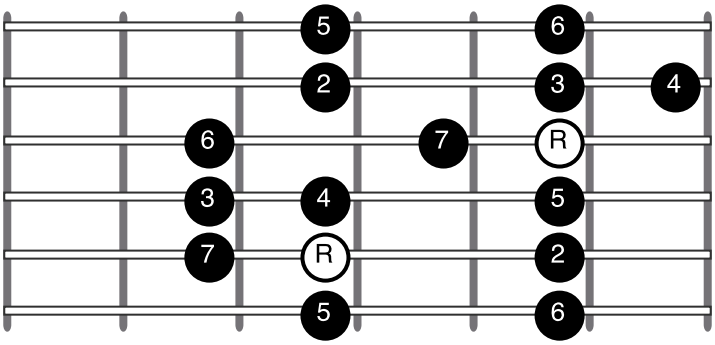
Major Arpeggio



Major Pentatonic

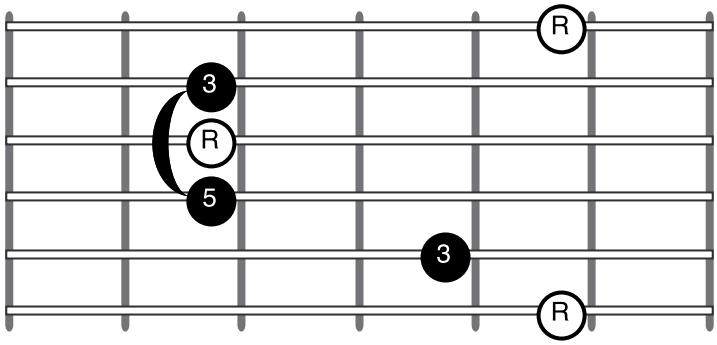


Major Scale

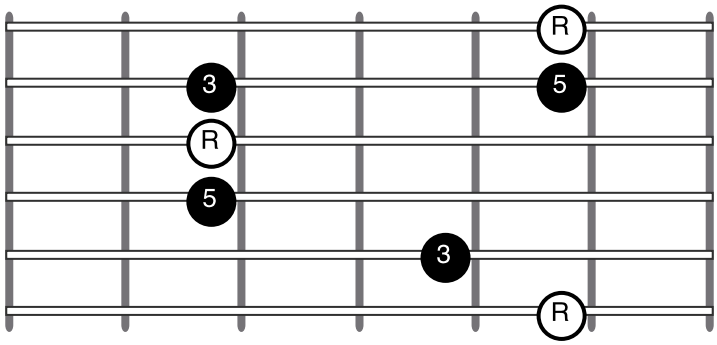


G-Shape

Major Chord



Major Arpeggio



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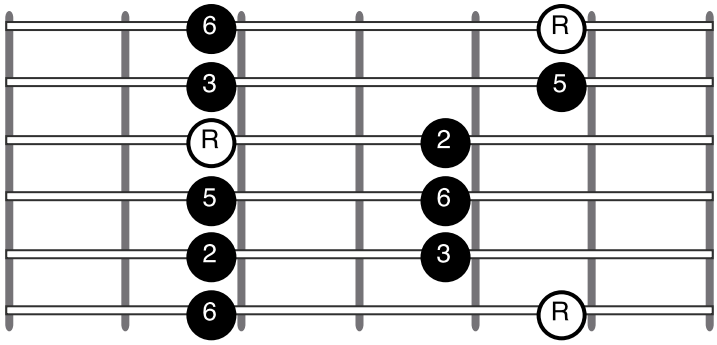
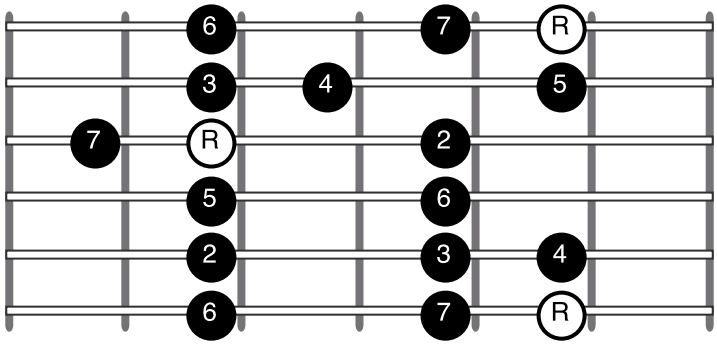
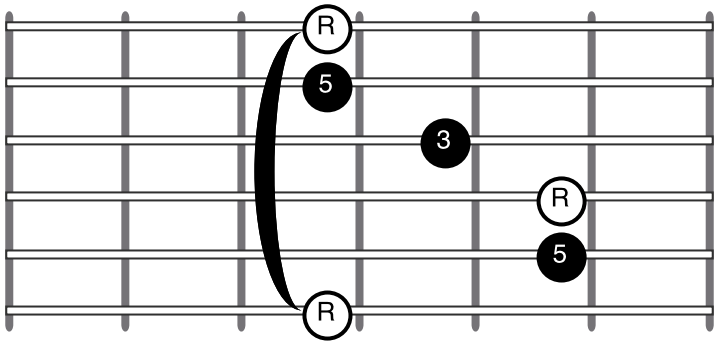


Major Scale

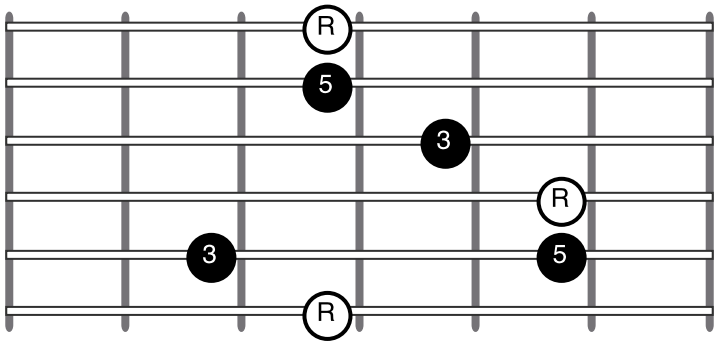


E-Shape

Major Chord



Major Arpeggio



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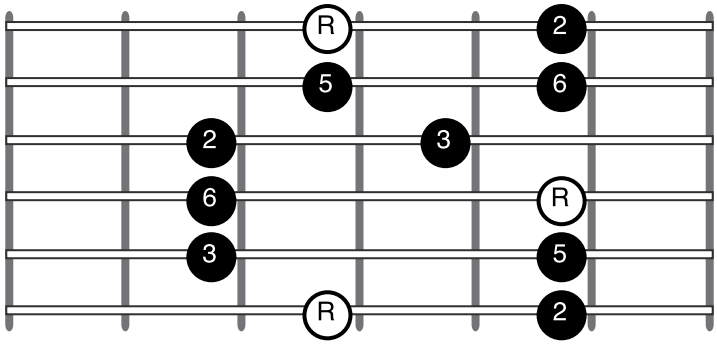
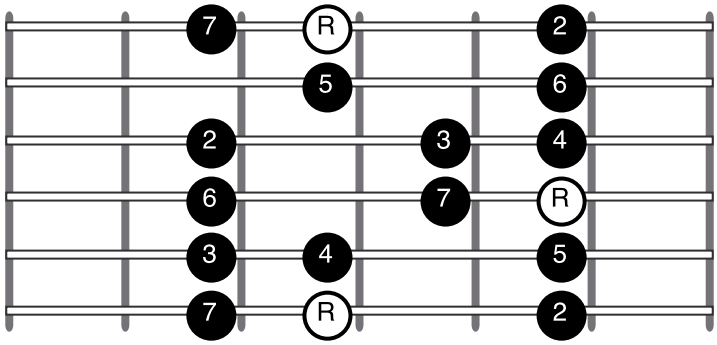
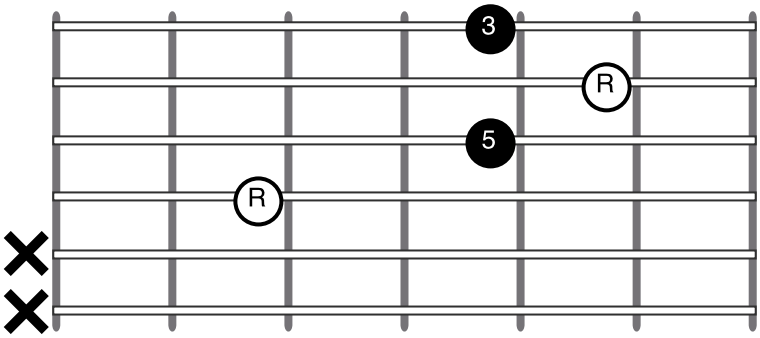


Major Scale

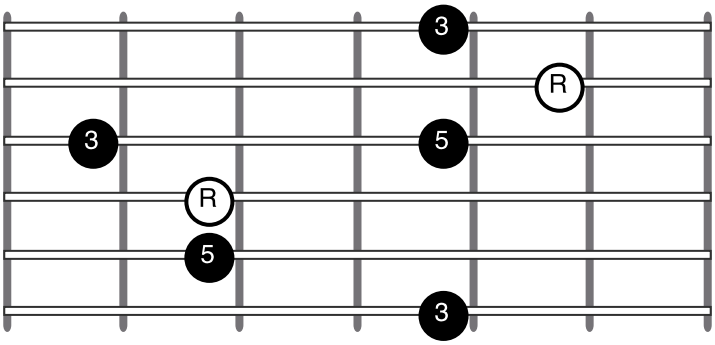


D-Shape

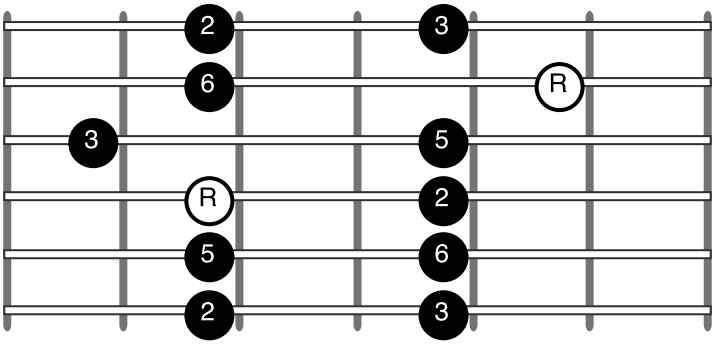
Major Chord



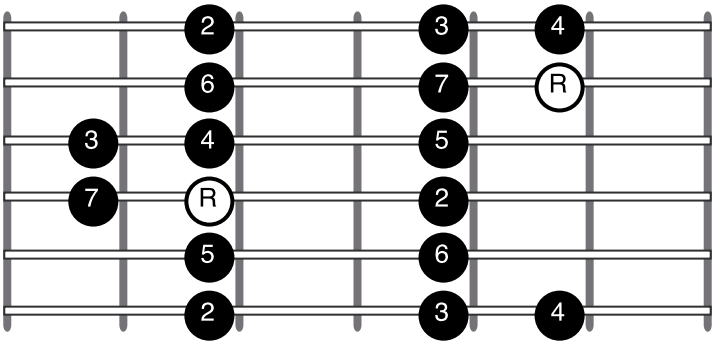
Major Arpeggio



Major Pentatonic

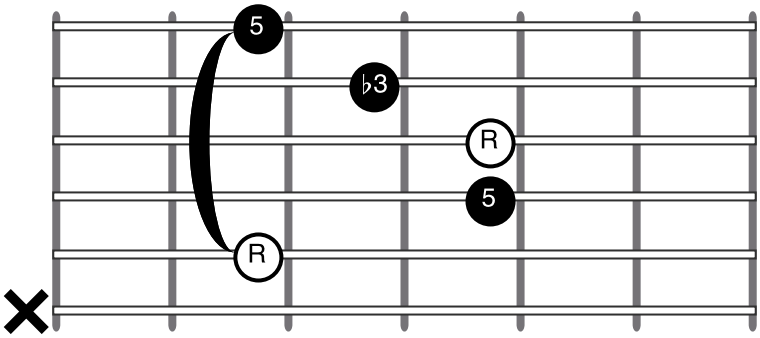


Major Scale

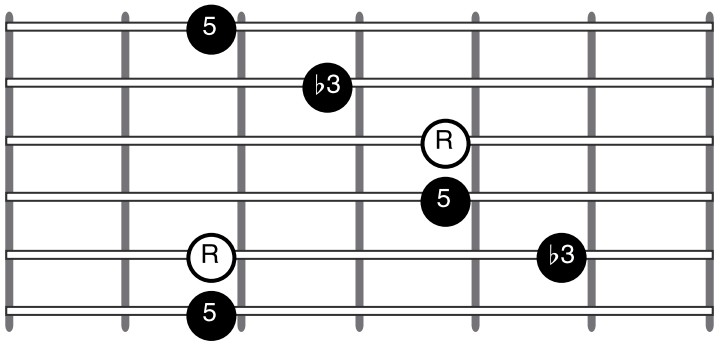


Am-Shape

Minor Chord



Minor Arpeggio



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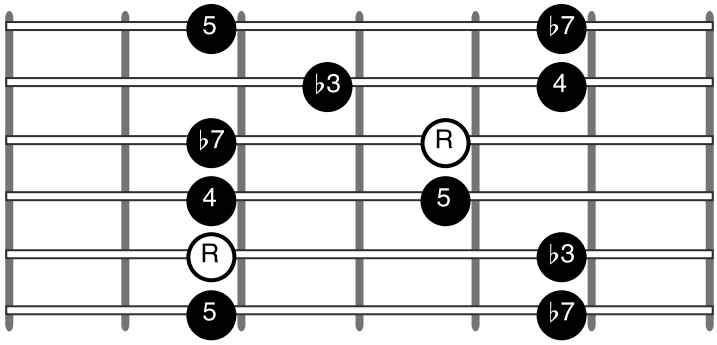
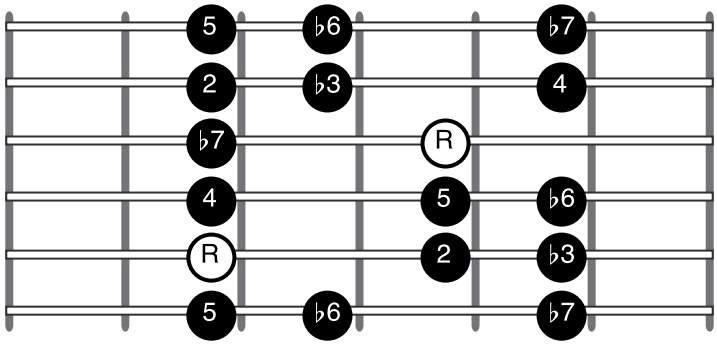
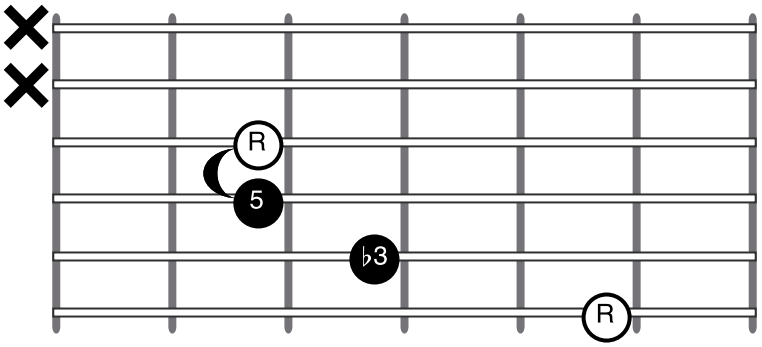


Natural Minor Scale

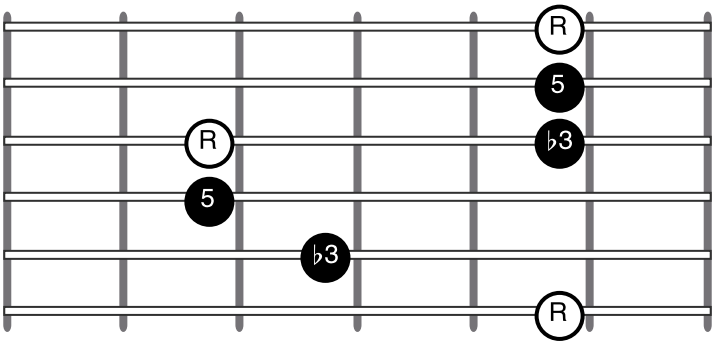


Gm-Shape

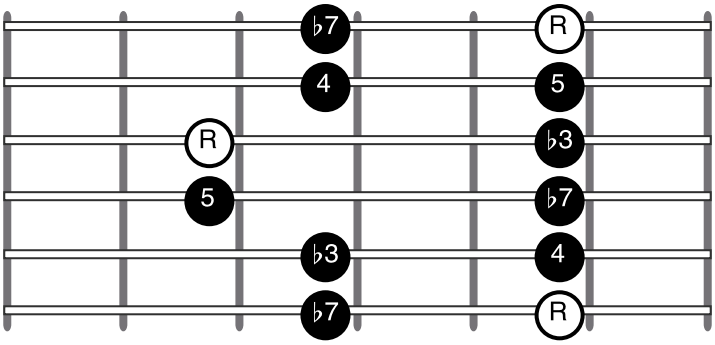
Minor Chord



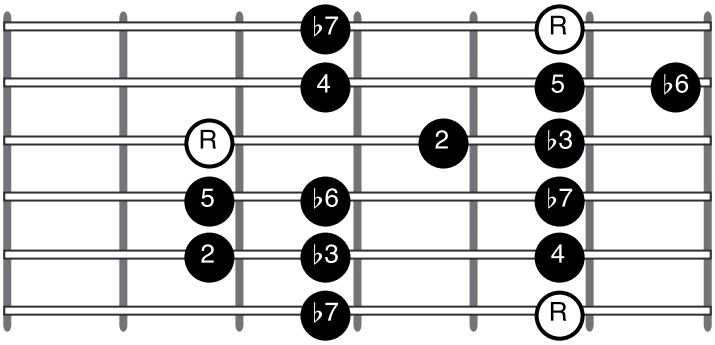
Minor Arpeggio



Minor Pentatonic

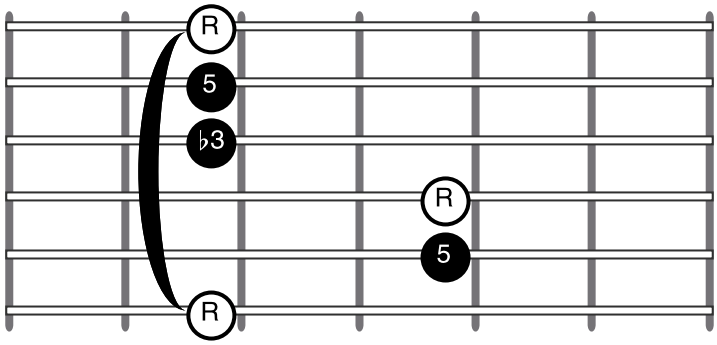


Natural Minor Scale

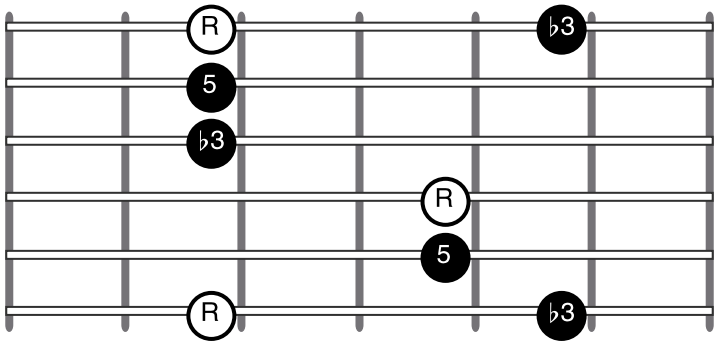


Em-Shape

Minor Chord



Minor Arpeggio



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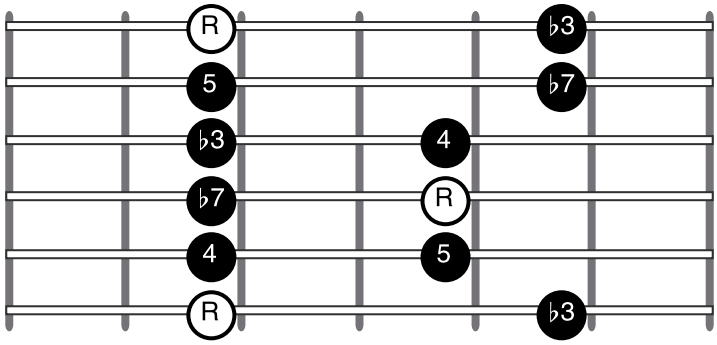
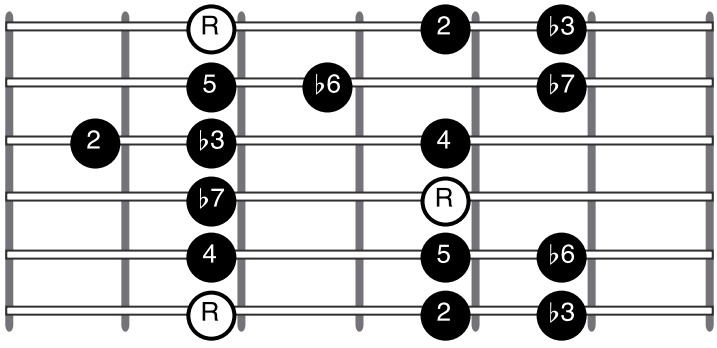
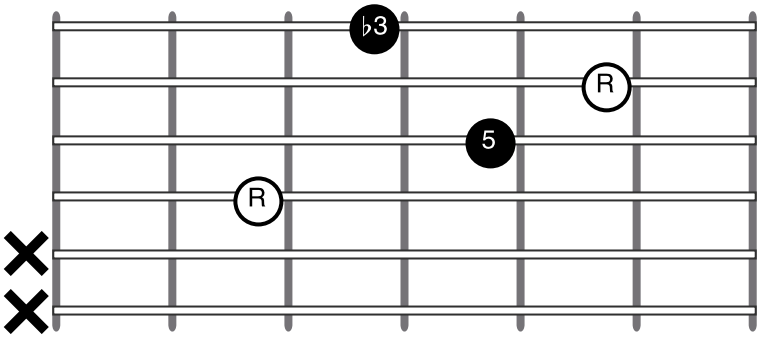


Natural Minor Scale

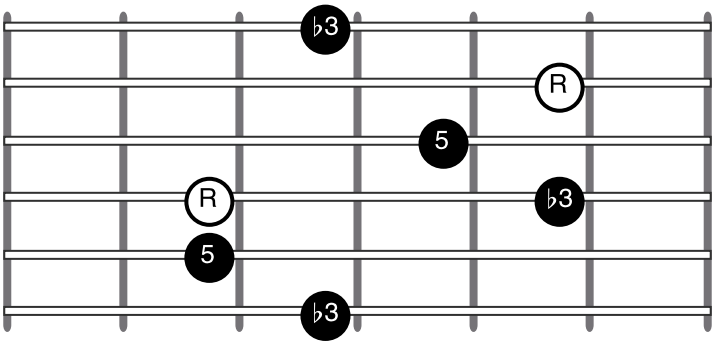


Dm-Shape

Minor Chord



Minor Arpeggio



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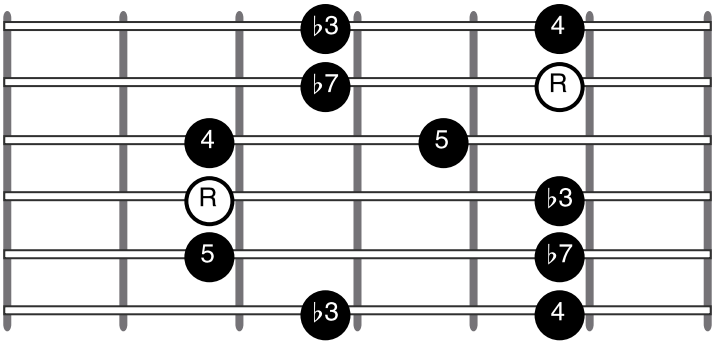
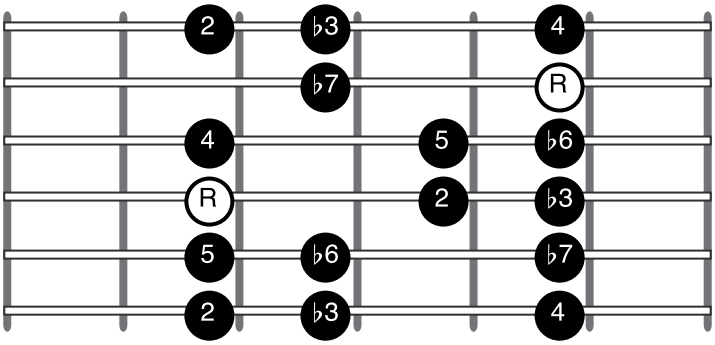
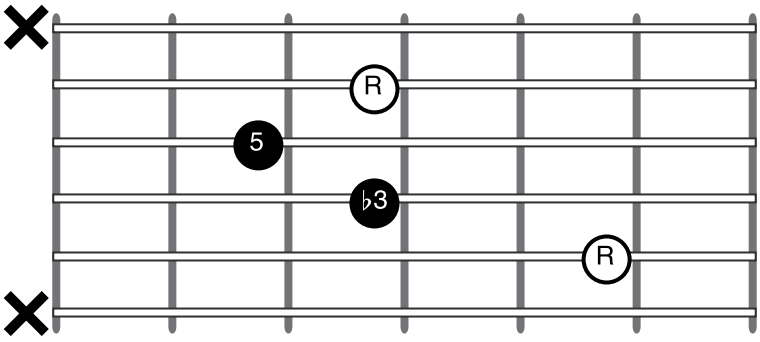


Natural Minor Scale

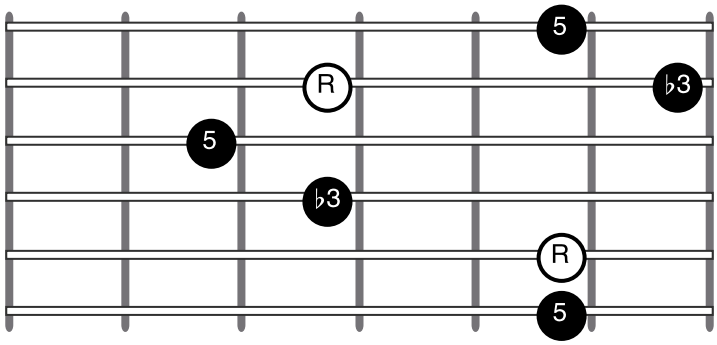


Cm-Shape

Minor Chord



Minor Arpeggio



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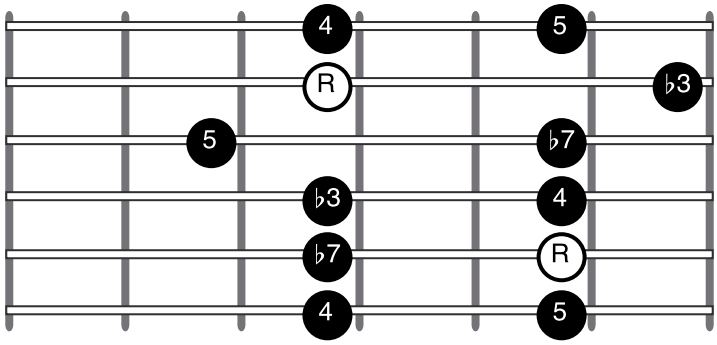
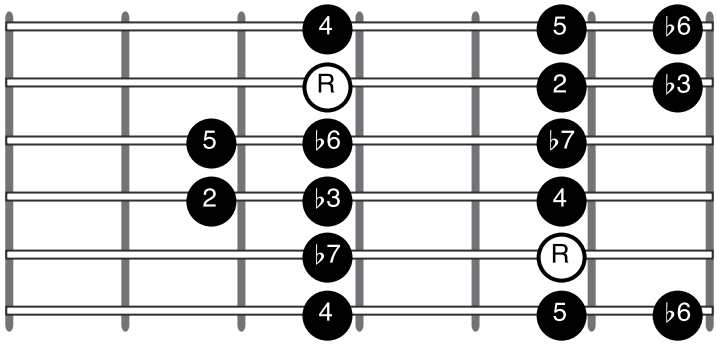
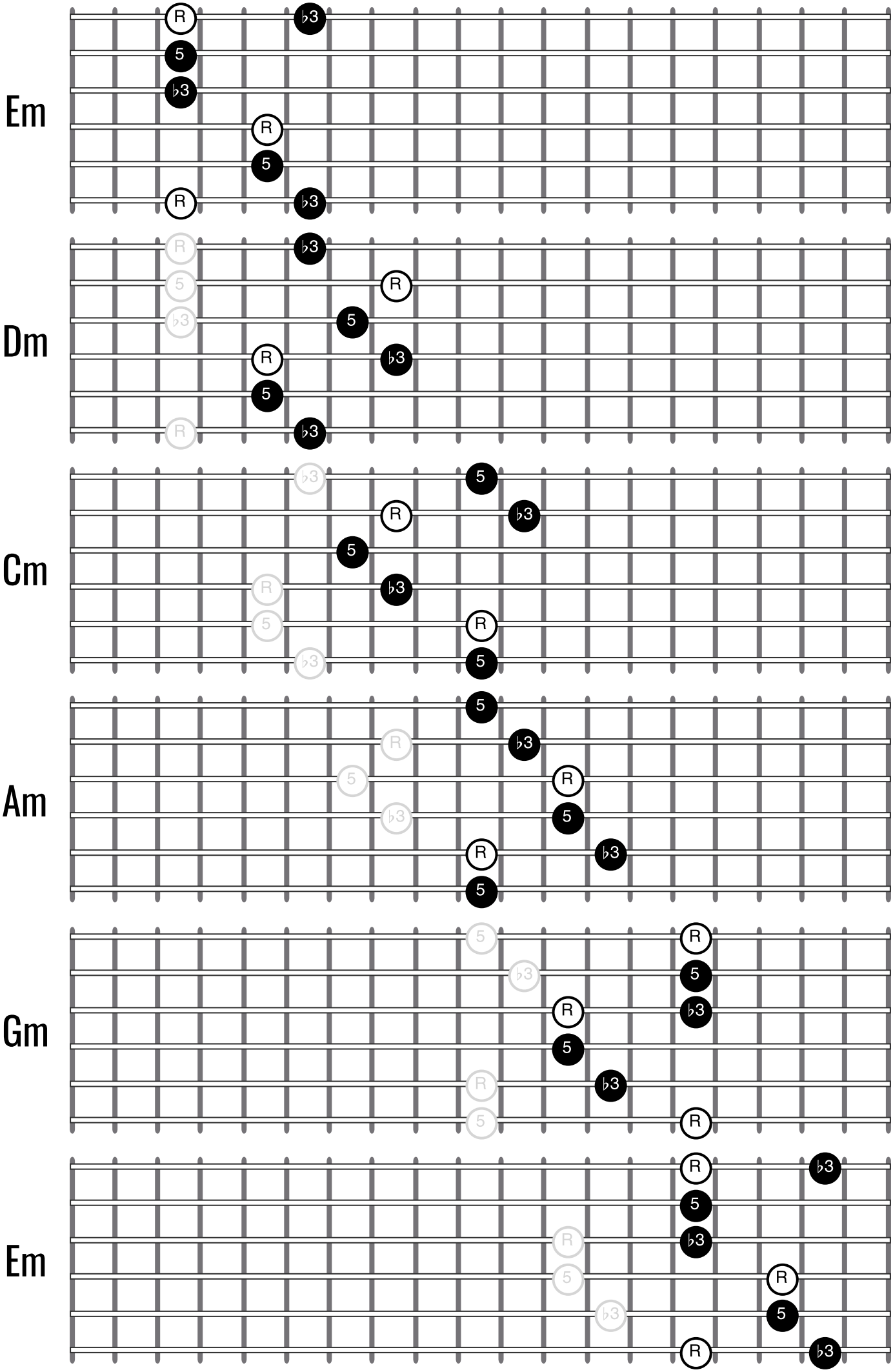


Natural Minor Scale

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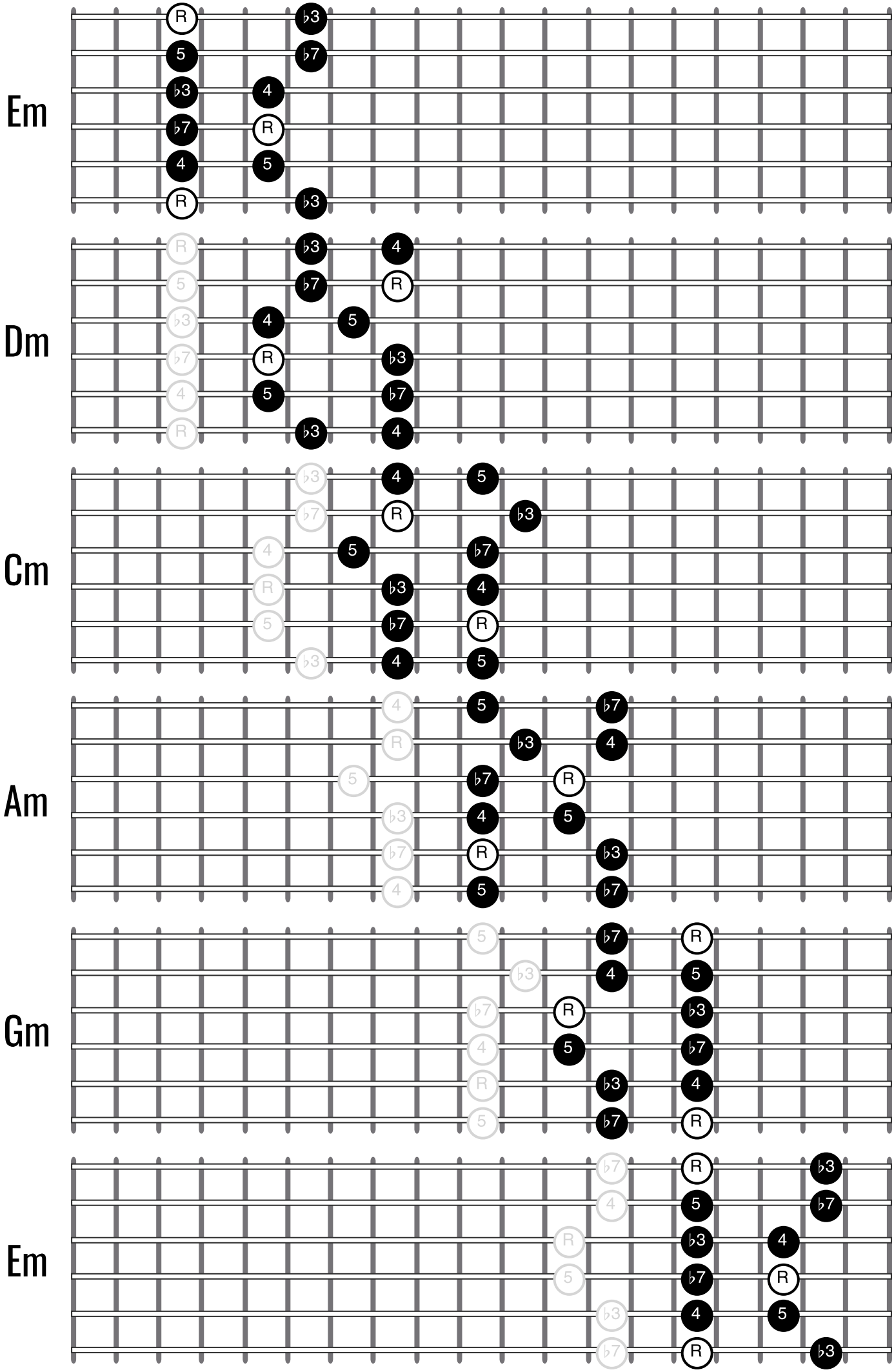
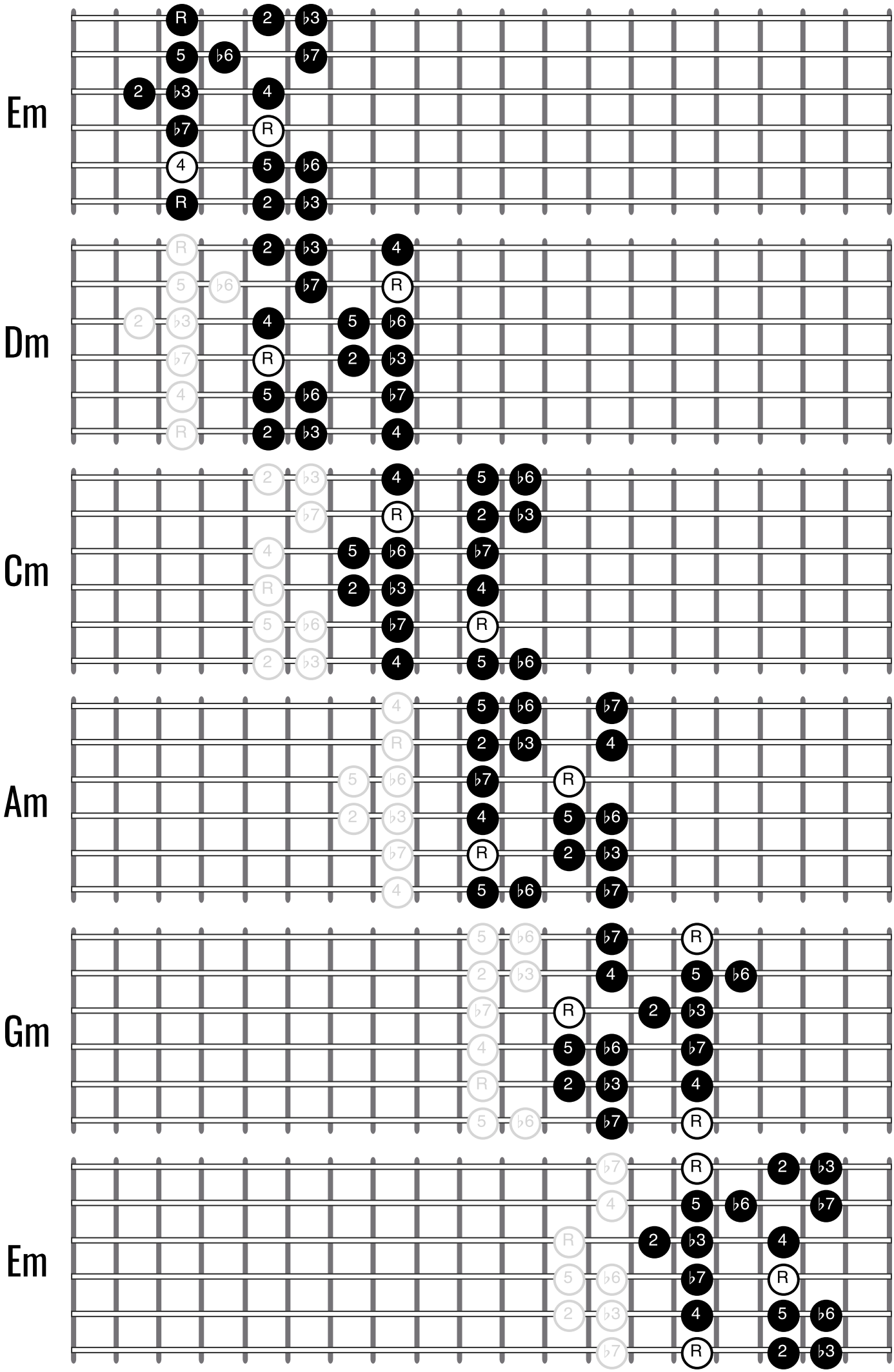
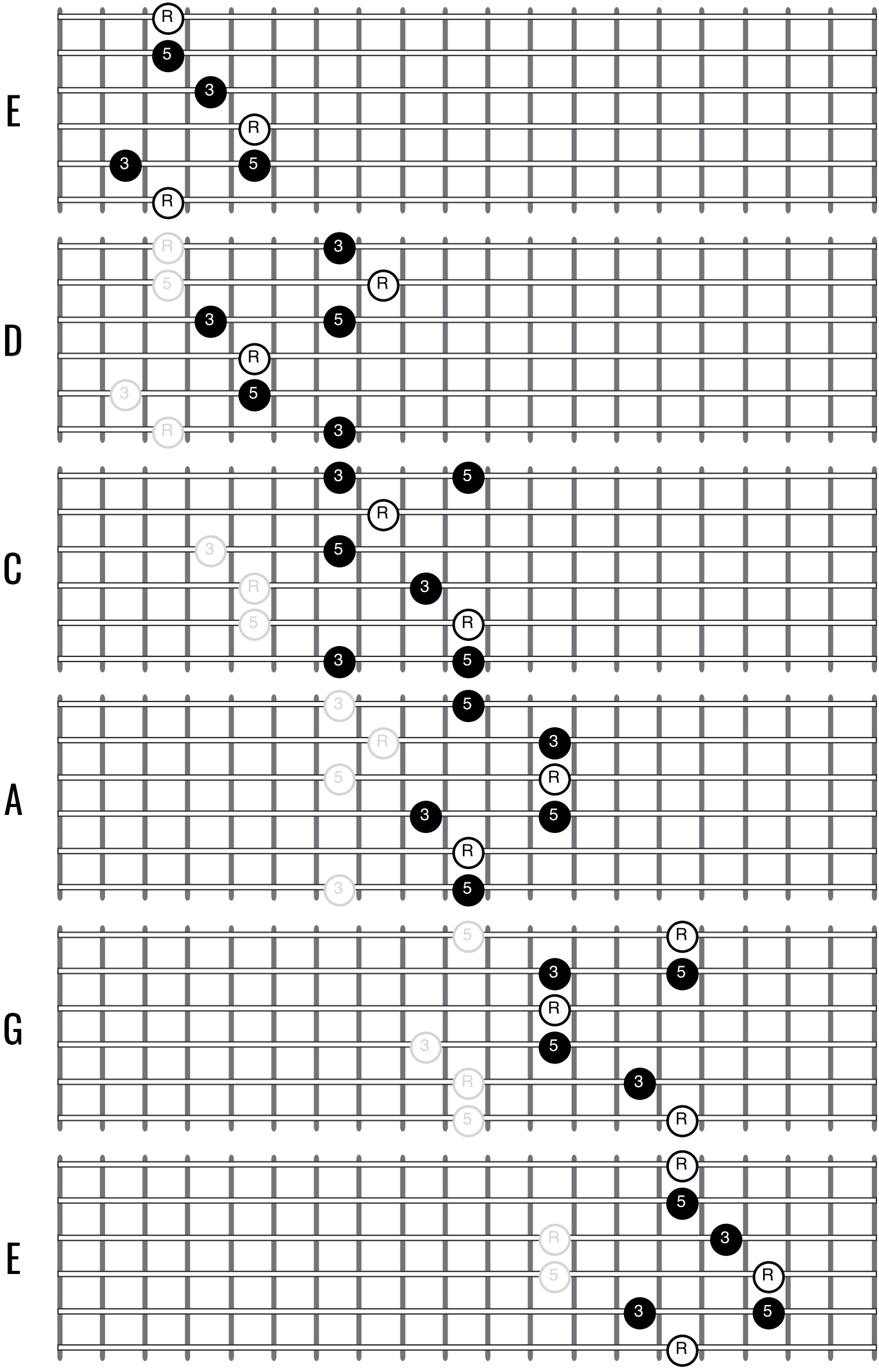

Em
R ♭3
5 ♭7
♭3 4
♭7 R
4 5
R ♭3
Dm
R ♭3 4
5 ♭7 R
♭3 4 5
♭7 R ♭3
4 5 ♭7
R ♭3 4
Cm
♭3 4 5
♭7 R ♭3
4 5 ♭7
R ♭3 4
5 ♭7 R
♭3 4 5
Am
4 5 ♭7
R ♭3 4
5 ♭7 R
♭3 4 5
♭7 R ♭3
4 5 ♭7
Gm
5 ♭7 R
♭3 4 5
♭7 R ♭3
4 5 ♭7
R ♭3 4
5 ♭7 R
Em
♭7 R ♭3
4 5 ♭7
R ♭3 4
5 ♭7 R
♭3 4 5
♭7 R ♭3


Em
Dm
Cm
Am
Gm
Em


E
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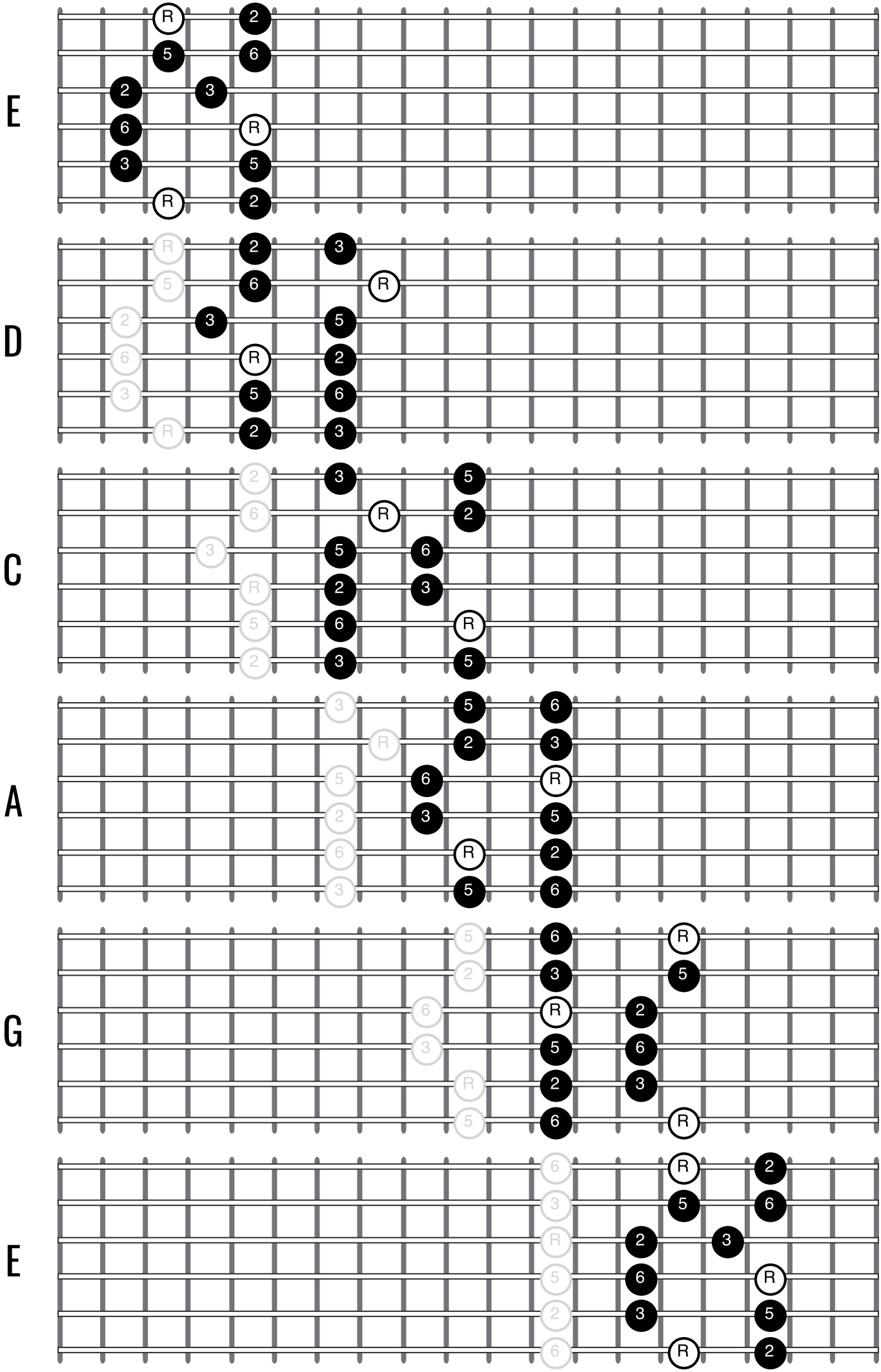
R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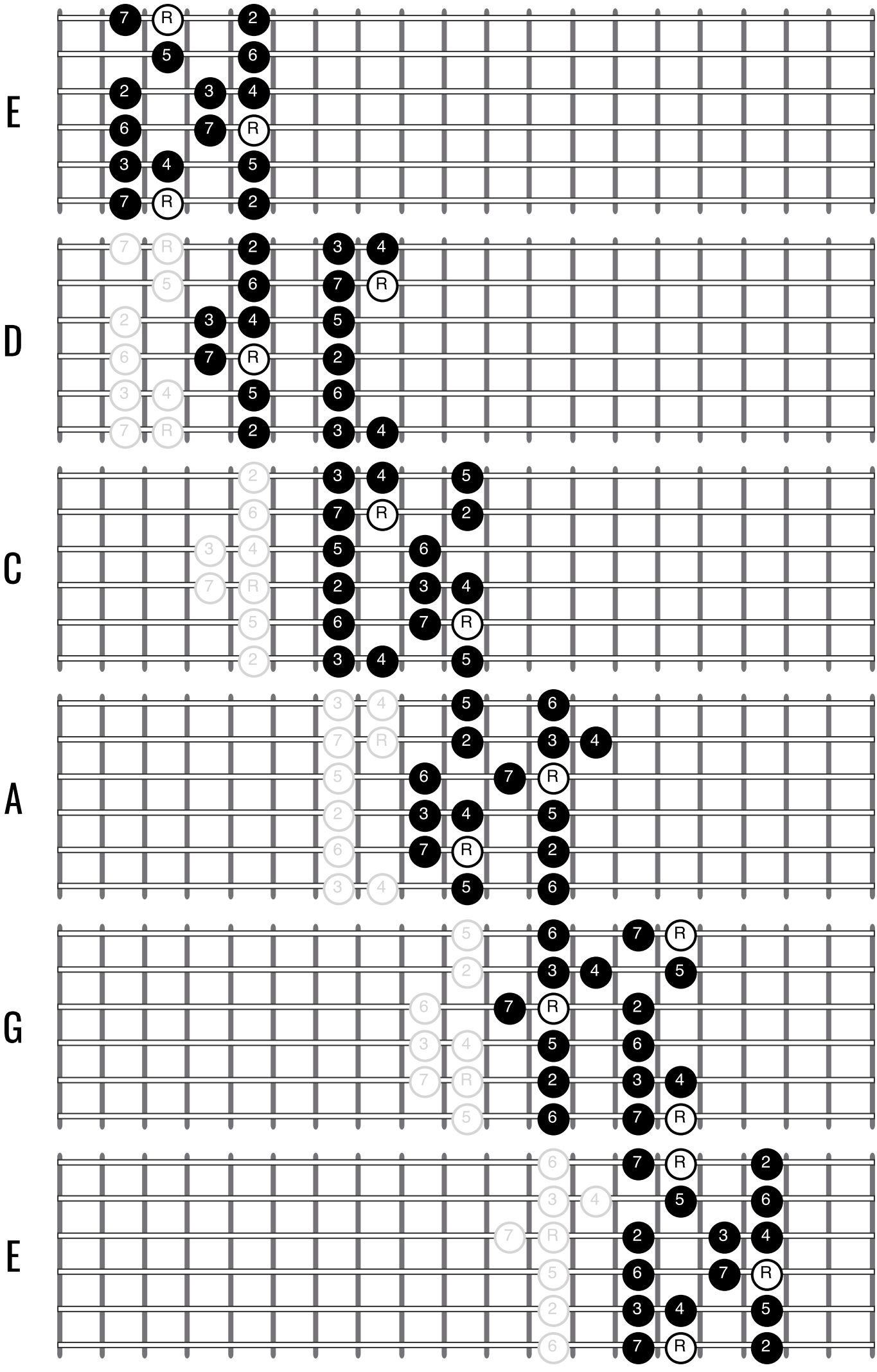
E
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