DAVID WALLIMANN

Guitar Modes Made Easy



TEXT AND MUSIC BY DAVID WALLIMANN

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Preface

Guitar players seem to have a love/hate relationship with modes.

Some cherish them and use them daily. Others don’t understand them and fear that they are missing out. The truth is that everyone uses modes. Not using modes would be just like talking without using the alphabet.

If you’ve always wanted to be more in control of your playing and finally understand how to play modal, this book is for you!

Practice well!

David Wallimann

CHAPTER 1

Intervals

A single note played by itself is nothing more than a sound. What gives meaning to a note is the relationship it has with another one.

The distance between two notes is called an ***interval***.

Knowing your intervals will help you understand all the musical concepts we'll discuss in this book.



SECTION 1

Introduction

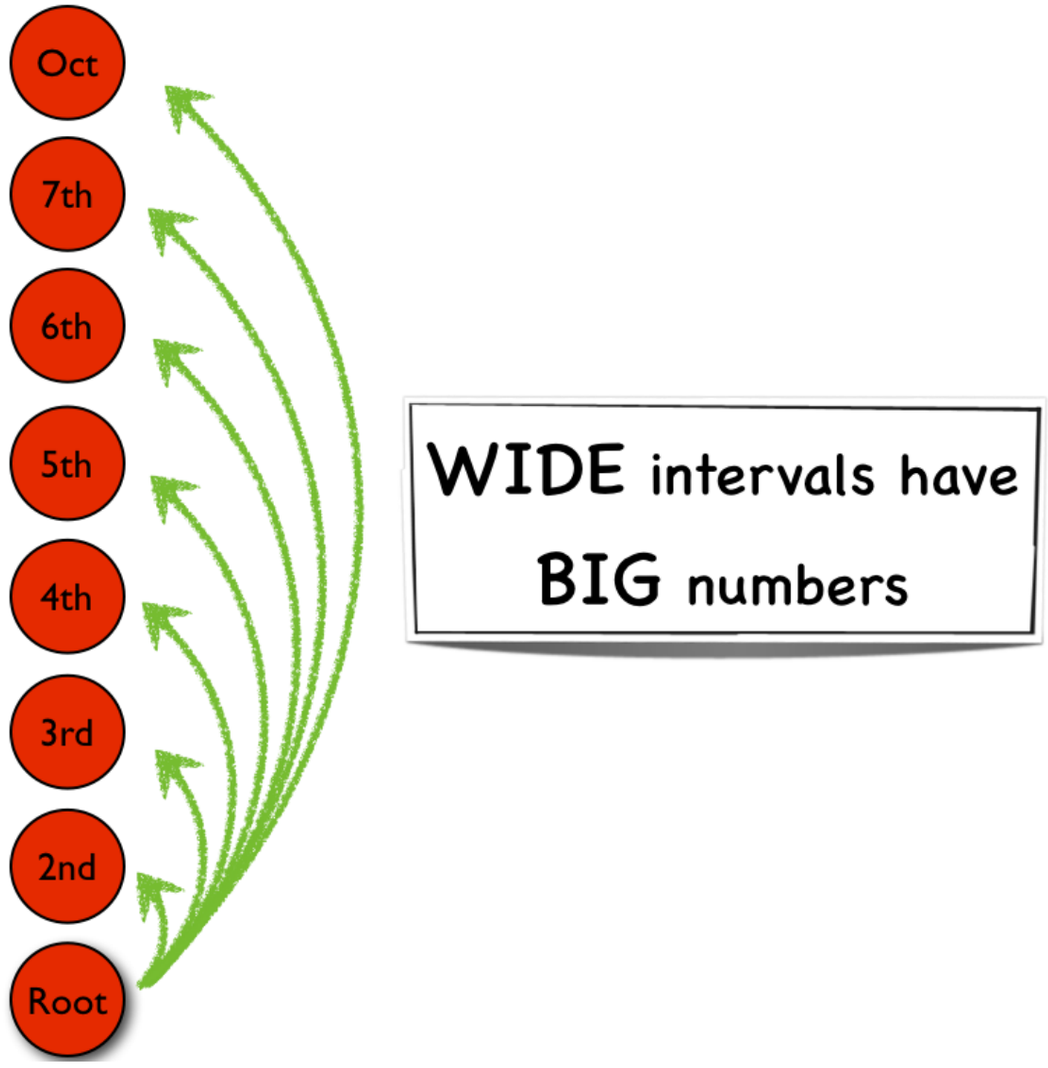
An interval is the distance between two notes. This means that we need a starting point. The starting point in music is called the ***root***. It's from that root that we will measure different intervals.

Depending on the musical context, roots can change from note to note. For example, an A Major chord is constructed of notes stacked on top of an A root.

Roots can be found anywhere on your fretboard. This means that any given fret can be a root.

Intervals are given number names. The distance between a root and the next alphabetical note is called a 2nd. The distance between a root and the note found after the second is called a 3rd. The bigger the number, the wider the interval.

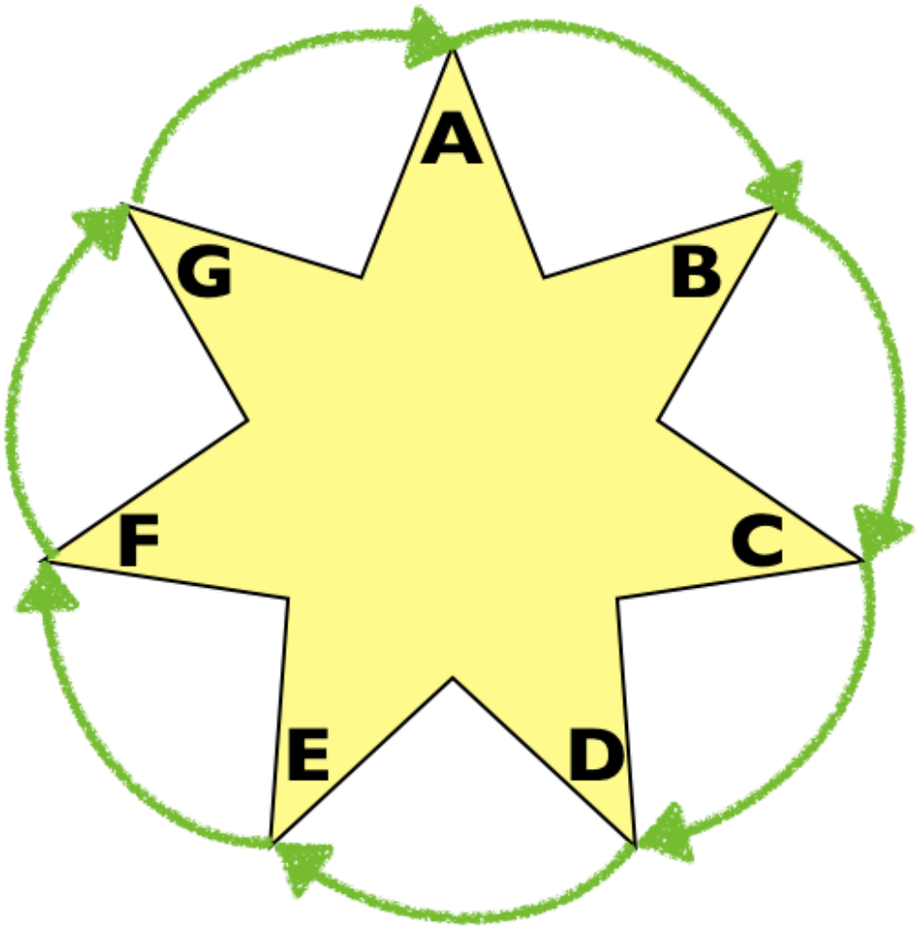
At the end of this chapter, you will be able to play any given interval right away from any string, any fret.



Octaves

Western music is based on ***diatonic*** scales (seven note scales). The seven first letters of the alphabet are used to name notes.

If our root is A, it is followed by the notes B, C, D, E, F, and G. This makes a diatonic scale. After G comes another A.



Each of the intervals found between the root and its following notes are wider and wider.

The distance between the an A and the next which is found seven notes higher is called an ***octave***.

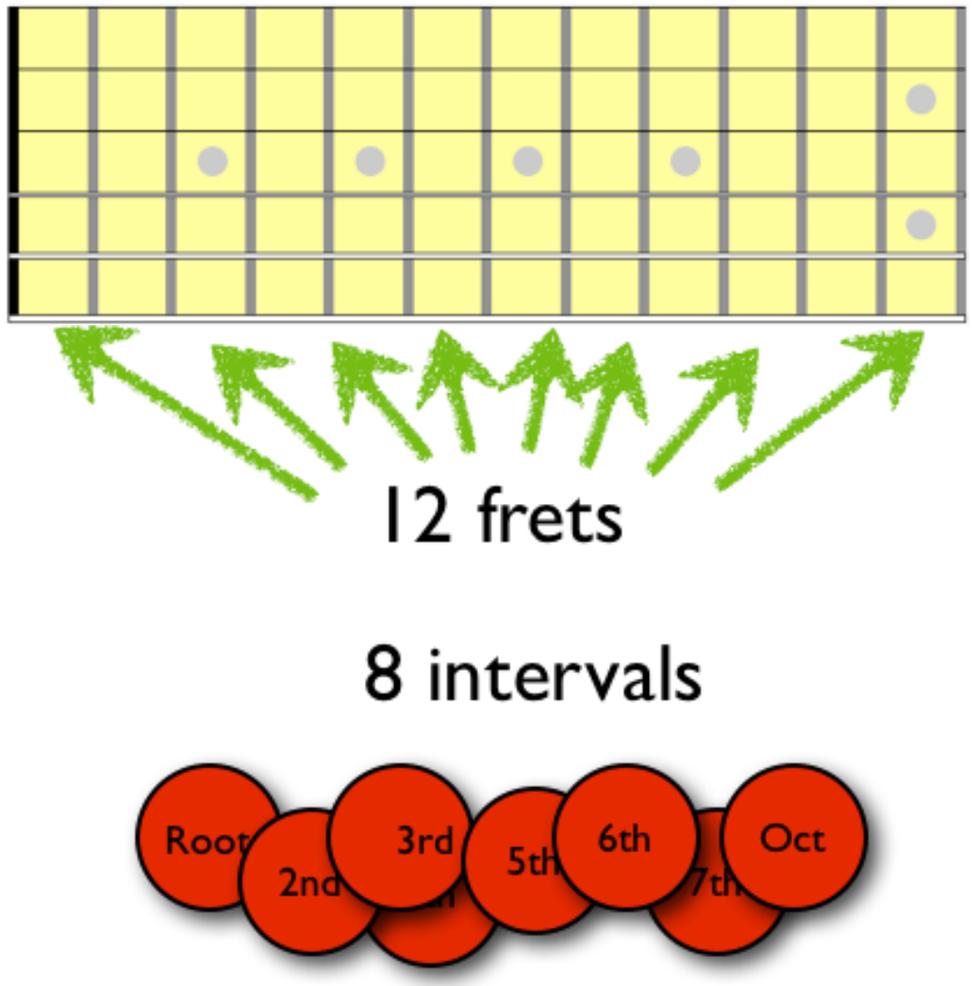
Octaves



An octave is ALWAYS found 12 frets above its root. This means that there are more frets between a root and its octave than there are intervals.

How does that work?

The answer lies in the fact that intervals have sub-categories.





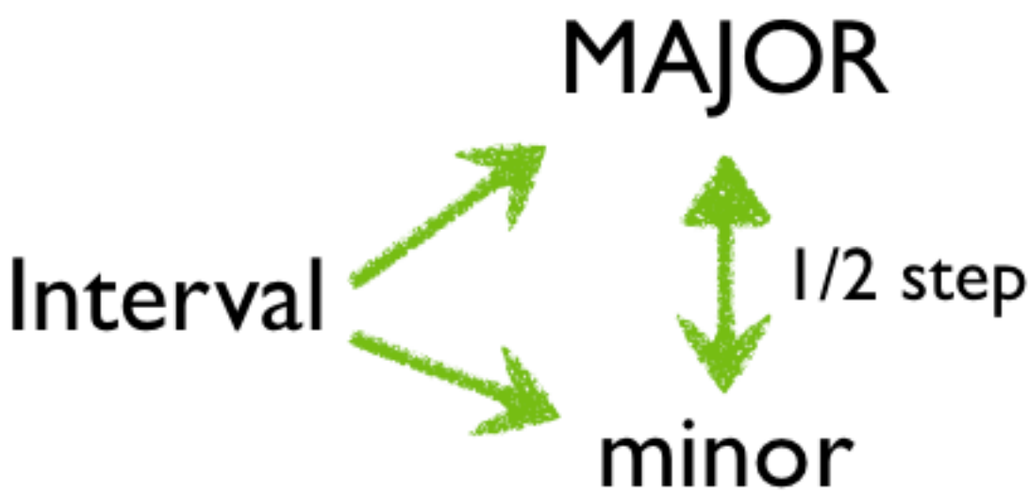
SECTION 3

Minor Or Major

Because we need to fit seven intervals over 12 frets, we need to sub-categorize these intervals. Most intervals can be defined as minor or major.

A minor interval is always smaller then a Major interval. For example a minor 2nd is smaller than a Major 2nd.

The distance between a minor interval and a Major interval is the smallest interval found in Western music. Only a half step separates these two notes. On the guitar, this corresponds to one fret.



Audio examples

Major 3rds - minor 3rds

Major 6ths - minor 6ths

Major 7ths - minor 7ths

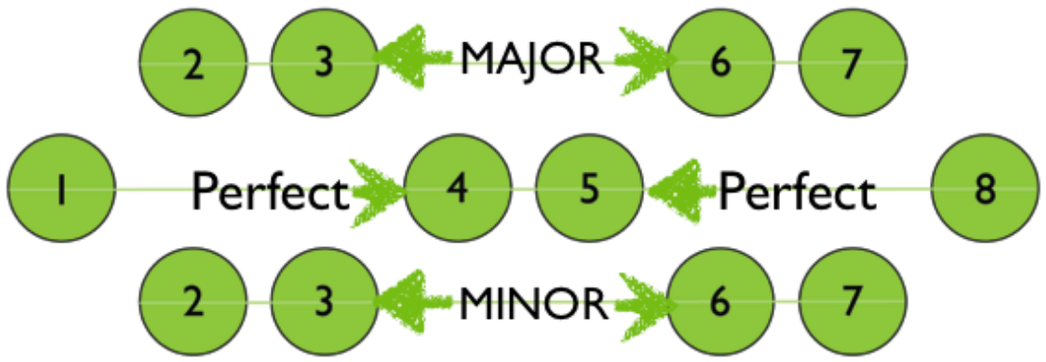
Perfect Intervals

As it is often the case in music, there are exceptions.

All intervals but the 4th and 5th can be minor or Major. The 4th and the 5th are Perfect.

A good way to remember this is to visualize all the possible intervals between a root and its octave.

The two intervals found right at the middle are the exceptions. In other words the 4th and the 5th cannot be minor nor Major.



When an interval can't be classified as minor or Major, it is considered perfect.

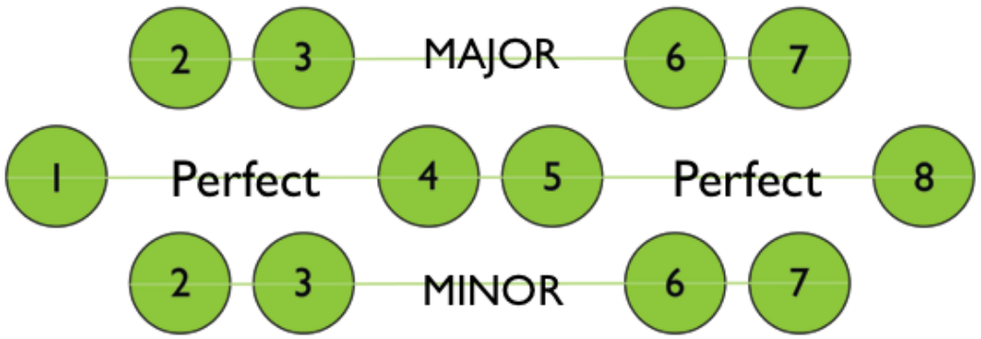
Audio examples

Perfect 4ths

Perfect 5ths

Root On 6th String

Before we get practical on our guitar, let's review what we've learned.



Make sure you remember the following points:

- There are 7 intervals between a root and its octave:

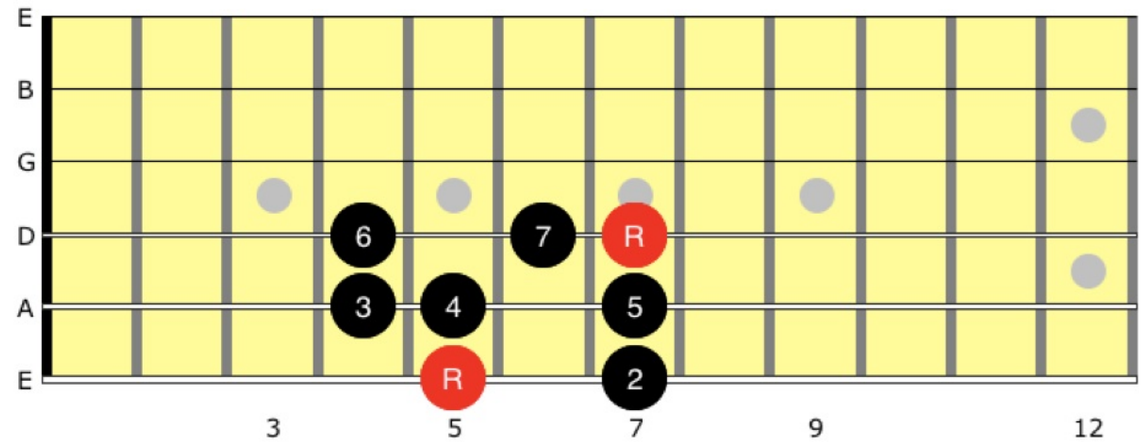
(Root, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, Octave)

- Intervals can be minor or Major
- The 4th and 5th are Perfect

Let's consider a root on the 5th fret of the 6th string.

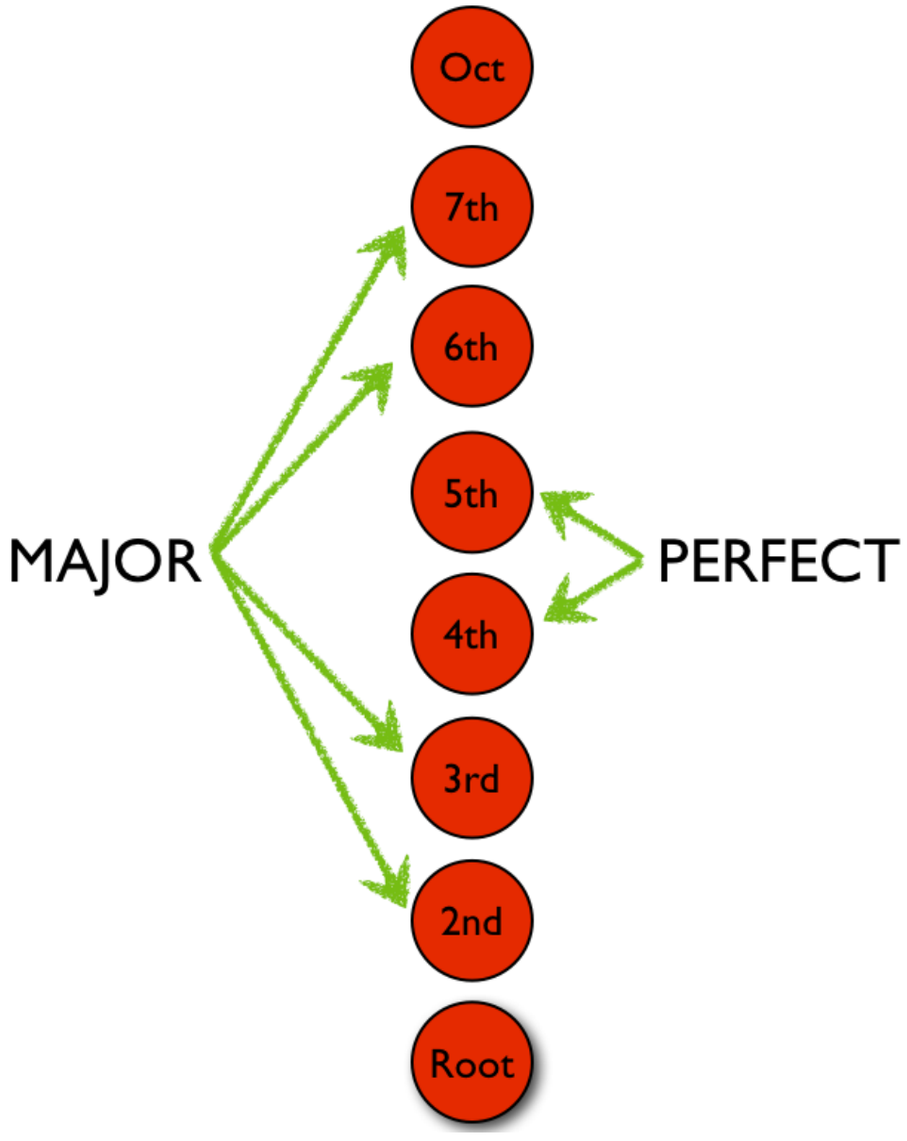
The following diagram places all Major and Perfect intervals in a way that they are easily reachable when playing from a root on the 6th string.

Root on 6th string



Root on 6th string

The following shape lists all intervals between a root to its octave.



Spend time memorizing that shape and name each of the given intervals as you play them. Remember that the shape only lists the Major and perfect intervals.

Don't forget that the intervals you land on need to be considered in relation to the root.

Intervals are not single notes, but the distance between a note and its root.

Moving the shape to a different fret will simply change the root you start from.

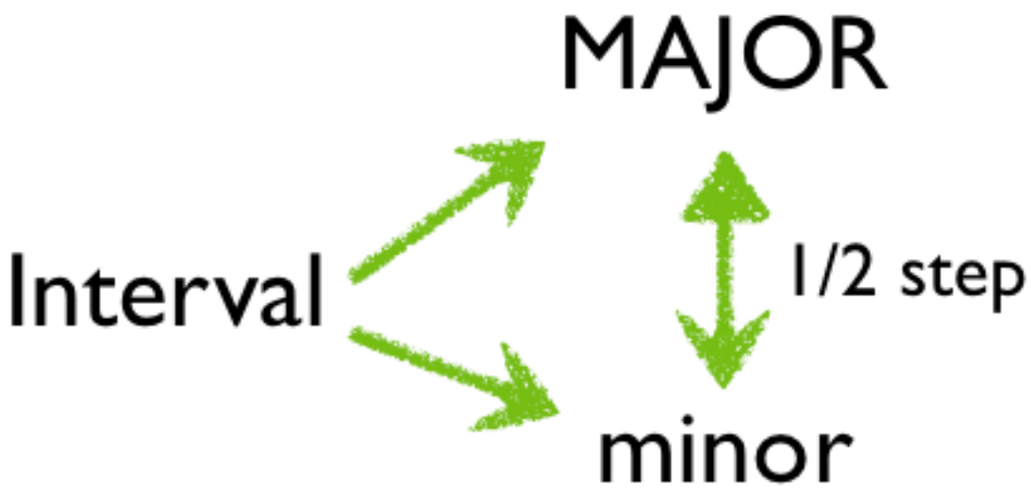
SECTION 6

Minor Intervals

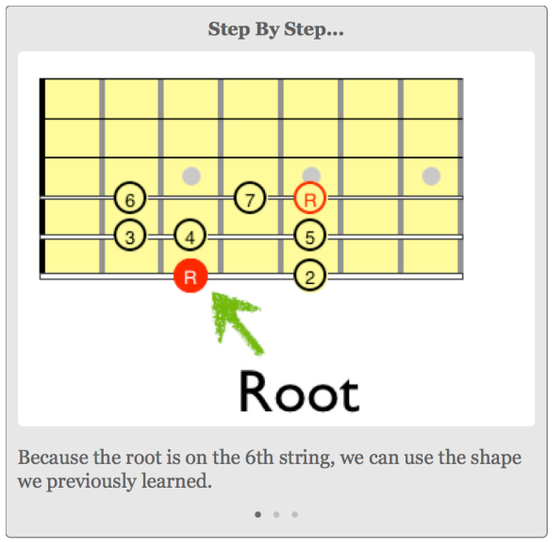
A minor interval is always smaller than a Major interval. For example, the distance between the root and its minor 3rd is smaller than the distance between the root and its Major 3rd.

By now, you should be able to find any given Major and perfect intervals from any roots found on the 6th string.

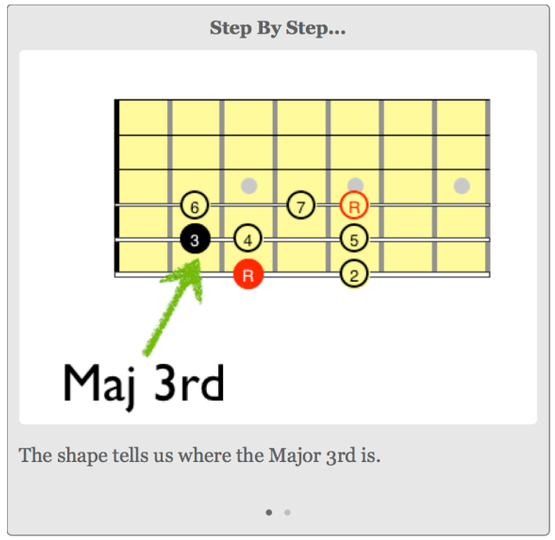
In order to make any Major interval minor, simply move the landing note a half step lower (1 fret).



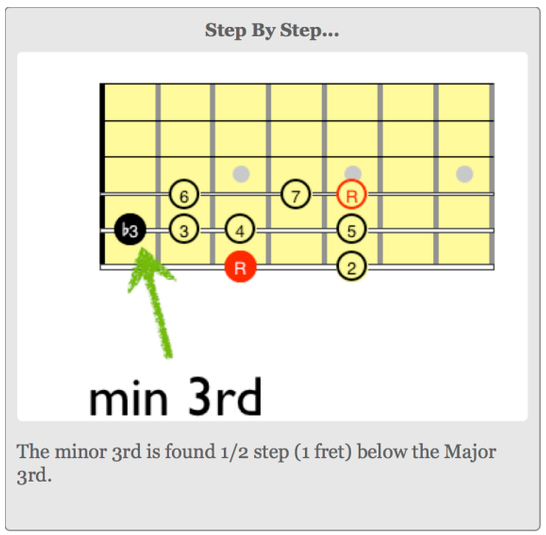
Let's consider a root on the 3rd fret of the 6th string. According to the 1st shape we learned, the Major 3rd of that root is found on the 2nd fret of the 5th string. By moving that note a half step below (1st fret of the 5th string) we have a minor 3rd.



Because the root is on the 6th string, we can use the shape we previously learned.



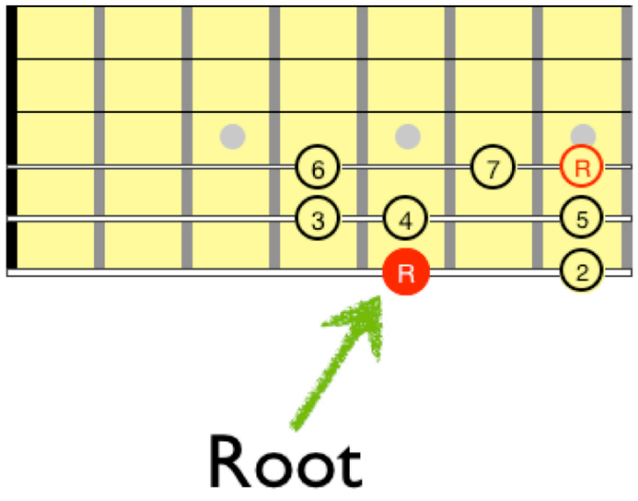
The shape tells us where the Major 3rd is.



The minor 3rd is found 1/2 step (1 fret) below the Major 3rd.

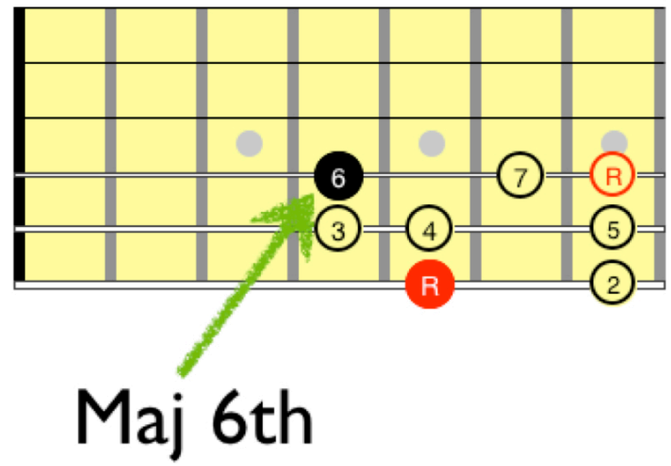
Let's now consider a root on the 5th fret of the 6th string. According to the 1st shape we learned, the Major 6th of that root is found on the 4th fret of the 4th string. By moving that note a half step below (3rd fret of the 4th string) we have a minor 6th.

Step By Step...



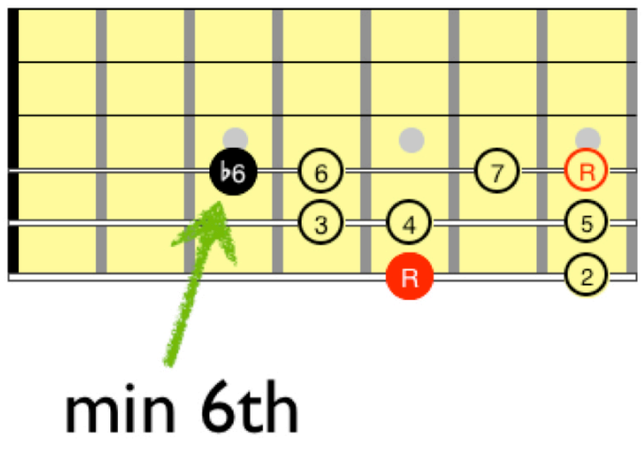
Because the root is on the 6th string, we can use the shape we previously learned.

Step By Step...



The shape tells us where the Major 6th is found.

Step By Step...

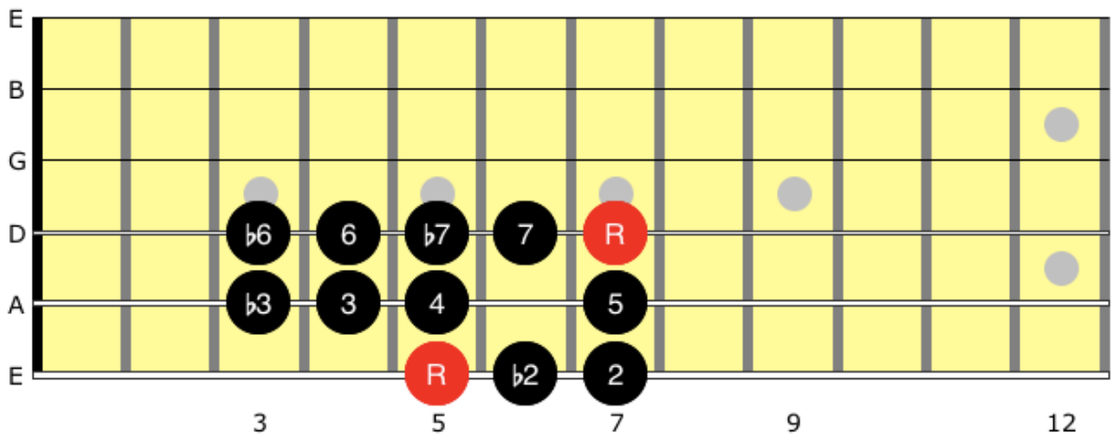


The minor 6th is found 1/2 step (1 fret) below the Major 6th.

Augmented Or Diminished

By now, you should be able to name and find on your fretboard any minor, Major or perfect intervals.

The following diagram lists the placement of these intervals from a root found on the 6th string:

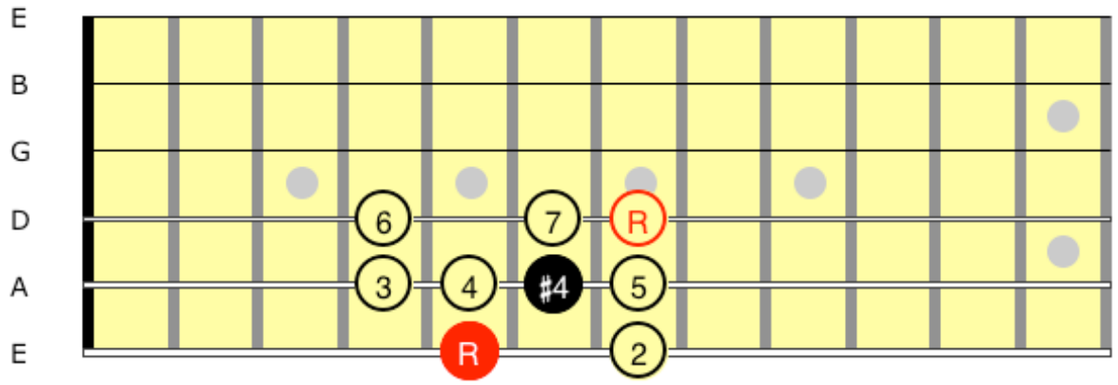


Almost all spaces are taken between the root and its octave. There is one missing note though between the perfect 4th and perfect 5th. That space needs to be named.

Remember that the 4th and 5th are Perfect intervals, they can not be labeled as minor nor Major. Perfect intervals can however be altered.

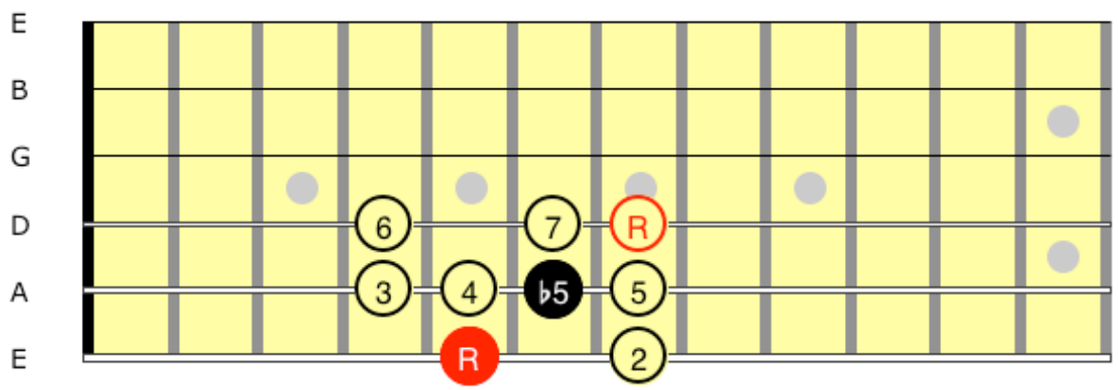
Perfect interval + 1/2 step = Augmented interval

example: augmented 4th (#4):



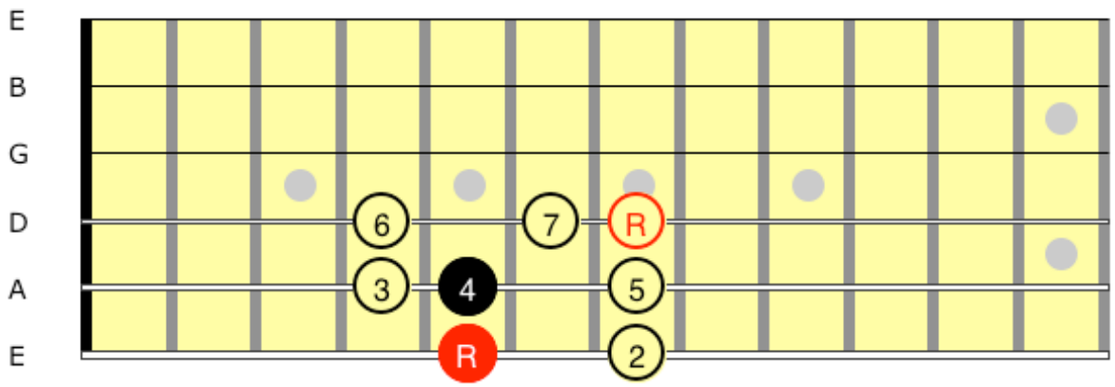
Perfect interval - 1/2 step = diminished interval

example: diminished 5th (b5):

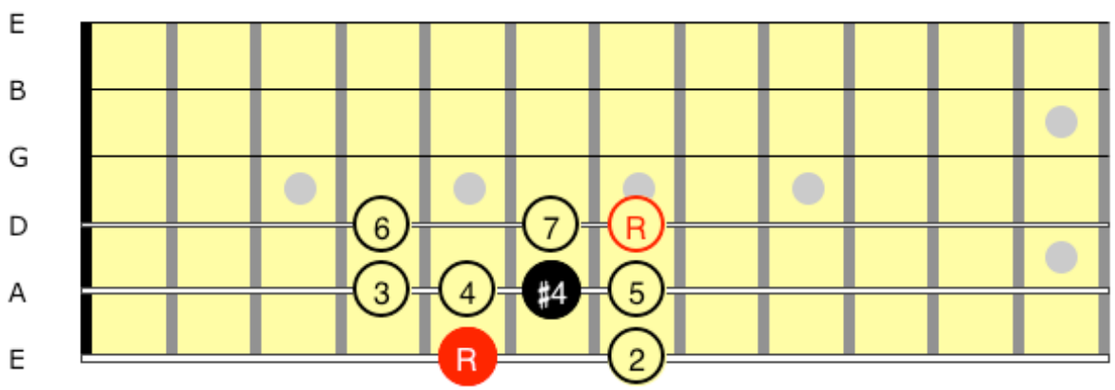


Let's consider a root on the 5th fret of the 6th string. From that root let's find the Augmented 4th (#4).

The first step is to find the perfect 4th using the first shape we previously learned:

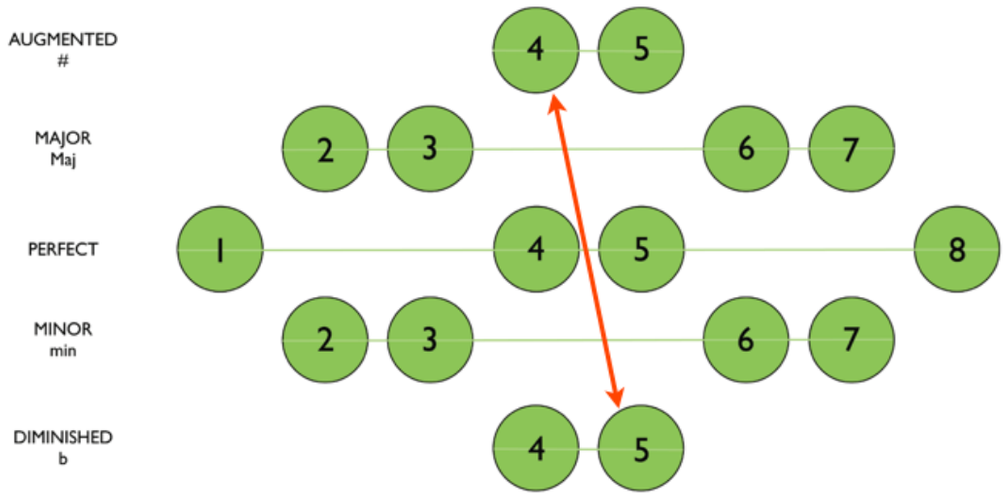


The augmented version of that interval is found one half step above:



Notice how the augmented 4th is found on the same space as the diminished 5th. This is what is called ***en-harmonic*** notes.





SECTION 8

Roots On Other Strings

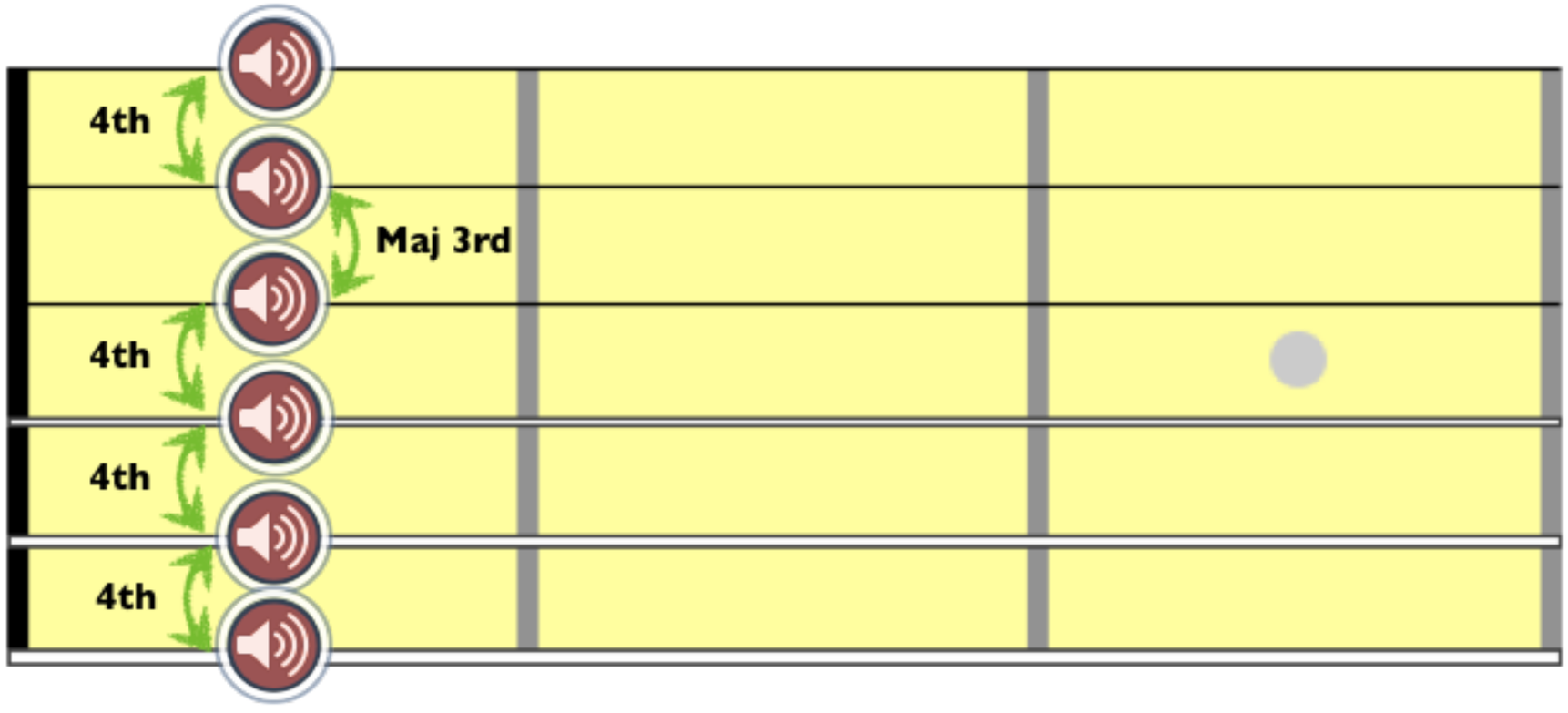
You should now be able to find all intervals from any root found on the 6th string. Congratulations!

You might be tempted to use the same exact shape to find the intervals involving roots found on strings other than the 6th. Unfortunately, this will not always work. This is due to the way the guitar is tuned.

Let's take a look at a six string guitar tuned in standard tuning.

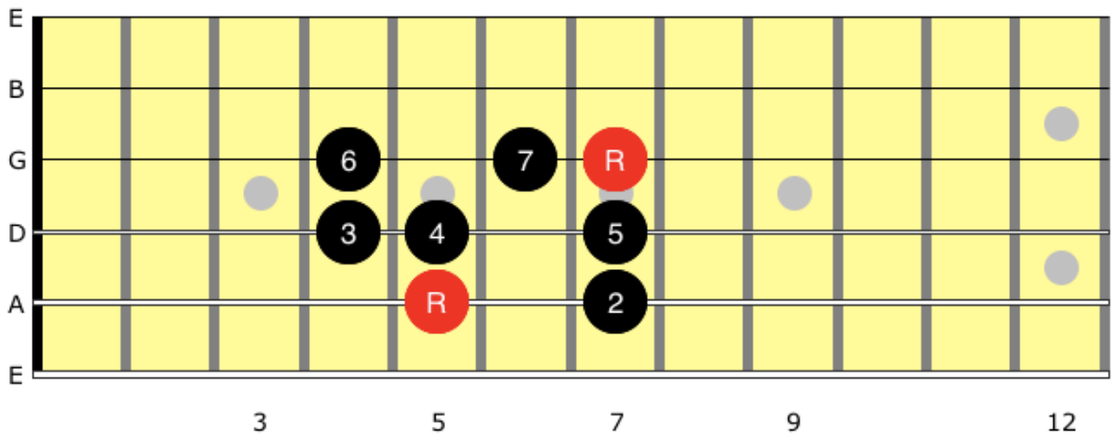
The distance between each string is a perfect 4th except between the 3rd and 2nd strings which is a Major 3rd. This means that anytime you are dealing with intervals that involve the 3rd and 2nd strings together, the shape will change.

The shape we learned in section 5 of this chapter involves three strings: strings 6, 5 and 4.



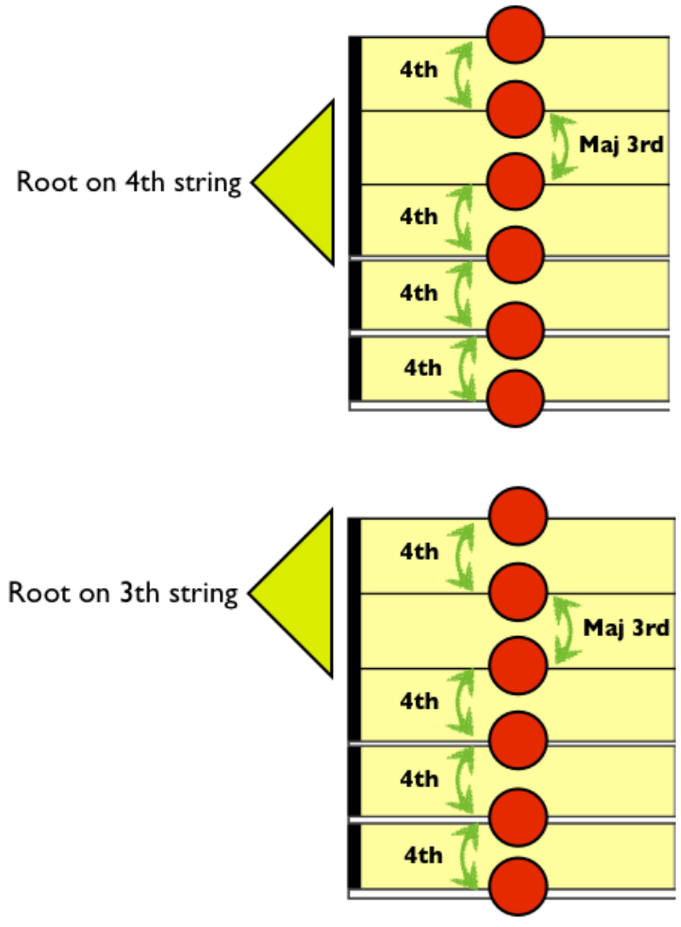
Let's now consider a root on the 5th fret of the fifth string. The shape used to find all intervals between that root and its octave will involve strings 5, 4 and 3. As long as the shape involved does not include strings 3 and 2 at the same time, you can use the original shape you learned in section 5.

This means that you can now find any intervals from any root found on the 5th string!



Root on 5th string

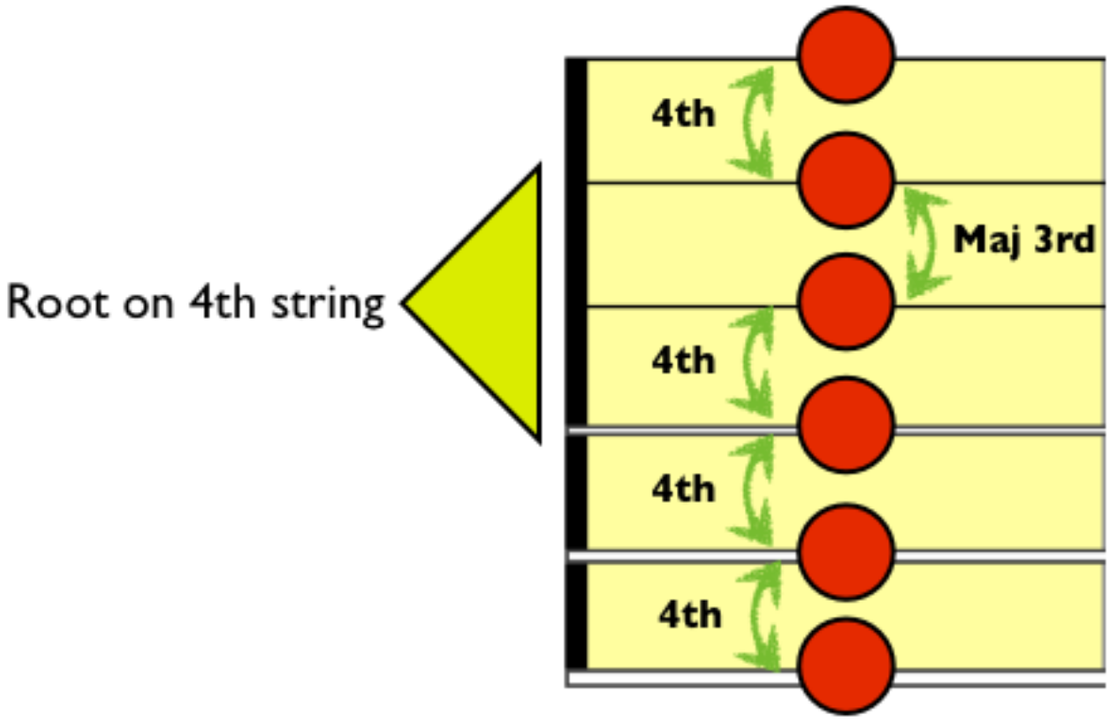
Let's now consider a root on the 4th and 3rd string. The shapes used to find the intervals on those strings would both involve strings 3 and 2 together.



Because the interval separating those strings is not a perfect 4th, we will need to learn new shapes as we will see in the following sections

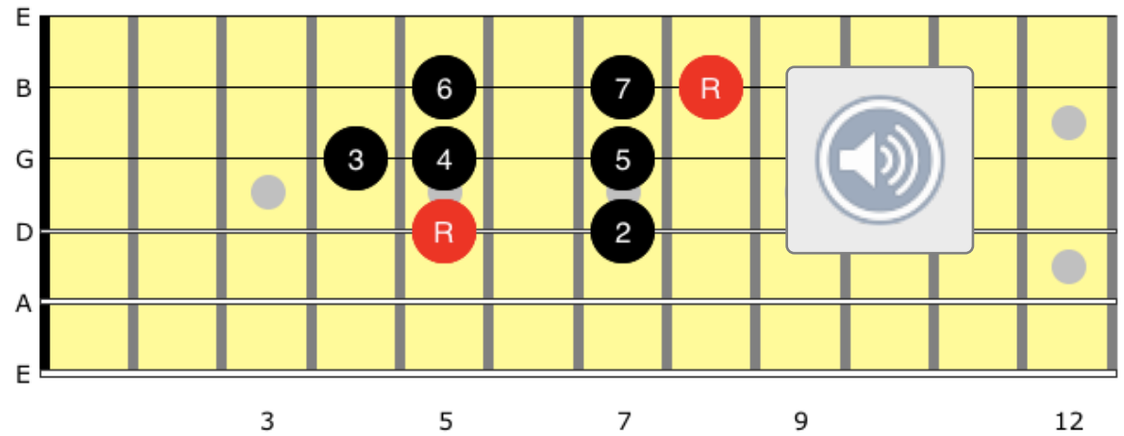
Root On 4th String

Let's consider a root on the 5th fret of the 4th string. The shape we will use here to cover all intervals between the root and its octave will involve strings 4, 3 and 2. As we discussed in the previous section, the tuning between the 3rd and 2nd string differs from the others. We find a Major 3rd instead of a perfect 4th.



This means that the shape used to find any interval when the root is found on the 4th string will be different than the one used for roots on strings 6 and 5.

Following is the shape we will use when the root is found on the 4th string. That shape lists all the Major and perfect intervals. Remember that this shape can be moved on different frets to reflect the root you are starting from.



Once that shape memorized, we can easily deduce any given interval from any root found on the 4th string.

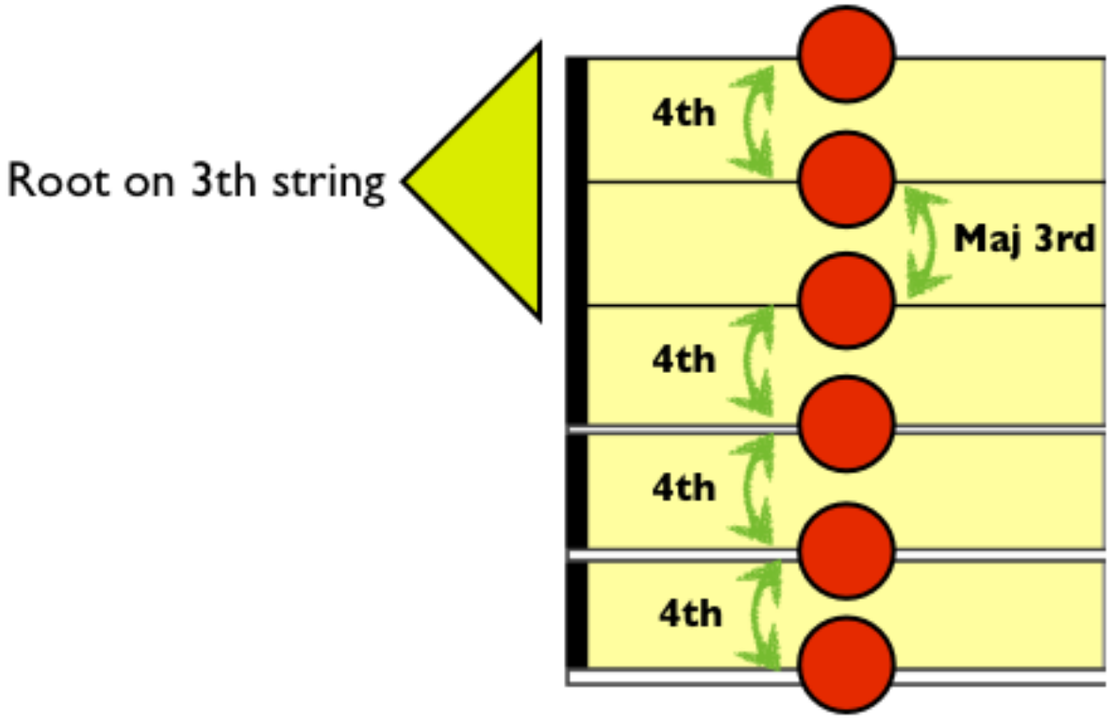
Remember that a minor interval is found one 1/2 step below its Major version.

Remember that a perfect interval can be made diminished (- 1/2 step) or Augmented (+ 1/2 step).

Root On 3rd String

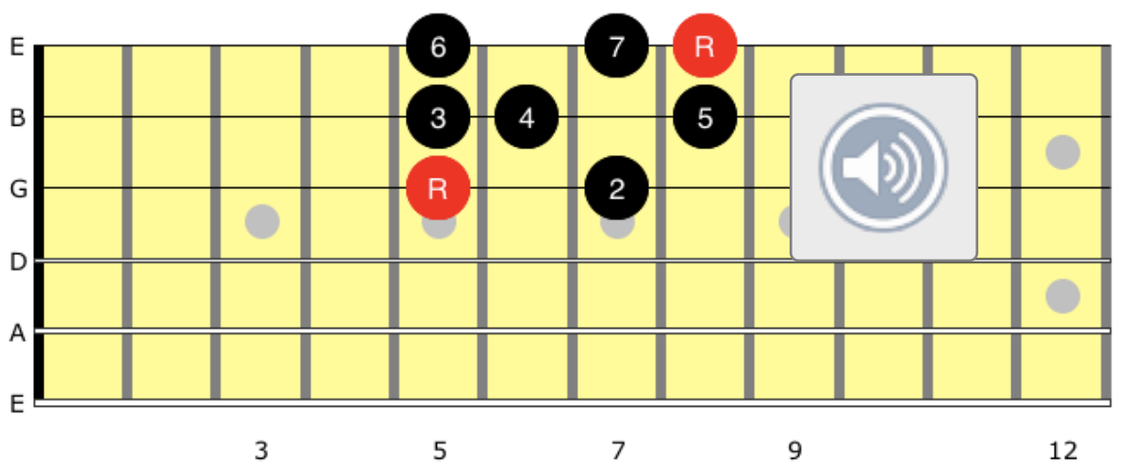
You should now be able to find any intervals between a root and its octave on strings 6, 5 and 4.

Let's now consider a root on the 5th fret of the 3rd string. The shape used to cover all intervals between that root and its octave involves strings 3, 2 and 1. This means that we will need to learn a new shape.



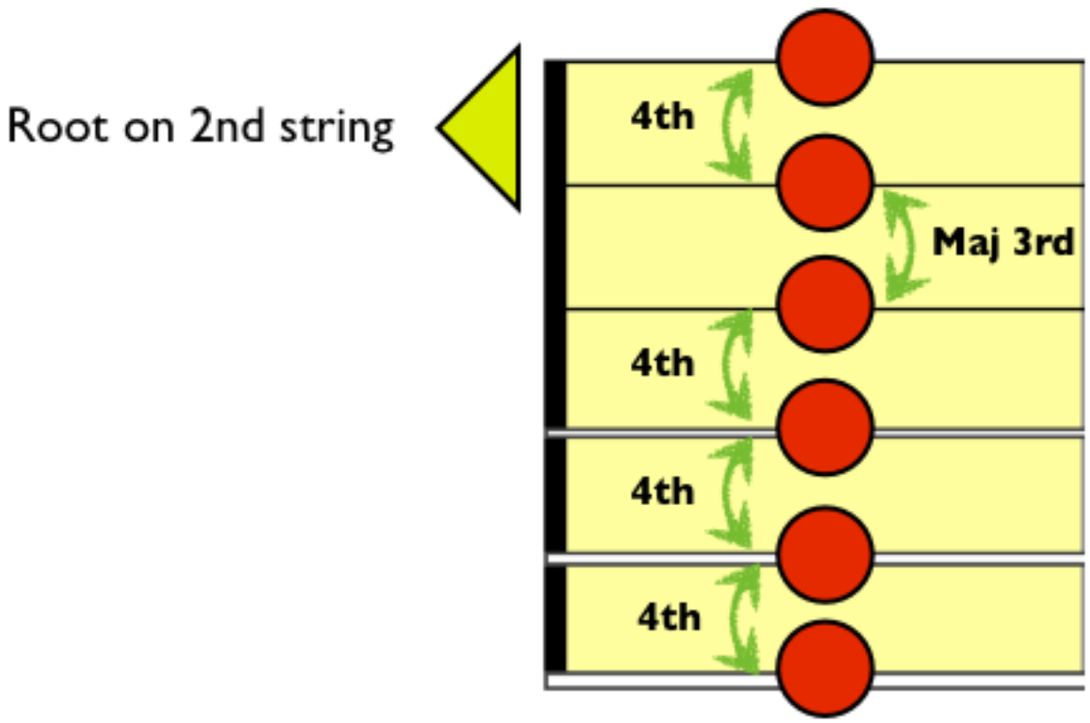
Following is the 3rd shape we will use to easily find any Major or perfect intervals.

From that shape you can easily deduce the minor, diminished and Augmented intervals.



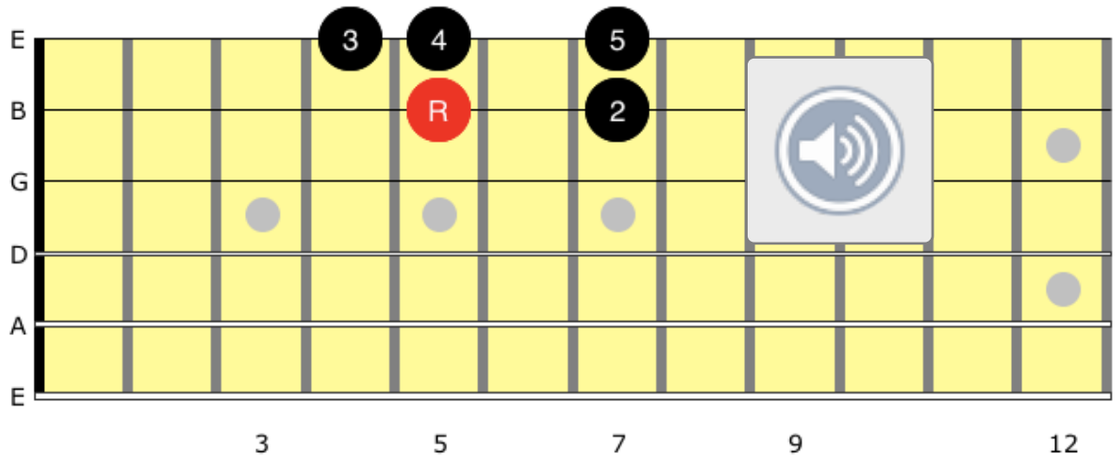
Root On Second String

Last but not least, let's consider a root on the 5th fret of the 2nd string. Because only two strings are left, we won't be able to play the full shape from a root to its octave without having to shift on the fretboard horizontally.



Because the 3rd and 2nd strings are not involved together we can safely start using the original first shape discussed in section 5

Using that shape, you can easily find any intervals found between a root on the 2nd string and its perfect 5th.



Before Moving On



Memorize all shapes

Know how to alter any intervals

Anticipate the sound of each notes you play

CHAPTER 2

Minor Pentatonic

One of the most important scales in modern music is the minor ***pentatonic*** scale. In this chapter,we will learn how to build a minor pentatonic scale and when to use it.



SECTION 1

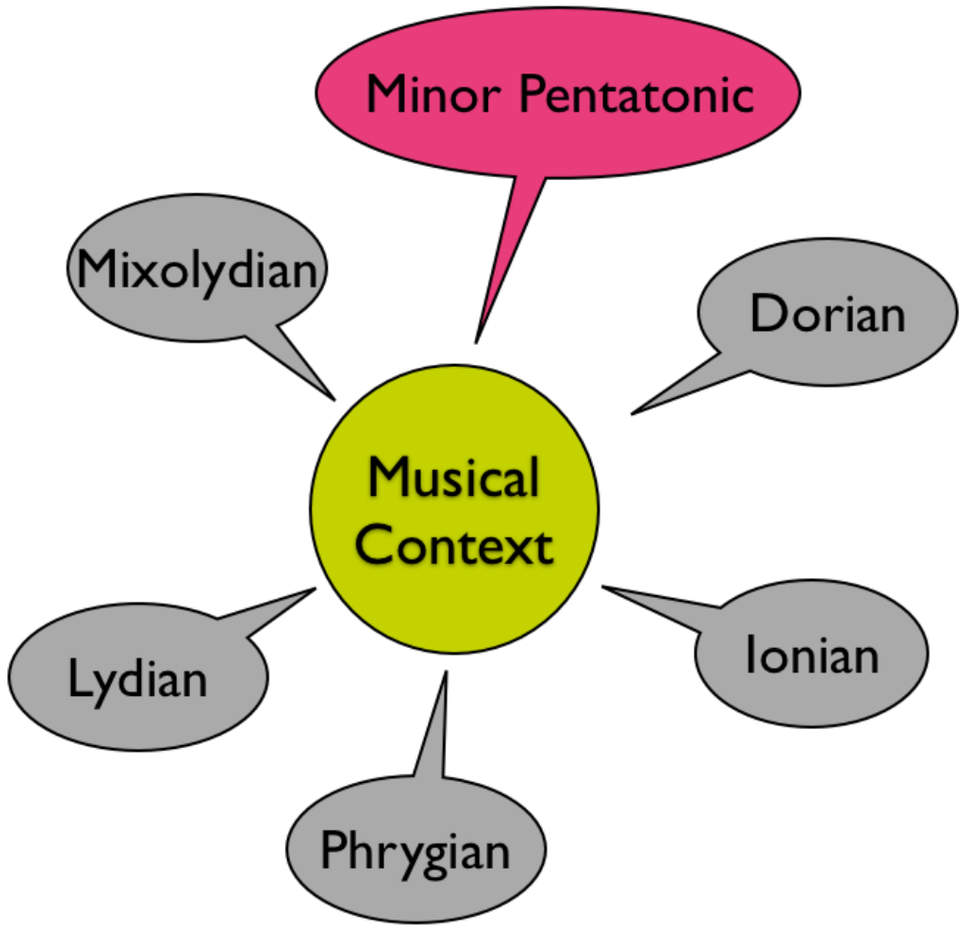
Introduction

Communicating your ideas effectively is one of the most important skills you can learn. Language is a method of communication consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way.

The possible words one may use are determined by the alphabet the language is based on.

Music is a language. As such, the musician uses musical phrases made of different notes to express himself. These notes are part of a system determined by the musical context.

In this chapter, we'll take a look at a musical alphabet called the minor **pentatonic** scale.



Minor Pentatonic Formula

A scale is a series of different notes organized according to a predetermined set of intervals. There are two types of scales: Major scales and minor scales.

This is determined by the nature of the 3rd found in that scale.

- If a scale has a Major 3rd, it is a Major scale.
- If a scale has a minor 3rd, it is a minor scale.

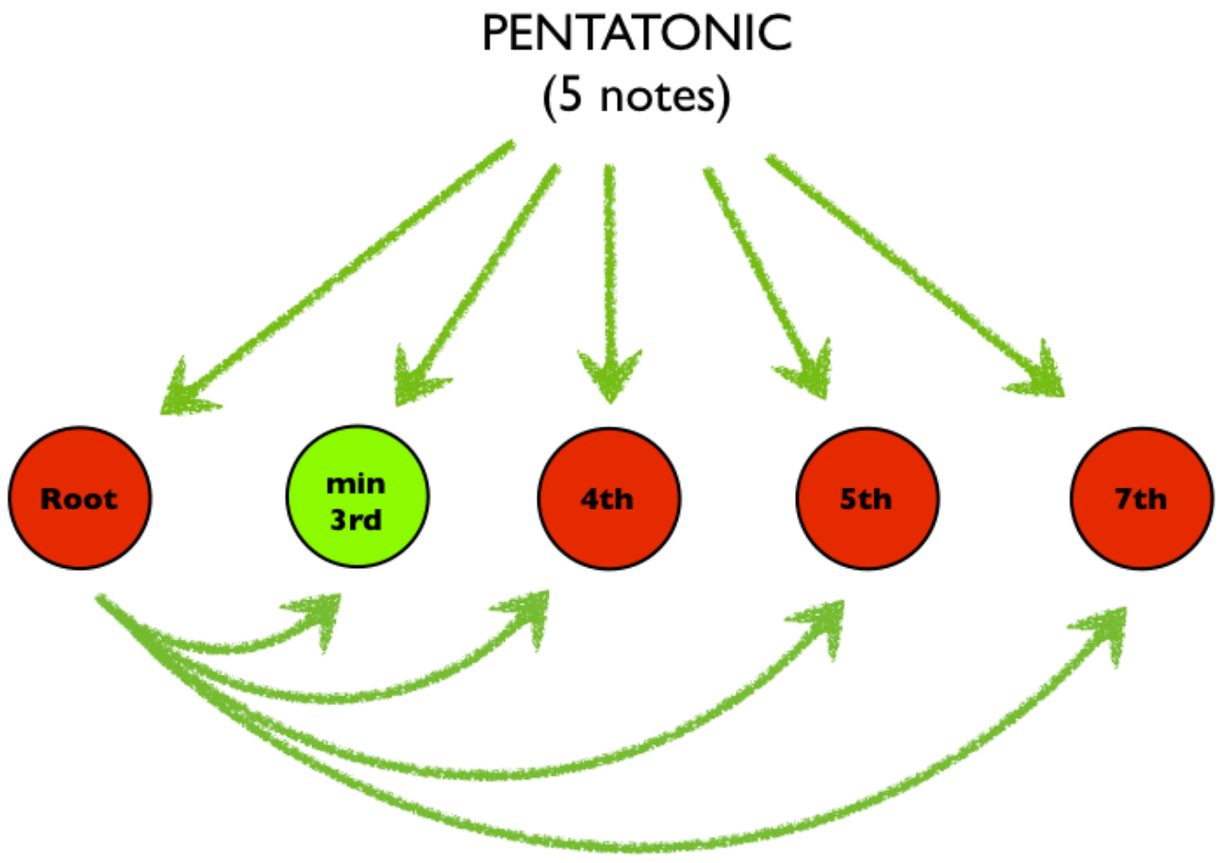
A Pentatonic scale is a five tone scale. This means that any scale made of five notes is a pentatonic scale.

A minor pentatonic scale is a five tone scale that has a minor 3rd. Any five note scales that have a minor 3rd can be referred to as a minor pentatonic scale.

This means that a lot of scales can fit in the minor pentatonic family.

Although that is true, it is commonly accepted to use the following formula whenever referring to a minor pentatonic scale:

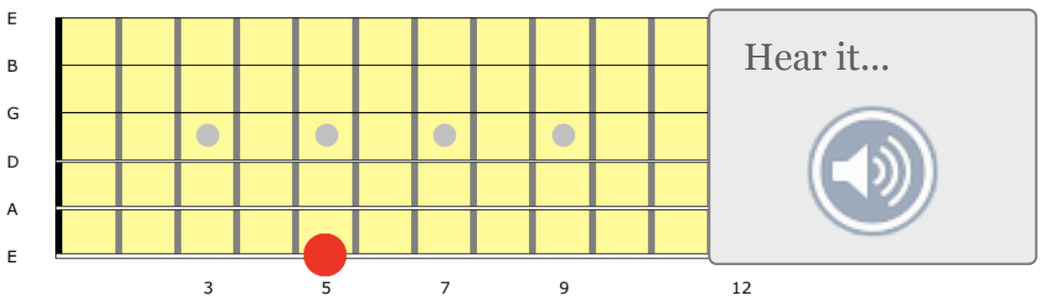
Root - min 3rd - 4th - 5th - min 7th



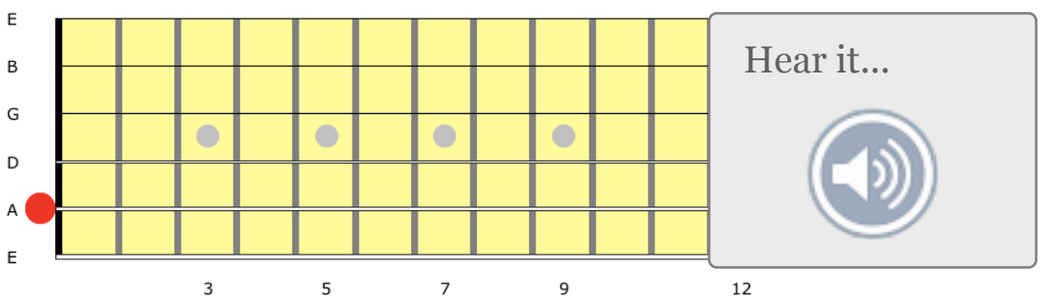
About Positions

Because of the way the guitar is built, we can find the same exact note on different strings, different frets.

Let's play the 5th fret on the 6th string:

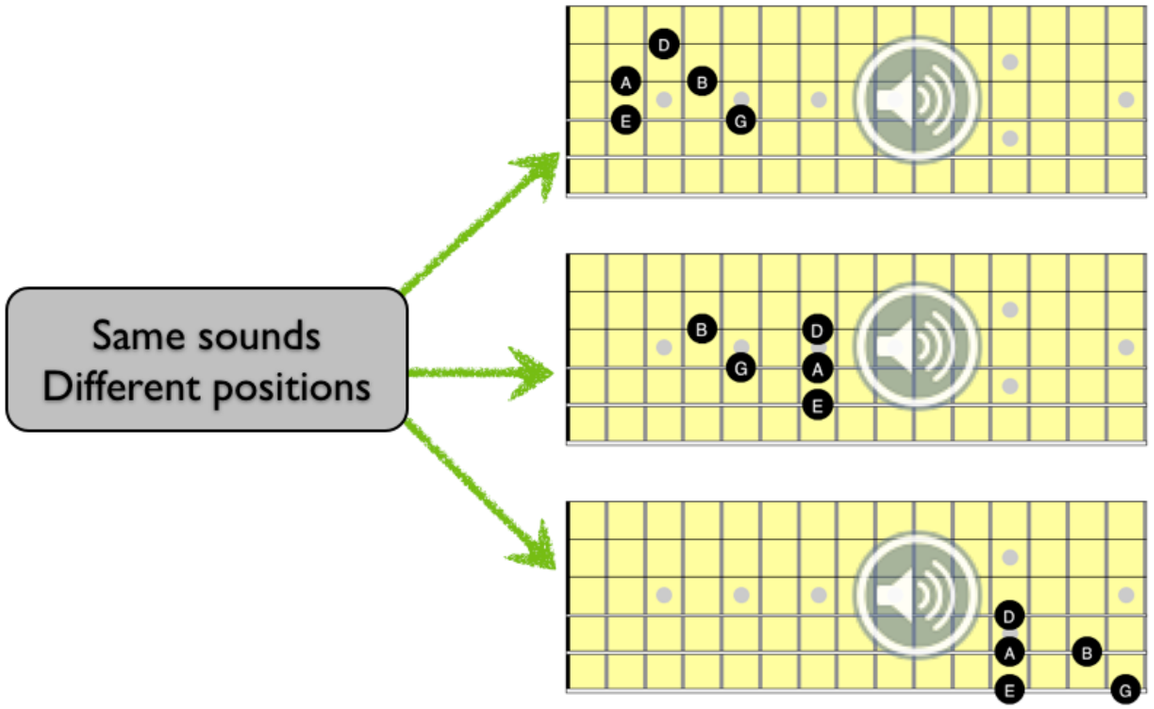


Let's now play the open 5th string:



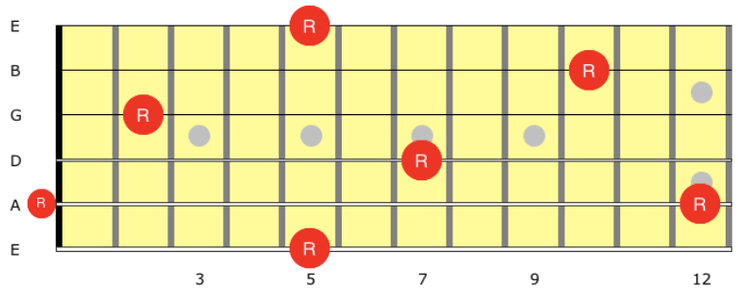
Both notes sound exactly the same. This means that there are multiple ways to play the same exact scale on the fretboard.

These different ways of playing a scale are referred to as positions. There are no right or wrong positions. Positions simply allow you to play the same musical idea on different areas of the fretboard.

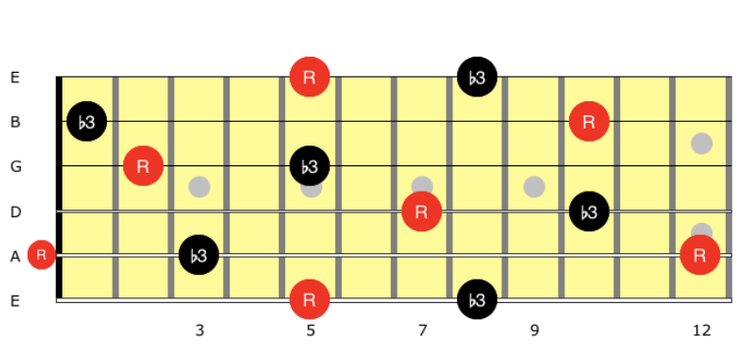


Let's consider a minor pentatonic scale which root would be the note A.

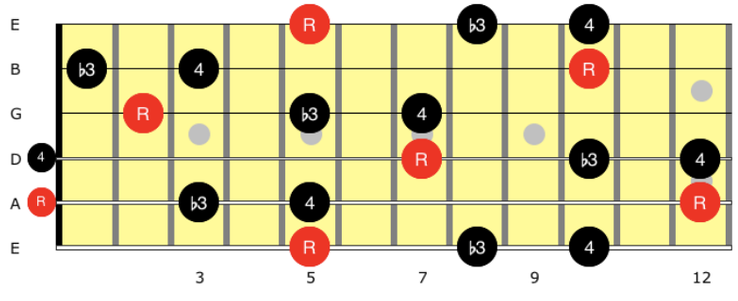
The following diagram shows you where you could start that scale from:



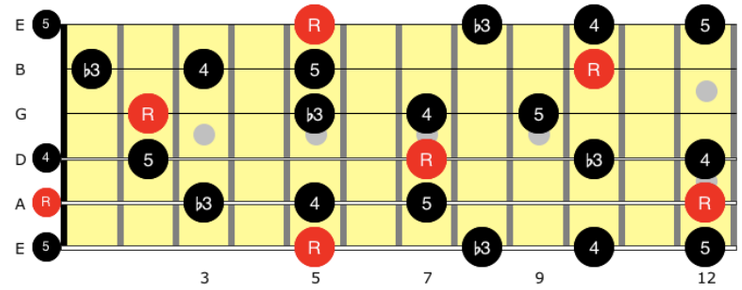
Let's now add to that diagram the minor 3rd which is the second note found in the minor pentatonic formula:



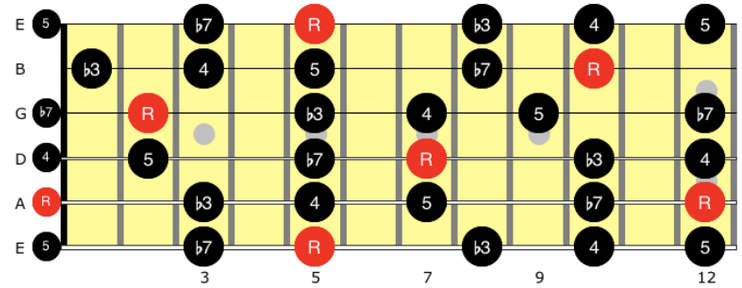
Next comes the 4th:



Then the 5th:



And finally the minor 7th:



All the notes found in the previous diagram are part of the minor pentatonic scale. It would be difficult for anyone to start expressing himself musically given the number of possible note placements found over the full fretboard.

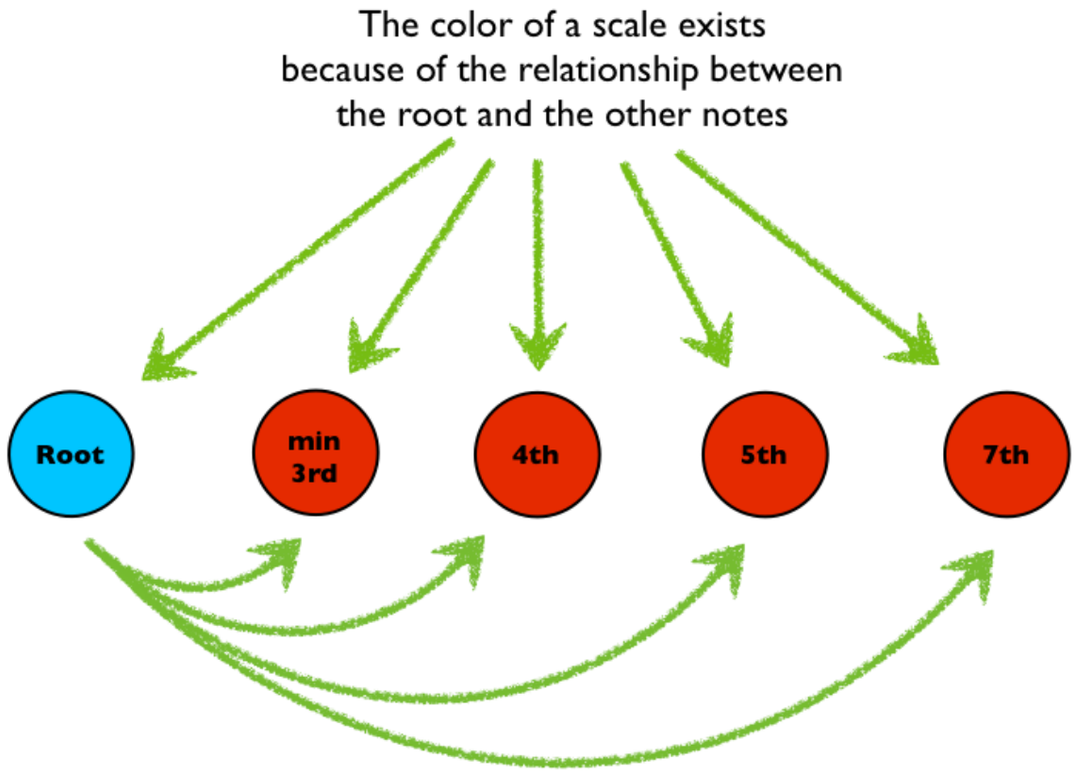
In the following modules, we will split the full fretboard into sections (positions) to make things easier.

Position 1

It's not the note you start playing from that determines the key in but rather the relationship between those notes and the root.

The root will already be heard in the chord you are playing over.

This is a very important point to remember when playing.



A minor pentatonic scale is made of the following notes:

Root - min 3rd - 4th - 5th - min 7th

Position numbers are determined by the note from which a position starts. If a scale has five notes, there will be five positions.

Each of the five positions of a minor pentatonic scale will start with the following notes:

Position 1: Root

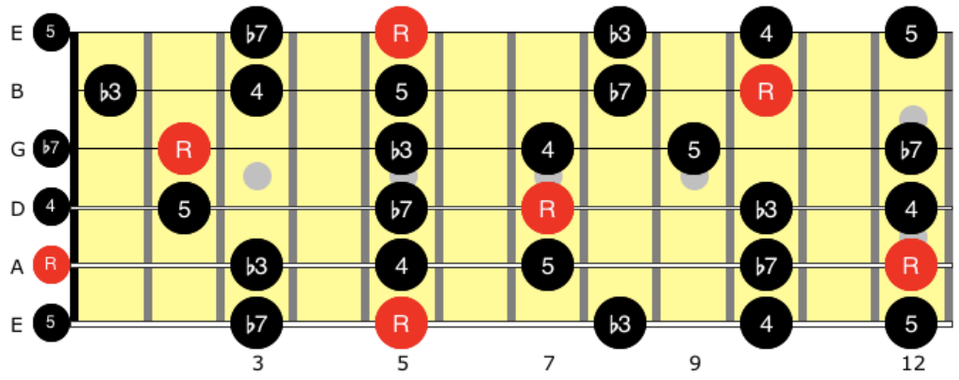
Position 2: min 3rd

Position 3: 4th

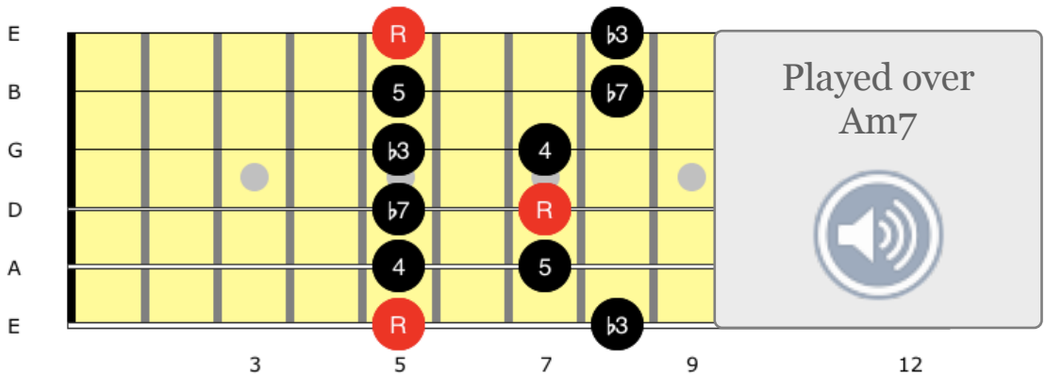
Position 4: 5th

Position 5: min 7th

Let’s consider an A minor pentatonic scale played all over the fretboard:



Let’s now visualize our first position. We can do that by slicing our fretboard vertically starting with the root:



Because that first position starts with the root, it is very commonly used. Always gravitating around that position can however become a problem.

The way the notes of the first position of the minor pentatonic scale are organized in that slice of the fretboard will encourage certain musical ideas that can become too predictable after a while.

In the following sections, we’ll study the 4 other positions of the minor pentatonic scale.

Before moving on, make sure you get comfortable with that first position.

Anticipate the sound of the notes you play as you practice the first position over the following backing track:

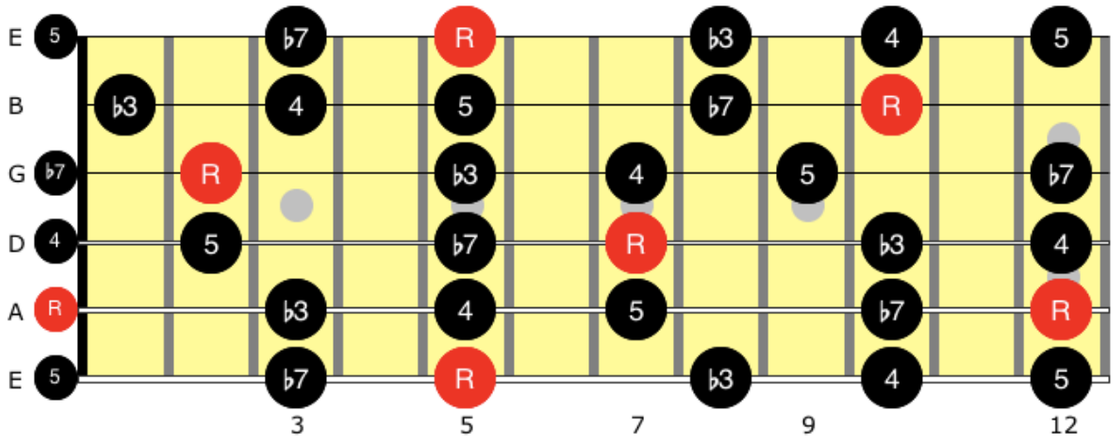
A minor pentatonic - position 1

Position 2

As you just learned, scale positions are determined by their starting note. The second position of a minor pentatonic scale will start with the 2nd note found in its formula:

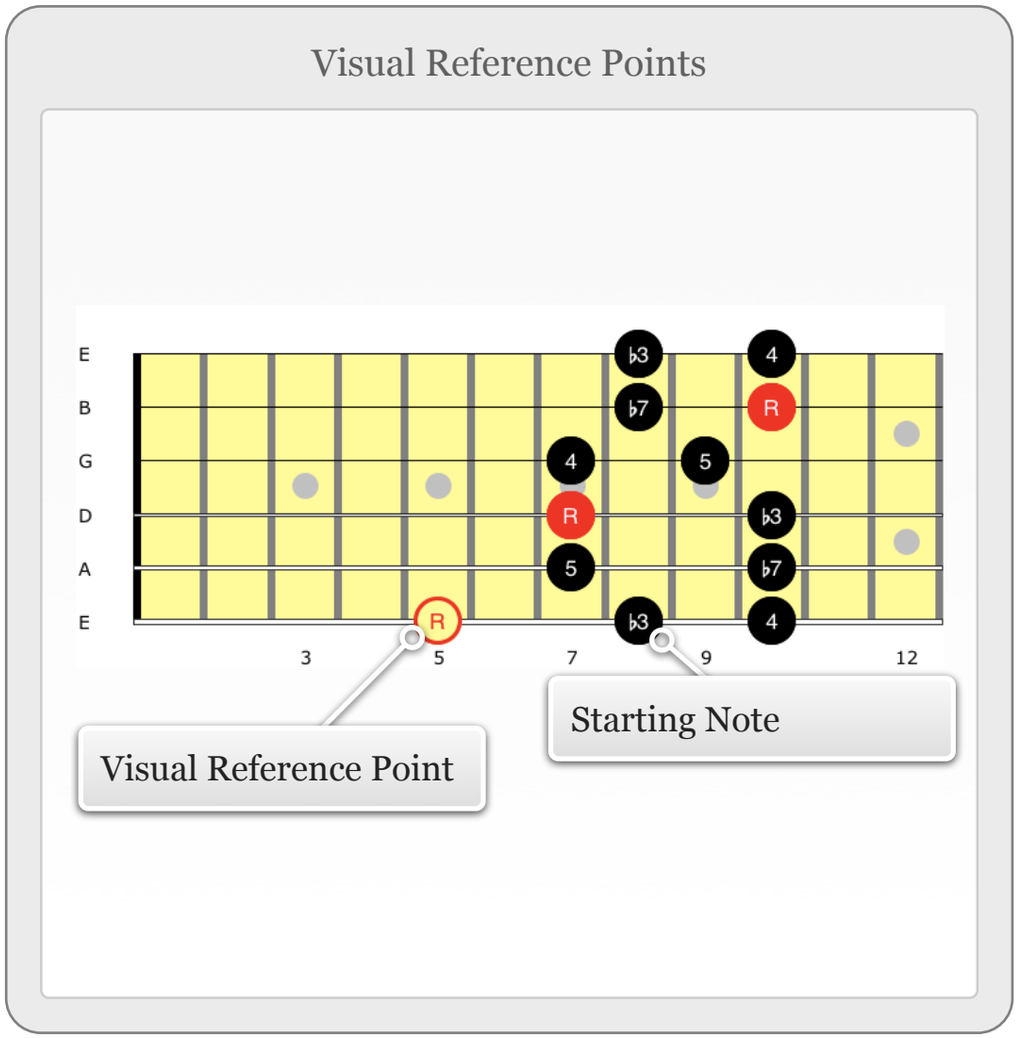
Root - **min 3rd** - 4th - 5th - min 7th

Let's take a look at an A minor pentatonic scale written all over the fretboard:



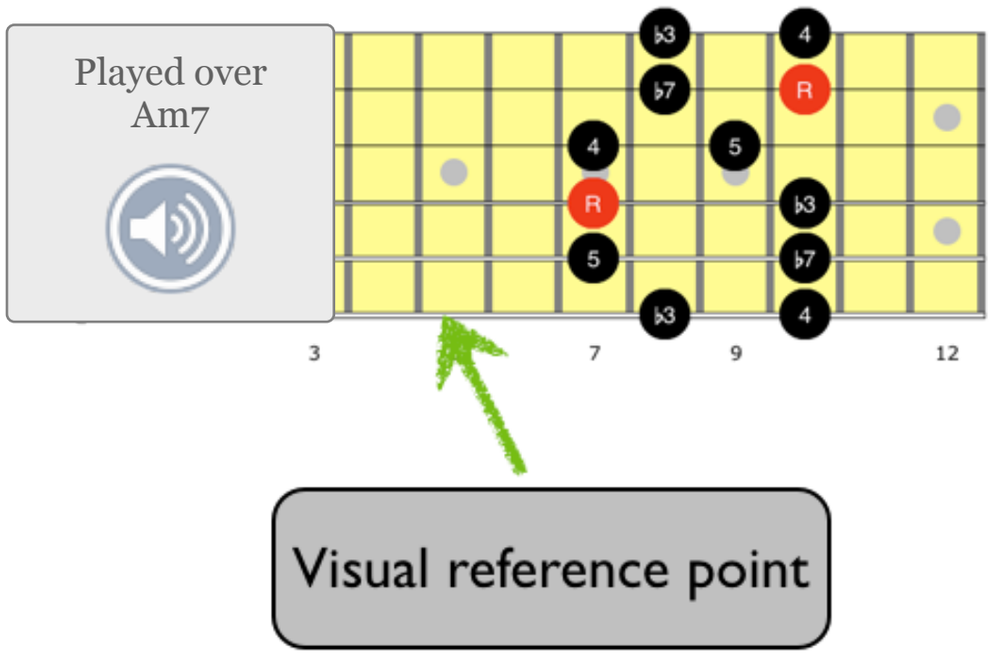
The 2nd position is found right after the 1st one and starts with the second note of the scale (in this case a minor 3rd).

It is very important when playing with different positions to know where the roots are found. For the 1st position, the root is the first note the position starts with. Things get a bit harder with other positions.



Using a visual reference point will help you stay in key. A commonly used reference point for the 2nd position is to the root found on the 6th string.

Even though the reference point is not always found in the positions you use, it is often easier to refer to roots found on the 6th and 5th string.



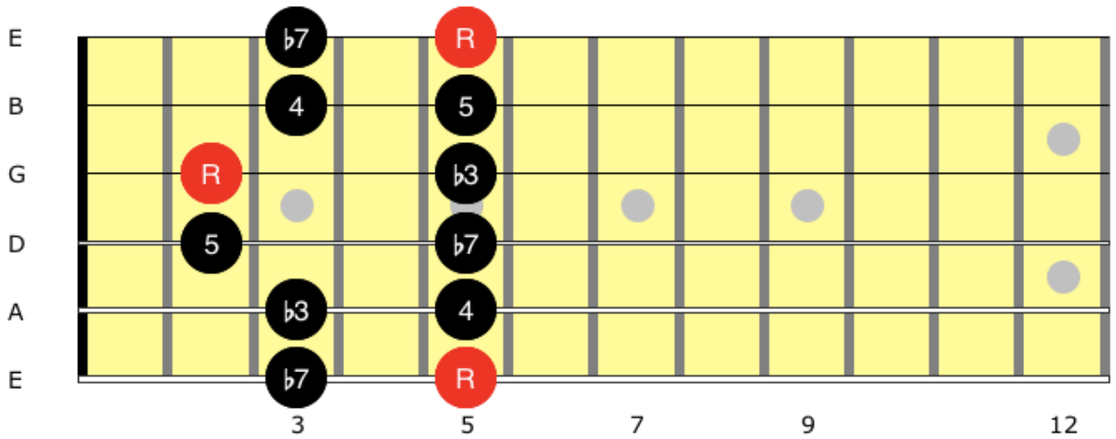
Practice the first two positions over the following backing tracks. Pay attention to the key as this will change the place of the visual reference point on the fretboard!

A minor pentatonic - root on 5th fret

E minor pentatonic - root on 12th fret

Position 5

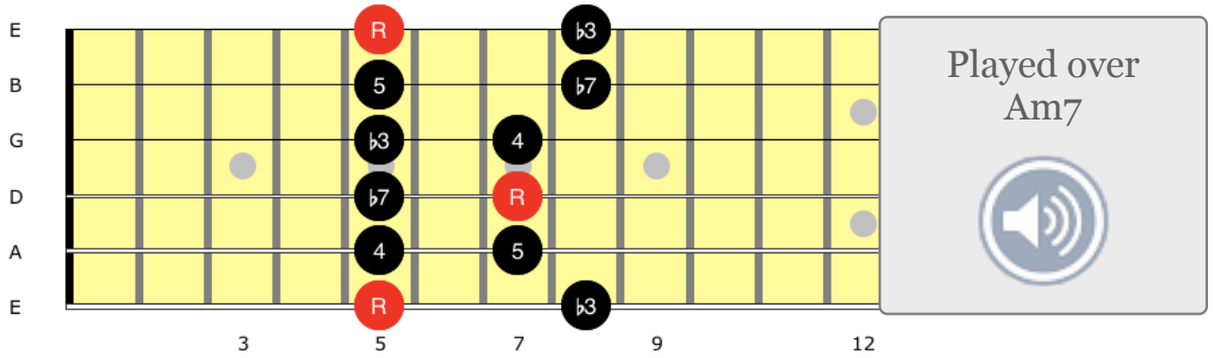
The first and second positions we just learned use the root on the 6th string as a visual reference point. Before dealing with visual reference points on the 5th string, let's take a look at the 5th position:



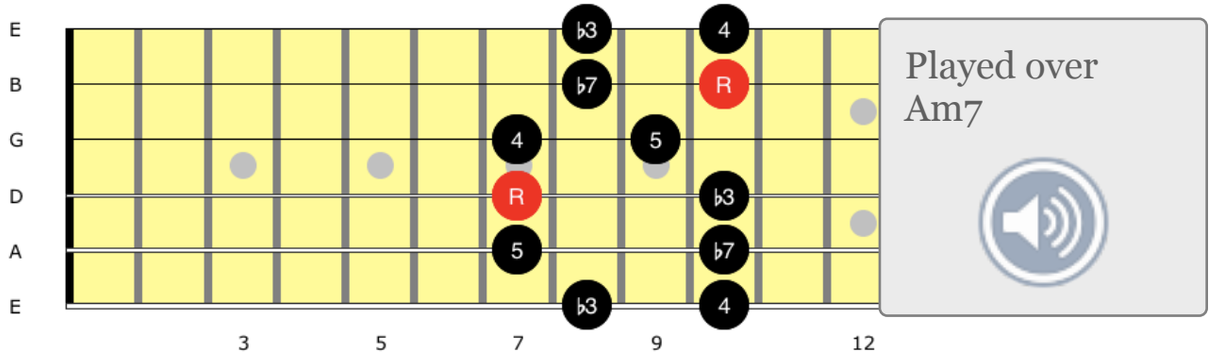
Notice how the root of the scale is on the 6th string? We'll use that root as a visual reference point when improvising.

You should by now be able to play the three positions of the minor pentatonic scale that reference a root on the 6th string:

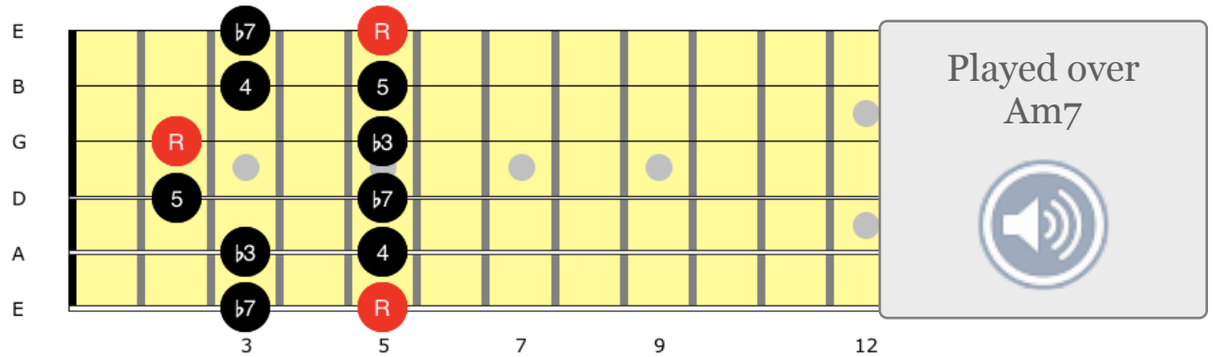
Position 1



Position 2

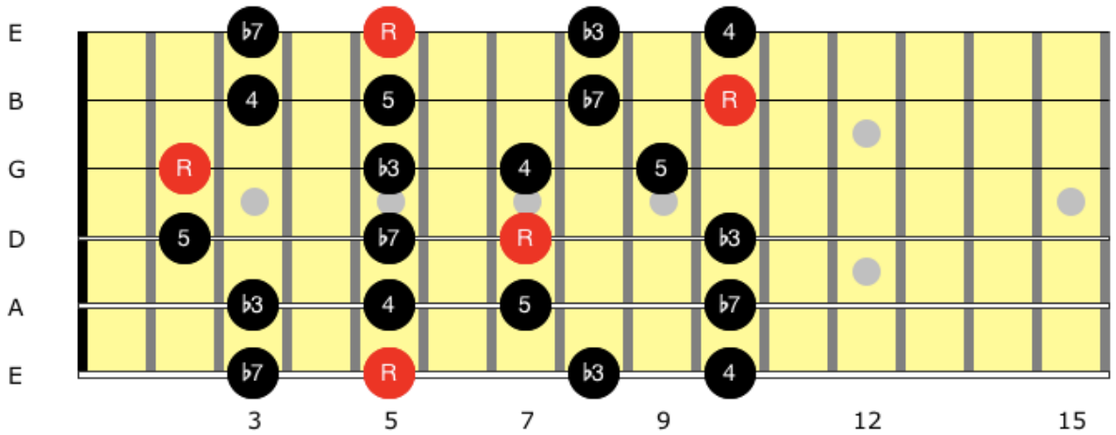


Position 5



Positions 3 And 4

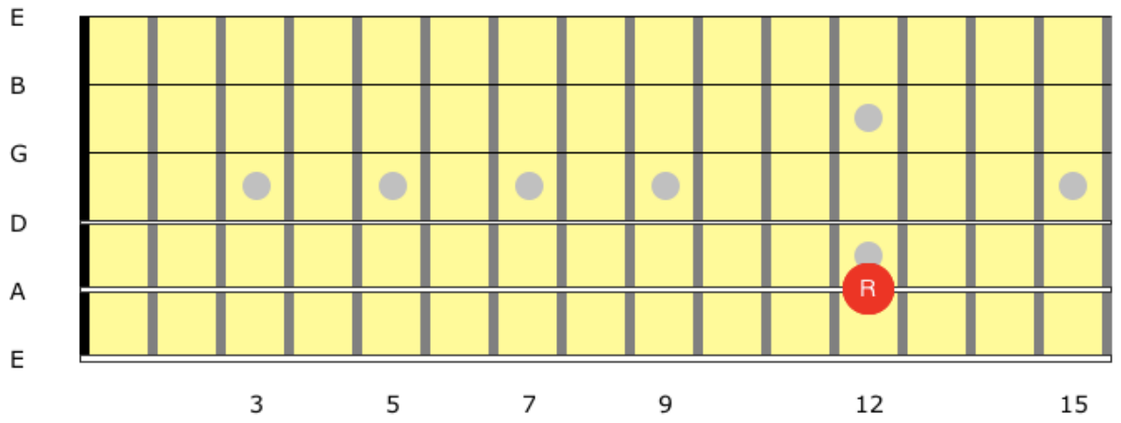
Let's take a look at the area of the fretboard we covered with the previous positions:



Before moving on, spend time mentally visualizing the 3 positions in the previous diagram.

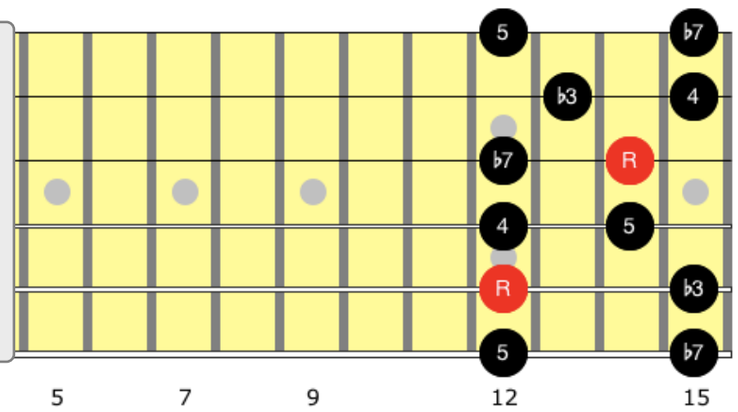
Those positions use the 6th string as a visual reference point. Let's now work with positions built around the root on the 5th string.

In an A minor pentatonic scale, the root is found on the 12th fret of the 5th string:



Let's start with the position that is found on the right side of that root.

A minor pentatonic over Am7
- position 4 -

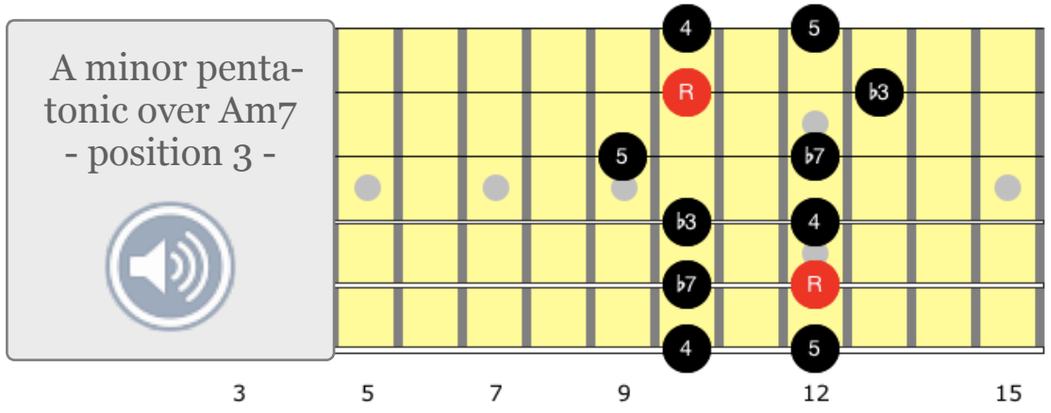


The previous position starts with the perfect 5th of the minor pentatonic scale which is the 4th note found in the minor pentatonic scale formula:

Root - min 3rd - 4th - **5th** - min 7th

We are therefore dealing with the 4th position of the minor pentatonic scale.

We now just need to learn the last position which is built on the left side of the 5th string root:



Practice all five positions over the following backing tracks. Pay attention to the key as this will change the place of the root on the fretboard!

A minor pentatonic - root on 5th fret

C minor pentatonic - rooth on 8th fret

Before Moving On



Memorize all 5 positions

Anticipate the sound of each notes you play

Know the scale's formula

CHAPTER 3

Major Pentatonic

In this chapter, we'll study one of the most useful Major scales: the Major pentatonic scale.

At the end of the following eight sections you will be able to play that scale anywhere on the fretboard and know when to use it.



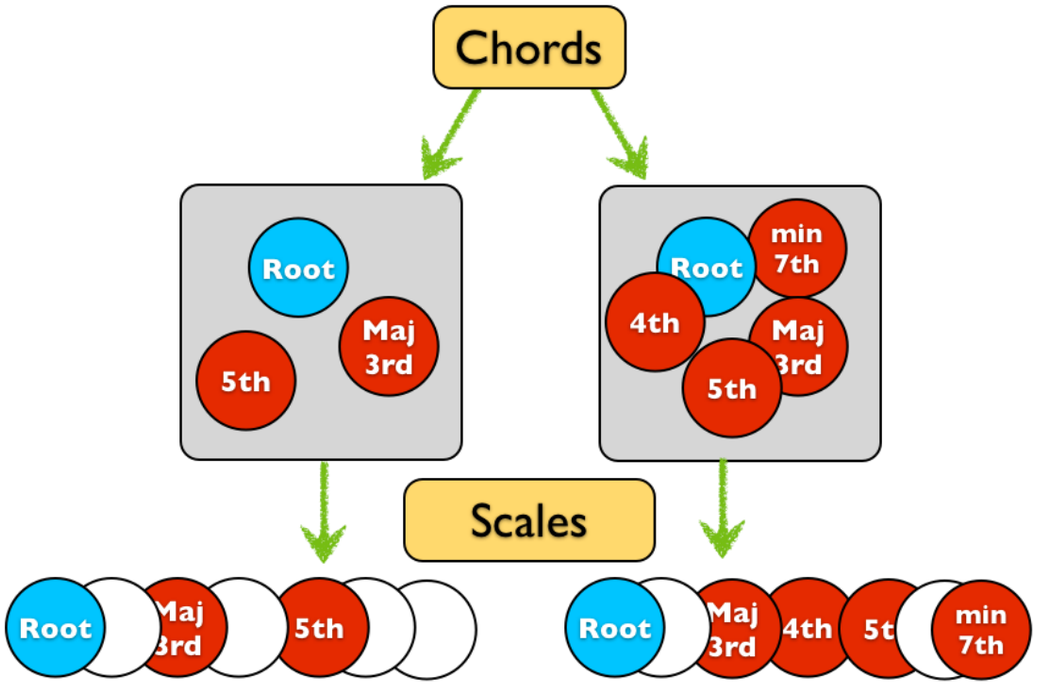
Introduction

Knowing which scale to use has everything to do with the chord(s) you are playing over.

If a chord has a minor 3rd, you will use a scale with a minor 3rd. If a chord has a Major 3rd, you will use a scale with a Major 3rd.

The more notes a chord or chord progression has, the less options you have when selecting a scale.

The Major pentatonic scale is a very useful five note scale. It is made of some of the most commonly used notes found in chords as we will see in the next section.



Notes found in chords determine the scale used.

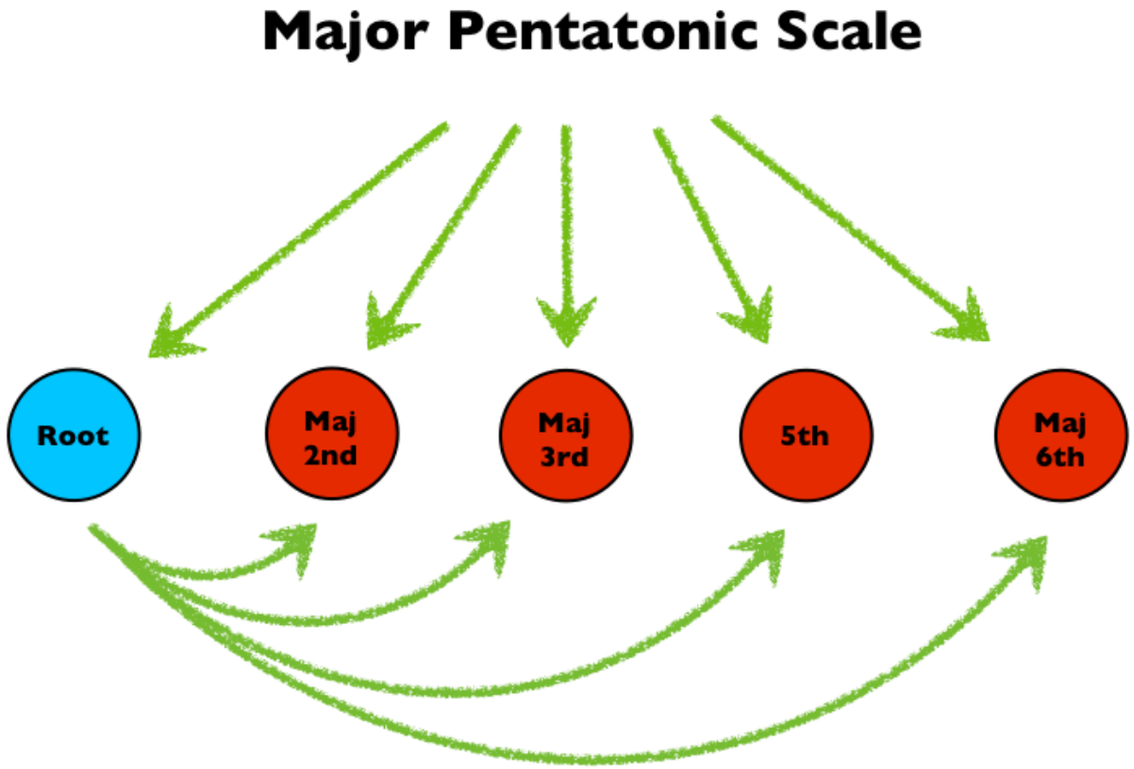
Major Pentatonic Formula

The formula of a scale is what makes it unique. Knowing a scale's formula will help you understand how it relates to the chord(s) you are playing over.

A Major pentatonic scale is made of the following notes:

Root - Maj 2nd - Maj 3rd - 5th - Maj 6th

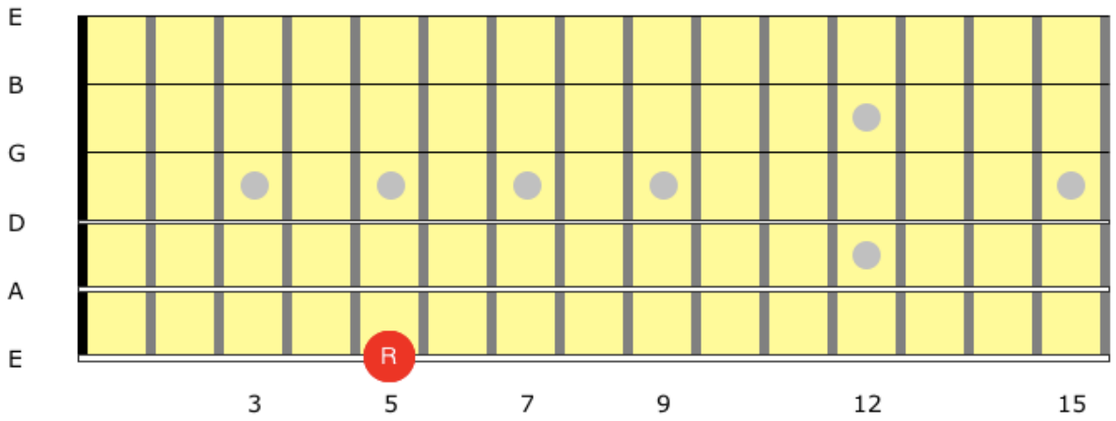
This means that if a chord is made of a Root, a Major 3rd and a 5th you may use the Major pentatonic scale over it as both share the same types of intervals.



In the following sections, we'll learn how to play that scale all over the fretboard and use it while improvising.

Position 1

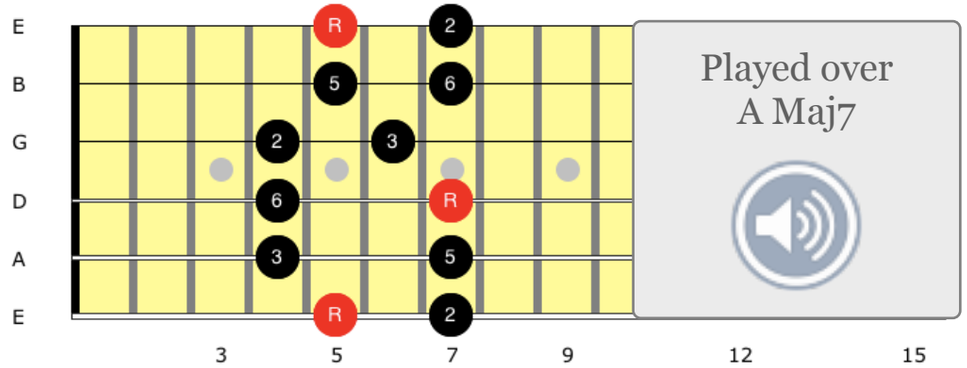
The first position of a scale is the position that starts with its root on the 6th string. Let's work in the key of A. In this example the root is found on the 5th fret of the 6th string:



We 'll use that note as a visual reference point when improvising.

This does not mean that all your musical ideas need to start with the root! It simply means that you are using that note to determine which area of the fretboard you are phrasing in.

Let's take a look at the 1st position of an A Major pentatonic scale:



As you memorize that position, get in the habit of anticipating the sound of each note you play. This will help you be more in control of your music.

Notice how each notes have their own character and their own meaning. This is an important concept to remember: a note by itself does not carry any meaning. You need to play that note in reference to another to bring out the character of that note.

About Positions

Because of the way the guitar is built, it is possible to play the same exact note on different strings, different frets. The same scale can be played in various areas of the fretboard.

Being able to play the same musical idea in multiple fretboard zones will give you much more freedom. Scale positions refer to areas of the fretboard.

In the example of an A Major pentatonic scale, we can split the fretboard into 5 zones, each starting with one of the notes of the Major pentatonic scale.

Position 1:

Root - Maj 2nd - Maj 3rd - 5th - Maj 6th

Position 2:

Maj 2nd - Maj 3rd - 5th - Maj 6th - Root

Position 3:

Maj 3rd - 5th - Maj 6th - Root - Maj 2nd

Position 4:

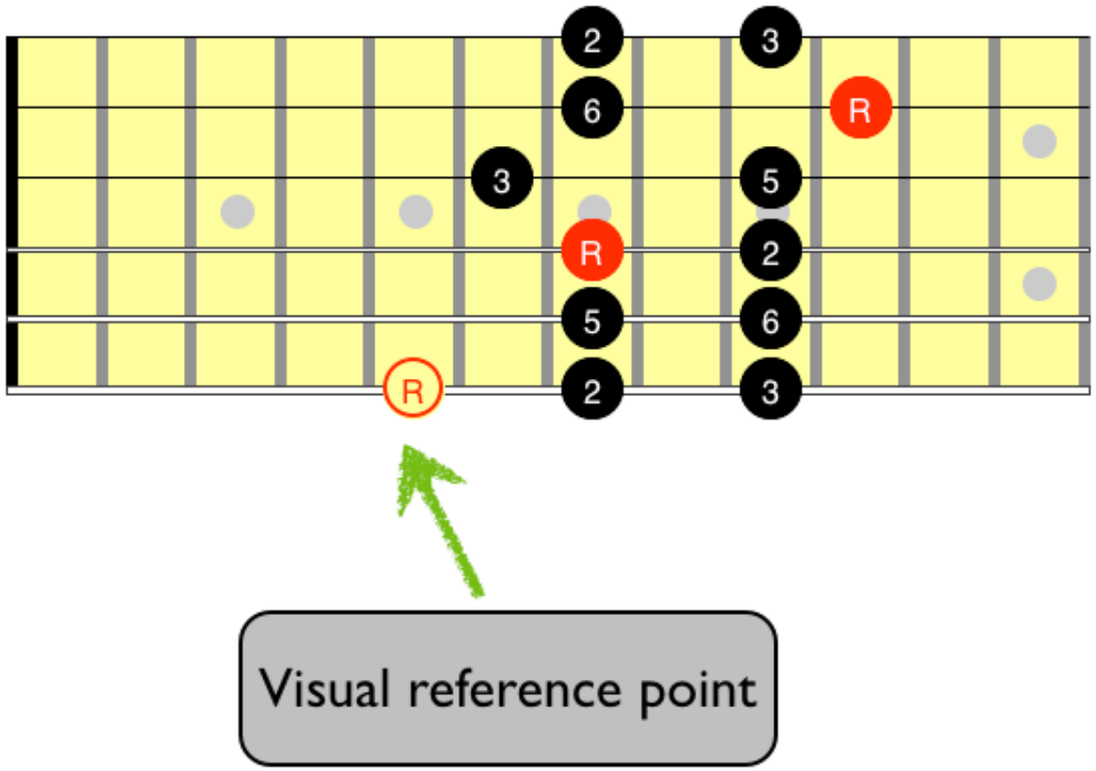
5th - Maj 6th - Root - Maj 2nd - Maj 3rd

Position 5:

Maj 6th - Root - Maj 2nd - Maj 3rd - 5th

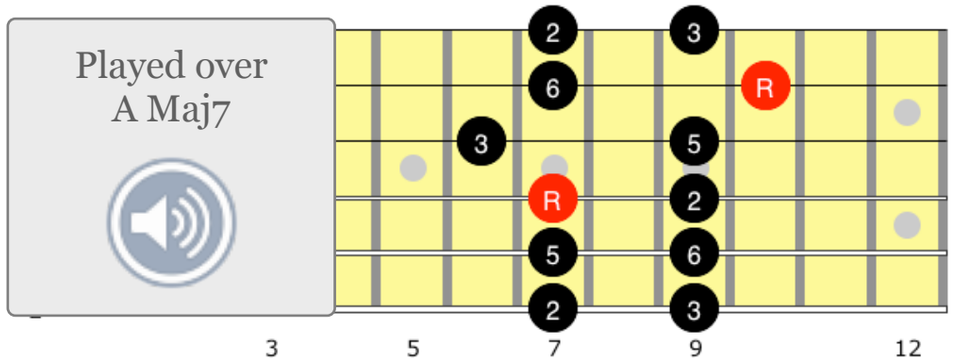
Position 2

The second position is found on the right side of the first one. We will use the root on the 6th string as a visual reference point to build our position.



Remember that the position you are playing in does not need to start with the root to be in key.

It's the attraction that the root exercises over the notes you play that creates the color of a scale.



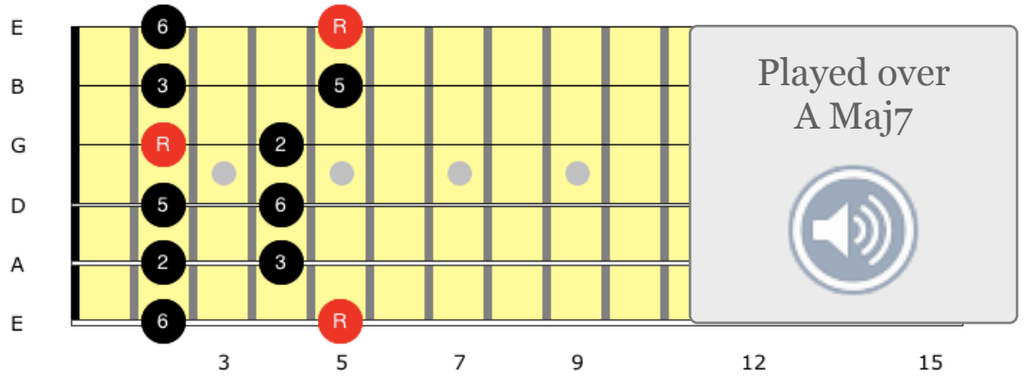
Position 5

Let's now concentrate on the area of the fretboard found on the left side of the first position.

The position found on the left side of the first starts with the 5th note of the Major pentatonic scale:

Root - Maj 2nd - Maj 3rd - 5th - **Maj 6th**

Here is that position in the key of A:



That position should look familiar to you. It is identical to the first position on a minor pentatonic scale.

Do not get confused though!

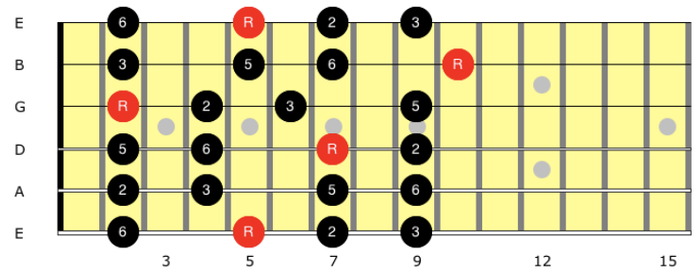
You are still playing a Major pentatonic scale!

Always remember that what makes a scale is the attraction heard between the notes you are playing and the root.

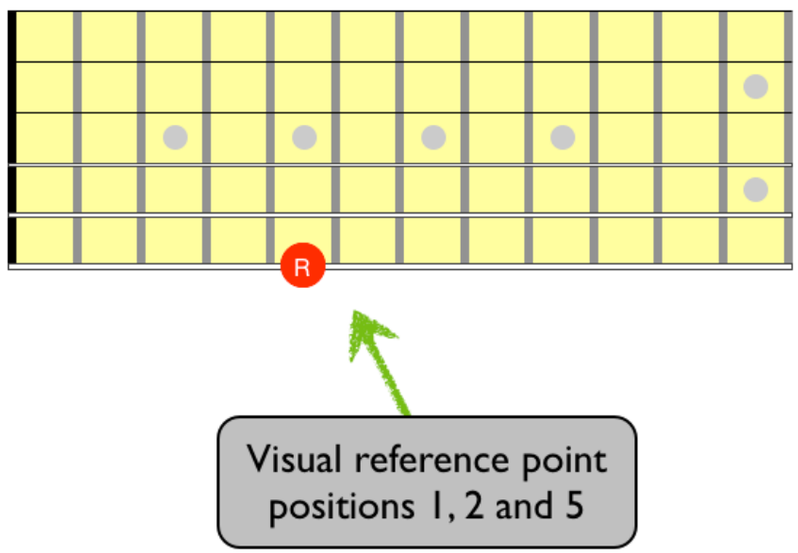
In this example the root is A, therefore we are playing an A Major pentatonic scale.

Positions 3 And 4

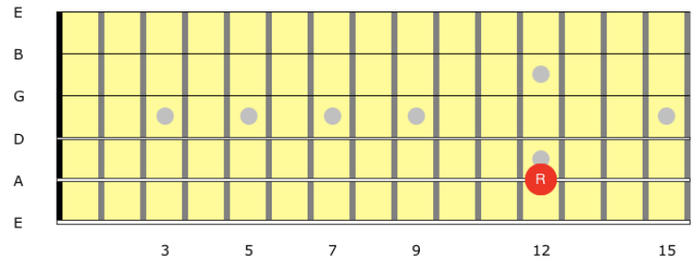
Before moving on, let's look at the area of the fretboard we can cover by combining positions 1, 2 and 5:

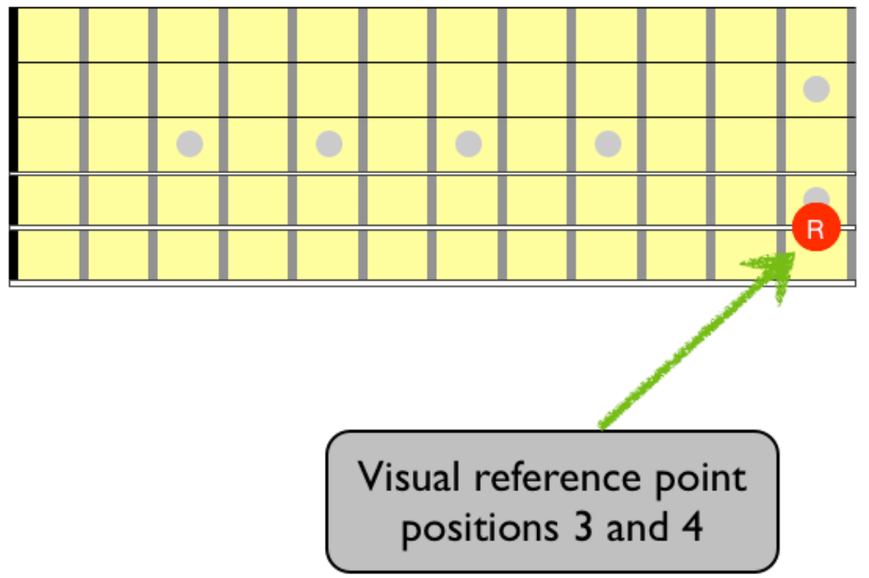


All three positions use the root on the 6th string as a visual reference point. In the example of an A Major pentatonic scale, that reference point is found on the 5th fret of the 6th string.

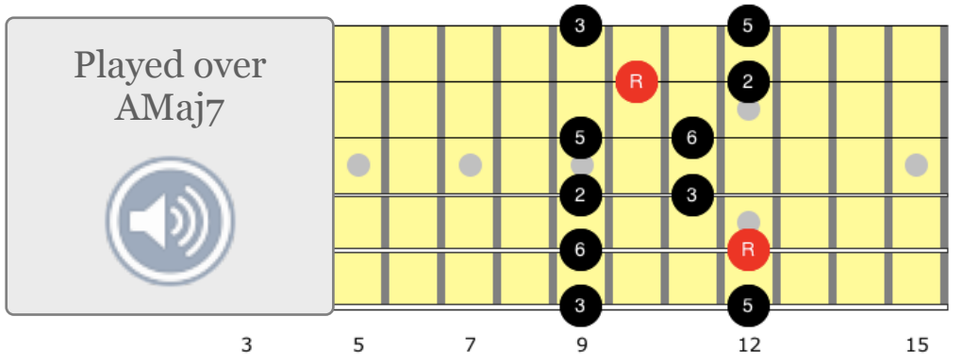


In this section, we'll use the root found on the 5th string as a reference point. In the key of A, that root is found on the 12th fret of the 5th string:





Two positions can be built around that root. The first one spreads out on the left side:

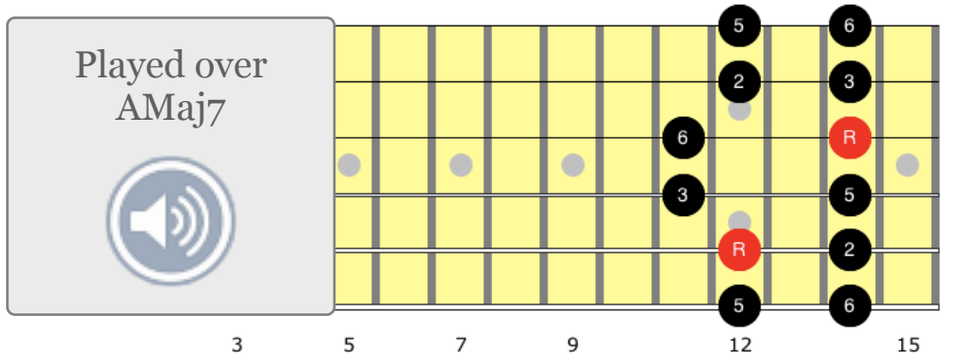


That positions starts with a Major 3rd which is the 3rd note found in the Major pentatonic scale formula:

Root - Maj 2nd - **Maj 3rd** - 5th - Maj 6th

This is therefore the 3rd position of a Major pentatonic scale.

Last but not least, let's learn the positions found on the right side of the root placed on the 5th string:



This last position corresponds to the 4th position of an A Major pentatonic scale as it starts with the 4th note of the Major pentatonic scale formula:

Root - Maj 2nd - Maj 3rd - **5th** - Maj 6th

Before Moving On



Memorize all 5 positions

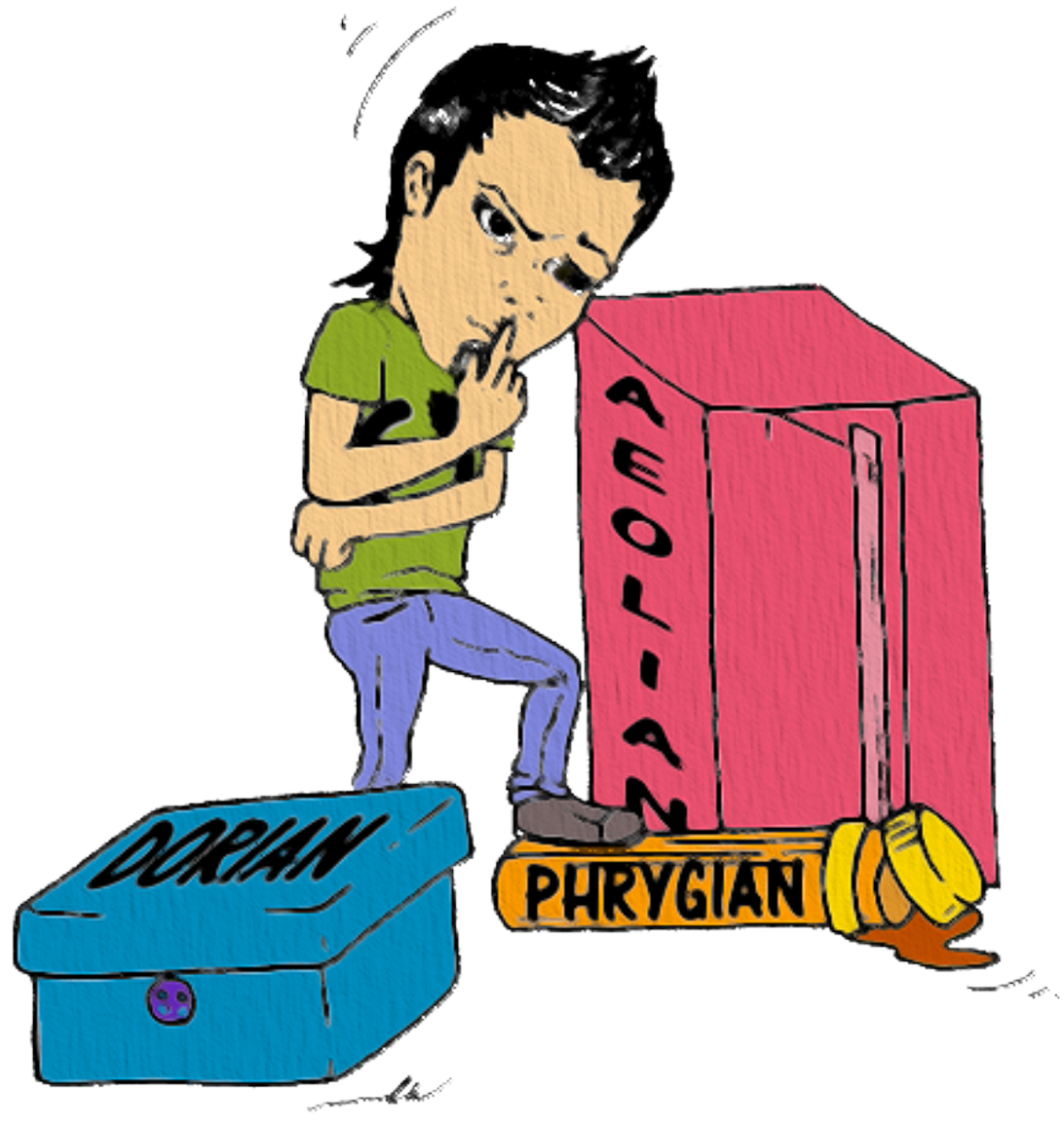
Anticipate the sound of each notes you play

Know the scale's formula

Chapter 4

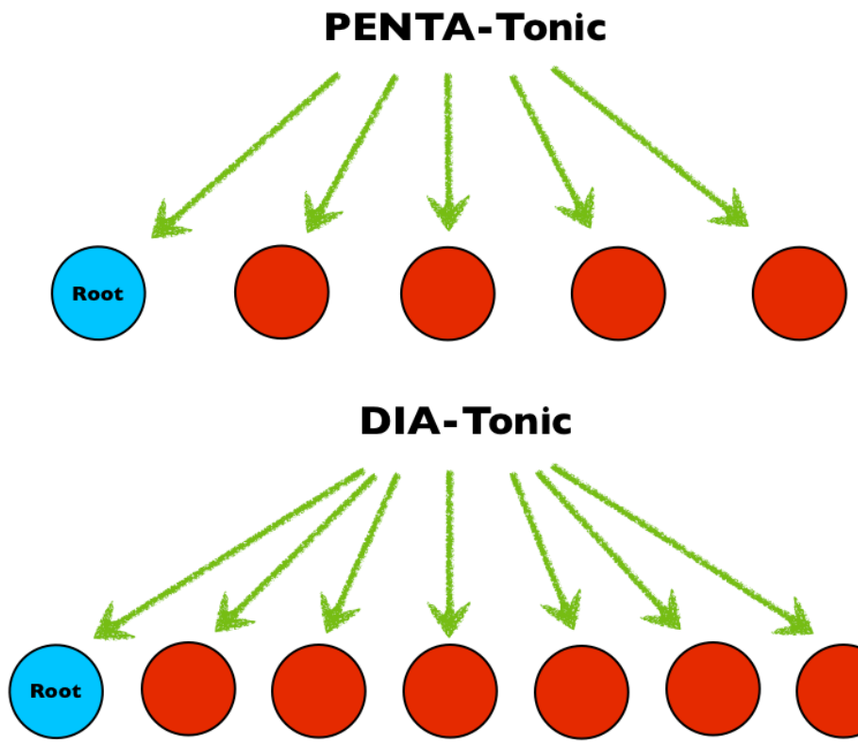
Minor Modes

Modes can be confusing if not approached the correct way. This chapter will teach you what minor modes are, and how to use them.



Formulas

A mode is a scale - a series of notes organized in a pre-determined order. In this chapter, we will talk about diatonic scales (7 note scales).



The modes found in the next sections are all minor which means that they all have in common a minor 3rd.

There are many modes available to chose from when improvising, however we will focus on three of the most commonly used **minor** modes:

The Dorian mode, the Phrygian mode and the Aeolian mode.

Let’s take a look at what makes their formulas:

Dorian mode:

Root - Maj2nd - min3rd - 4th - 5th - Maj6th - min7th

Phrygian mode:

Root - min2nd - min3rd - 4th - 5th - min6th - min7th

Aeolian mode:

Root - Maj2nd - min3rd - 4th - 5th - min6th - min7th

Similarities

Before learning how to play these modes on the guitar, let's take a closer look at their formulas. Notice the similarities between these three modes:

Dorian	Phrygian	Aeolian
R	**R**	**R**
2	min 2nd	2
min 3rd	**min 3rd**	**min 3rd**
4	**4**	**4**
5	**5**	**5**
6th	min 6th	min 6th
min 7th	**min 7th**	**min 7th**

These common notes should look familiar to you (see 2nd chapter).

The common notes spell out a minor pentatonic scale. That means that you already know five of the seven notes that make the Dorian, Phrygian and Aeolian modes.

The two notes added to a minor pentatonic scale to make a minor mode are called "*characteristic notes*".

Those notes will differentiate the Dorian, Phrygian and Aeolian from one another.

SECTION 3

Dorian Mode

The first mode we'll look at is probably the most commonly used minor modes. As a matter of fact, if you've been playing guitar for a while it would not be surprising that you already use it without knowing it.

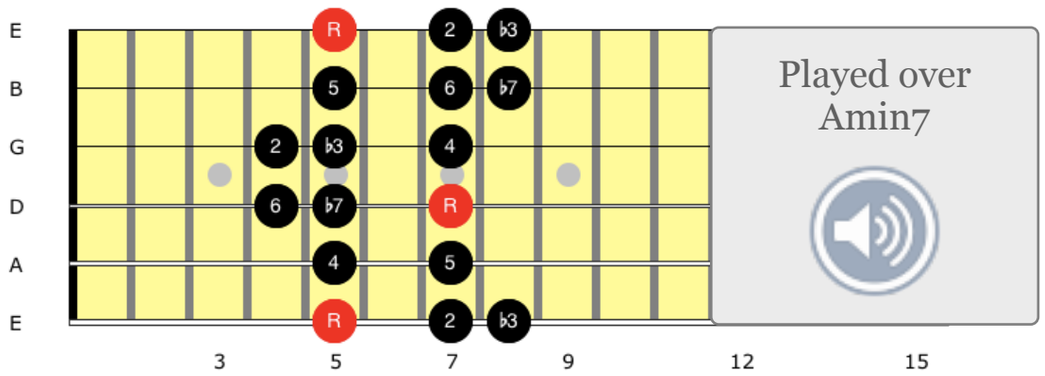
Let's start by looking at the Dorian mode's formula. Notice how the minor pentatonic scale is found within the mode:

Dorian mode:

Root - Maj 2nd - min 3rd - 4th - 5th - Maj 6th - min 7th

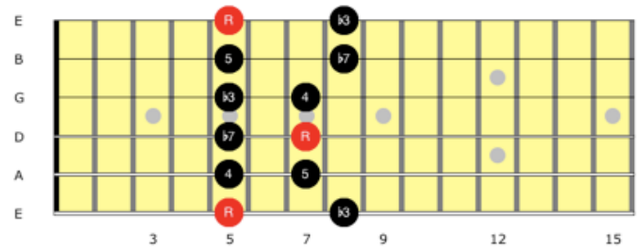
Knowing that a minor pentatonic scale is found within the Dorian mode makes it much easier to use. We can simply see the Dorian mode as a minor pentatonic scale to which we added a Major 2nd and Major 6th.

Let's take a look at the first position of an A Dorian mode:



Let's now break down that first position and see how it is made of a minor pentatonic scale with two additional characteristic notes:

minor pentatonic



+

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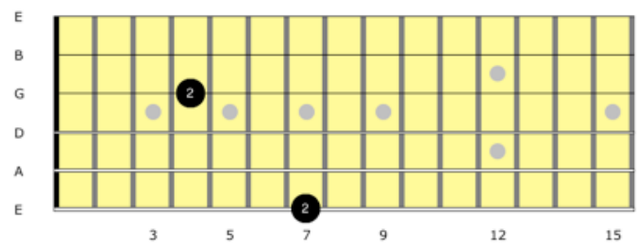
2nd



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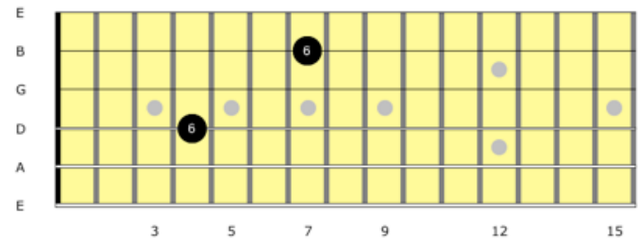
6th



Before moving on make sure you get comfortable with the first position of the Dorian mode.

Anticipate the sound of the notes you play as you practice that first position over the following backing track:

A Dorian - position 1



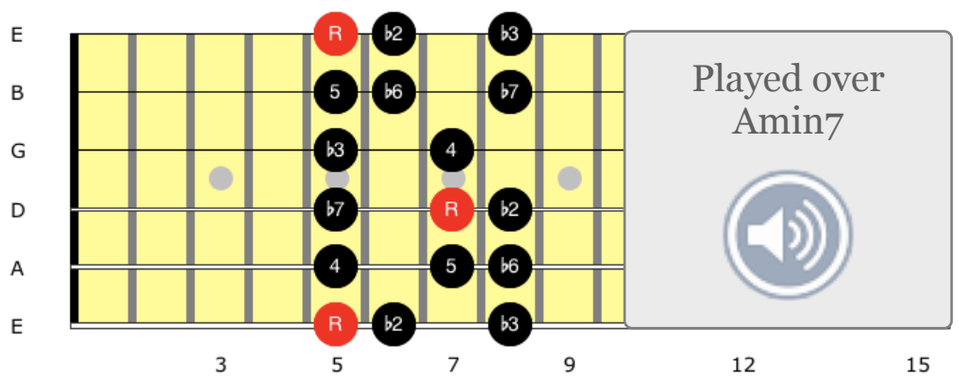
Phrygian Mode

The next mode we'll study is called the Phrygian mode. Just as for the Dorian mode, it is made of a minor pentatonic scale with two characteristic notes. Let's take a look at the formula of that scale:

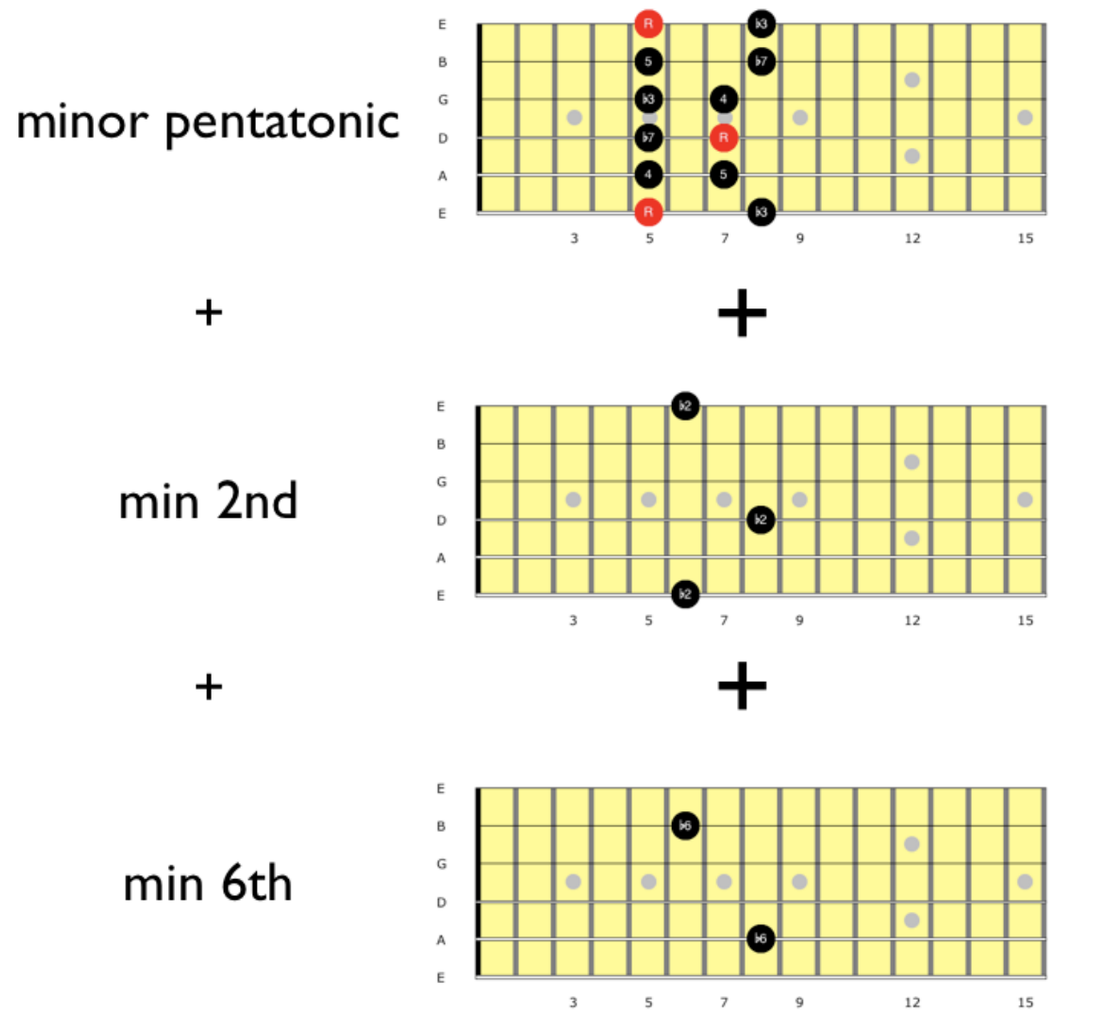
Phrygian mode:

Root - min 2nd - min 3rd - 4th - 5th - min 6th - min 7th

Following is the first position of an A Phrygian mode. Notice how the minor pentatonic scale is hidden within that mode:



Here is a breakdown of the Phrygian mode:



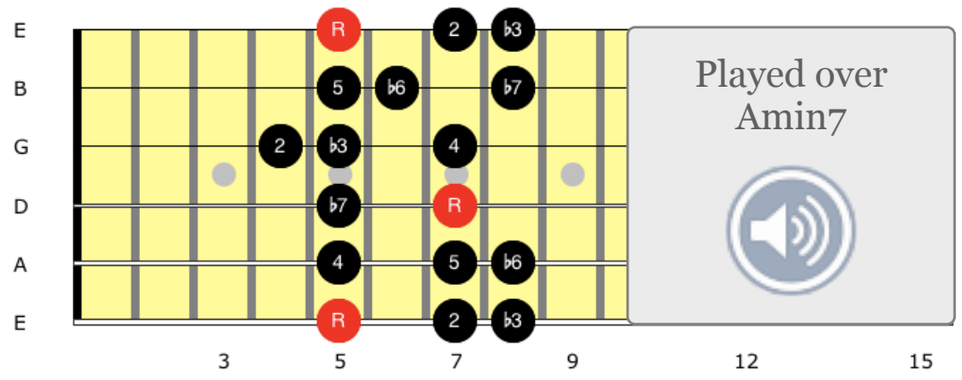
Aeolian Mode

The third and last most commonly used minor mode we'll study is the Aeolian mode also know as the natural minor scale. The Aeolian mode can be seen as a minor pentatonic scale to which we'll add two characteristic notes.

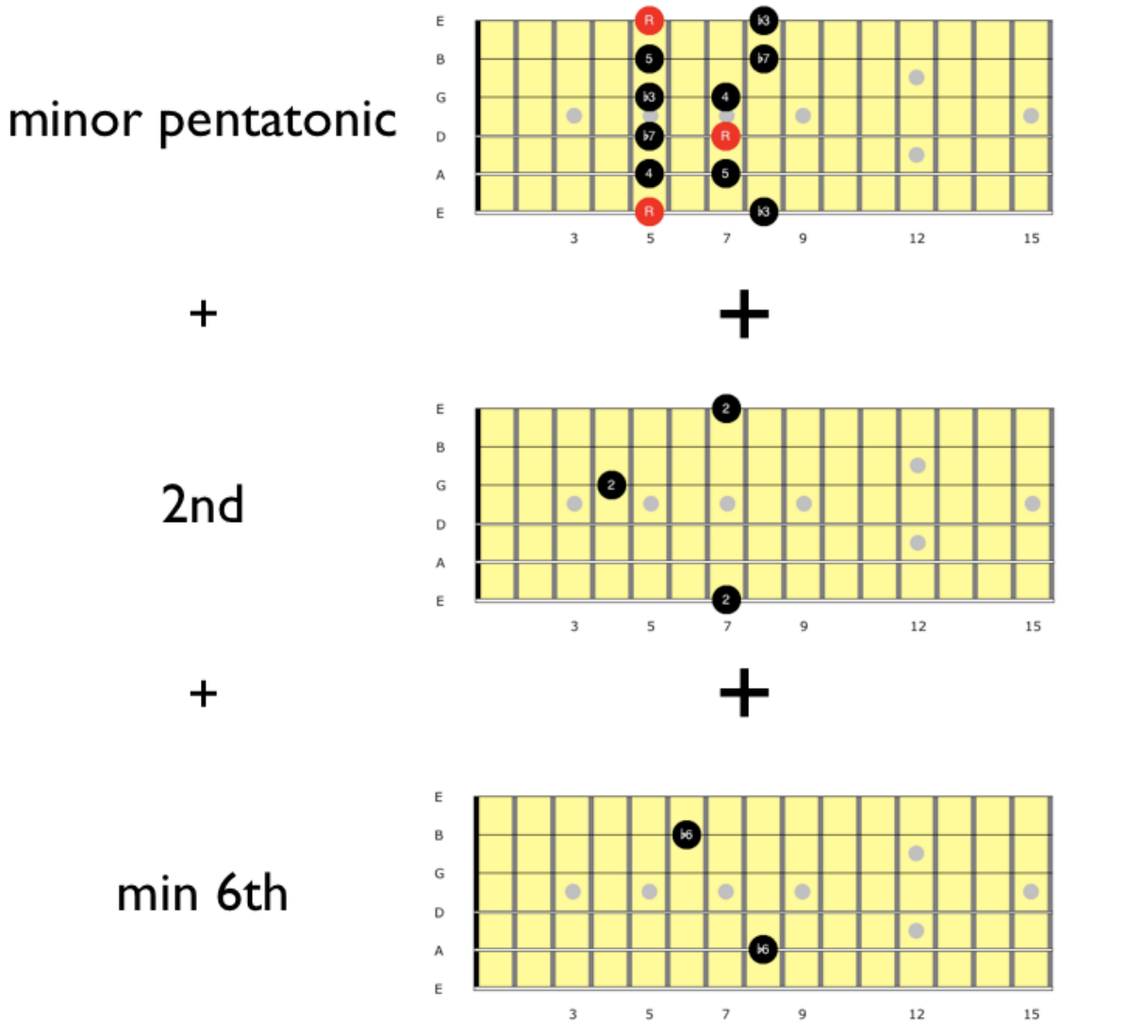
Aeolian mode:

Root - 2nd - min 3rd - 4th - 5th - min 6th - min 7th

As you memorize the first shape of an A Aeolian mode, notice how it is built on the first position of a minor pentatonic scale to which we added a Major 2nd and a minor 6th:



Here is the breakdown of the Aeolian mode:



A Aeolian - position 1

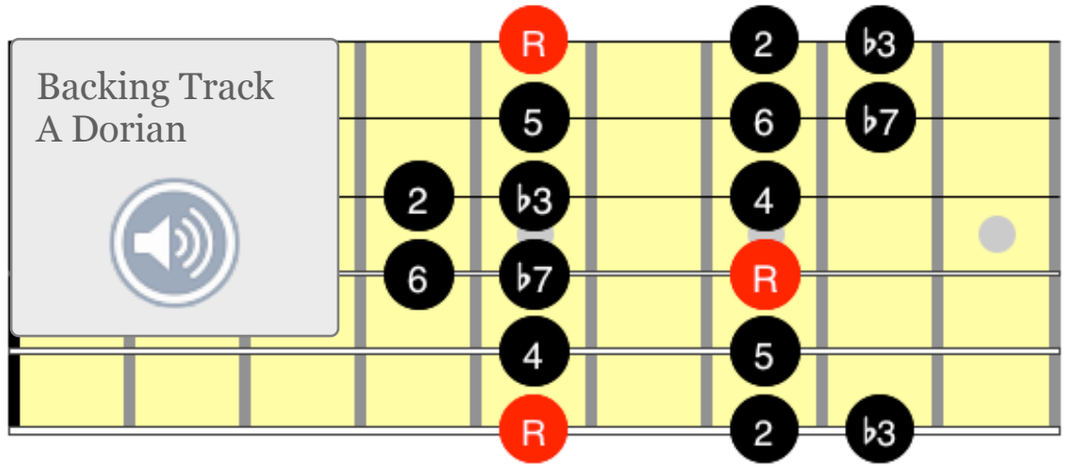
Going Further

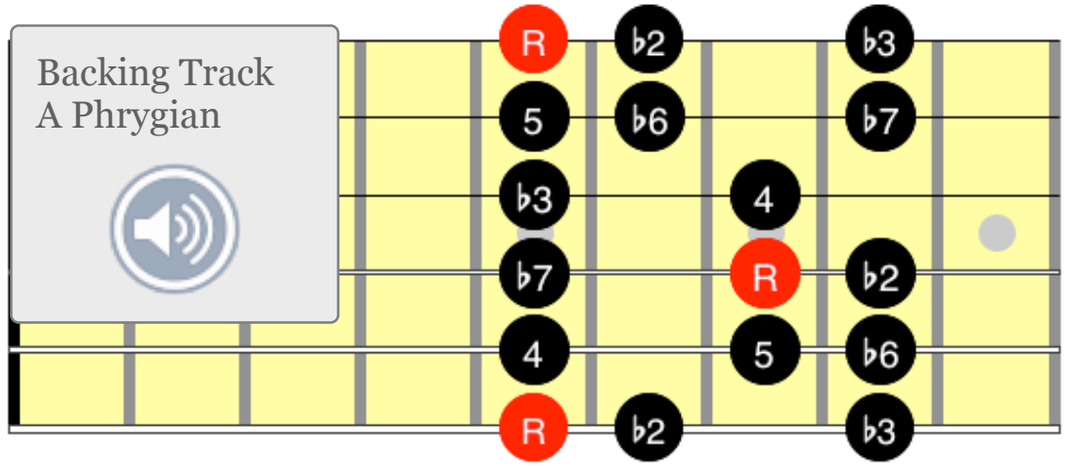
Mastering a scale means much more than just knowing its position. A scale is a tool used to express yourself musically.

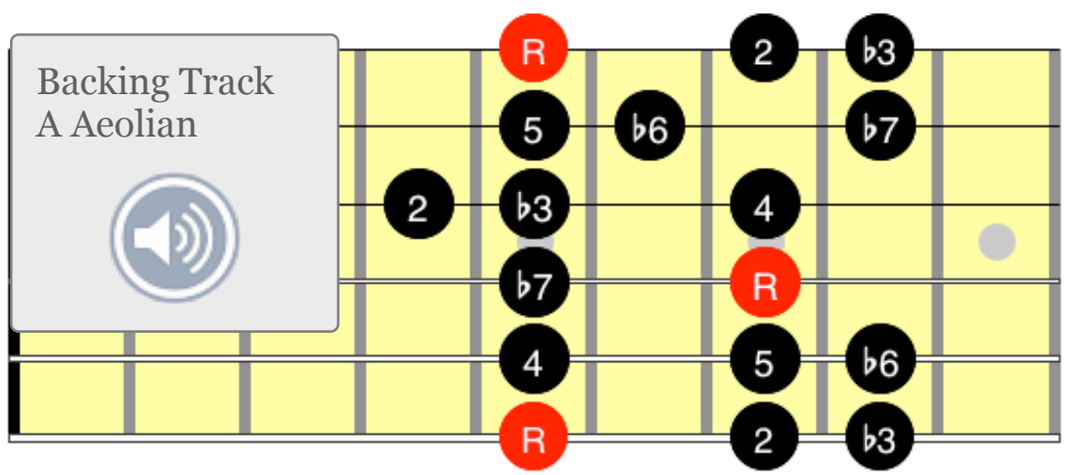
Before going further, make sure you are comfortable with the sound of the Dorian, Phrygian and Aeolian modes. As we discussed in this chapter they are all quite close to each other as they all have five common notes.

The characteristic notes of these modes will differentiate them from one another. Following is a short recap of these characteristic notes:

DORIAN	PHRYGIAN	AEOLIAN
R	R	R
2nd	min 2nd	2nd
min 3rd	min 3rd	min 3rd
4th	4th	4th
5th	5th	5th
6th	min 6th	min 6th
min 7th	min 7th	min 7th7







Before Moving On



Memorize all three shapes

Know each characteristic notes

Anticipate the sound of each notes you play

CHAPTER 5

Major Modes

In this chapter, we'll take a look at three of the most commonly used Major modes. At the end of this chapter you will know how to differentiate each Major modes from one another and know how to use them.



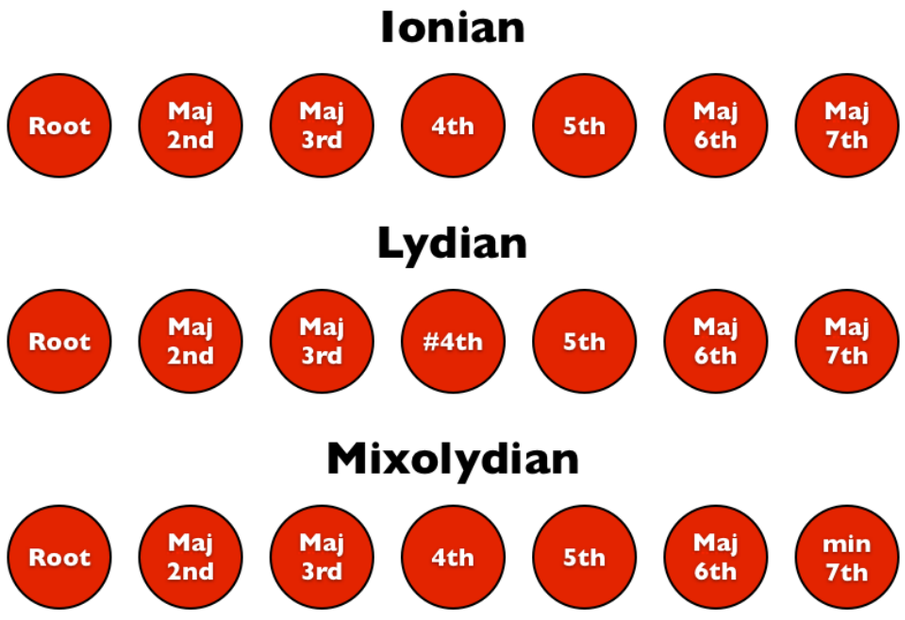
Formulas

In this chapter, we'll study three of the most commonly used Major modes:

The Ionian mode, the Lydian mode and the Mixolydian mode.

The three modes in this chapter are major because they have in common a Major 3rd.

Let's take a closer look at the formulas of these modes:



Ionian mode:

Root - 2nd - 3rd - 4th - 5th - 6th - 7th

Lydian mode:

Root - 2nd - 3rd - #4th - 5th - 6th - 7th

Mixolydian mode:

Root - 2nd - 3rd - 4th - 5th - 6th - min7th

Similarities

By comparing the formulas of the Ionian, Lydian and Mixolydian modes we find some interesting similarities:

Ionian	Lydian	Mixolydian
R	**R**	**R**
2	**2**	**2**
3rd 4	**3rd** #4	**3rd** 4
5	**5**	**5**
6th	**6th**	**6th**
7th	7th	min 7th

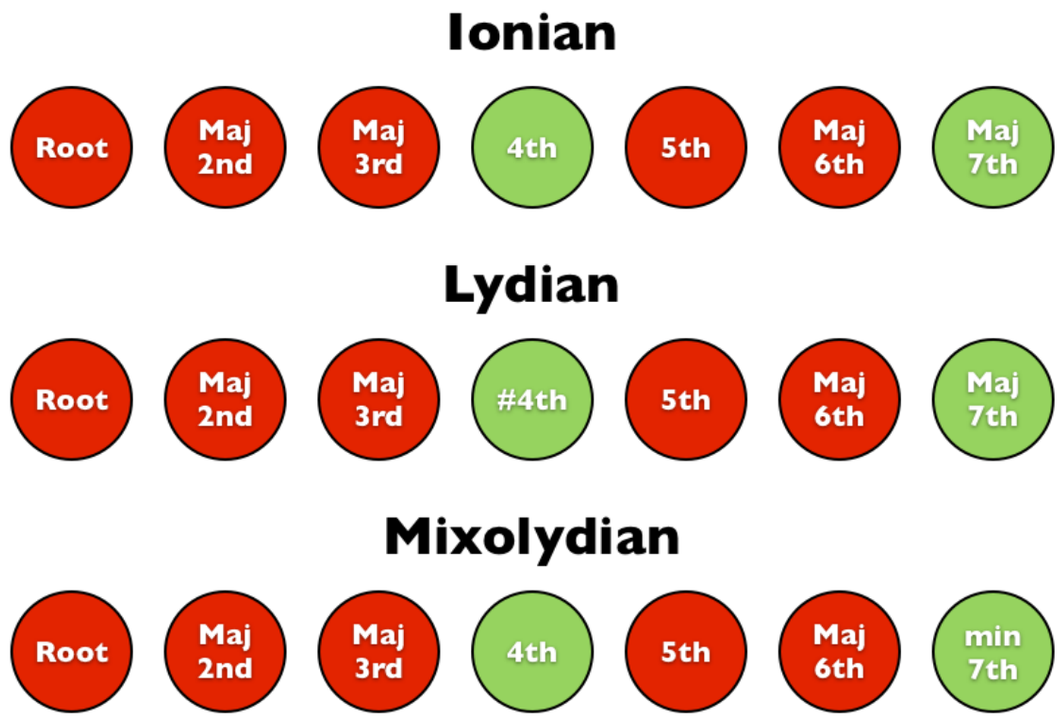
The five notes that these three modes have in common should look familiar to you if you studied the 3rd chapter

The Ionian, Lydian and Mixolydian modes all have in common the notes of a Major pentatonic scale:

Root - Maj 2nd - Maj 3rd - 5th - Maj 6th

This explains why it can be difficult to differentiate them when playing them one after the other.

The differing notes are called *characteristic* notes.

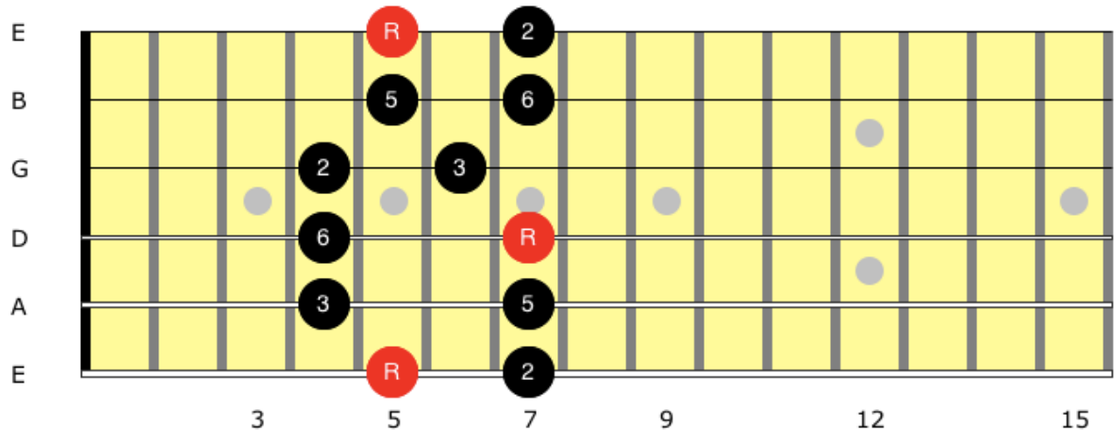


SECTION 3

Positions

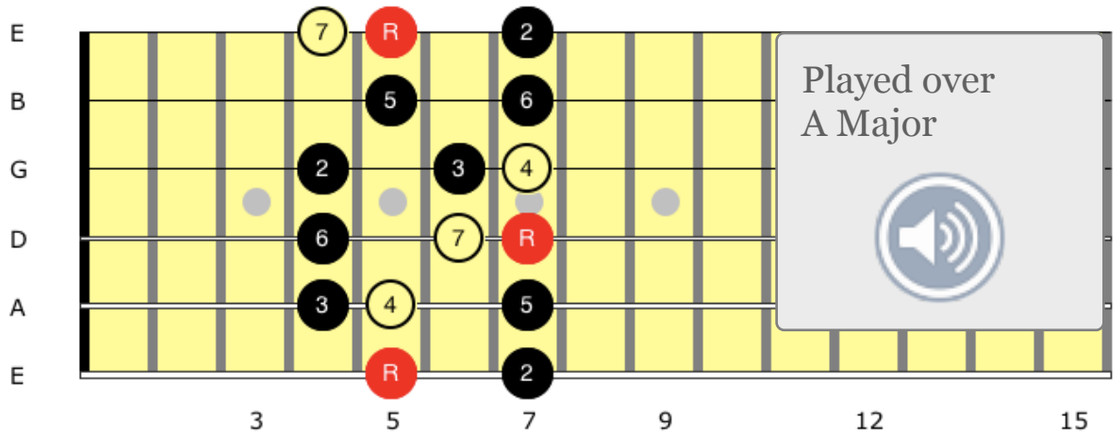
Let's use what we learned in the previous chapter to build the first positions of the three modes we'll be working with. Let's work in the key of A.

We know that the Ionian, Lydian and Mixolydian have in common the five notes that make a Major pentatonic scale. Therefore we can start with the foundation which is the first position of a Major pentatonic scale:

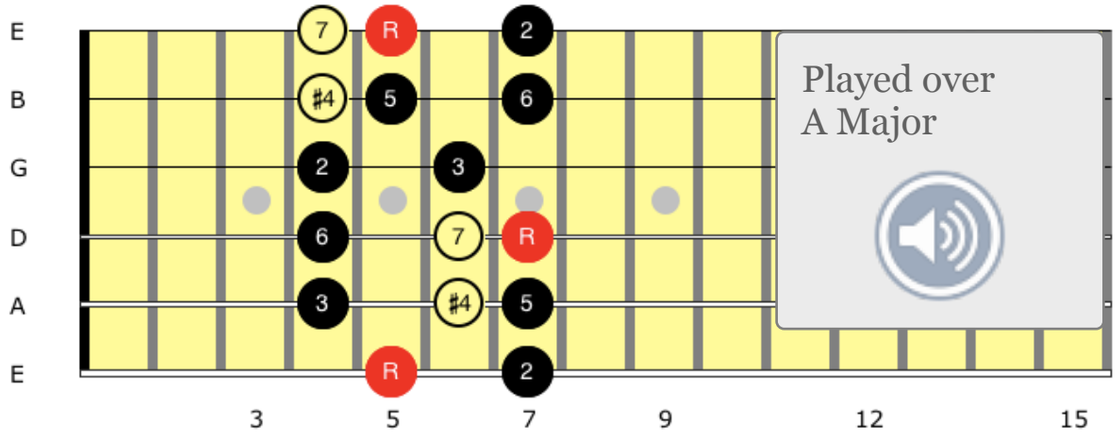


In order to build the full diatonic mode, we need to add to the Major pentatonic scale two characteristic notes for each of these three Major modes.

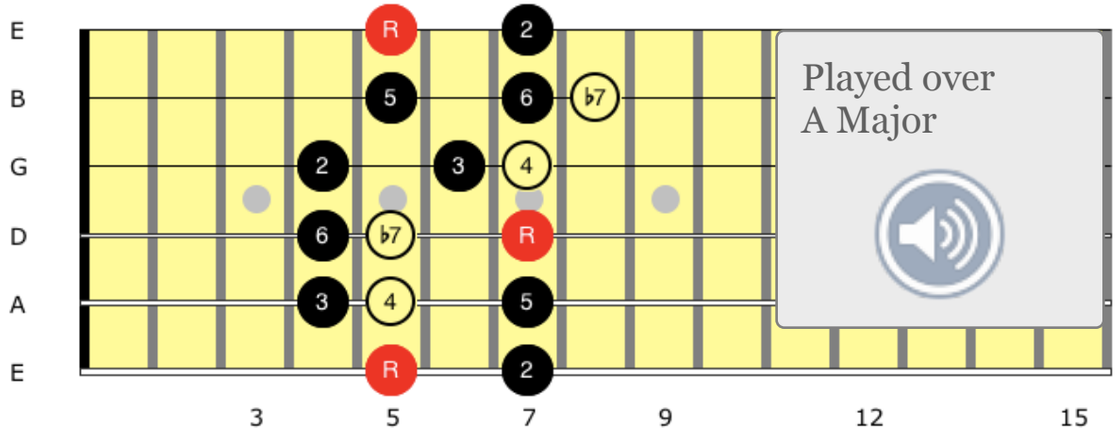
Ionian: Major pentatonic scale + 4th + Maj 7th



Lydian: Major pentatonic scale + #4th + Maj 7th



Mixolydian: Major pentatonic scale + 4th + min 7th



Going Further

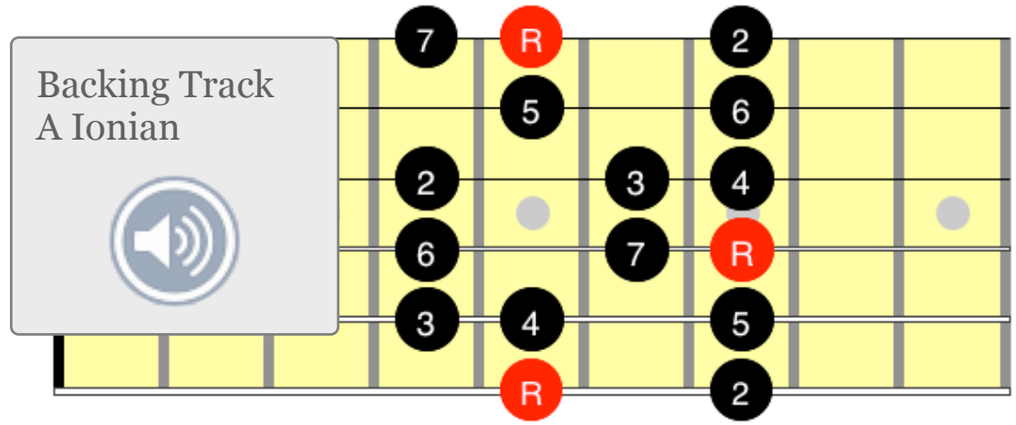
Knowing how to play the first position of the Ionian, Lydian and Mixolydian mode is only the beginning. Using these scales in a musical context requires practice.

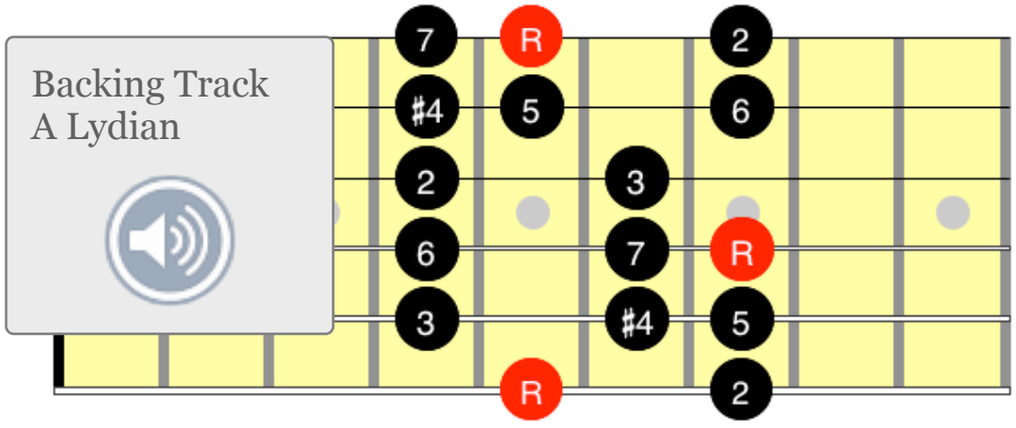
The first step in playing modal is to train your ear to recognize these modes. As you practice them, force yourself to anticipate the sound of every note you play.

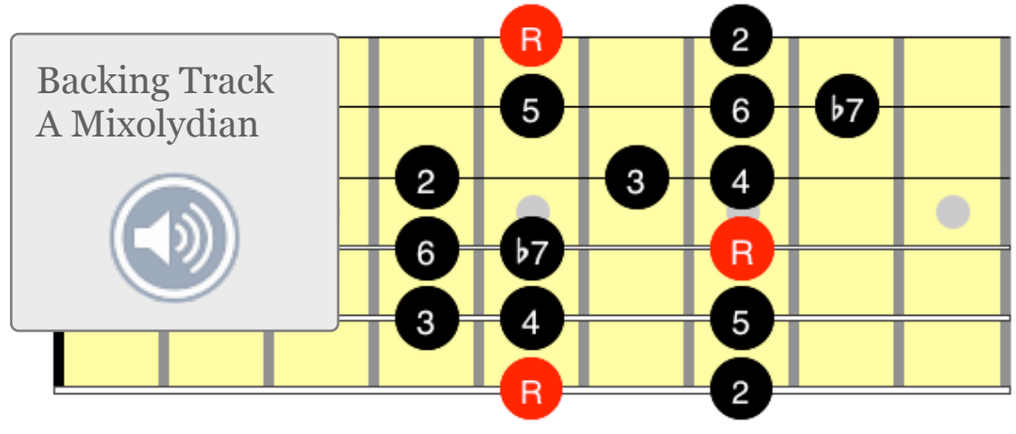
Remember that a mode is built on intervals. Intervals involve two notes which is why you must practice these scales in relation to a root. Without a root being heard, it is difficult to really appreciate the color of the mode you are using.

Use the following backing tracks to practice the Ionian, Lydian and Mixolydian modes.

Anticipate the sound of every note you play!







Before Moving On



Memorize all shapes

Know how to alter any intervals

Anticipate the sound of each notes you play

CHAPTER 6

Locrian Mode

In this chapter we'll study the Locrian mode. At the end of this section, not only will you be able to play that mode, but also learn how to play all the previous modes all over the fretboard.



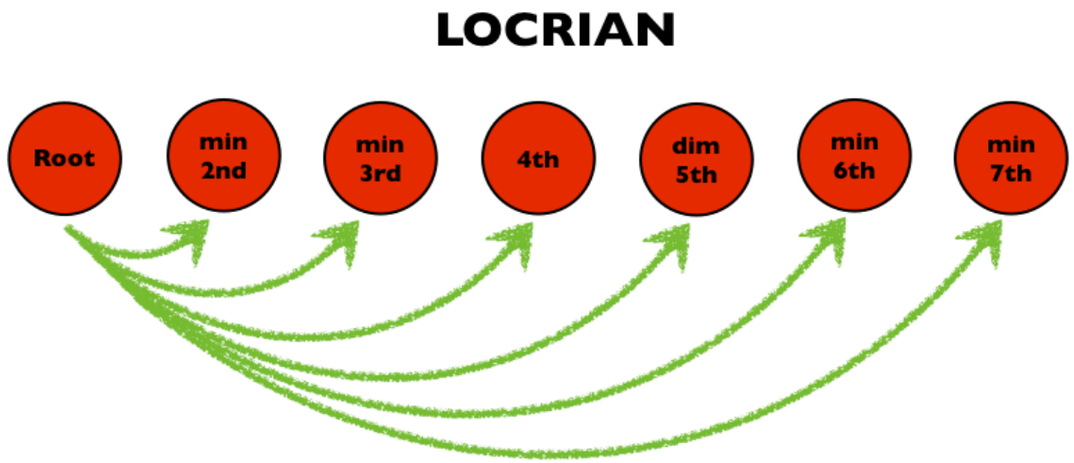
Formula

The Locrian mode is a diatonic scale that is part of the minor family. You might wonder why it was not included in the Minor Modes chapter of this book.

Although the Locrian mode is a minor mode (it has a minor 3rd), its formula does not include the notes found in a minor pentatonic scale:

Root - min 2nd - min 3rd - 4th - b5 - min 6th - min 7th

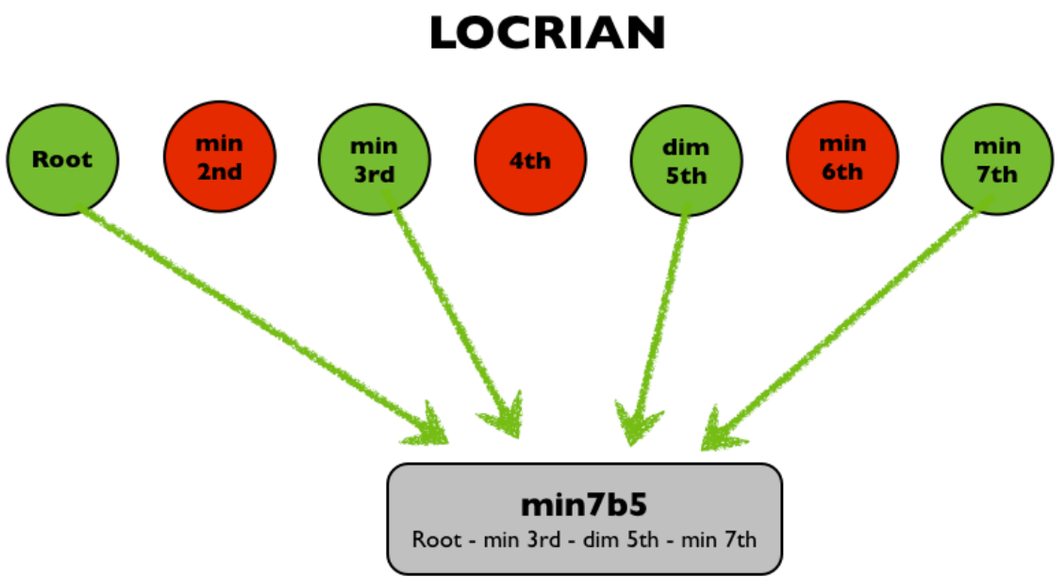
Because no minor pentatonic scale is present, a bit more work is required to memorize the first position of that scale.



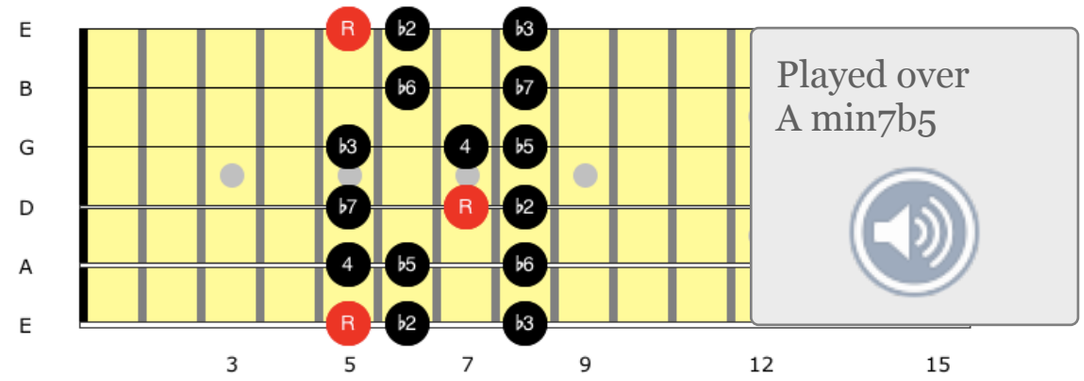
First Position

By looking at the formula of the Locrian mode, we can build a four note chord as shown below:

Root - min 2nd - **min 3rd** - 4th - **b5** - min 6th - **min 7th**



Let's take a look at the first position of an A Locrian mode:



As you memorize this position, make sure you are aware of the intervals you are playing.

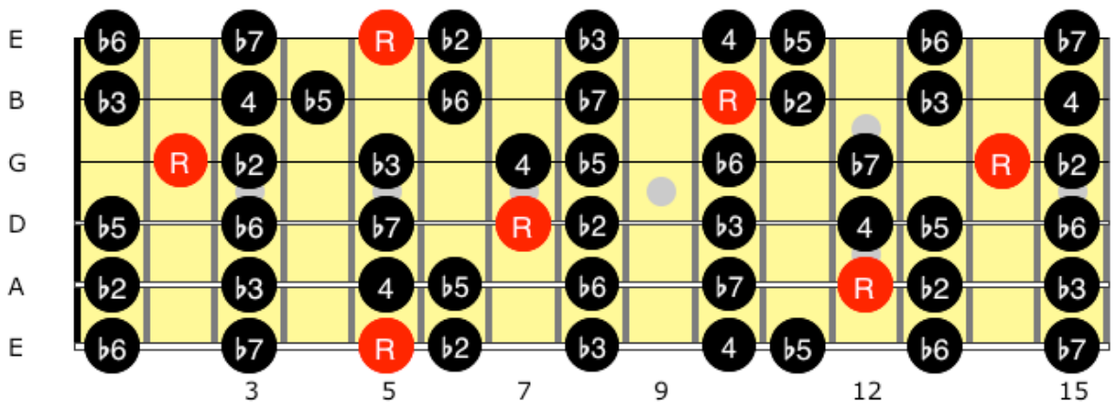
This will help you target the desired notes when you improvise.

Scales VS Positions

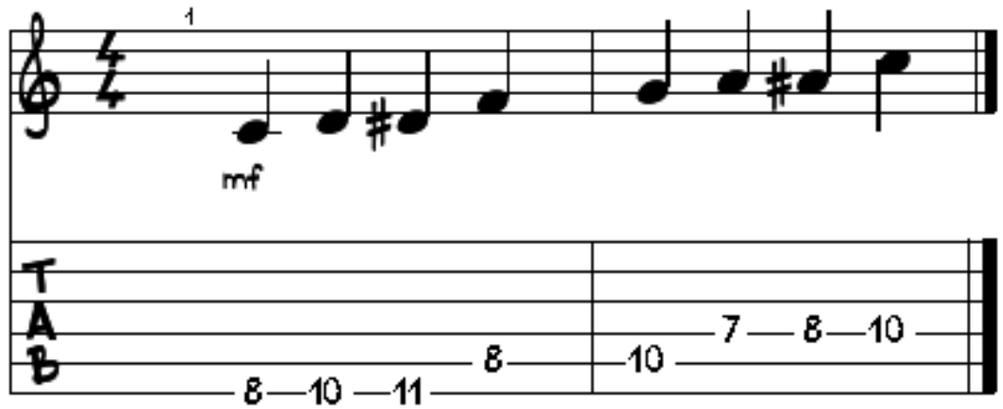
It is very important that you remember that it is not the note you start playing from that determines the key you are playing in.

The key is determined by the relationship between the notes you are playing and the chord(s) you are playing over.

Let's consider an A Locrian mode played all over the fretboard:

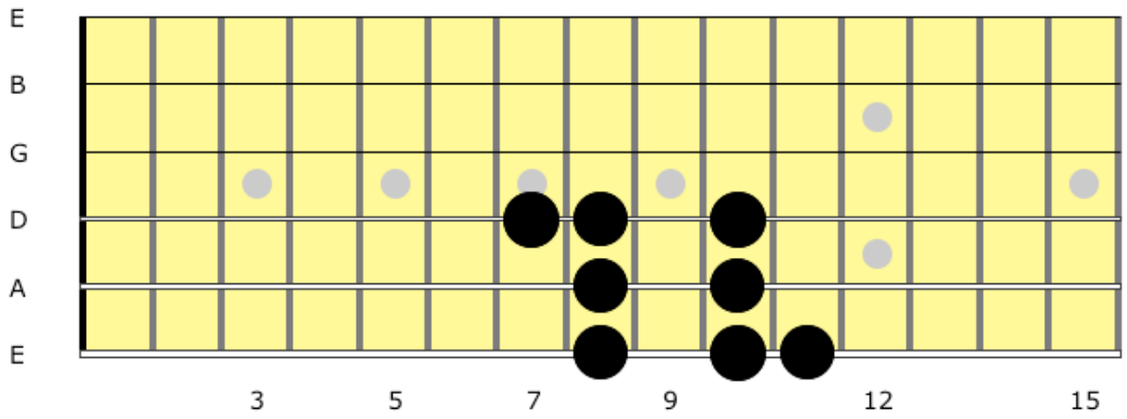


Let's now imagine that your improvisation starts with the following notes:



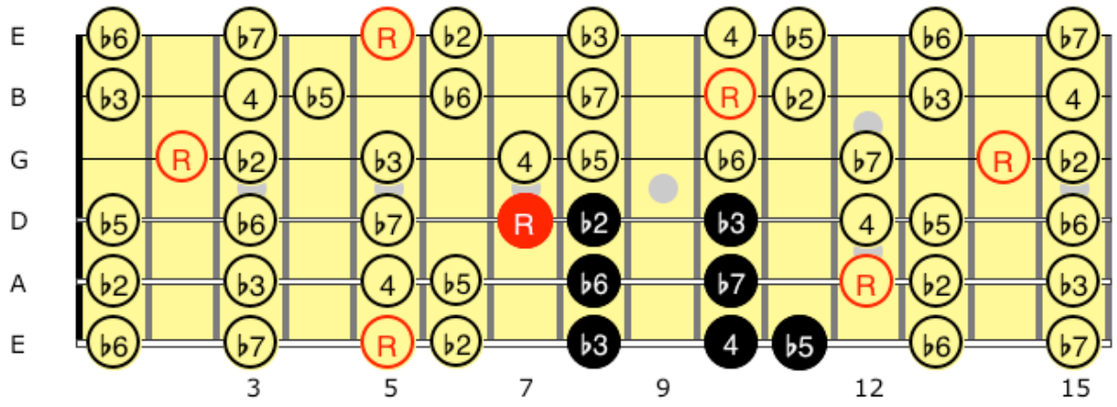
Example over Am7 b5

These notes on the fretboard look a lot like the first position of a C Dorian mode:



Even though it might appear that you are playing in C Dorian, remember that the root of the chord you are playing over remains A.

The notes you are playing are all attracted to the A note which is creating a series of intervals different than if the root were to be C:



It's those intervals that create the color of the scale and the key of the song.

Learning All Positions

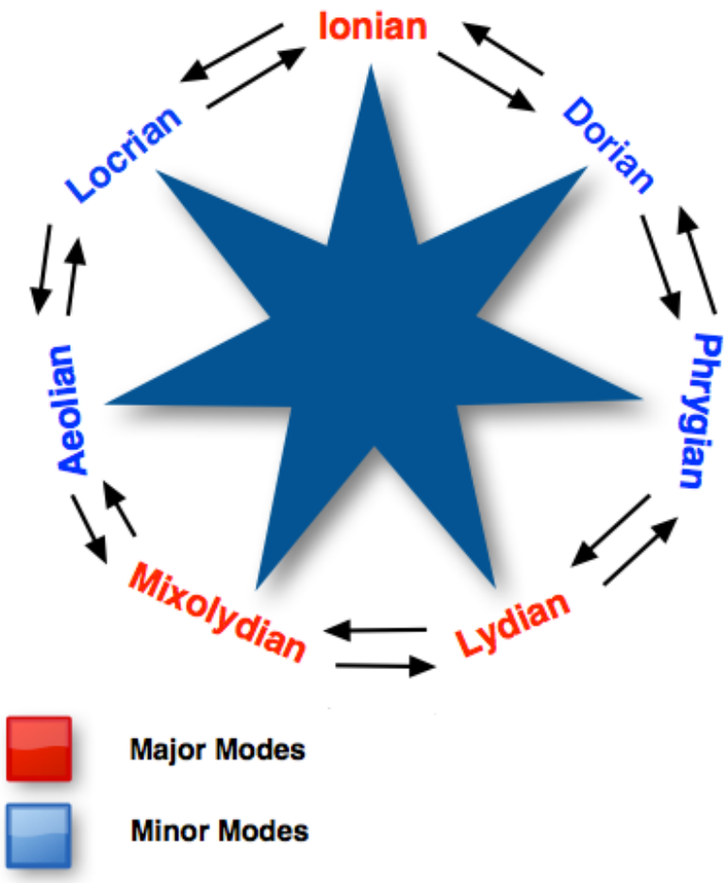
As we've seen in the previous section, a scale position is very different from a key.

A scale position is a shape. A key is determined by the intervals you are playing in relation to a root.

Being able to play in a key all over the fretboard can be difficult at first. But if you are comfortable with the first position of each of the seven modes discussed in the last 3 chapters we can use a simple trick.

If you aren't absolutely sure on how to play the first position of the three Major modes (Ionian, Lydian, Mixolydian) and of the four minor modes (Dorian, Phrygian, Aeolian and Locrian) you should go back and memorize them.

These seven modes can be played all over the fretboard by memorizing the following order:



Ionian

Dorian

Phrygian

Lydian

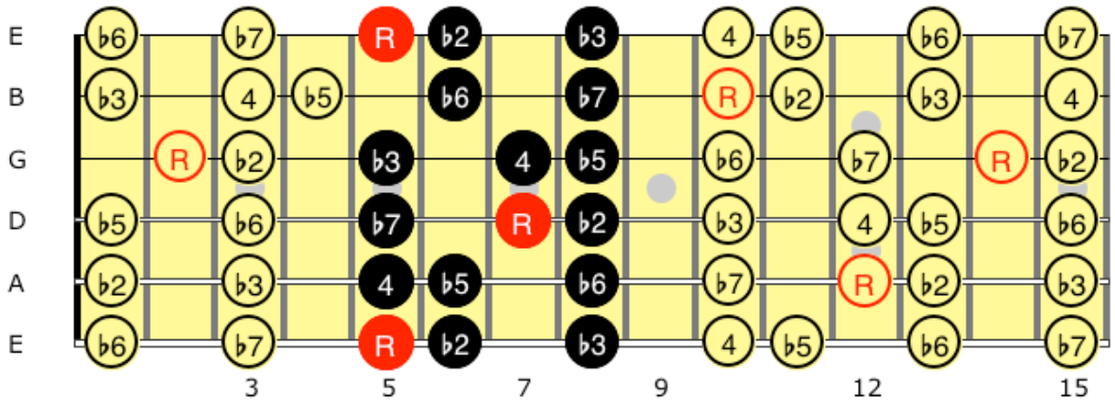
Mixolydian

Aeolian

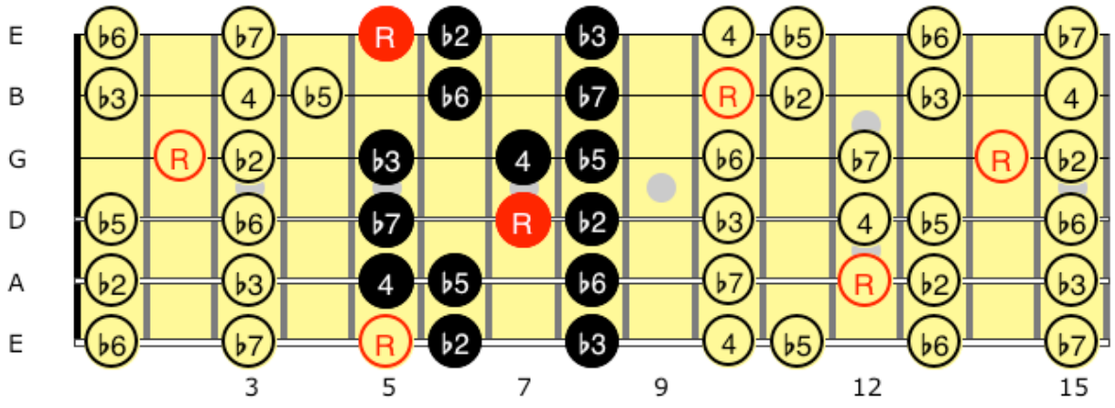
Locrian

This order can start from any mode and can work in any direction.

Let's take for example an A Locrian mode in its first position:

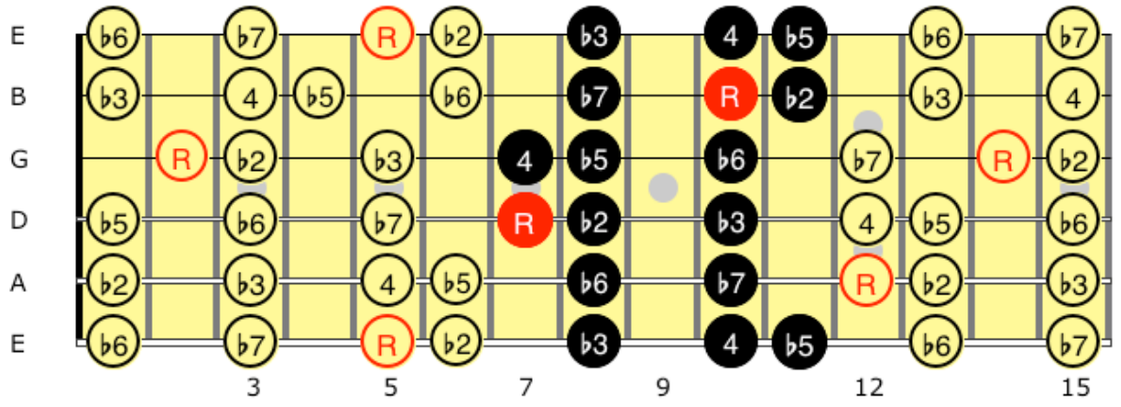


Let's now look at the second position which starts with the 2nd note of A Locrian:



Notice how that position is identical to the first position of an Ionian mode.

According to the order we just learned, the next position should correspond to a Dorian position:

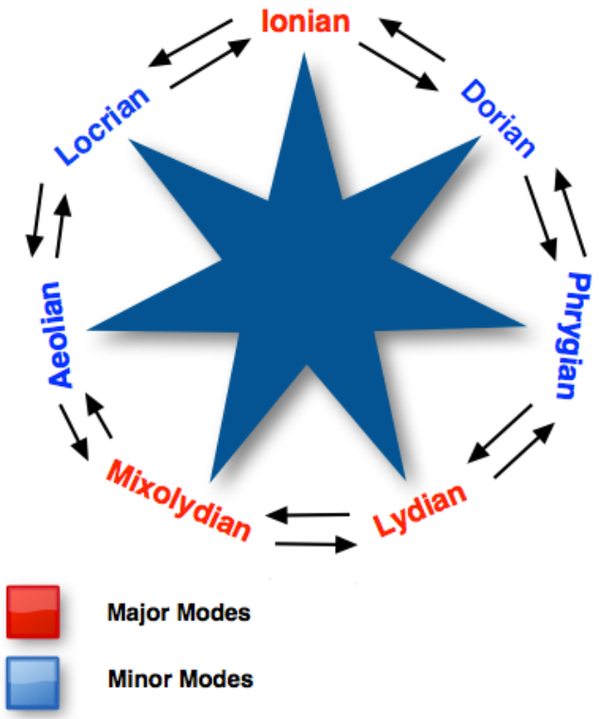


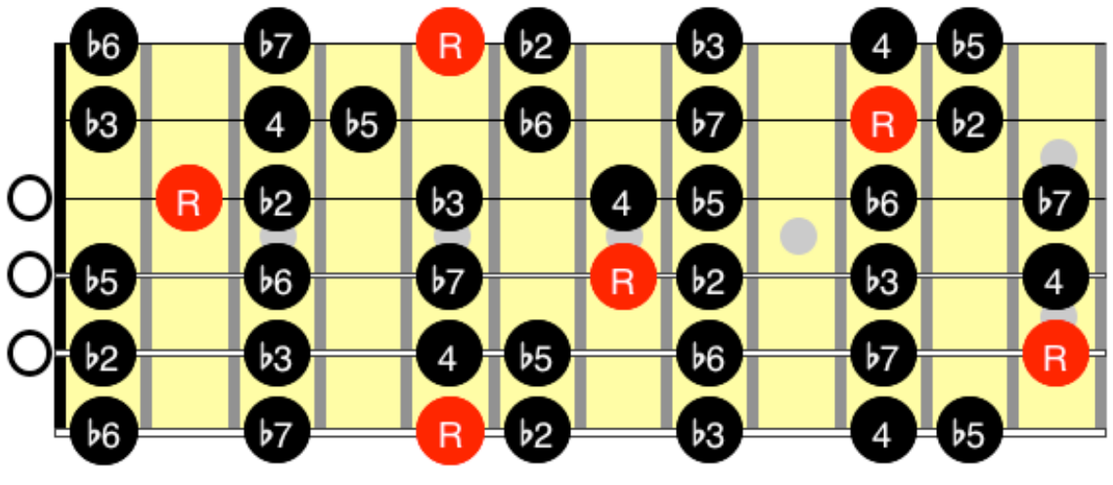
Using the order of modes learned in this section is very beneficial and will help you master your fretboard in no time.

Going Further

Remember that a mode is built on intervals. Without a root being heard, it is difficult to really appreciate the color of the mode you are using.

Use the following shape to play all over the fretboard and remember that it is not the position that you are playing in that determines the key, but rather the relationship between the notes you are using and the chord(s) you are playing over.





A Locrian Backing Track

Before Moving On



Memorize all shapes

Know all formulas

Anticipate the sound of each notes you play

CHAPTER 7

Going Further

Understanding what modes are and how they are built is only the beginning. Music is a living language that needs to be used with purpose.

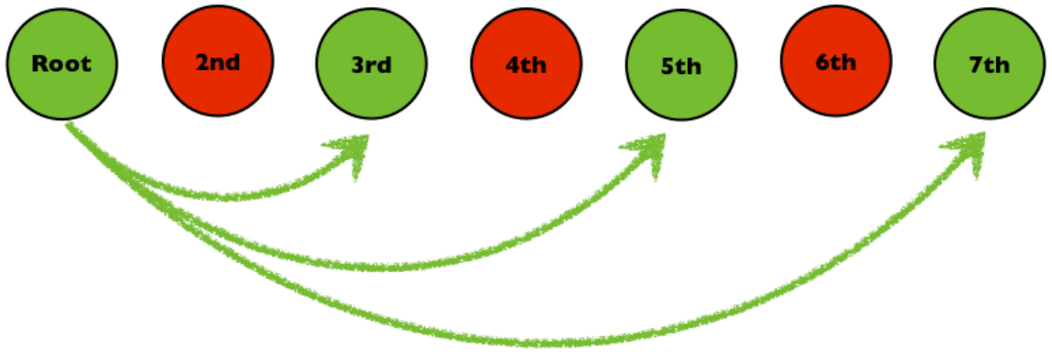
This chapter will give you tips, suggestions and backing tracks to go further and implement what you've learned to express yourself musically.



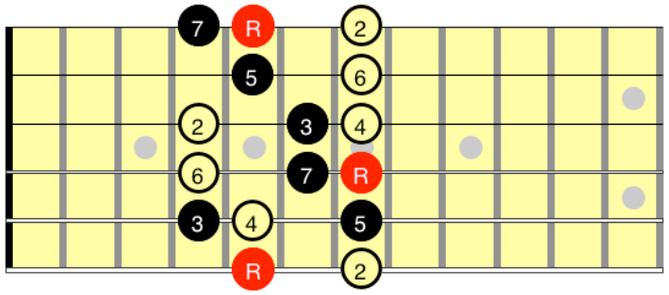
Chord Scales

A great way to memorize each modal positions while training your ears is to use the chord-scale method.

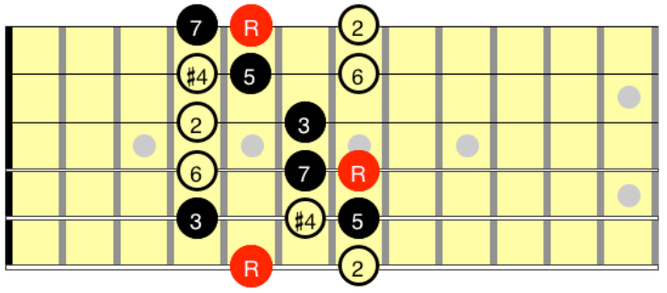
Each mode can be broken into a 4 note arpeggio by stacking the 3rd, 5th and 7th on top of the root:



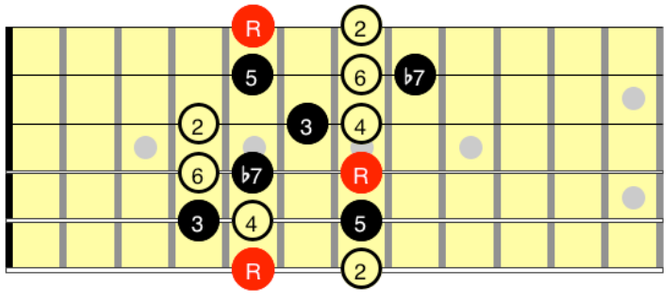
Ascending the arpeggio, and descending the full mode will help you get more comfortable with the color of the scale you are working with.



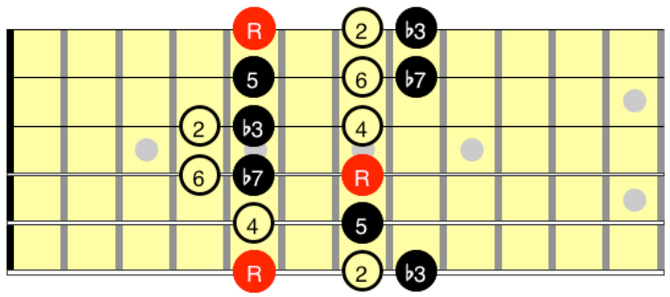
Ionian



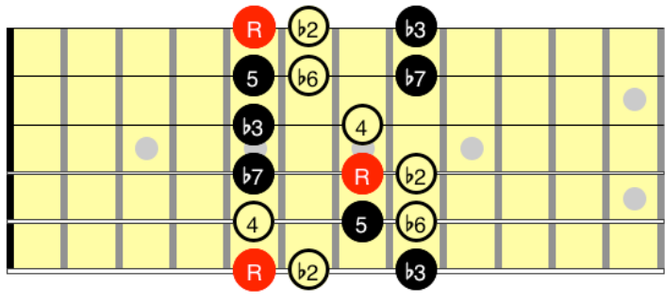
Lydian



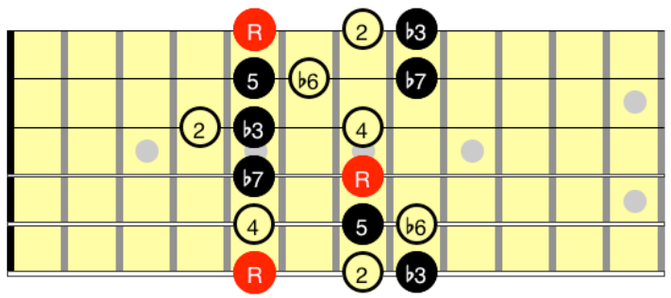
Mixolydian



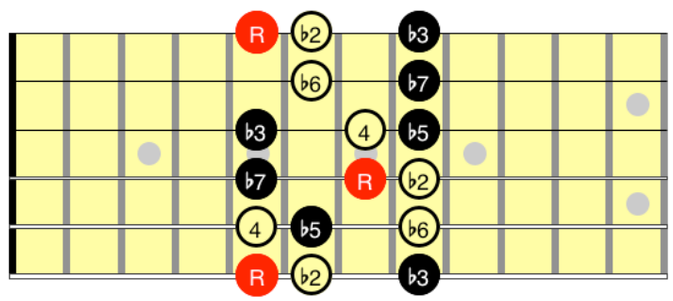
Dorian



Phrygian

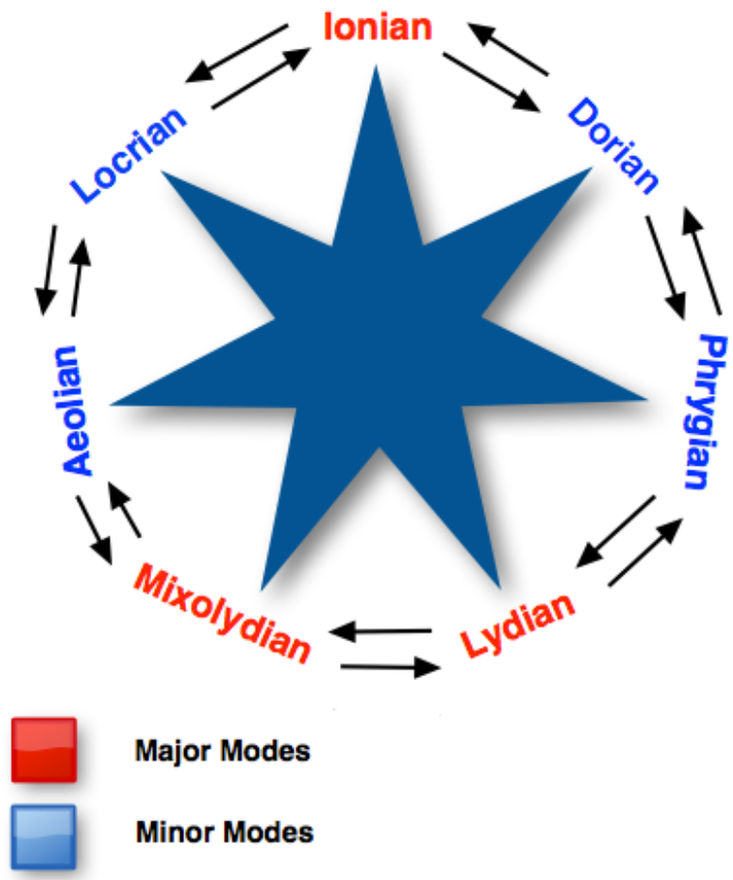


Aeolian



Locrian

Remember that you can play any mode all over the fret-board by using the following order:

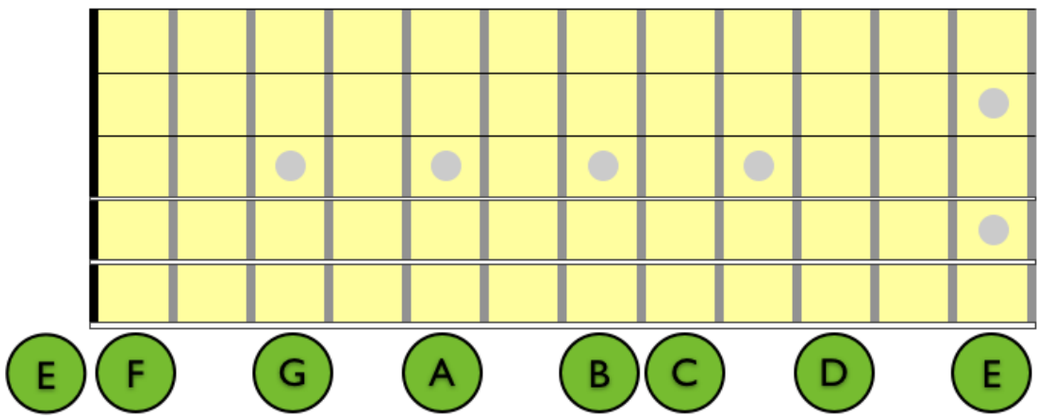


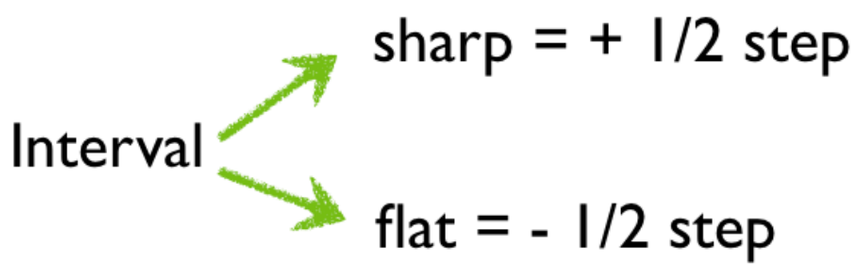
Try using that order with 4 notes arpeggios too!

Backing Tracks

Use the following backing tracks to develop your musical phrasing. Anticipate the sound of every notes you hear. This will give you more control on what you are playing.

Stay musical and always review what you have learned.





E Ionian

F# Lydian

A Mixolydian

G Dorian

C Phrygian

B Aeolian

F# Locrian

Guitar Playback

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Special Thanks

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Thank you who are reading this. I truly hope that you enjoy this book and that it helps you express yourself musically.

Last but not least, thank you God for the wonderful gift of music!

David

Resources

www.guitarplayback.com

Downloadable backing tracks, video lessons, licks and more...

www.youtube.com/wallimann

Free guitar lessons from the author...

www.neckdiagrams.com

The software I used to create all the diagrams in this book.

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