GUITAR SCALES & MODES FOR JAZZ GUITAR SOLOING



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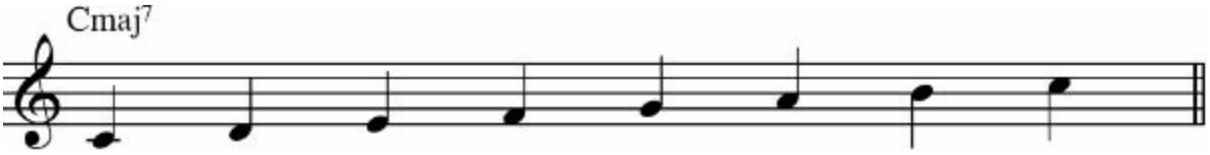
Chapter 1

Major Scale and Modes

In this chapter, we are going to study the basic major scale and its modes. Please focus on the intervals of each scale, especially on 3rds. If the 3rd is the major interval, the mode is a major or dominant scale, and if the 3rd is the minor interval, the mode is a minor scale. Notice that the 9th note of a chord is the same as the 2nd. The 13th and 6th which are the same notes derived from the root.

Major Scale and Modes

C Ionian



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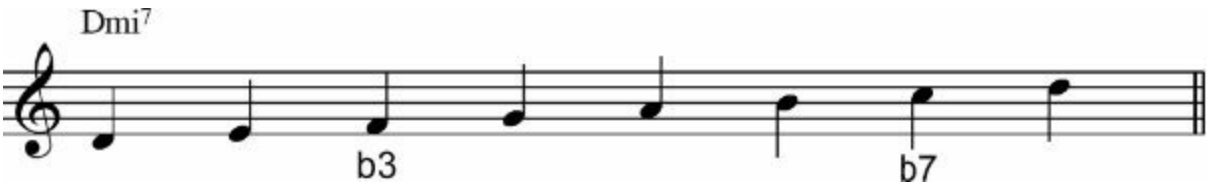

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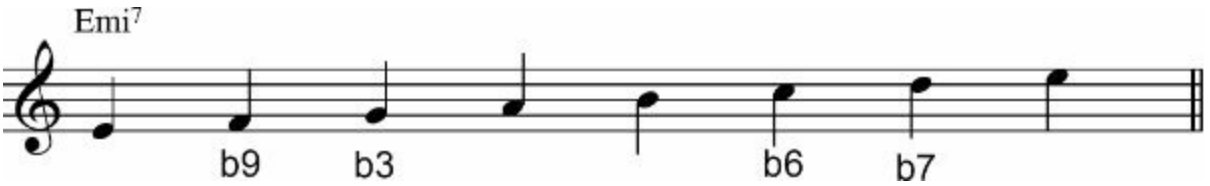

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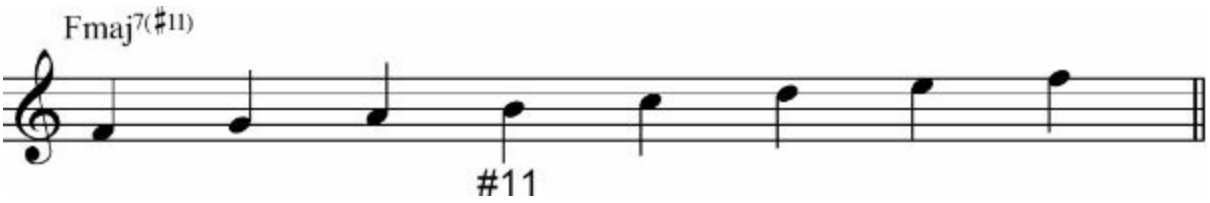

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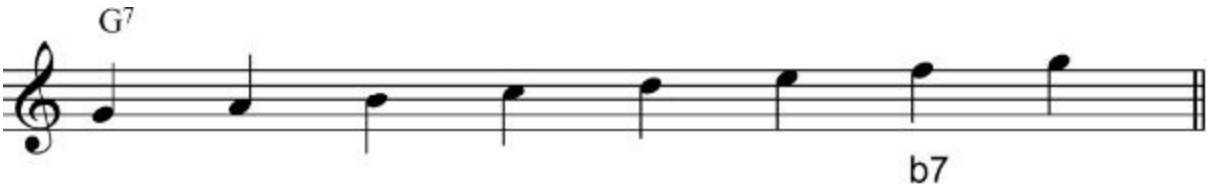

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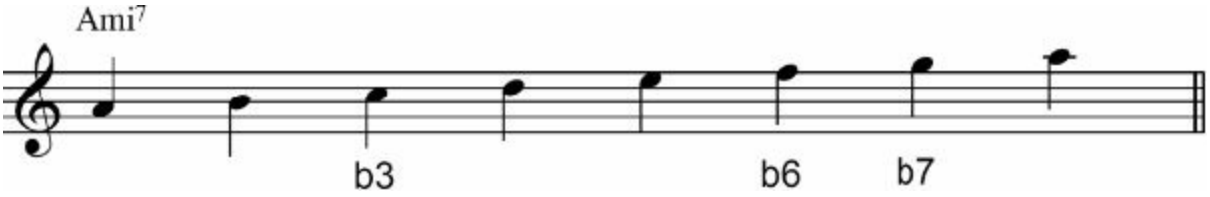

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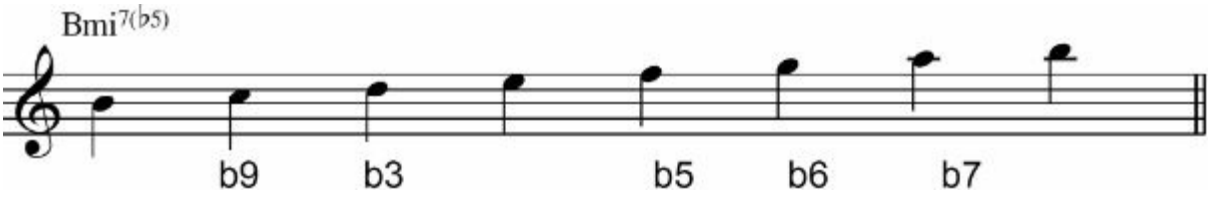
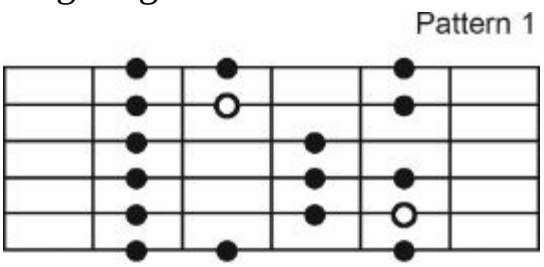
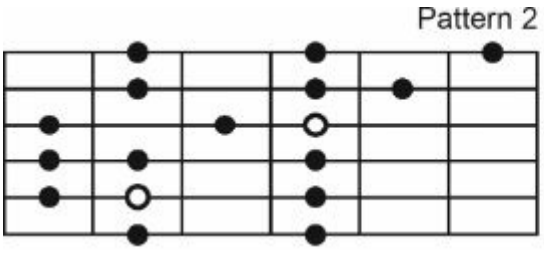


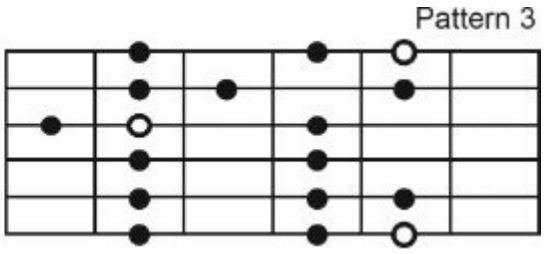
Ionian Mode (Major Scale)

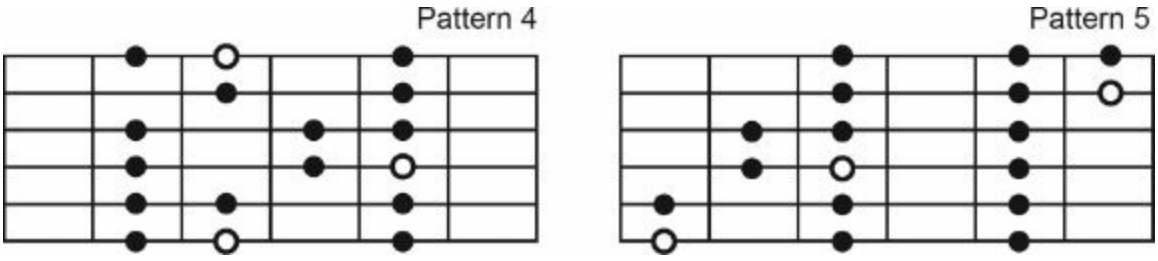
The first mode of the major scale is the Ionian mode which is the same as the ordinary major scale. Keep in mind that the C Ionian and E Ionian have different notes but have the same interval derived from the root. You can play the Ionian mode on Major, Major7th, Sus4, and Sus2 chords.

Fingering Patterns









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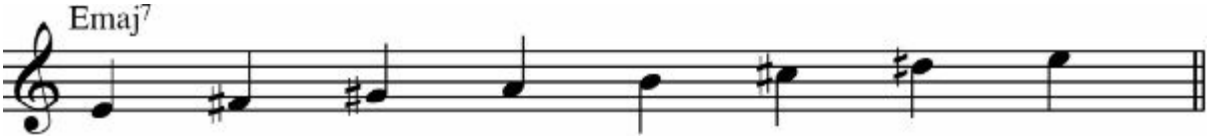

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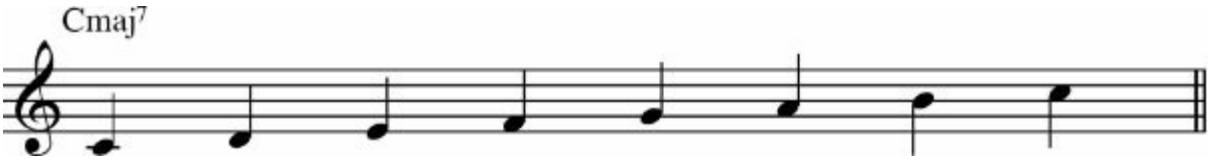

Scale Studies: C Ionian Mode (C Major Scale)

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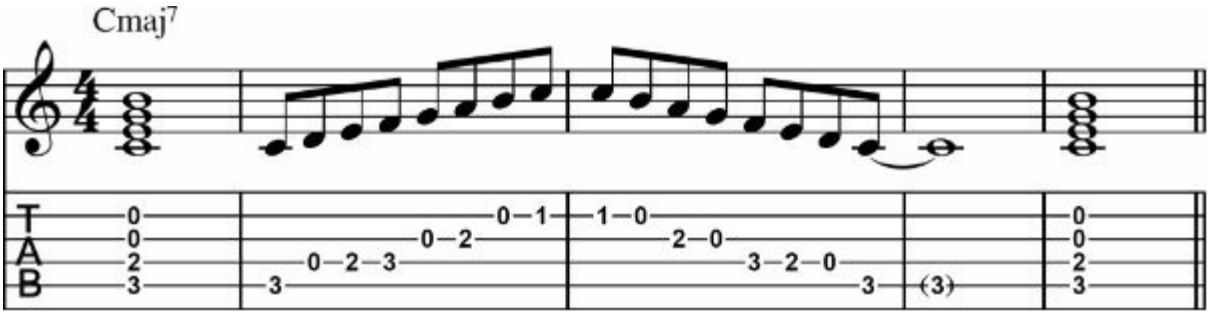

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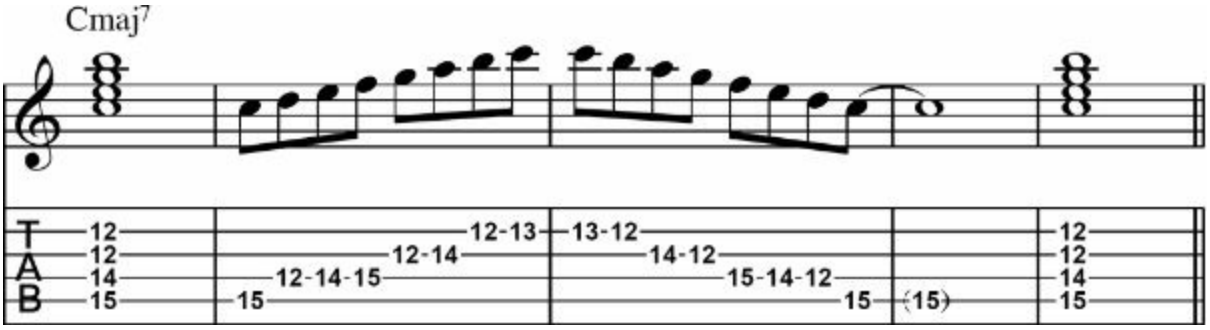

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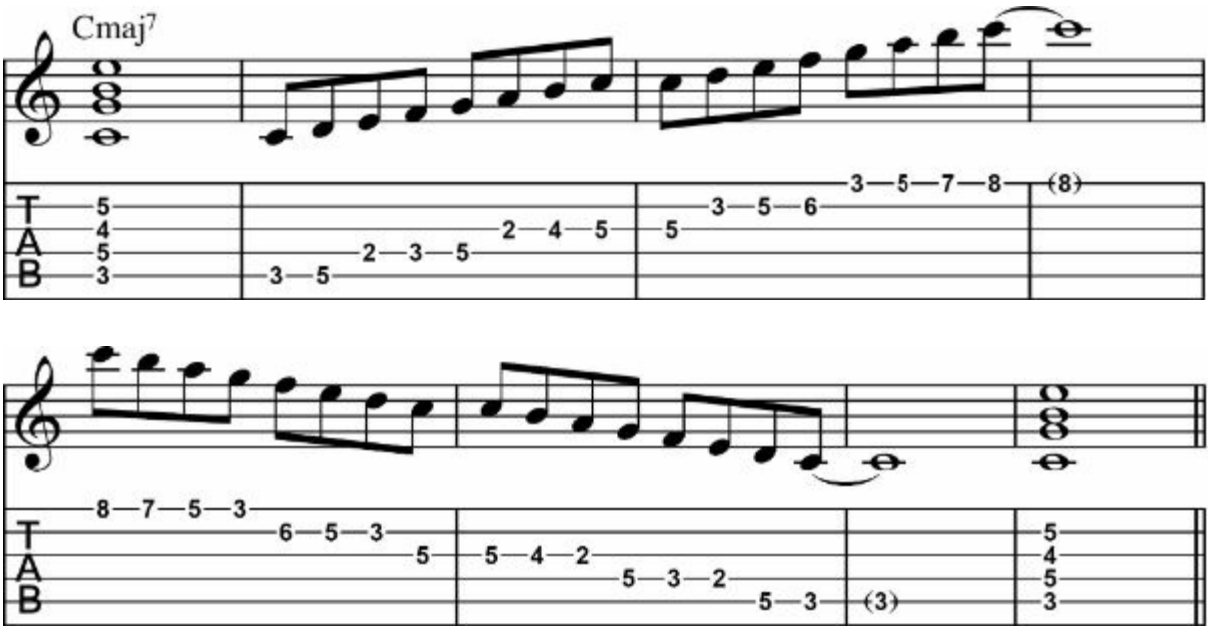

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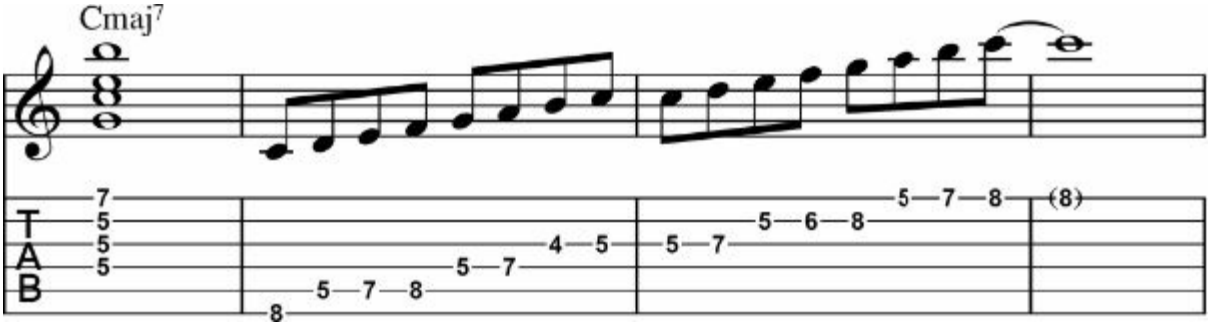

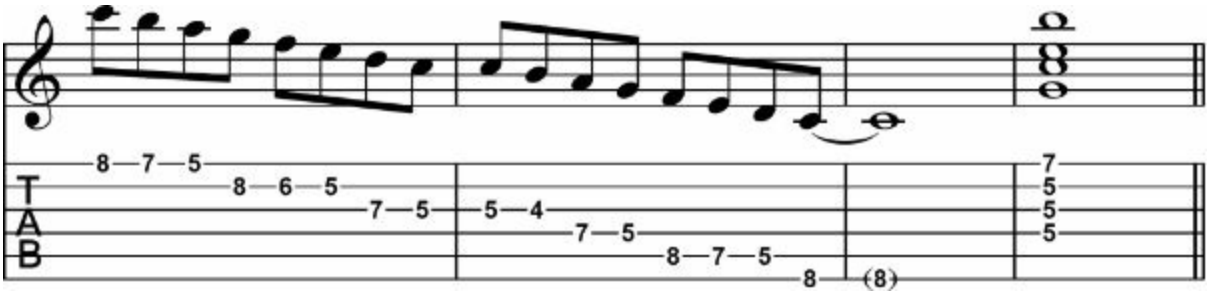

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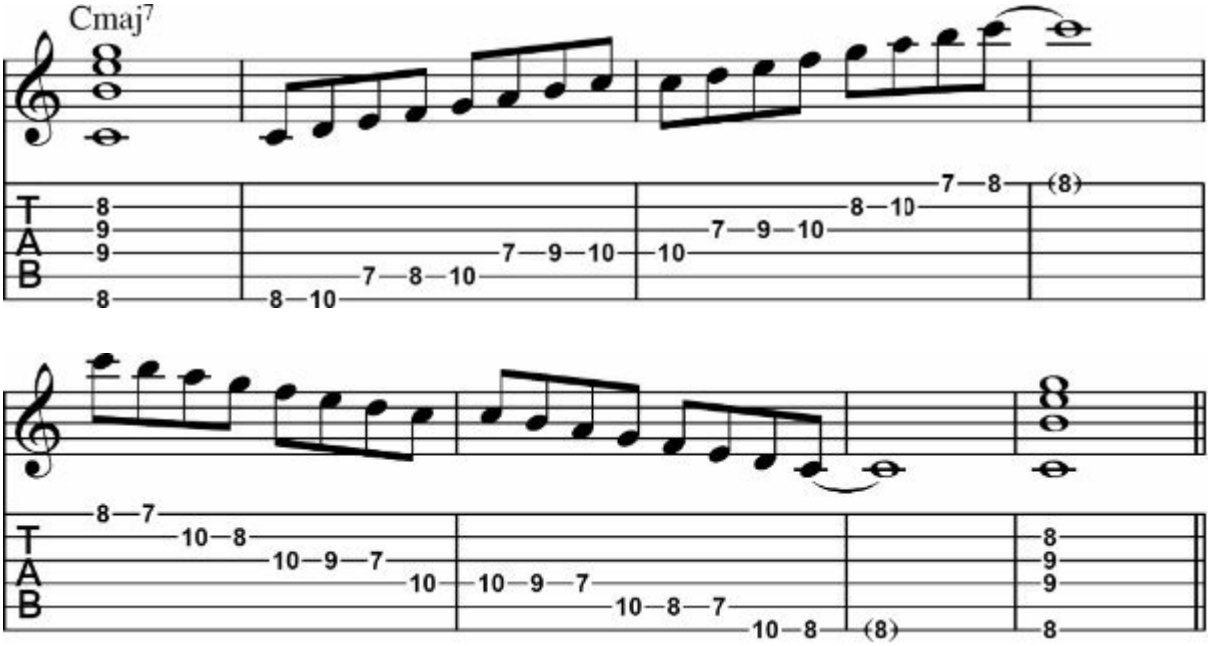

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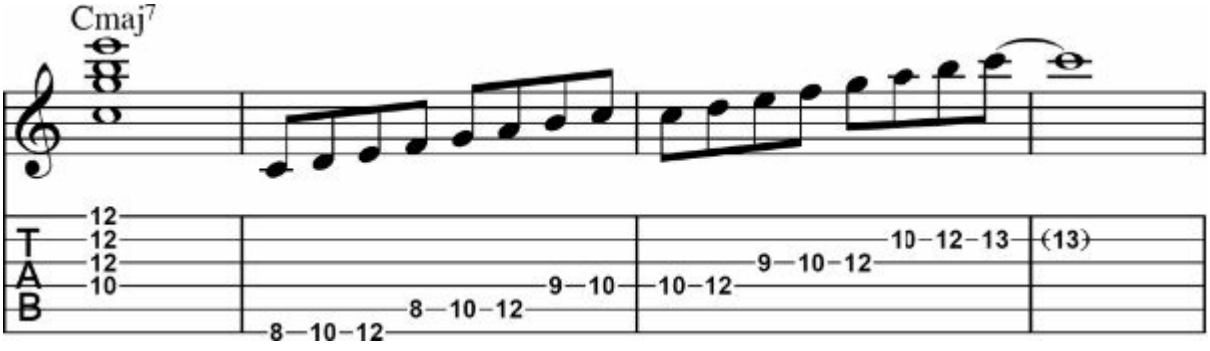

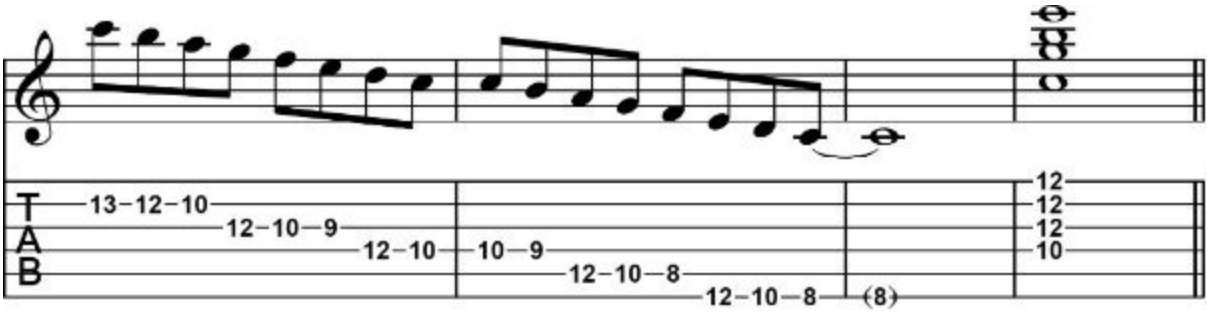

Arpeggio & Scale Studies: Cmaj7 and C Ionian

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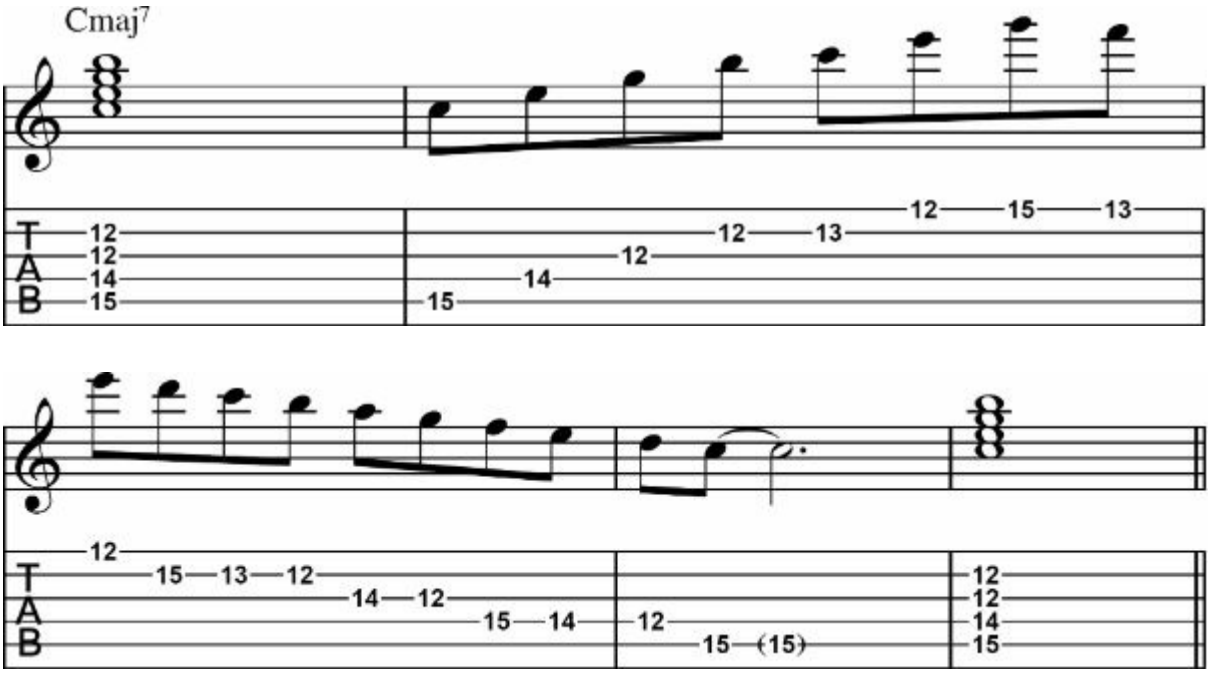

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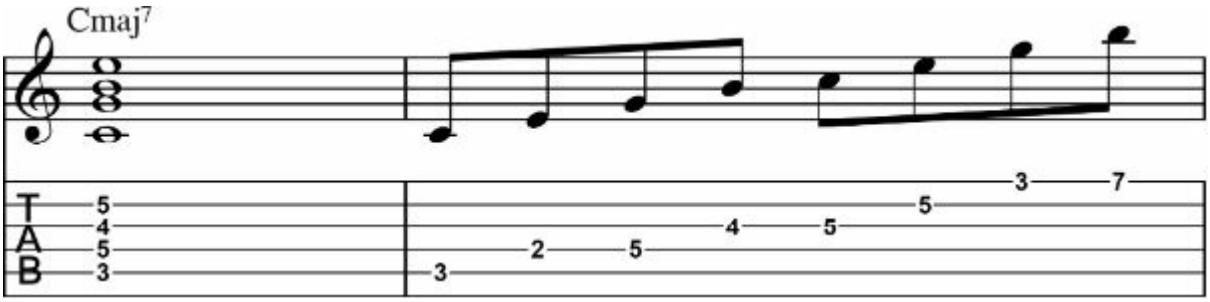

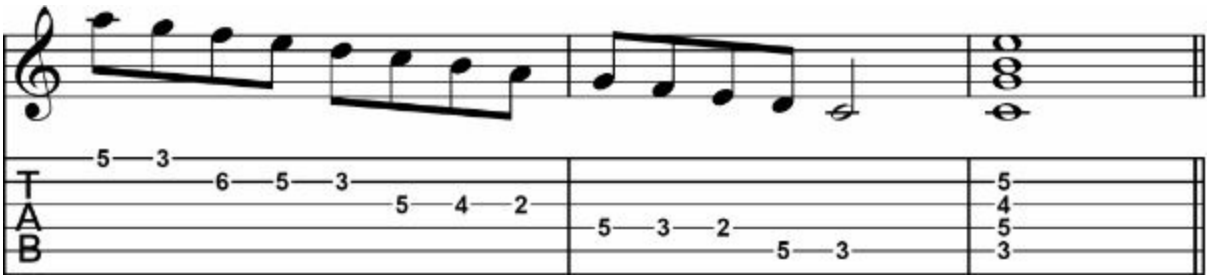

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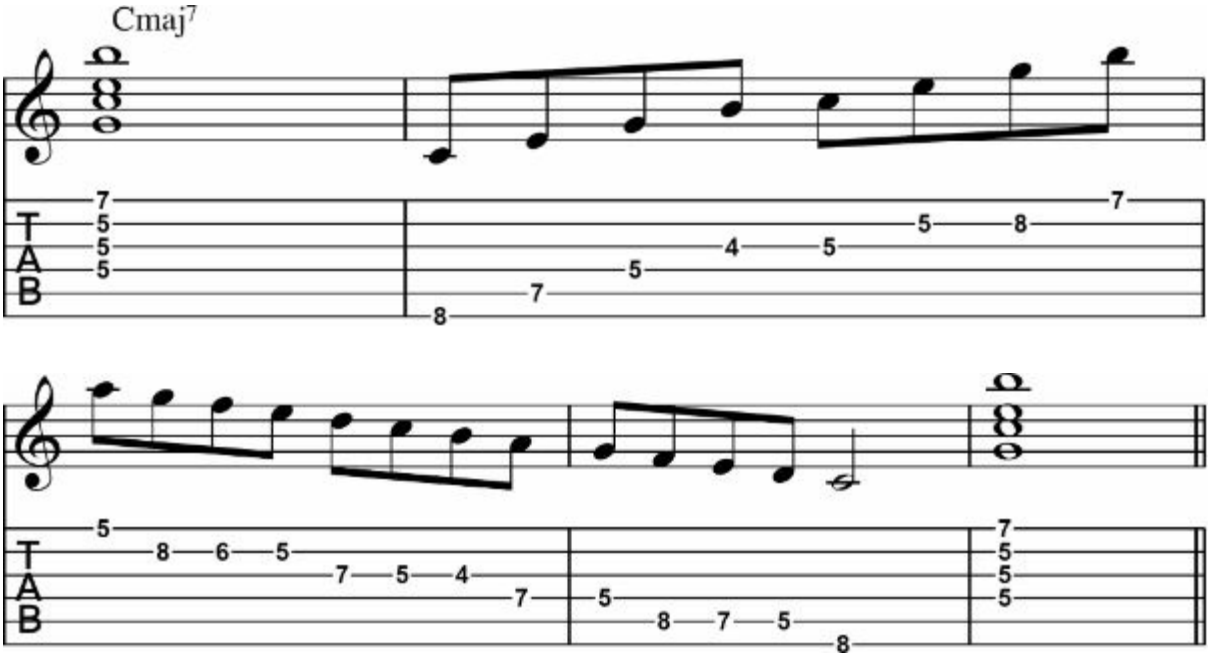

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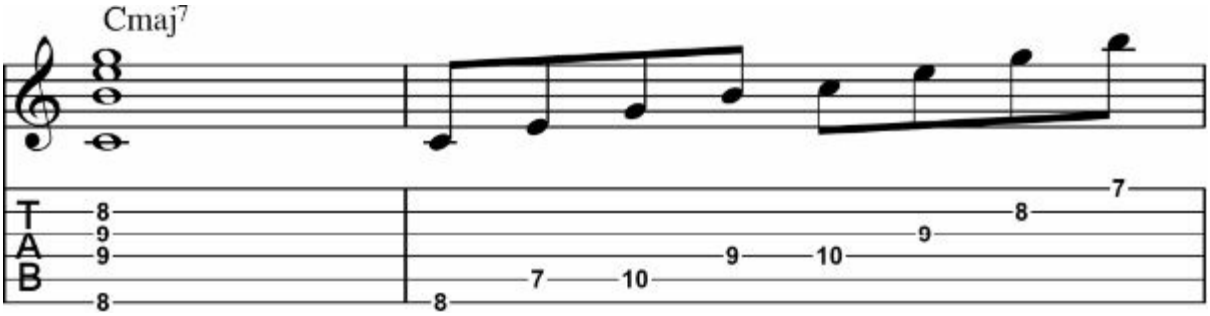

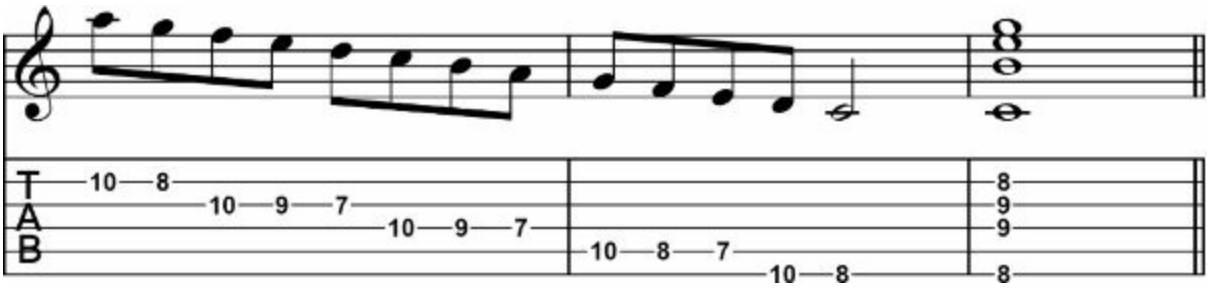

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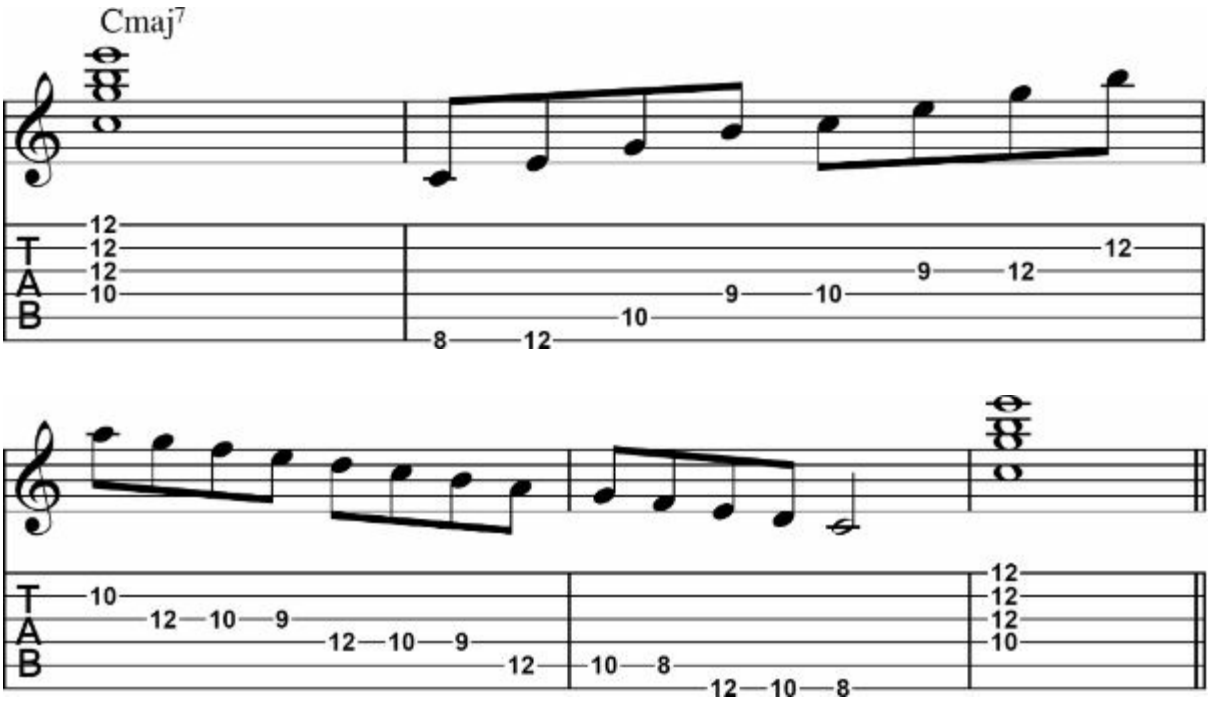
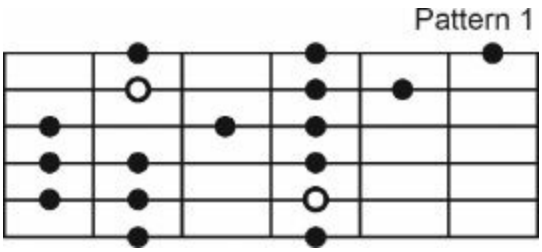
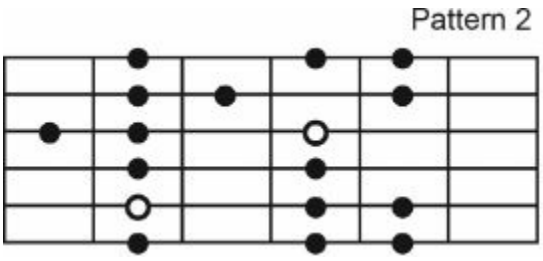


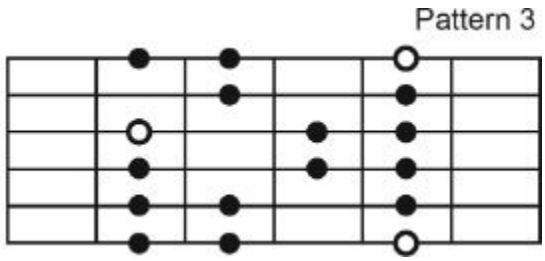
Dorian Mode

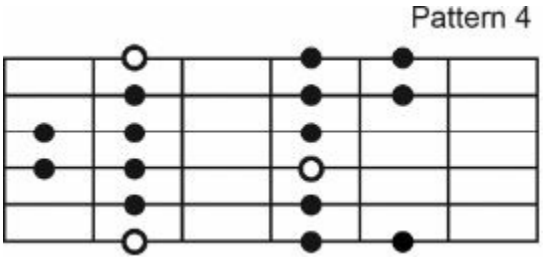
The Dorian is the 2nd mode of the major scale. The Intervals are the root, major 2nd, minor 3rd, perfect 4th, perfect 5th, major 6th, and minor 7th. There is just one note difference if you compare it with the Aeolian mode (Natural minor scale). The Aeolian has a minor 6th but the Dorian has a major 6th which makes a brighter sound. Play the Dorian over mi7, mi9, mi6, and mi13 chords.

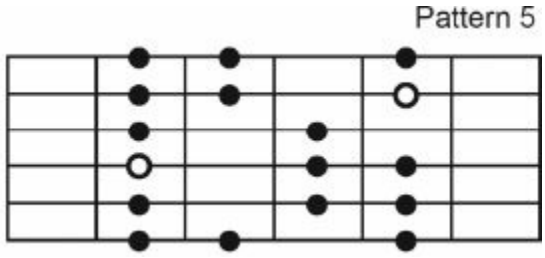
Fingering Patterns



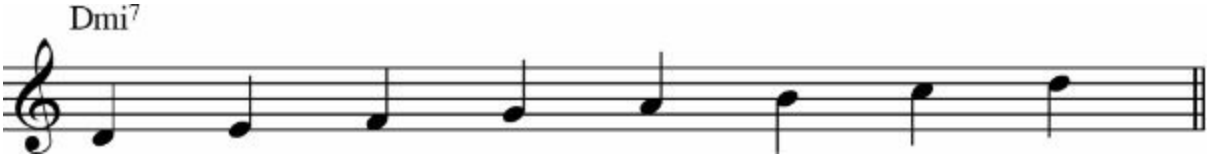








D Dorian Mode



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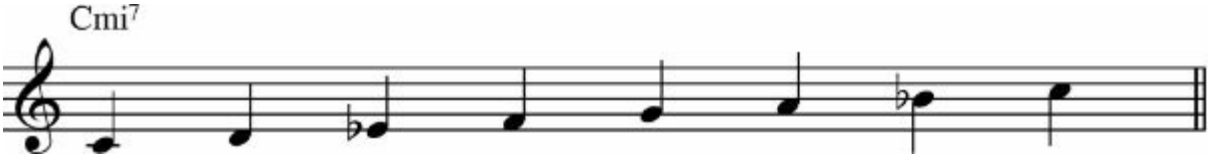

Scale Studies: D Dorian Mode

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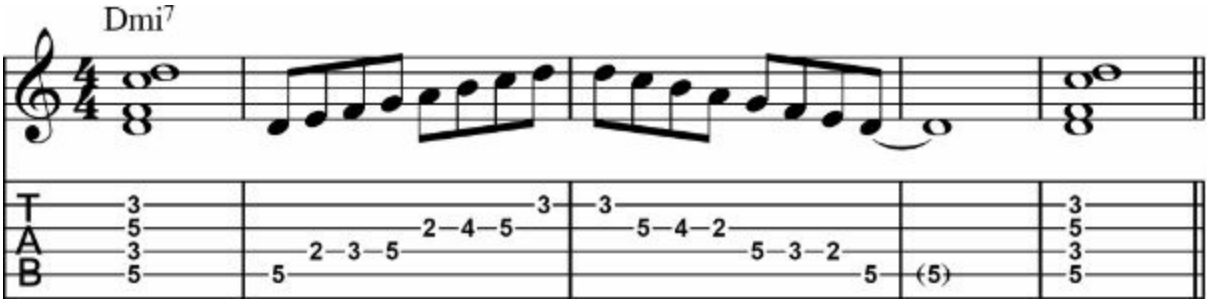

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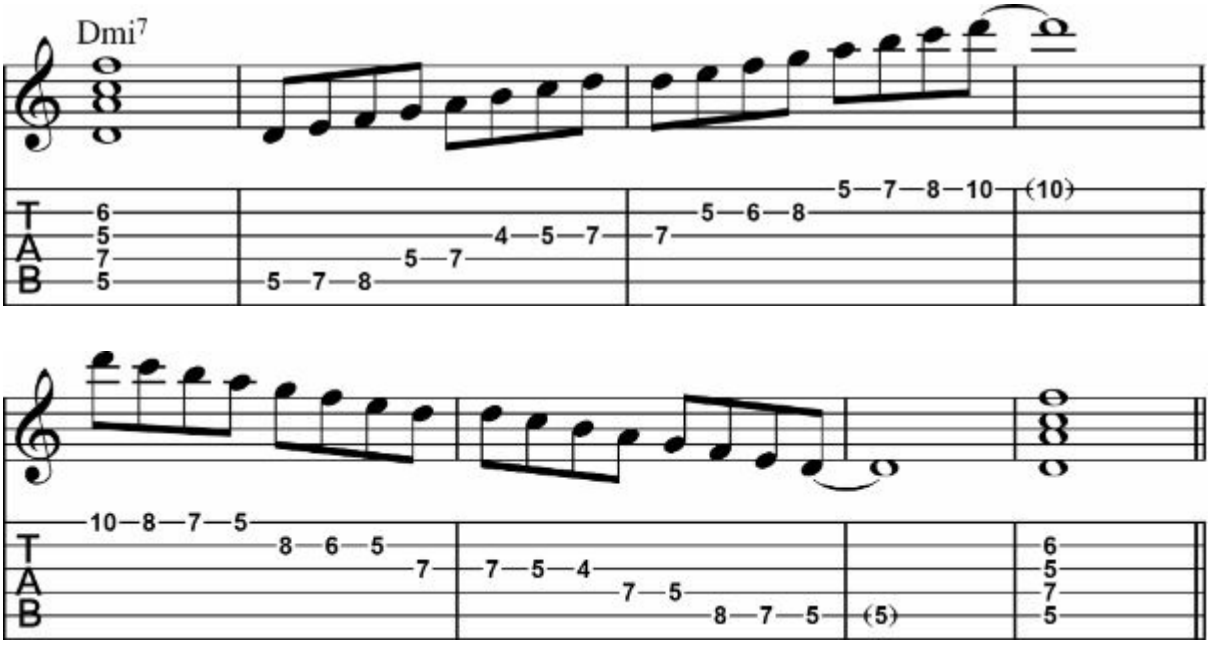

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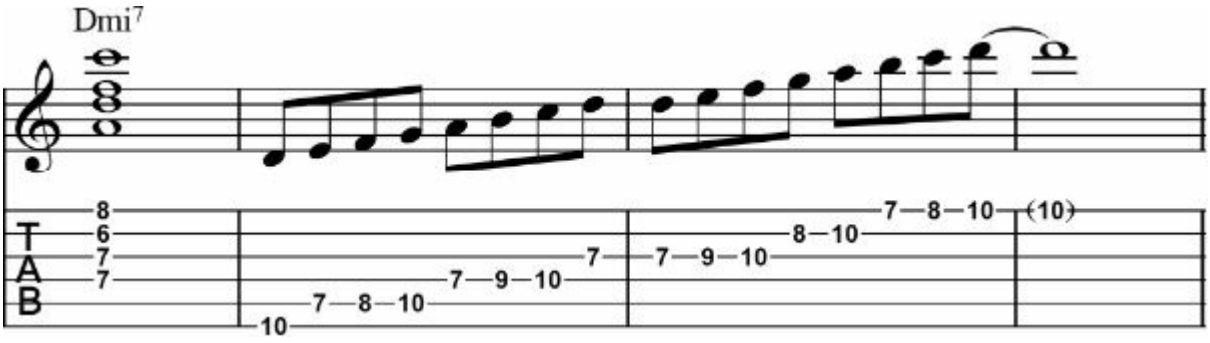

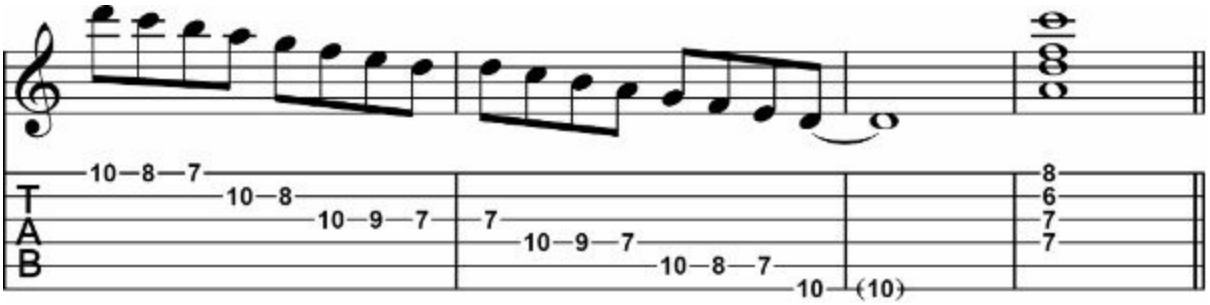

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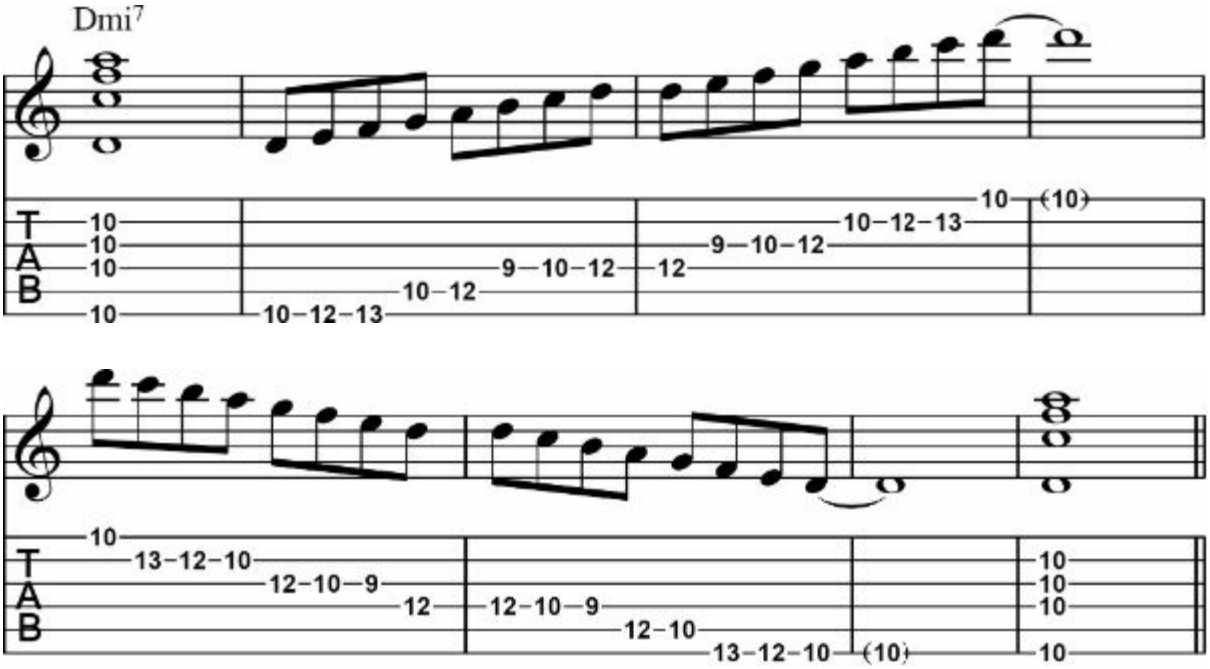

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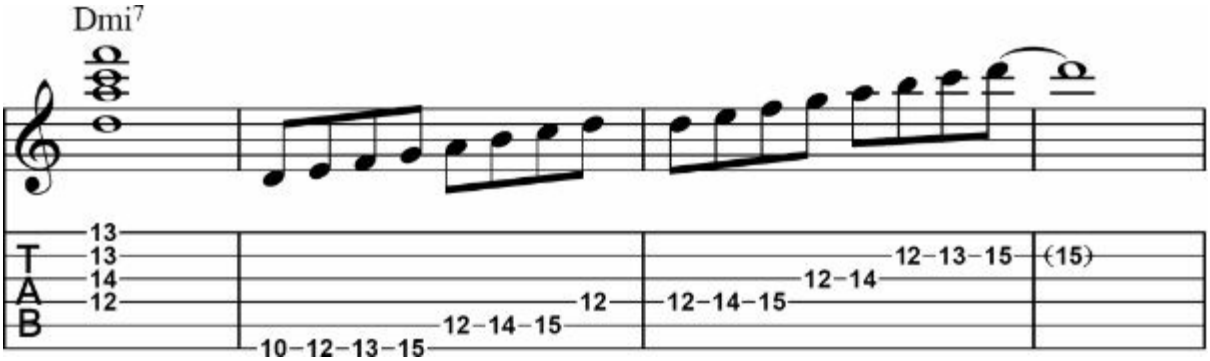

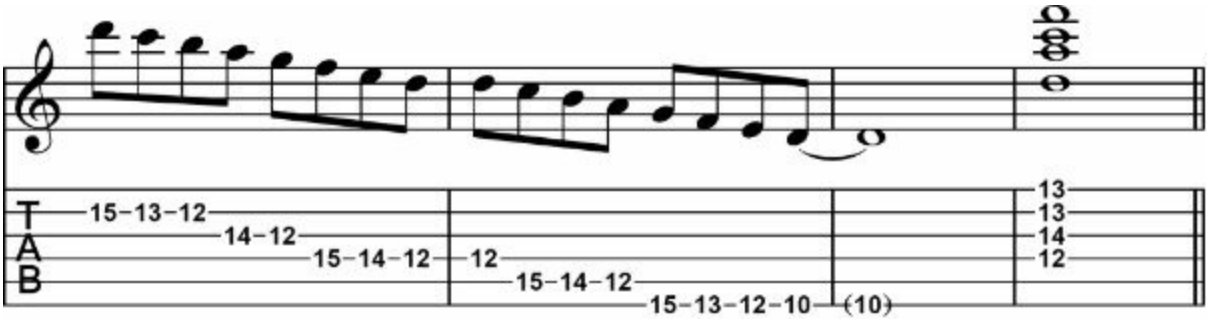

Arpeggio & Scale Studies: Dmi7 & D Dorian

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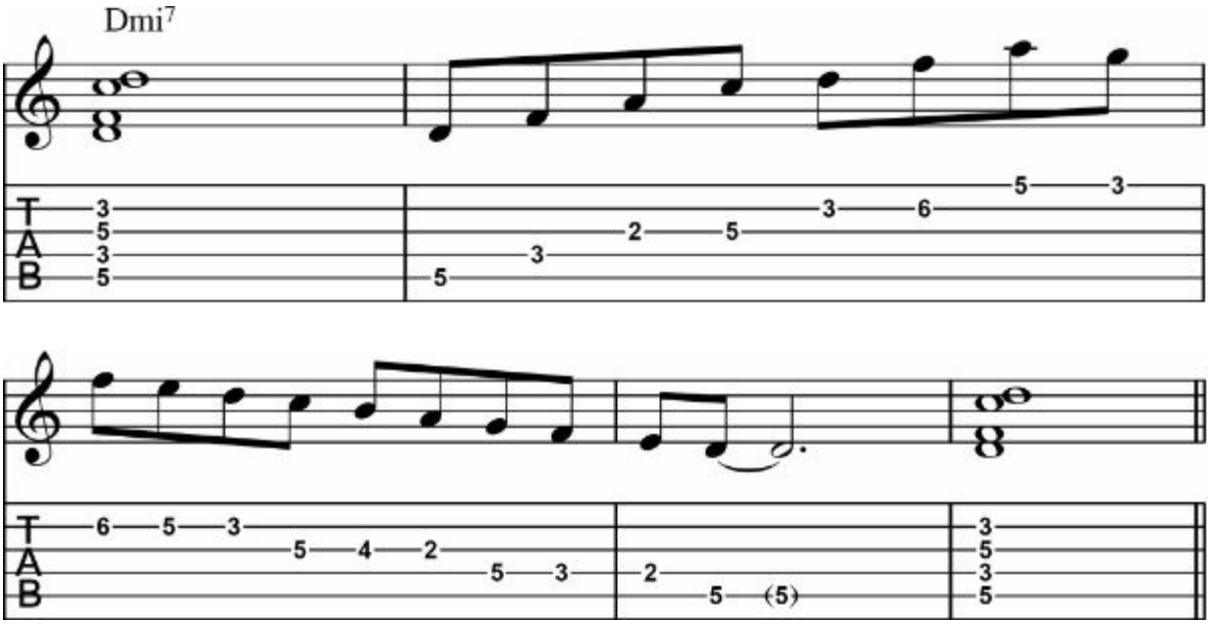

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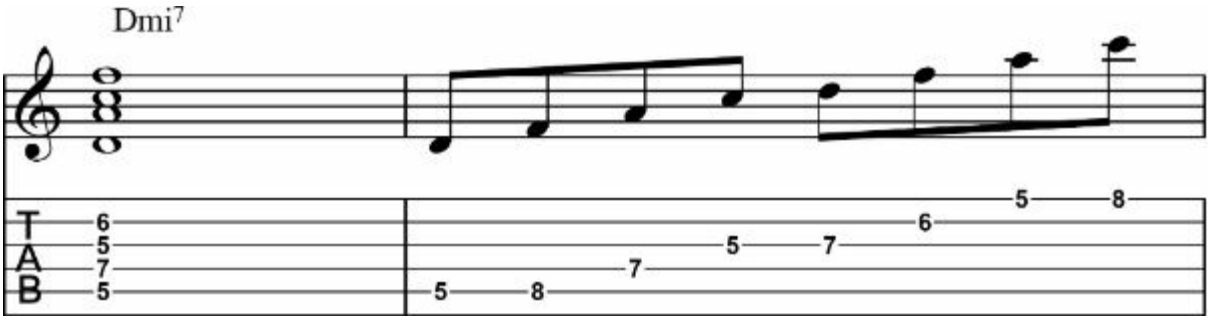

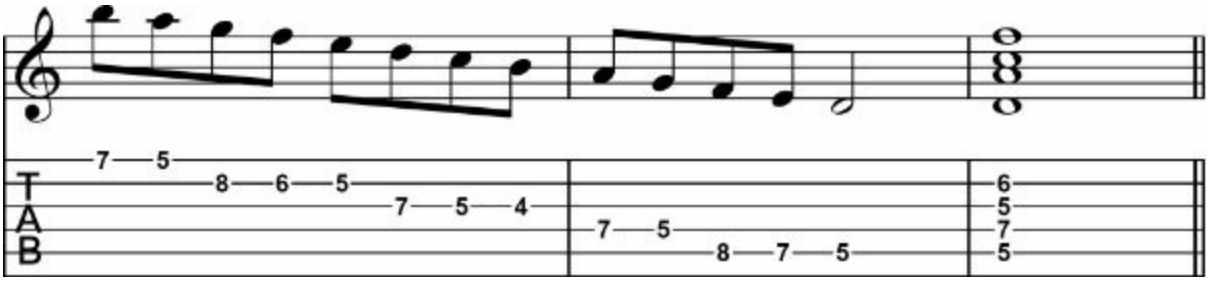

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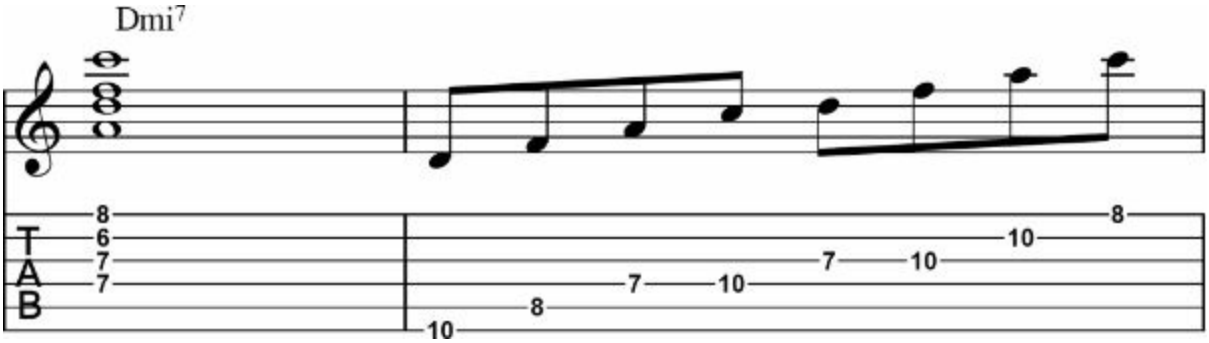

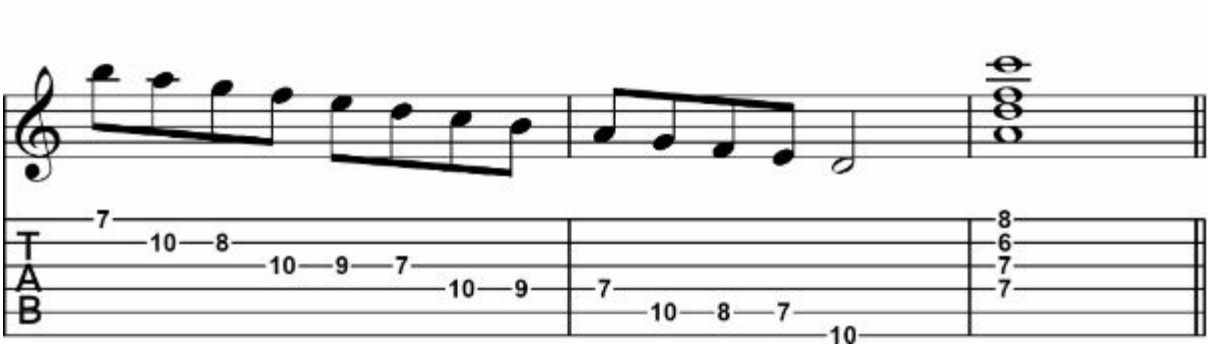

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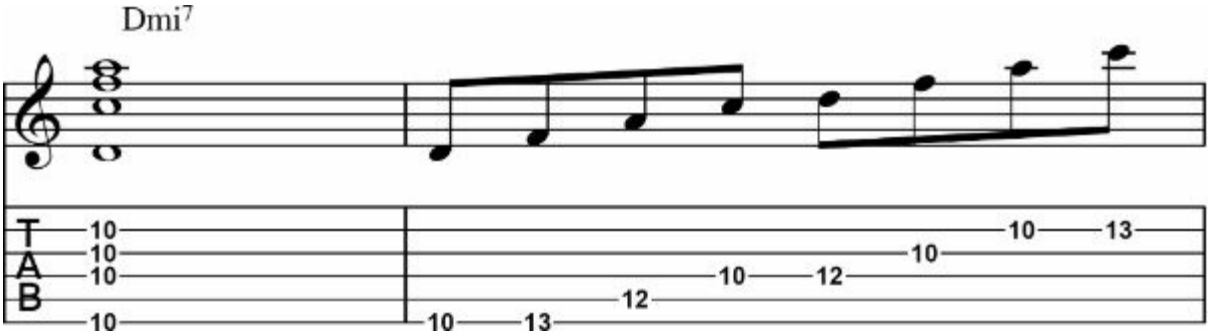

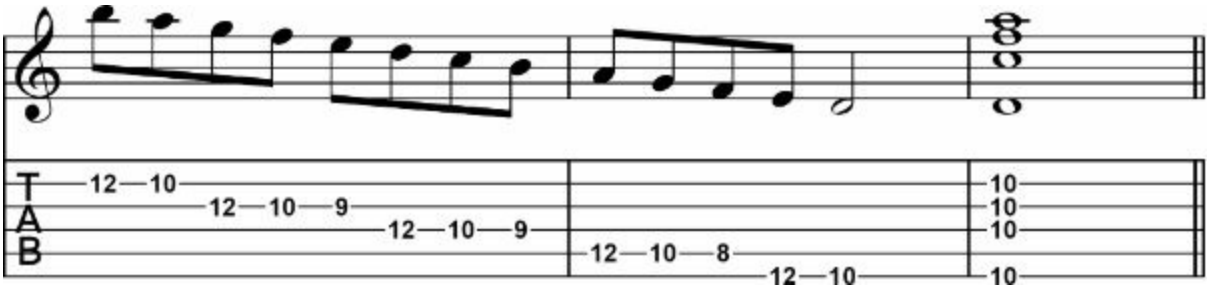

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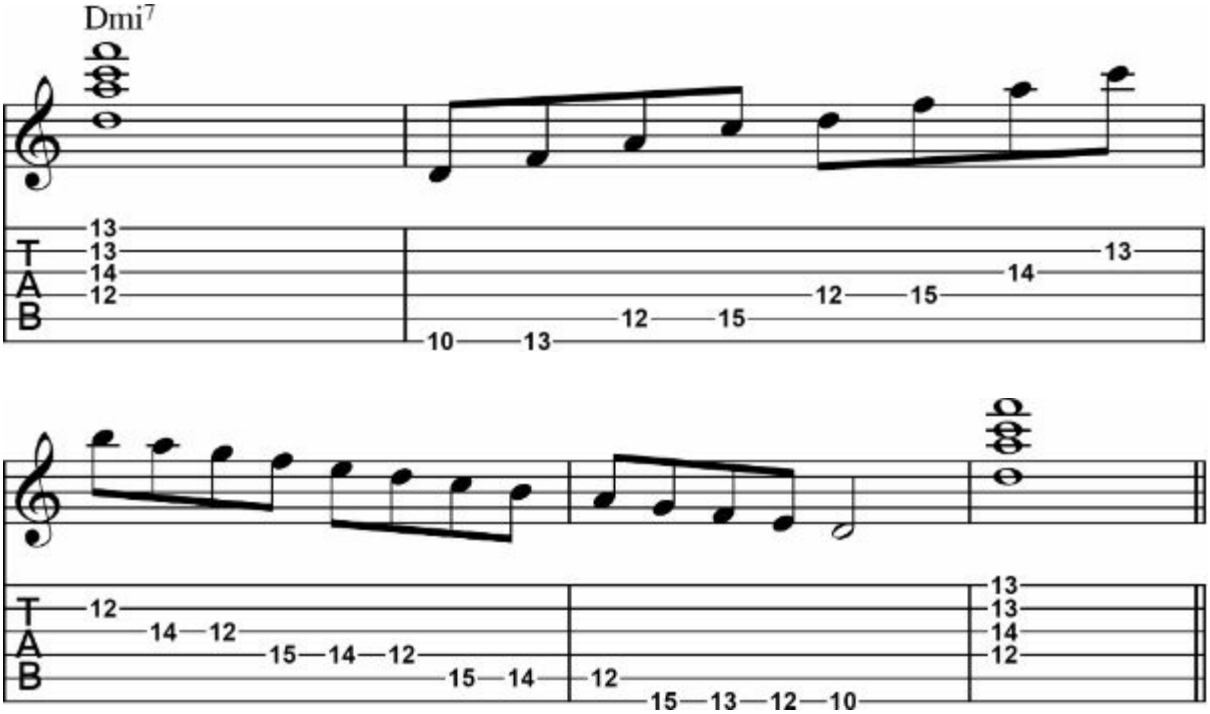
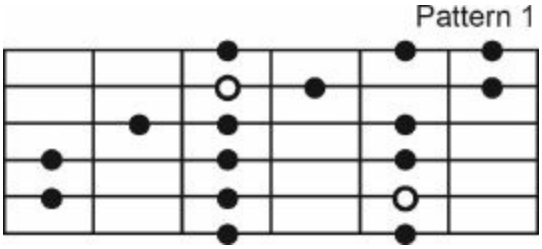
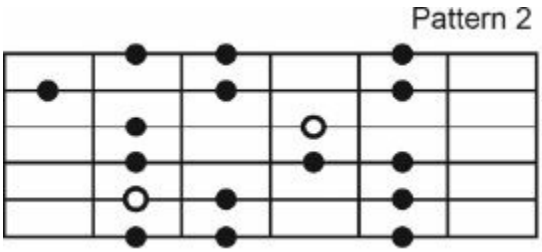


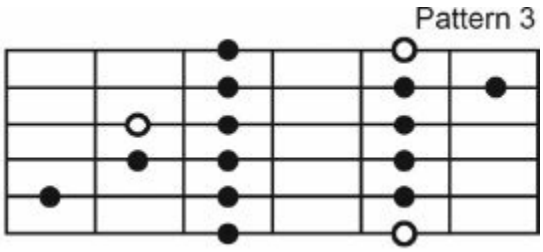
Phrygian Mode

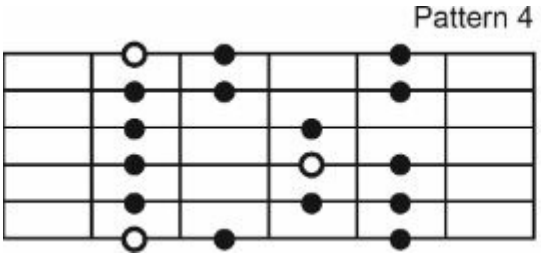
The third mode of the major scale is the Phrygian mode. It is a minor scale consisting of the root, flattened (b) 9th (b 2nd), b3rd, 4th, 5th, b6th, and b7th. You can regard this mode as a natural minor scale with a flattened 9th note. This scale is not easy to use because its flattened 9th note can clash with the root. You can hear it in Spanish music and some solos played by jazz pioneer on sus4(b9) chords. Play over these chords, mi7, mi7(b9), mi7(b9 b13).

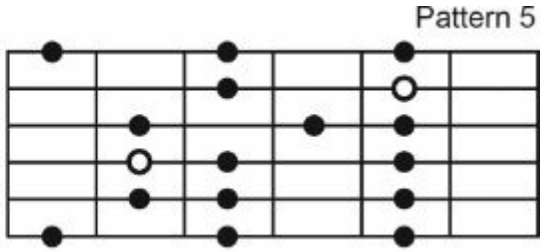
Fingering Patterns



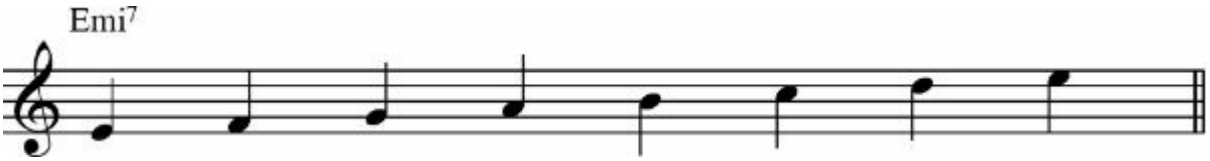




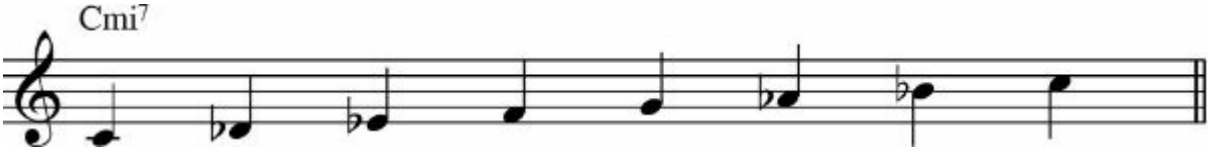




E Phrygian Mode

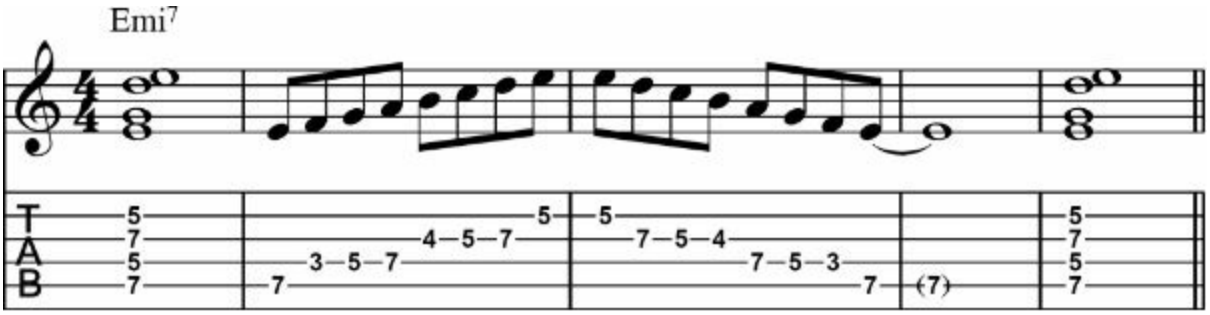


C Phrygian Mode



Scale Studies: E Phrygian Mode

Pattern 1



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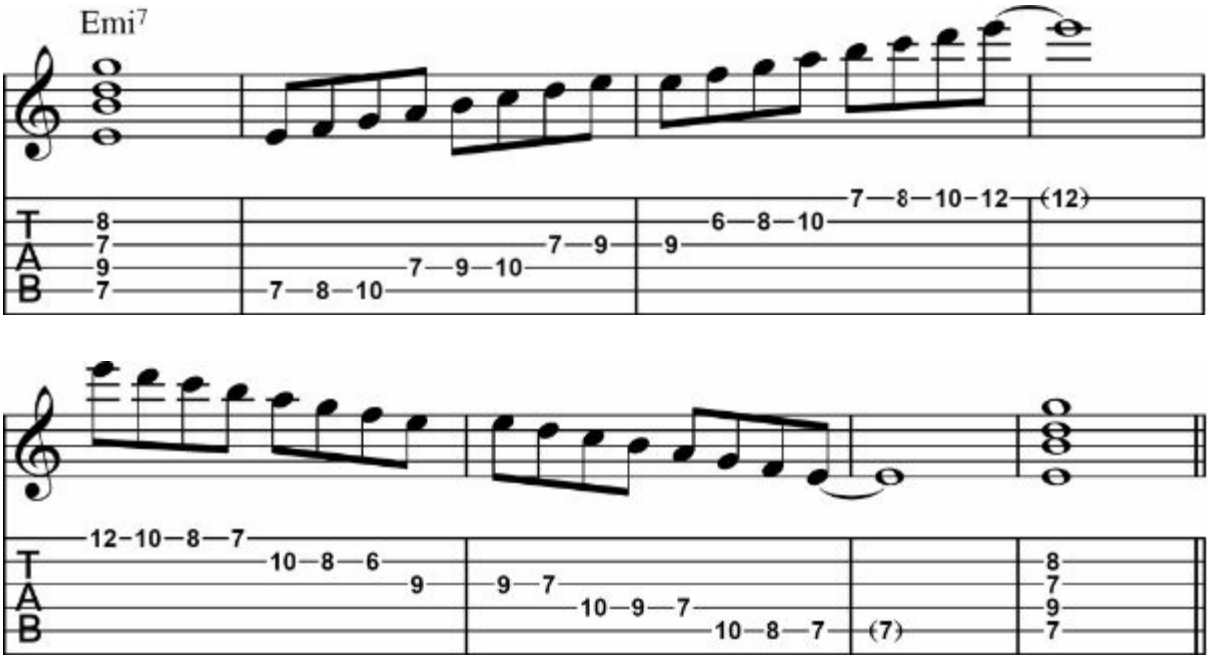

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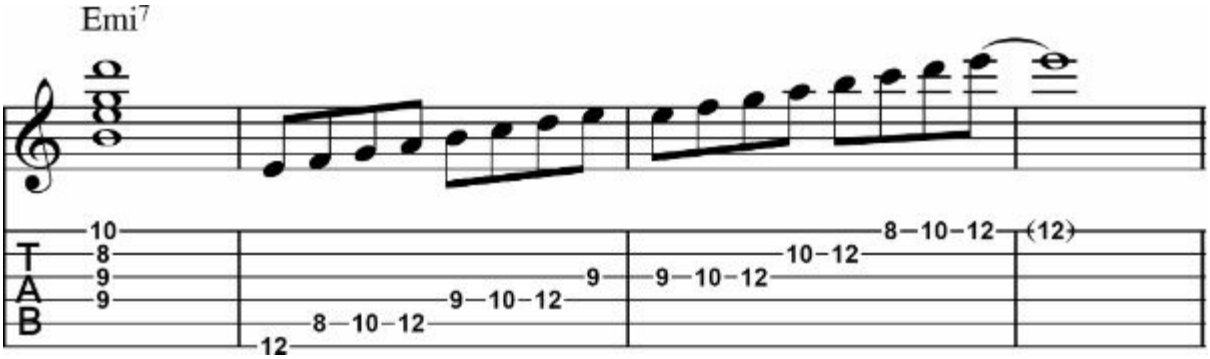

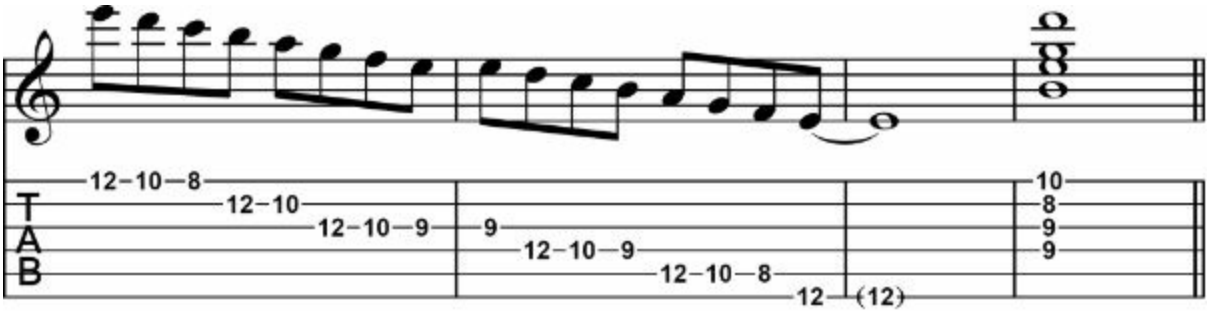

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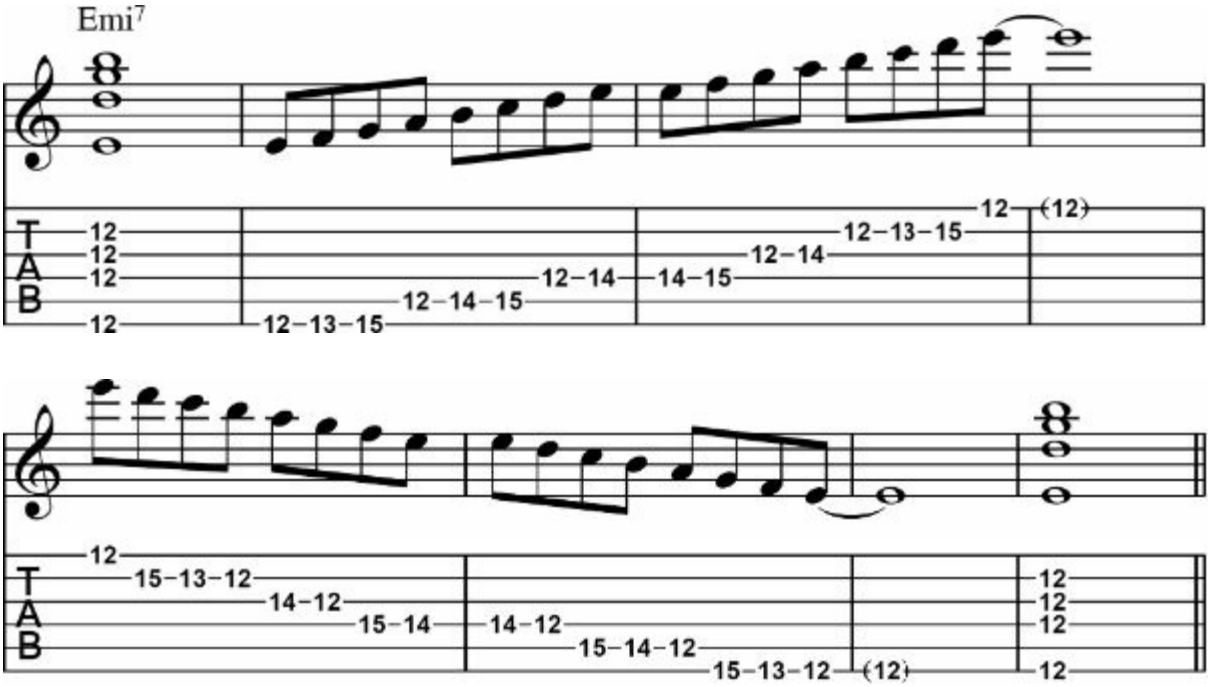

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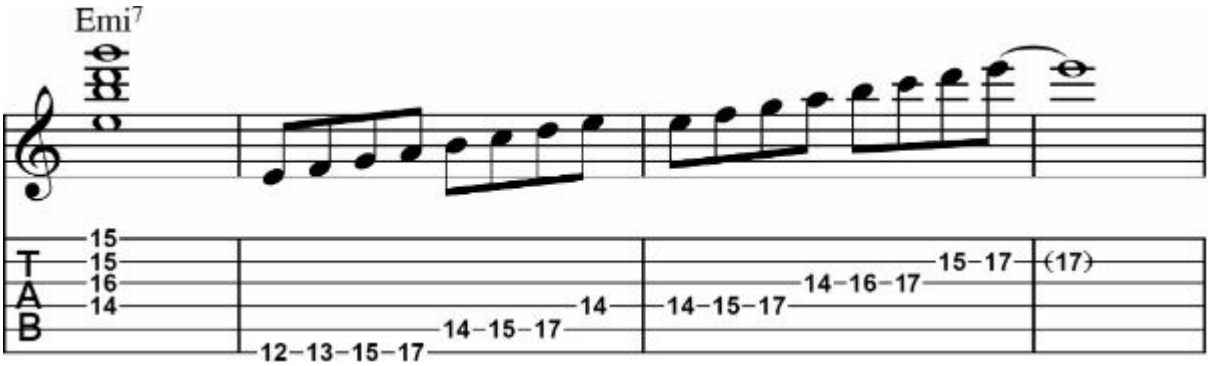
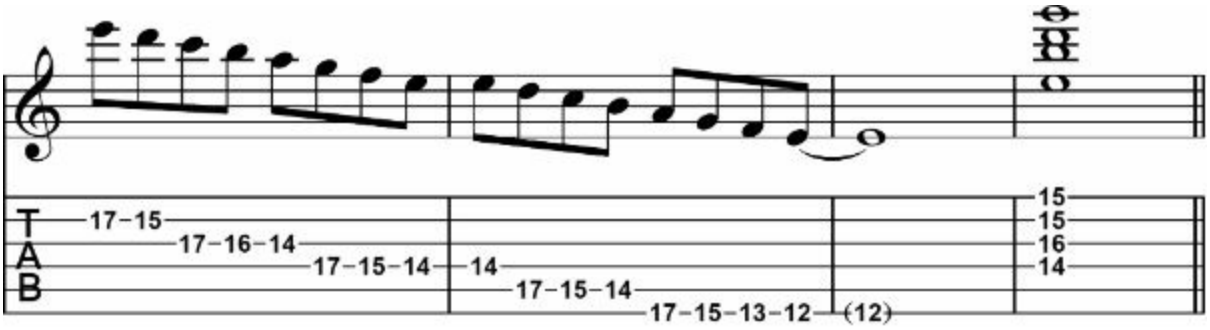
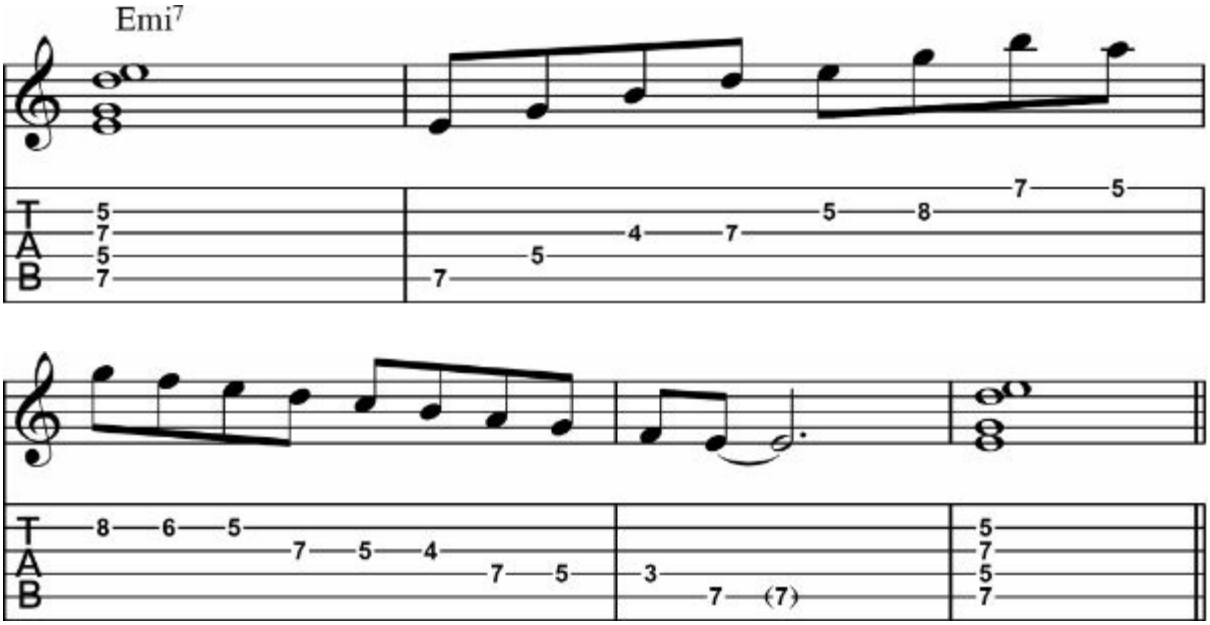




Arpeggio & Scale Studies: Emi7 & E Phrygian

Pattern 1



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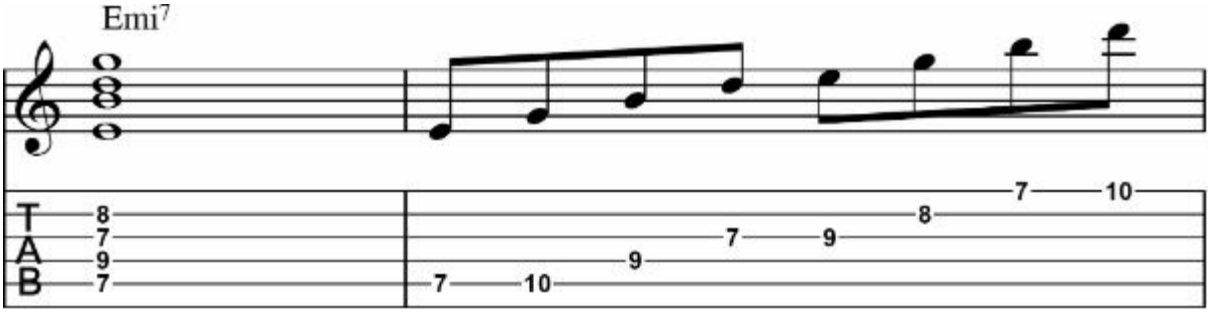

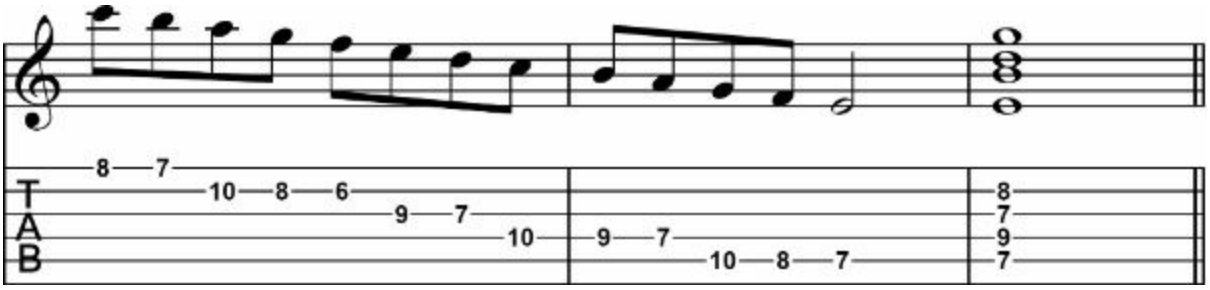

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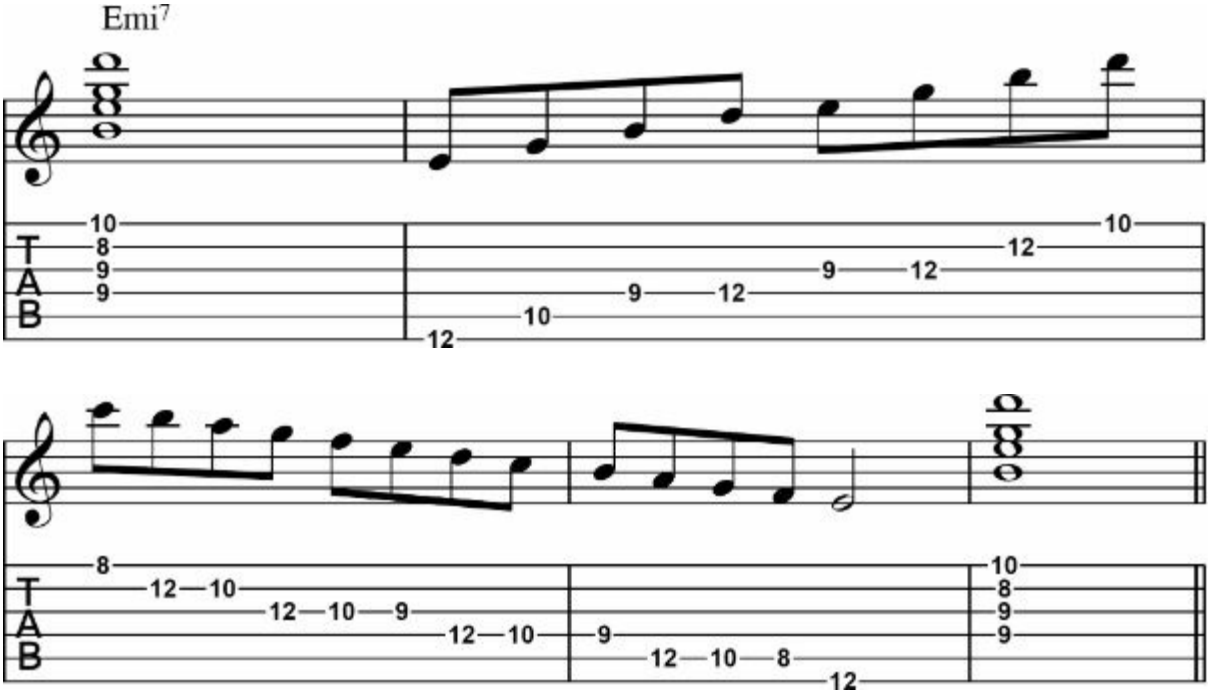
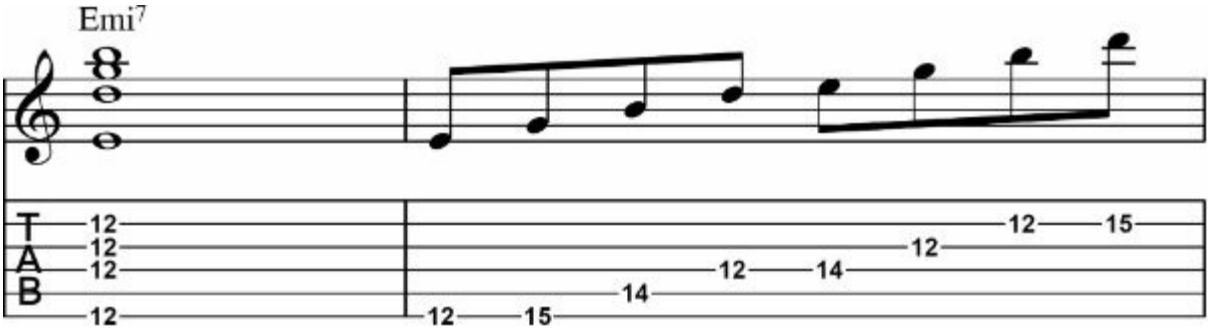
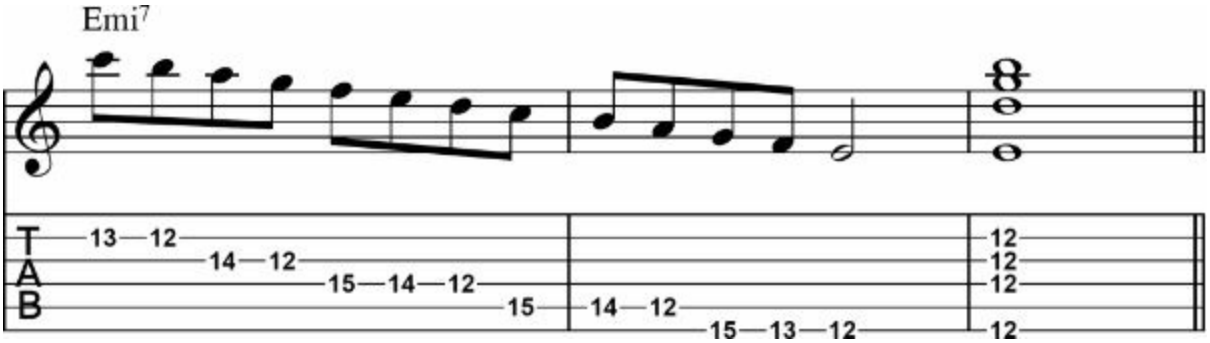
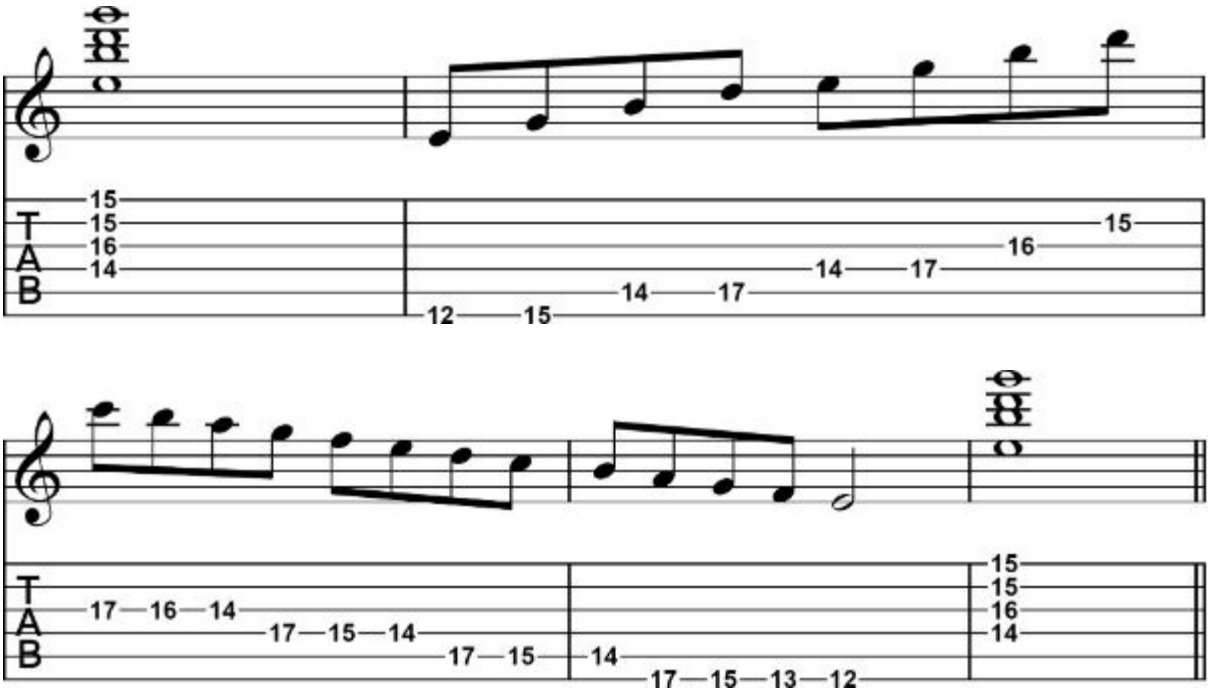


Pattern 4





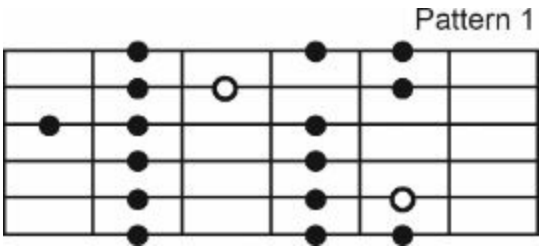
Pattern 5

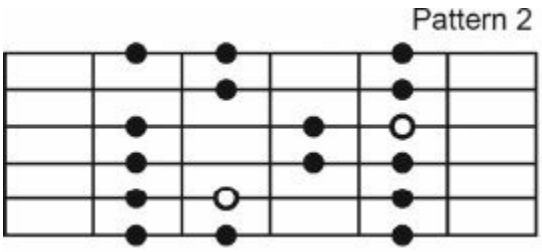


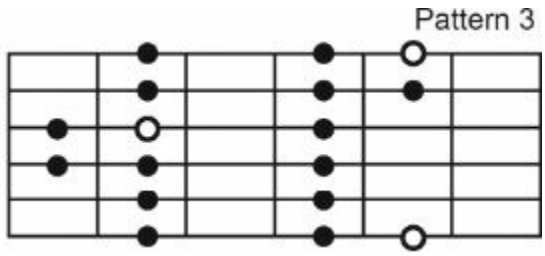
Lydian Mode

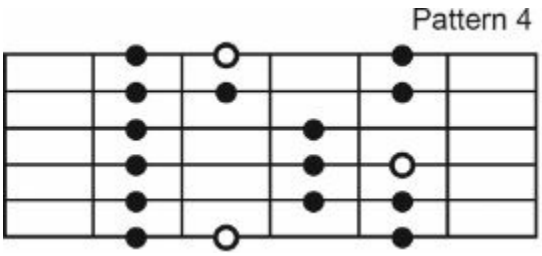
This is a major scale with a raised (#) 4th. The scale consists of the root, 2, 3, #4, 5, 6, and 7th. Many musicians use this scale on maj7 chord or maj7(#11) chord. It is very useful for improvisation because in Lydian mode, there is no avoid note which is the 4th of the major scale. Play on maj7, maj7(#4), maj7(#11). Remember #4th is the same note as #11th.

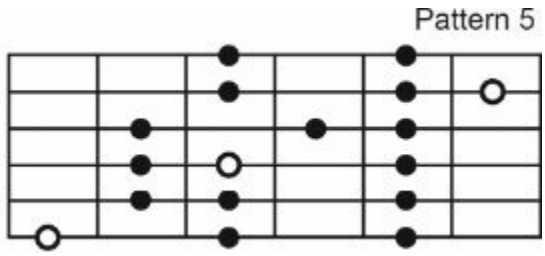
Fingering Patterns



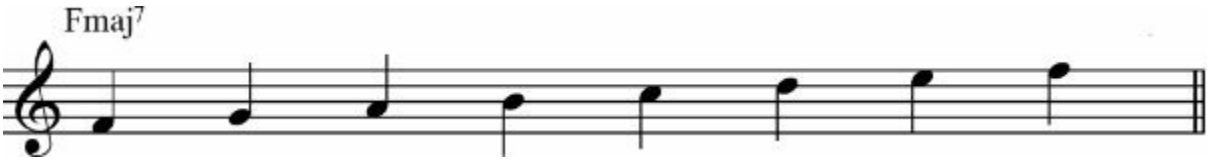




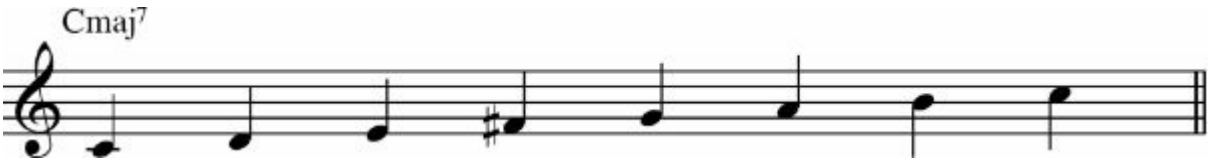




F Lydian Mode

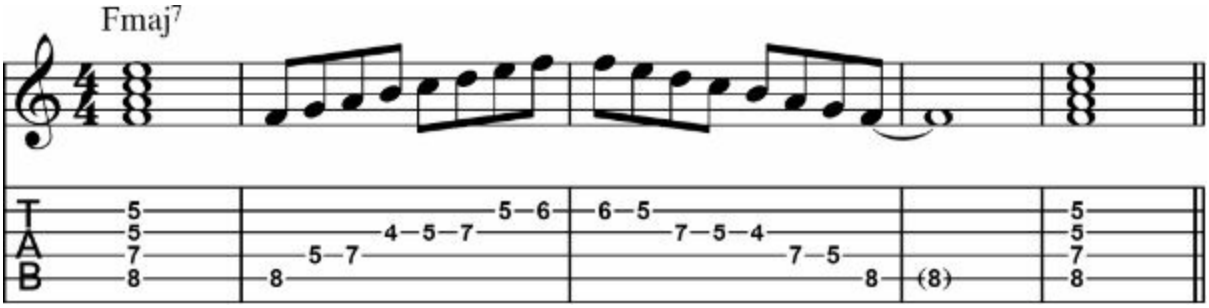


C Lydian Mode

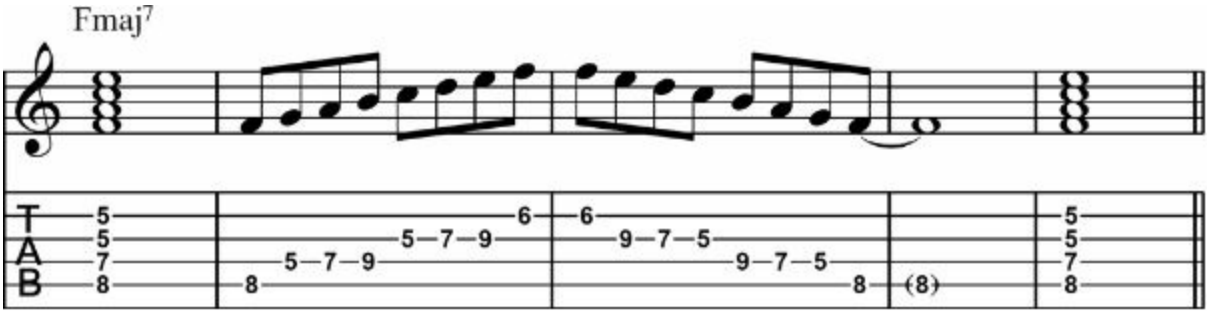


Scale Studies: F Lydian Mode

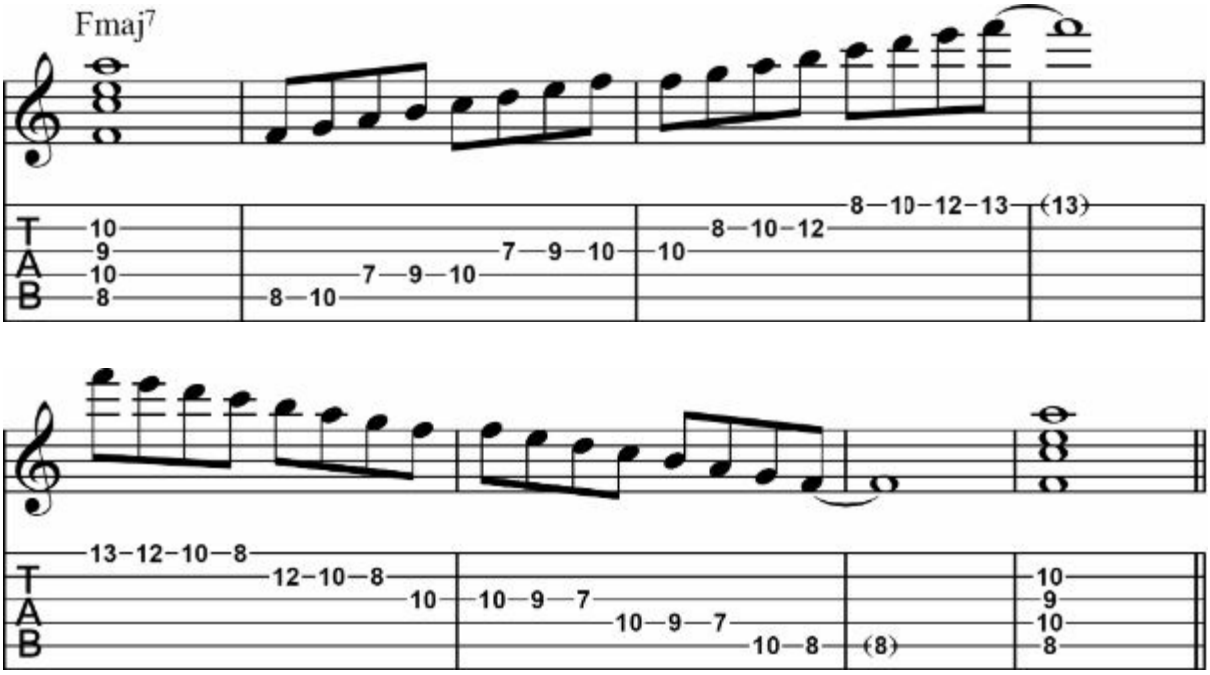
Pattern 1



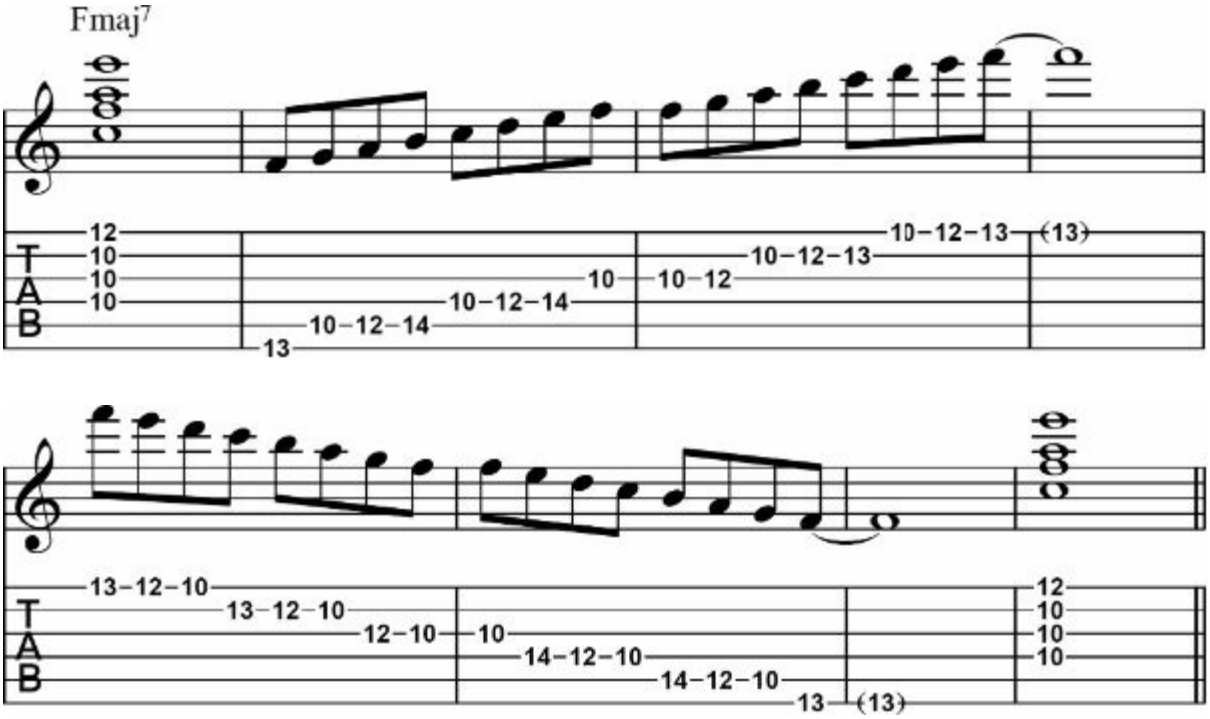
Pattern 1



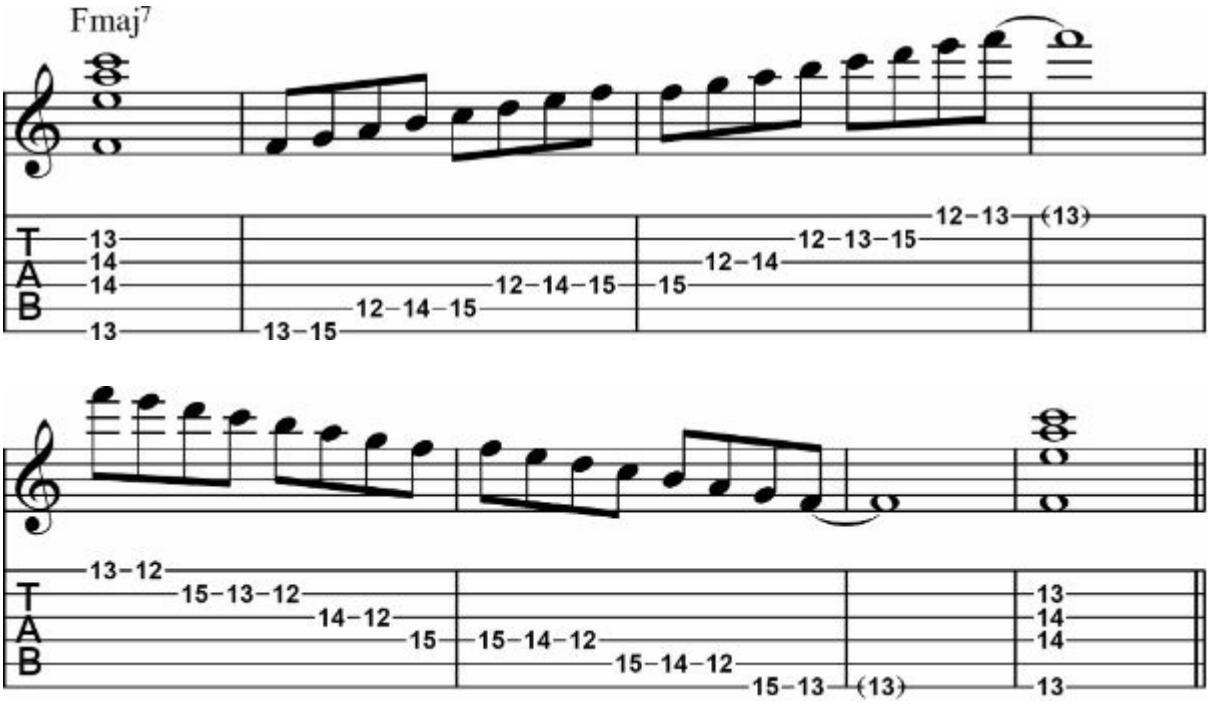
Pattern 2



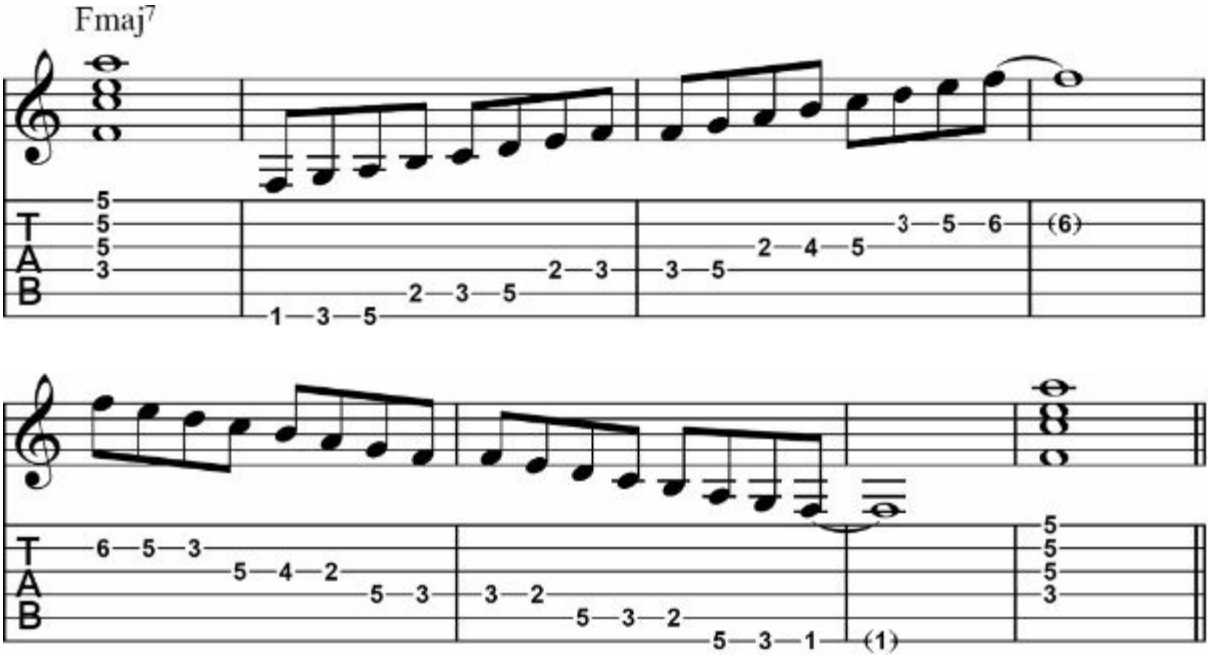
Pattern 3



Pattern 4

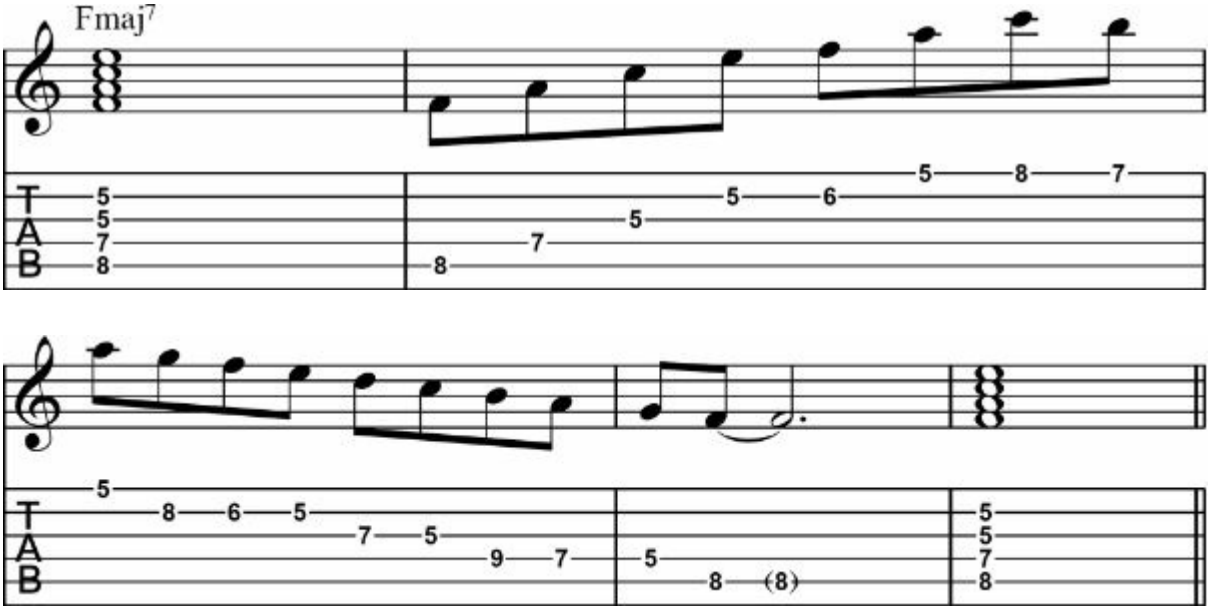


Pattern 5

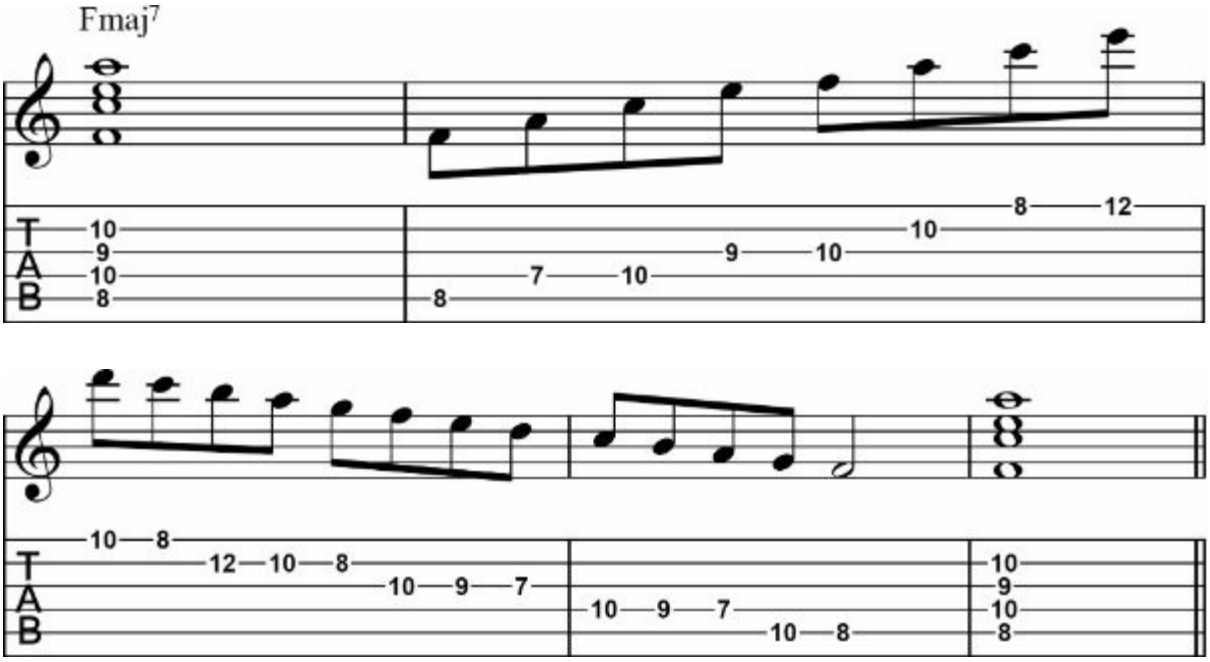


Arpeggio & Scale Studies: Fmaj7 & F Lydian

Pattern 1



Pattern 2



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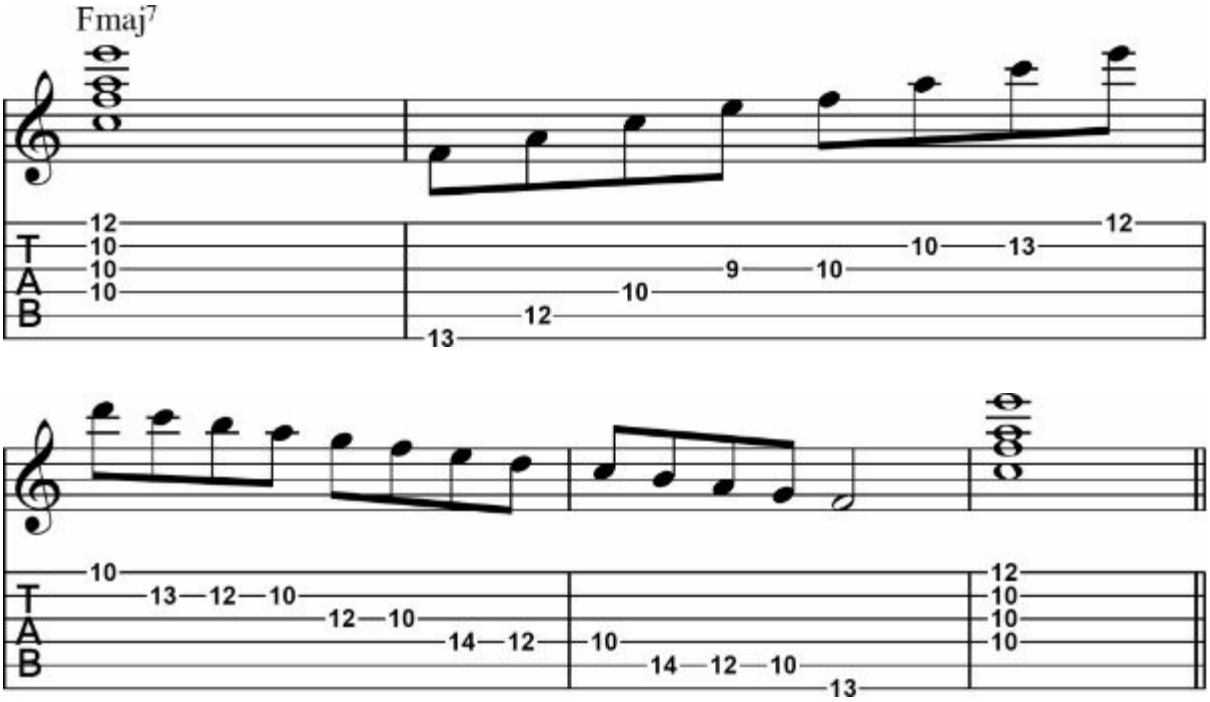

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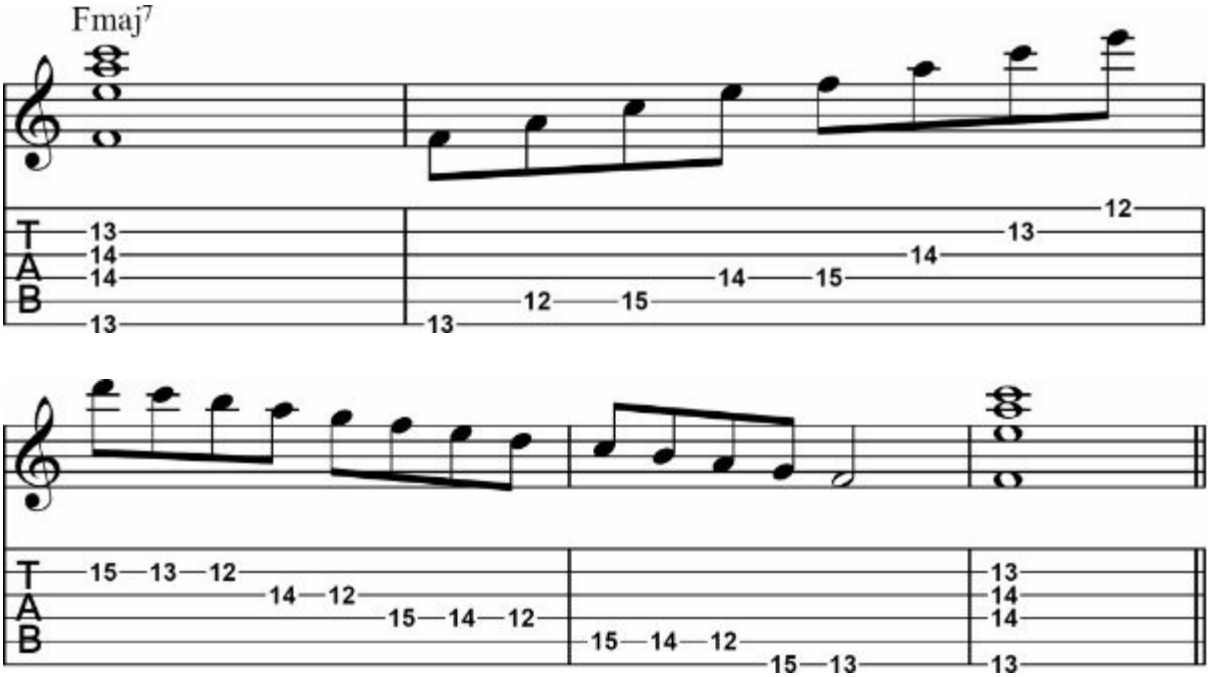

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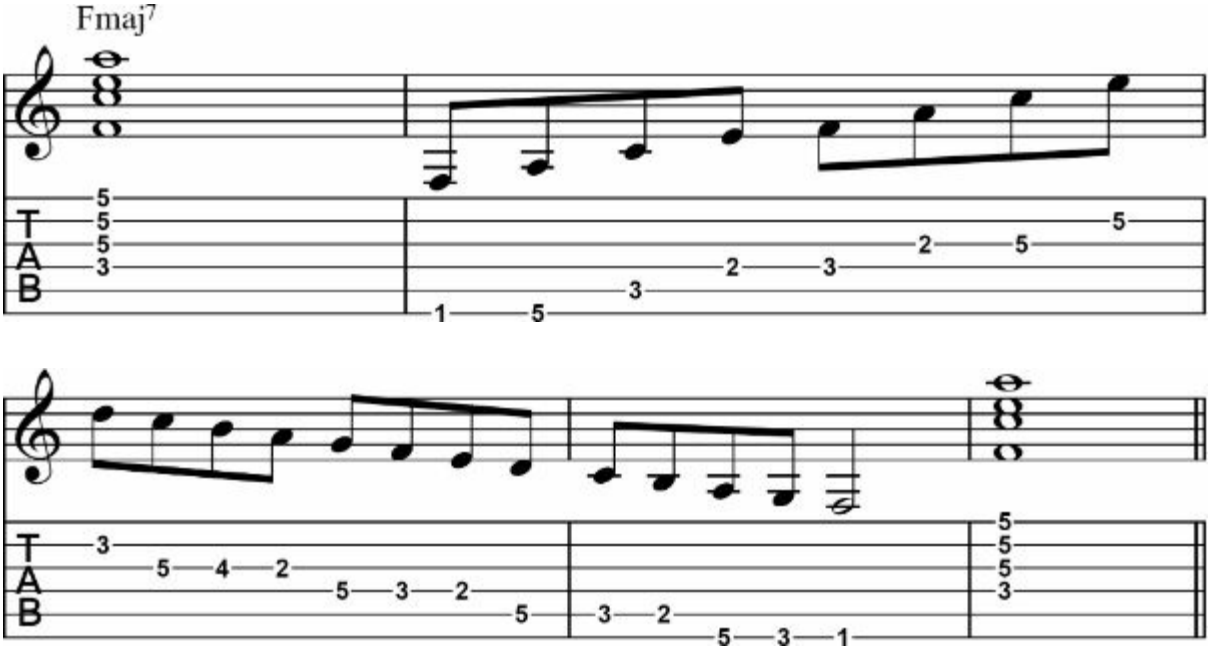
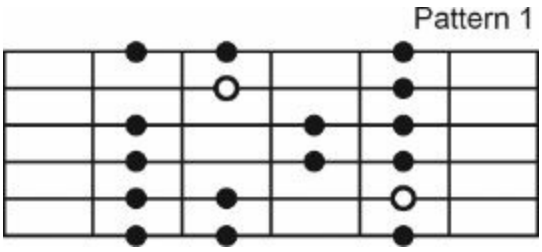
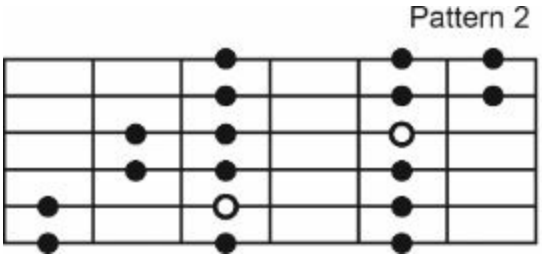


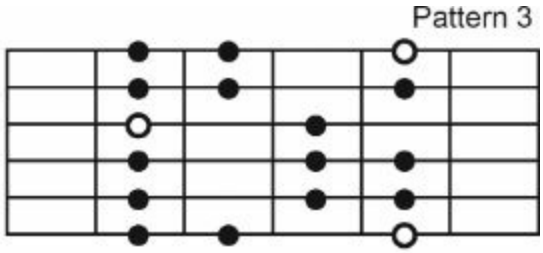
Mixolydian Mode

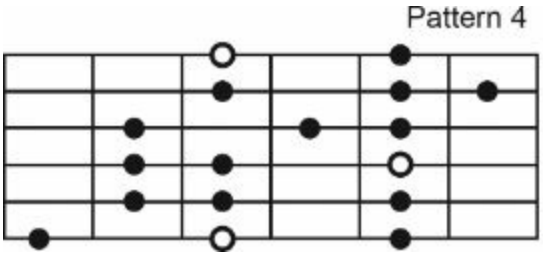
This is a major scale with a flattened(b) 7th note. You can play it over dominant 7th chords. The Mixolydian mode is the one of the most important modes in blues and jazz improvisation. It has V7 sound in a II V I chord progression. The intervals are root, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and b7.

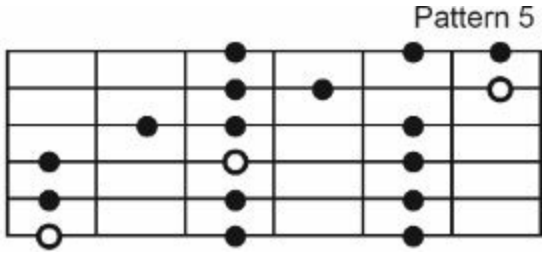
Fingering Patterns



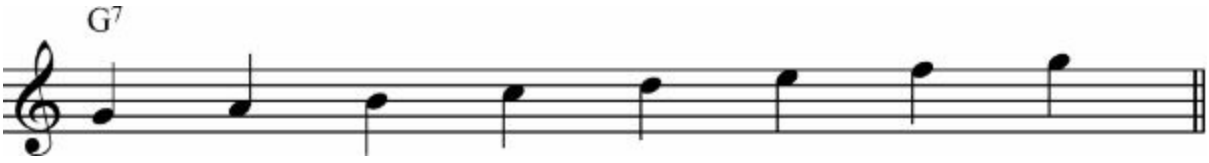




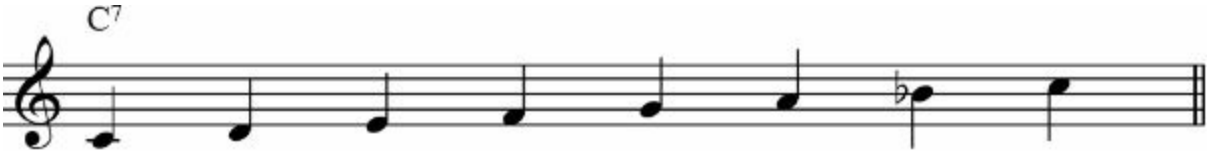




G Mixolydian Mode



C Mixolydian Mode



Scale Studies: G Mixolydian Mode

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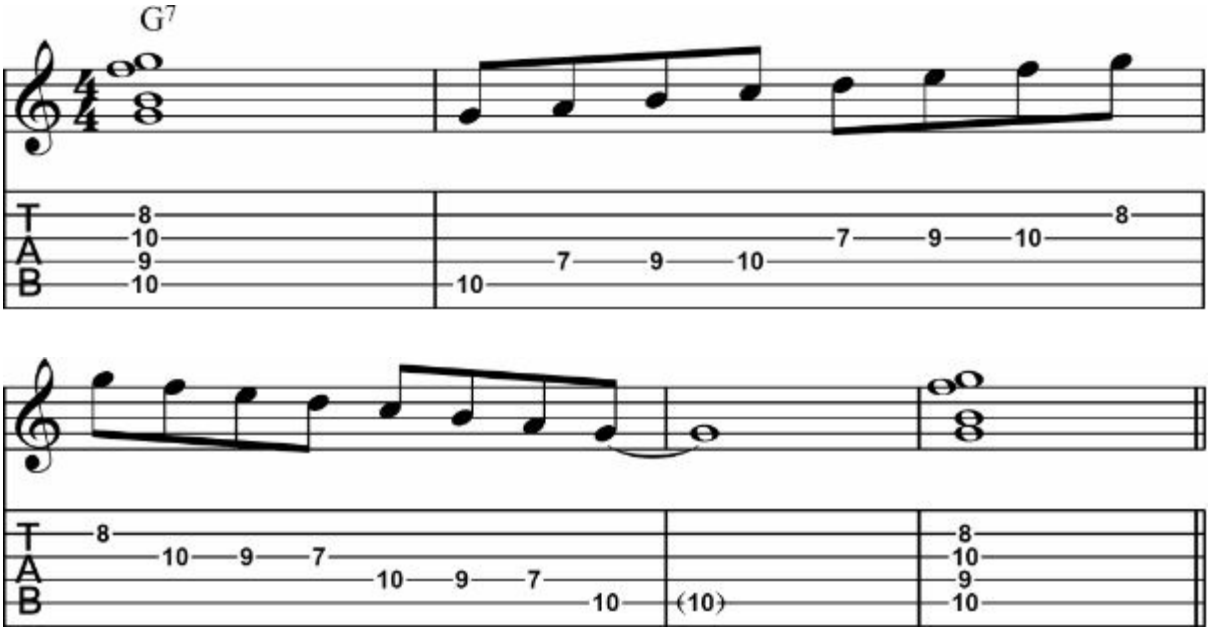

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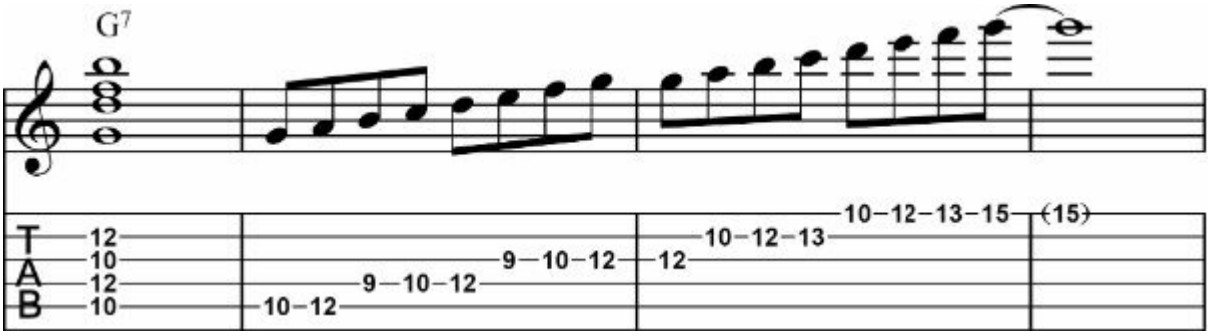

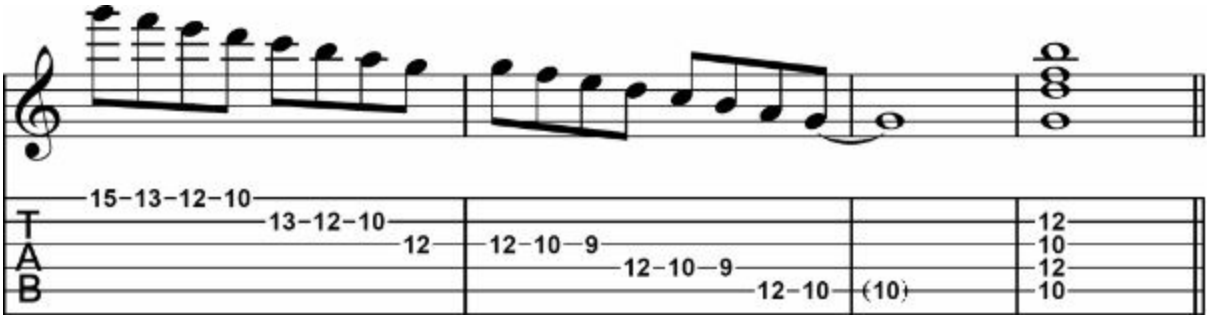

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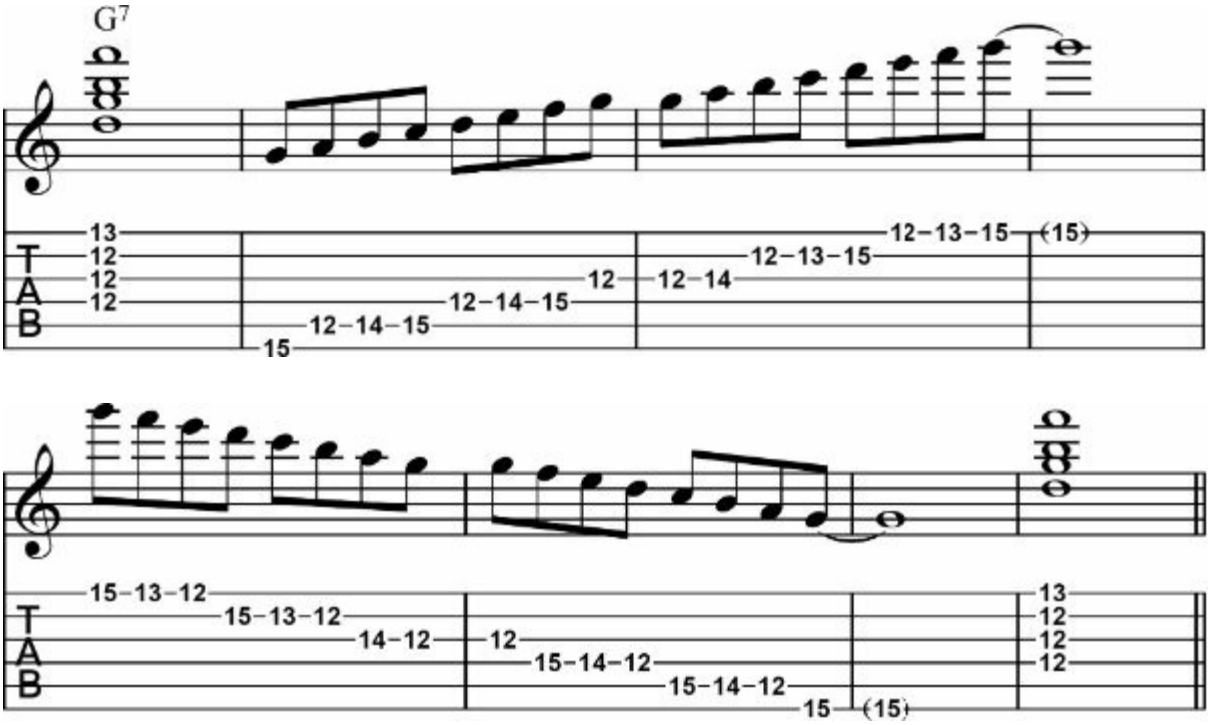
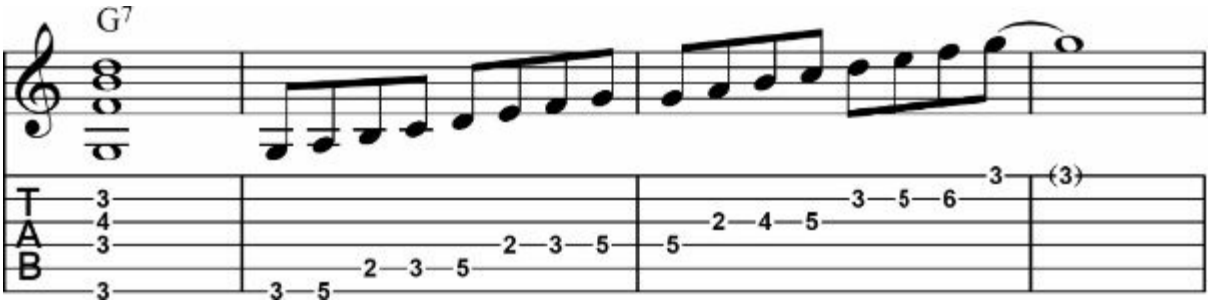
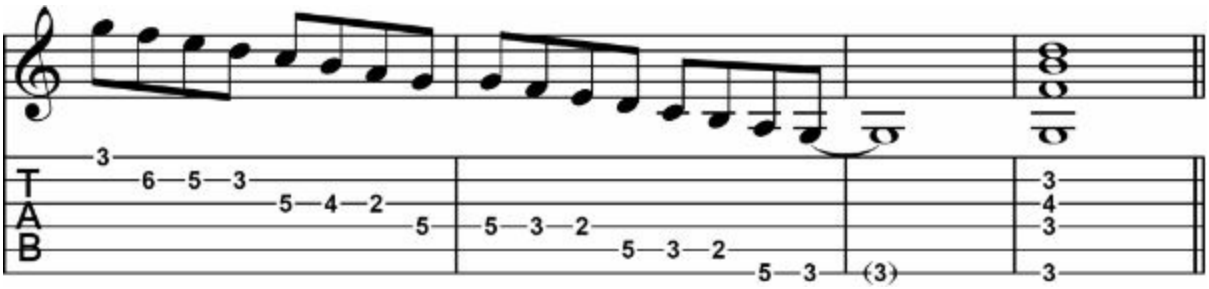
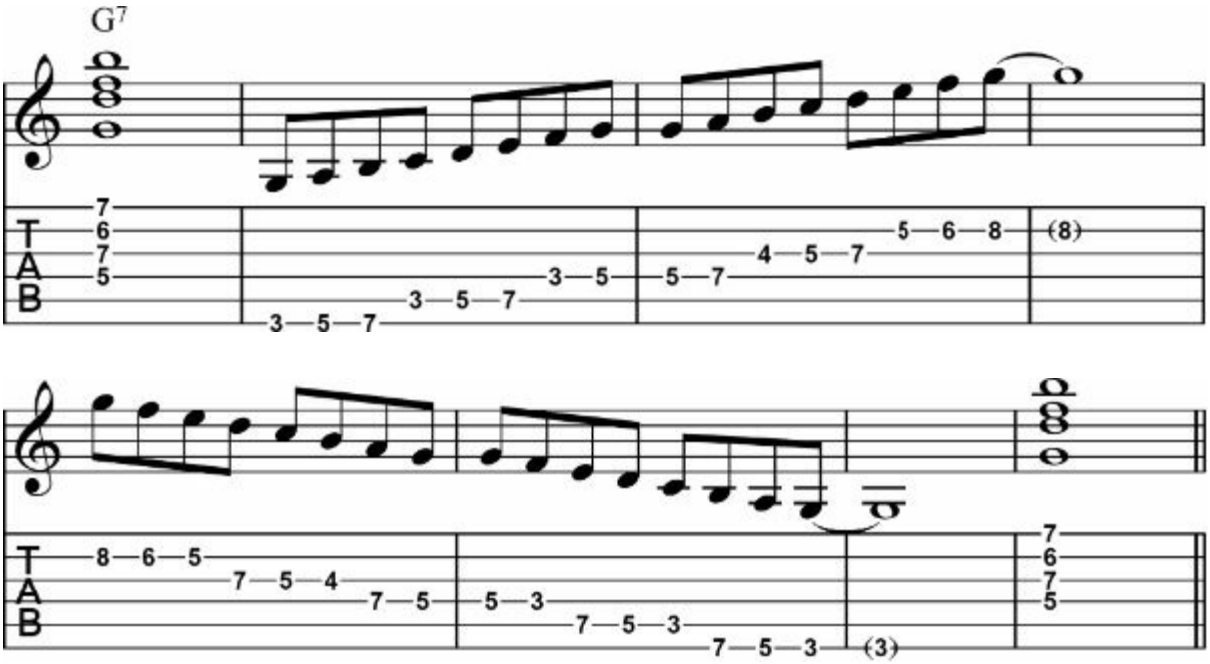


Pattern 4



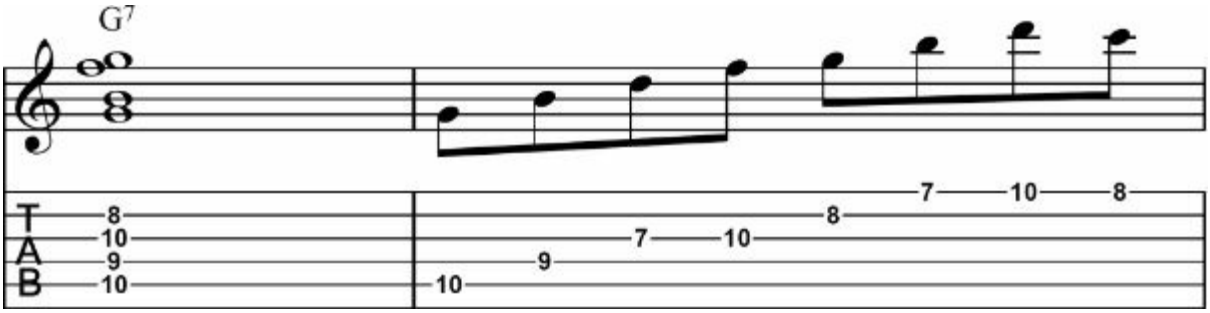


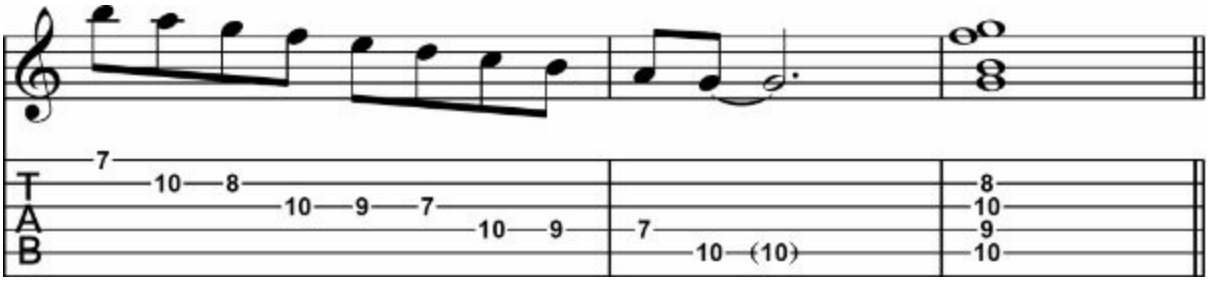
Pattern 5



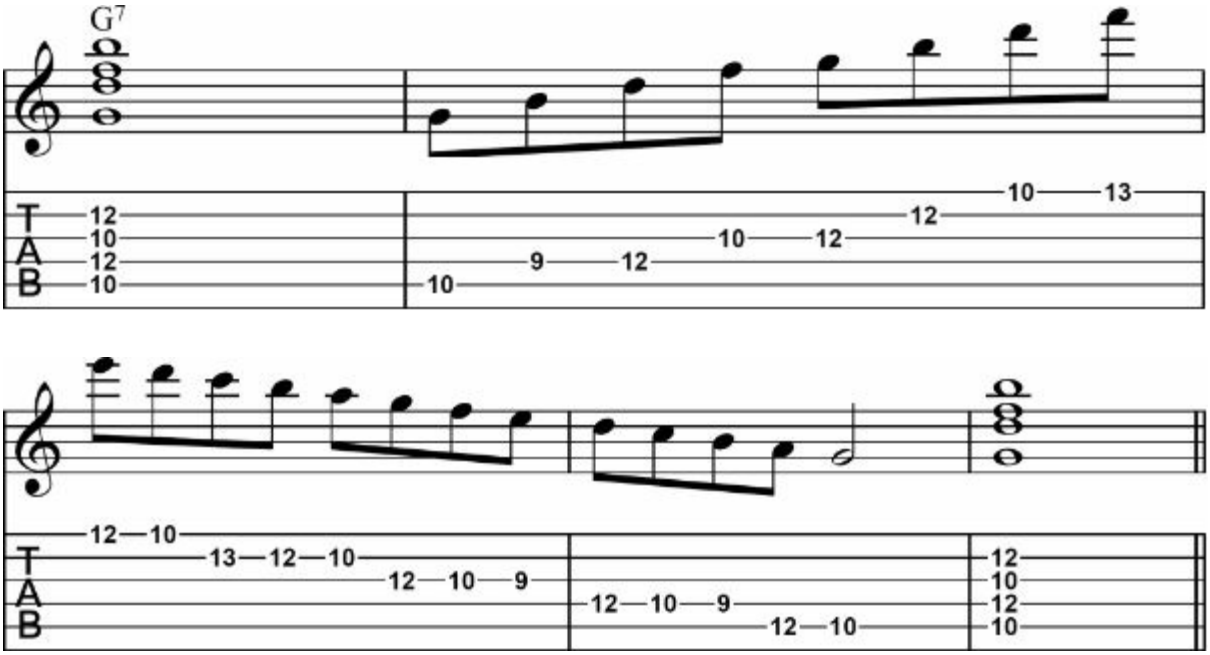
Arpeggio & Scale Studies: G7 and G Mixolydian

Pattern 1

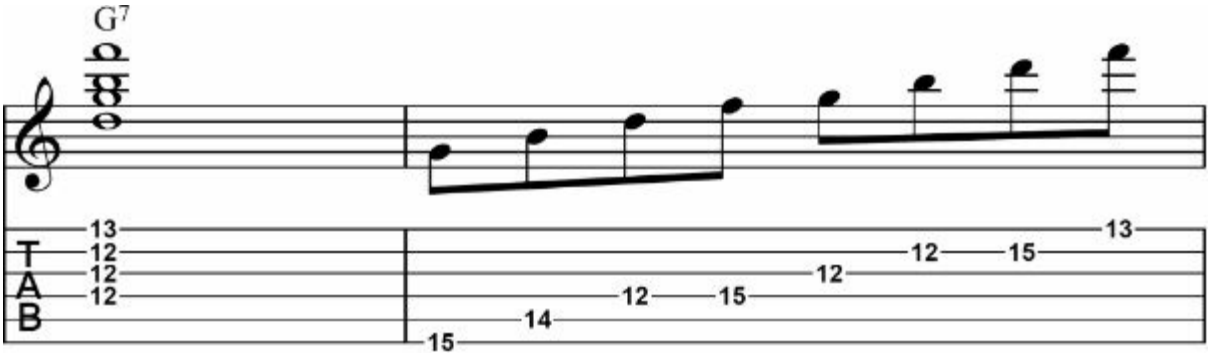


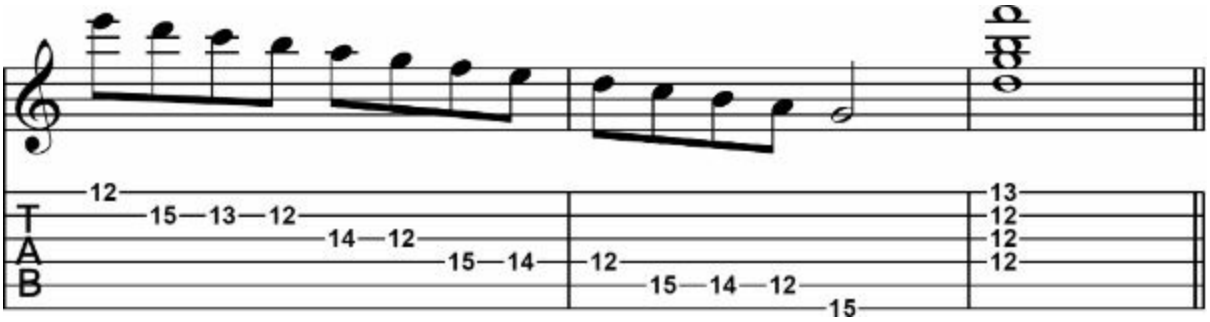


Pattern 2

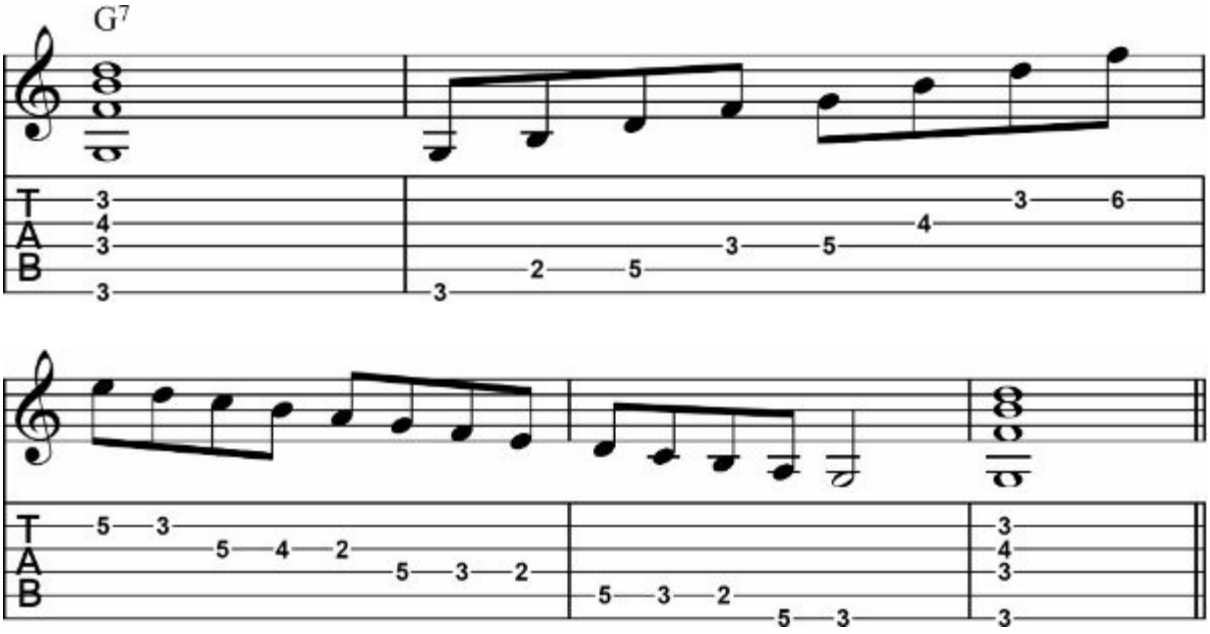


Pattern 3

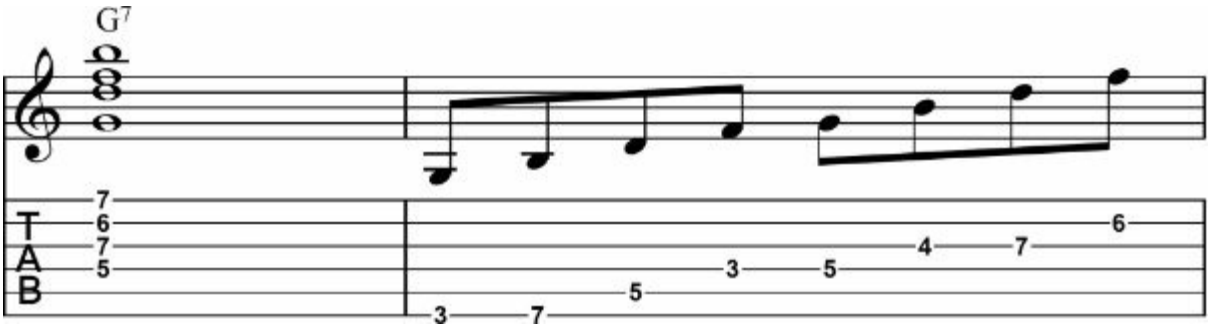


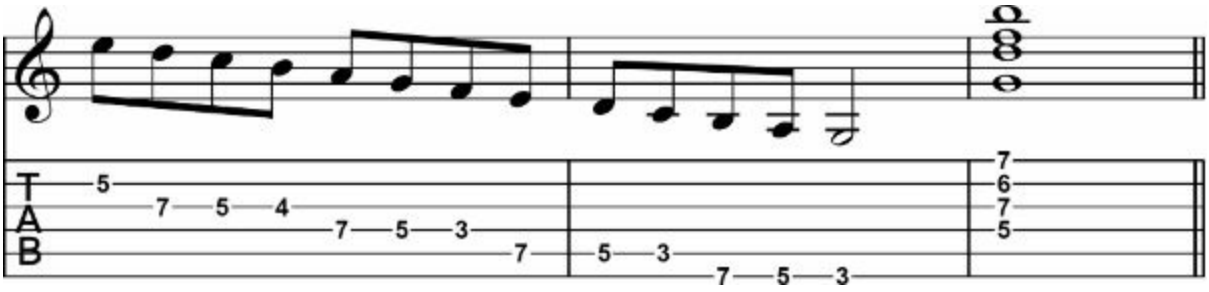


Pattern 4



Pattern 5

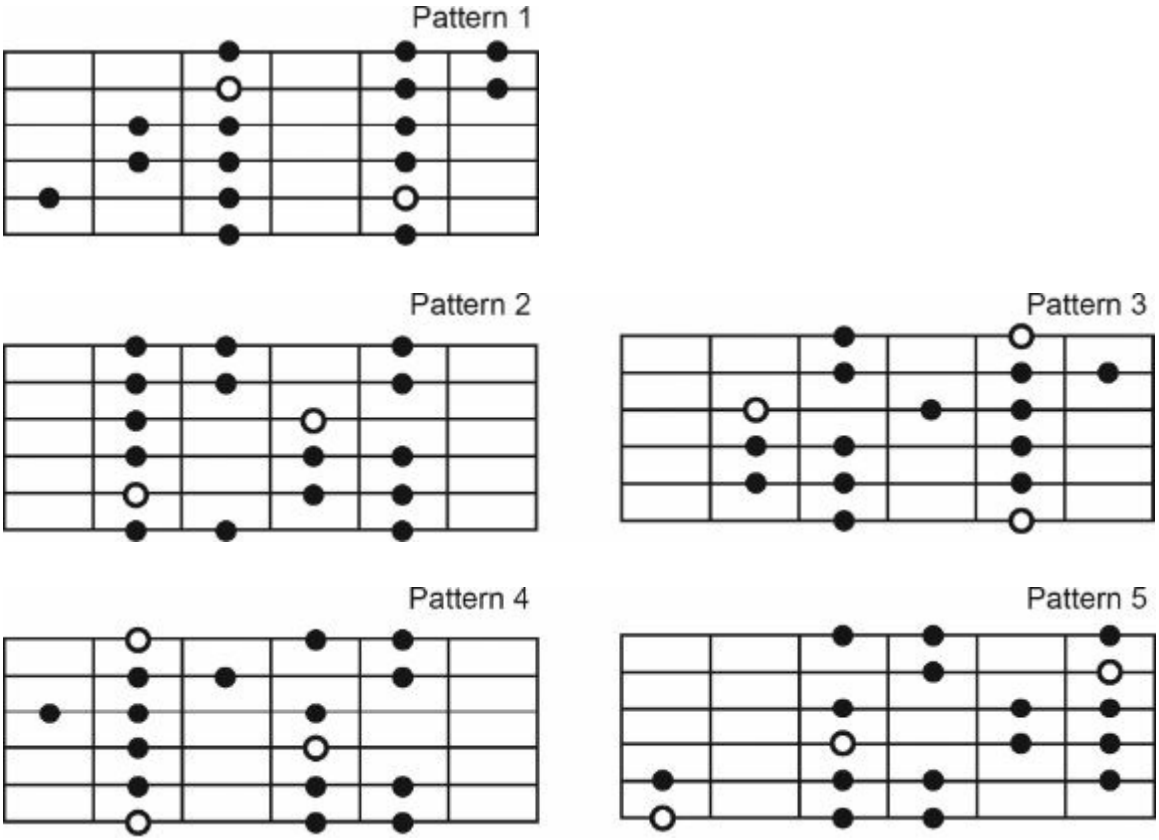




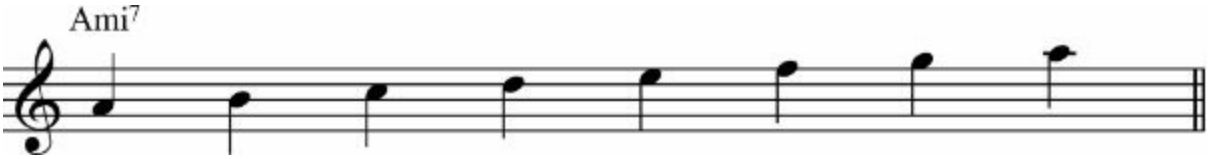
Aeolian Mode

The Aeolian mode is the same scale as the natural minor. It is the 6th mode of the major scale. The intervals are the root, 2, b3, 4, 5, b6, and b7. It is a minor scale with a major 6th. The 6th interval is the only difference between the Aeolian and Dorian modes. Play on mi, mi7, mi(b6), and mi7(b13).

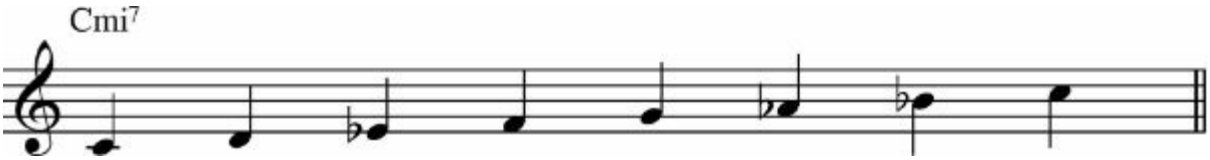
Fingering Patterns



A Aeolian Mode

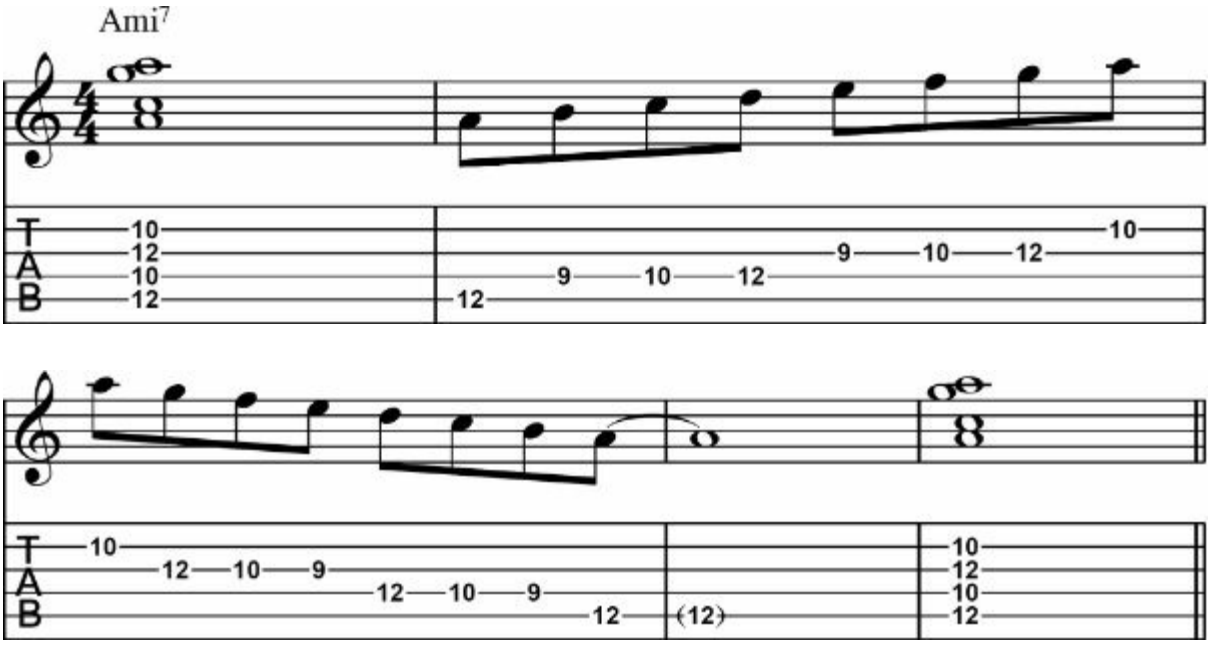


C Aeolian Mode



Scale Studies: A Aeolian Mode

Pattern 1



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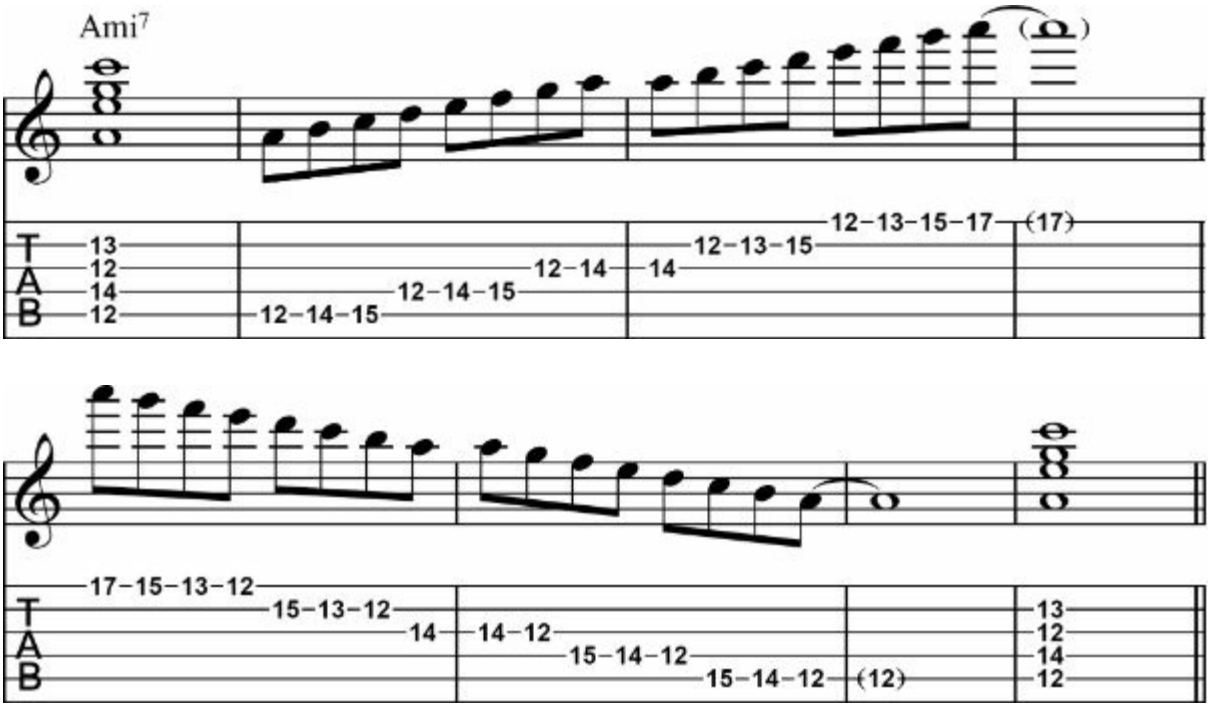

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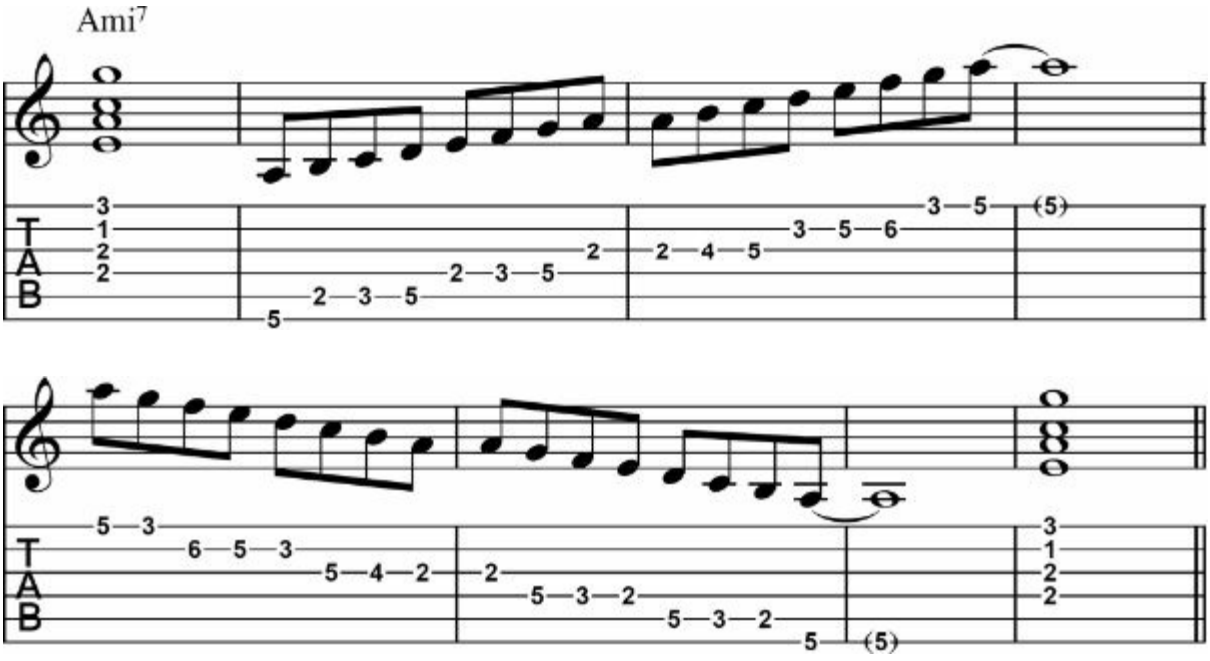

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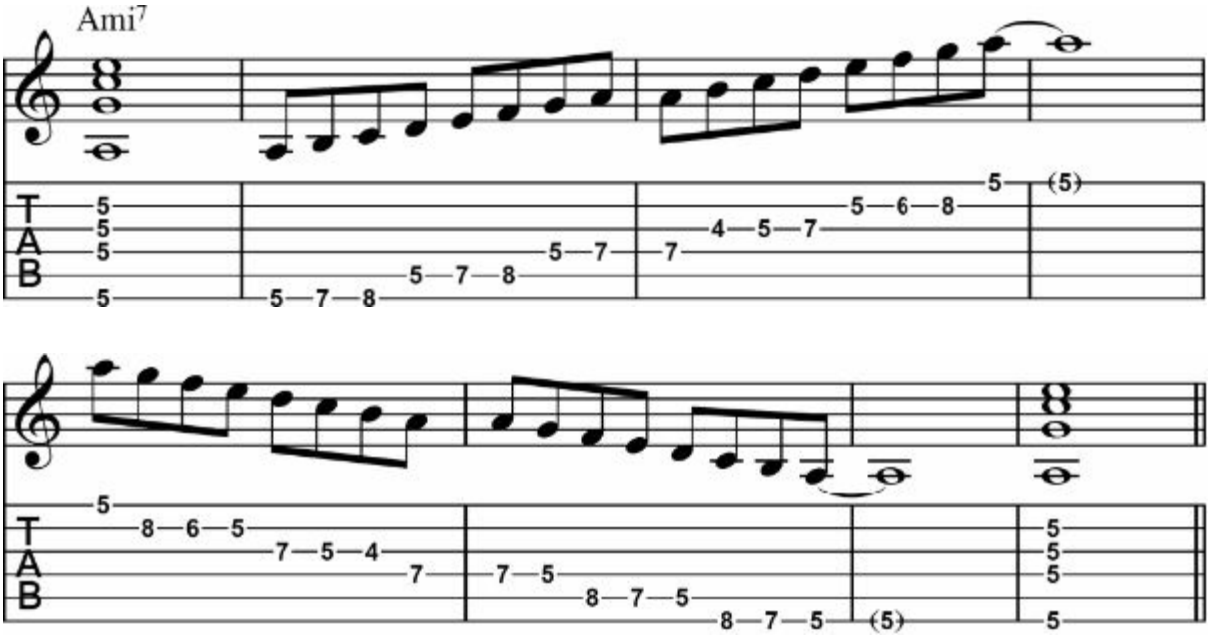

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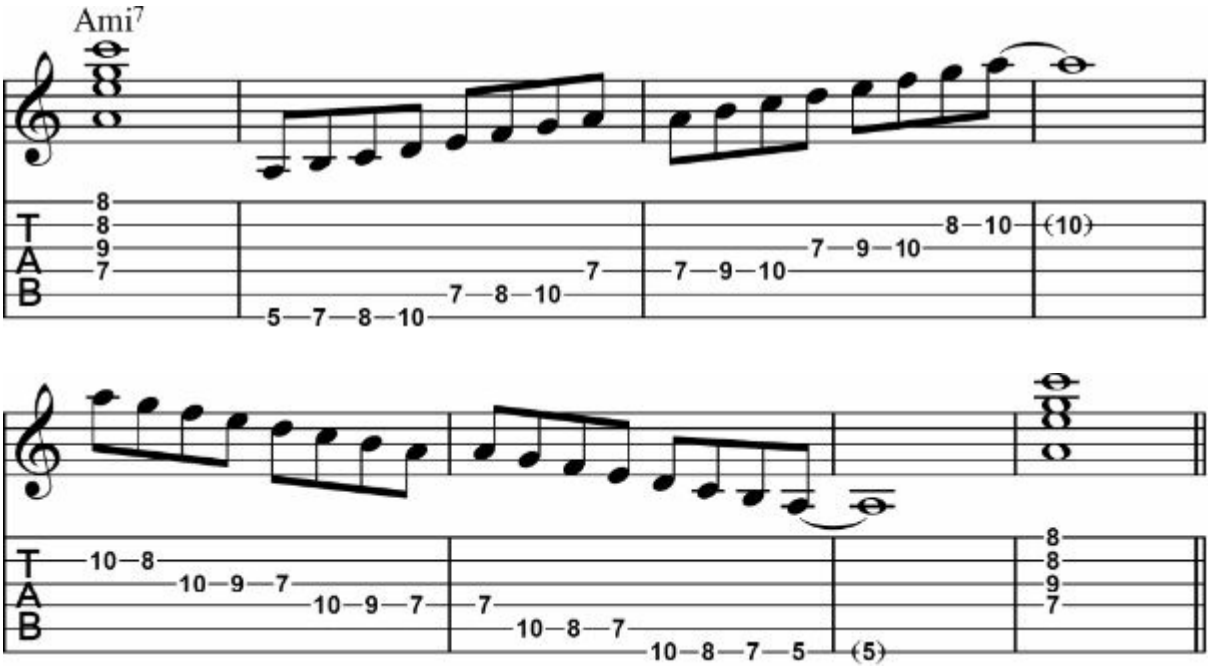
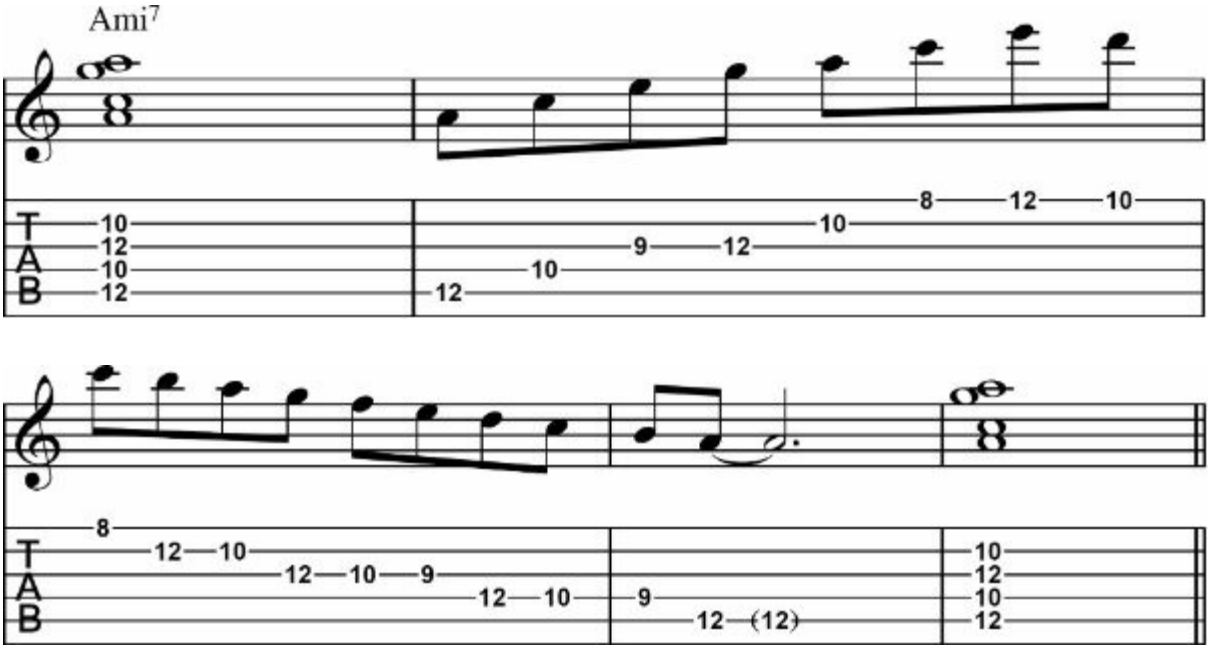


Arpeggio & Scale Studies: Ami7 & A Aeolian

Pattern 1



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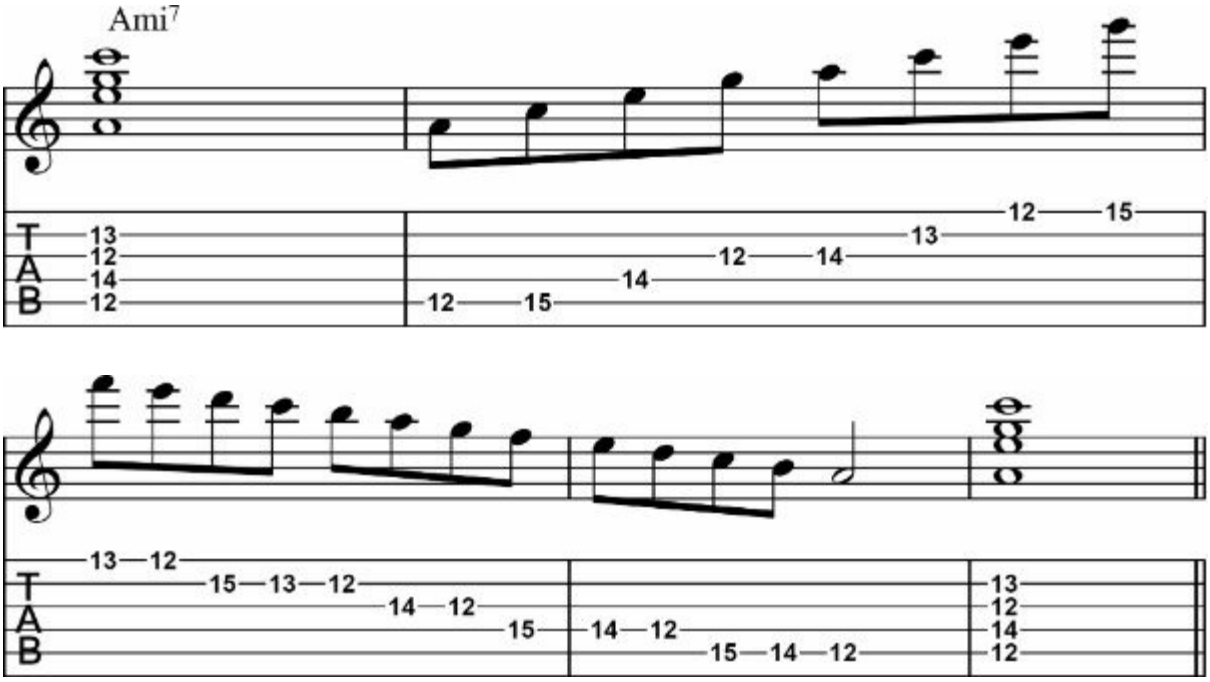

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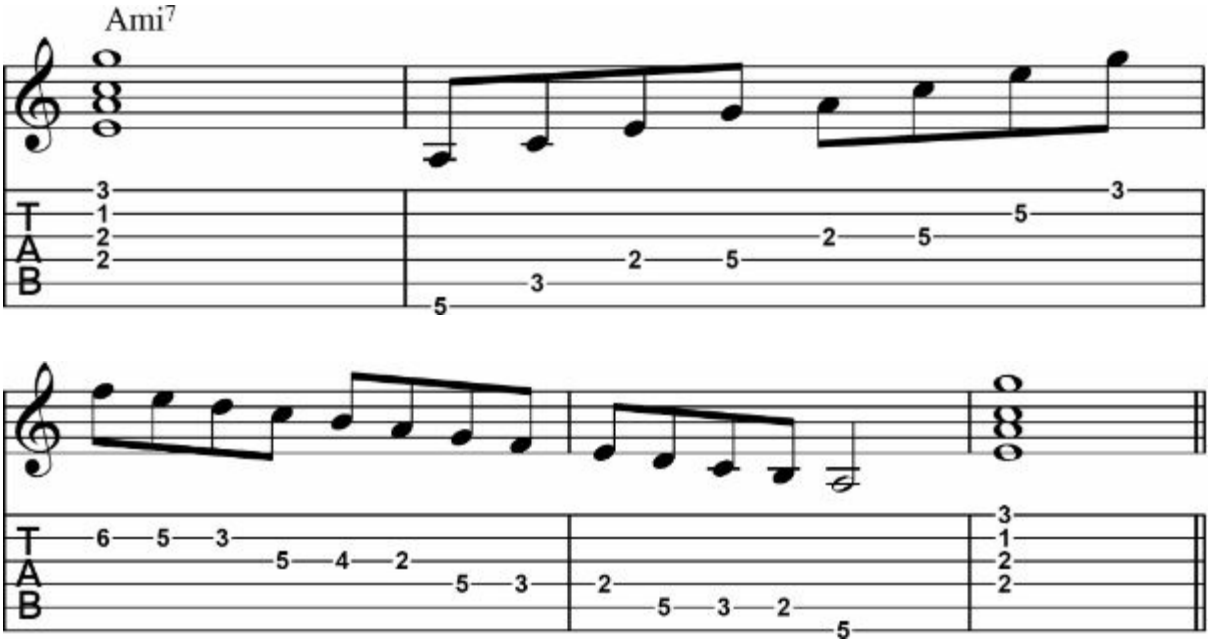

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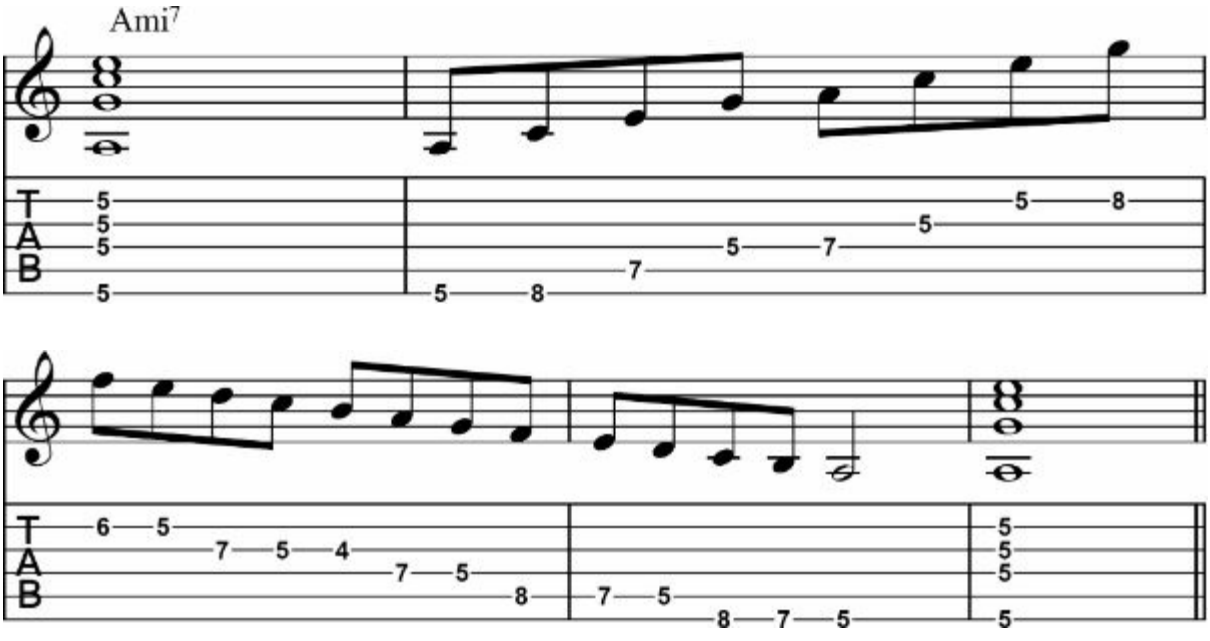
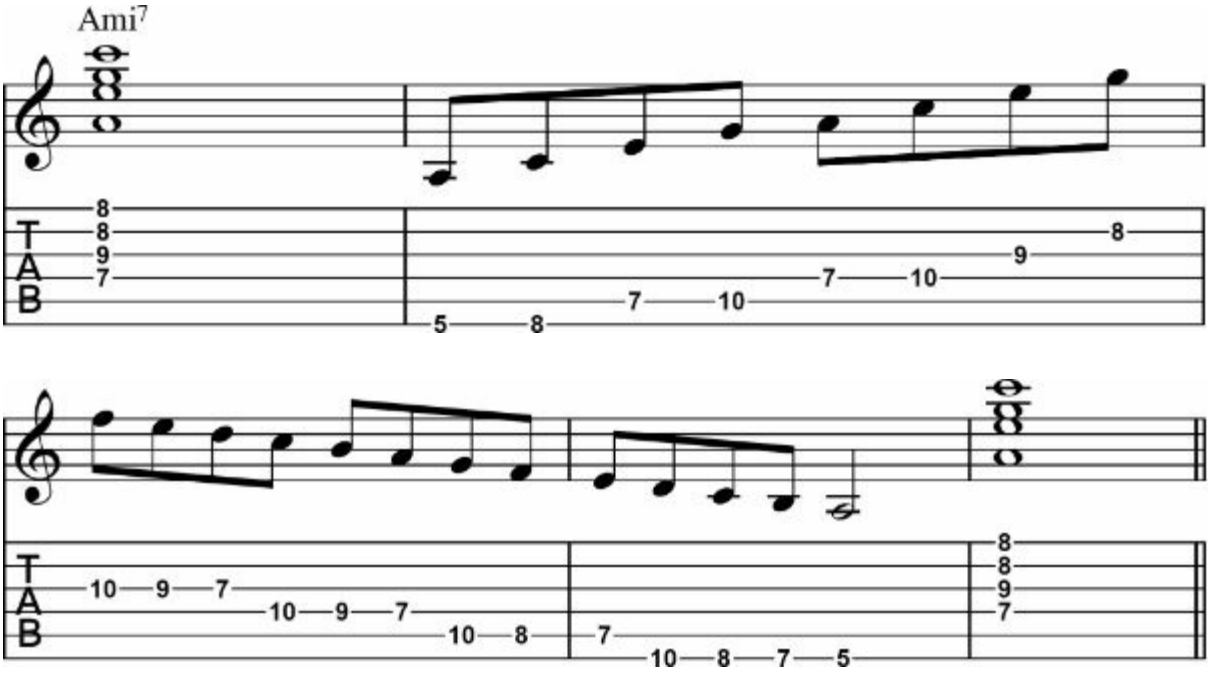


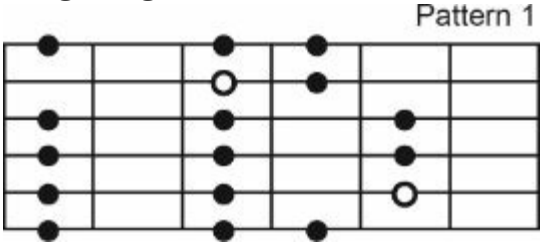
Pattern 5

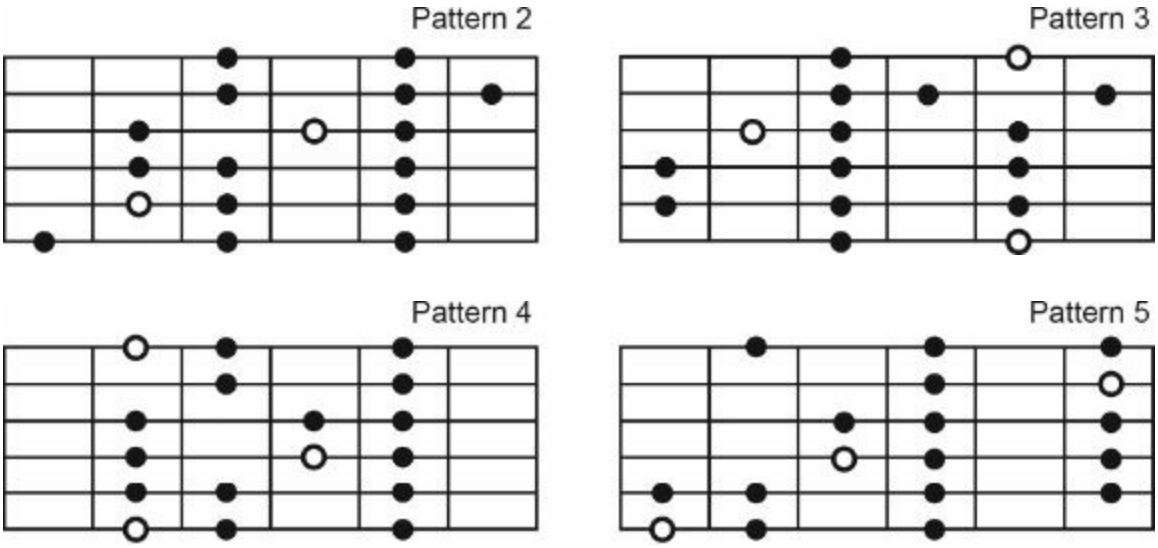


Locrian Mode

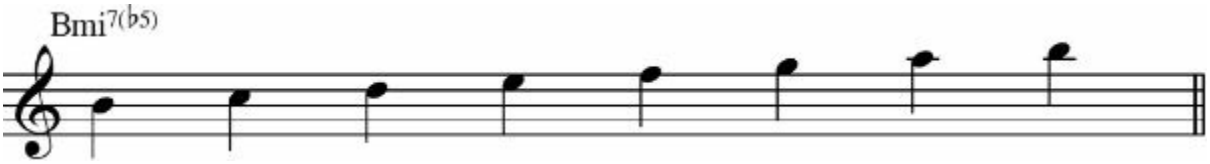
The Locrian mode is the 7th mode of the major scale. It's intervals are the root, b2(b9), b3, 4, b5, b6, and b7. You can play this over mi7(b5), half-diminished chords. However, you have to be careful on the b2 note because this can clash with the root of the chord. It is useful to study compare this with the Locrian #2 which is the 7th mode of melodic minor scale

Fingering Patterns

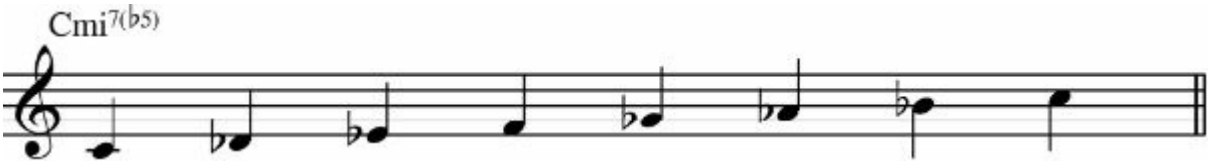




B Locrian Mode



C Locrian Mode



Scale Studies: B Locrian Mode

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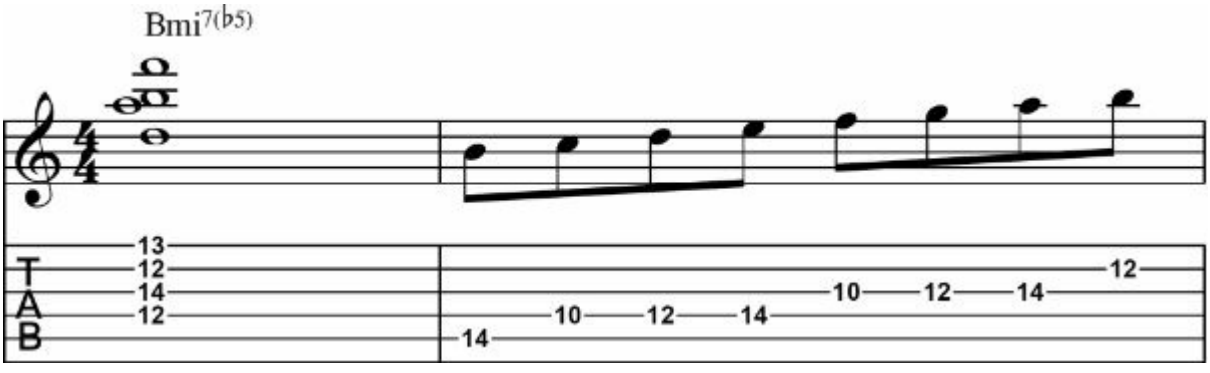
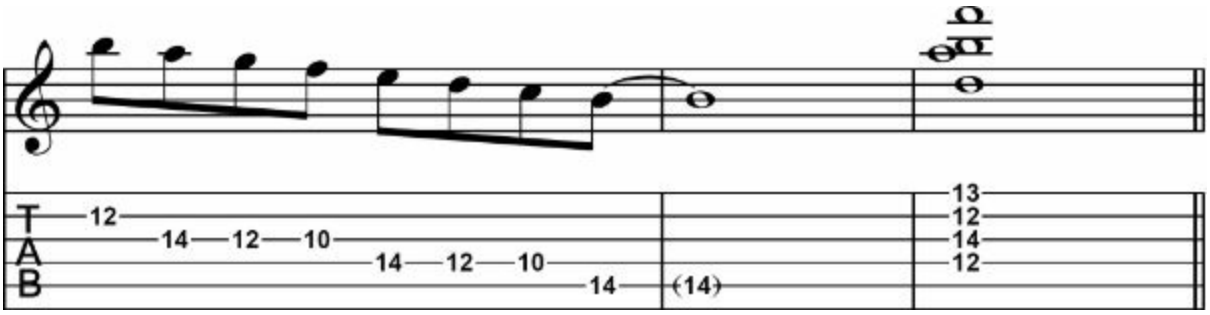
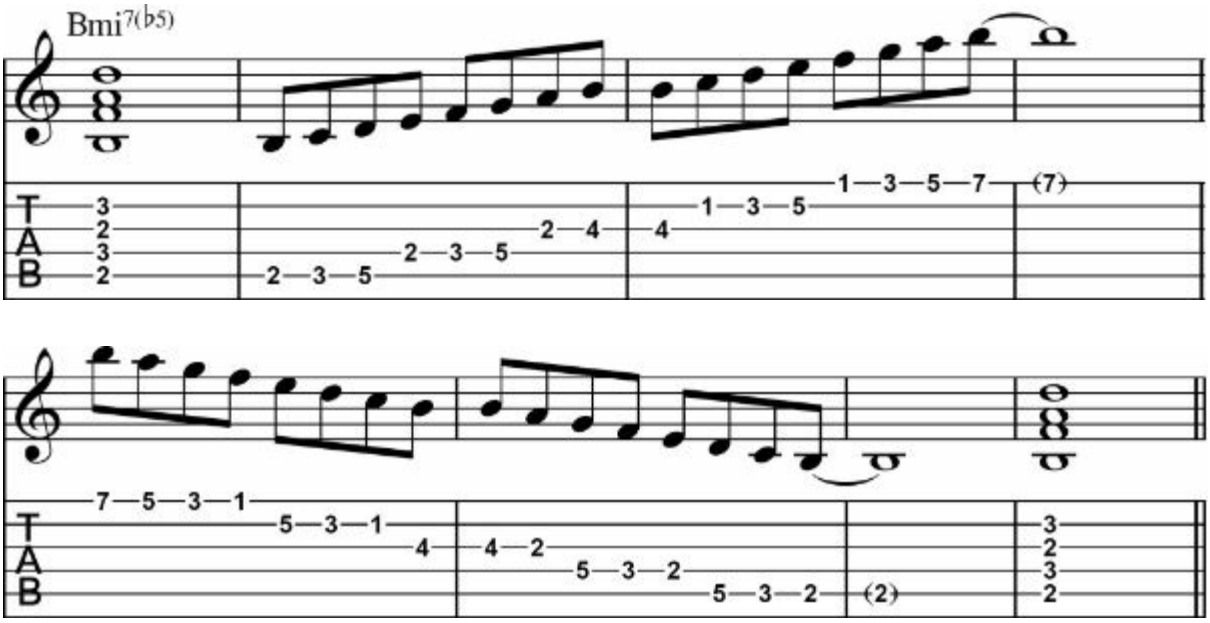




Pattern 2



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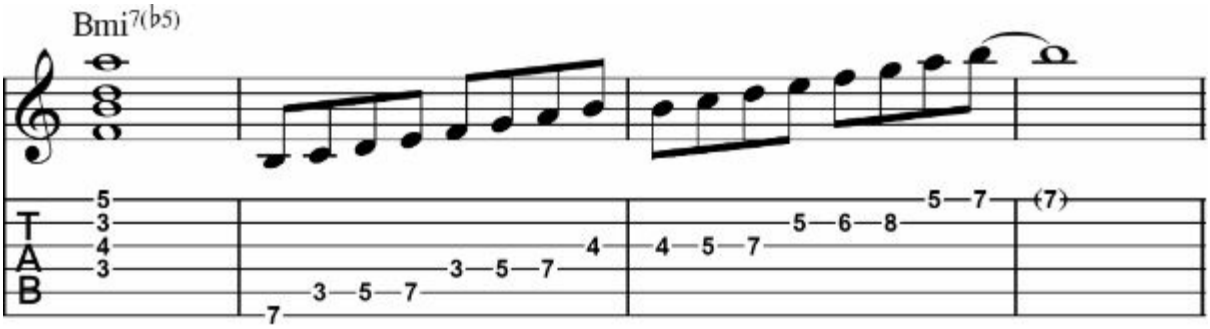

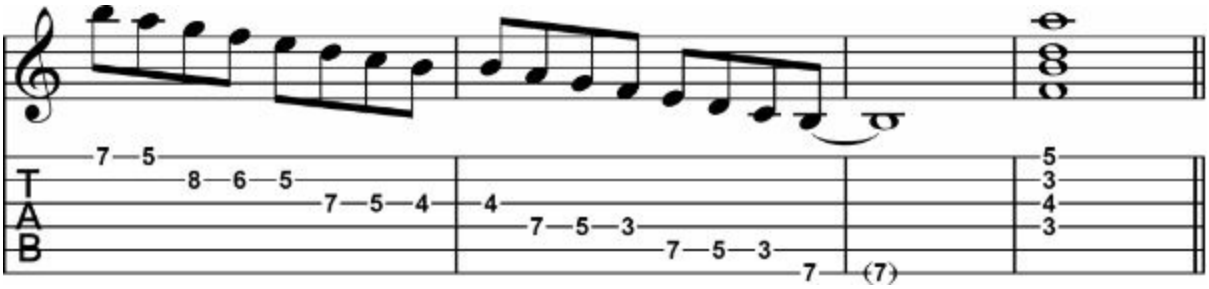

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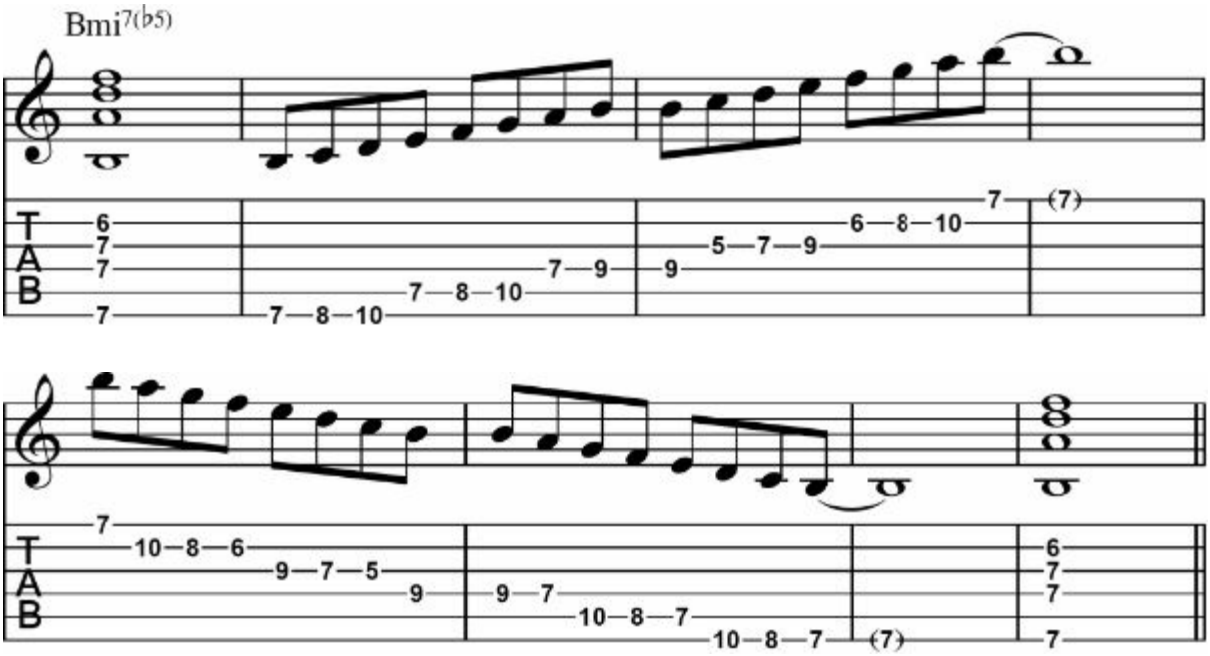

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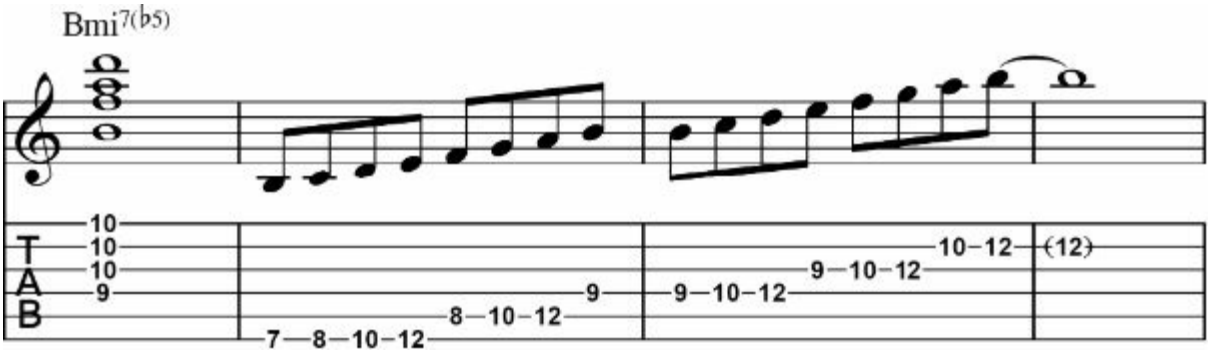
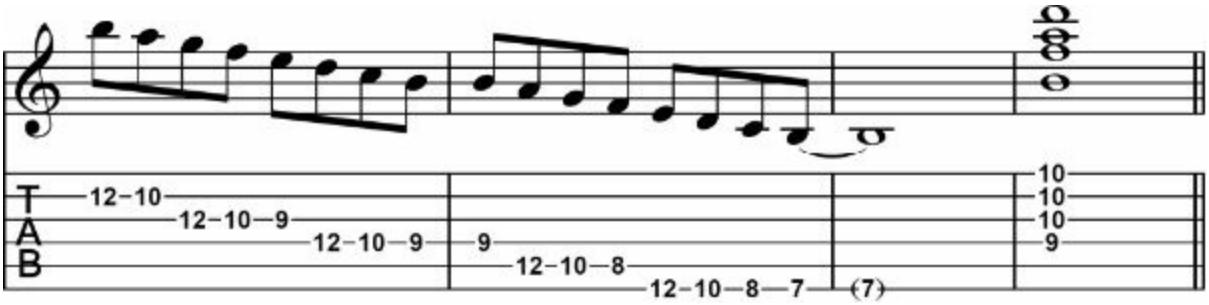
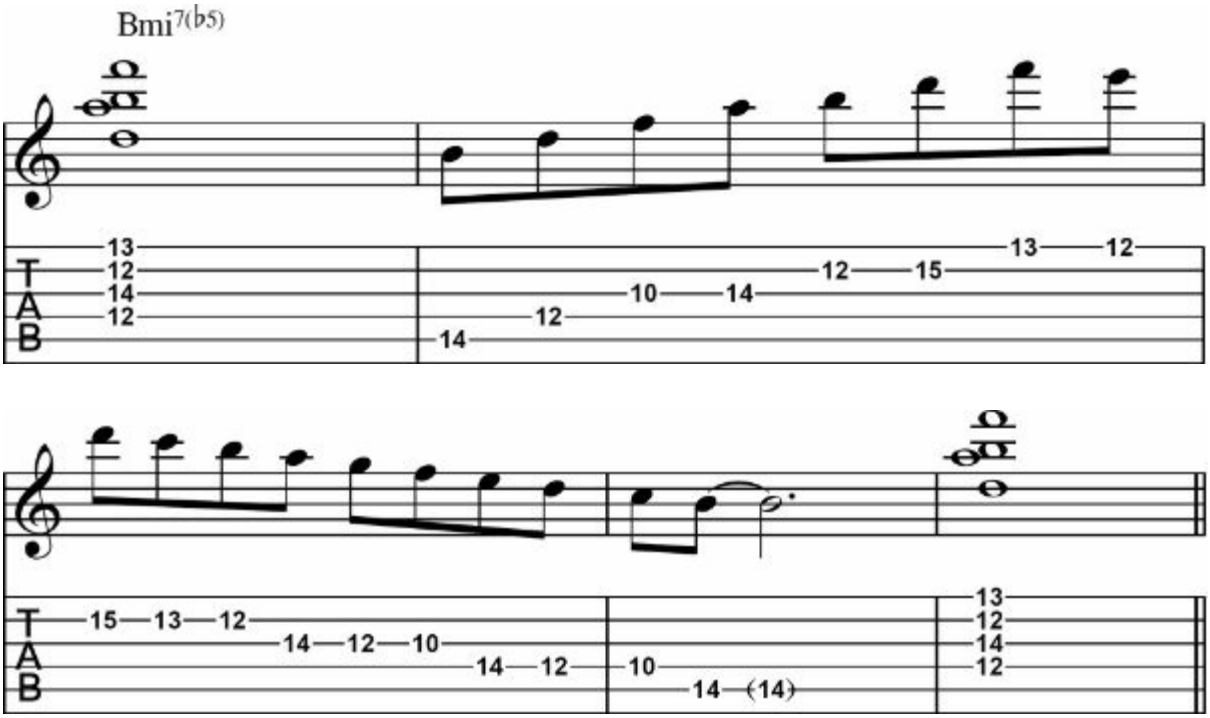




Arpeggio & Scale Studies: Bmi7(b5) & B Locrian

Pattern 1



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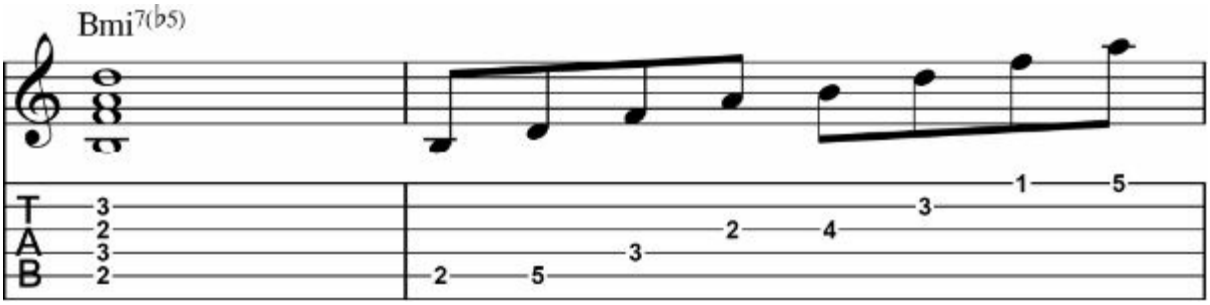

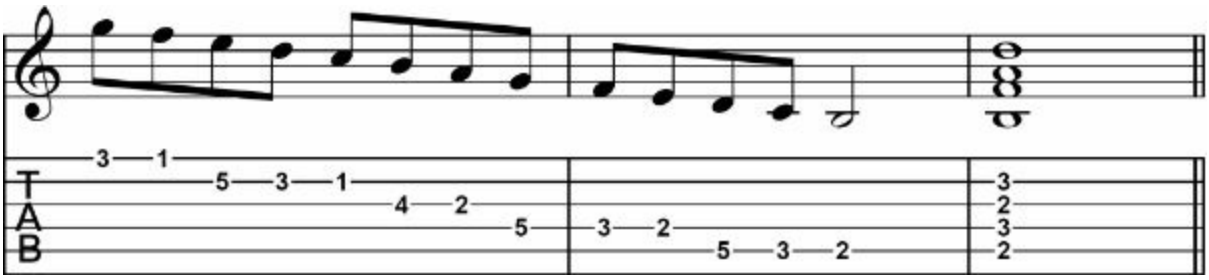

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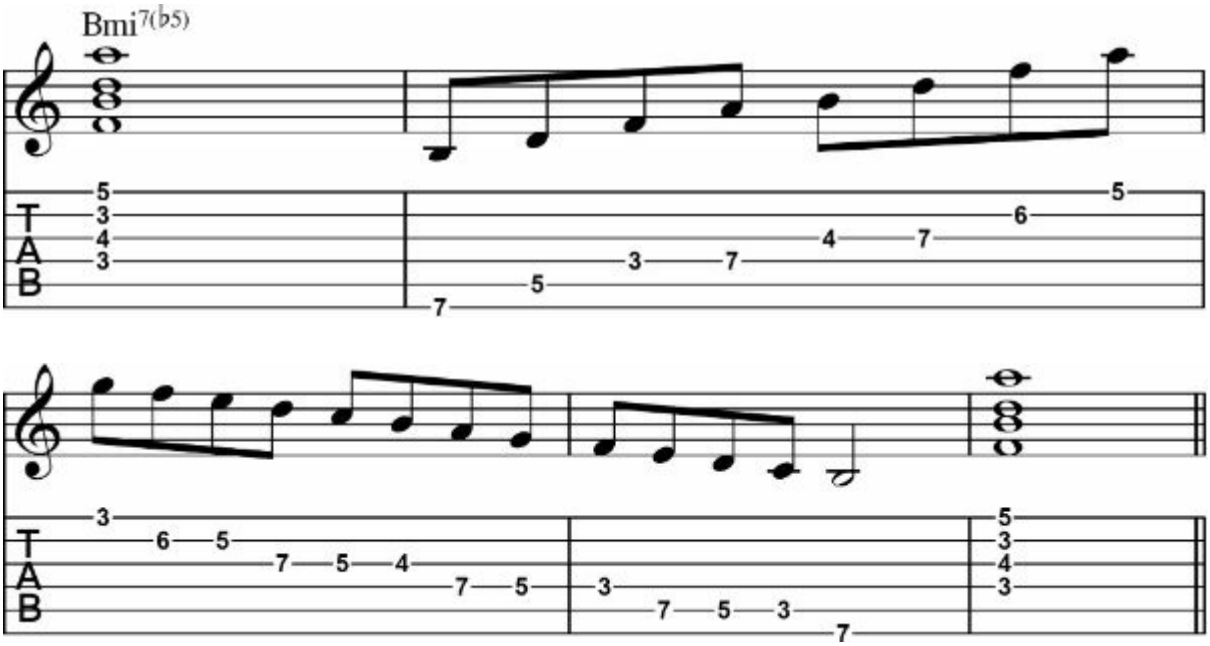

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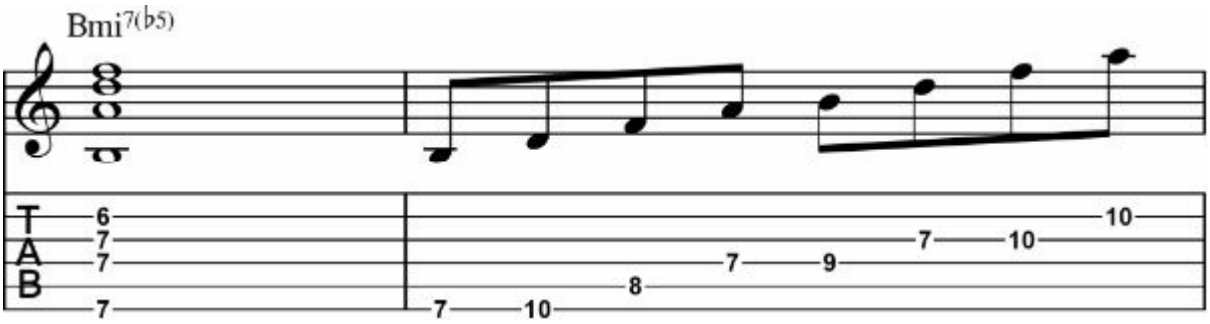
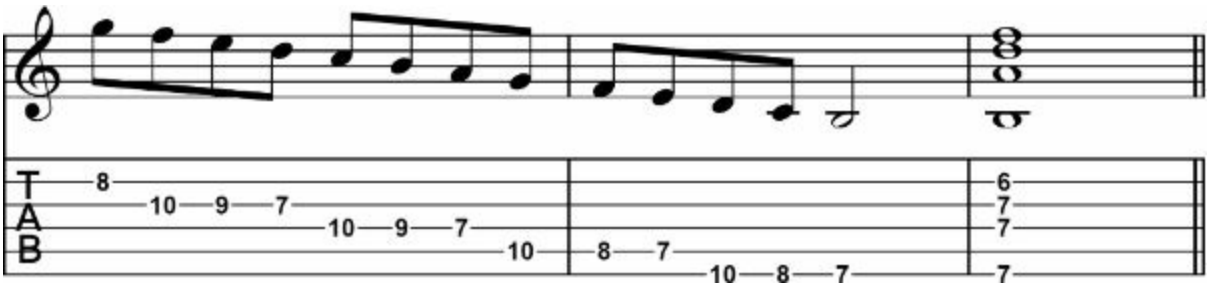
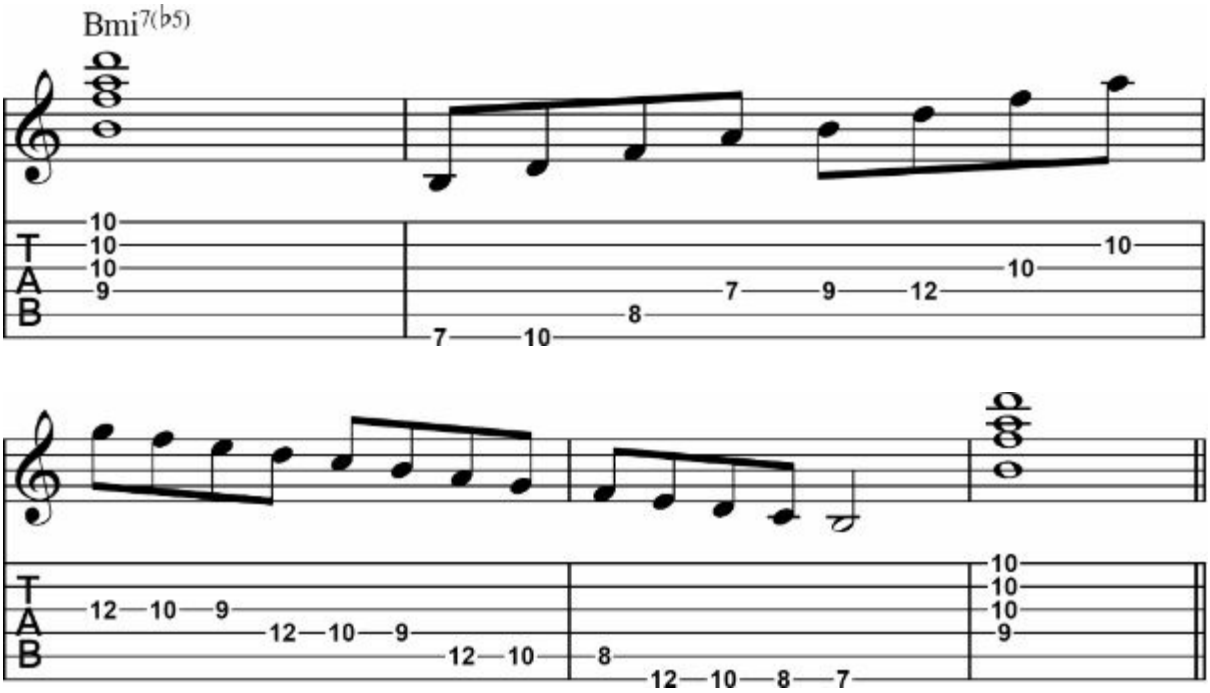




Pattern 5



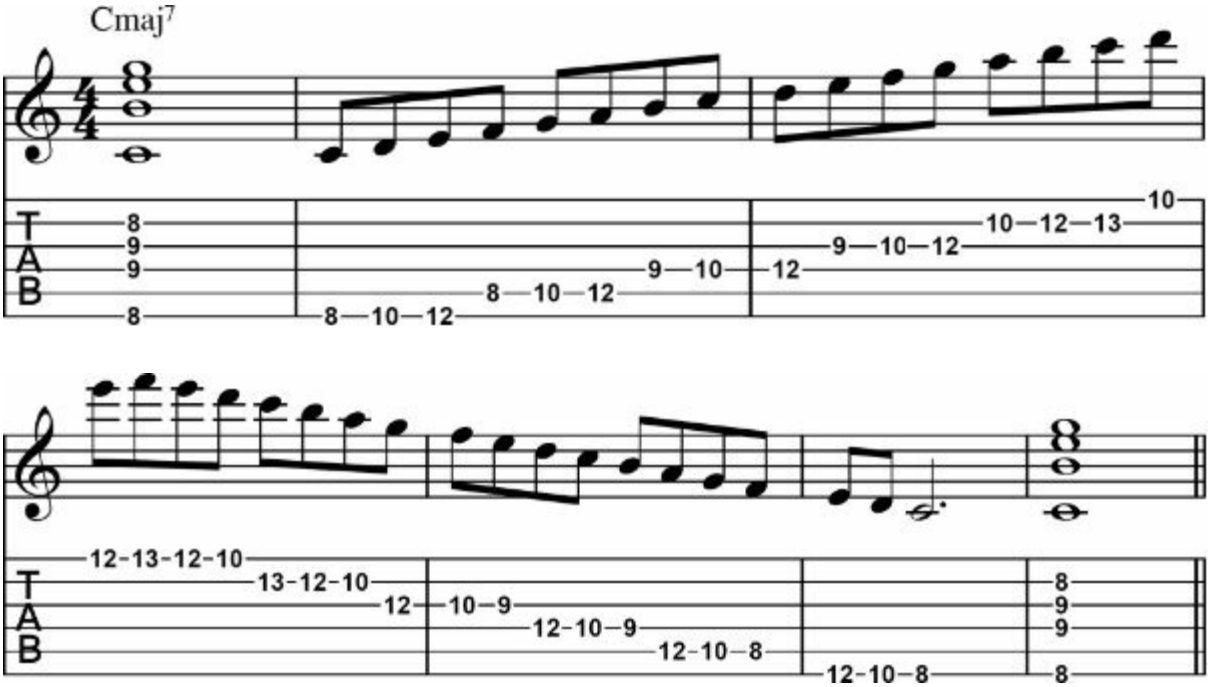
Chapter 2

Sequence Pattern Playing

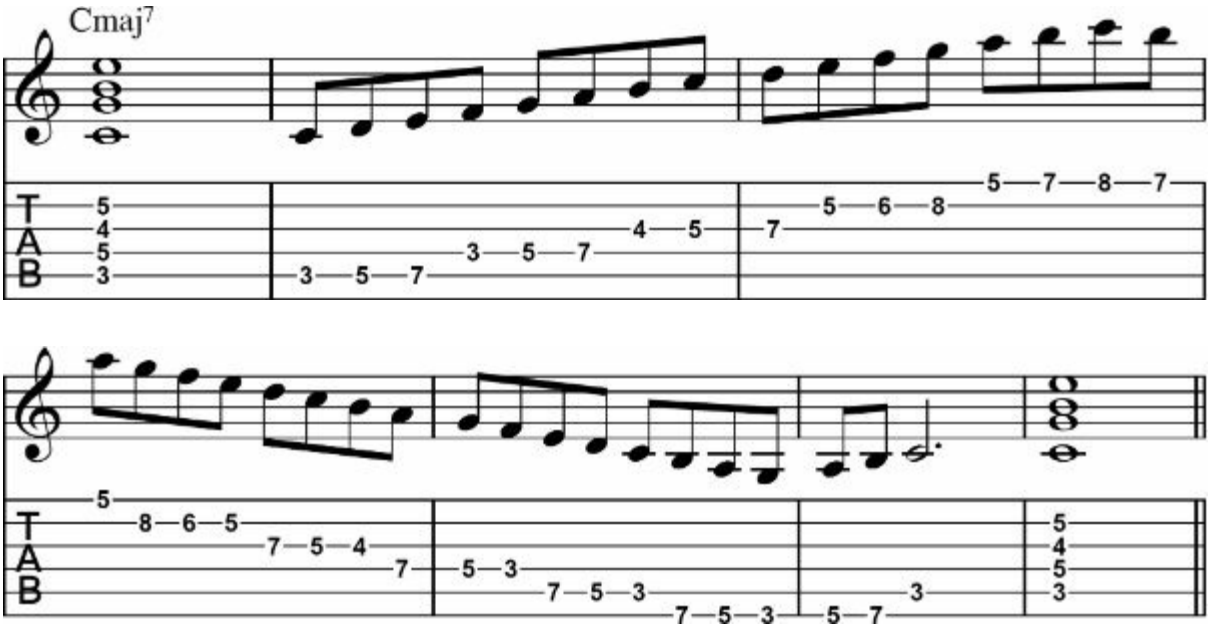
In this chapter, we are going to study 3-note-per-scale patterns and interval sequence patterns. This practice really helps the fingering ability and fingerboard harmony. I just made the examples using major and pentatonic scales but you can apply this method to any scales and modes.

3-Note-Per-String: Major Scales from Each String

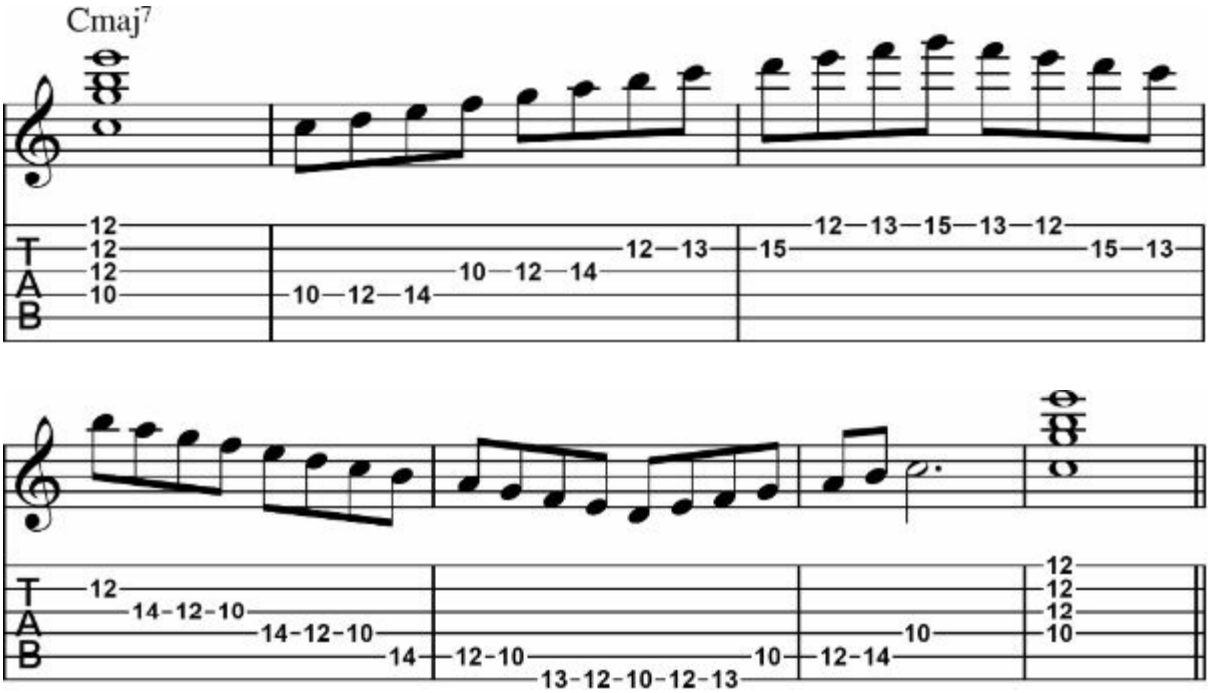
6th String Start



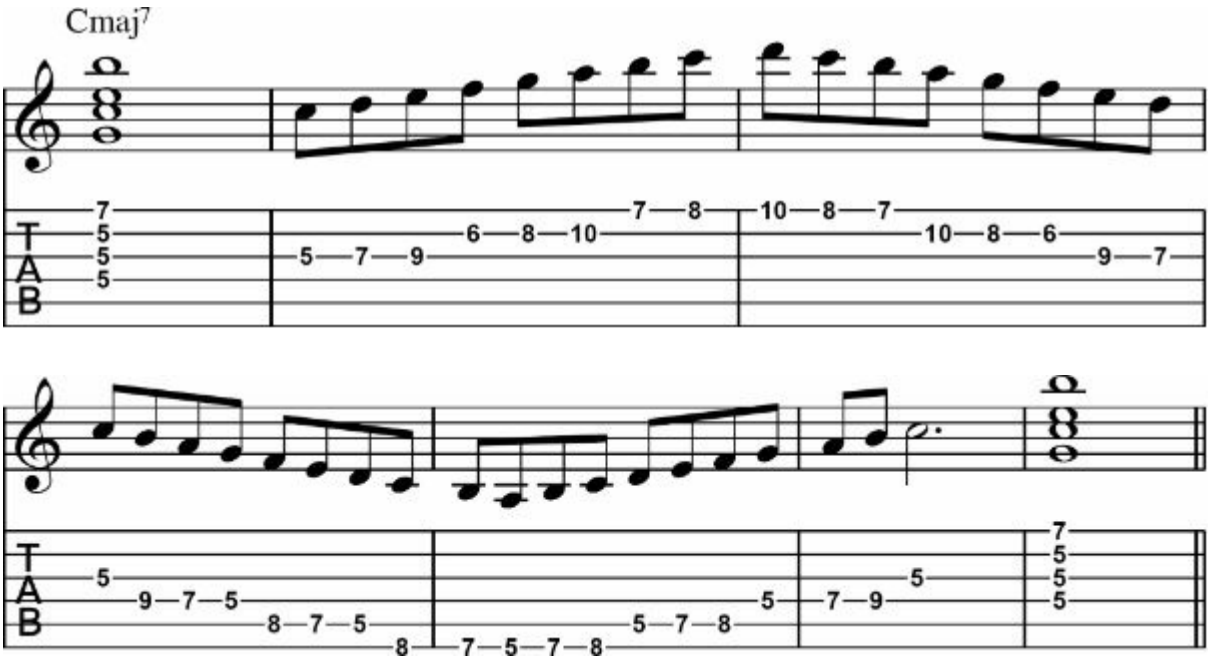
5th String Start



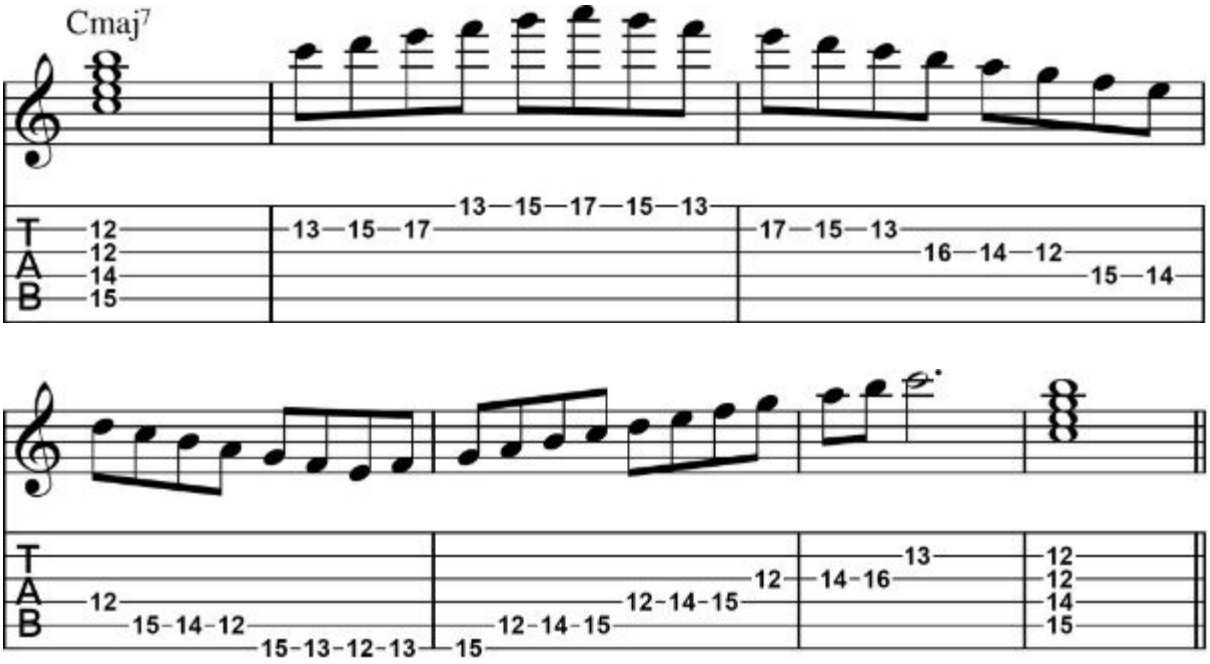
4th String Start



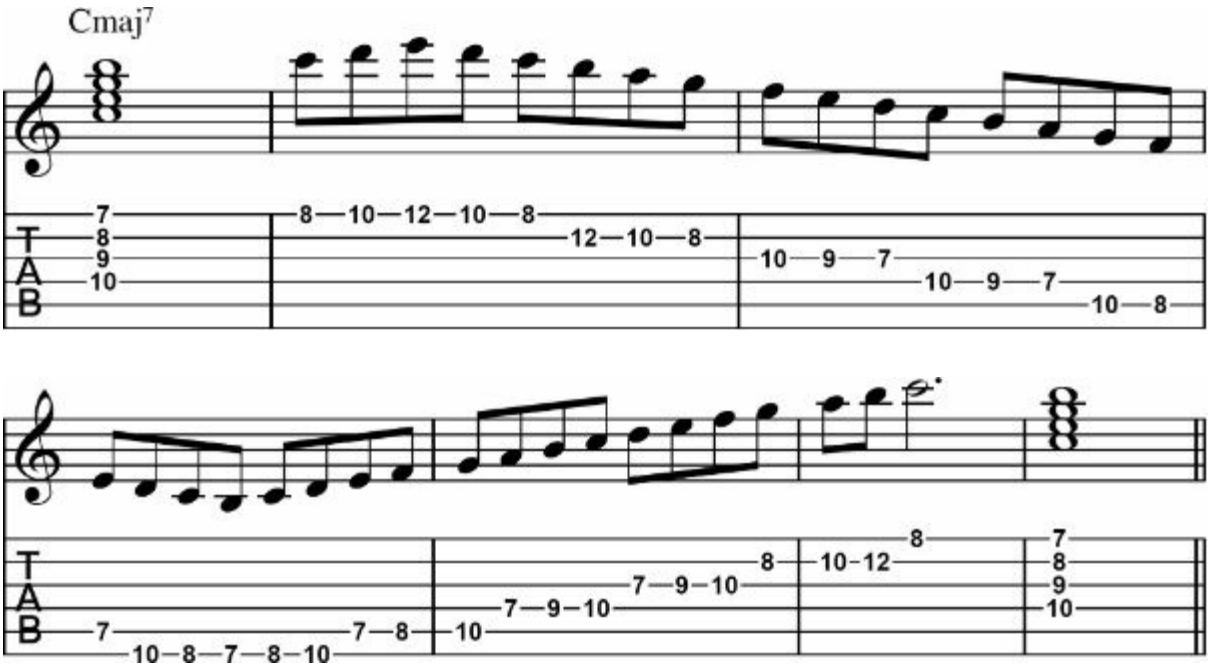
3rd String Start



2nd String Start

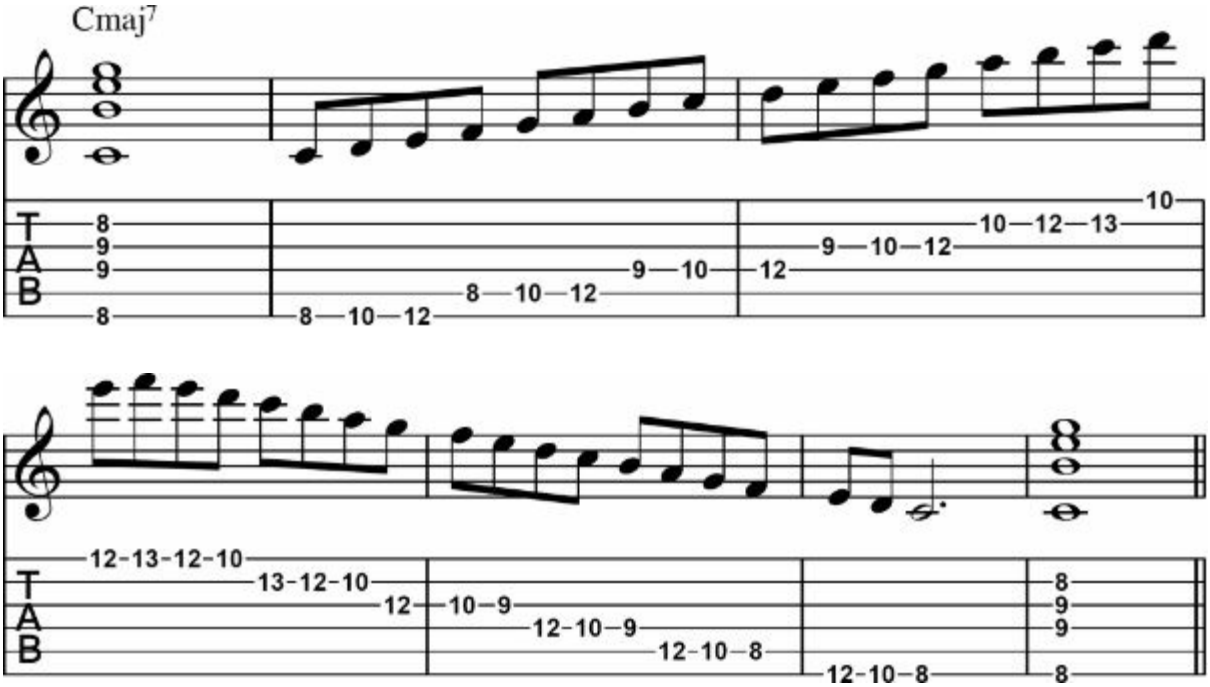


1st String Start

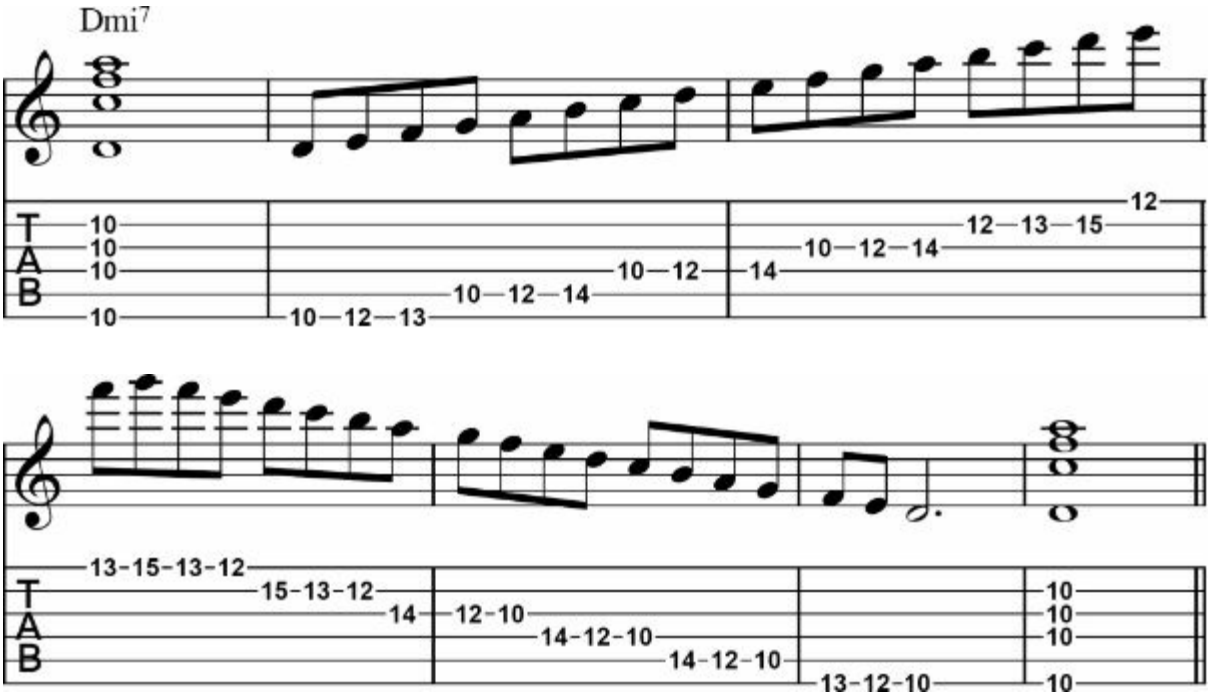


3-Note-Per-String: Every Mode from 6th String

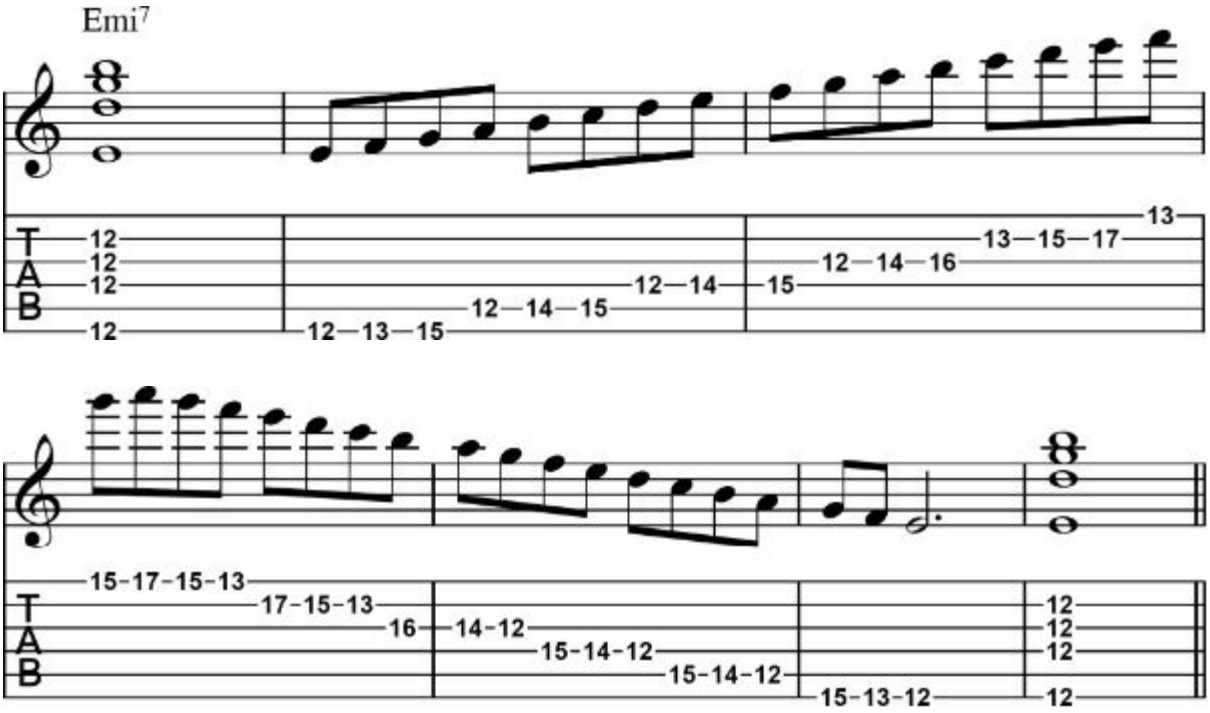
C Ionian



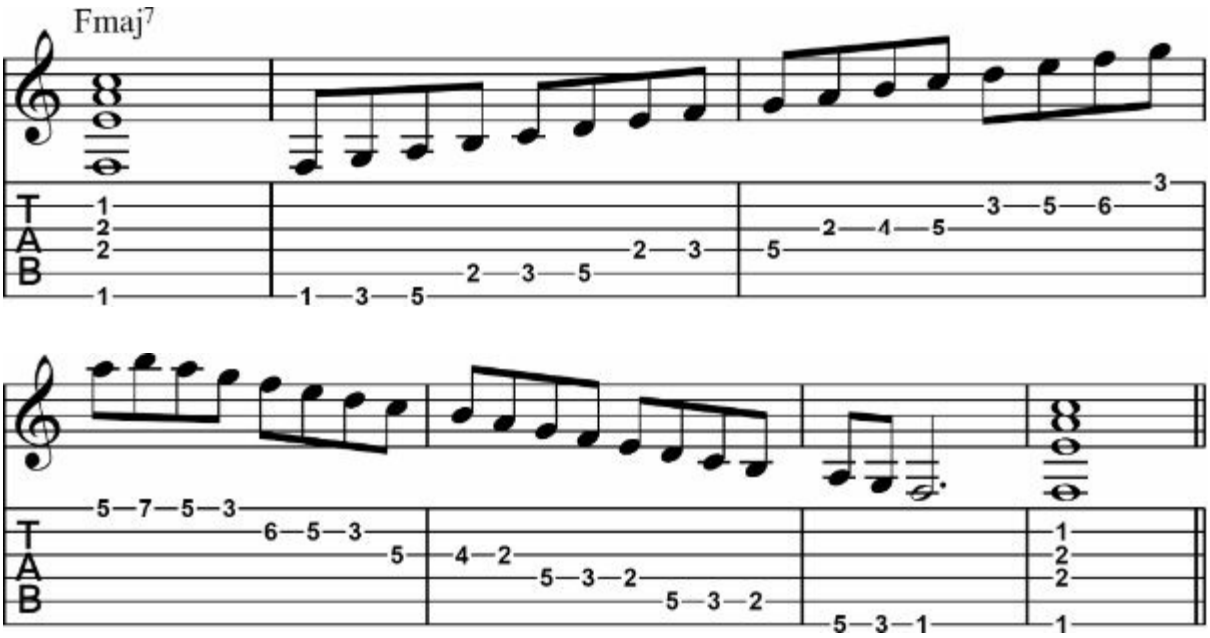
D Dorian



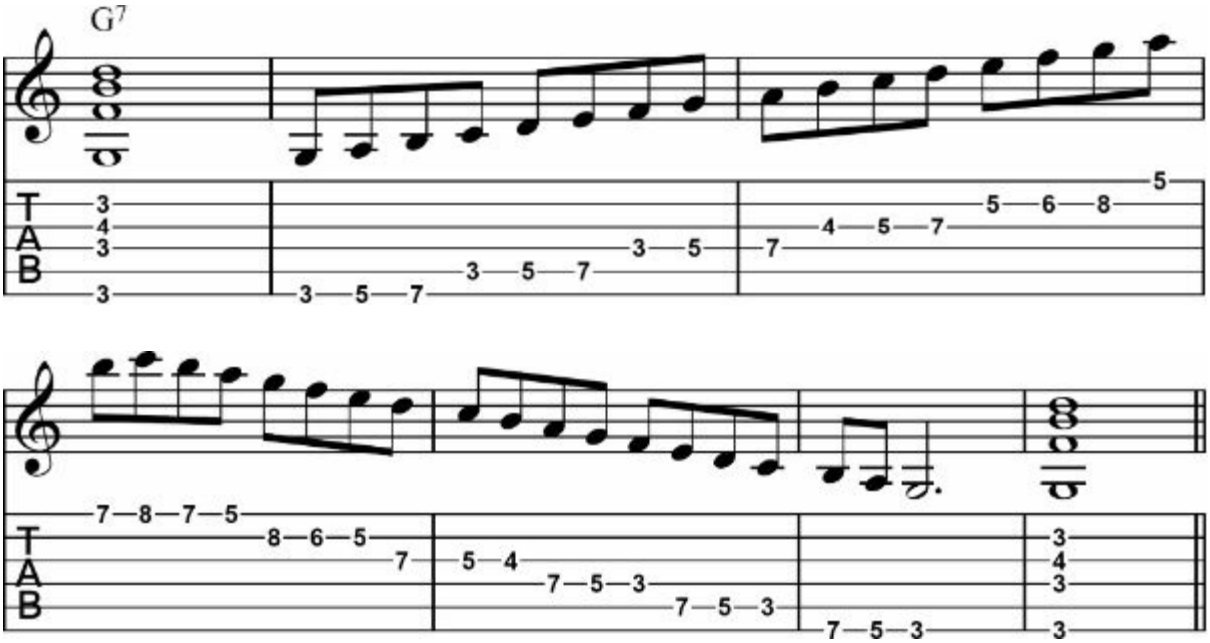
E Phrygian



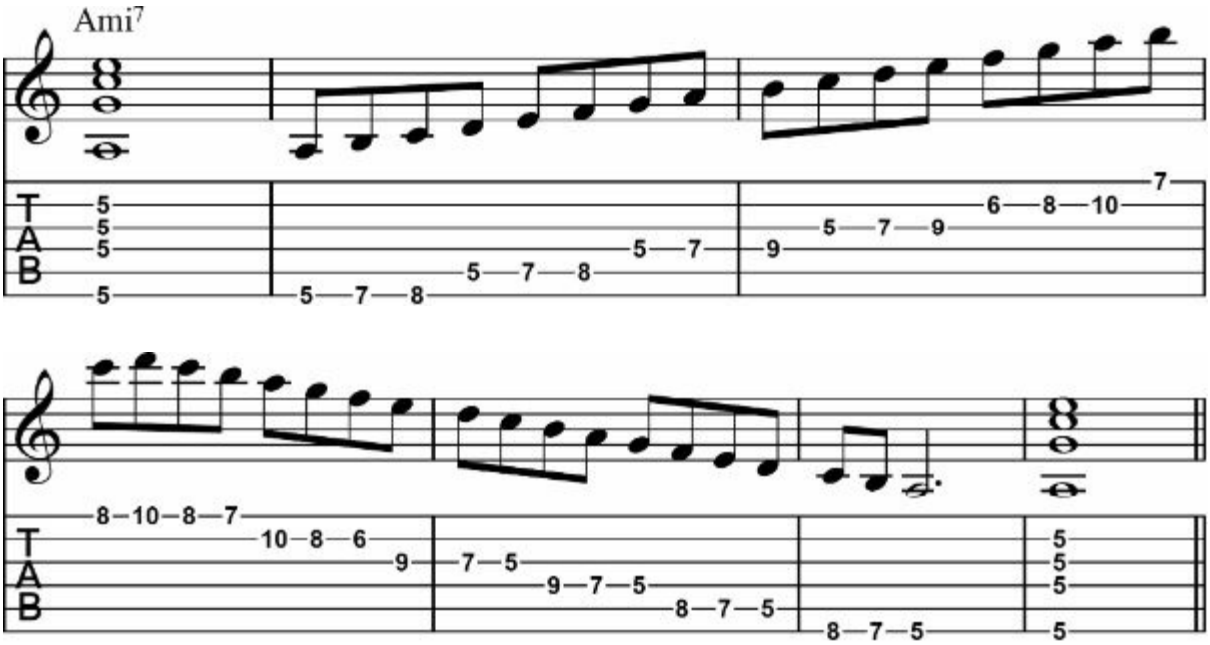
F Lydian



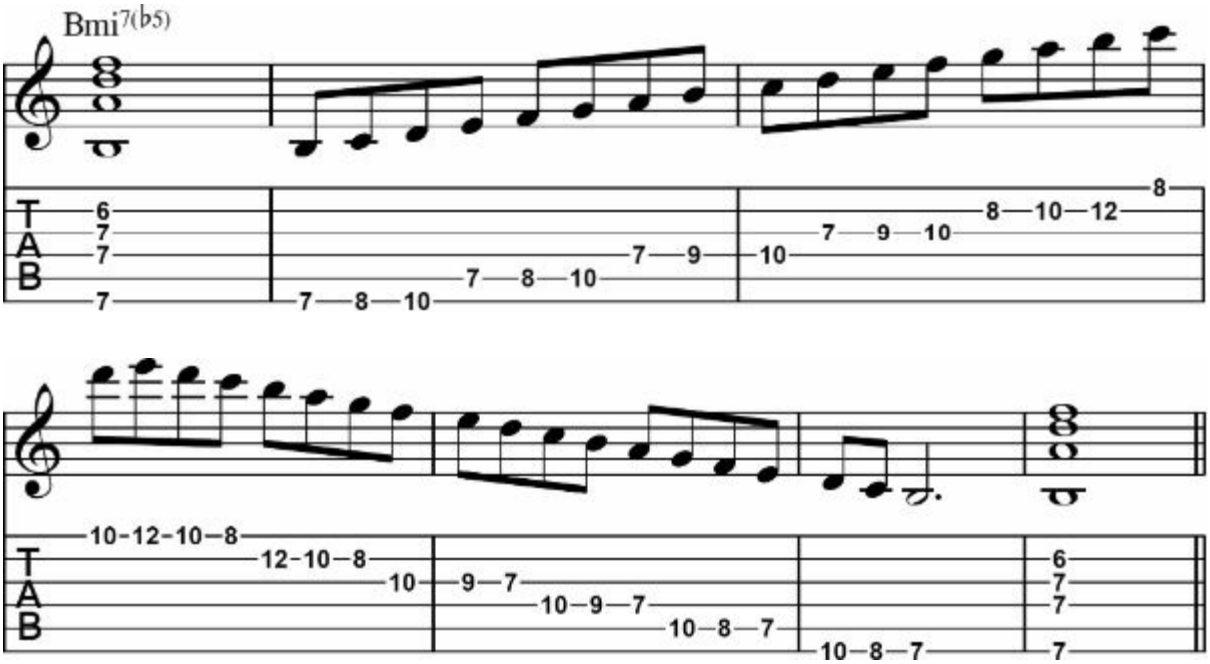
G Mixolydian



A Aeolian

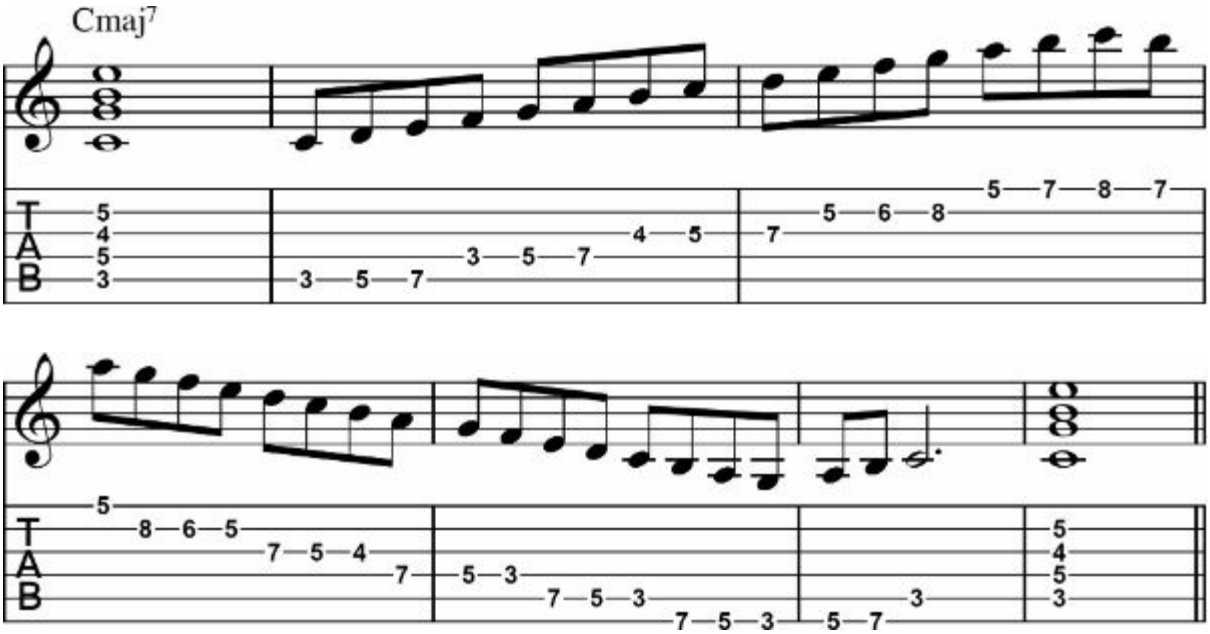


B Locrian

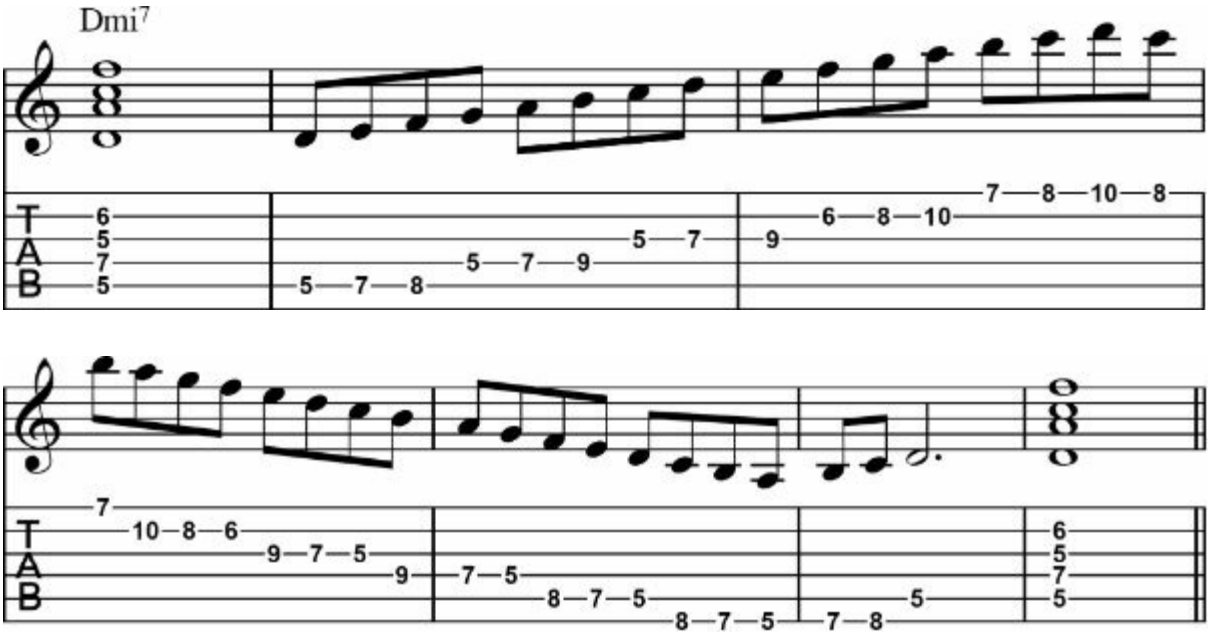


3-Note-Per-String: Every Mode from 5th String

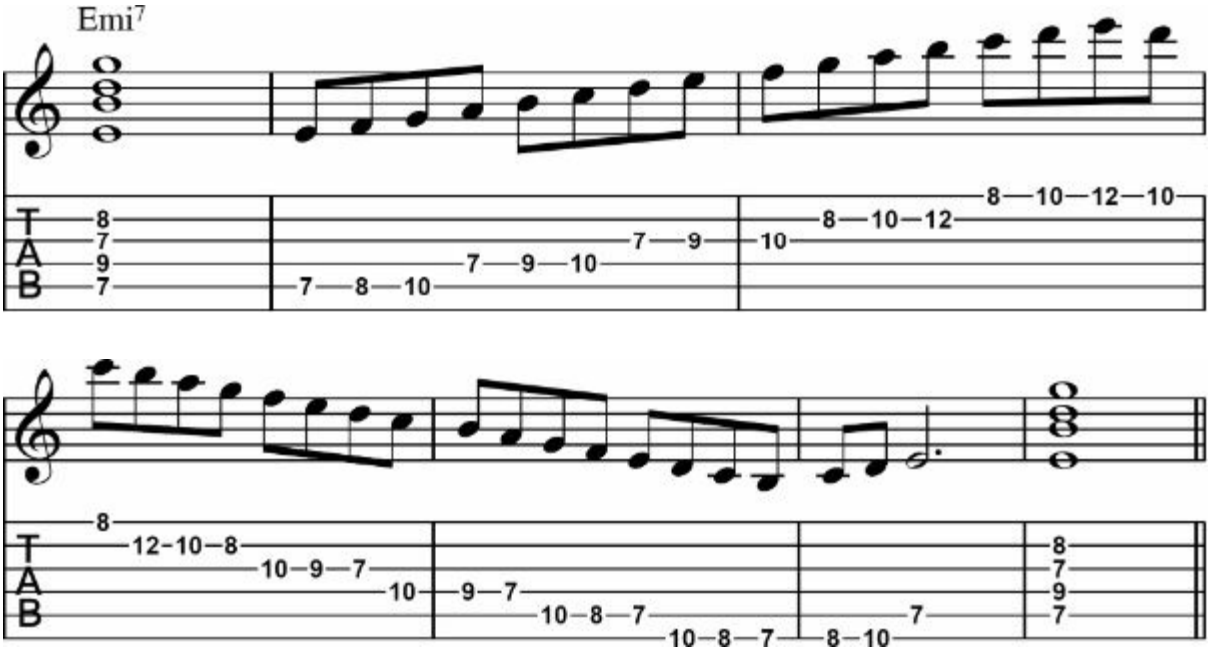
C Ionian



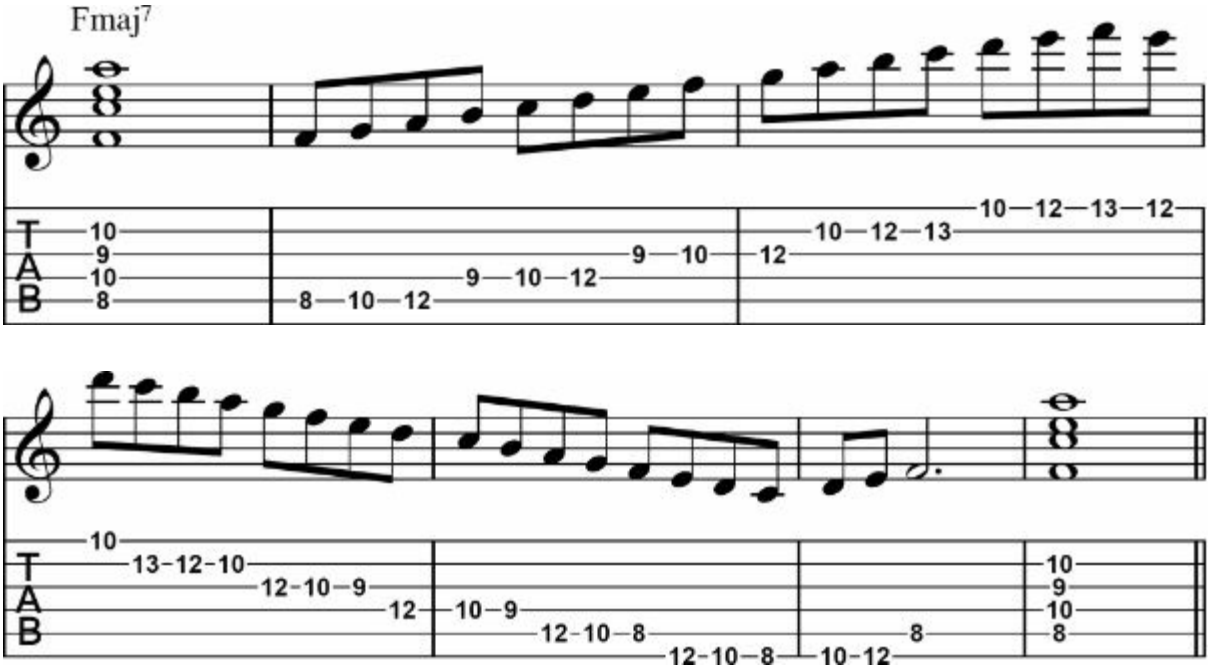
D Dorian



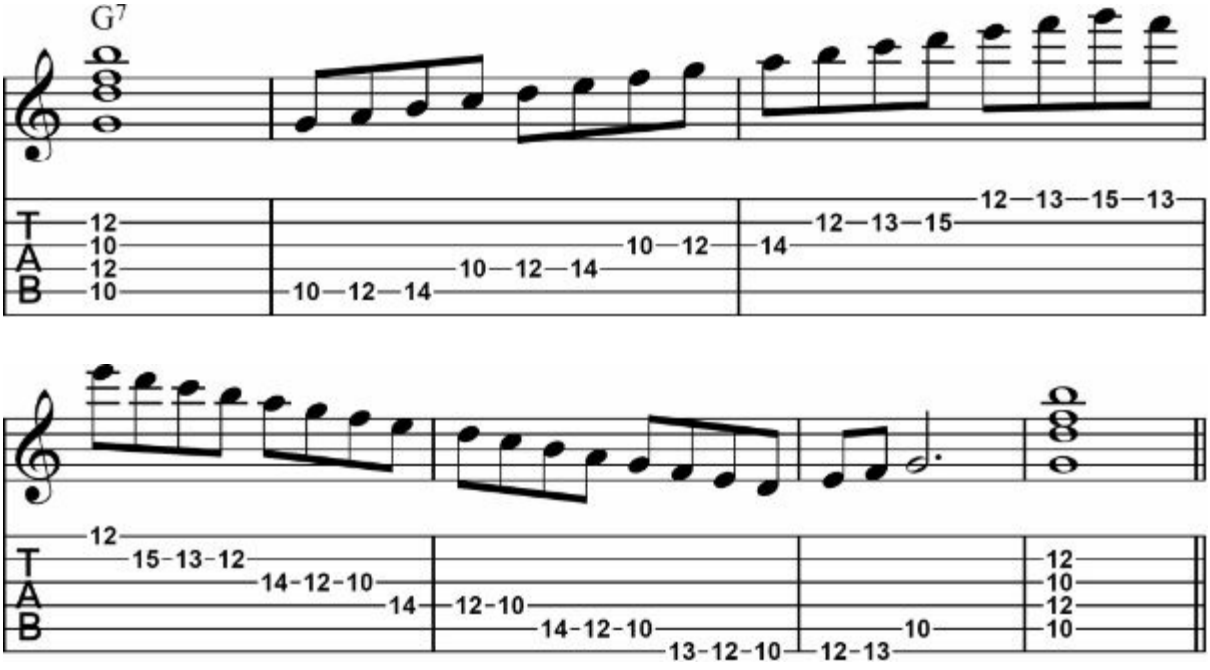
E Phrygian



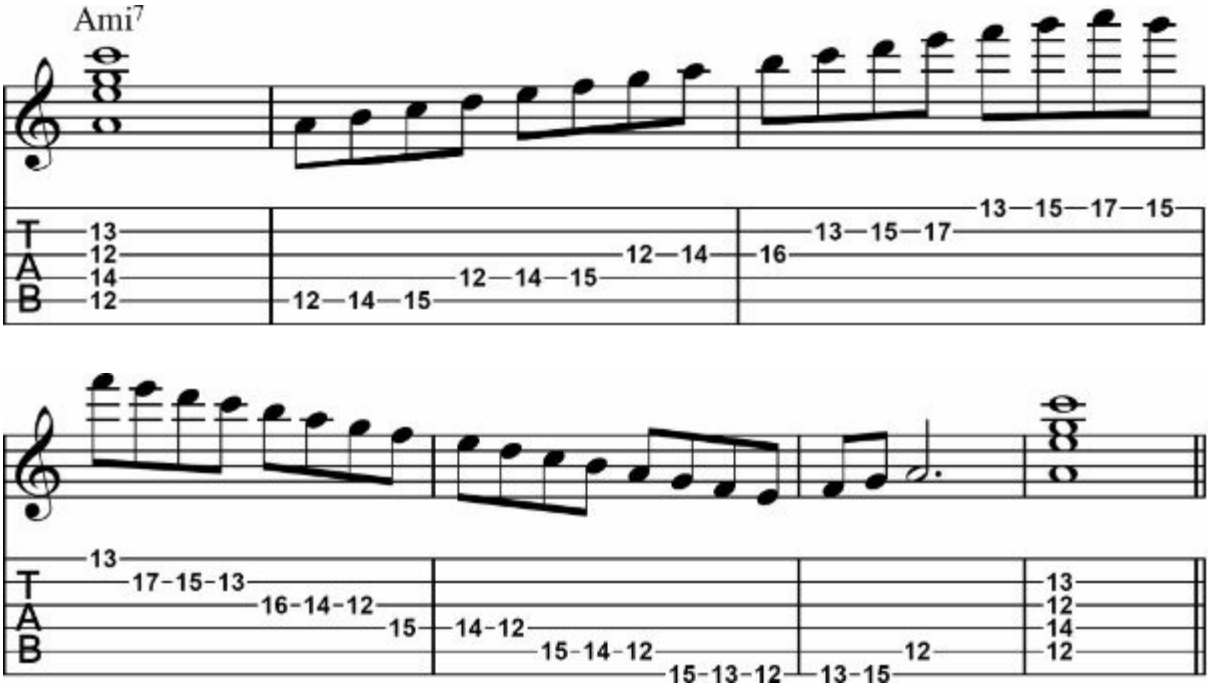
F Lydian



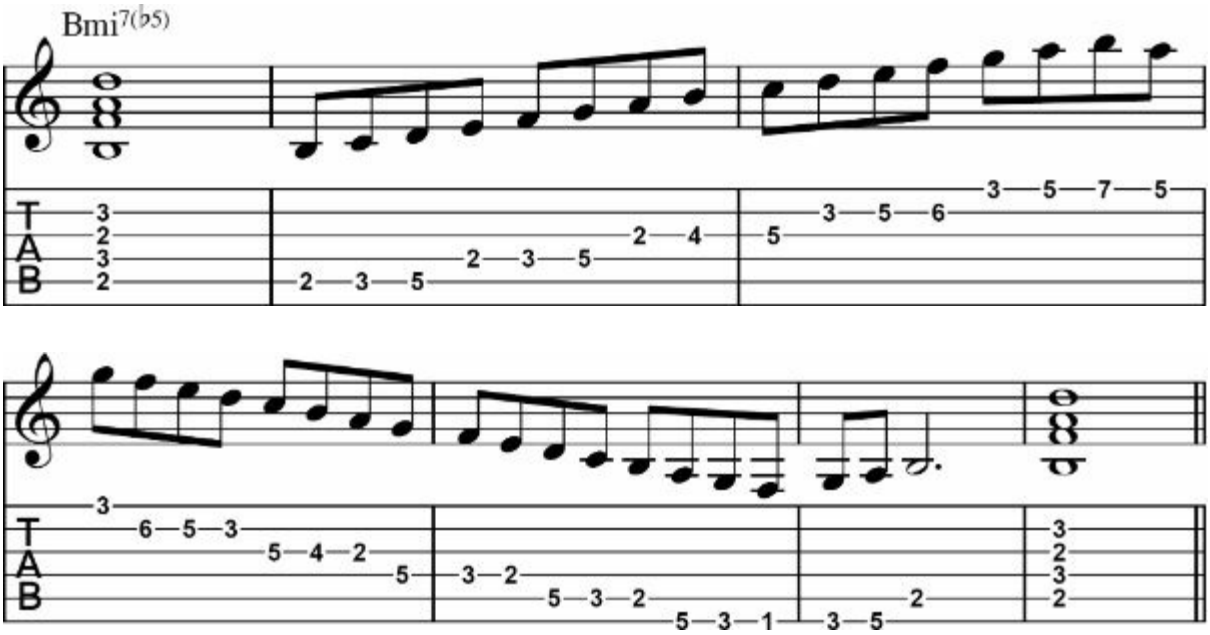
G Mixolydian



A Aeolian



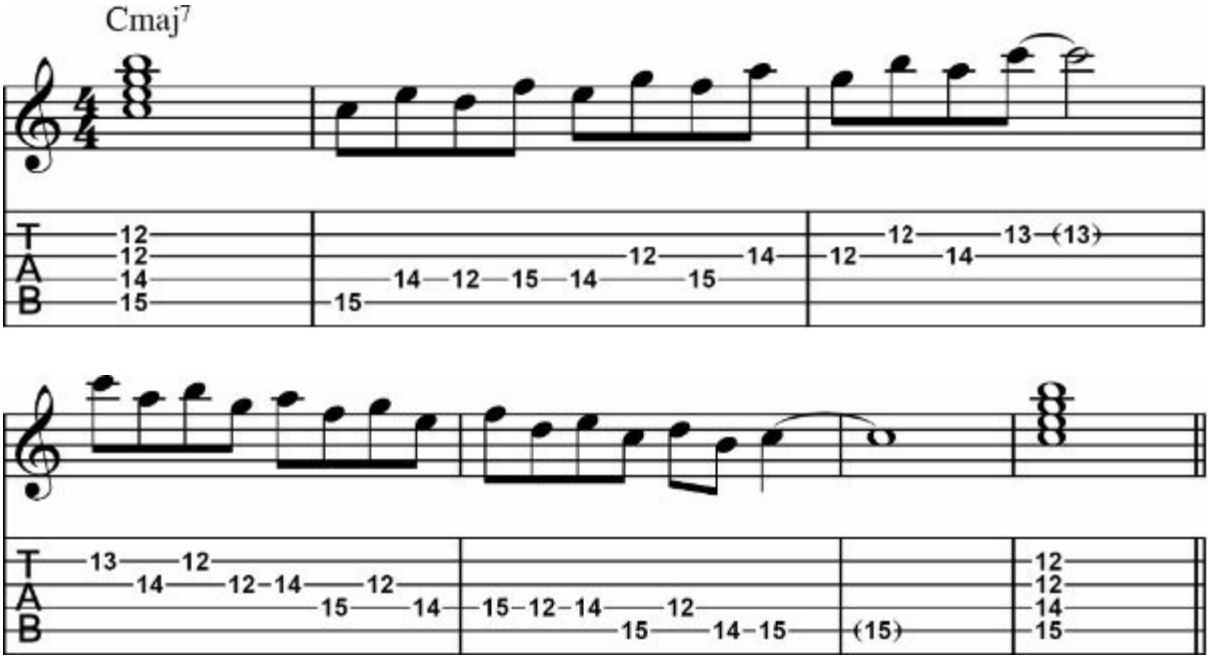
B Locrian



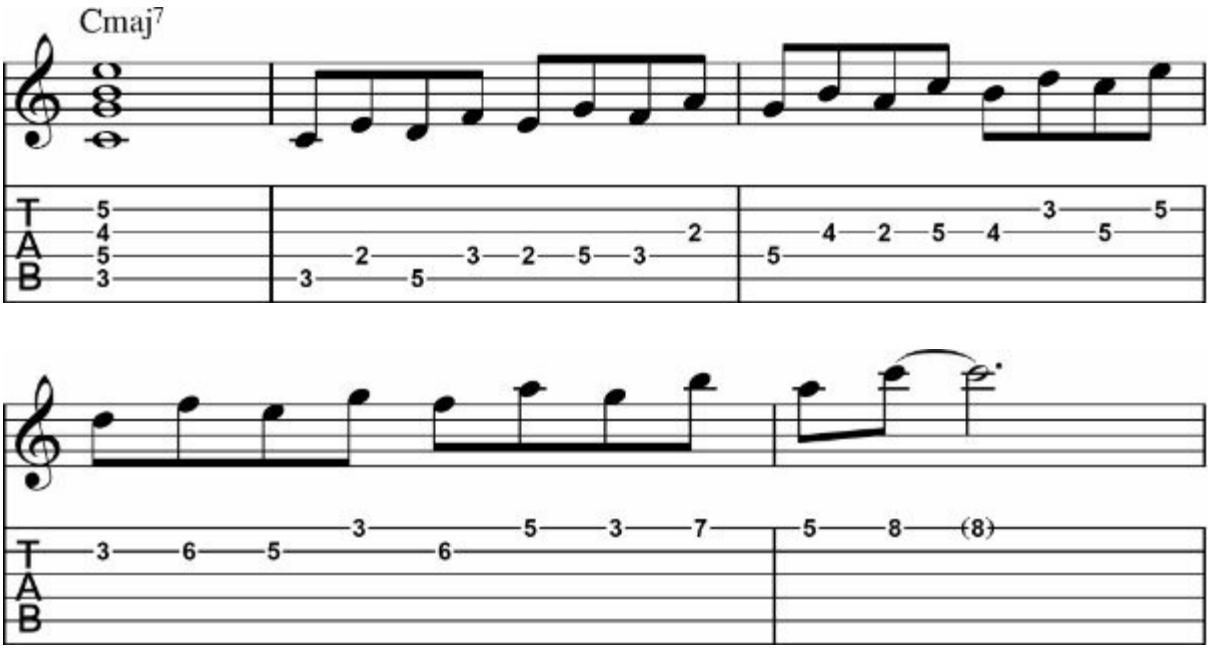
Interval Sequence Playing

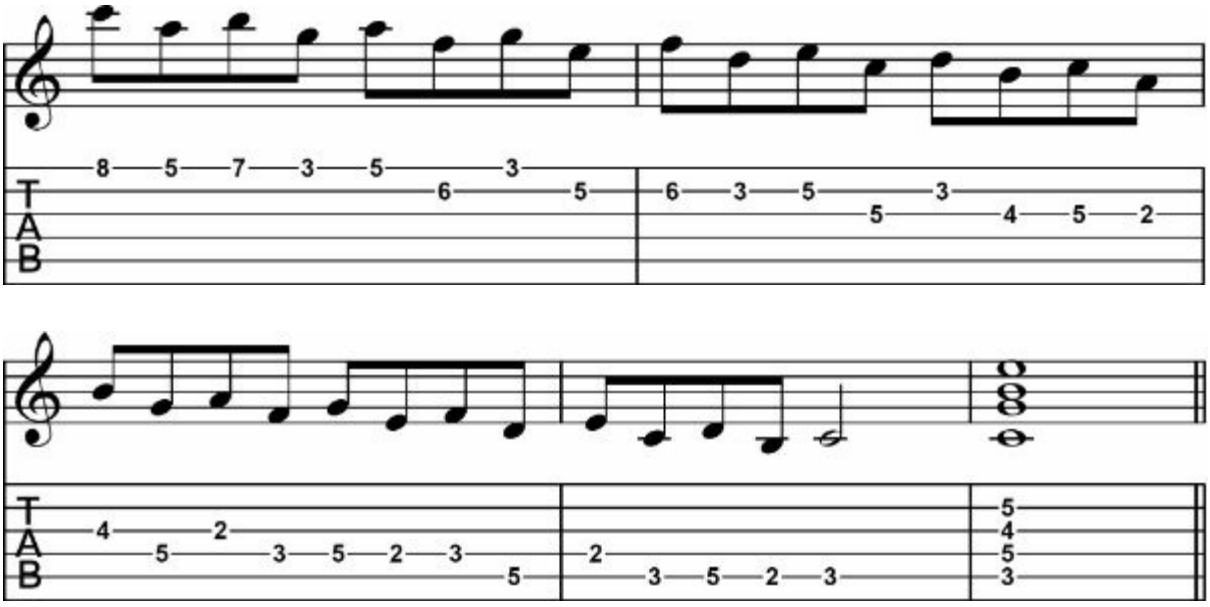
Major Scales on 3rd Interval Sequence

Pattern 1

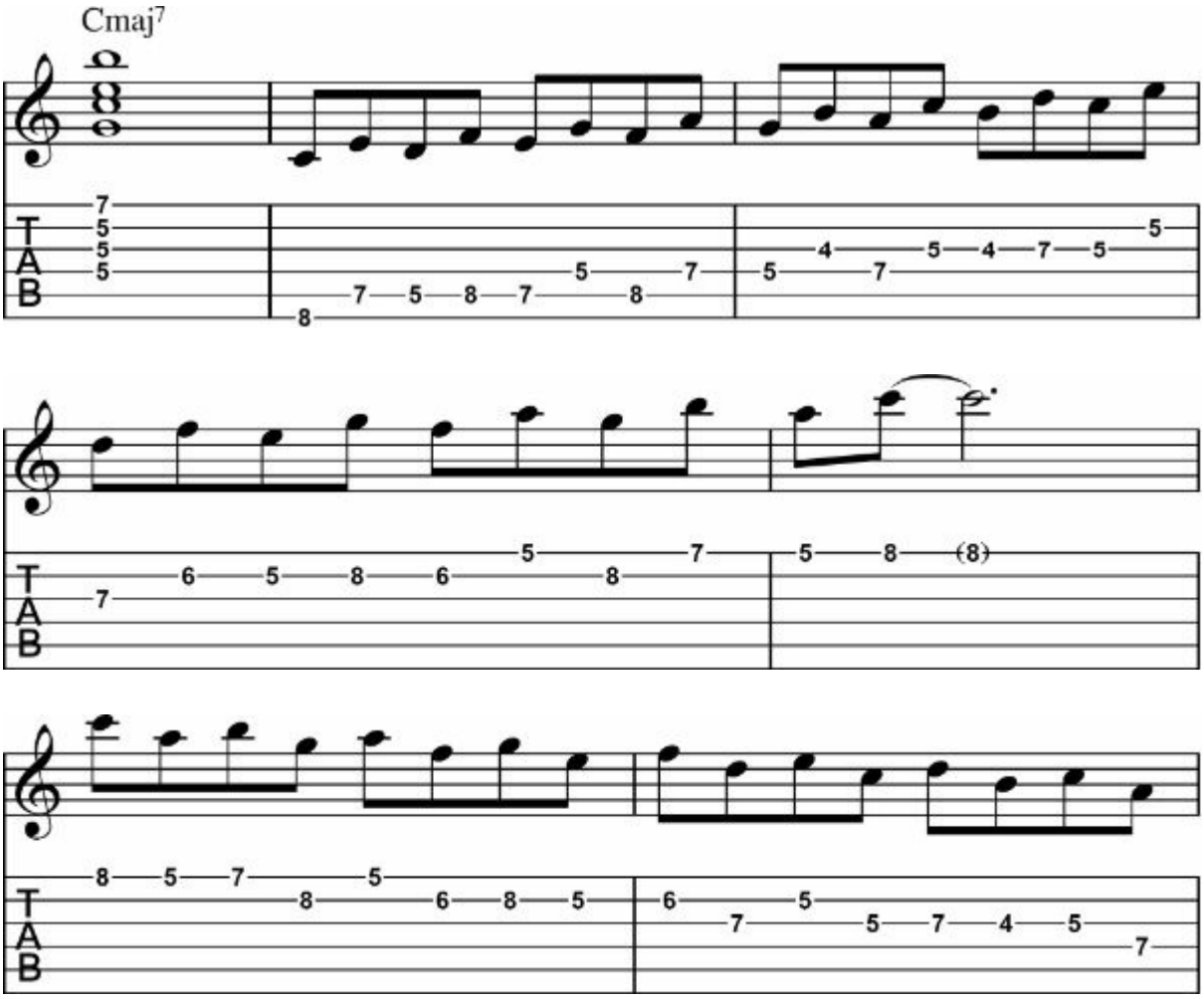


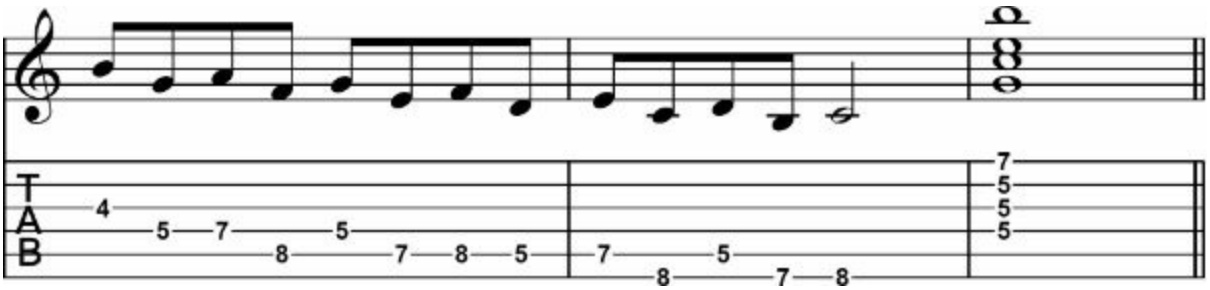
Pattern 2



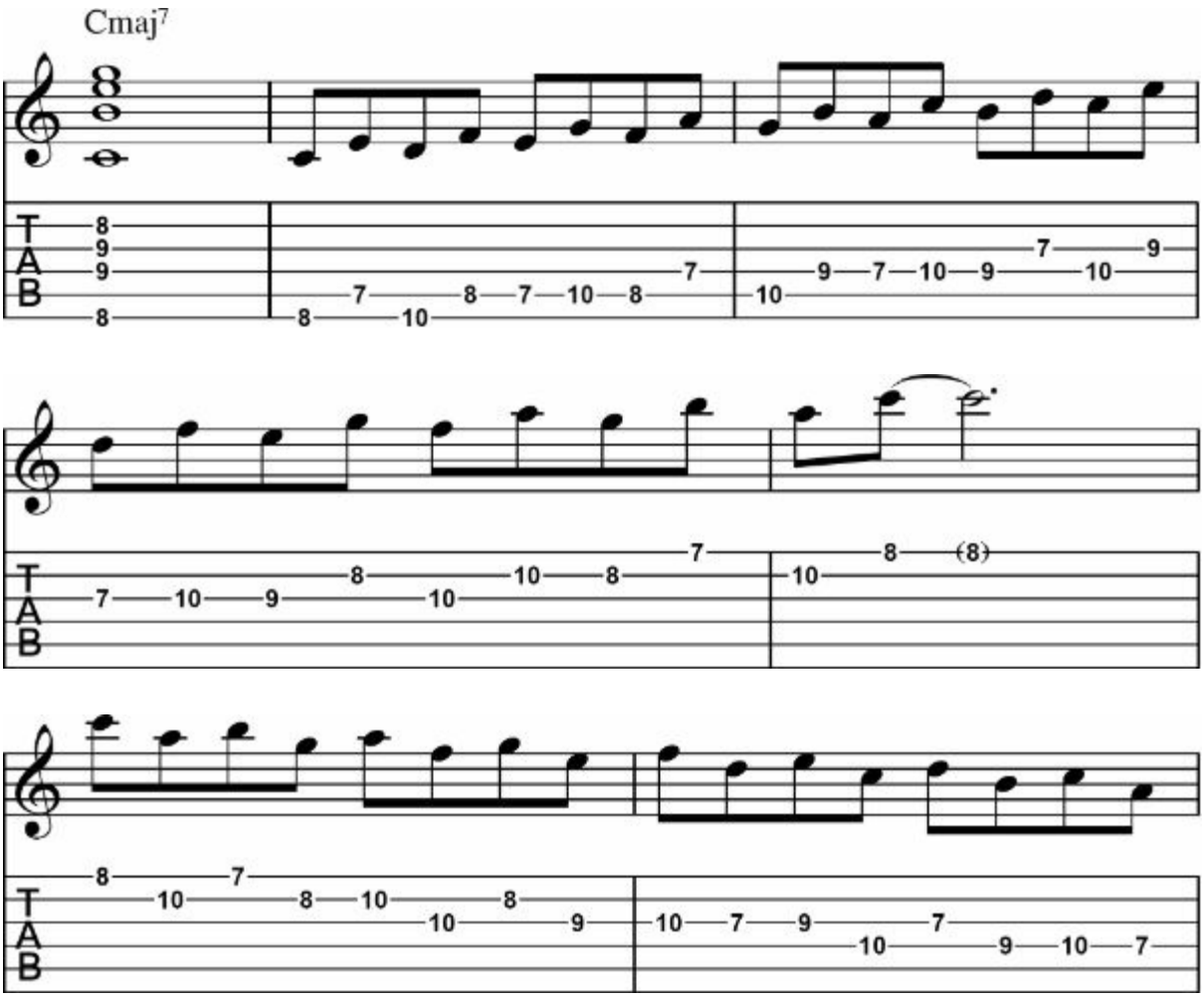


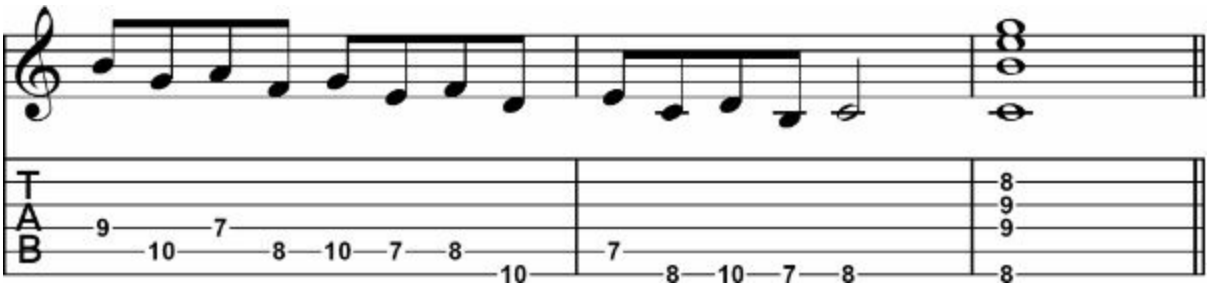
Pattern 3



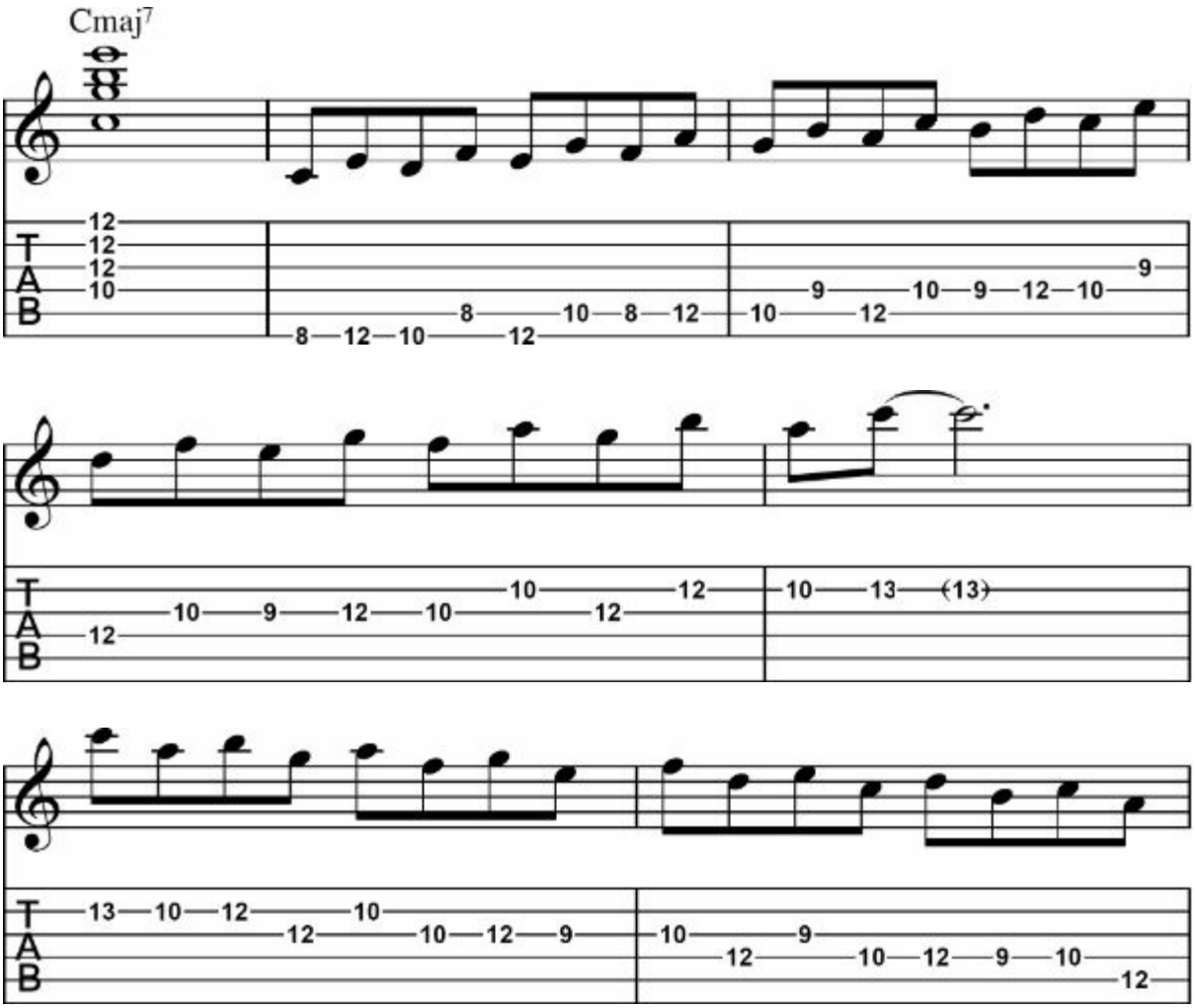


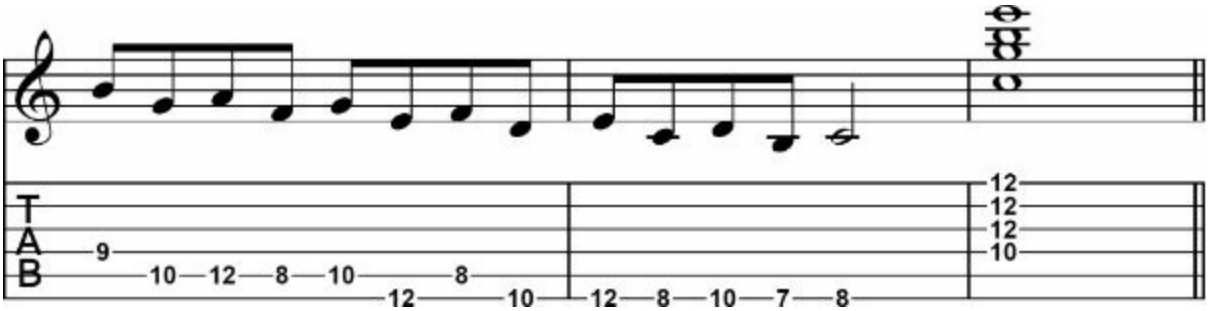
Pattern 4




T
A
B
9 7
10 8 10 7 8
10
7
8 10 7 8
8
9
9
8

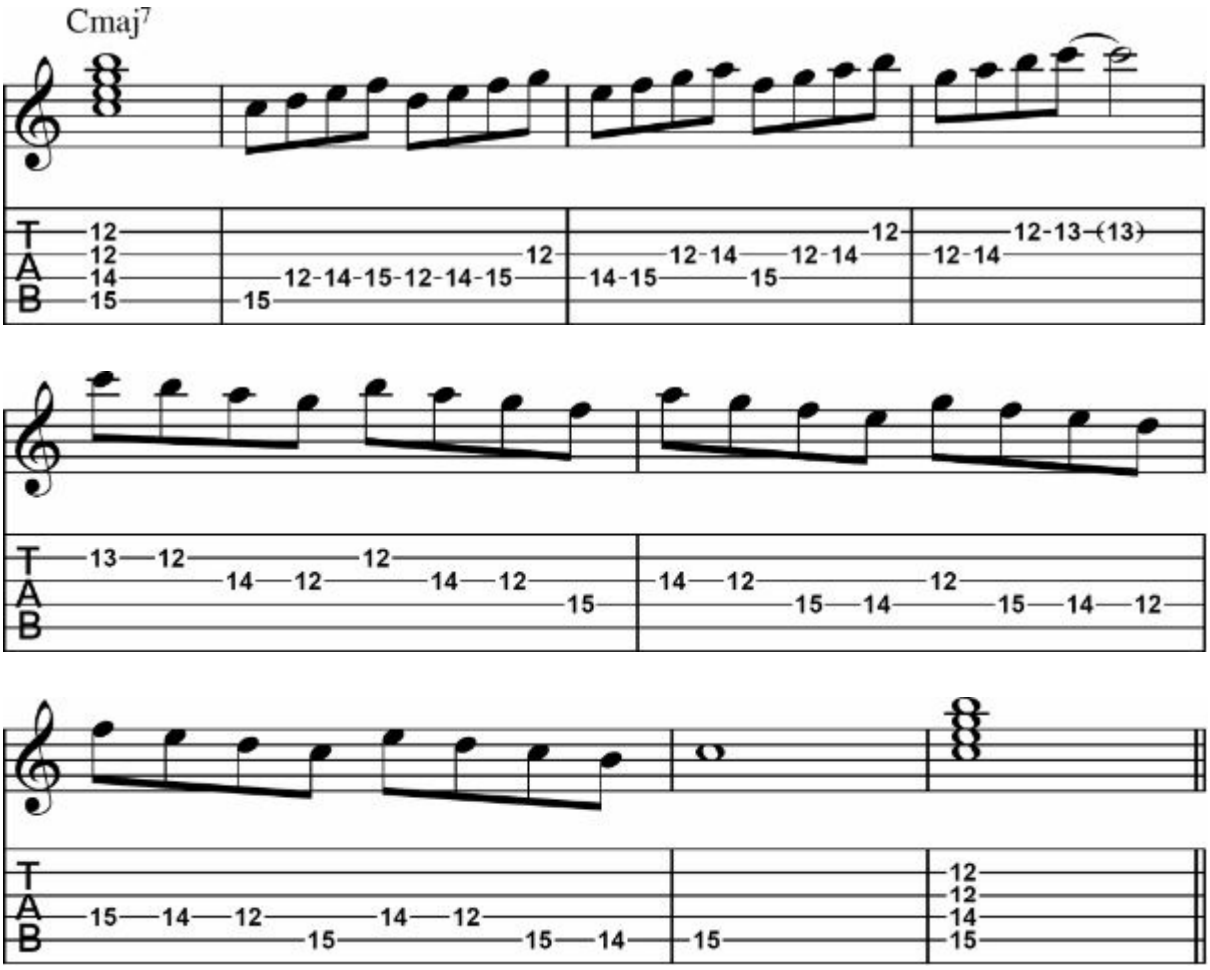
Pattern 5


Cmaj7
T
A
B
12
12
12
10
8 12 10 8 10 8 12
12
10 9 12 10 9 12 10
9
12 10 9 12 10 12
12
10 13 (13)
13 10 12 10
12 10 12 9
10 9
12 10 12 9 10
12



Major Scale Sequences on Every 4 Notes

Pattern 1



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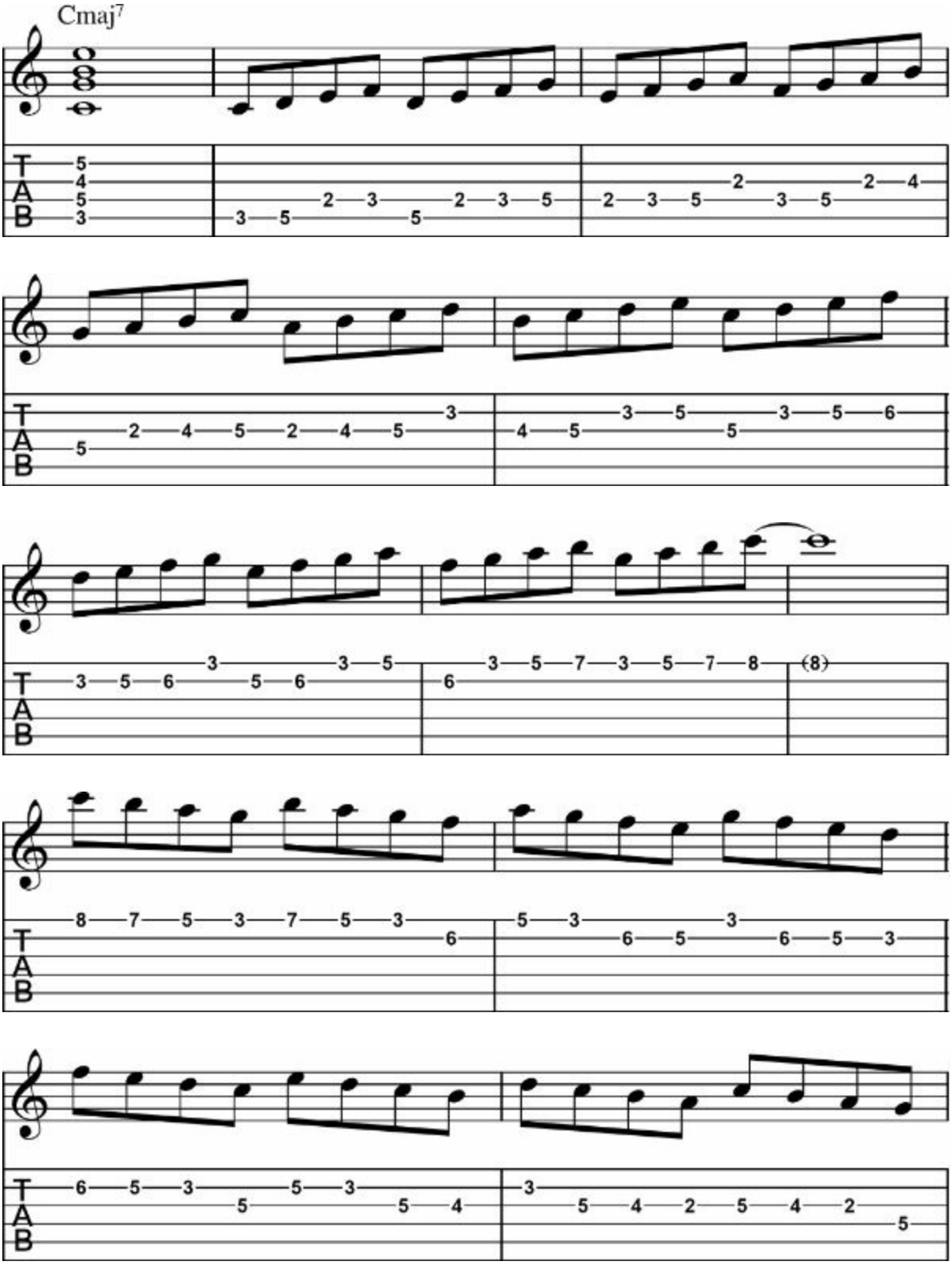
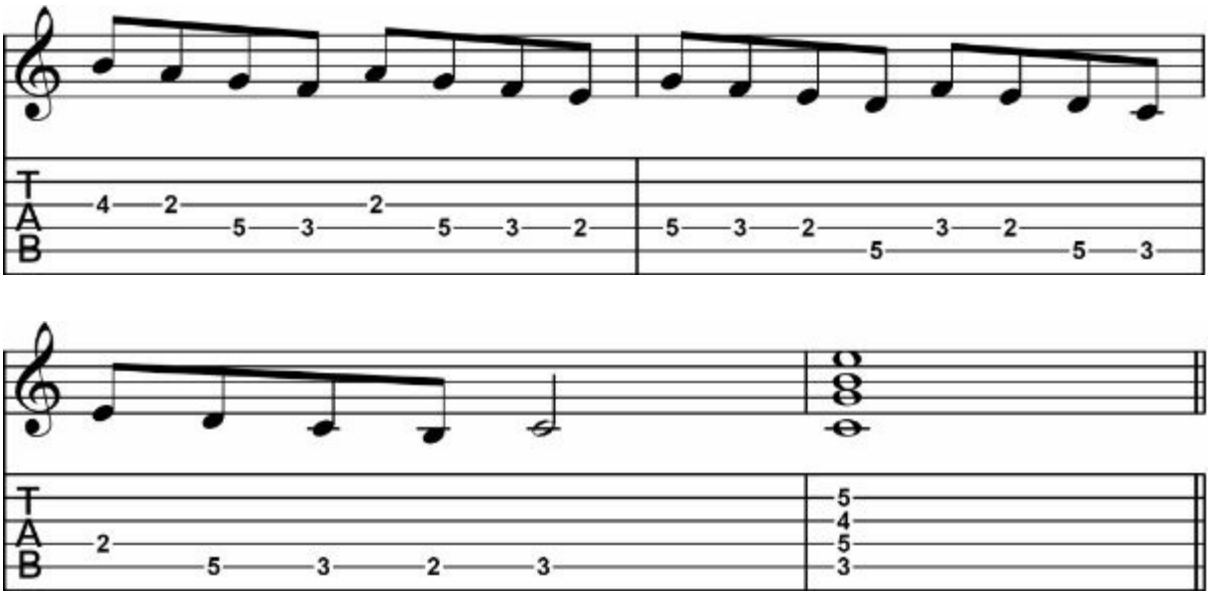

Cmaj7
T
A
B



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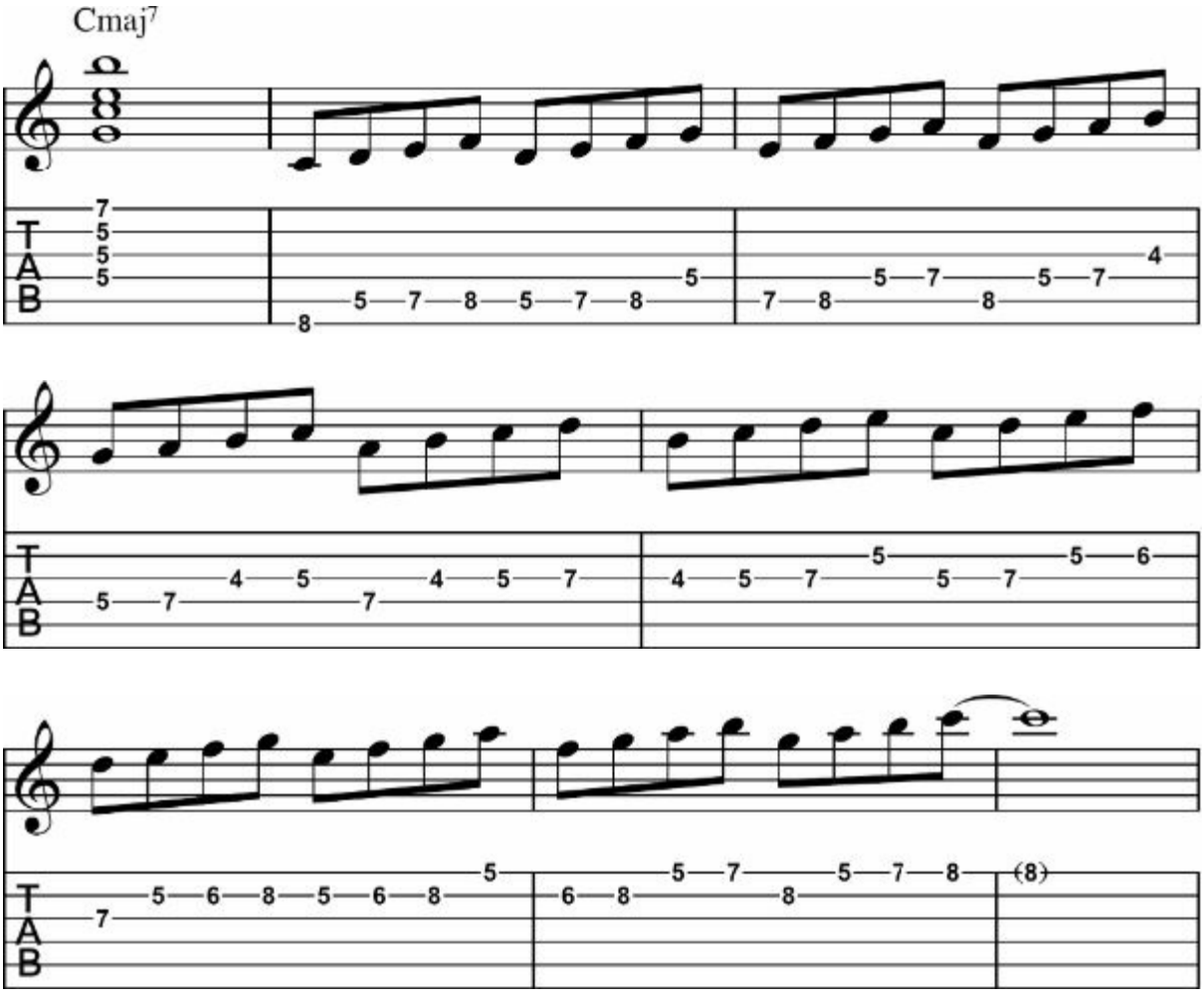
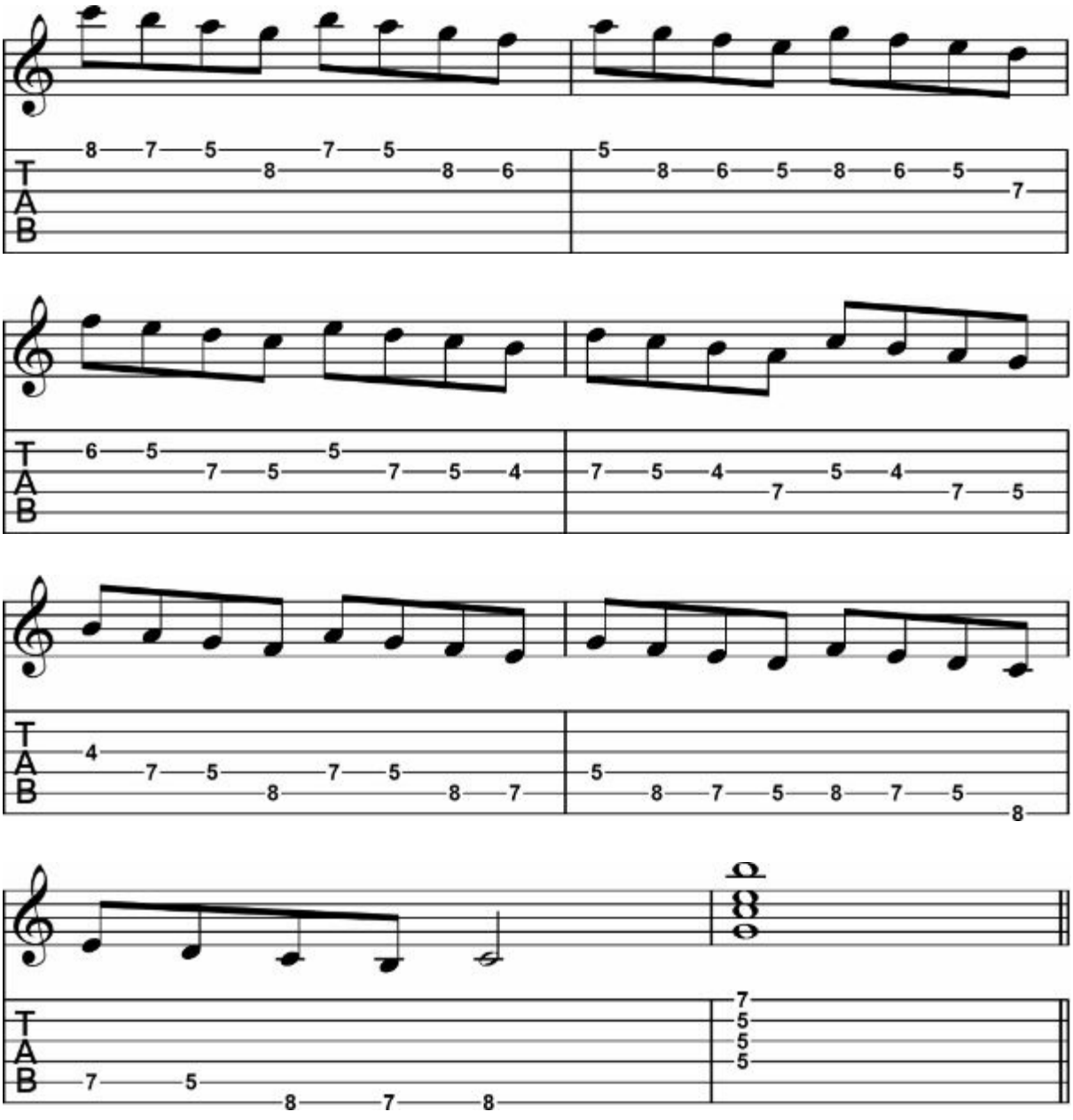
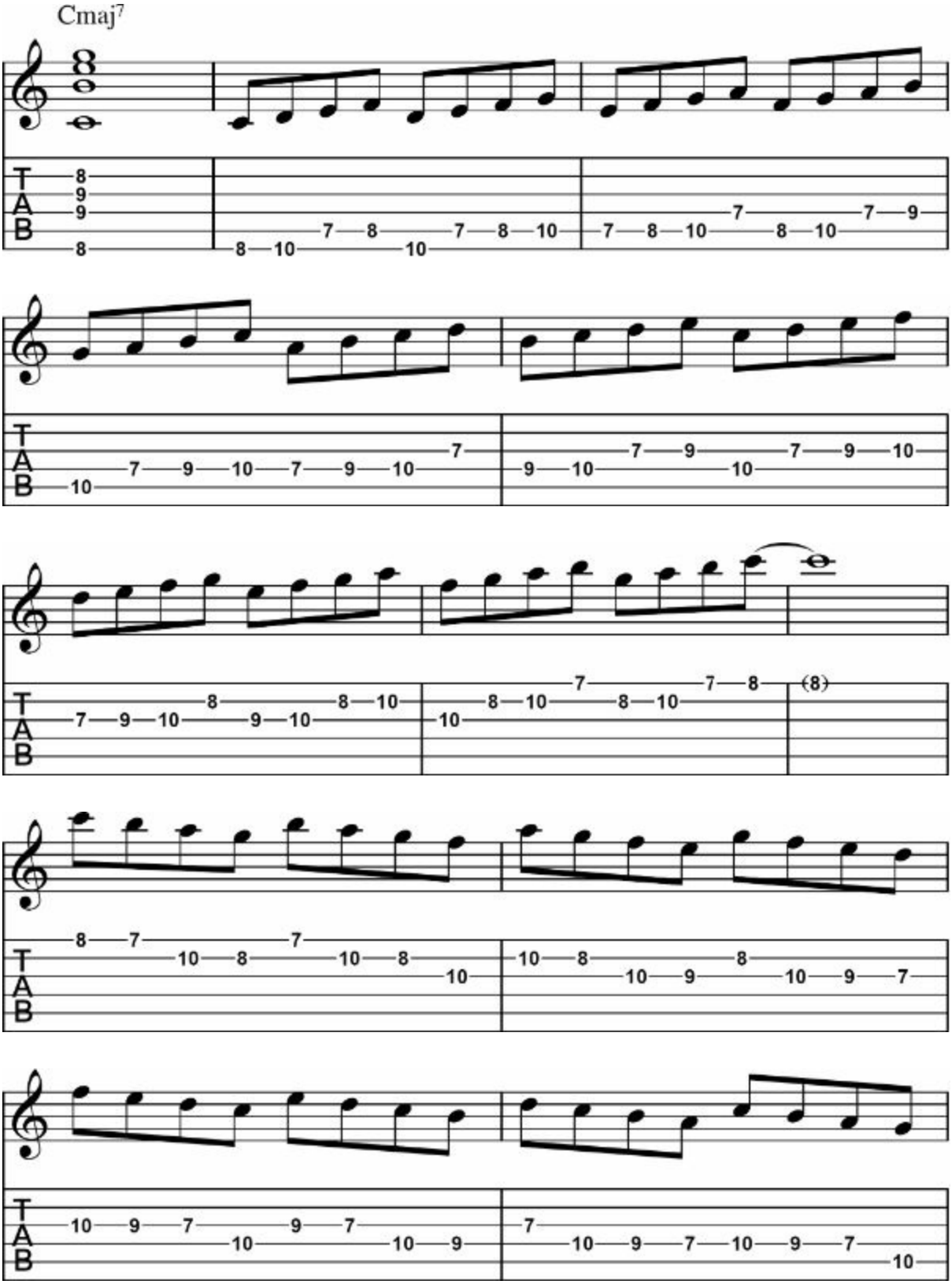
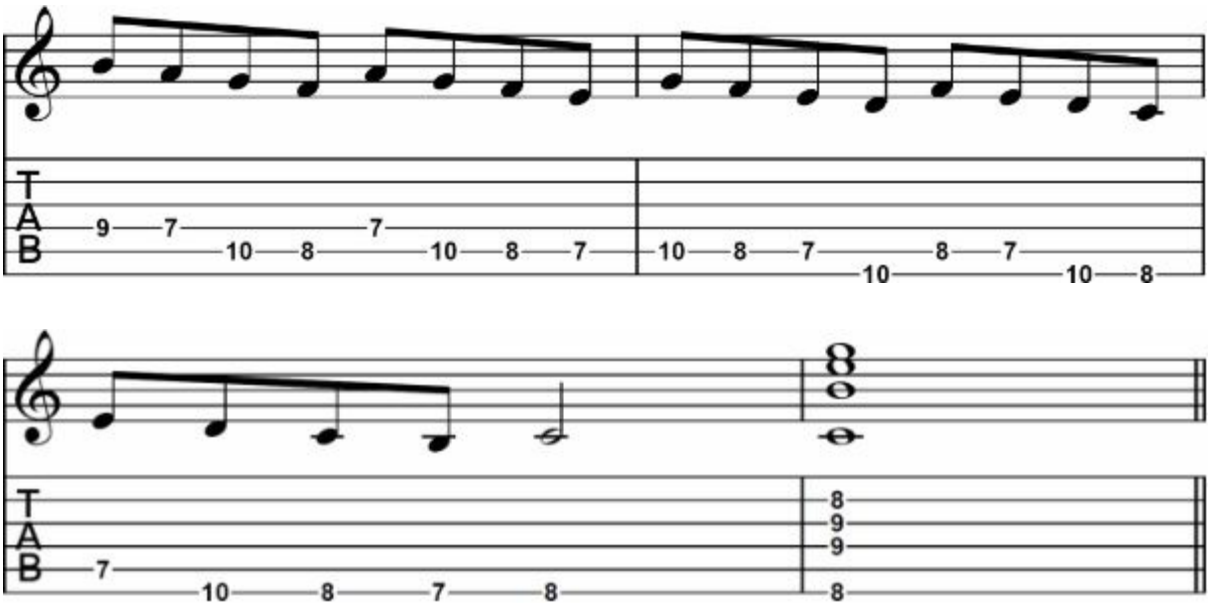




Pattern 4


Cmaj7
T
A
B


T
A
B
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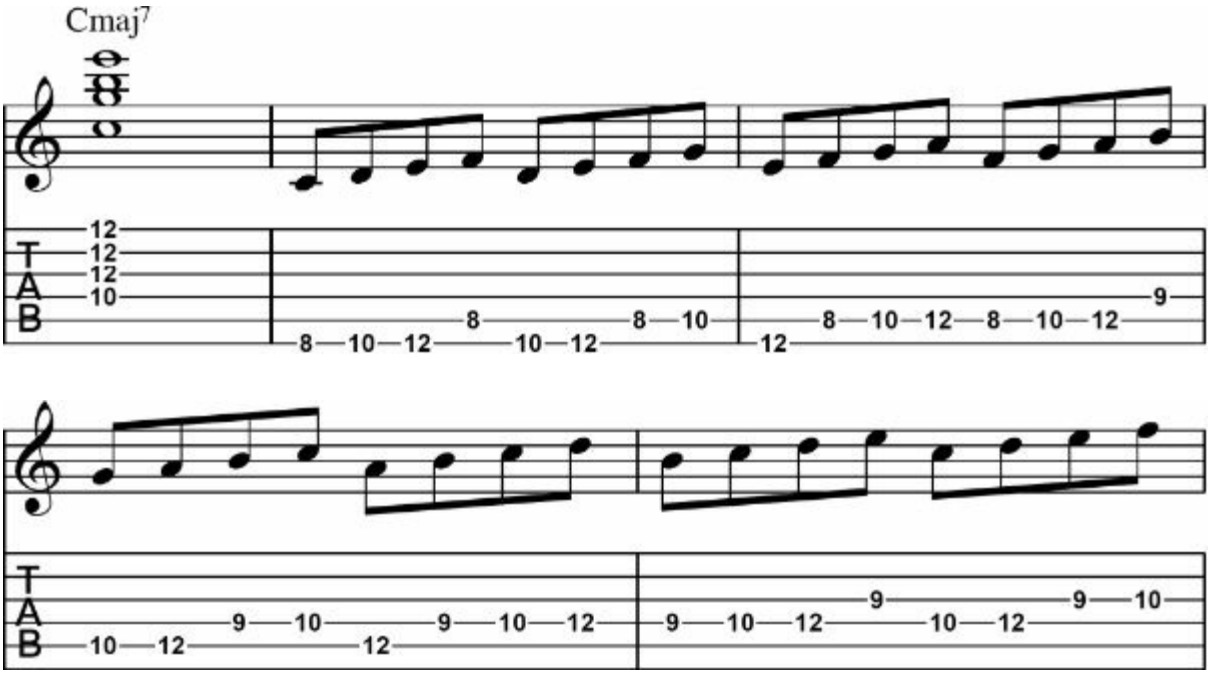
10 8 7 10 8 7 10 10 8
7 10 8 7 8
8 9 9 8

Pattern 5


Cmaj7
T
A
B
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8 10 12 8 10 12 8 10
8 10 12 8 10 12 9 12
10 12 9 10 12 9 10 12
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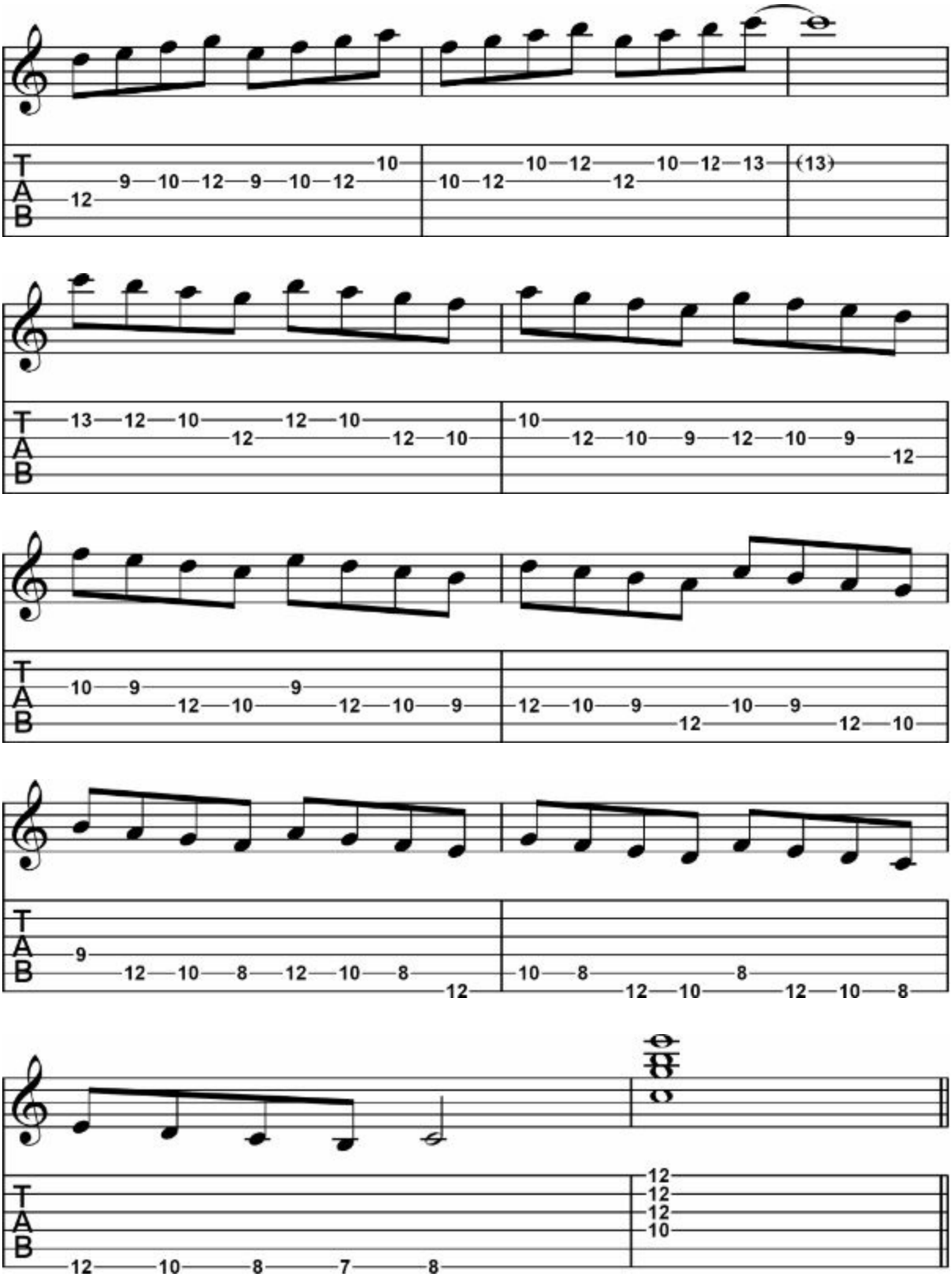
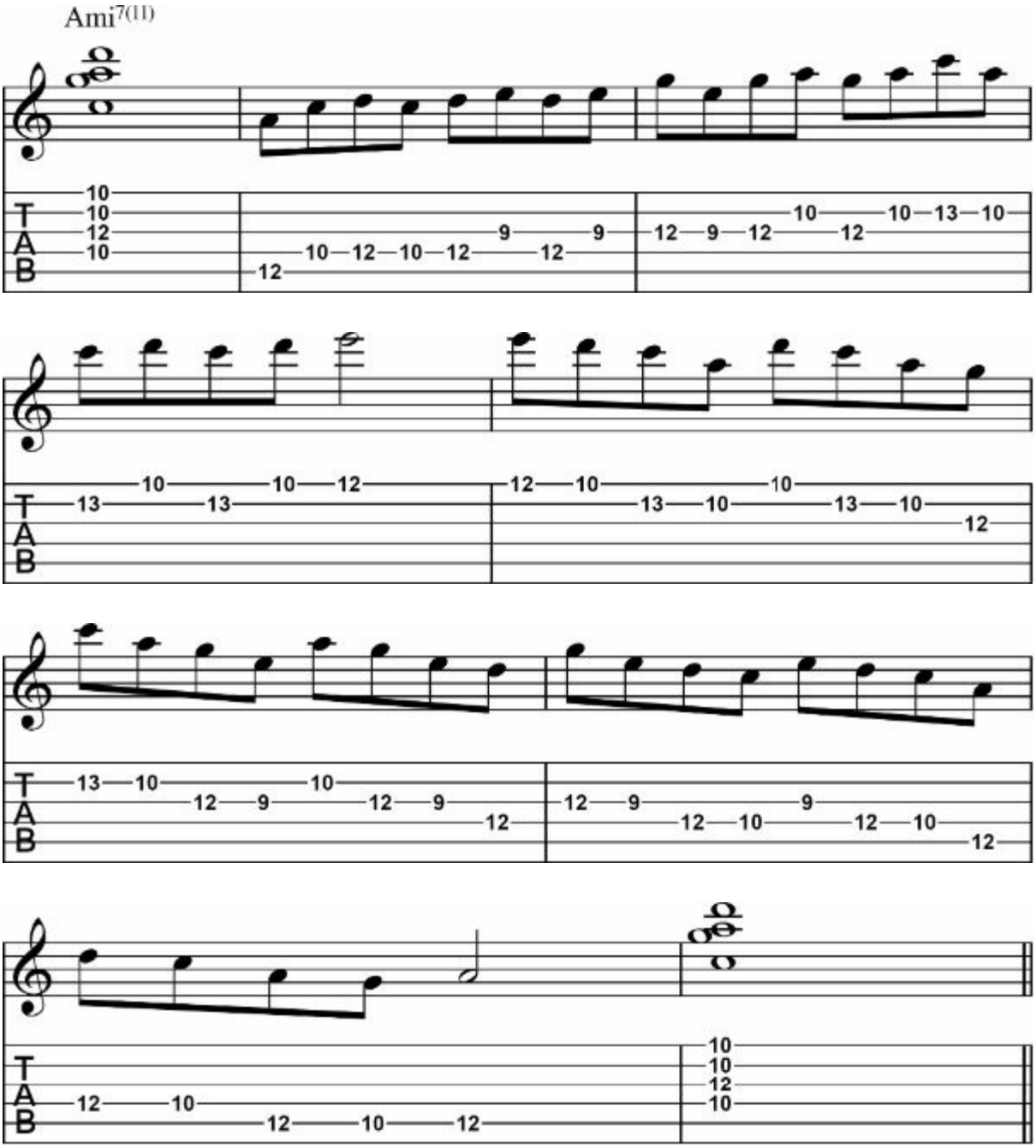

T
A
B
12 9 10 12 9 10 12 10
10 12 10 12 12 10 12 13 (13)
13 12 10 12 10 12 10
12 12 10
10 12 10 9 12 10 9 12
10 9 12 10 9 12 10 9
12 10 9 10 9 12 12 10
9 12 10 8 12 10 8 12
10 8 8 12 10 12 10 8
12 10 8 7 8
12
12
12
10

Minor Pentatonic Scales: Ascending on Every 3 Notes, Descending on Every 4 Notes

Pattern 1



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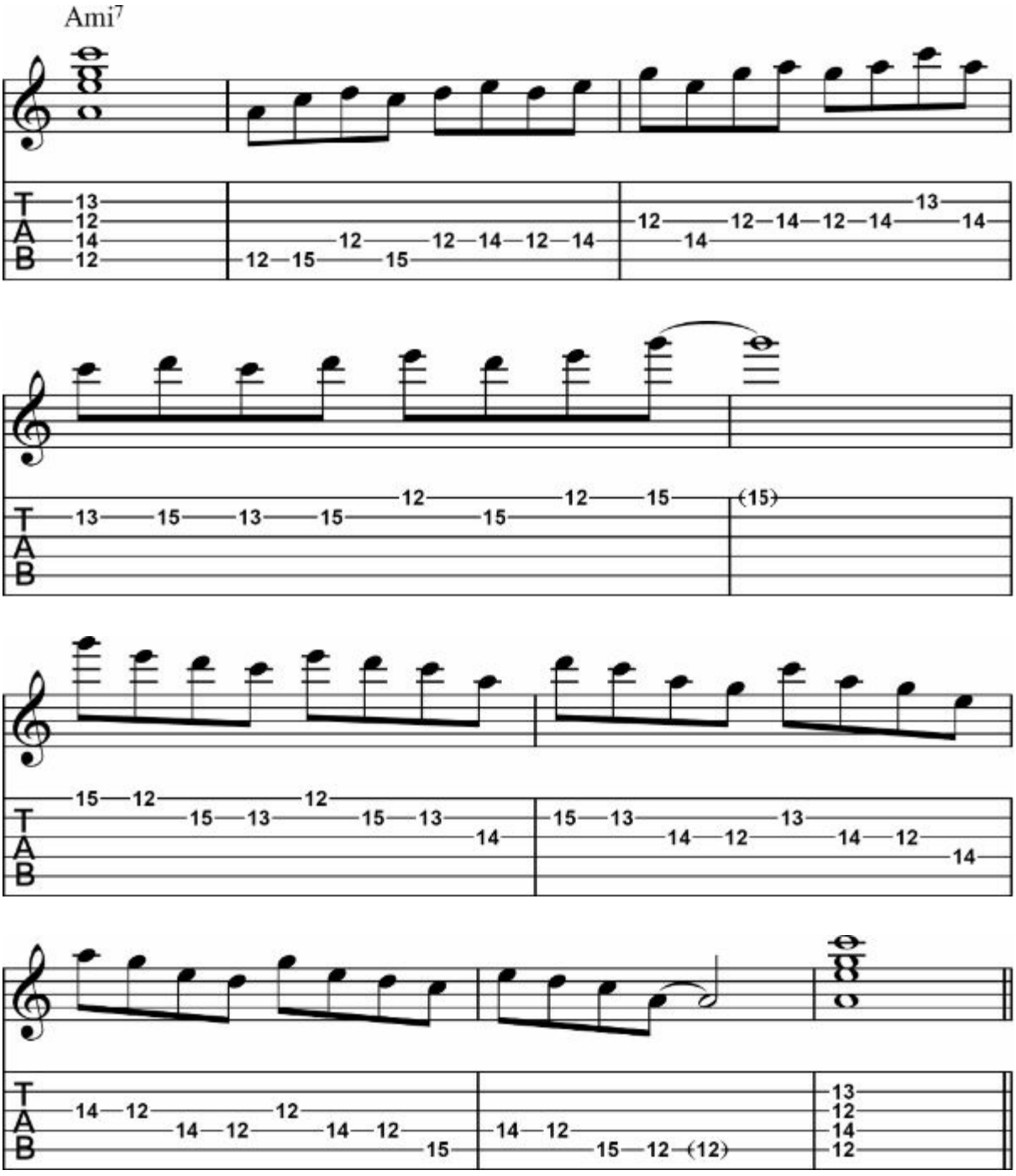

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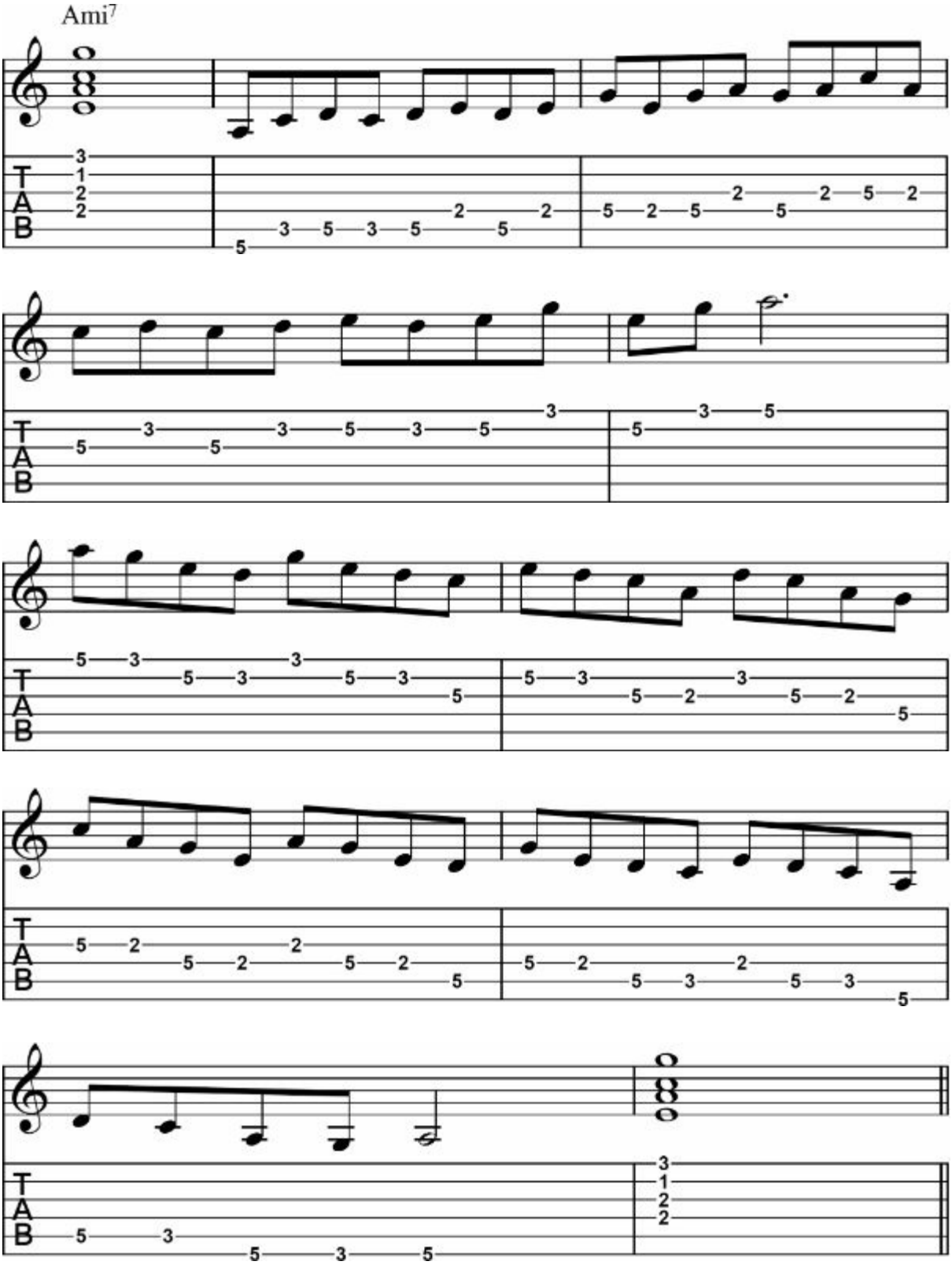

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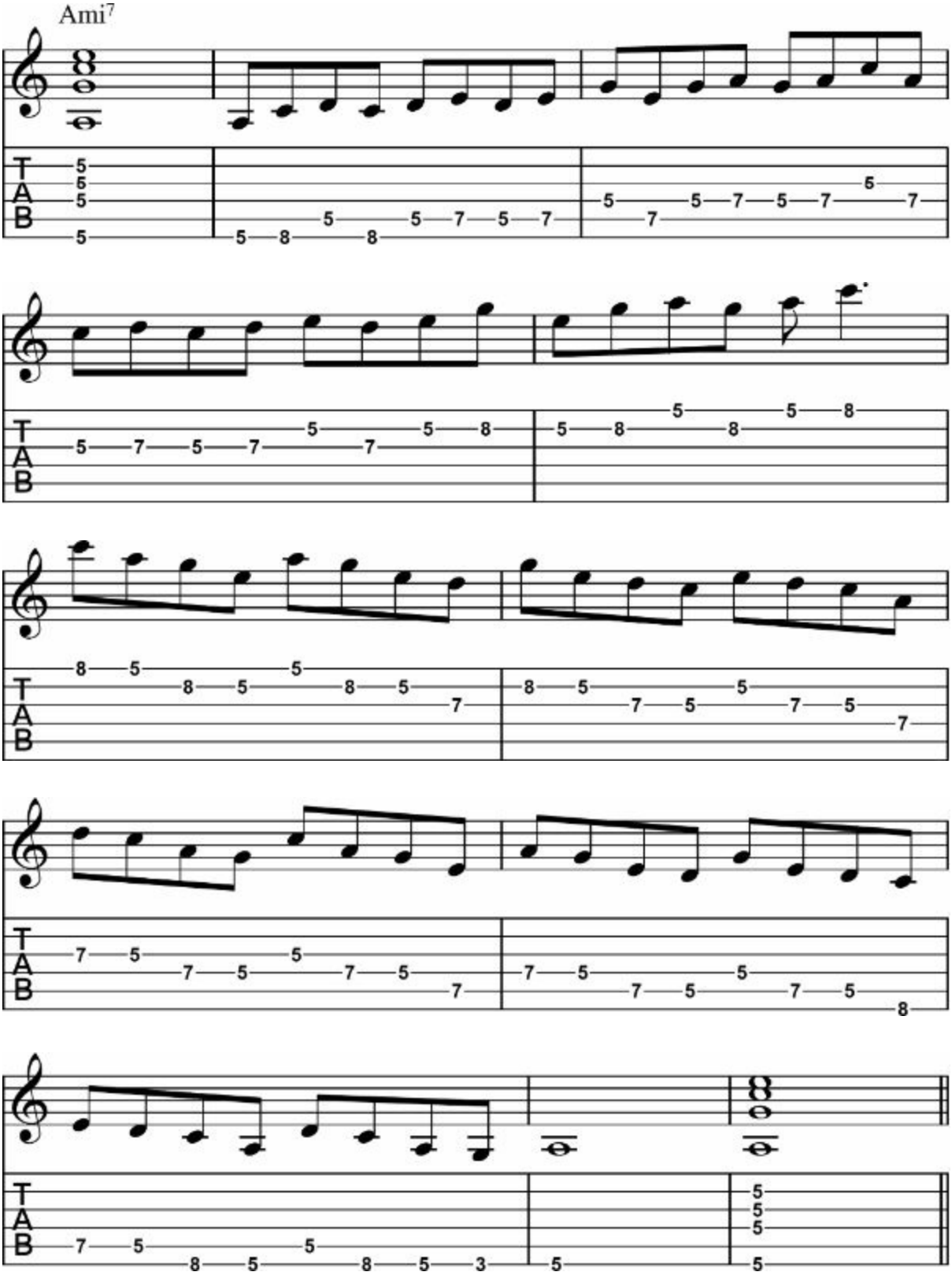
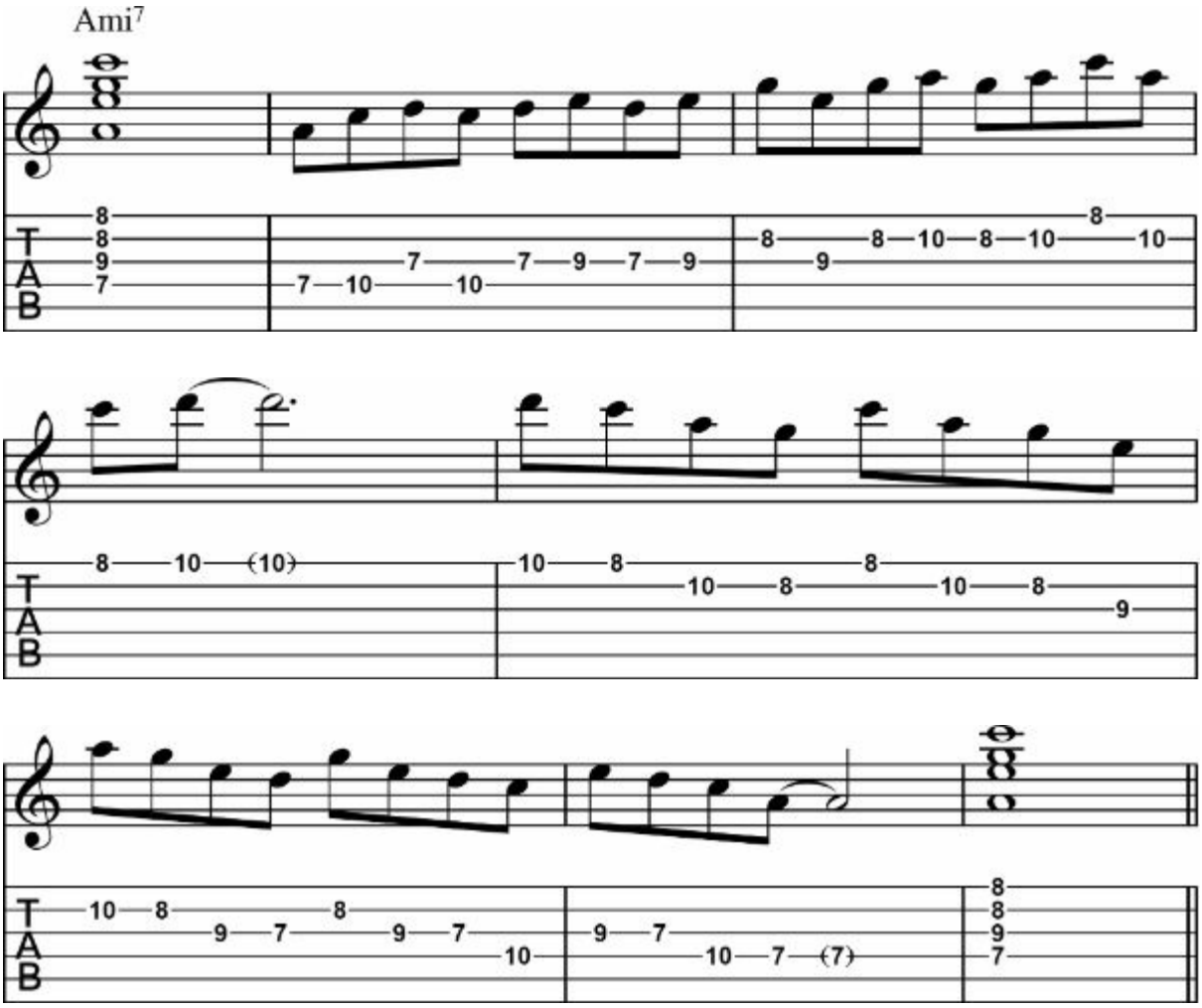

Ami7
T
A
B

Pattern 5



Chapter 3

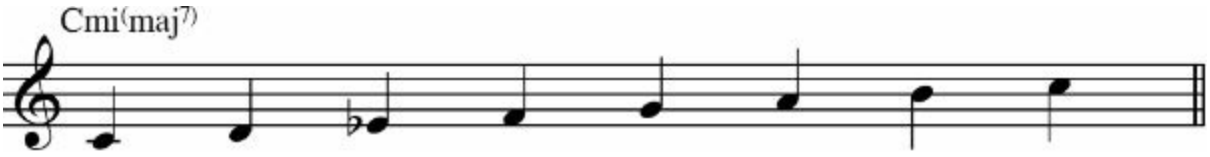
Melodic Minor Scale and Modes

The melodic minor scale is a seven note scale and has seven modes. The only difference between the major scale and the melodic minor scale is the 3rd. the major scale has a major 3rd and the melodic minor scale has a minor 3rd. However, melodic minor harmony sounds totally different to the major scale. It sounds much darker with an exotic texture. As this scale is really useful in jazz improvisation, many people call this scale as a jazz minor scale. The most common use of the melodic minor scale is using it as altered scale

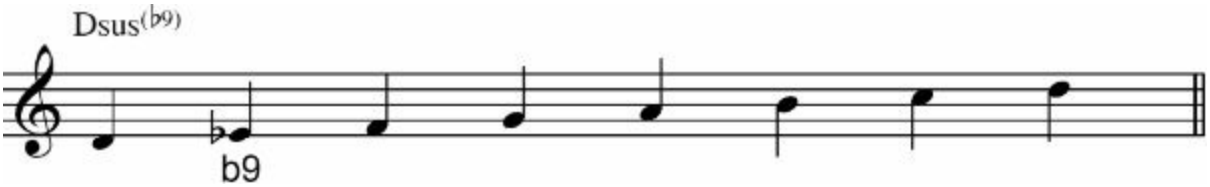
played a semitone below the scale's tonic. For example, the G7 chord and Ab jazz minor scale: the Ab jazz minor scale contains the root, third, seventh, and the four most common alterations of G7. This scale may be used to resolve to C in the progression G7-C (over G7, which need not be notated G7 b5#5b9#9)

Melodic Minor Scale Harmony

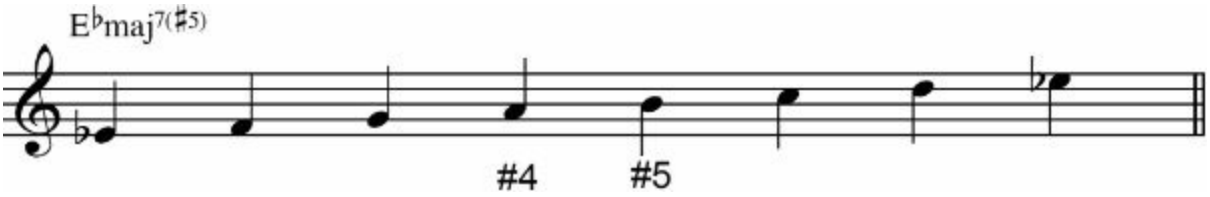
C Melodic Minor



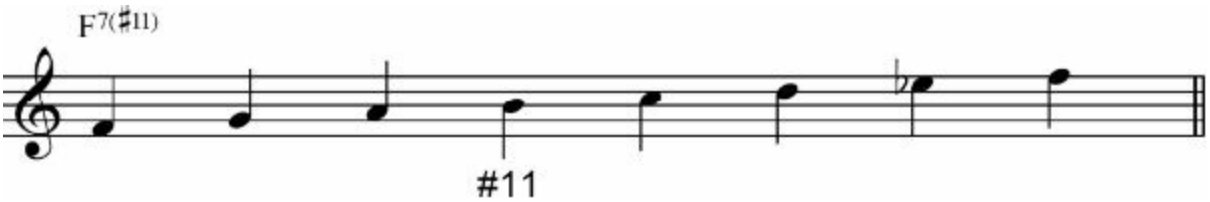
D susb9



Eb Lydian Augmented



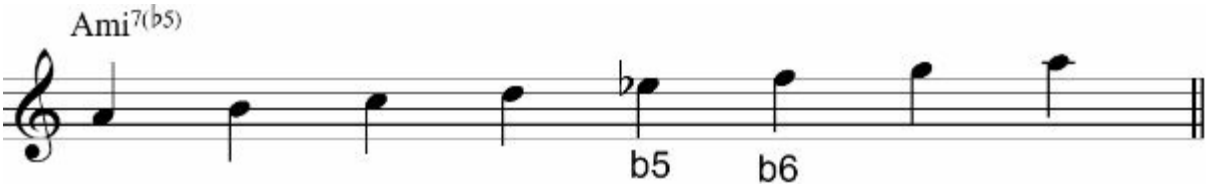
F Lydian Dominant



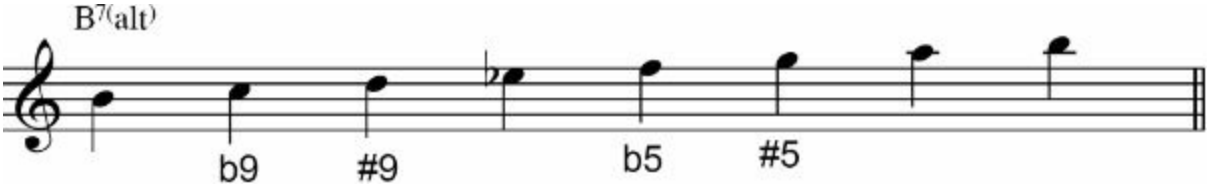
C Melodic Minor on G



A Locrian #2 or Half-Diminished



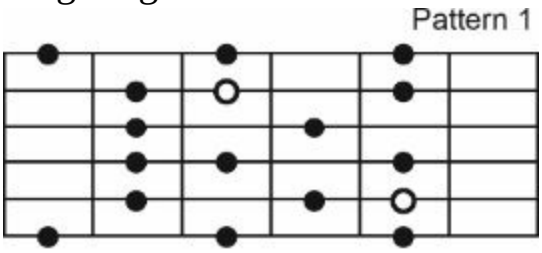
B Altered or Diminished Whole-Tone

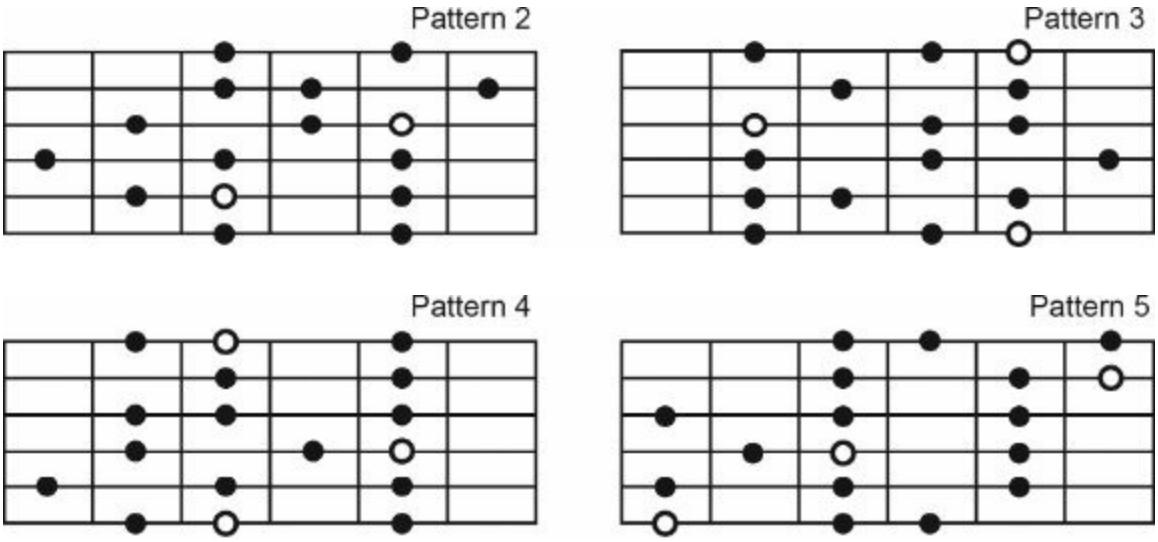


Melodic Minor Scale

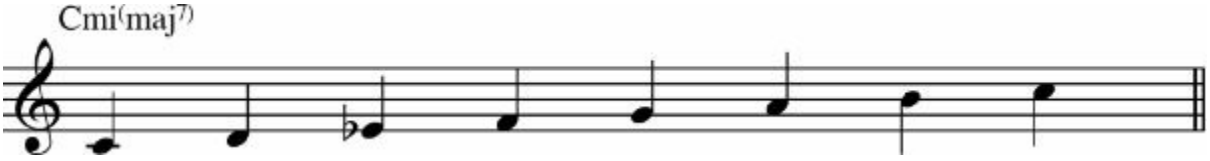
This is a minor scale that has a major 6th and major 7th. The intervals are the root, 2, b3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. Just like the major scale, there are 7 modes in the melodic minor scale. We are going to study the most common modes of the melodic minor which are the Lydian augmented, Lydian dominant, Locrian #2, and Altered. You can play the melodic minor scale over mi(maj7) chords.

Fingering Patterns

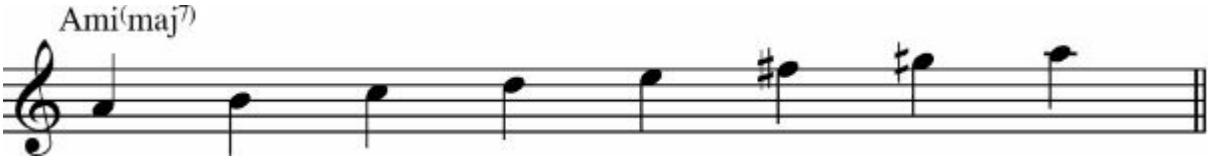




C Melodic Minor



A Melodic Minor



Scale Studies: A Melodic Minor Scale

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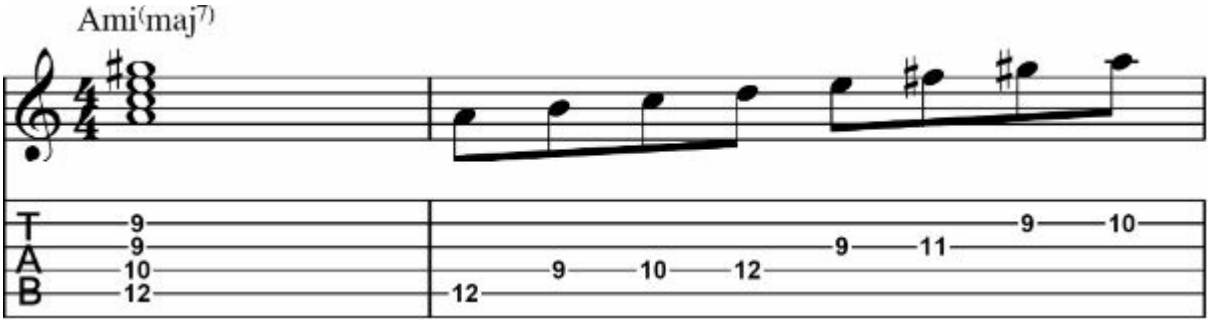

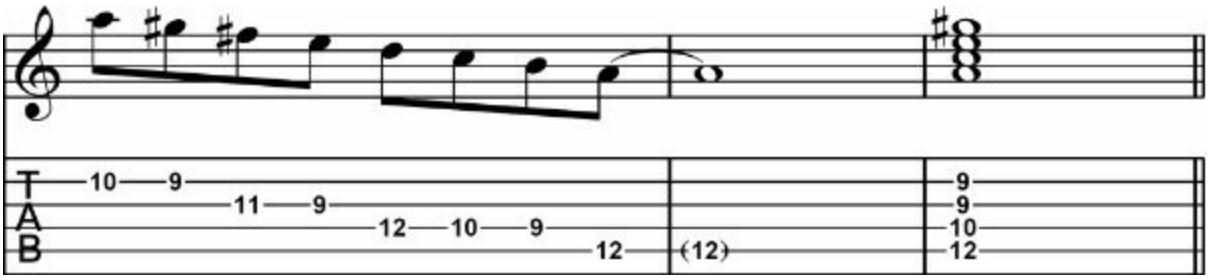

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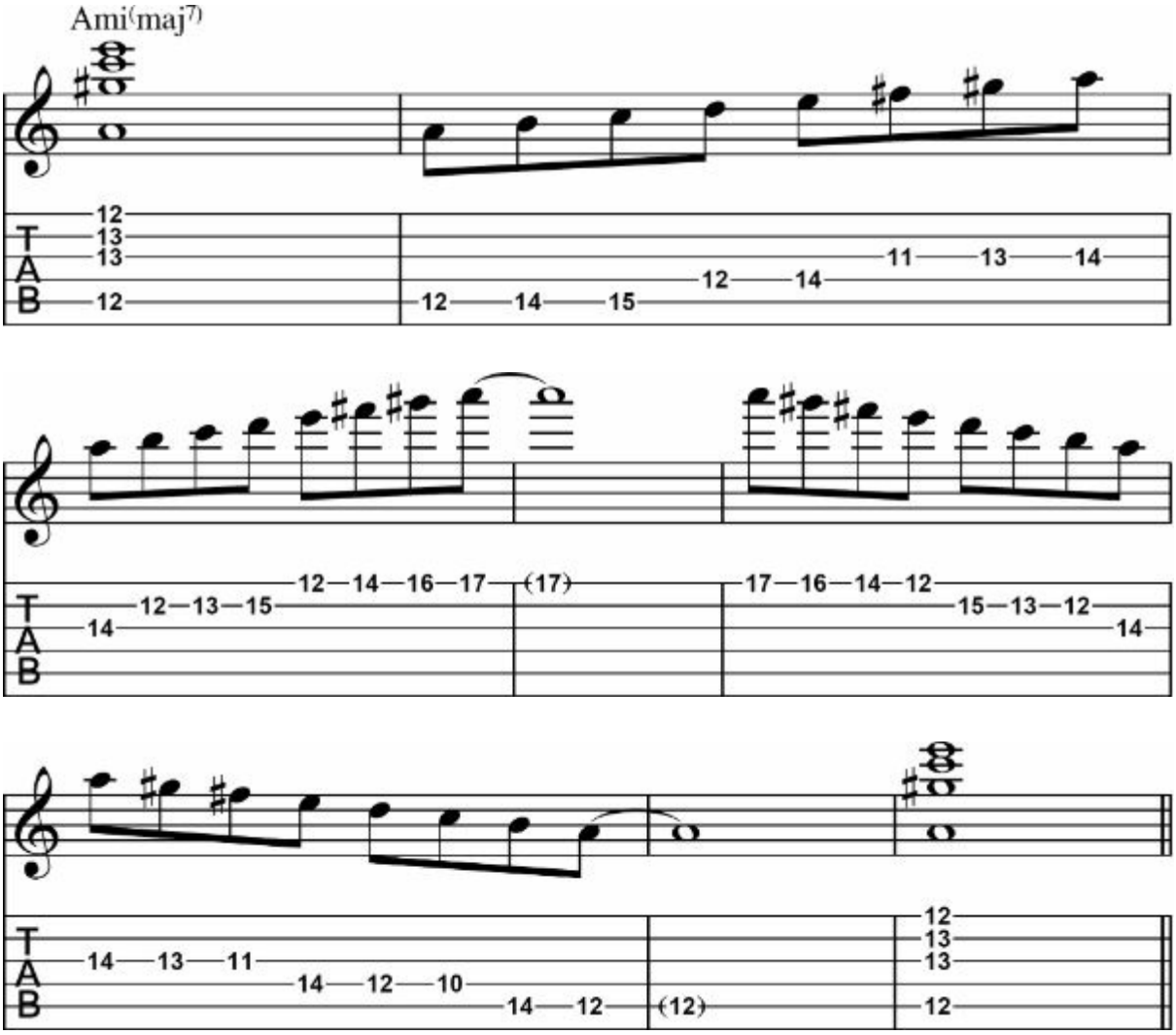
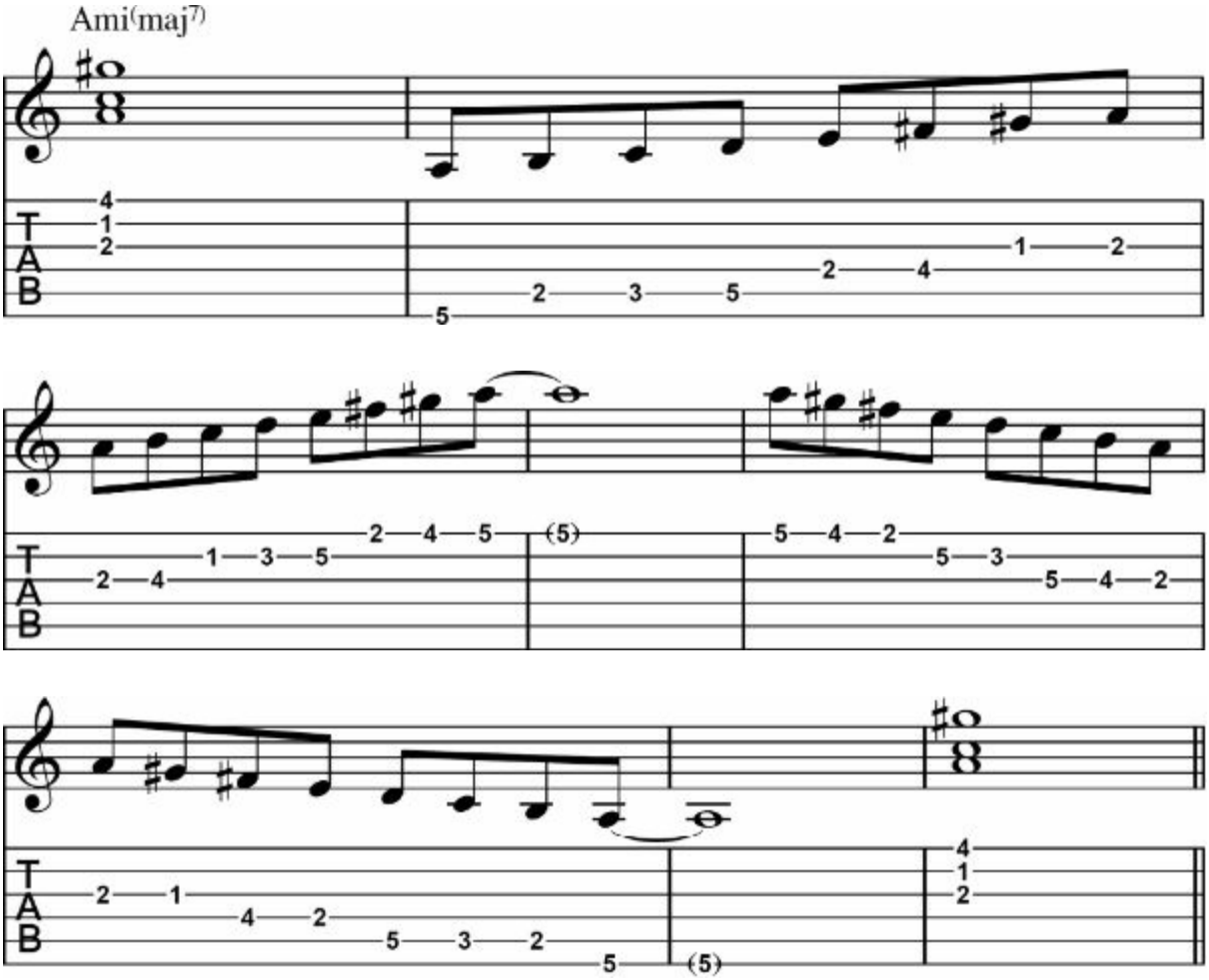


Pattern 3



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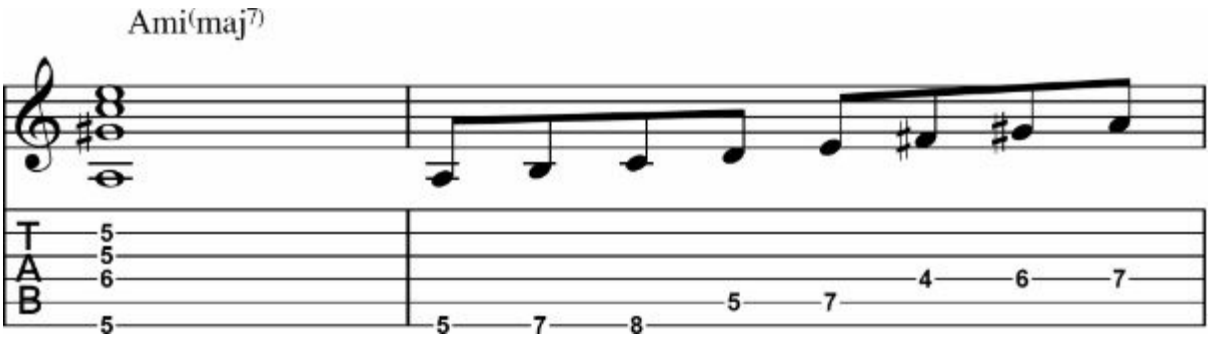
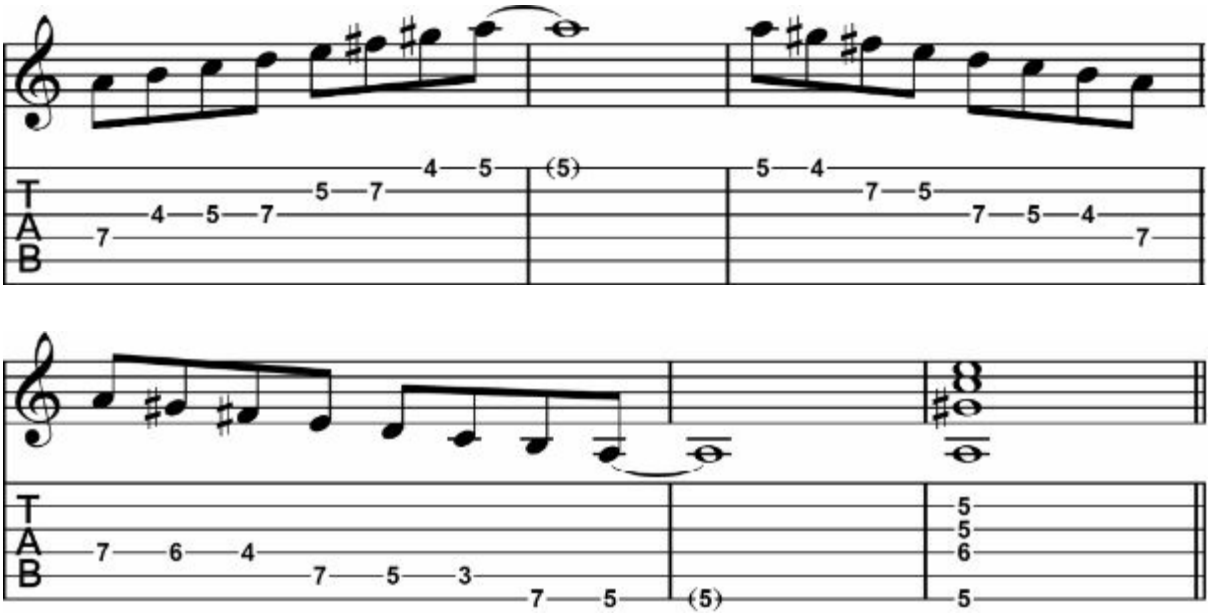
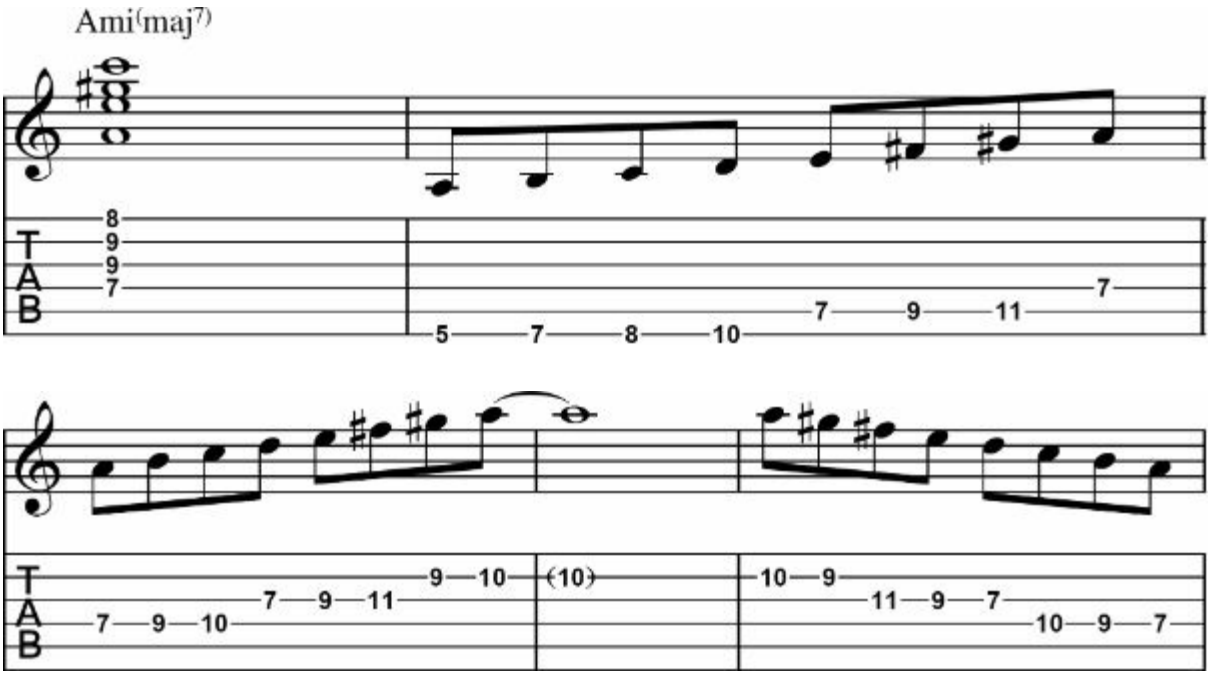



T
A
B
4 5 (5)
5 7
4 5 7
7
5 4
7 5
7 5 4
7
7 6 4
7 5 3
7 5
(5)
5
5
6
5

Pattern 5


Ami(maj7)
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A
B
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5 7 8 10
7 9 11
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9 10
7 9 11
7 9 10
(10)
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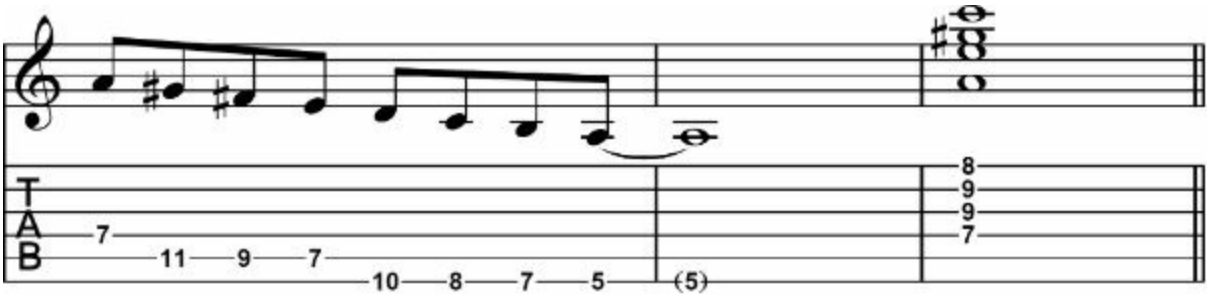
11 9 7
10 9 7



Arpeggio & Scale Studies: Ami(maj7) & A Melodic Minor

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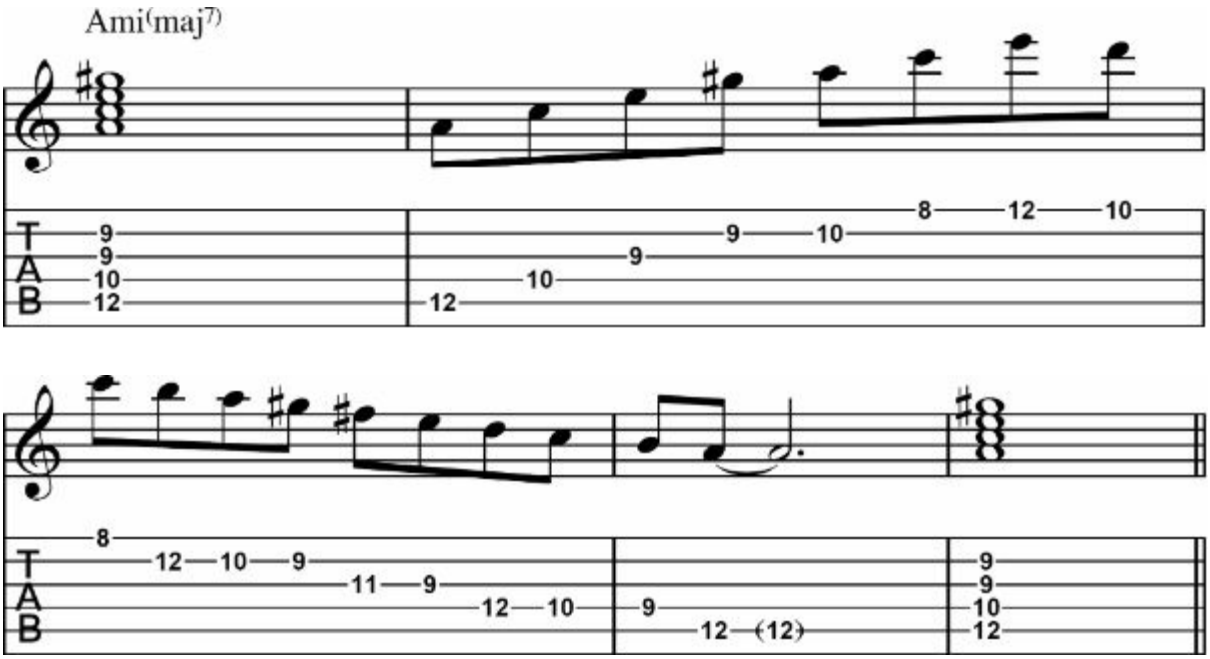
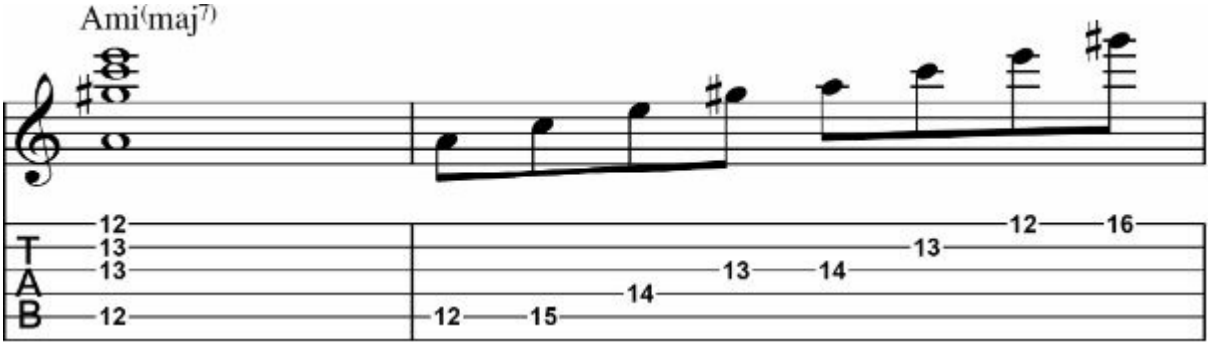
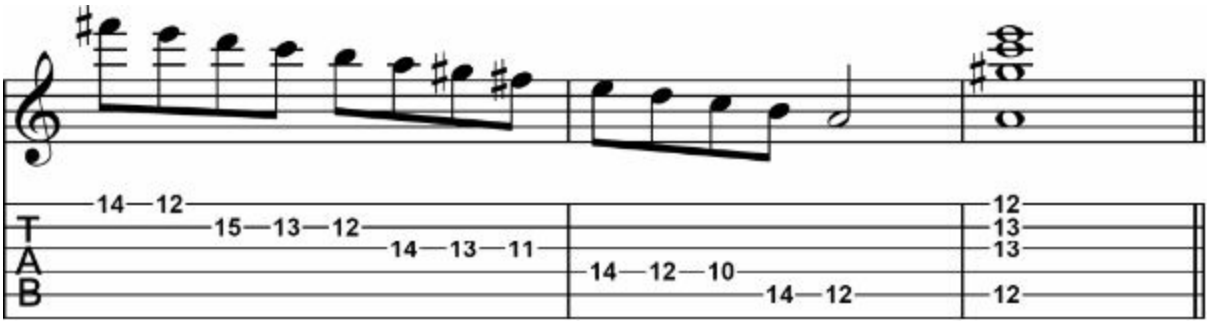
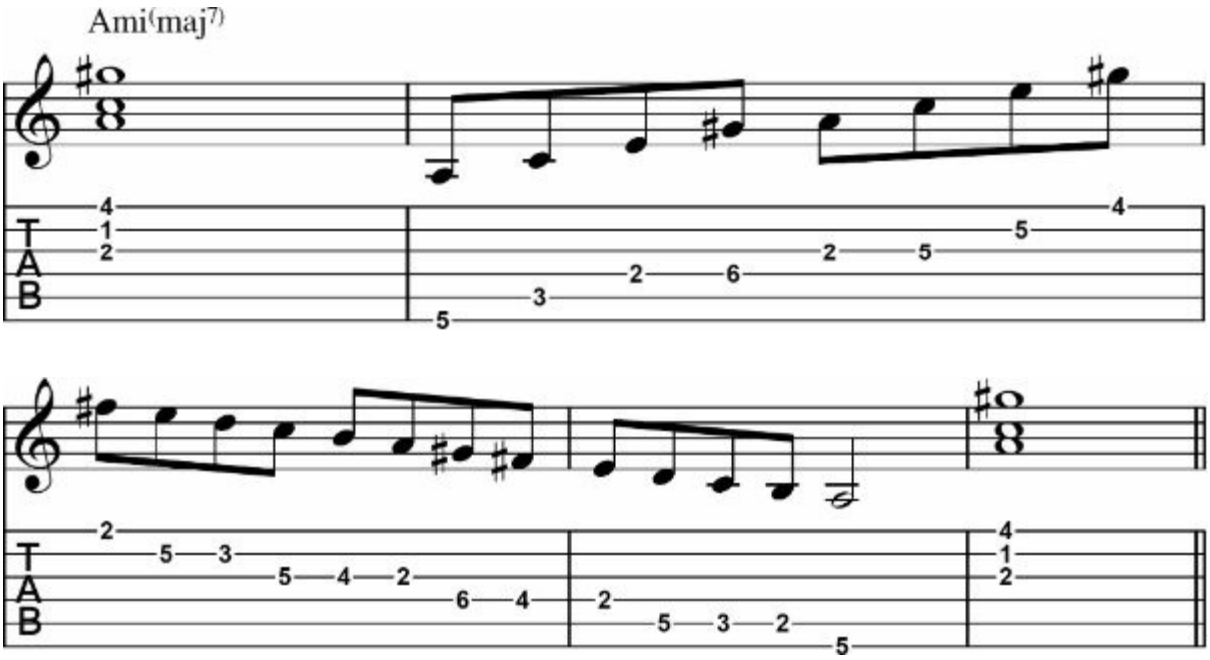


Pattern 2

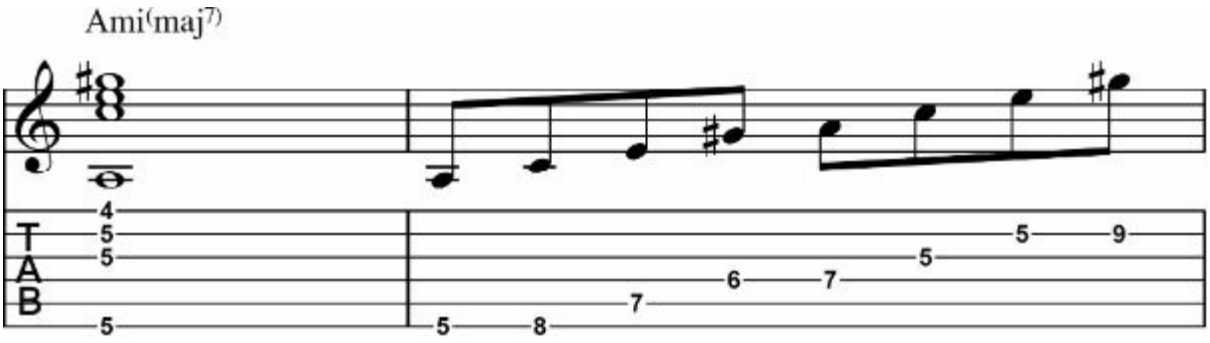


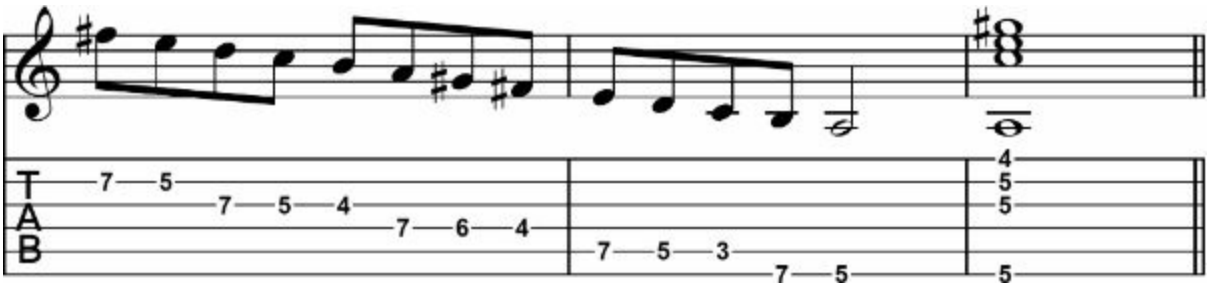


Pattern 3

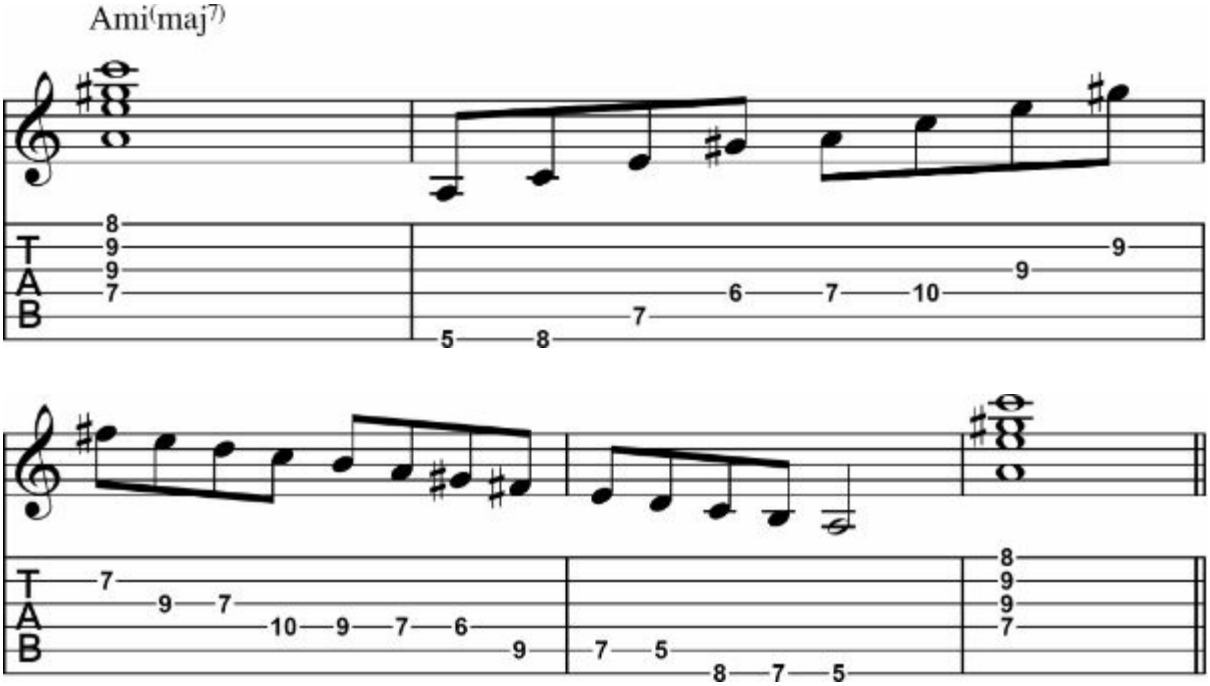


Pattern 4





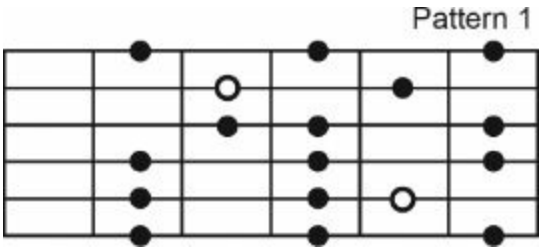
Pattern 5

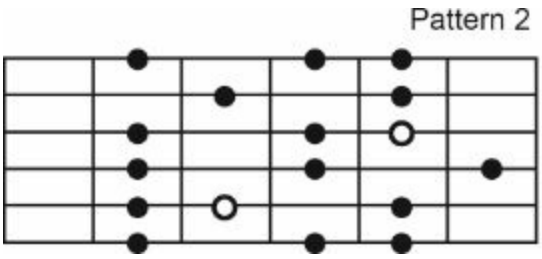


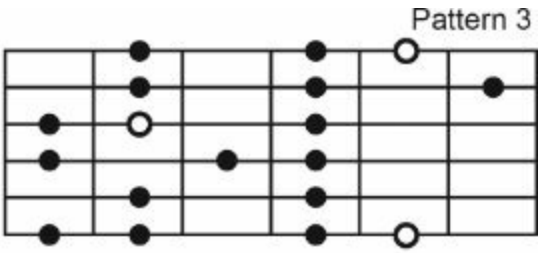
Lydian Augmented Scale

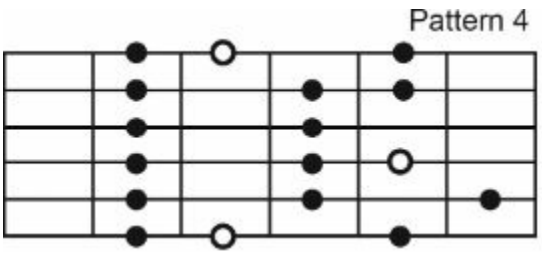
The Lydian augmented scale is the 3rd mode of the melodic minor. You can regard this scale as the Lydian mode with #5 notes. The intervals are the root, 2, 3, #4, #5, 6, and 7. People also write it as G/Eb for the Ebmaj7(#5) chord. Play over maj7(#5), maj7(#11 #5) chords.

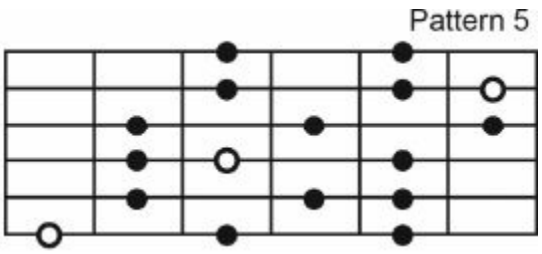
Fingering Patterns



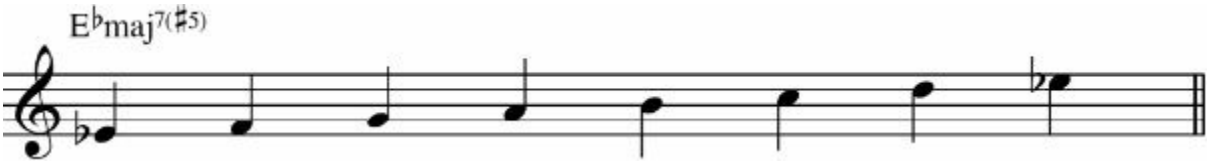




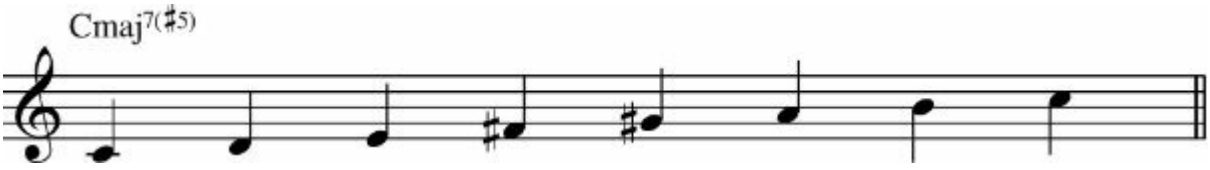




Eb Lydian Augmented



C Lydian Augmented



Scale Studies: Eb Lydian Augmented Scale

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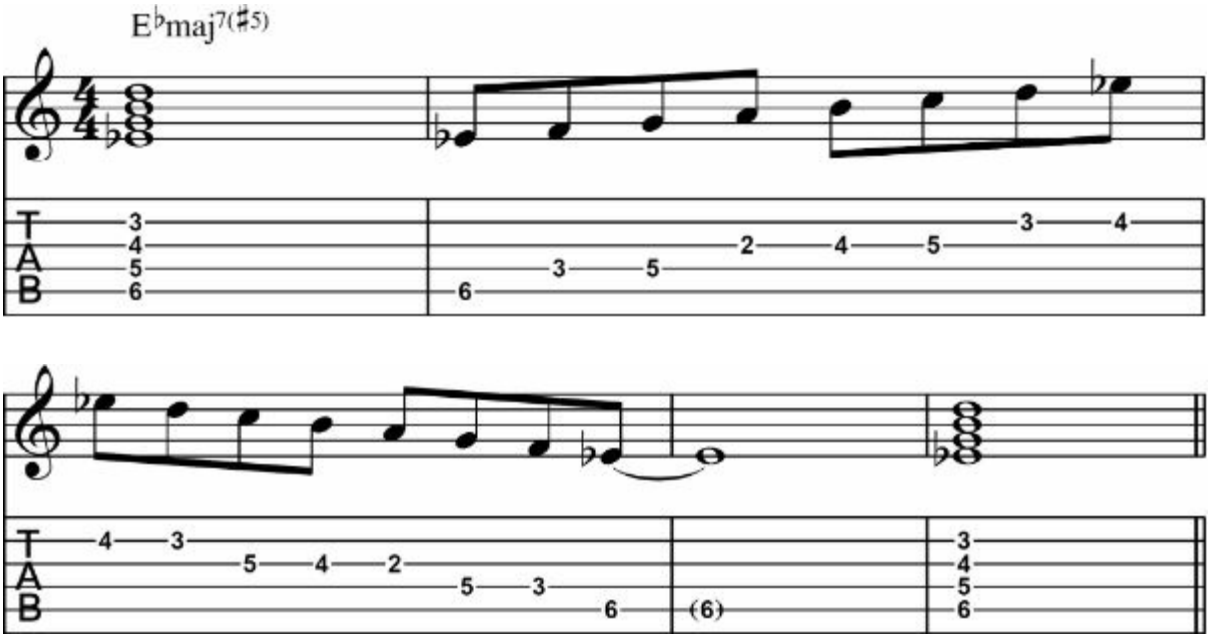
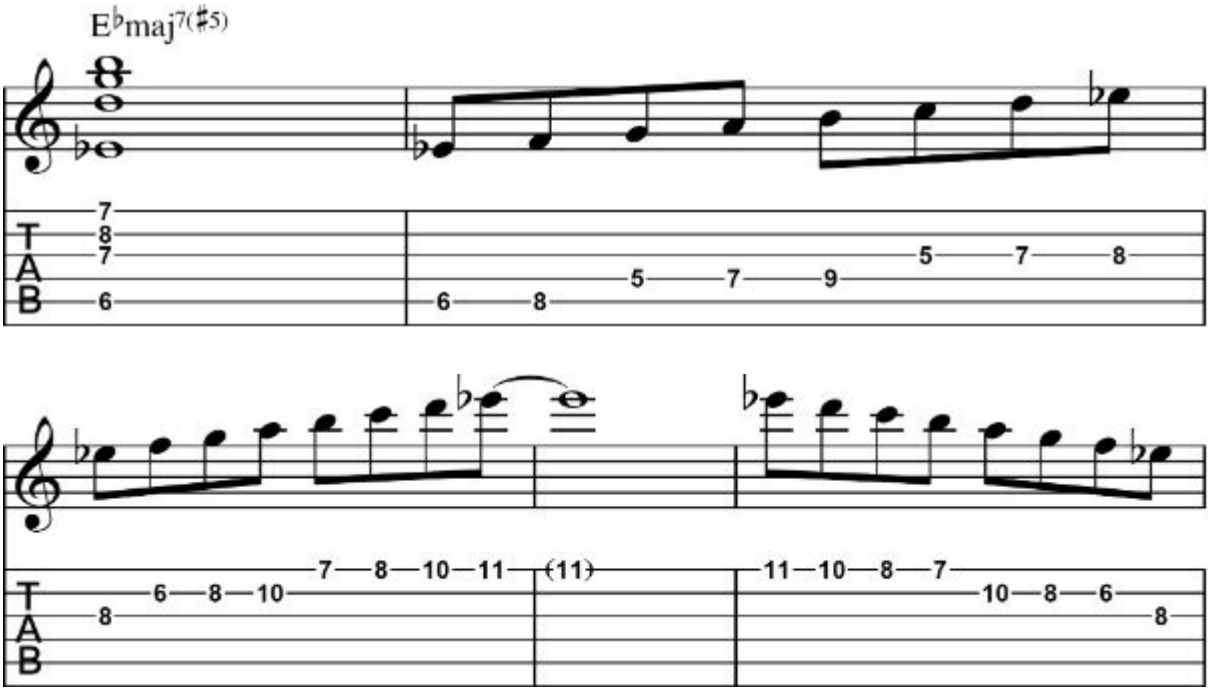
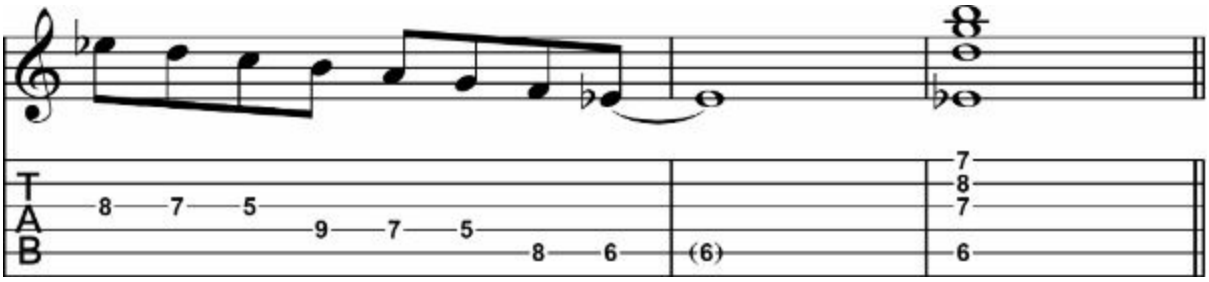
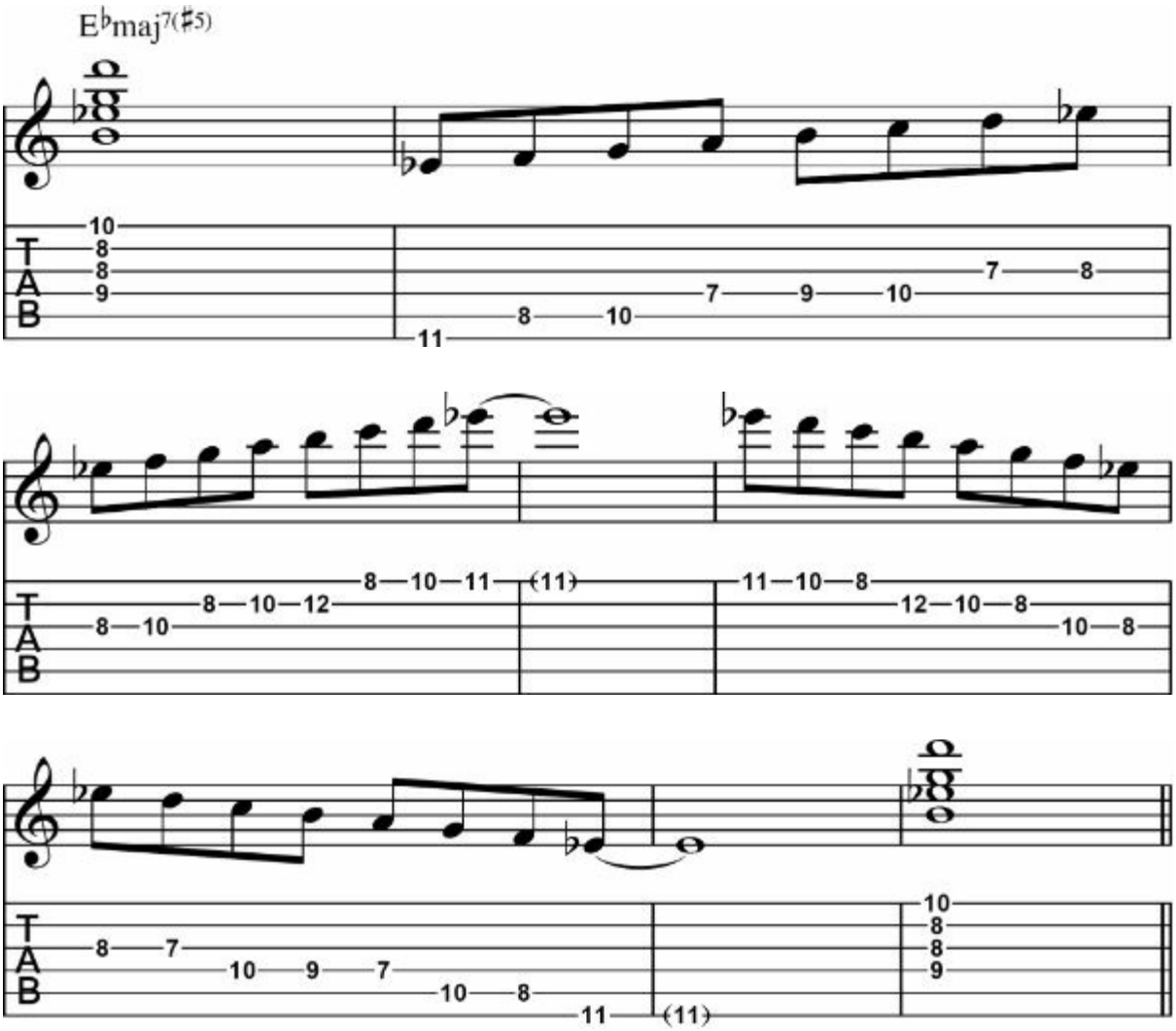


Pattern 2

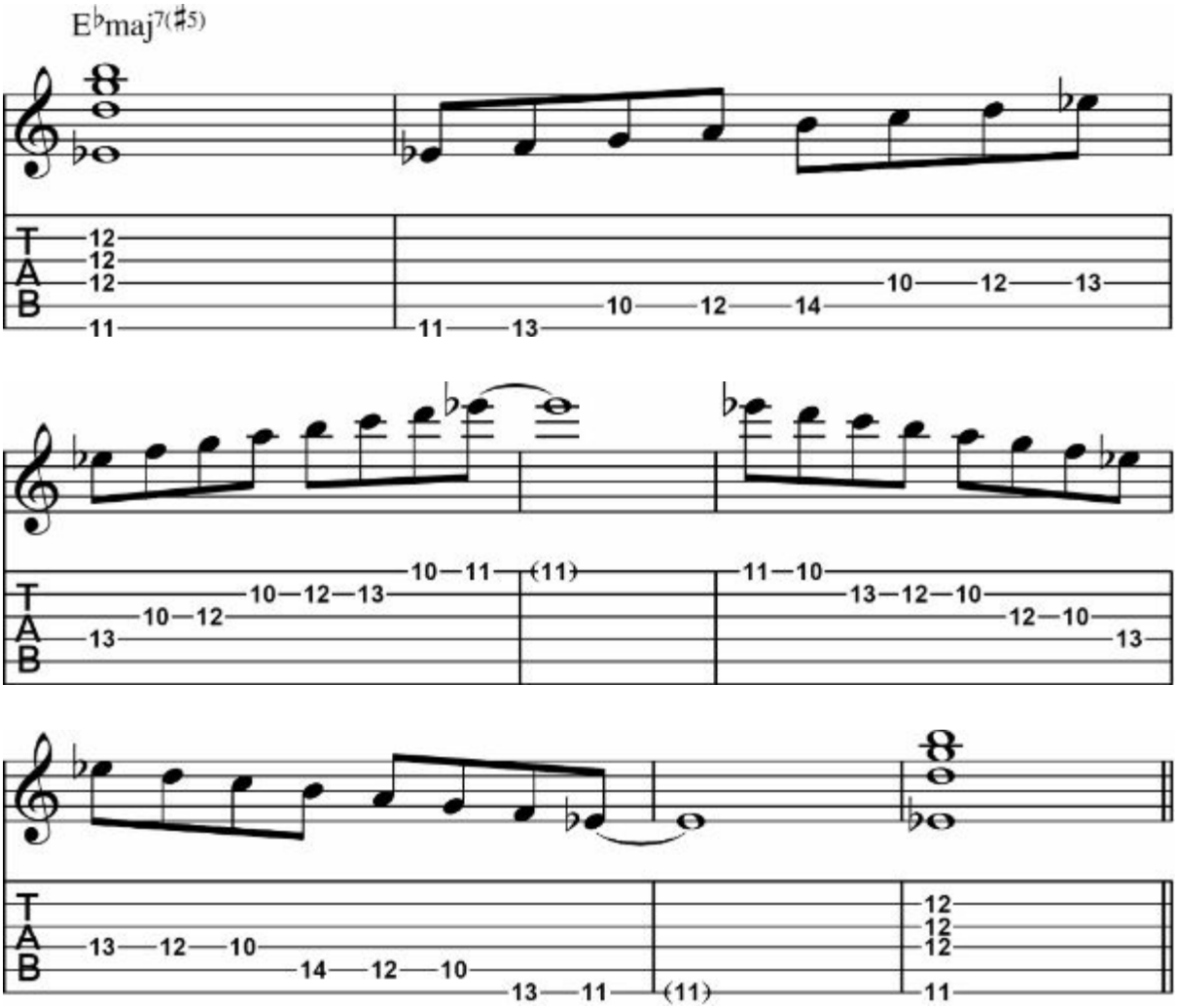




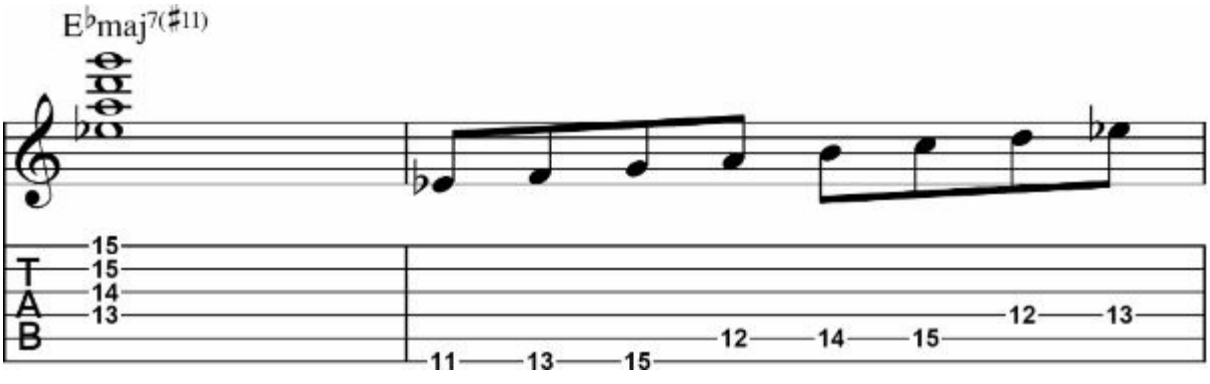
Pattern 3

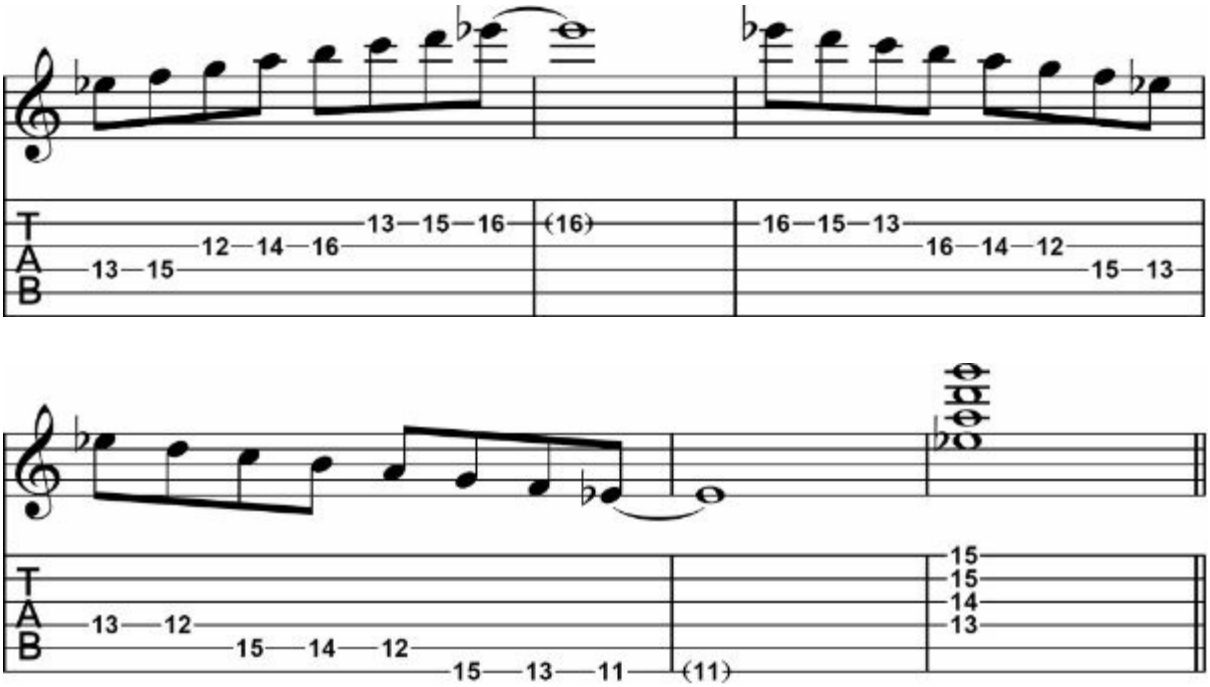


Pattern 4


E♭maj7(♯5)
T
A
B
12
12
12
11
10
12
14
11
13
10
12
13
10
11
(11)
10
12
13
13
10
12
11
10
13
12
10
12
10
13
13
12
10
14
12
10
13
11
(11)
12
12
12
11

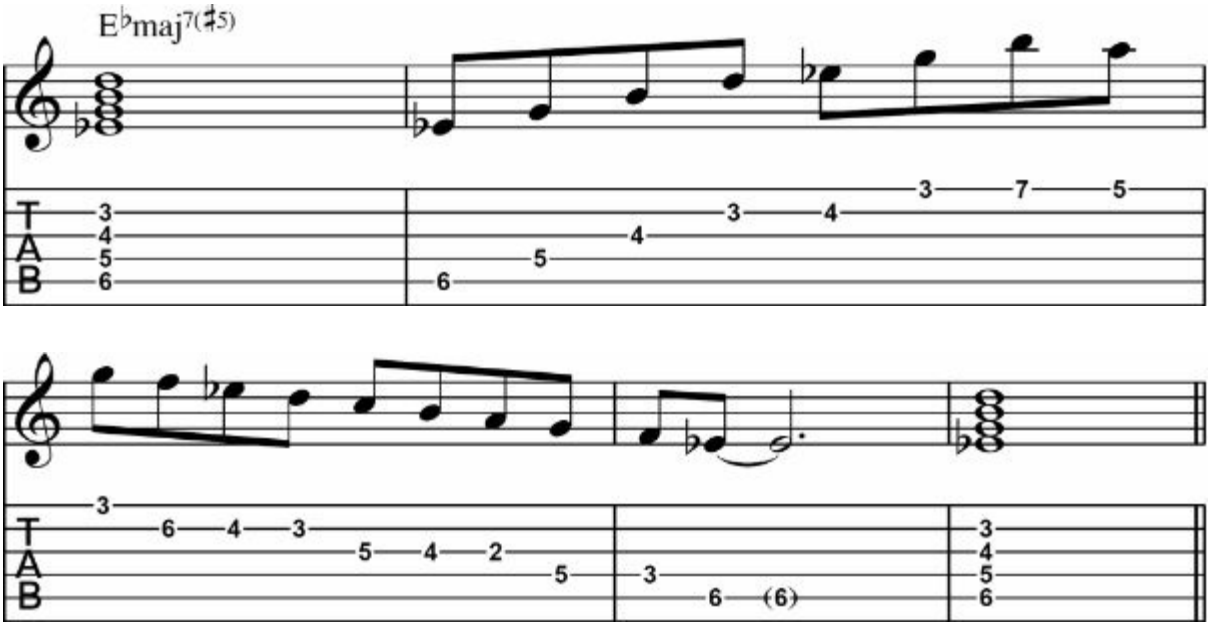
Pattern 5


E♭maj7(♯11)
T
A
B
15
15
14
13
12
14
15
11
13
15
12
13



Arpeggio & Scale Studies: Ebmaj7(#5) & Eb Lydian Augmented

Pattern 1



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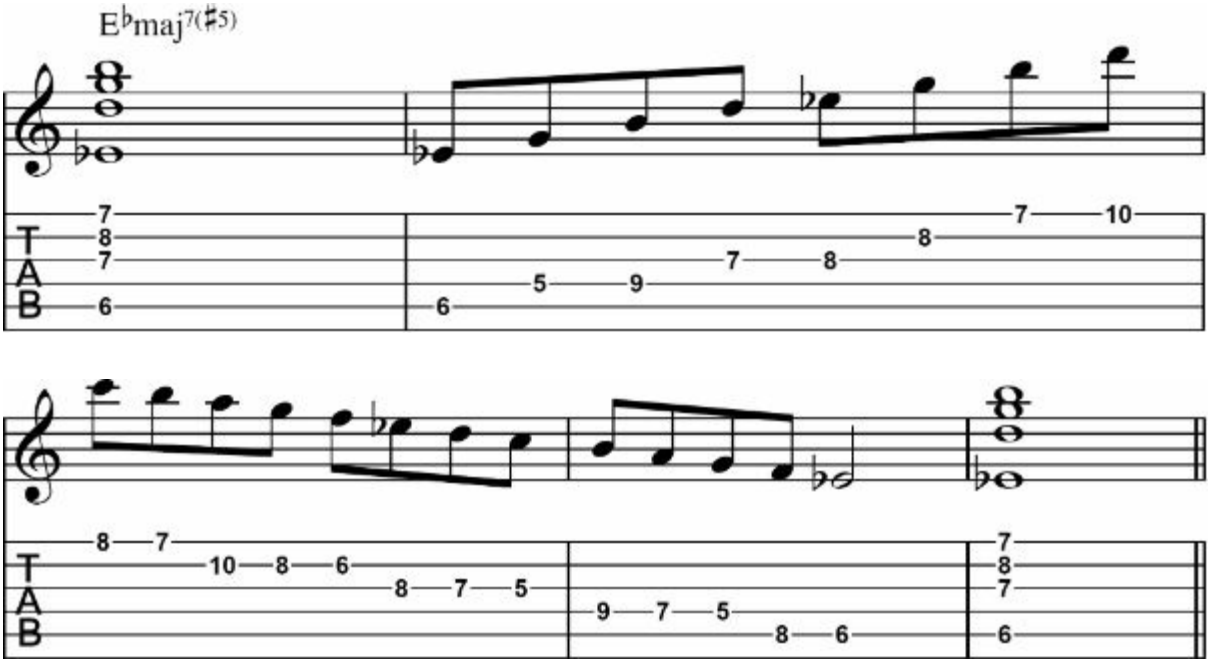
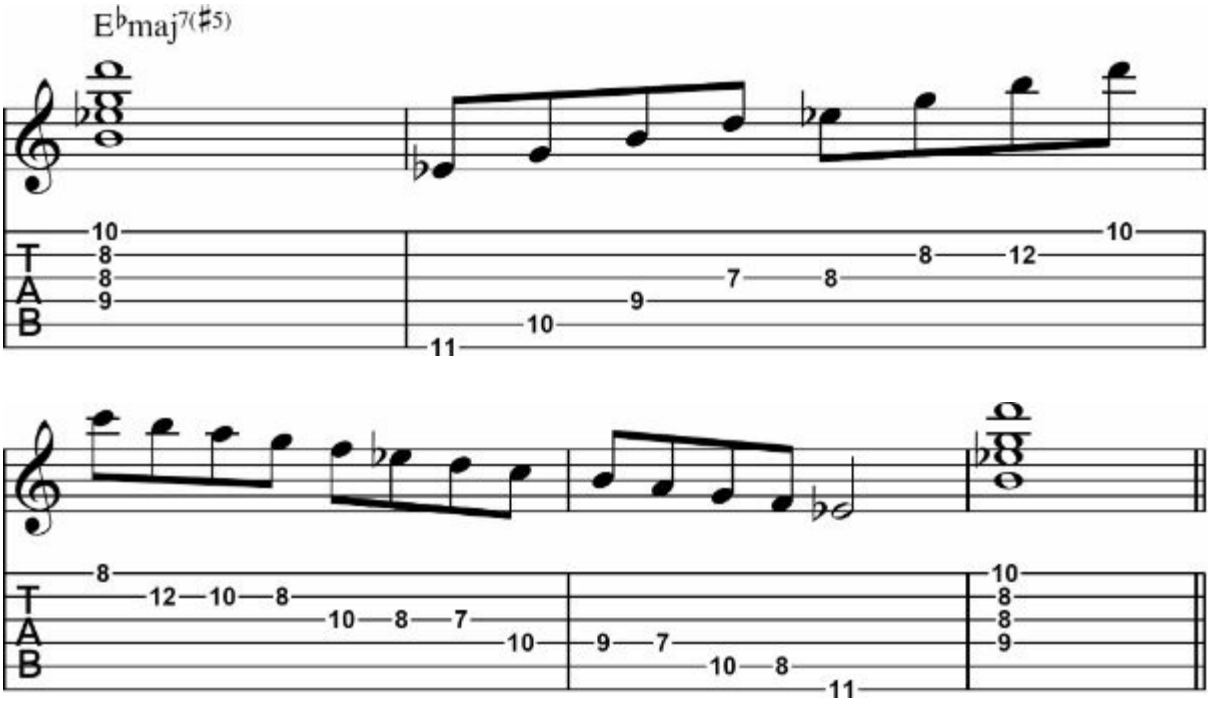
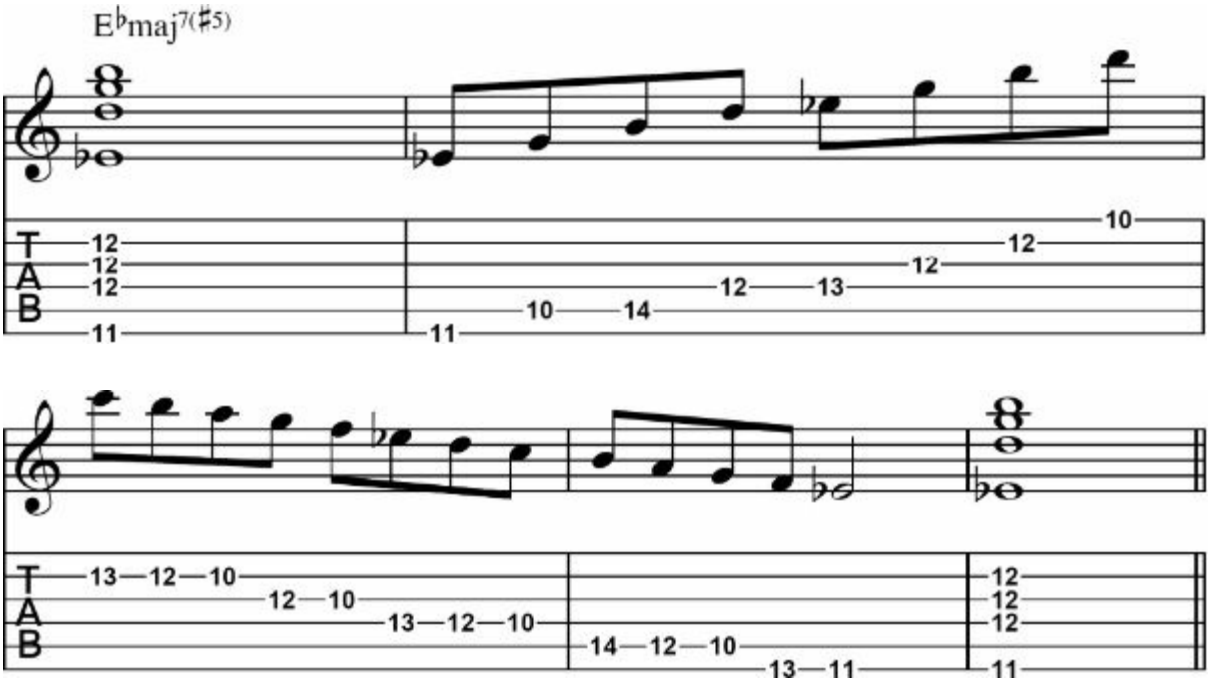


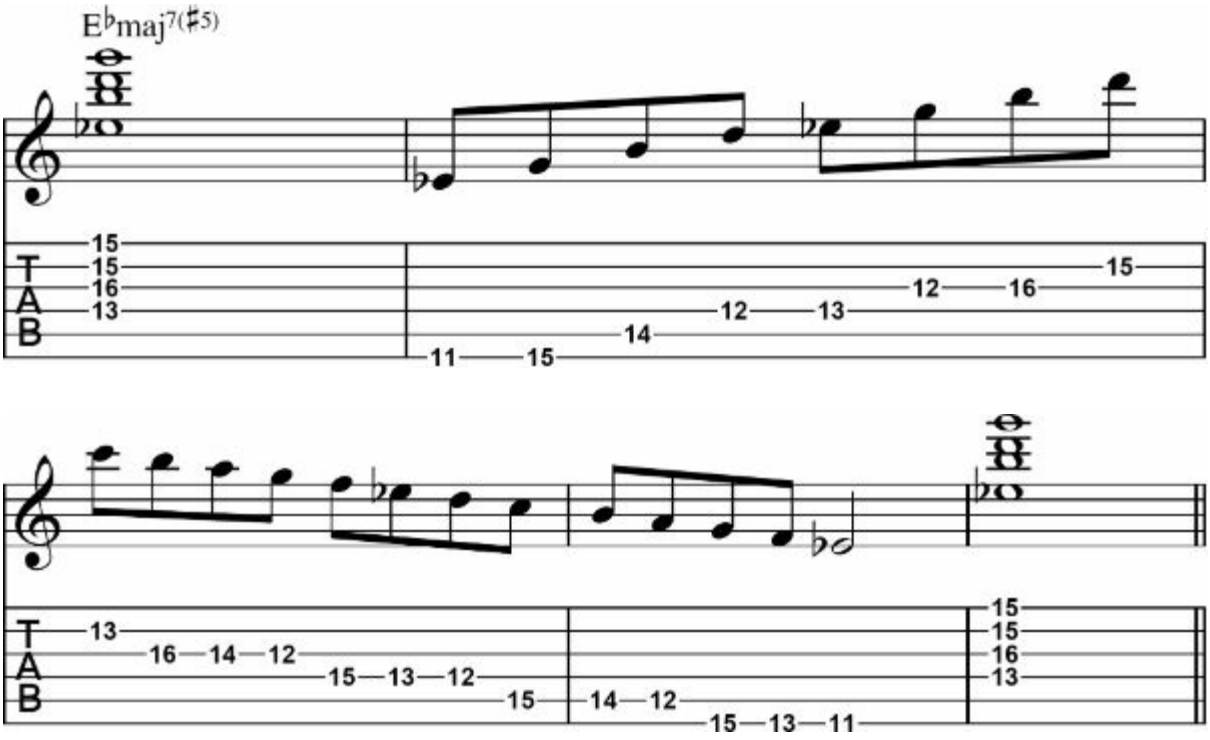
Pattern 3



Pattern 4



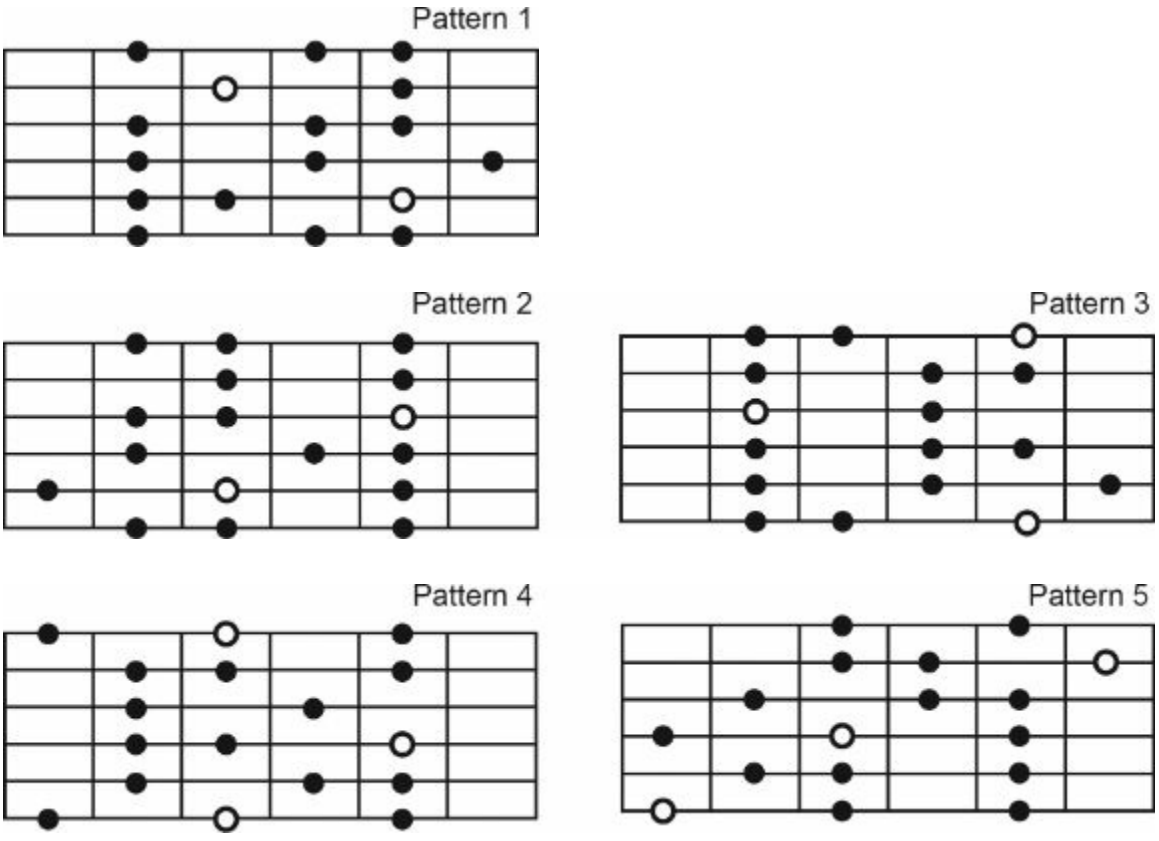
Pattern 5



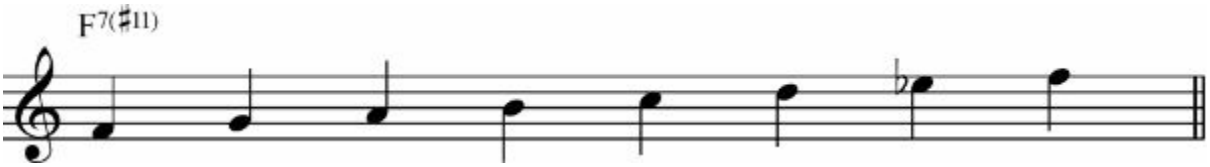
Lydian Dominant Scale

As the 4th mode of the melodic minor scale, the Lydian dominant can be easily understood from its name. You can think about this scale as a Mixolydian with #4(#11) notes. This scale is a favorite with jazz players because of its modern sound. The Lydian dominant can be played over ordinary dominant 7th chords just like the Mixolydian mode. The intervals are root, 2, 3, #4, 5, 6, and b7.

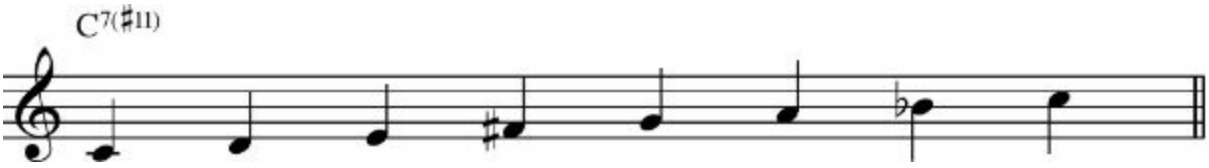
Fingering Patterns



F Lydian Dominant

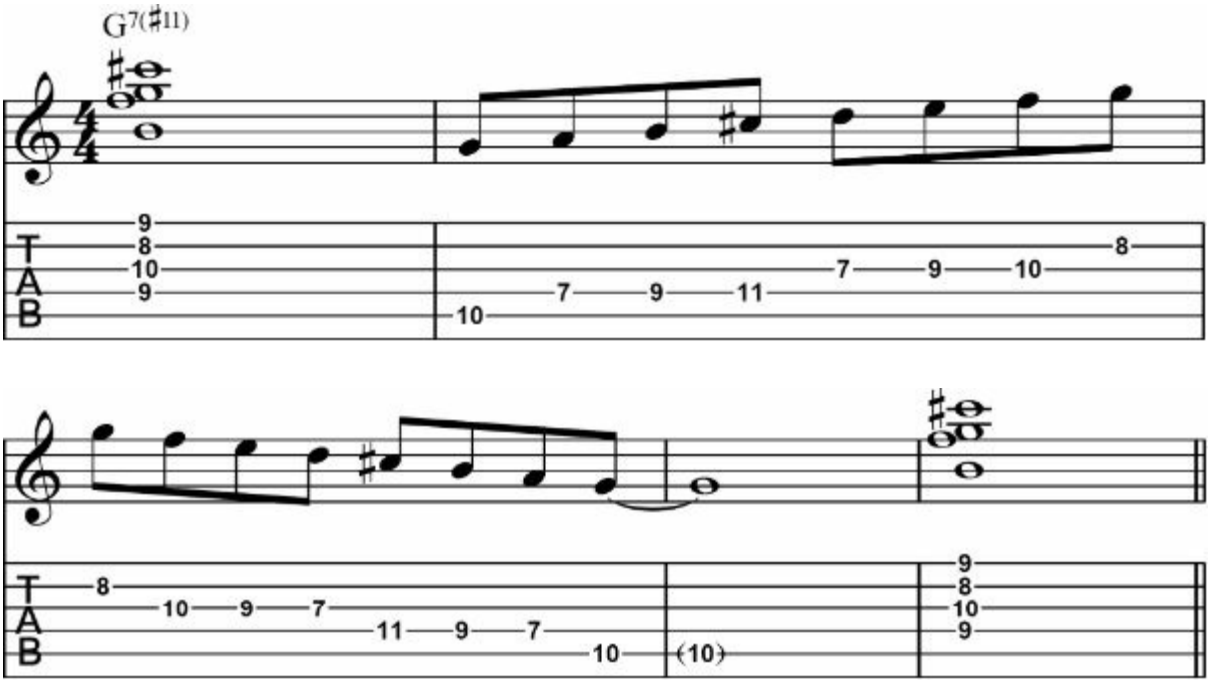


C Lydian Dominant

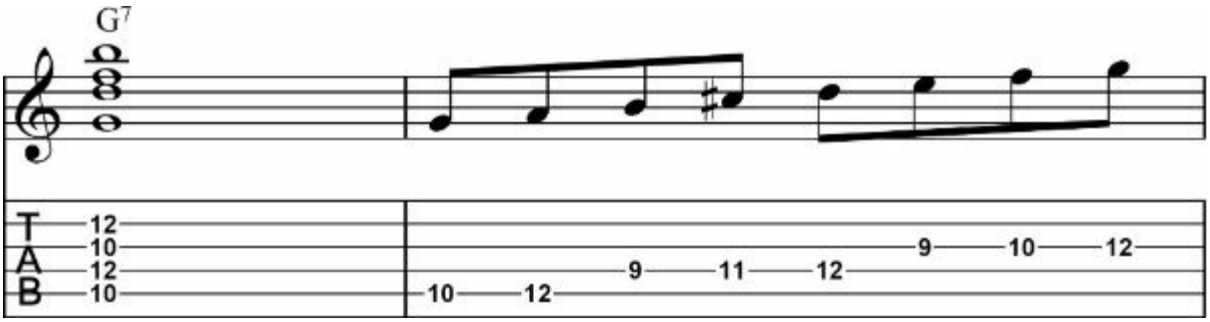


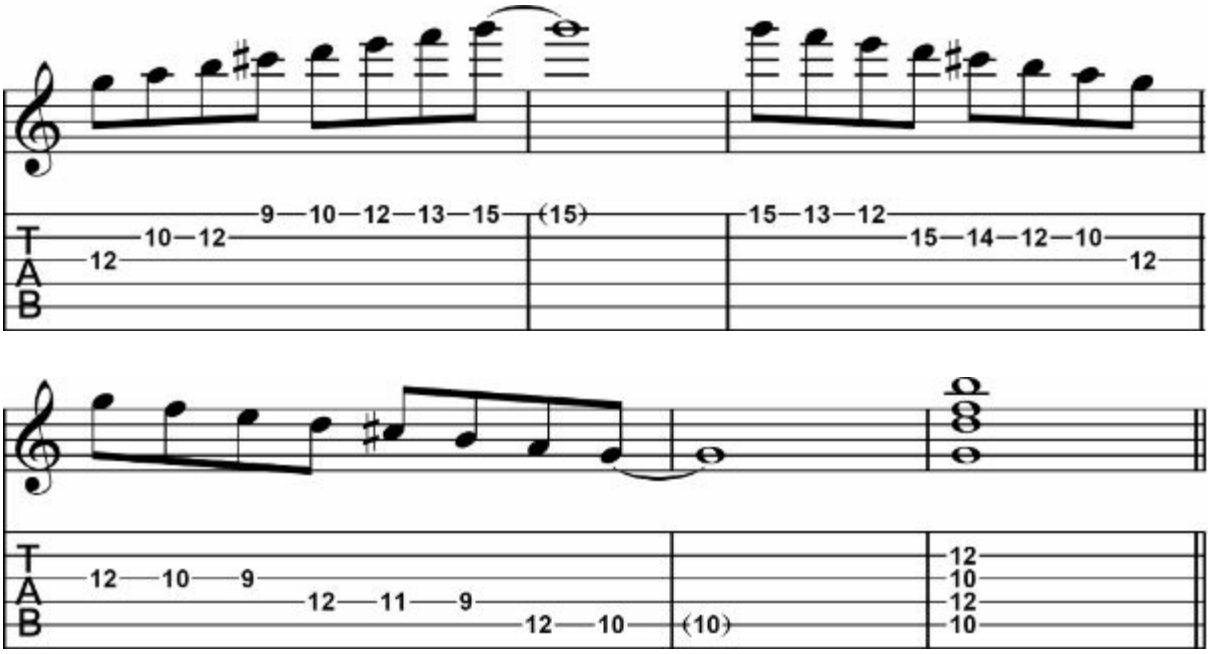
Scale Studies: G Lydian Dominant Scale

Pattern 1

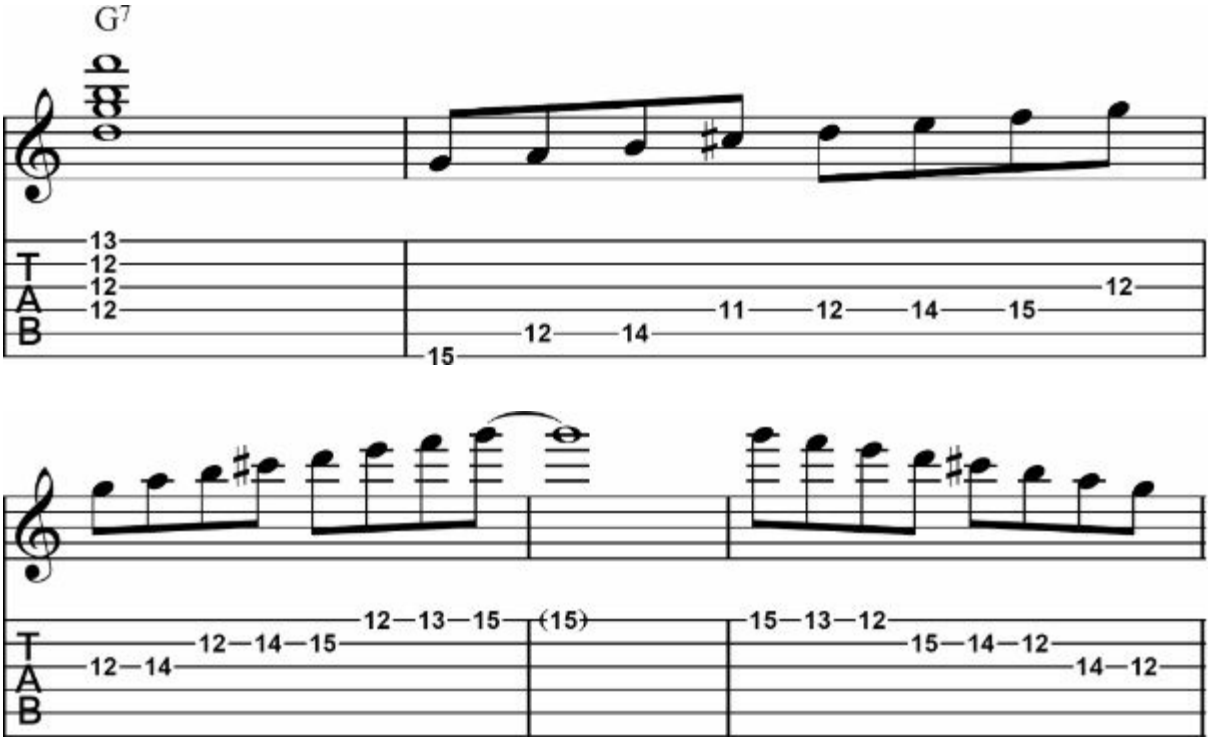


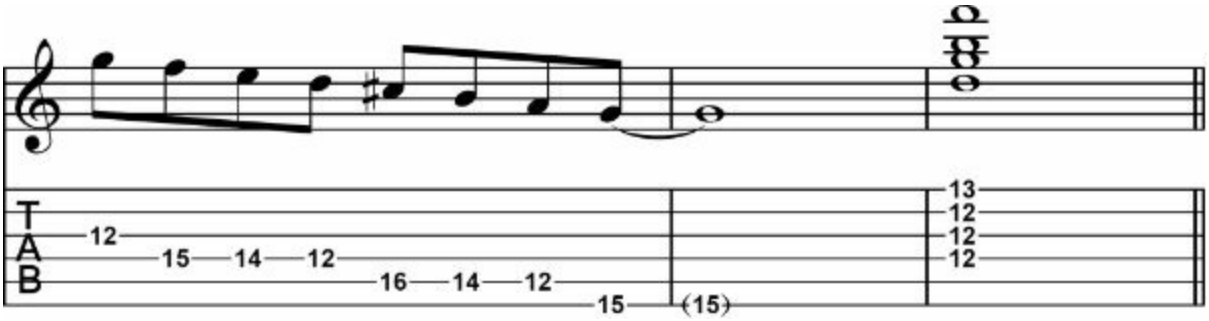
Pattern 2



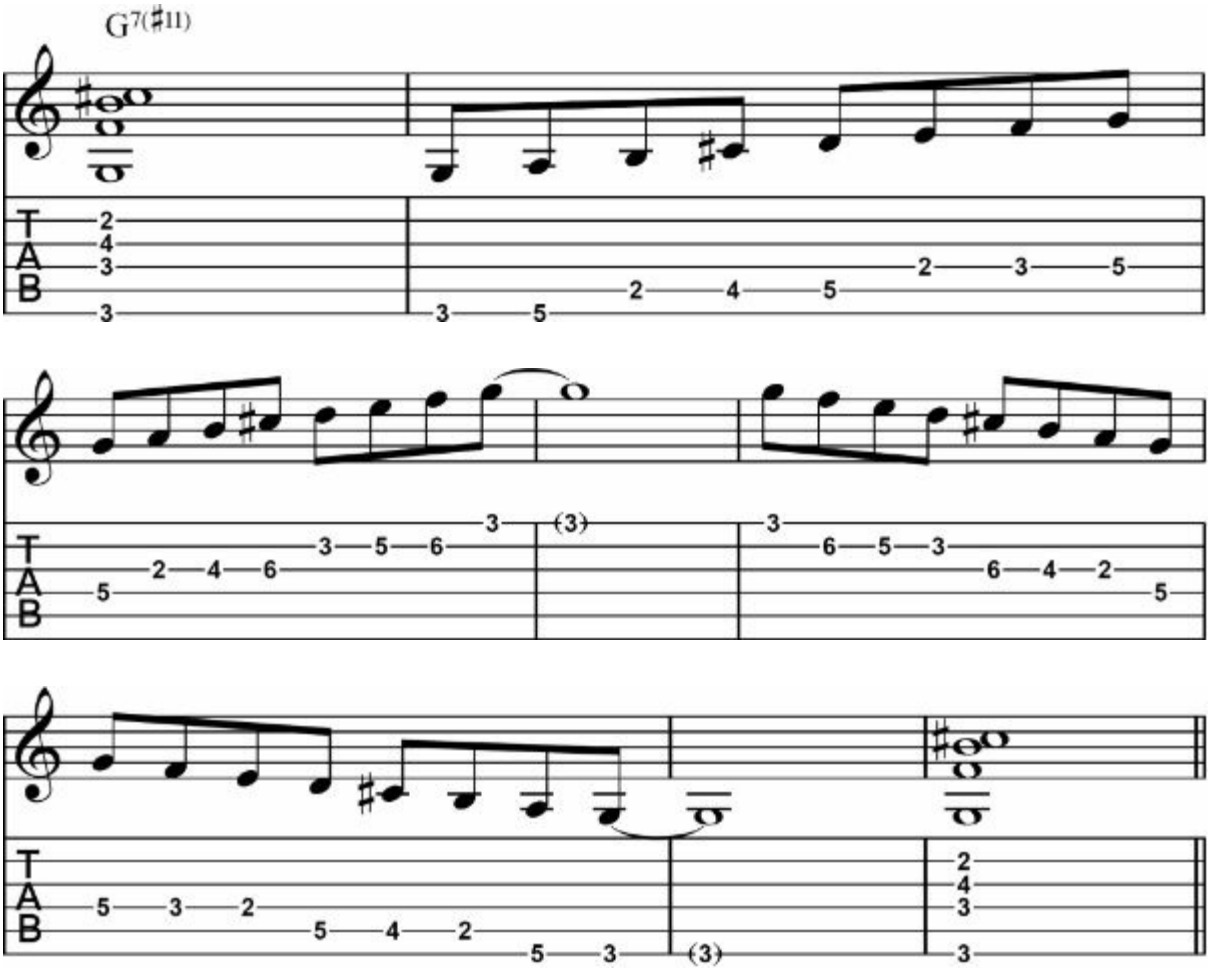

T
A
B
9 10 12 13 15 (15)
10 12
12
15 13 12
15 14 12 10
12
12 10 9
12 11 9
12 10
(10)
12
10
12
10

Pattern 3

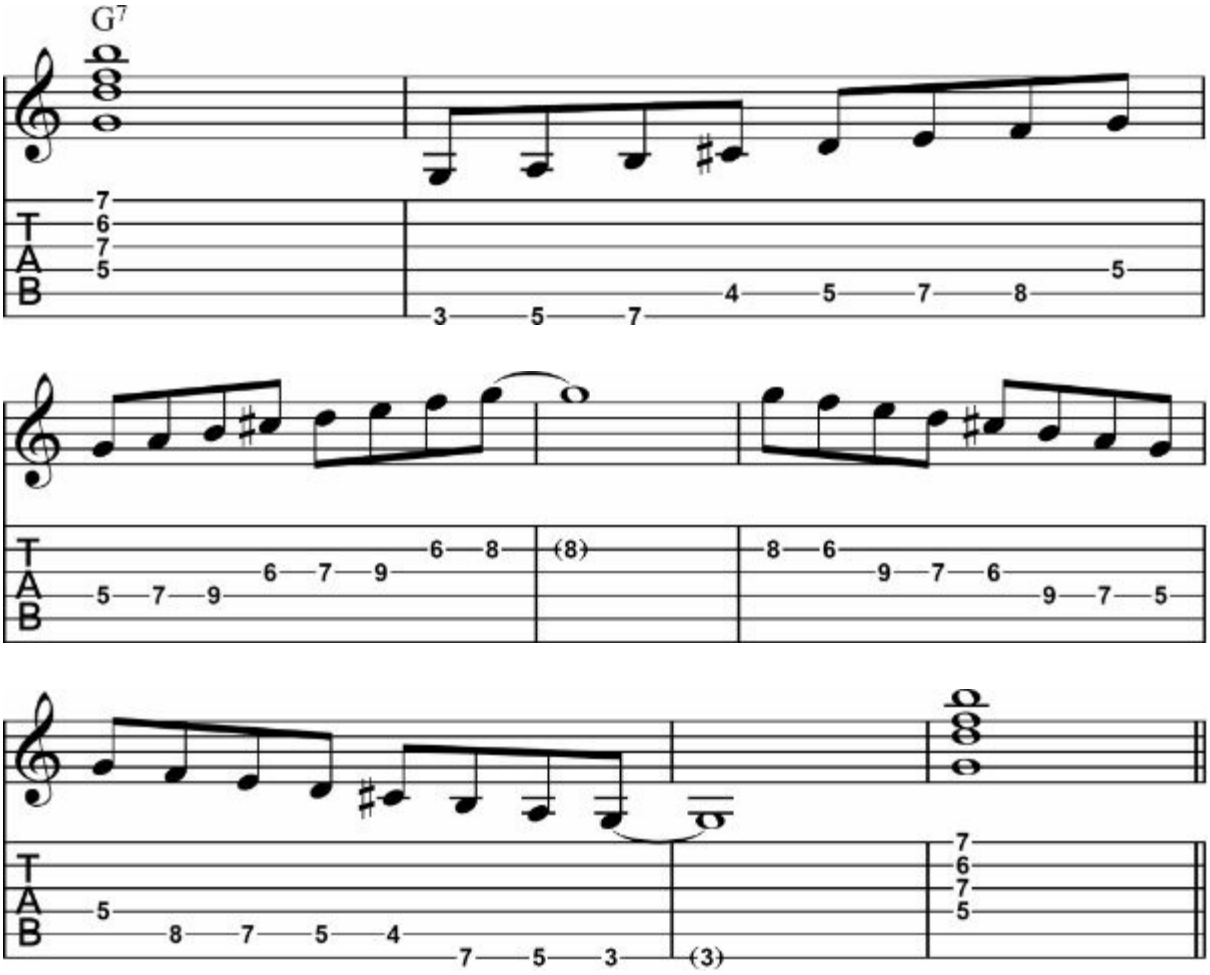

G7
T
A
B
13
12
12
12
15
12 14
11 12 14 15
12
12 13 15 (15)
12 14 15
12 14
15 13 12
15 14 12
14 12



Pattern 4

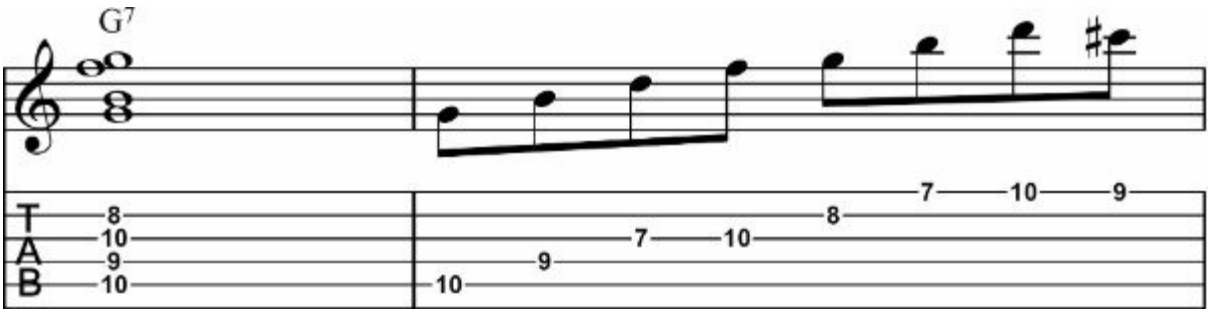


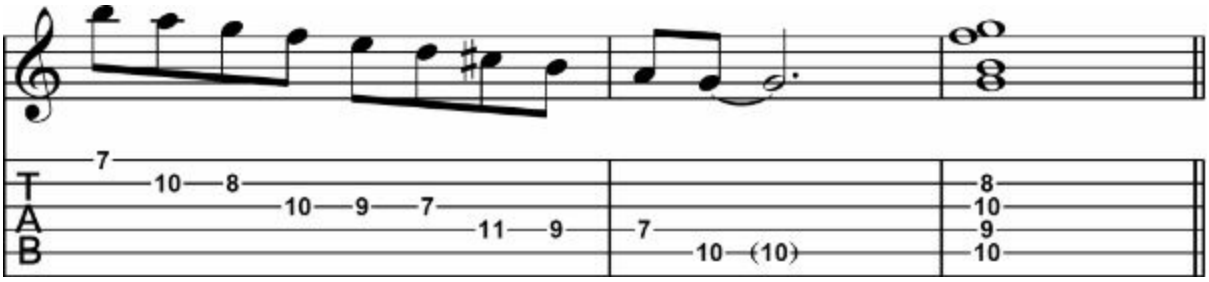
Pattern 5



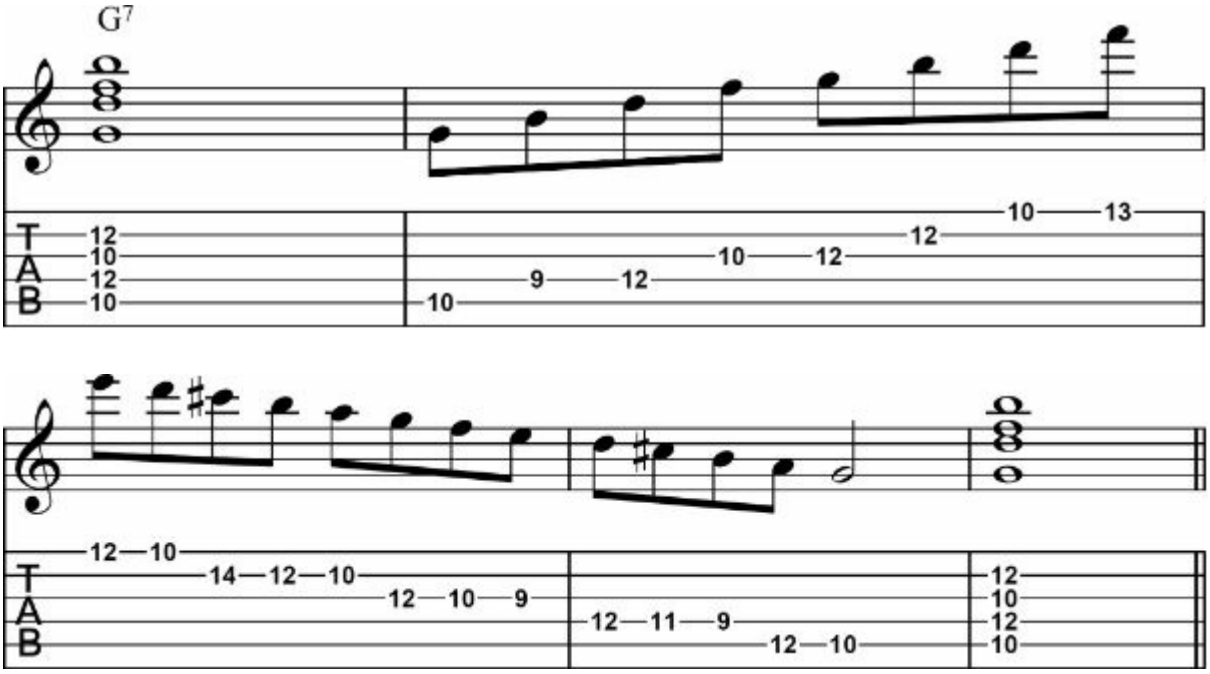
Arpeggio & Scale Studies: G7 & G Lydian Dominant Scale

Pattern 1

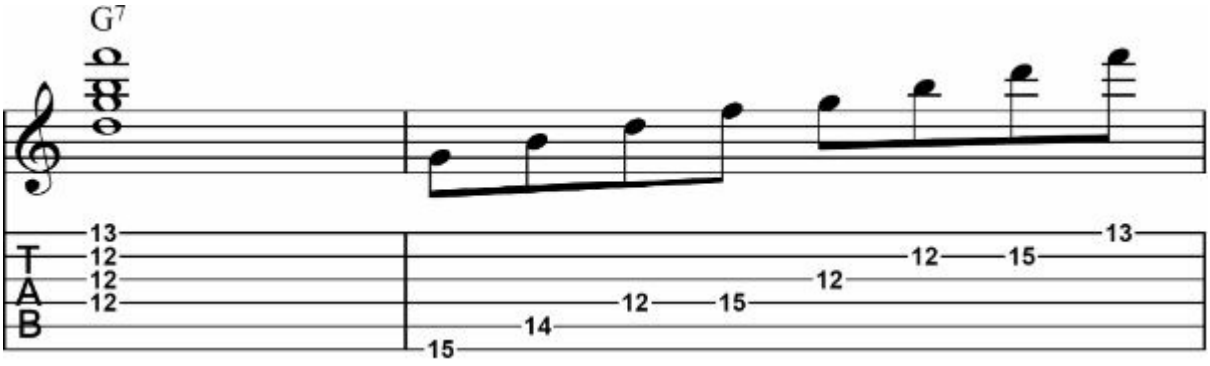


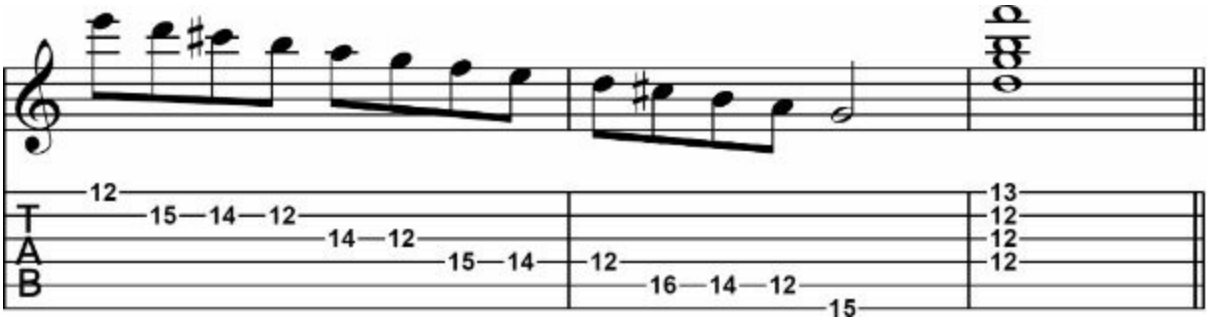


Pattern 2

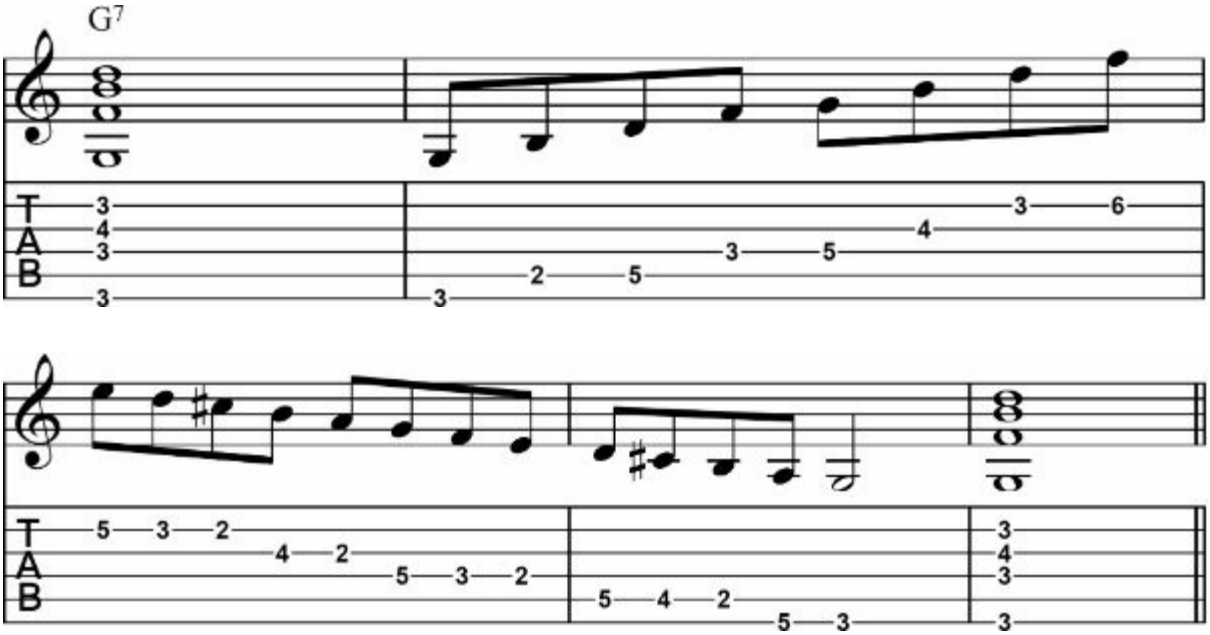


Pattern 3

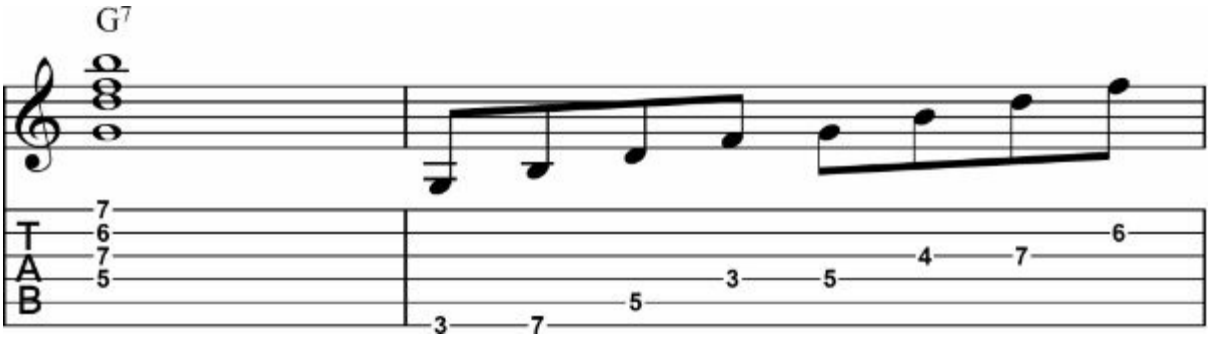


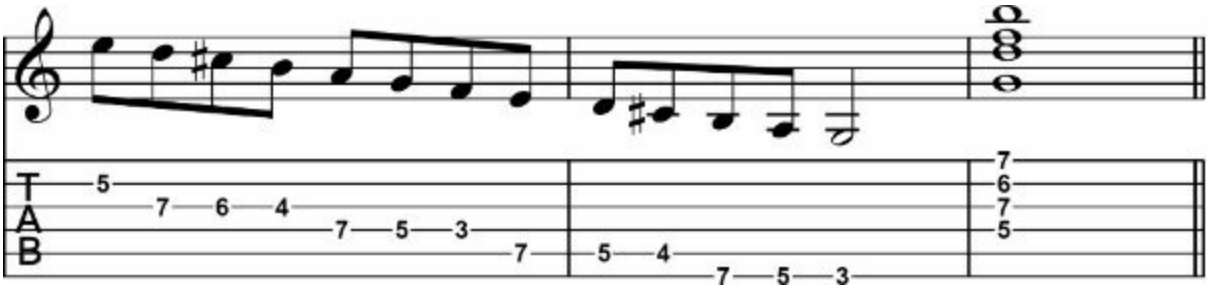


Pattern 4



Pattern 5

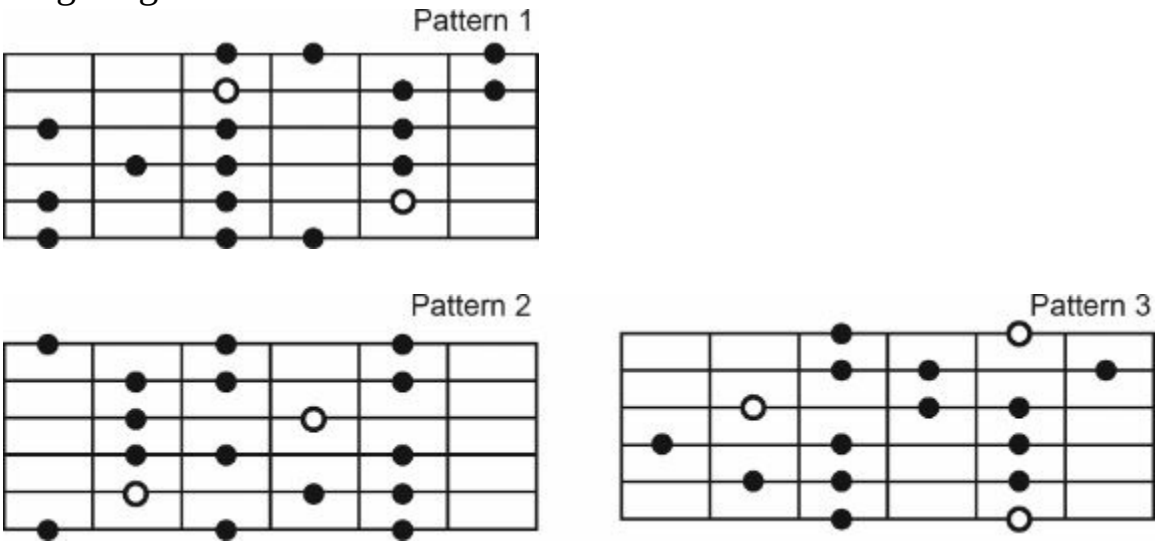


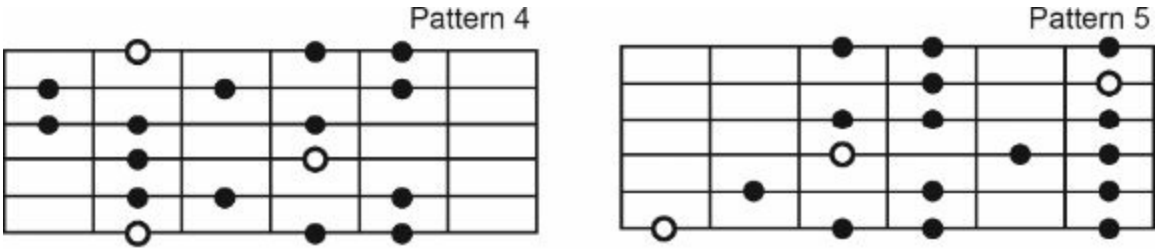


Locrian #2 / Half Diminished Scale

The Locrian #2 Scale is the 6th mode of the melodic minor scale. The intervals are root, 2, b3, 4, b5, b6, and b7. Due to its natural 2nd, this scale is more useful and easy to use than the Locrian mode. You can think of this scale as a natural minor with a b5 note. You can play the Locrian #2 scale over mi7(b5) chord.

Fingering Patterns

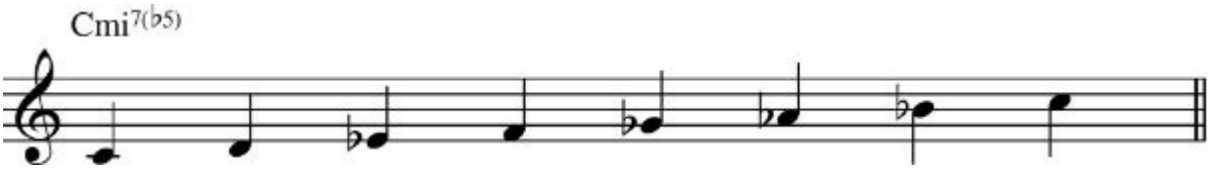




A Locrian #2

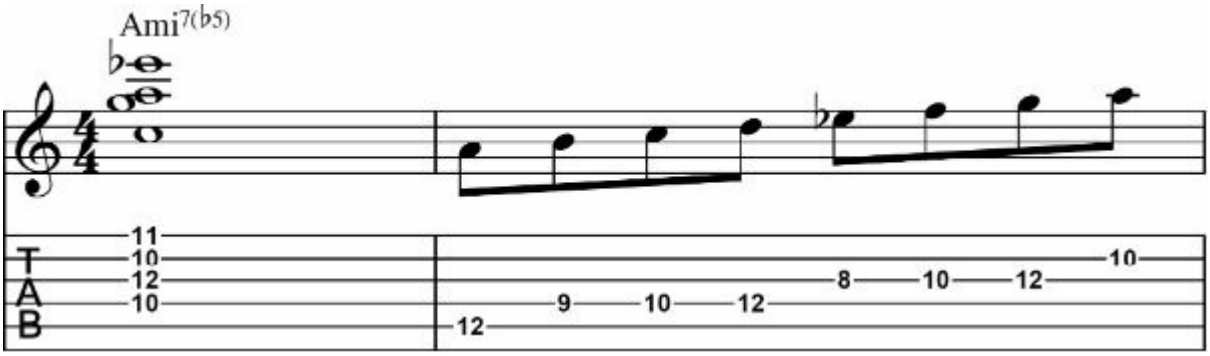


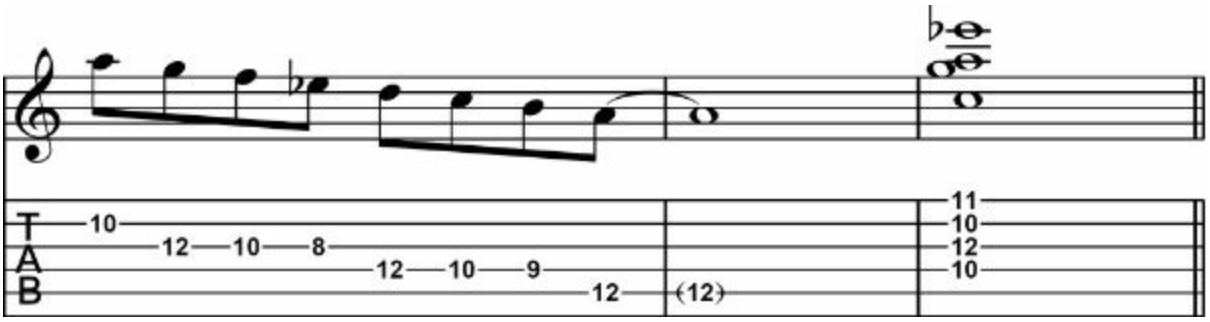
C Locrian #2



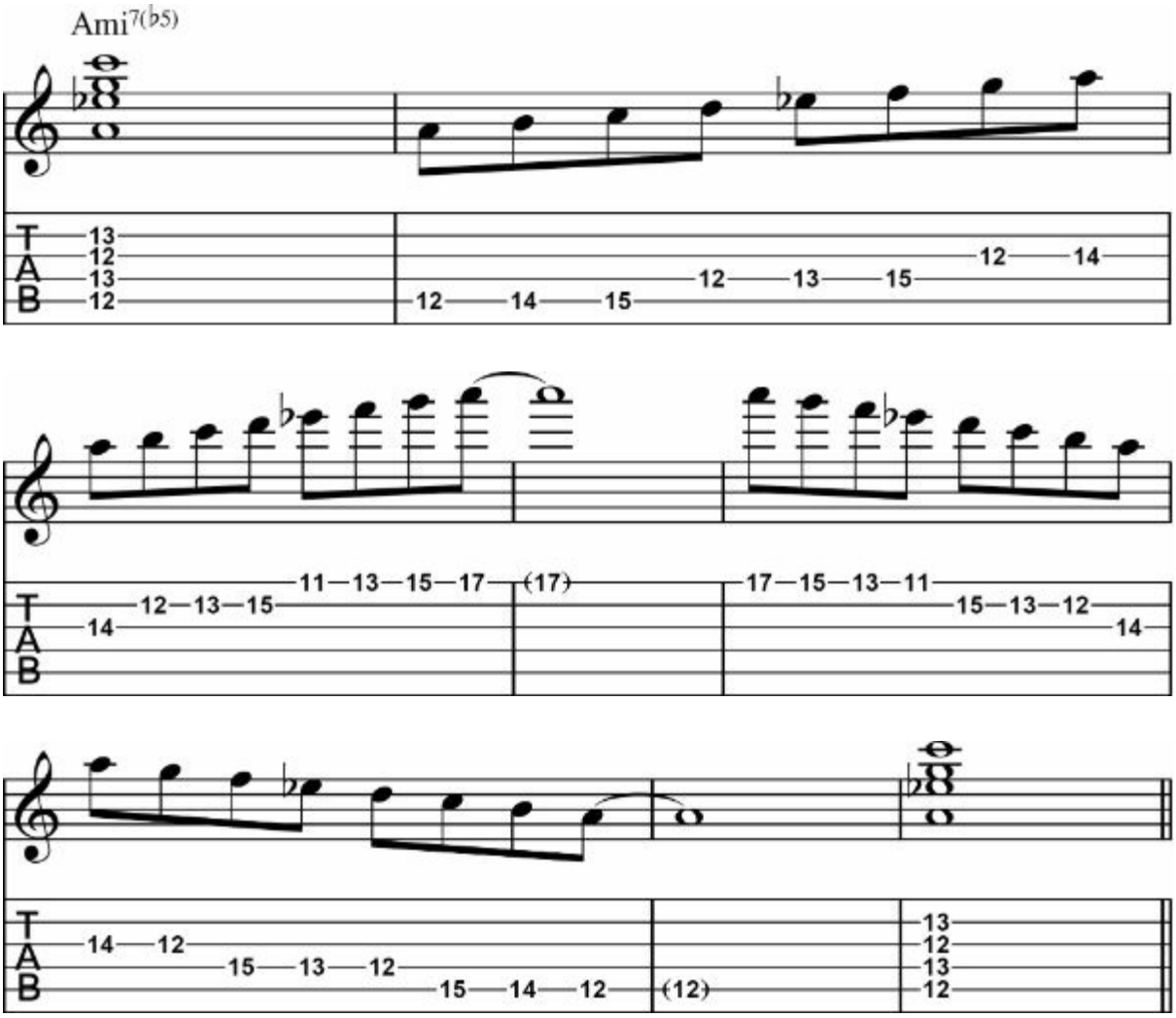
Scale Studies: A Locrian #2 Scale

Pattern 1





Pattern 2



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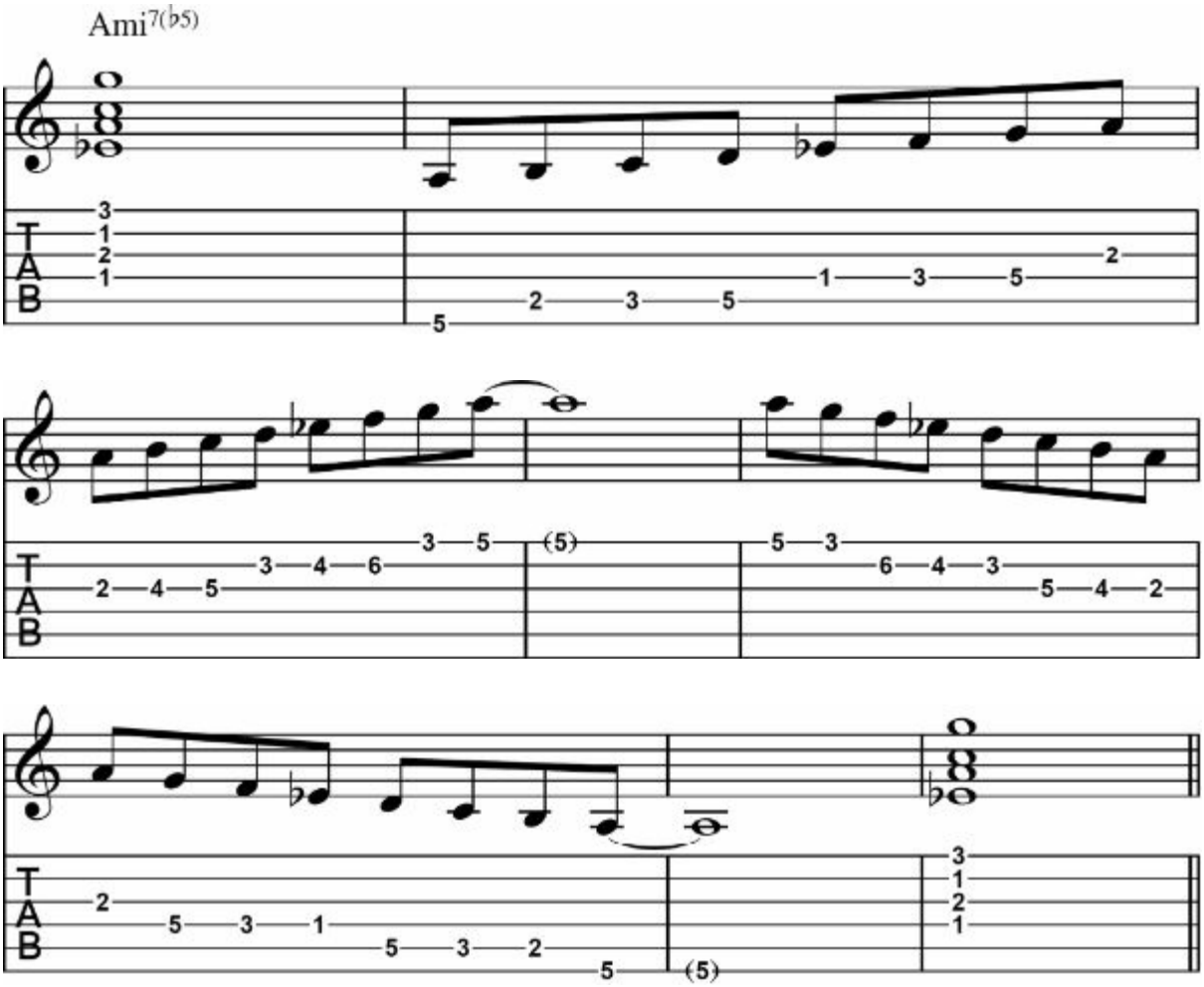
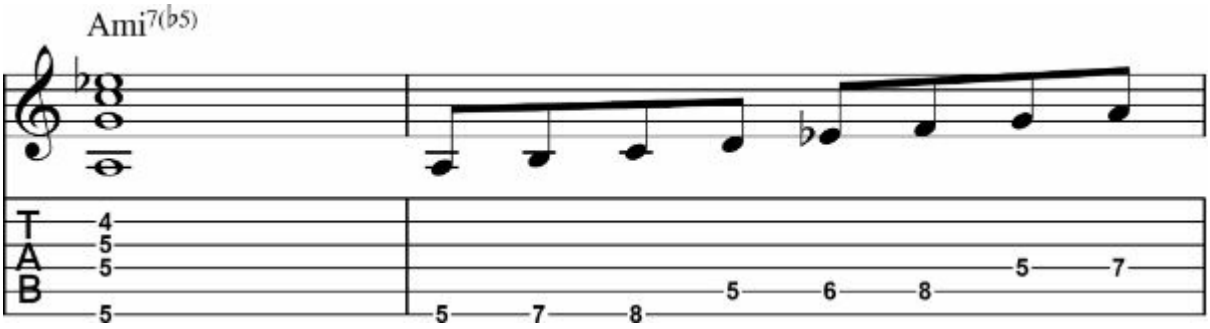
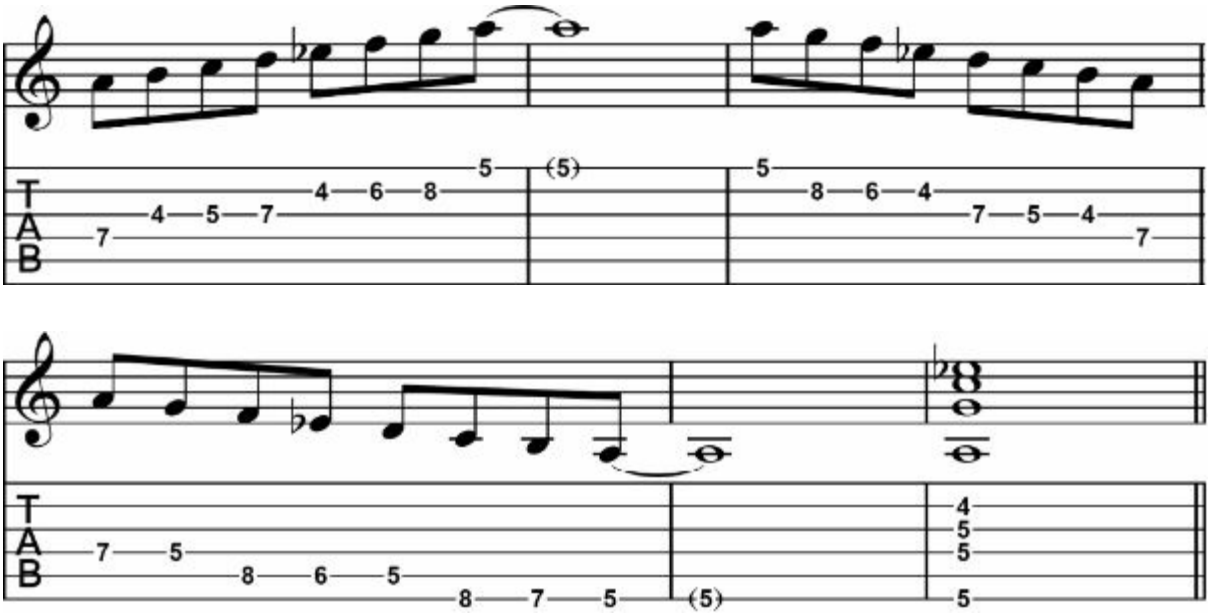
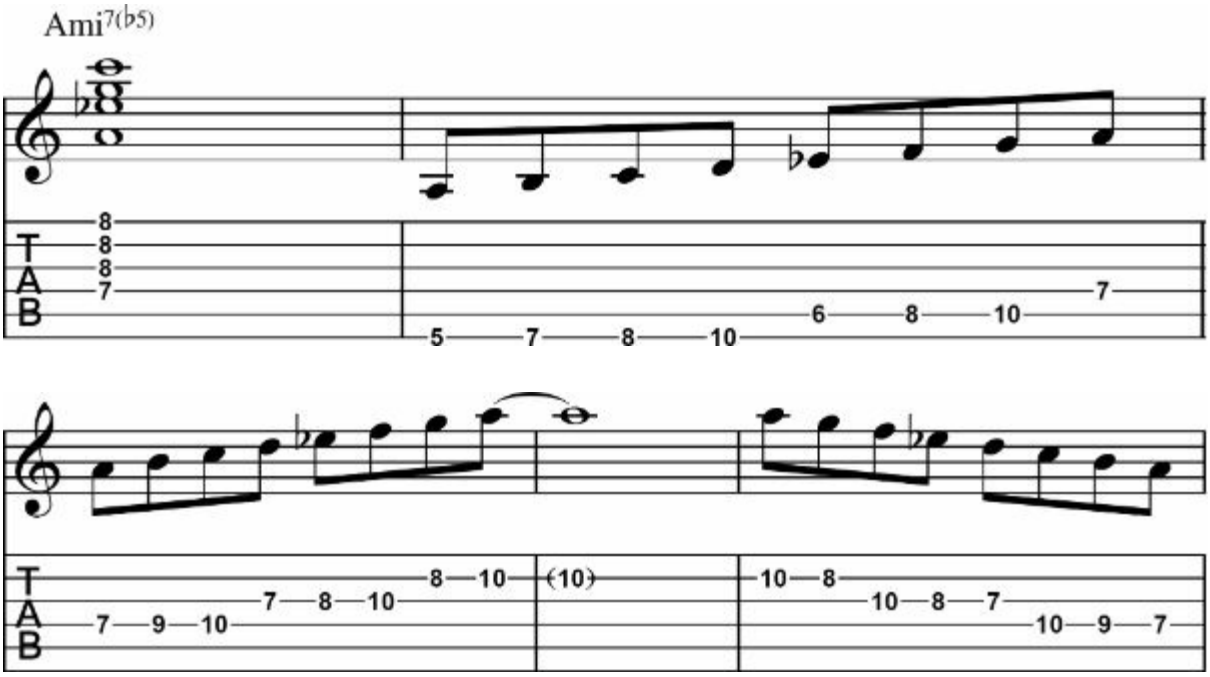


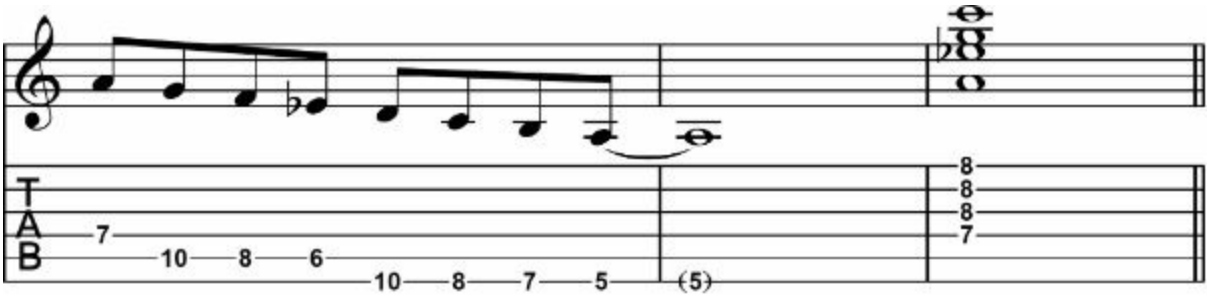
Pattern 4





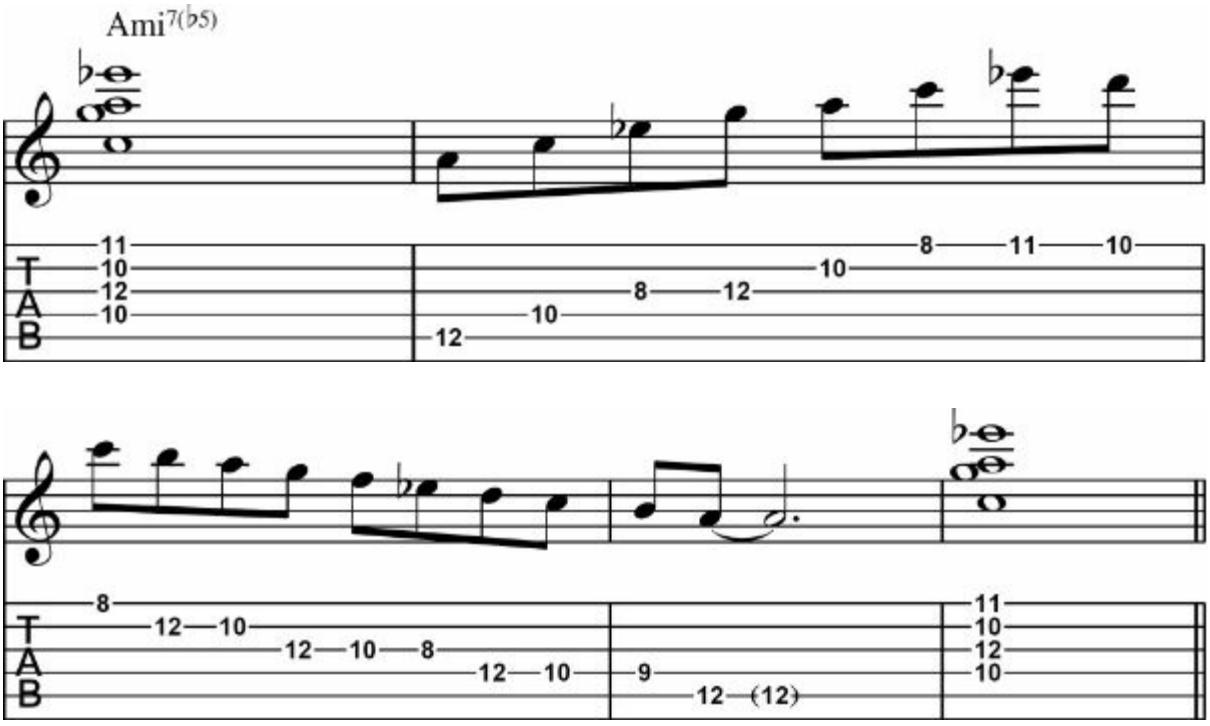
Pattern 5



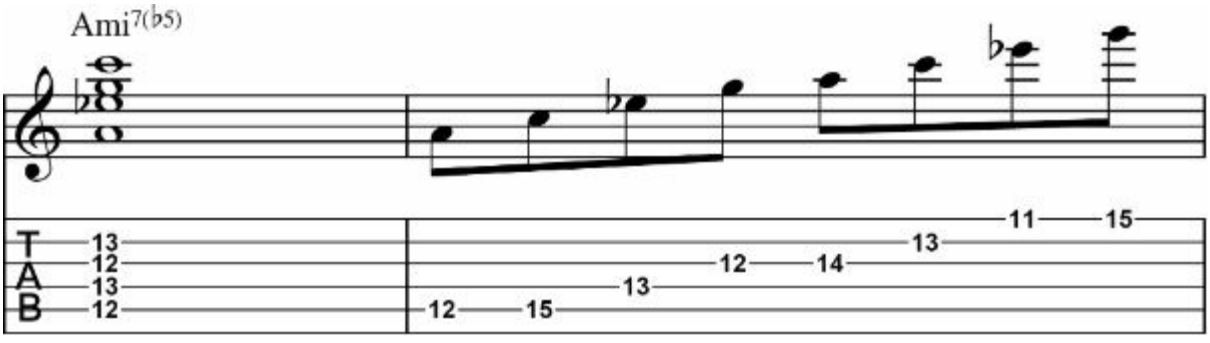


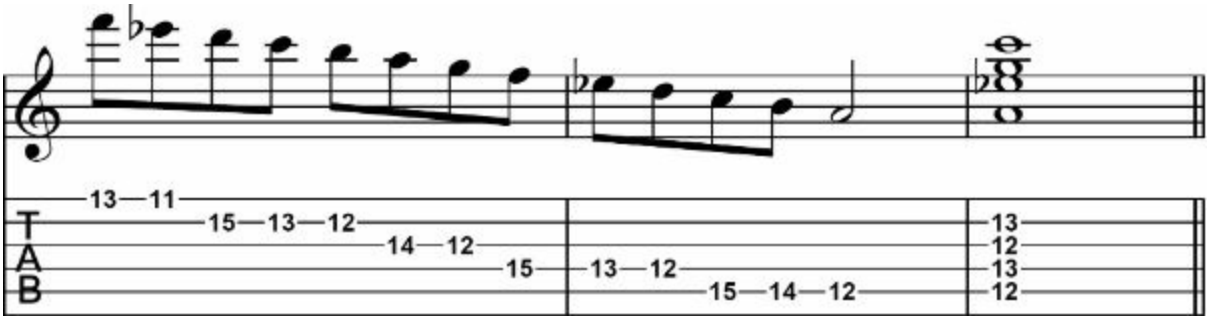
Arpeggio & Scale Studies: Ami7(b5) & A Locrian #2 Scale

Pattern 1



Pattern 2





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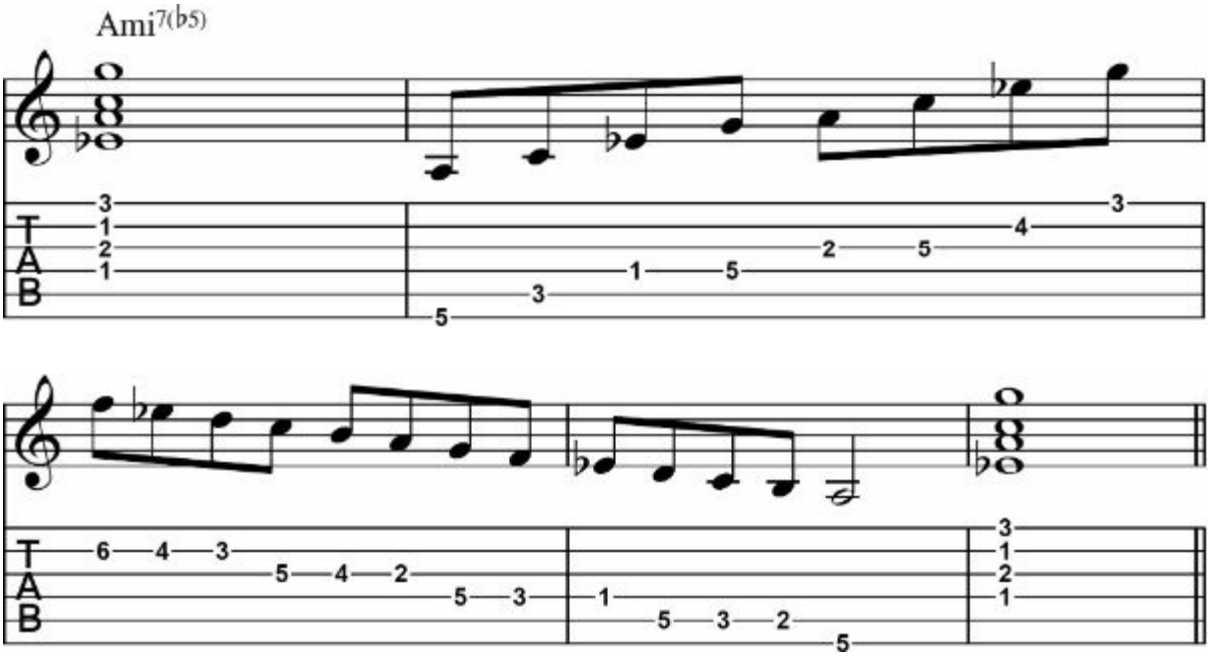
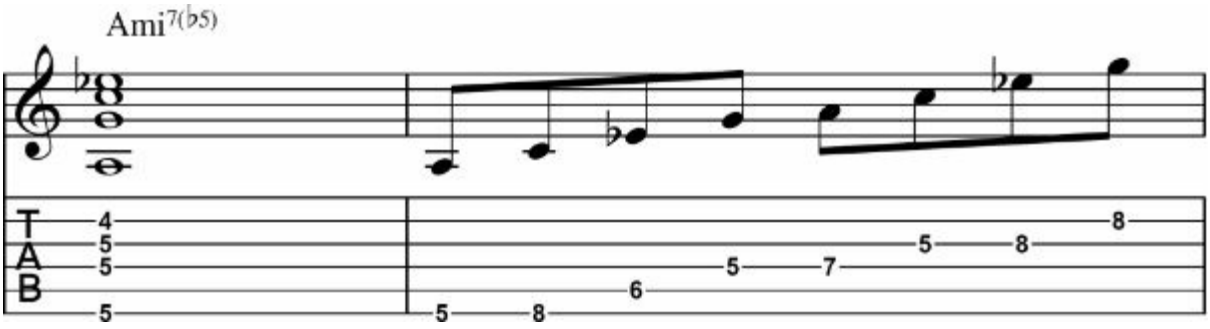
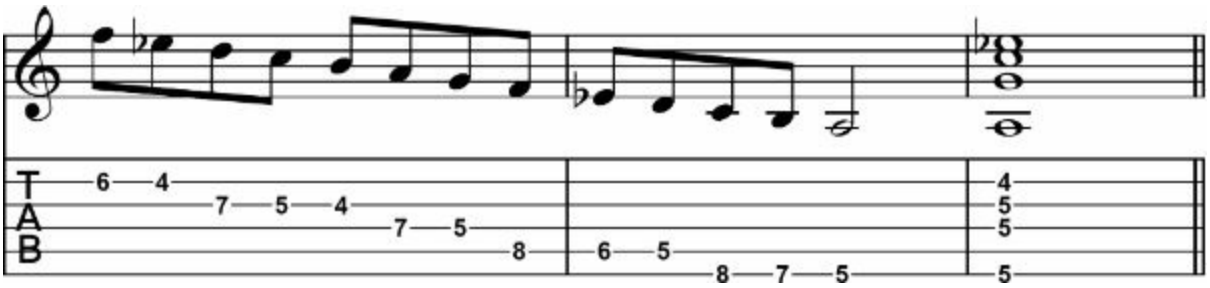
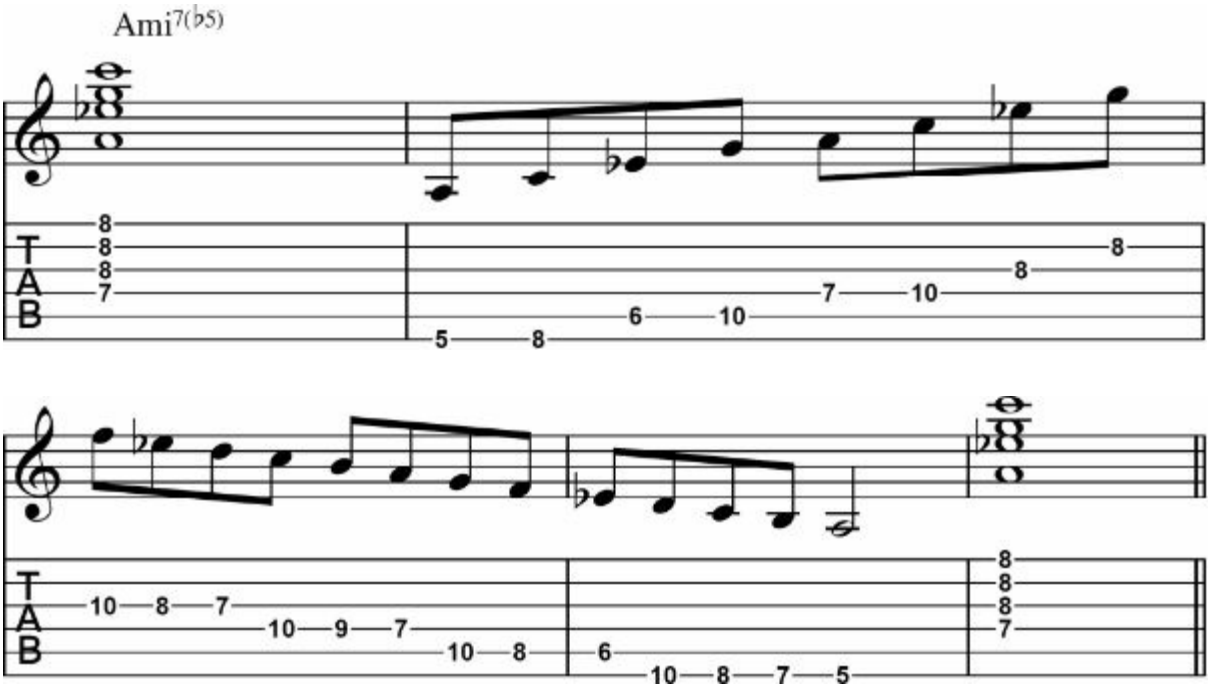


Pattern 4





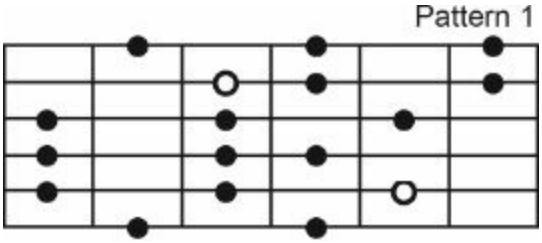
Pattern 5

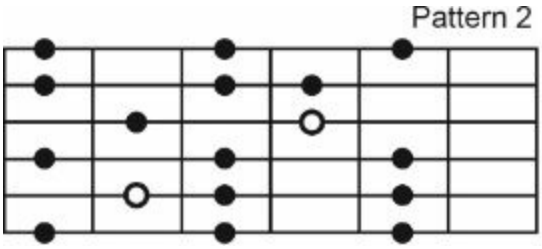


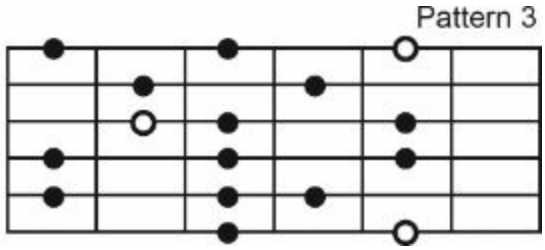
Altered Scale

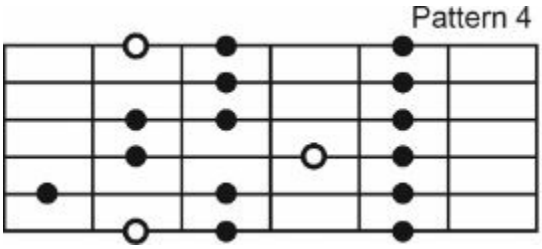
The Altered scale is the one of most important scale in jazz improvisation. It’s the 7th mode of the melodic minor scale and is also called the super Locrian scale. This scale has chord tones of dominant 7th chord-root, 3rd, and b7 and its all possible alterations-b5, #5, b9, and #9. The Altered scale can be used over functioning dominant chord on V7-I progressions. When you use this out-sounding scale, the resolution on I chord is very important. The intervals are root, b9, #9, 3, b5, #5, and b7.

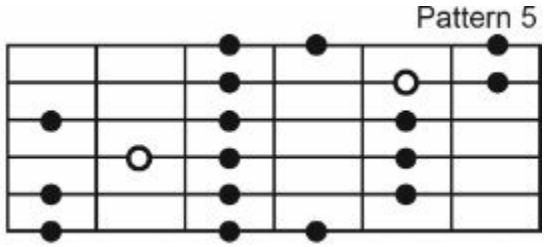
Fingering Patterns



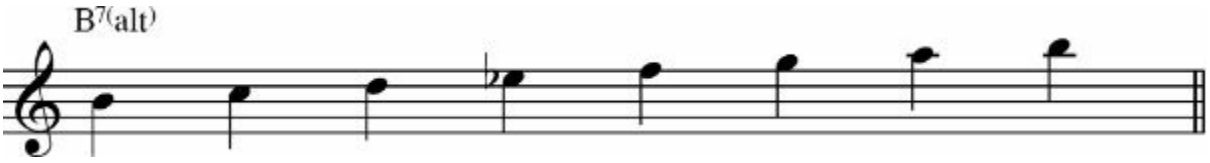




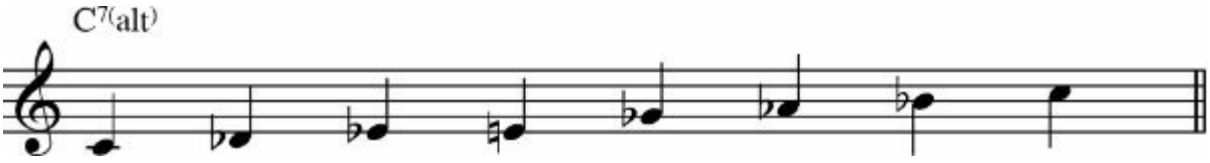




B Altered Scale

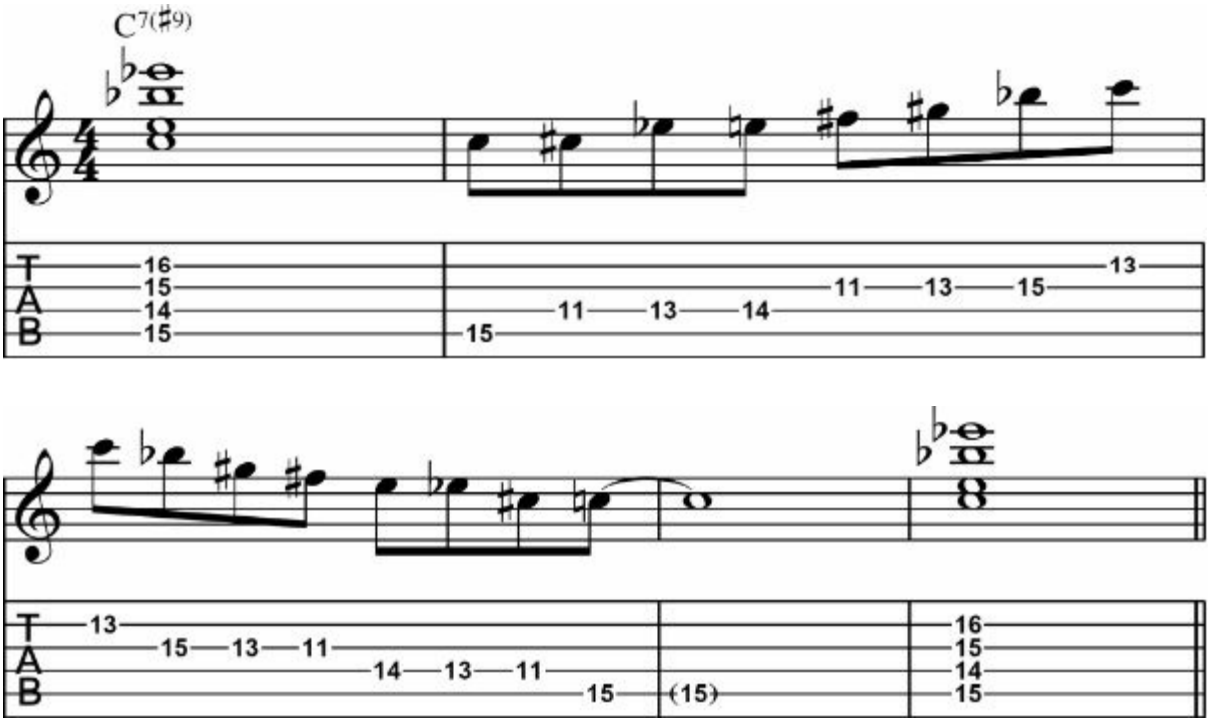


C Altered Scale

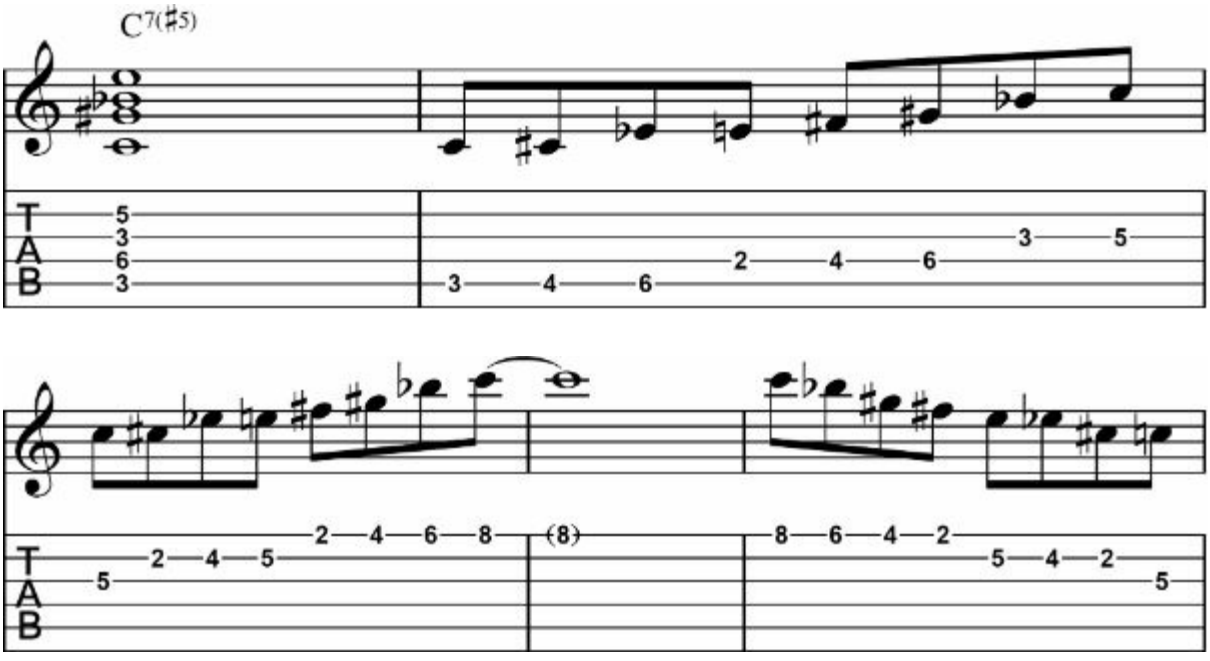


Scale Studies: C Altered Scale

Pattern 1


C7(♯9)
T
A
B
16
15
14
15
15
11
13
14
13
11
13
15
13
15
13
11
14
13
11
15
(15)
16
15
14
15

Pattern 2


C7(♯5)
T
A
B
5
3
6
3
3
4
6
2
4
6
3
5
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2
4
5
2
4
6
8
(8)
8
6
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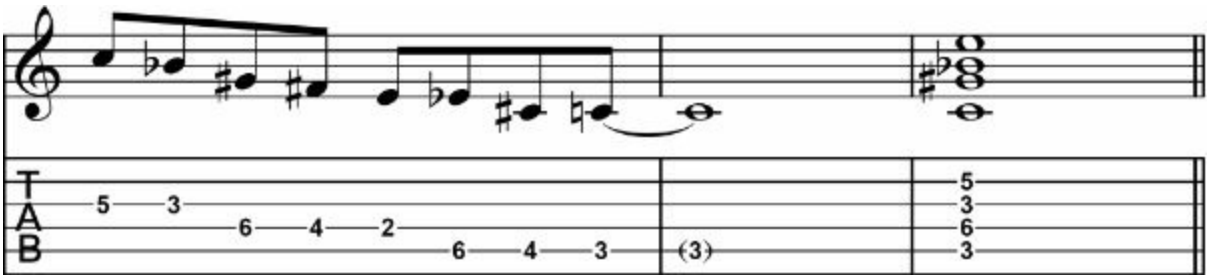
4
2
5



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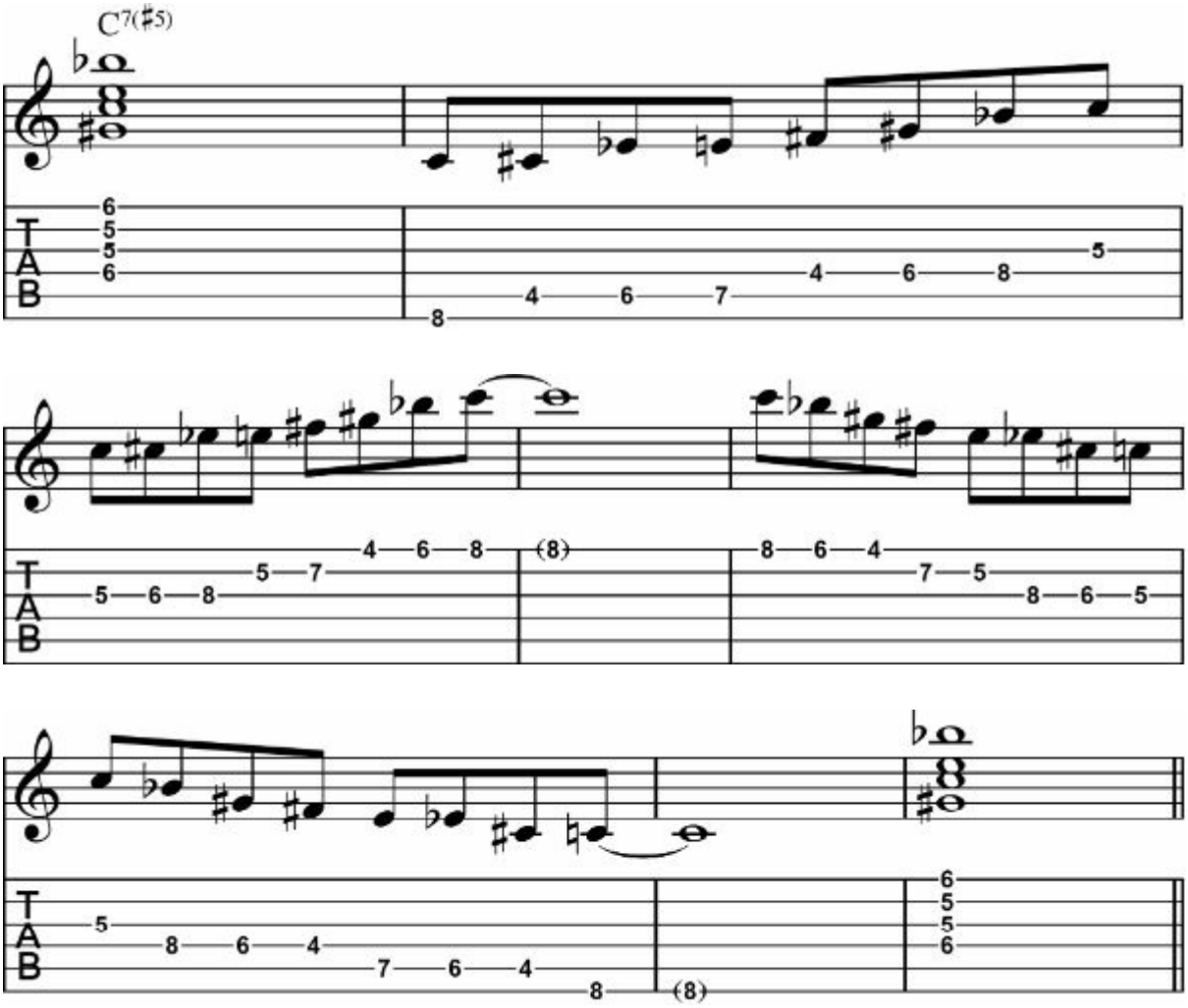

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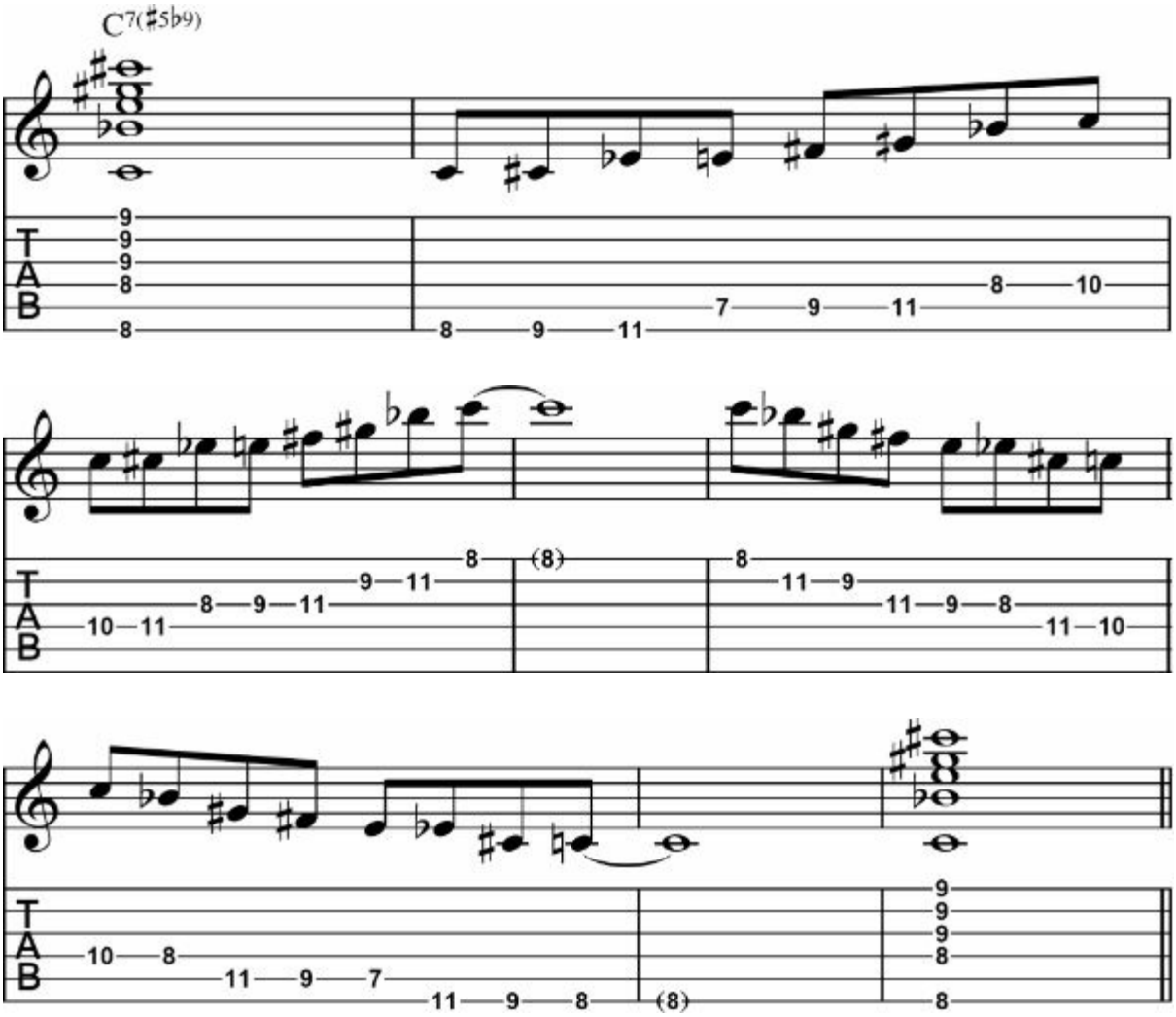

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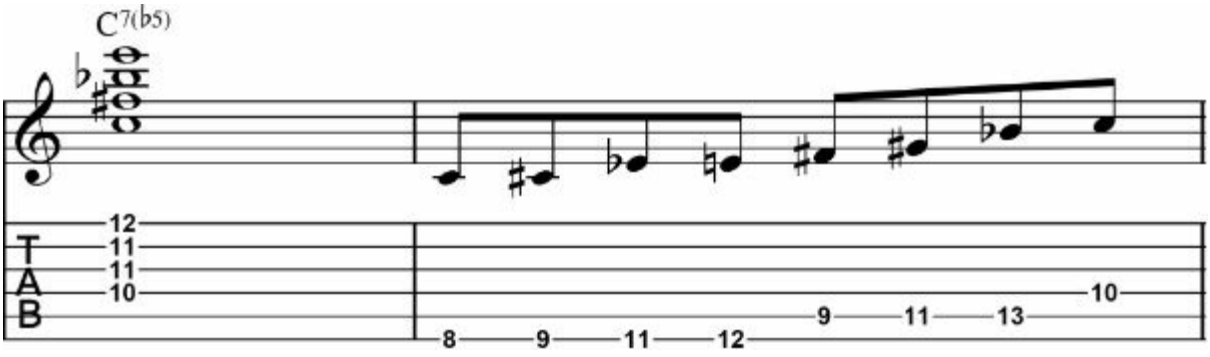

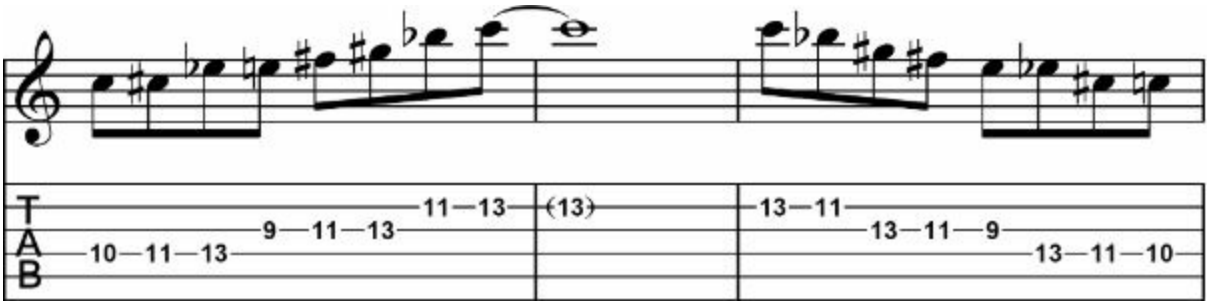

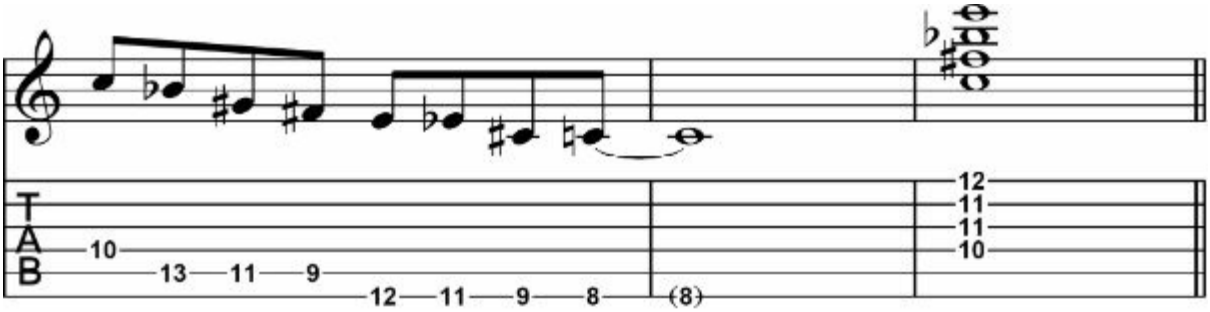

Arpeggio & Scale Studies: C7(alt) & C Altered Scale

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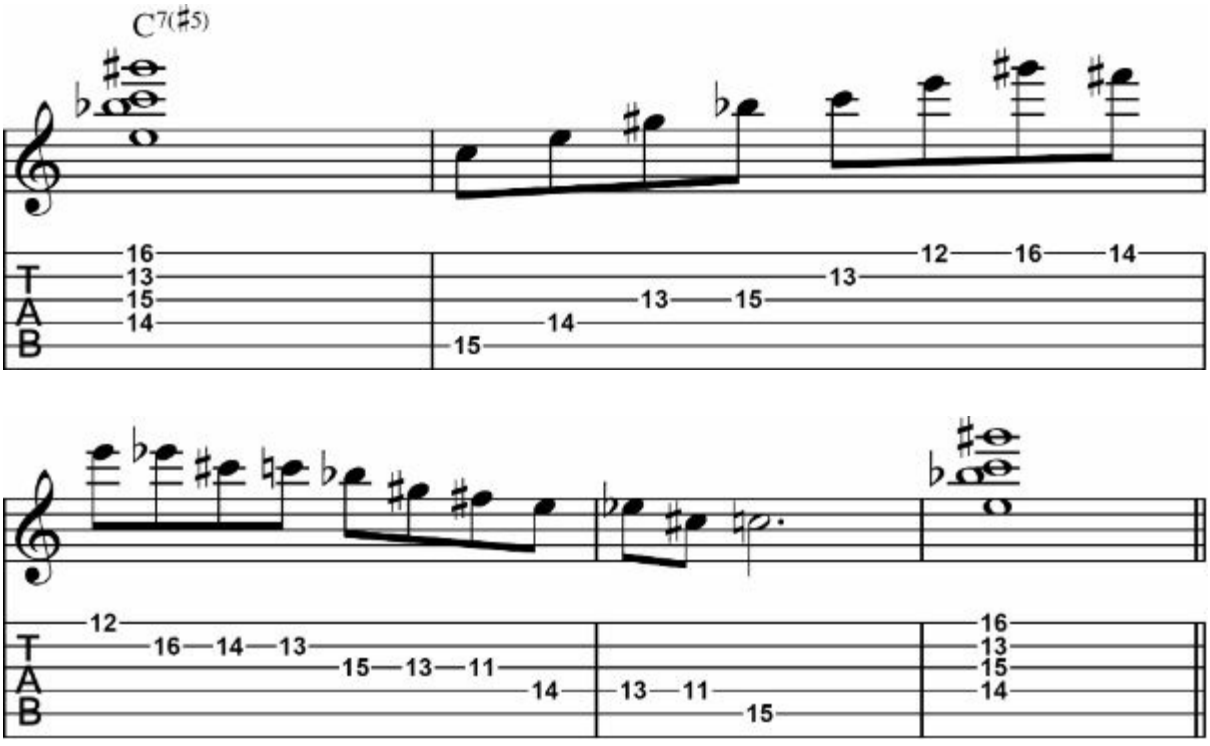

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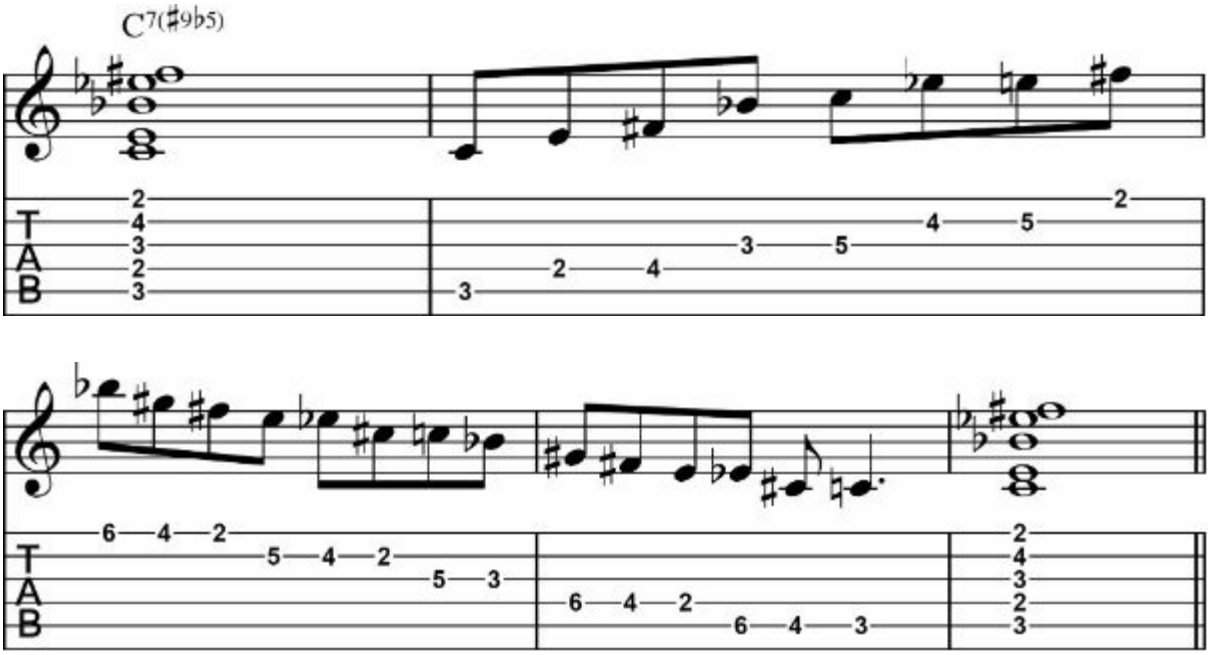

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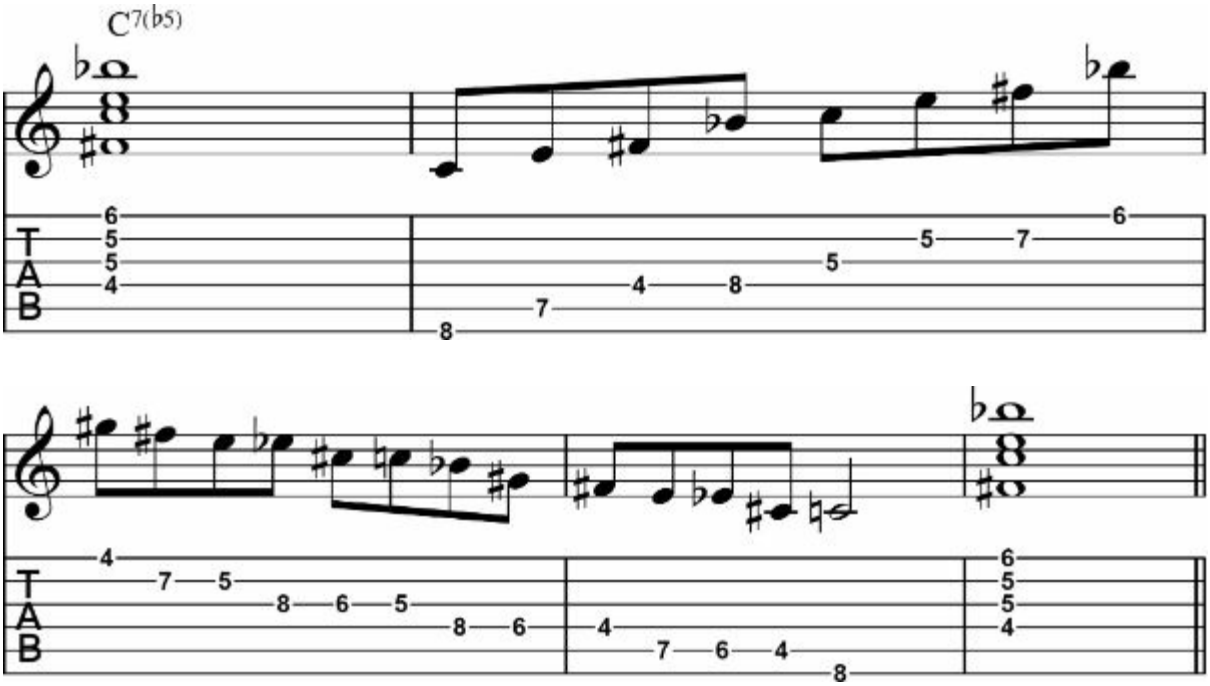

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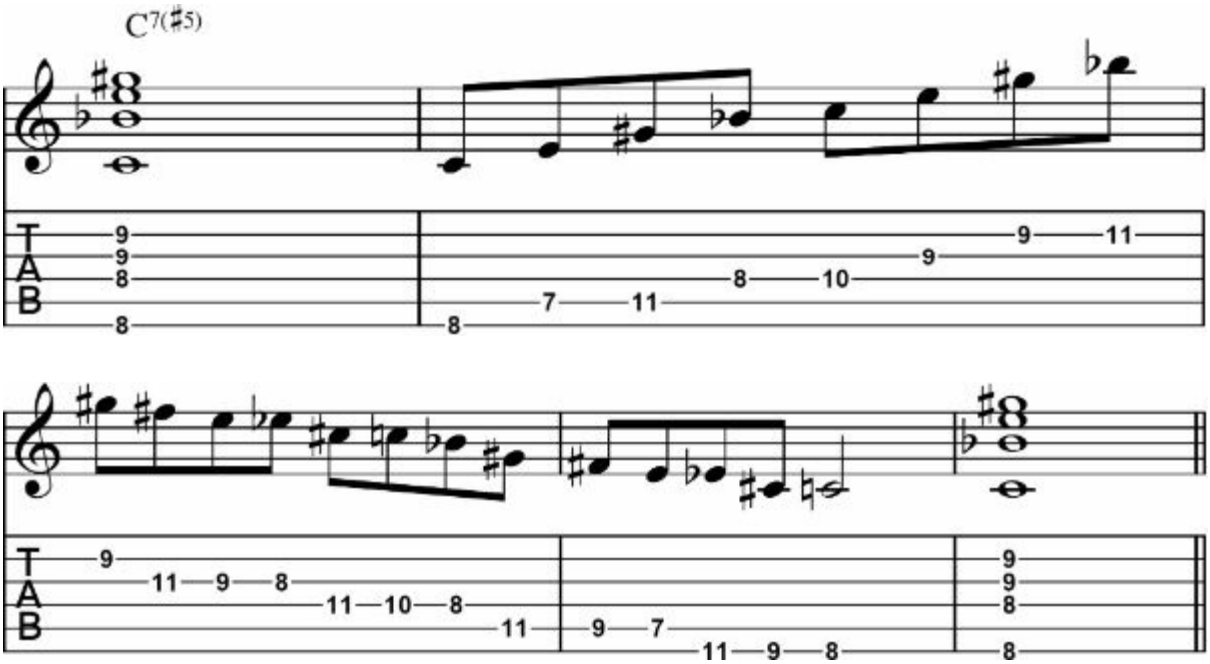

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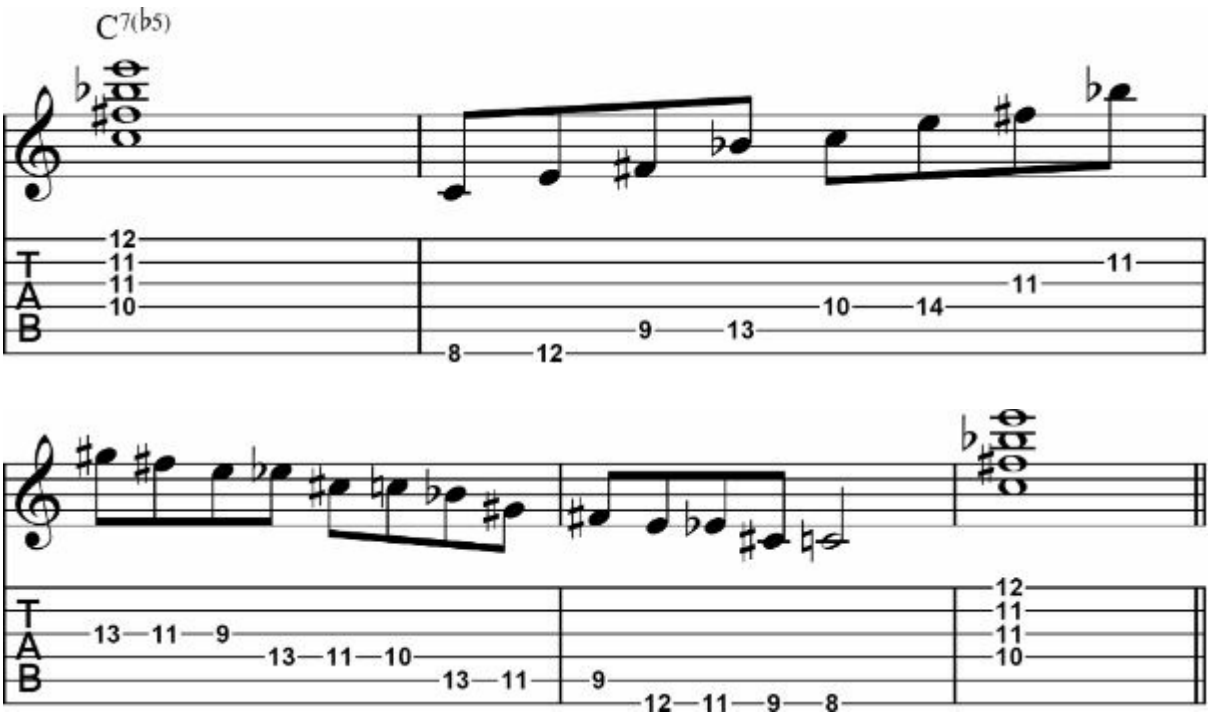


Chapter 4

Other Scales

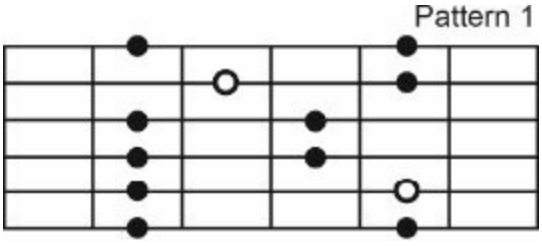
In this chapter, we are going to study the non-harmonic scales such as the diminished, blues, pentatonic, whole-tone, and bebop scales. You may find other scales later on, but I believe we have been through all the scales we need for improvisation. Scales are just one of the fundamentals for improvisation. There are more elements for good soloing such as chord tone arpeggios, diatonic harmonies, rhythms and variations, touch and dynamics, etc. Good soloing will come out eventually when you can handle these strategic points.

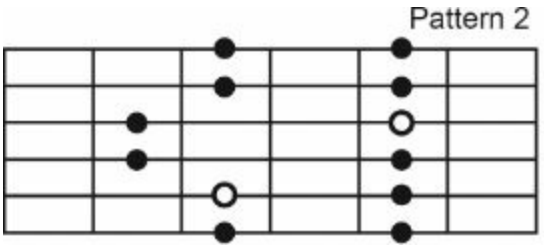
Pentatonic Scales

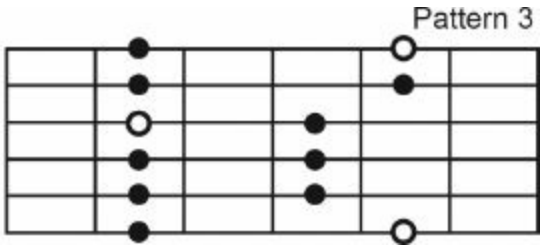
If I had to choose only one scale to improvise from, I think the pentatonic scale would be it. The Pentatonic scale is a guitar friendly scale because of its easy fingerings. You can use this scale for most music genres and situations. The major pentatonic scale has five notes as a root, 2, 3, 5, and 6 while the minor pentatonic has a root, b3, 4, 5, and b7. You can add other notes and mix with the pentatonic. Major 9, major 3rd, b5 notes are common add-ons to pentatonic scales.

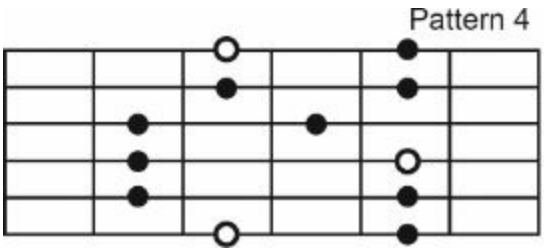
Major Pentatonic Scales

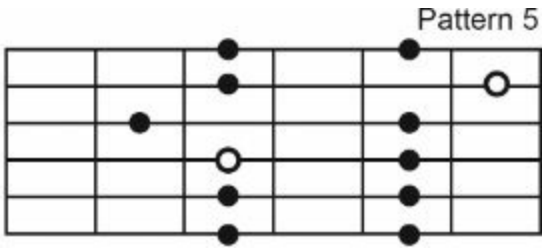
Fingering Patterns



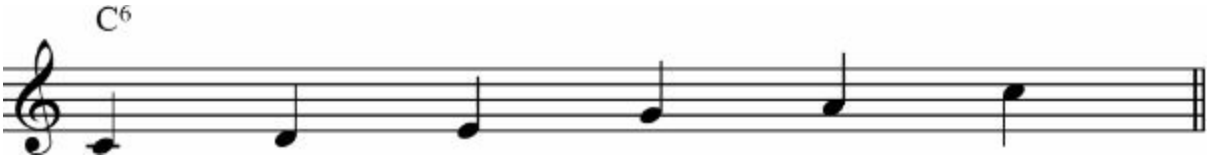




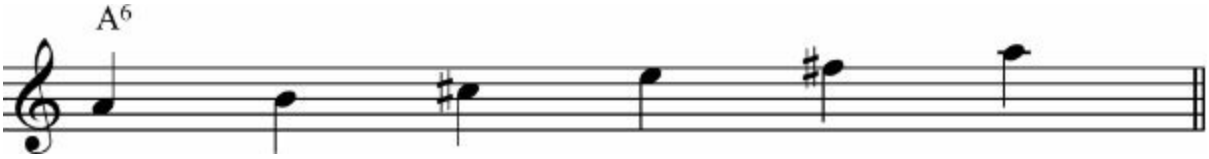




C Major Pentatonic Scale

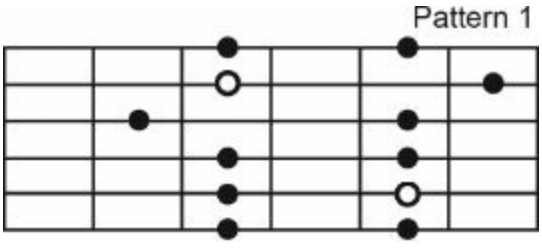


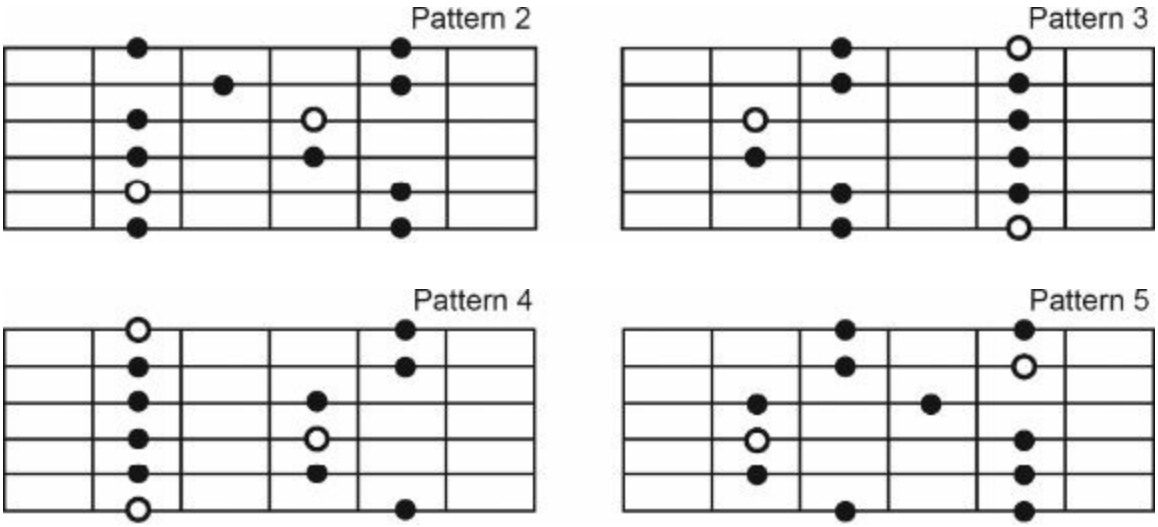
A Major Pentatonic Scale



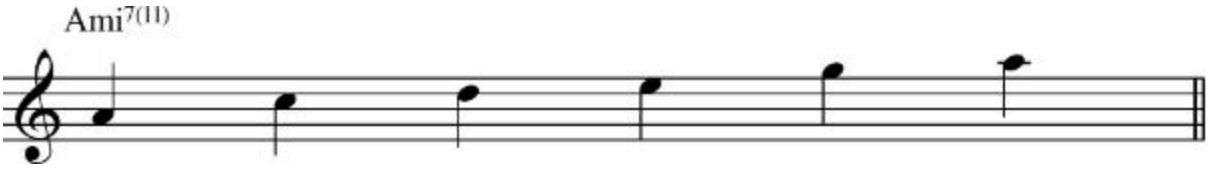
Minor Pentatonic Scales

Fingering Patterns

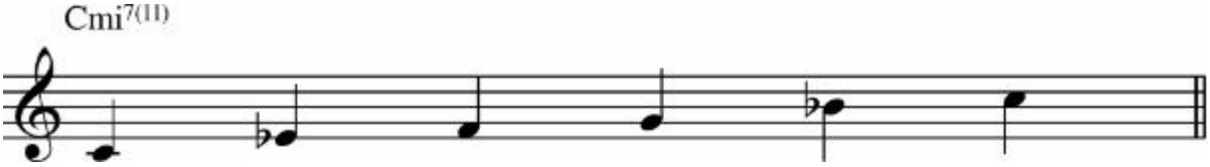




A Minor Pentatonic Scales



C Minor Pentatonic Scales



Scale Studies: C Major Pentatonic Scale

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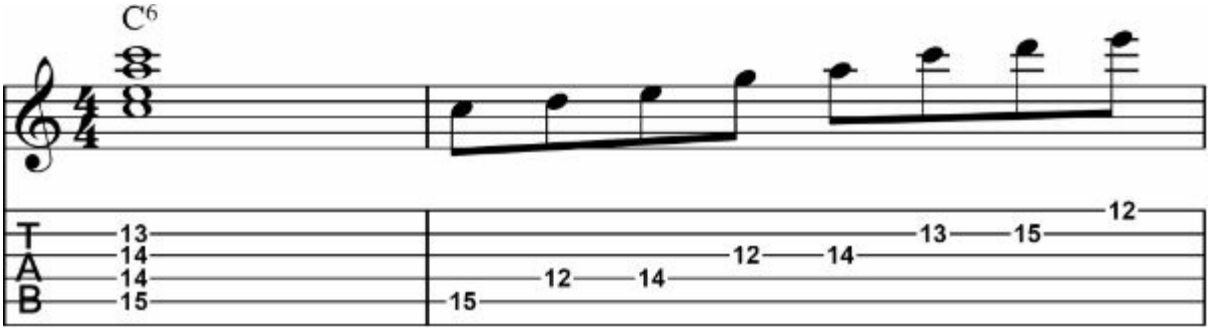

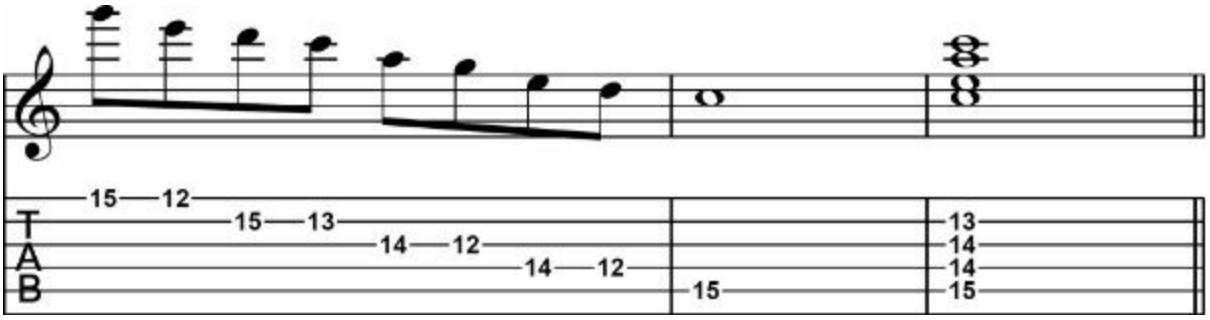

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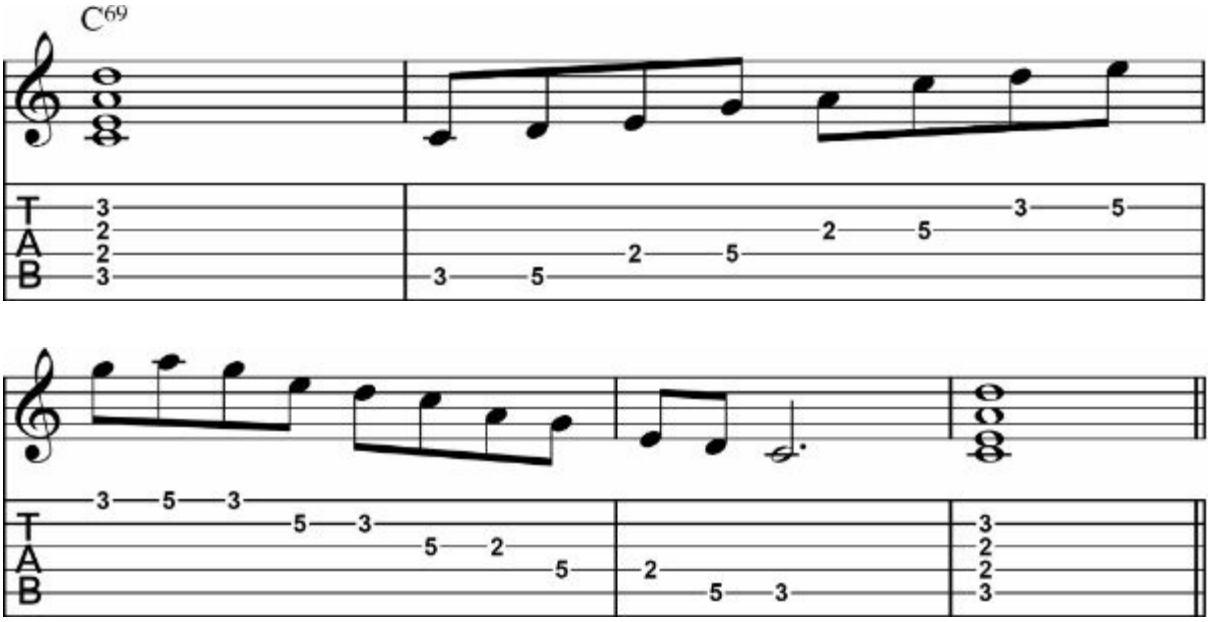

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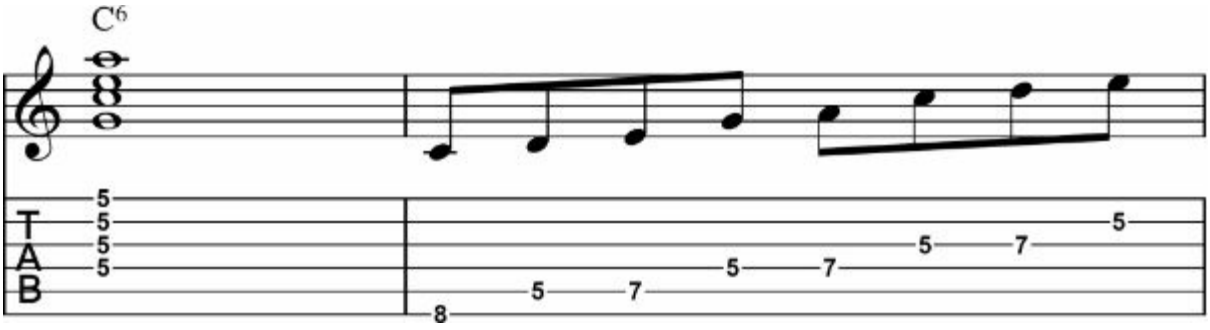

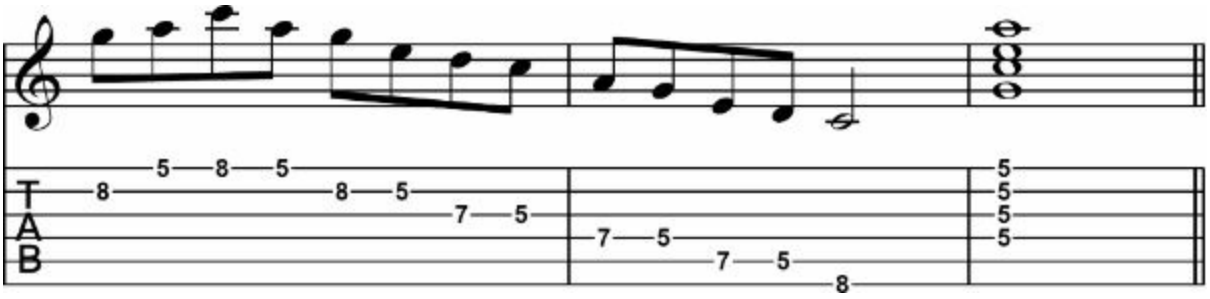

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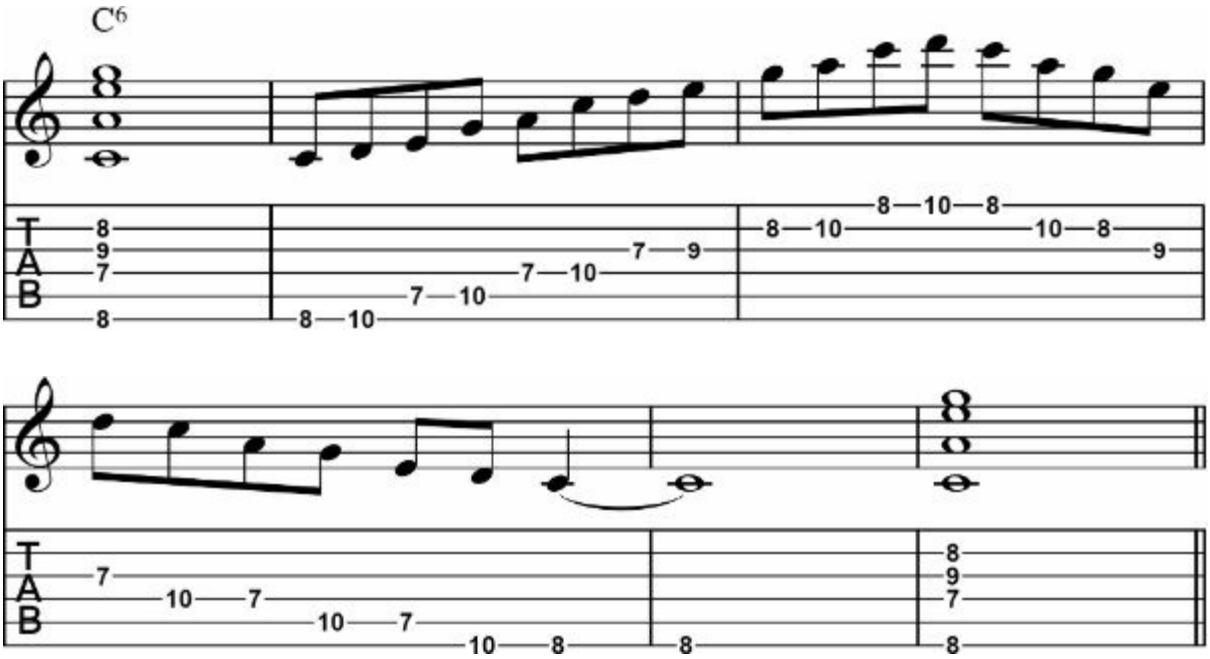

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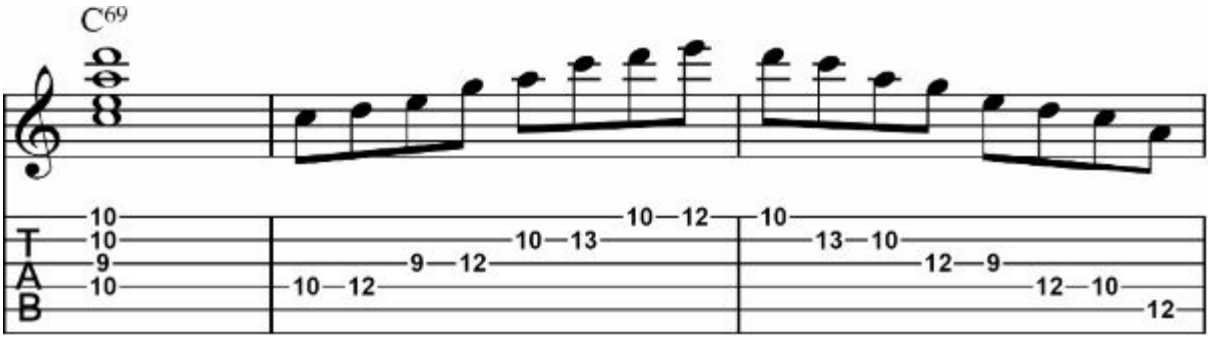

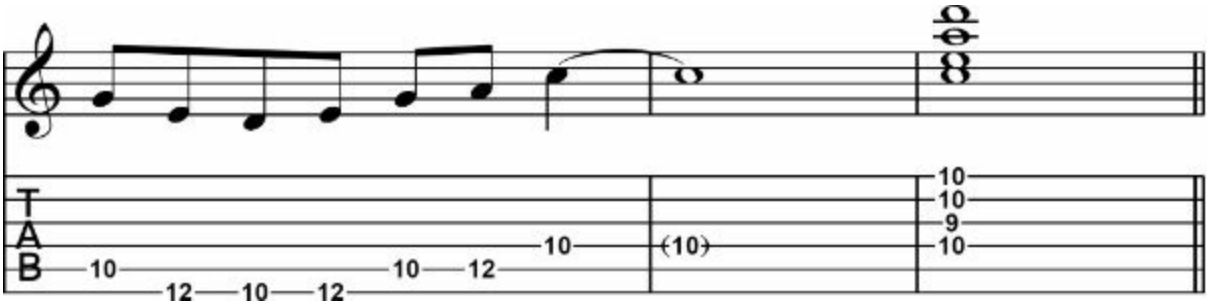

Scale Studies: A Minor Pentatonic Scale

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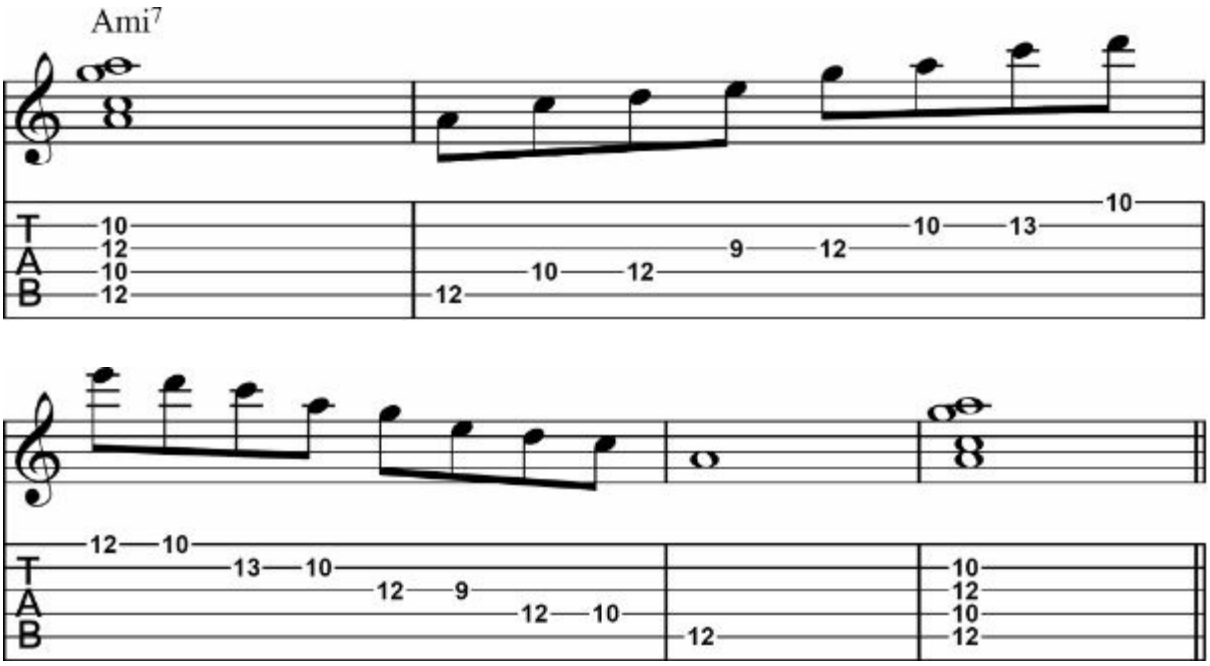

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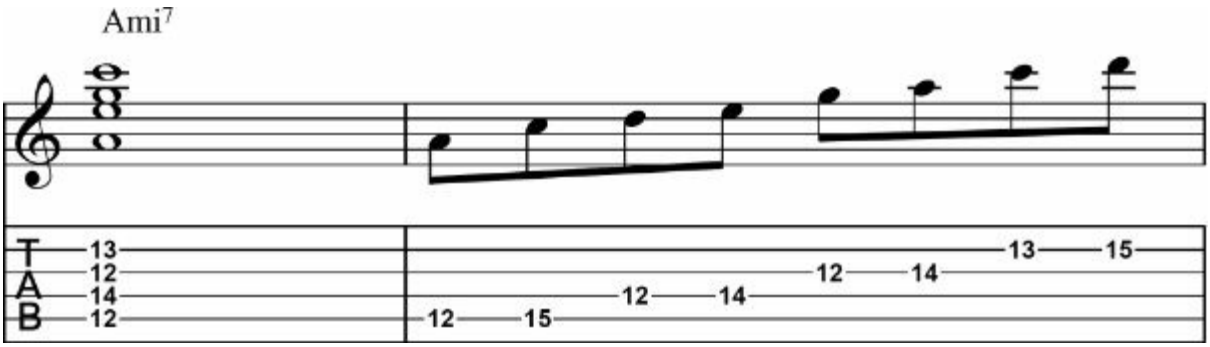

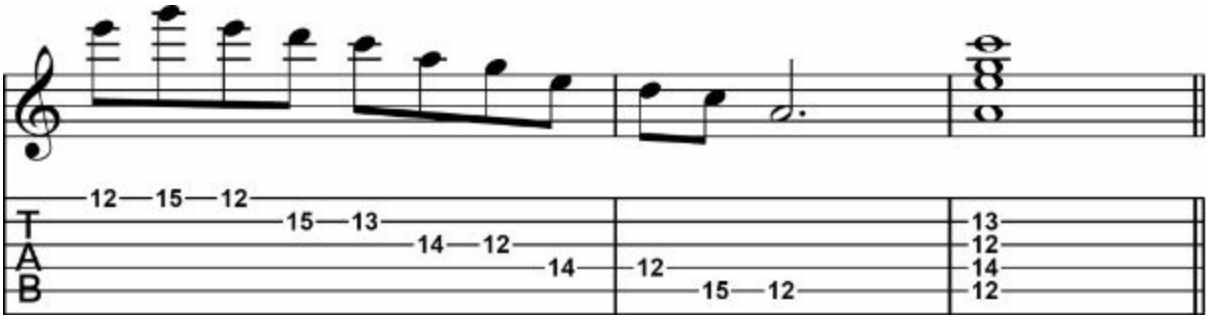

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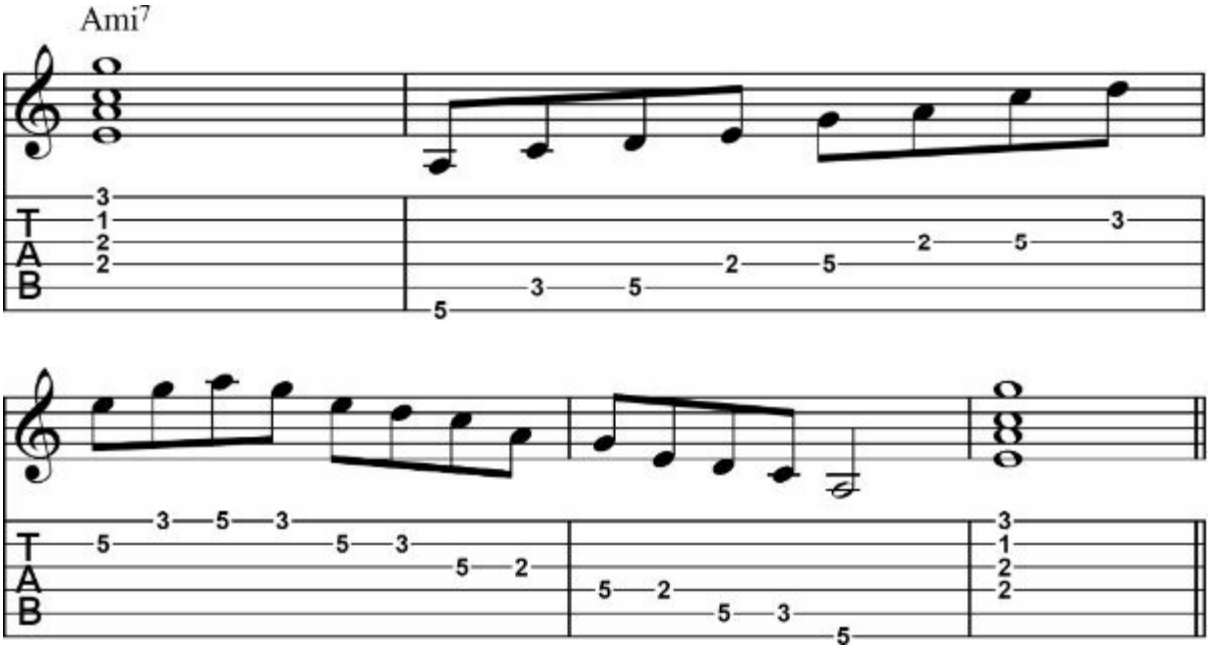

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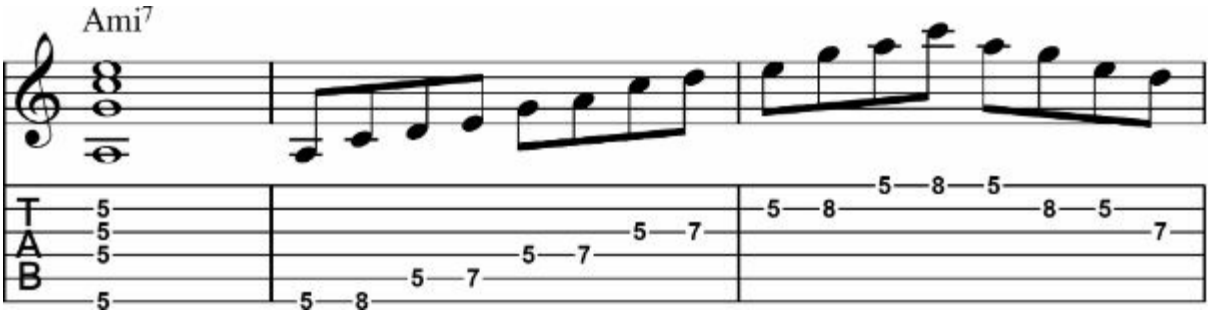

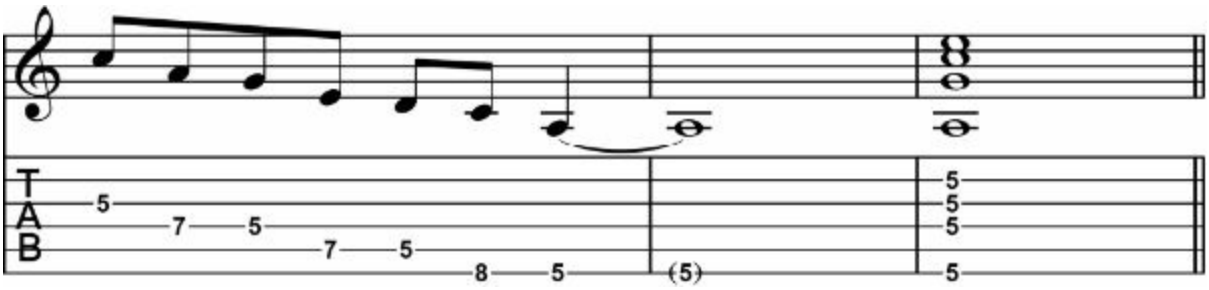

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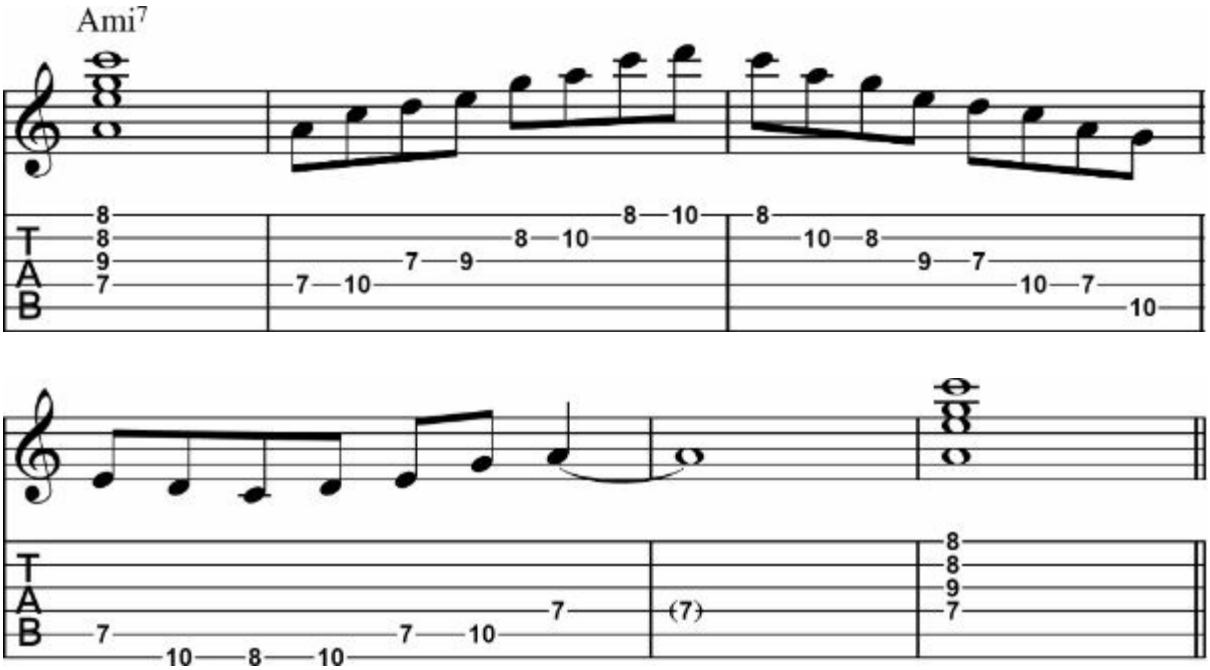
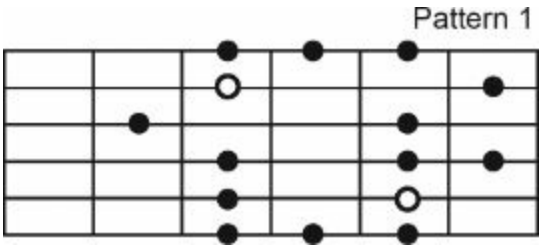
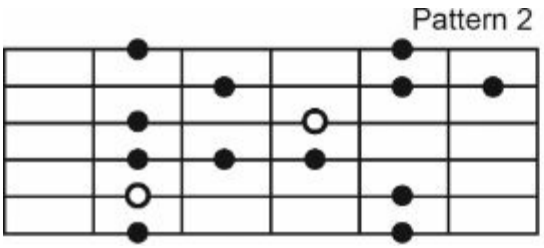


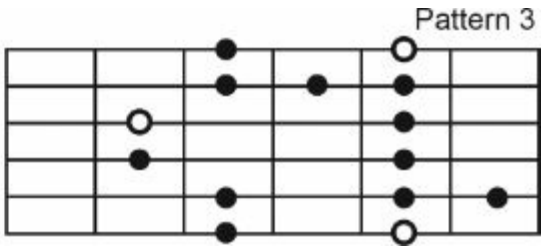
Blues Scale

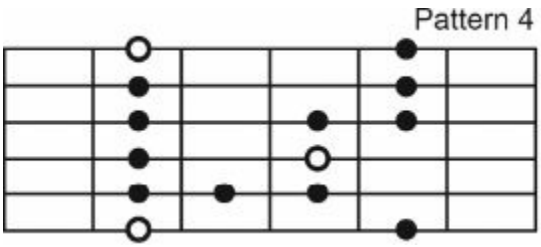
The Blues scale is a minor pentatonic scale with a b5 note. You can use the blues scale on minor or dominant chords. Play with blues guitar techniques such as bending, vibrato, and slide.

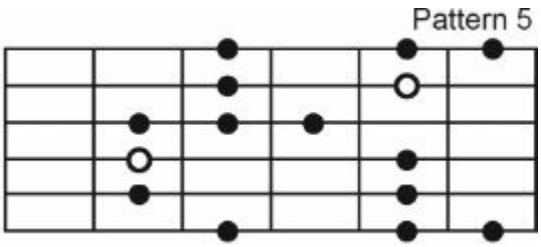
Fingering Patterns



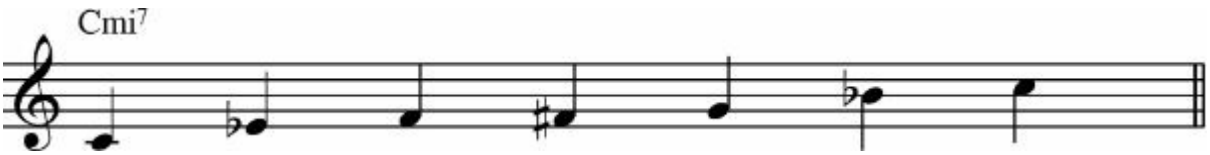




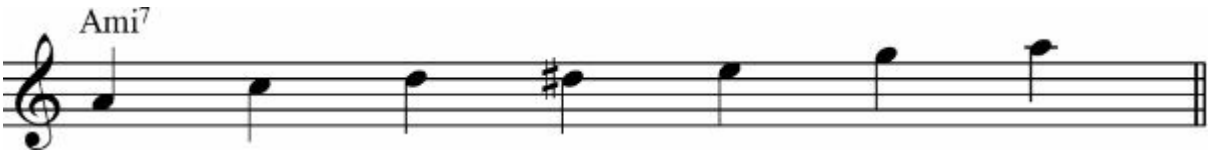




C Blues Scale



A Blues Scale



Scale Studies: A Blues Scale

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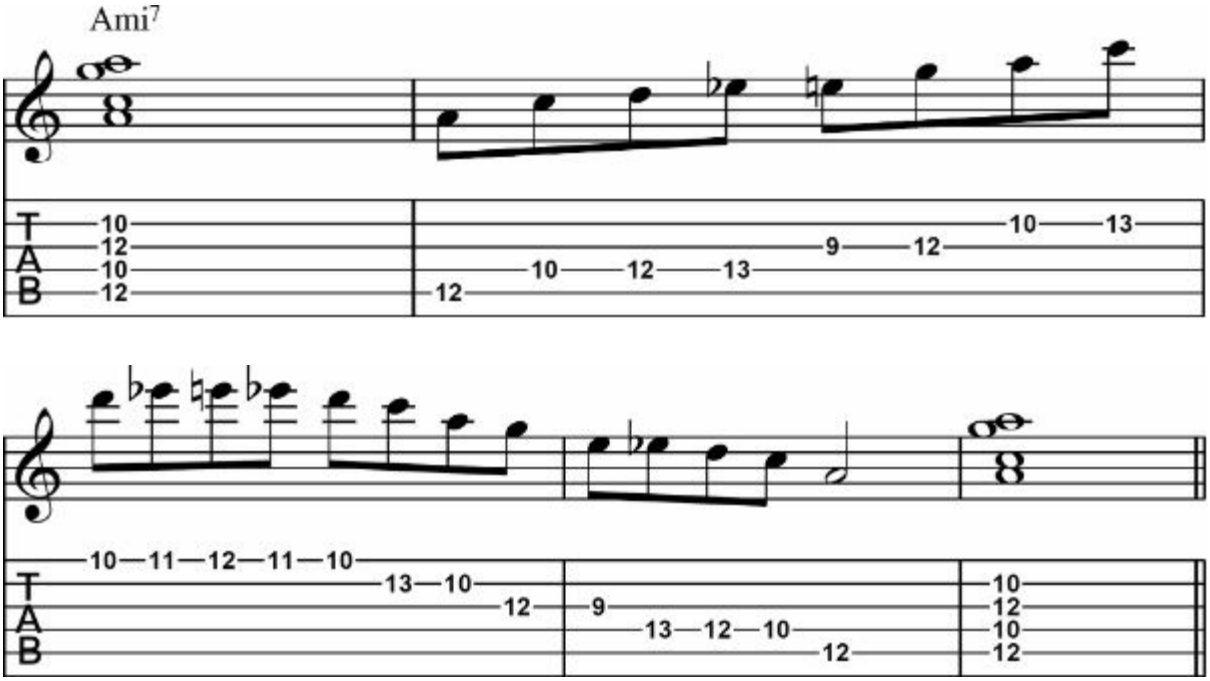

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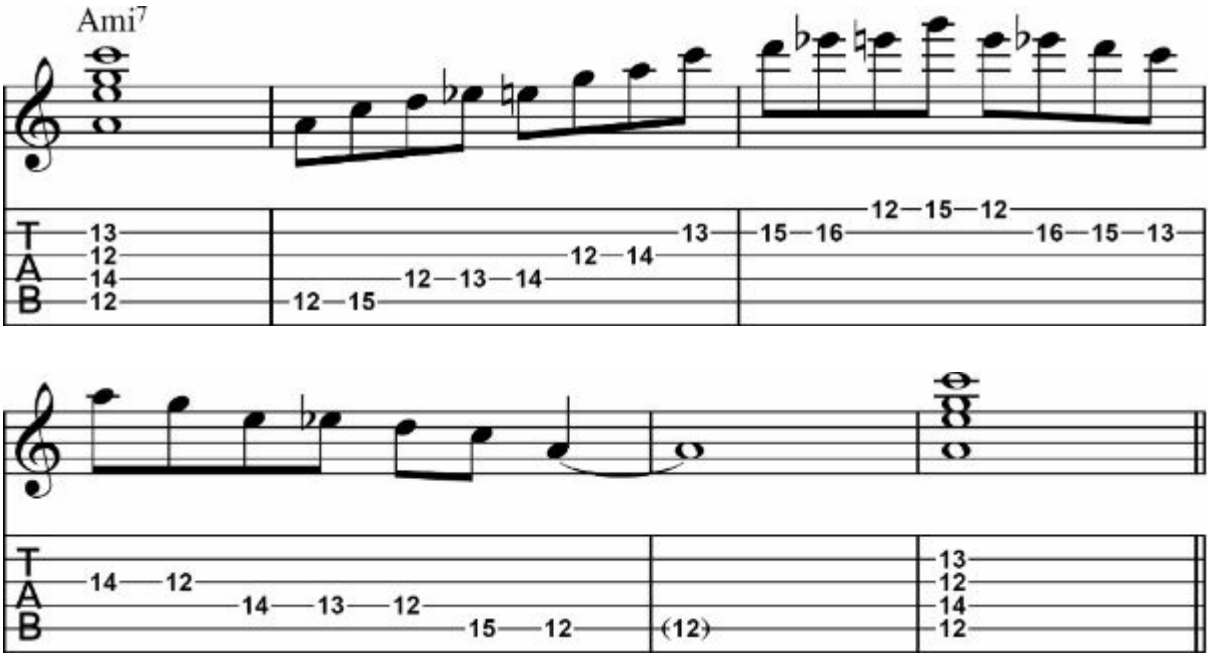

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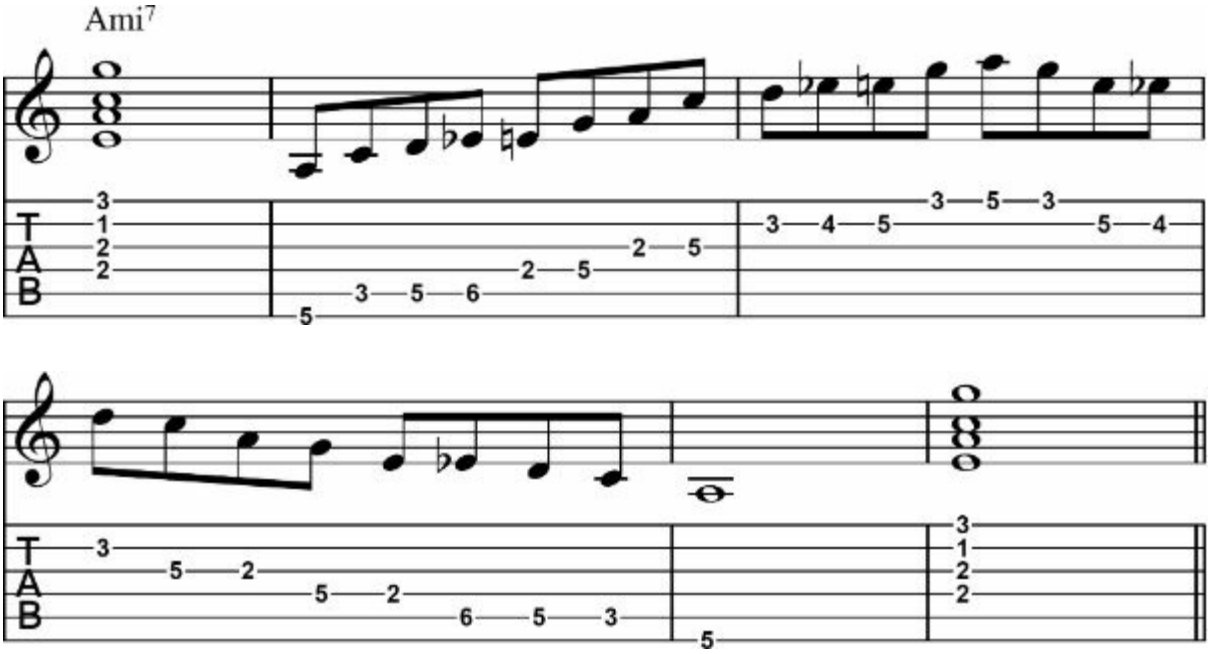

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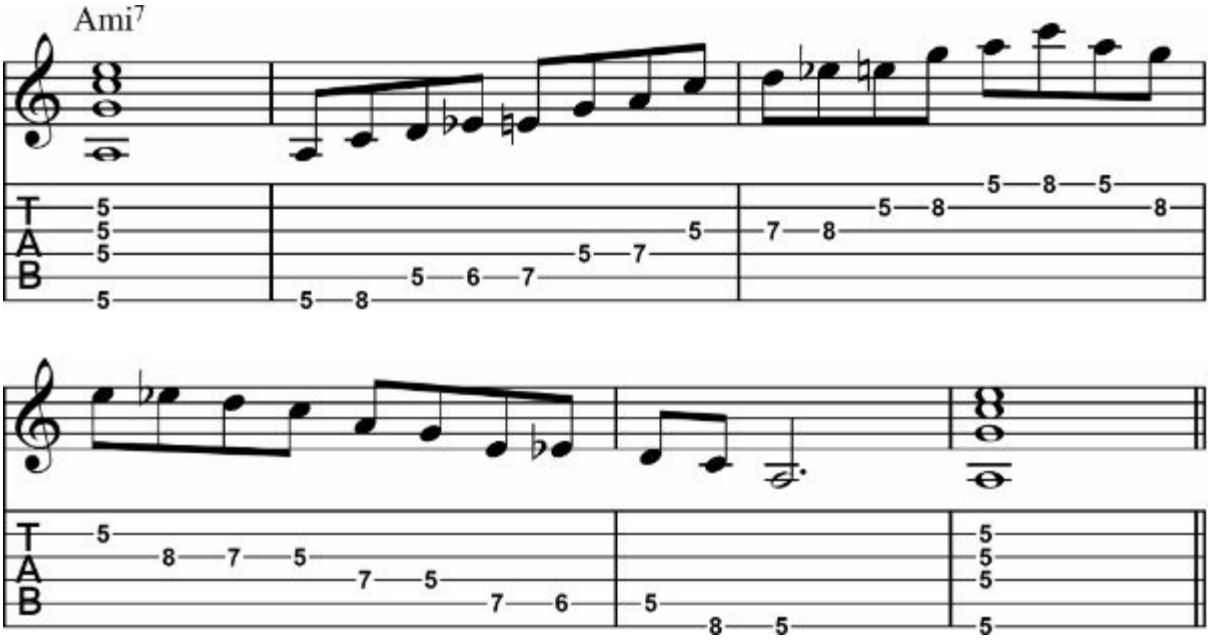

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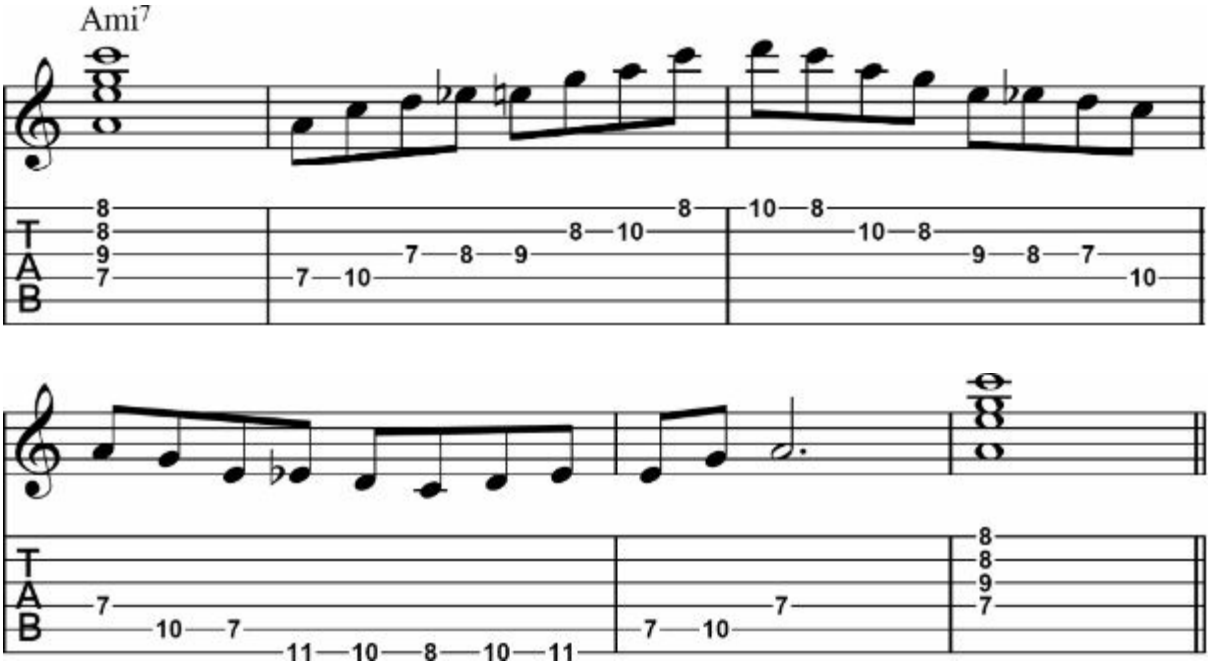
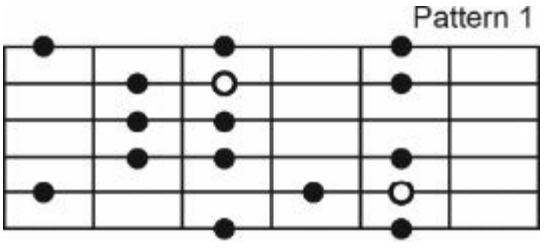
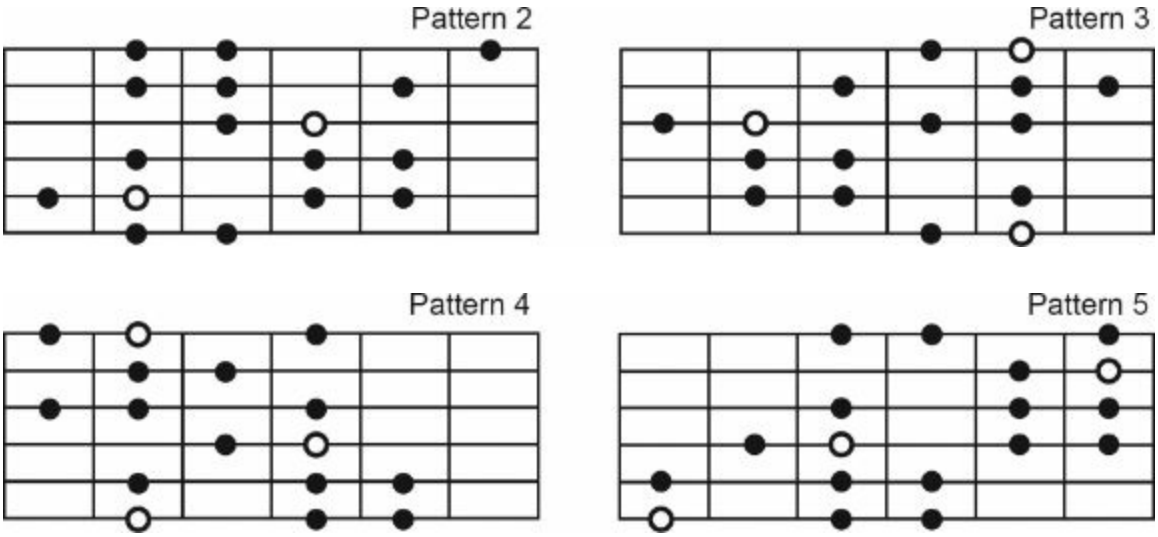


Harmonic Minor Scale

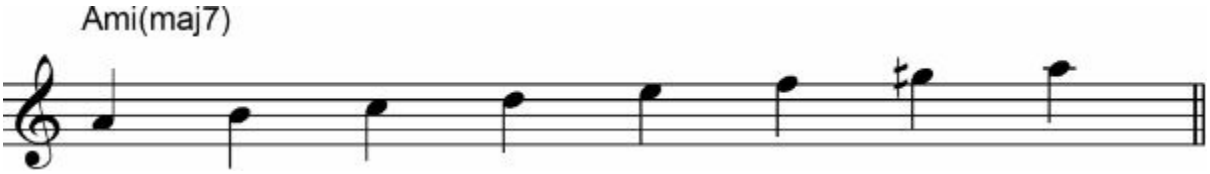
The harmonic minor has an exotic sound and is used in Eastern European and Middle Eastern music. Today's advanced rock guitarists use this scale for classical phrases. The intervals are root, 2, b3, 4, 5, b6, and 7. It's like a natural minor with major 7th note. You can play over mi(ma7) chords.

Fingering Patterns

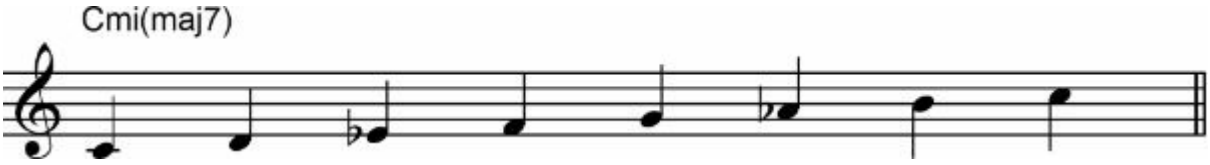




A Harmonic Minor Scale



C Harmonic Minor Scale



Scale Studies: A Harmonic Minor Scale

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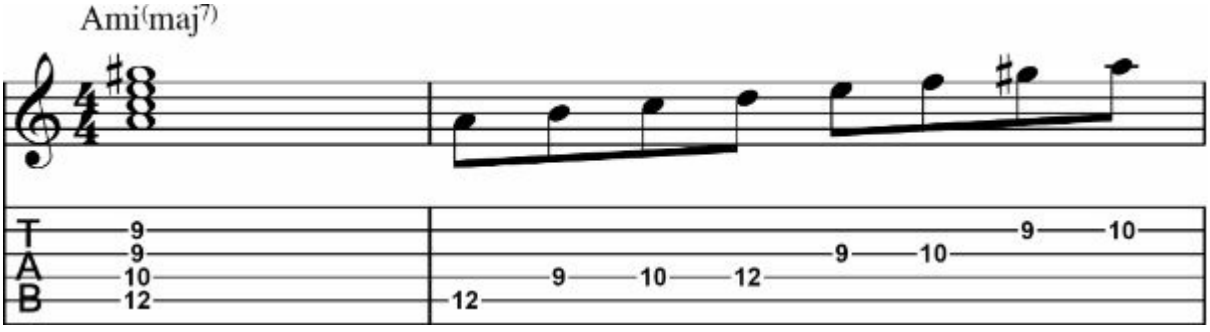
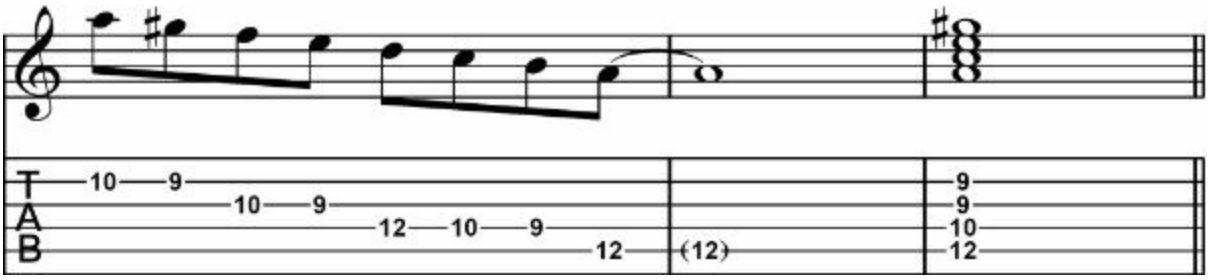
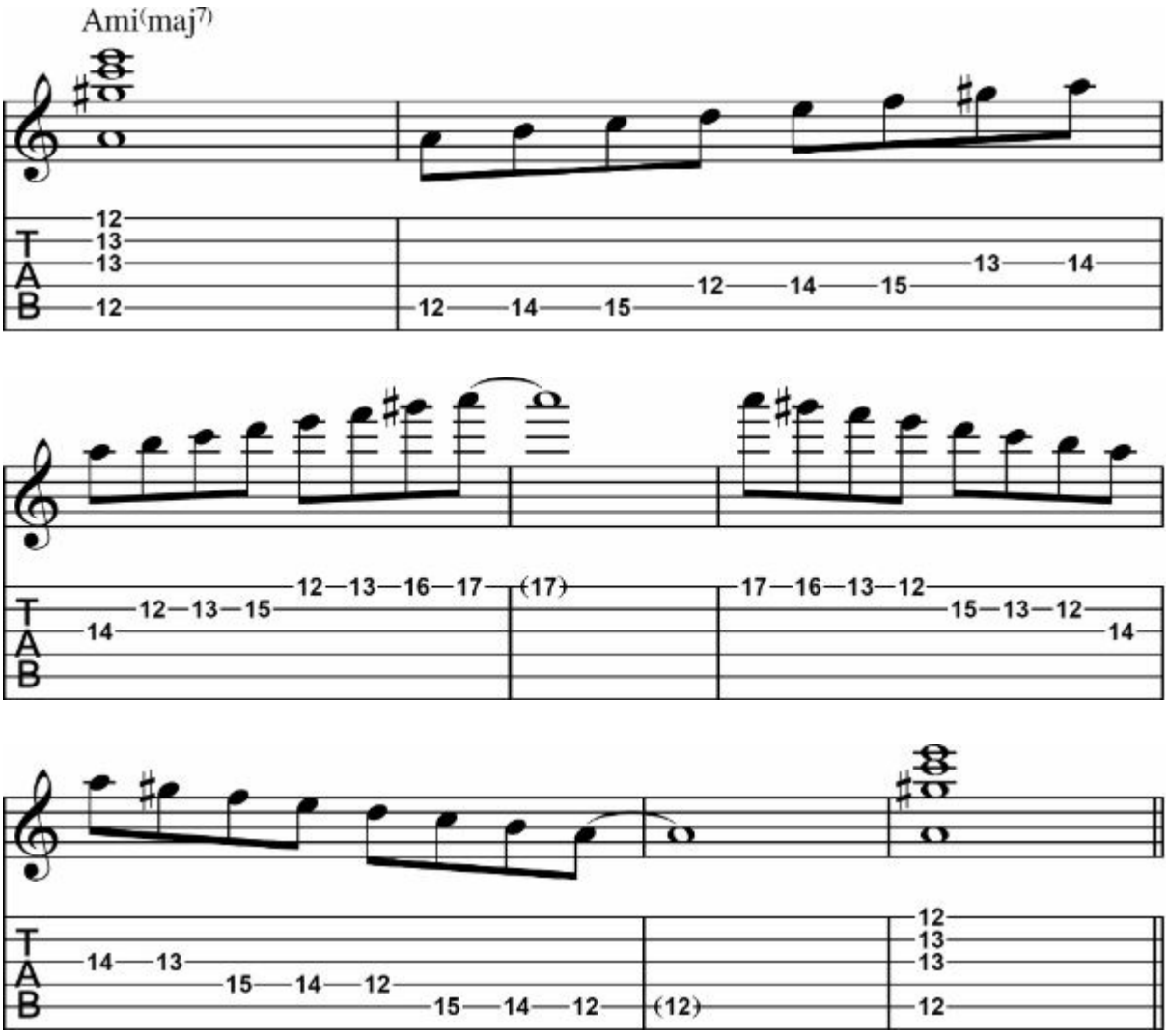




Pattern 2



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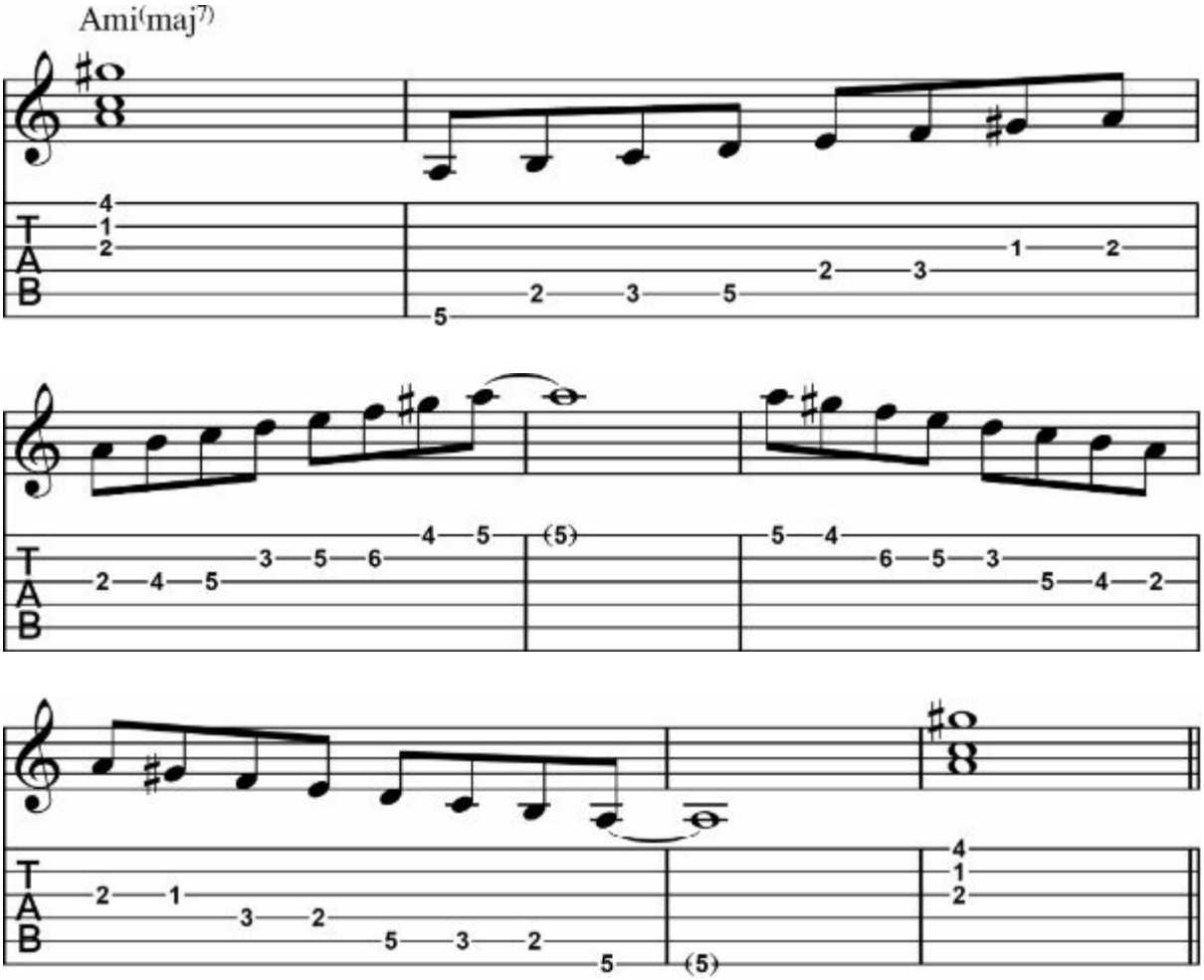

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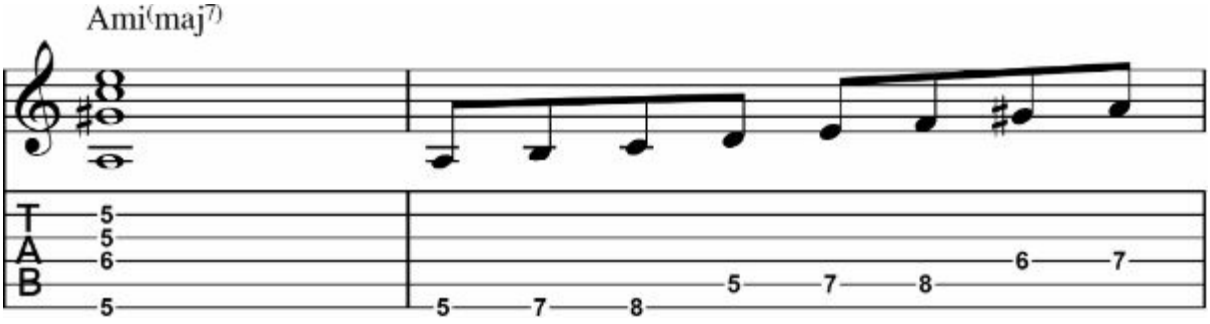

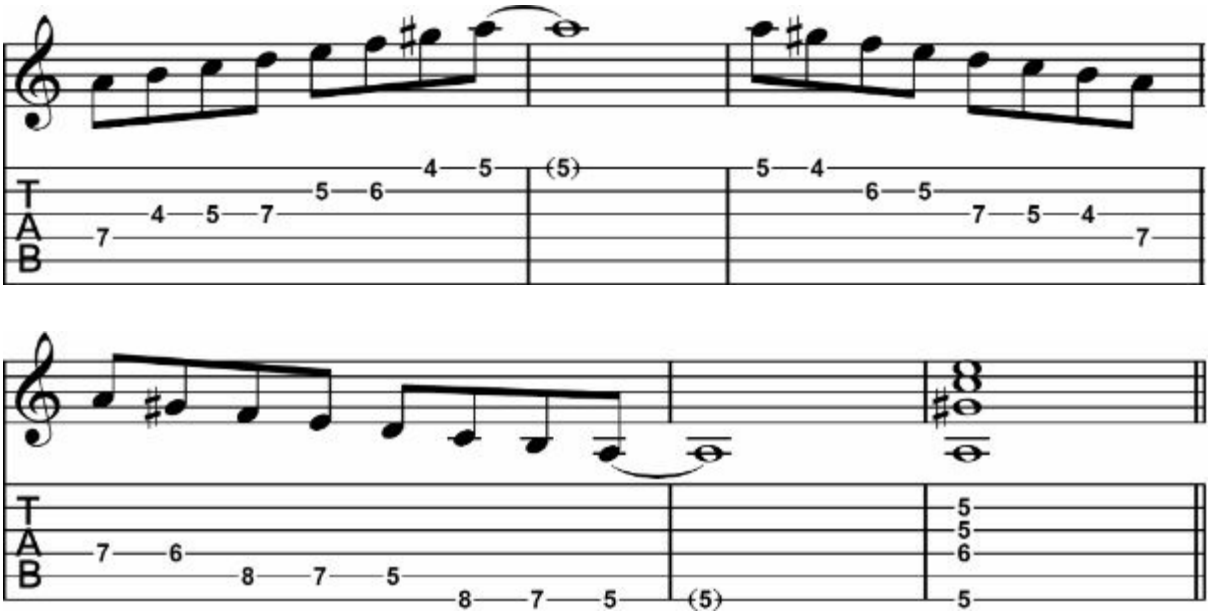

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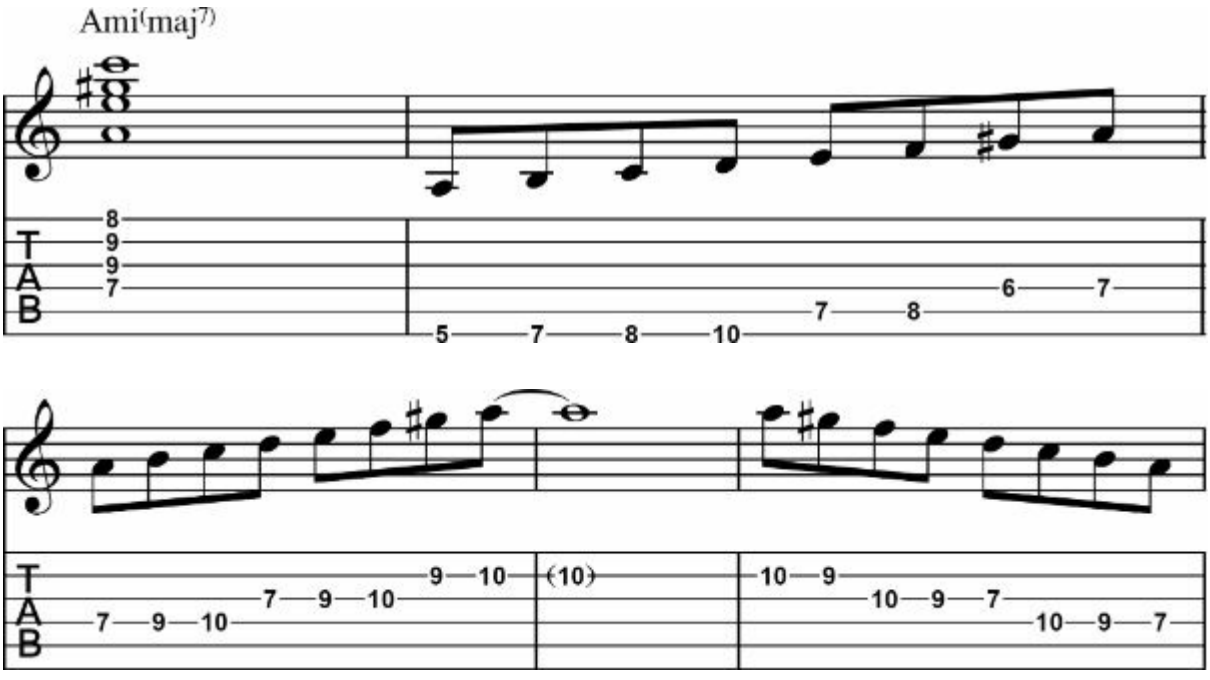
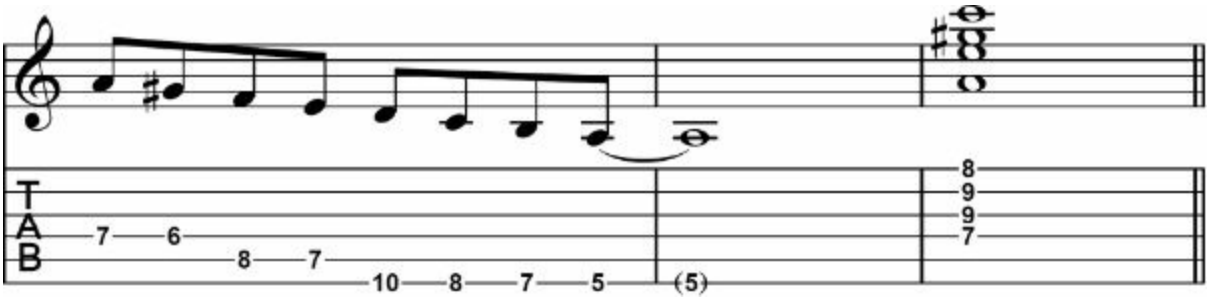
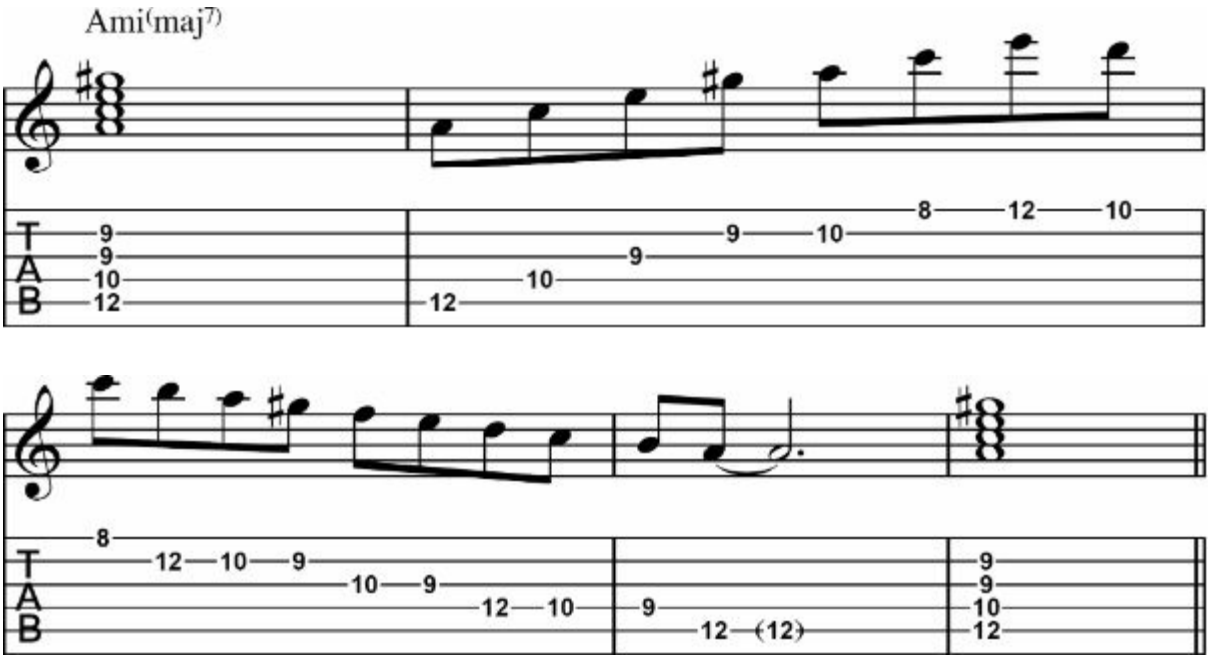




Arpeggio & Scale Studies: Ami(maj7) & A Harmonic Minor Scale

Pattern 1



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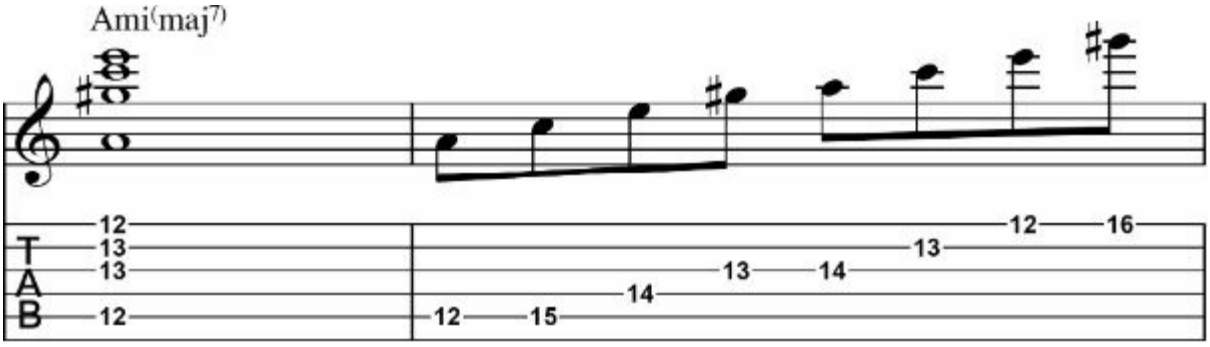

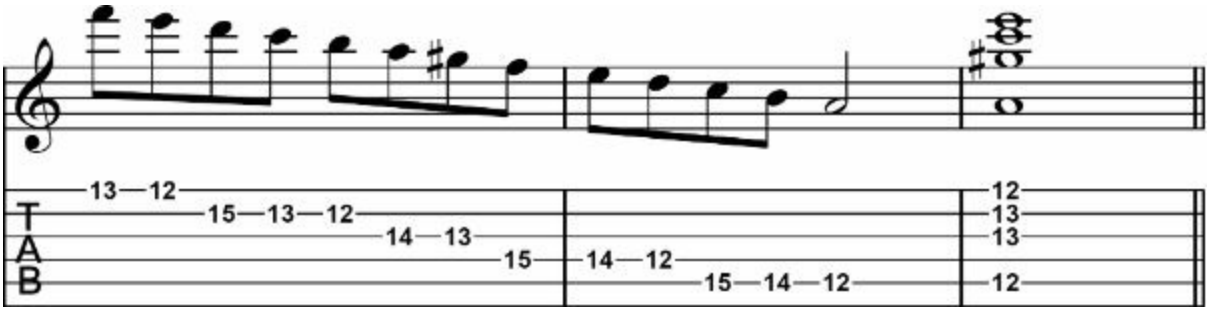

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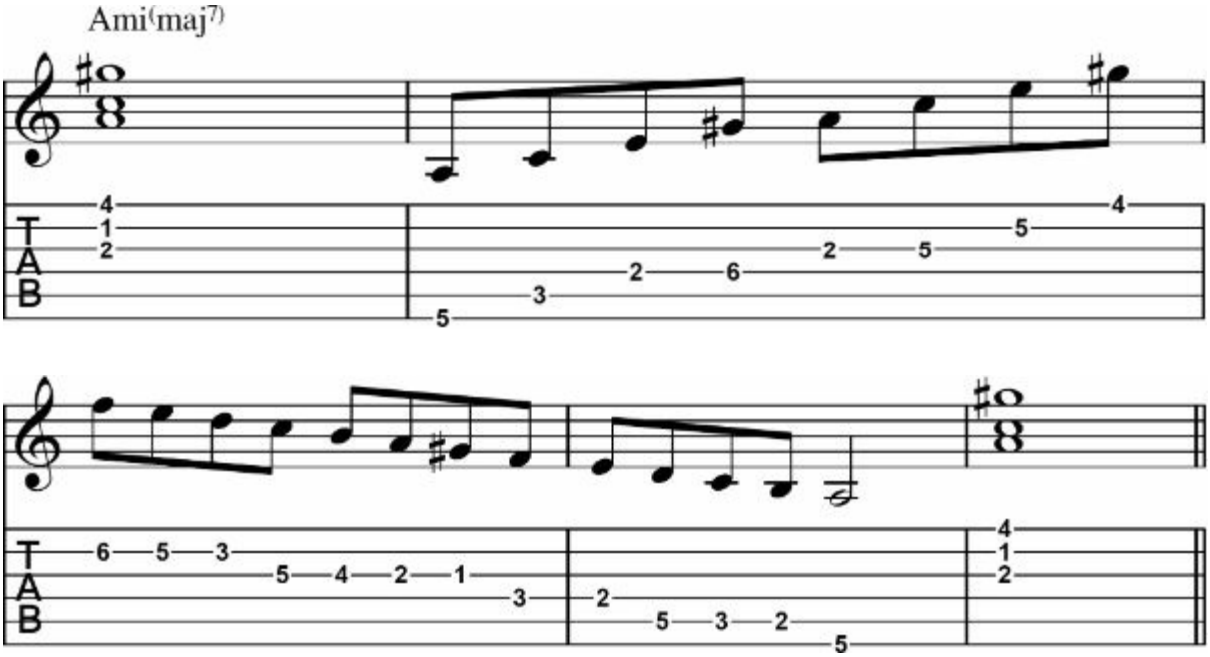

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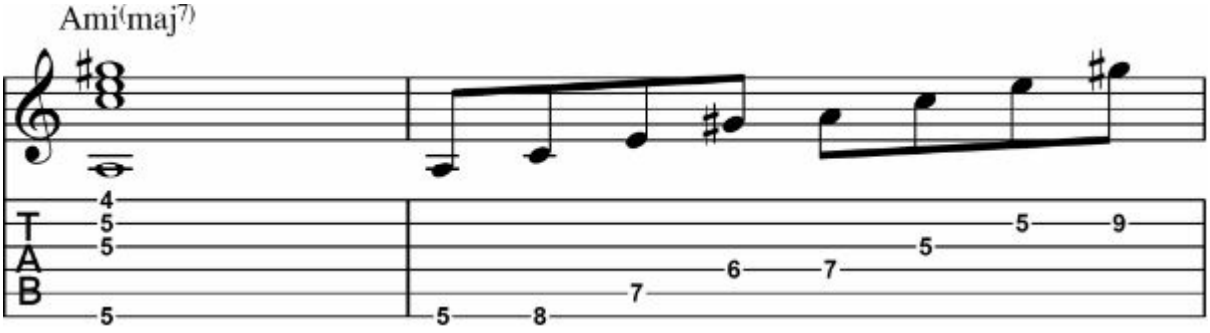

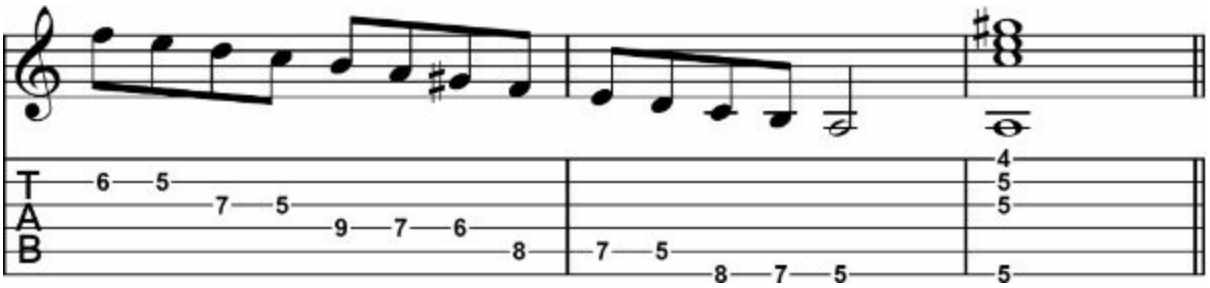

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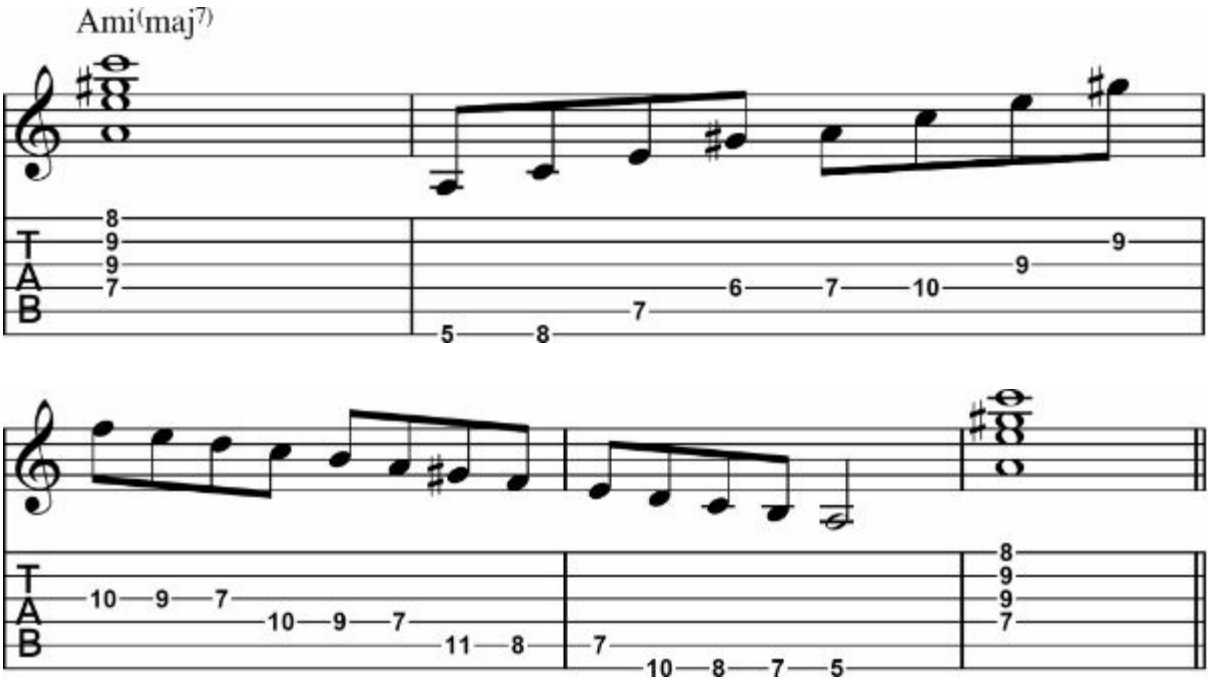
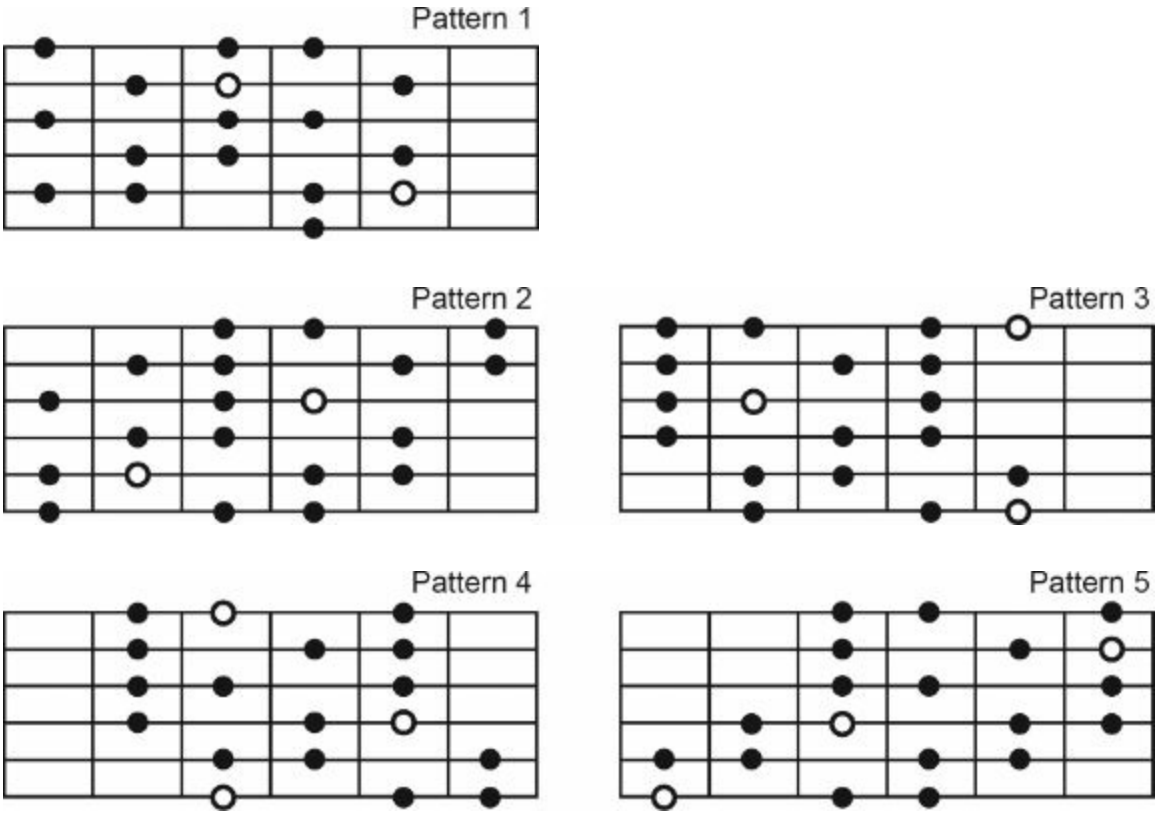


Diminished Scale (whole/half)

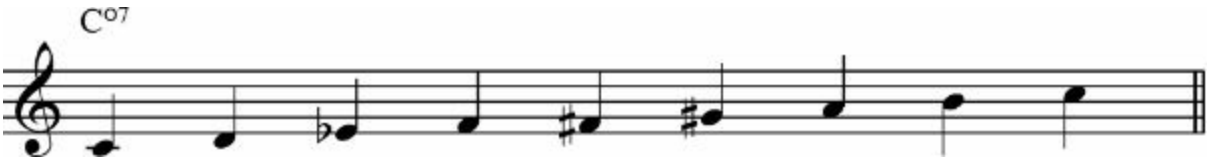
The diminished scale comes in two forms: the traditional diminished scale that alternates whole step and half steps, and half/whole diminished scale that alternates half step and whole steps. This eight note scale is totally symmetrical. It has a symmetrical pattern of intervals that provide players with many possibilities. One interesting fact about this scale is that it has the same scale notes in every minor 3rd interval-the C diminished scale, Eb diminished scale, F# diminished scale, and A diminished scale, all have the

same scale notes. You can play it over dim7 chords.

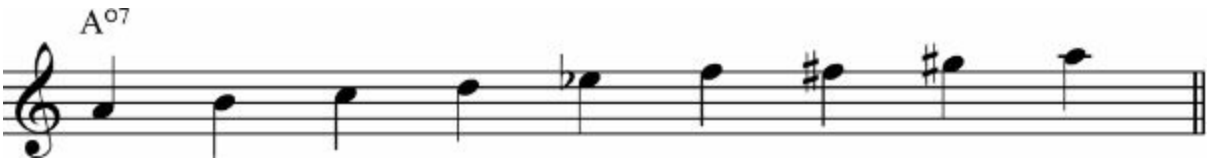
Fingering Patterns



C Diminished Scale (W/H)

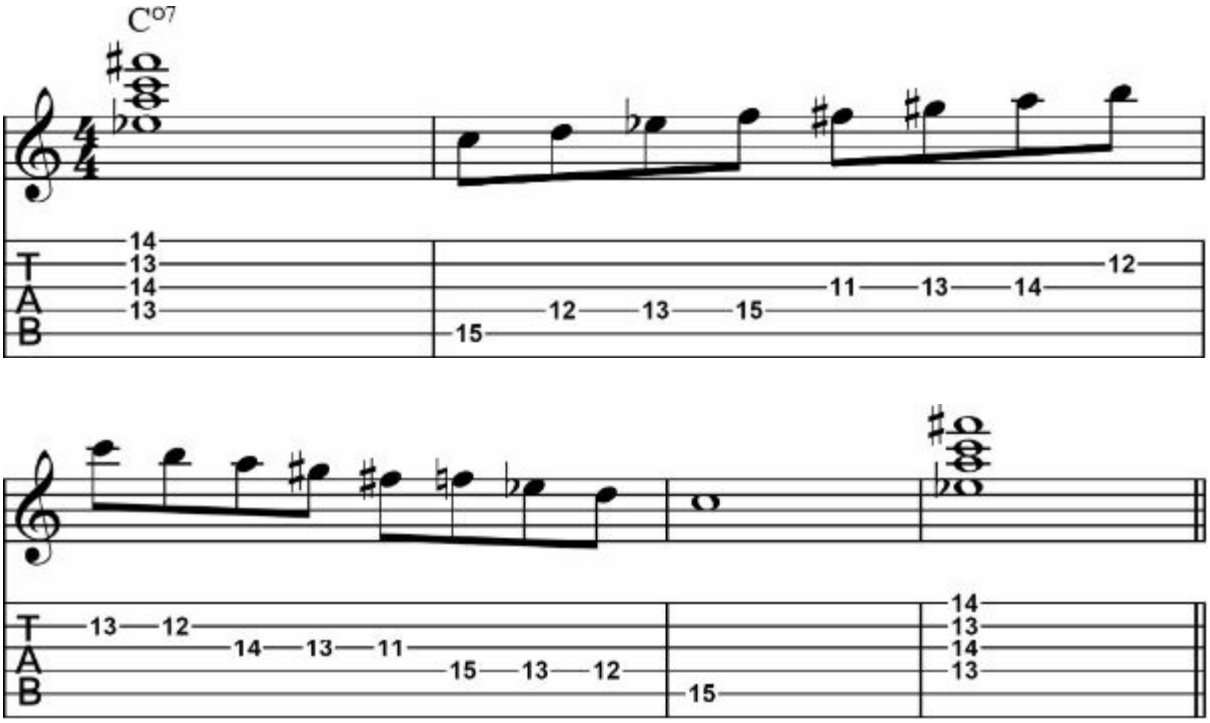


A Diminished Scale (W/H)



Scale Studies: C Diminished Scale (W/H)

Pattern 1



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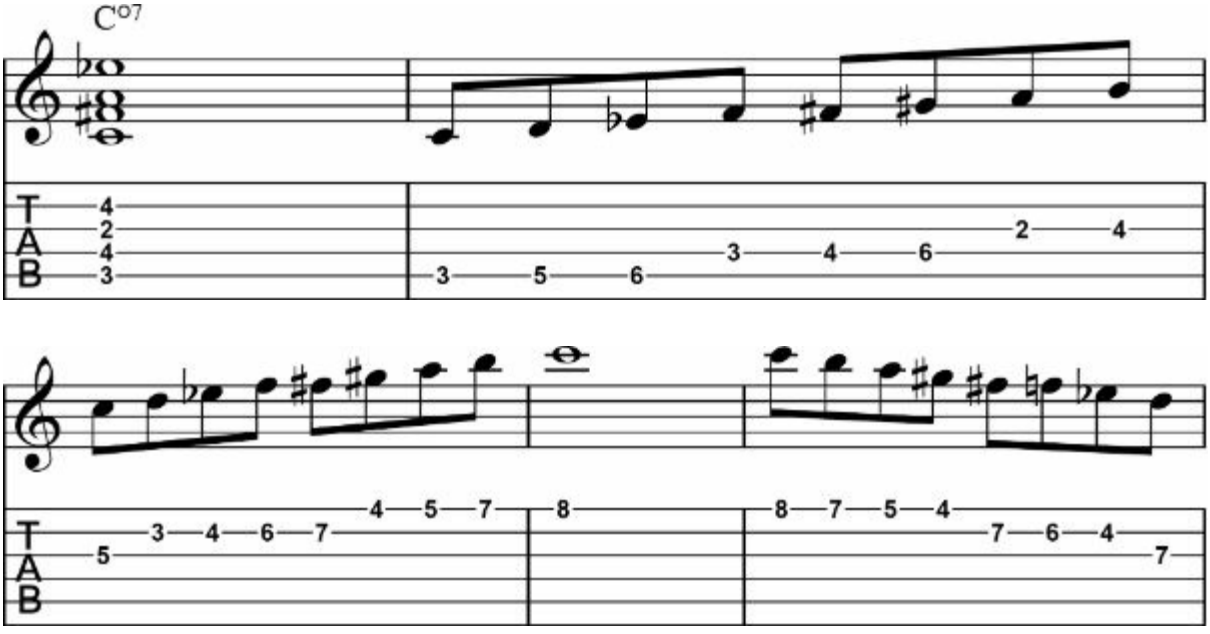

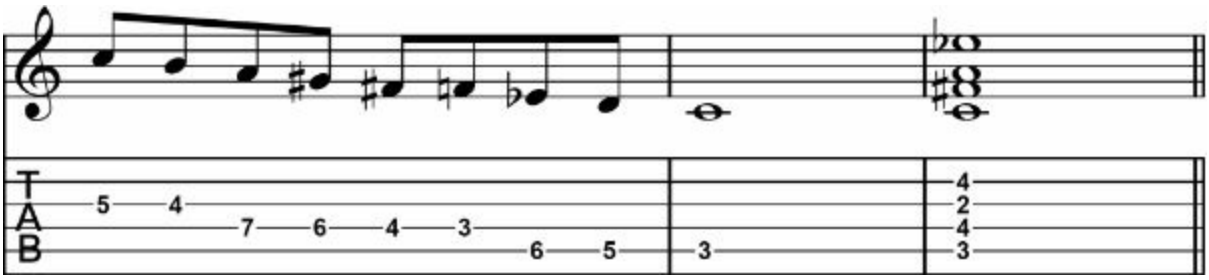

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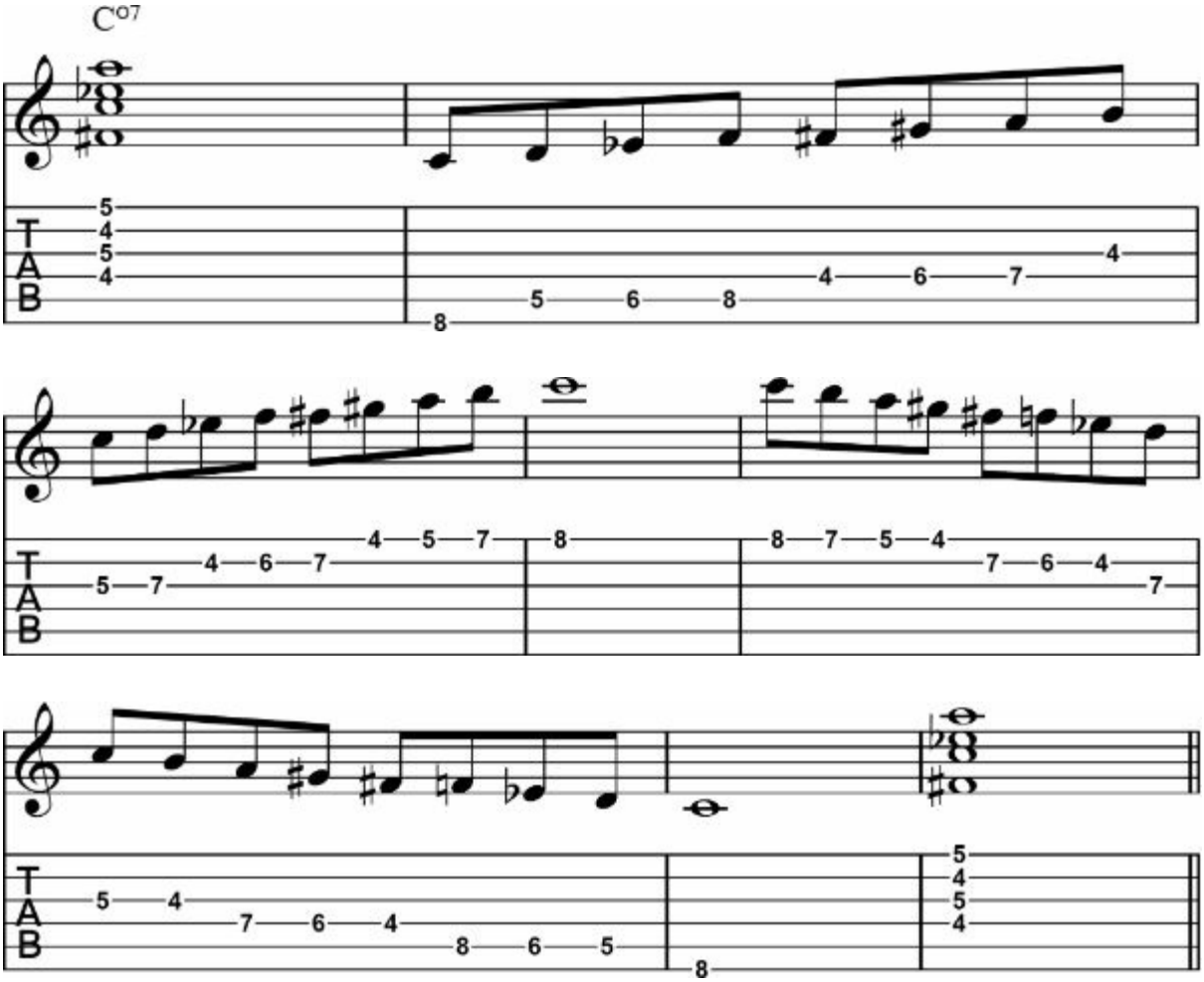

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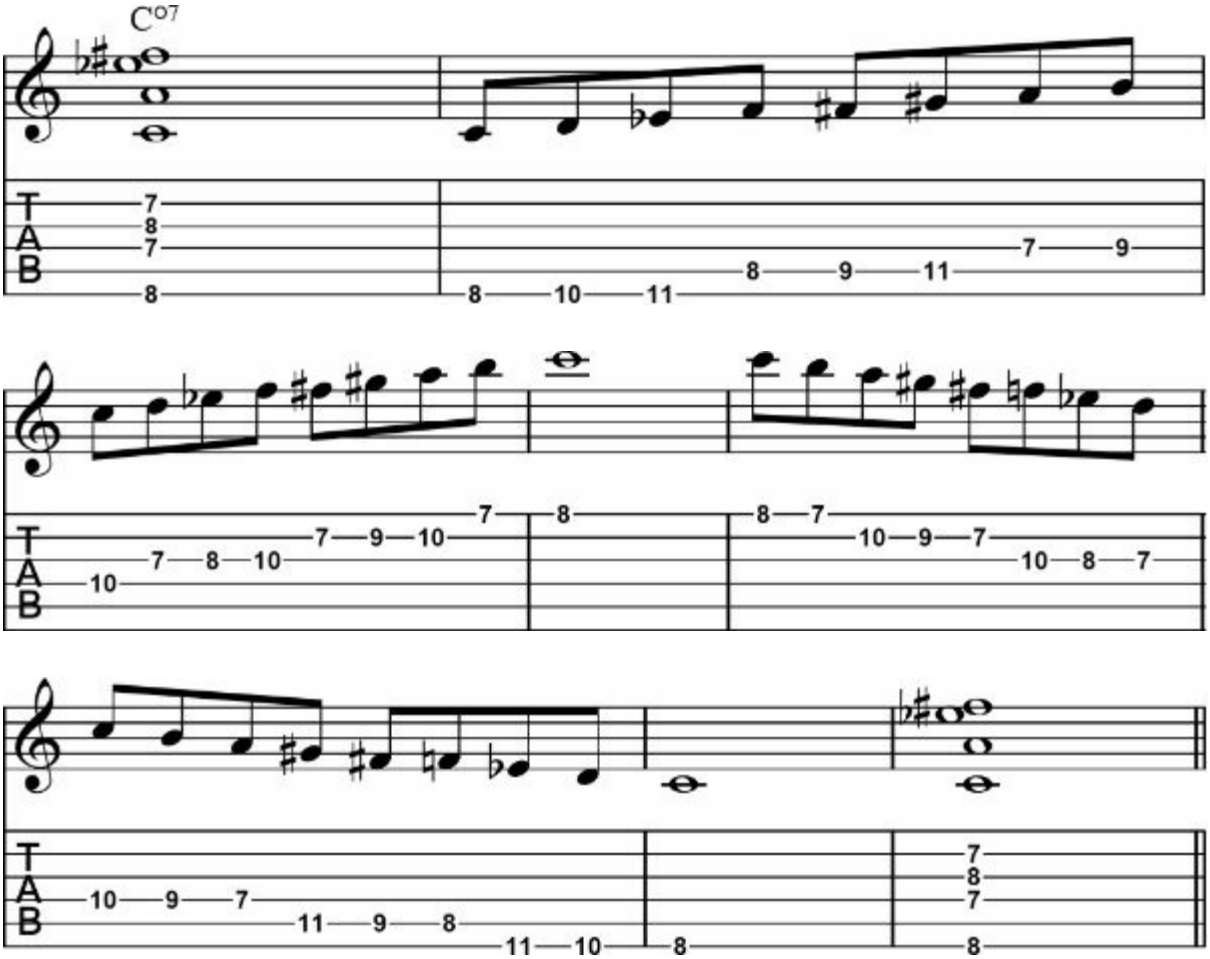

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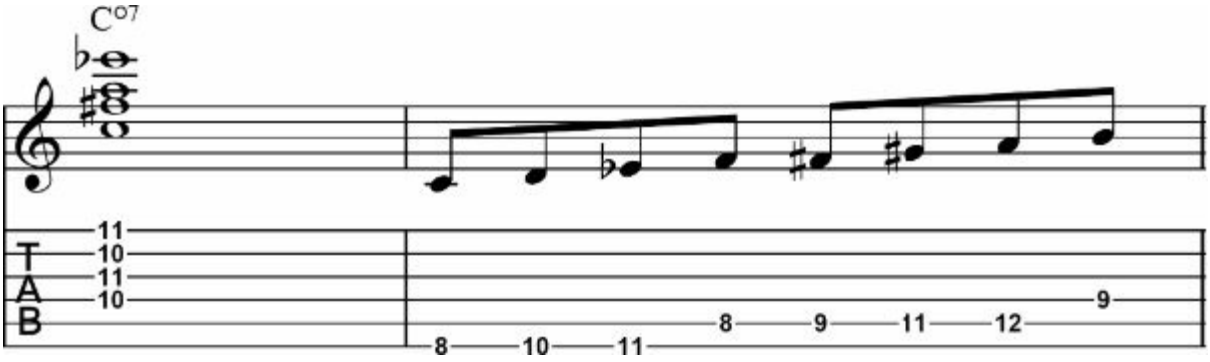

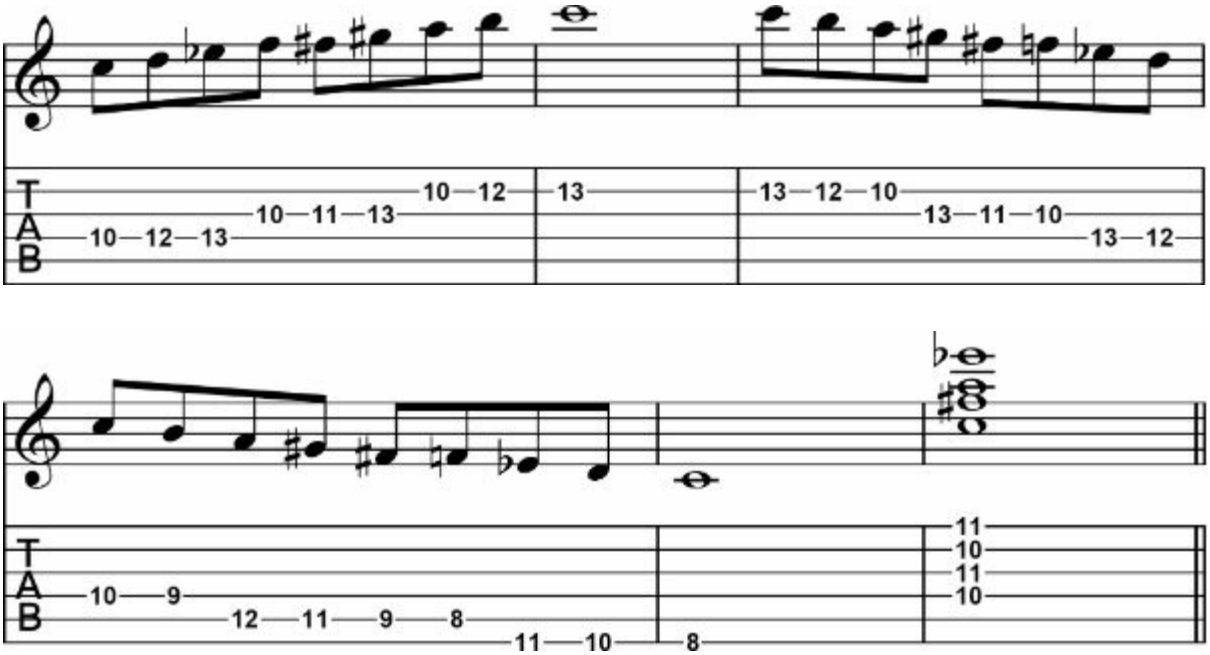

Arpeggio & Scale Studies: Cdim7 & C Diminished Scale (W/H)

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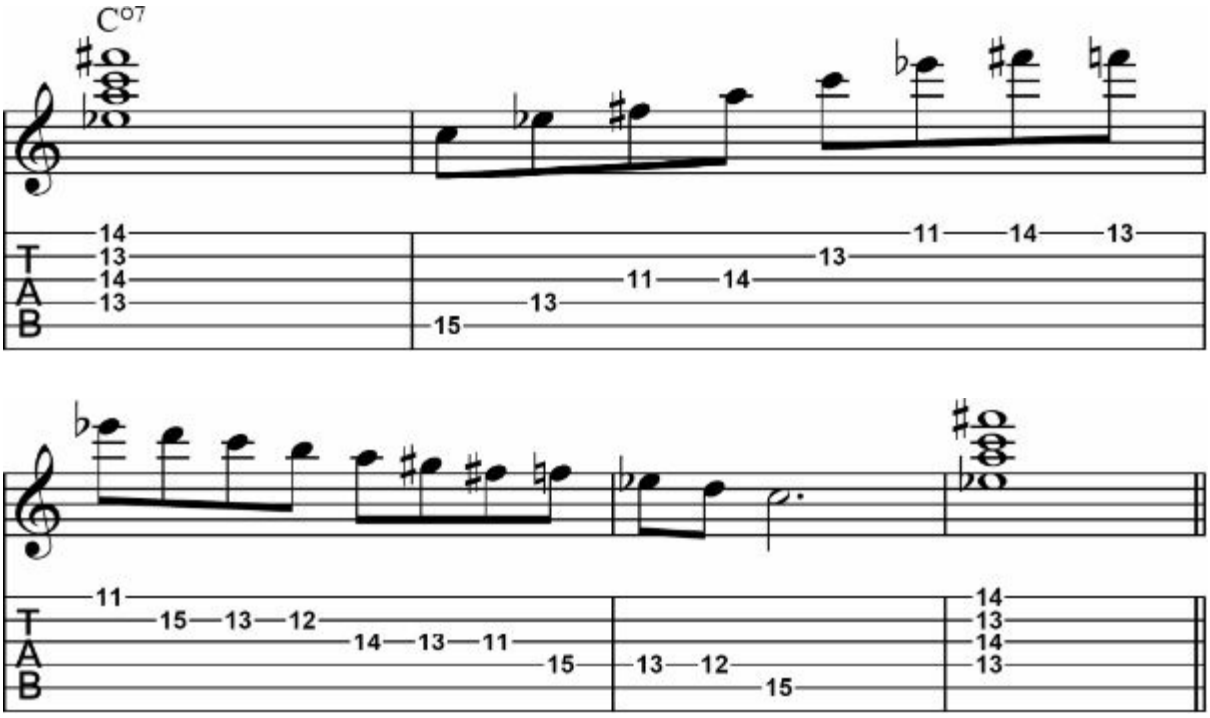

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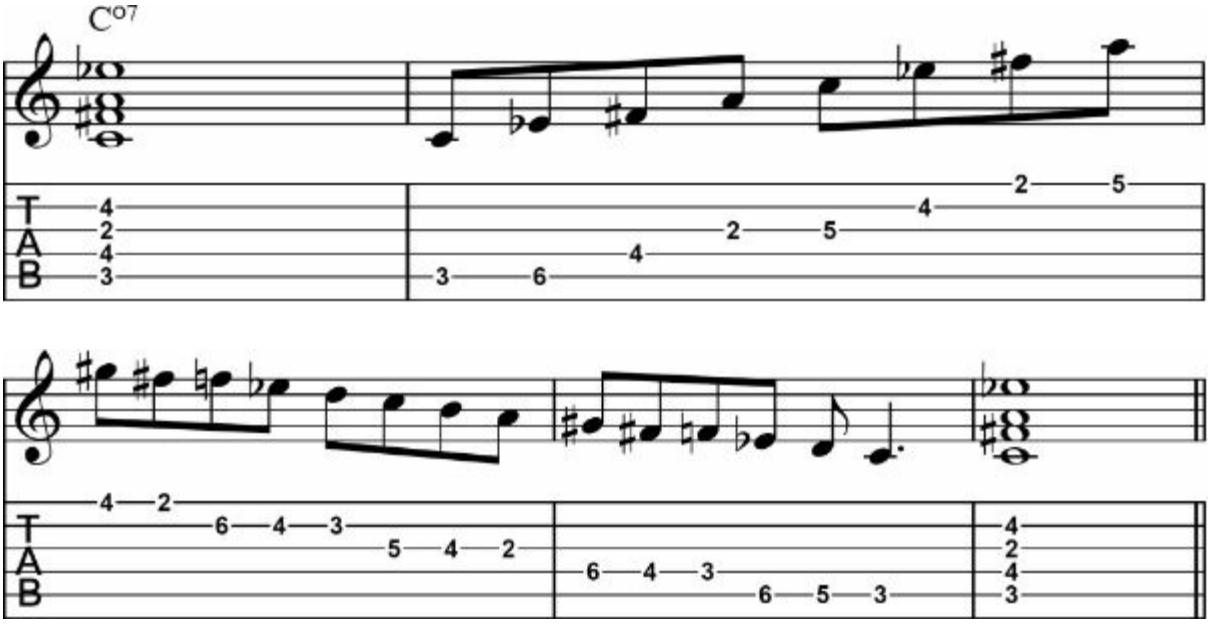

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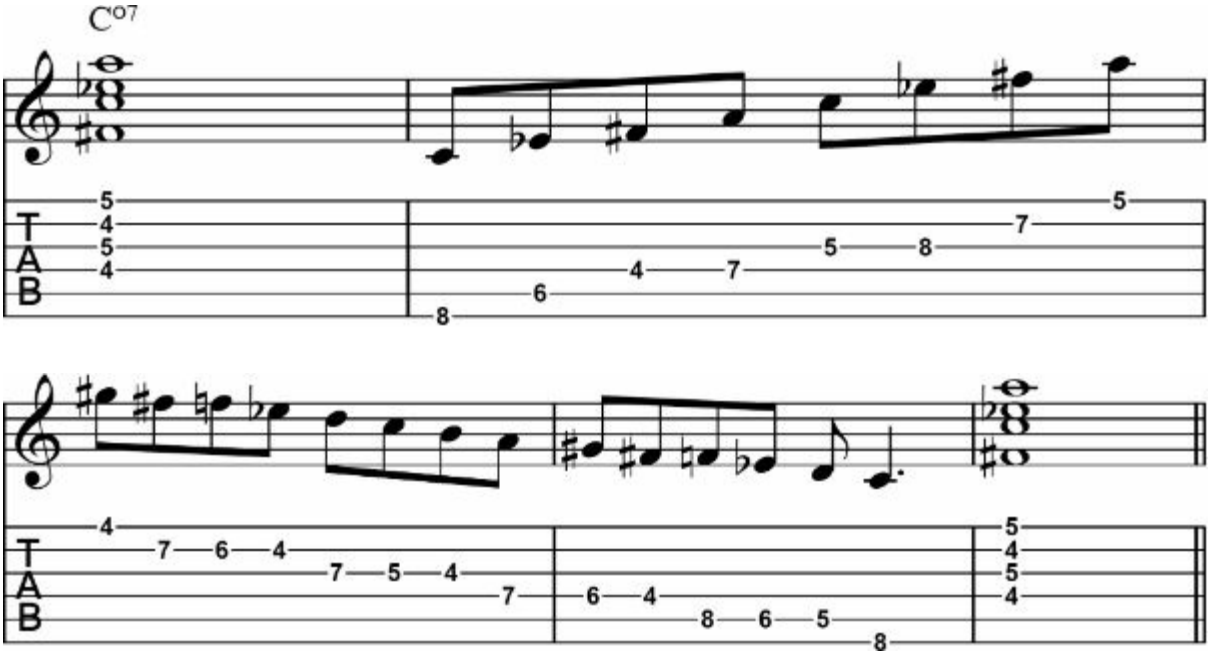

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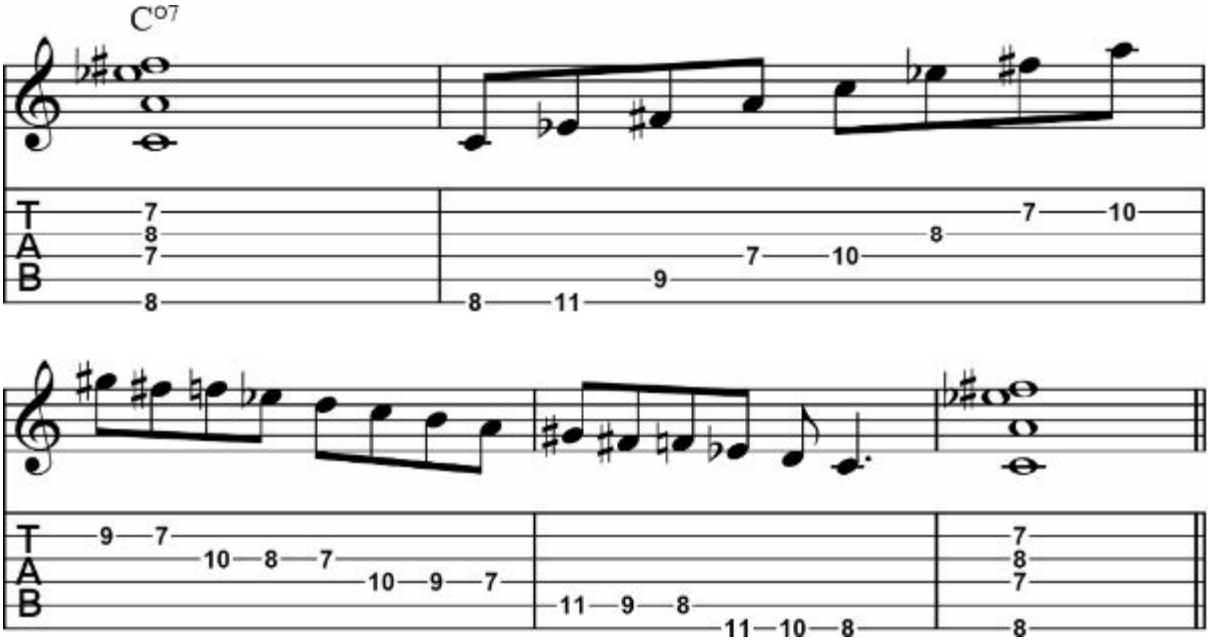

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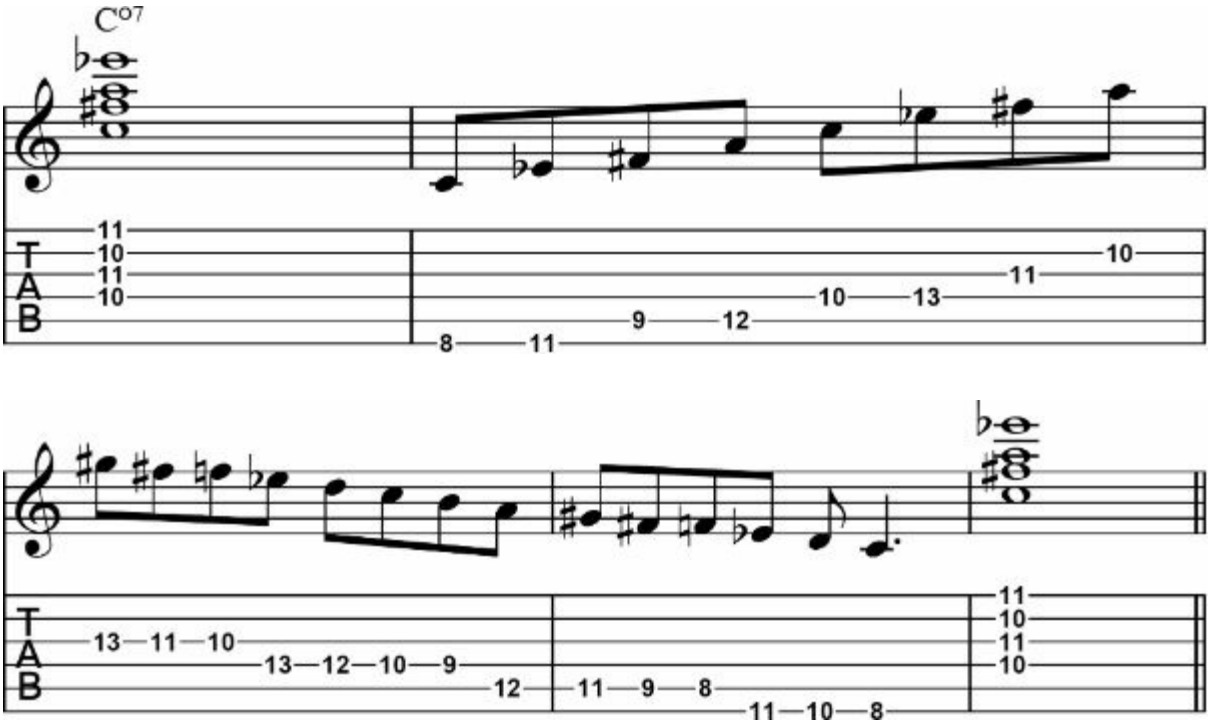
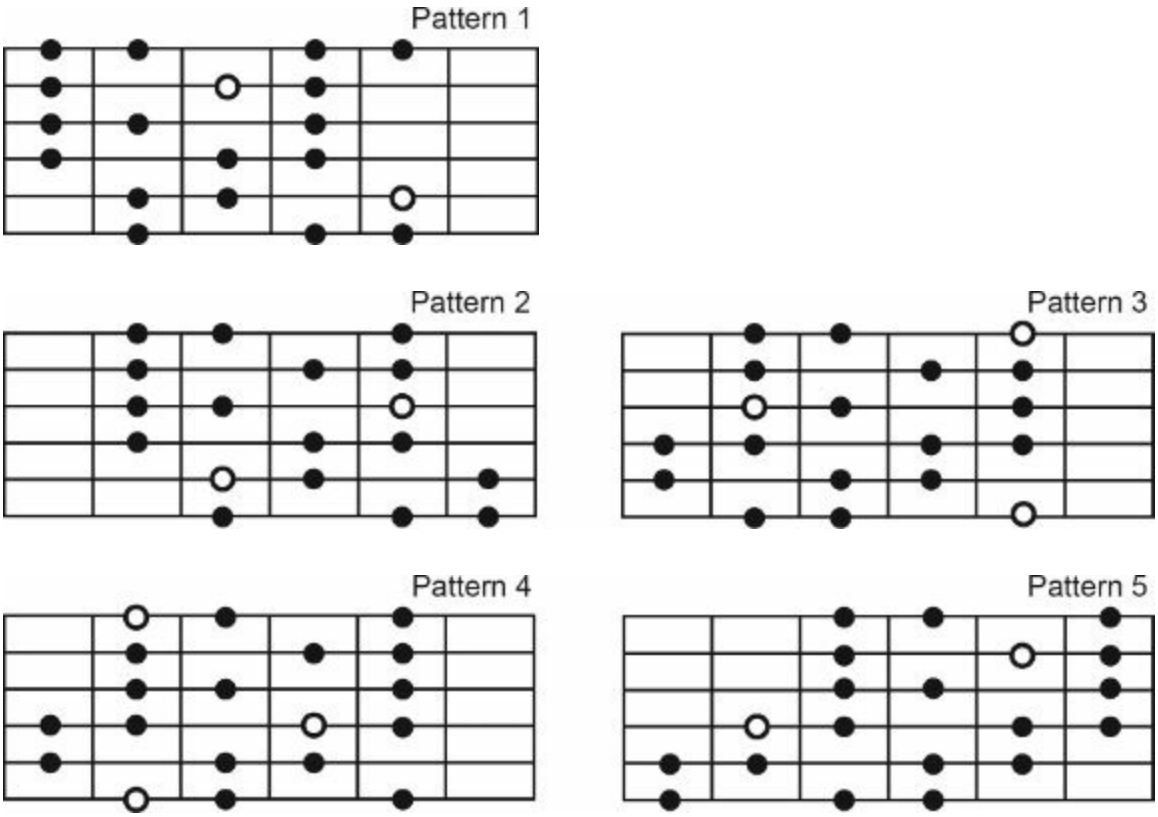


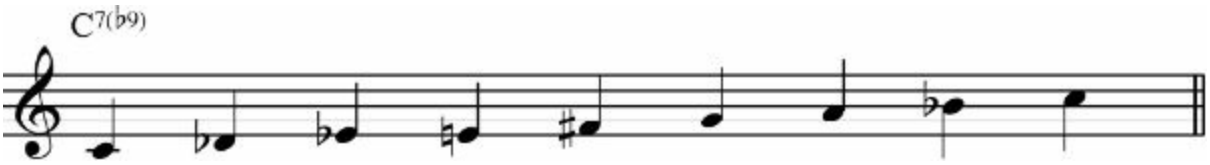
Half-Whole Diminished Scale

The half-whole diminished scale is another type of diminished scale that starts from half step intervals. You can play this scale on dim7 chord just like W/H diminished scale, but this scale has many more possibilities than W/H diminished scale. As the H/W diminished scale has all the notes of the dominant 7th chord, it can be played over the dominant 7th with b9 and #9 notes. This scale has a very modern sound and players such as Robben Ford and Larry Coryell use it often. The intervals are root, b2(b9), #2(#9), 3, #4, 5, 6, and b7.

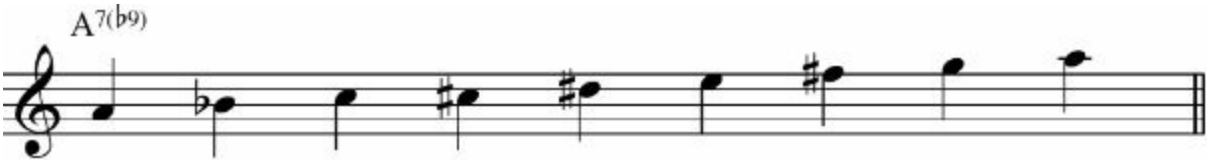
Fingering Patterns



C Half-Whole Diminished Scale

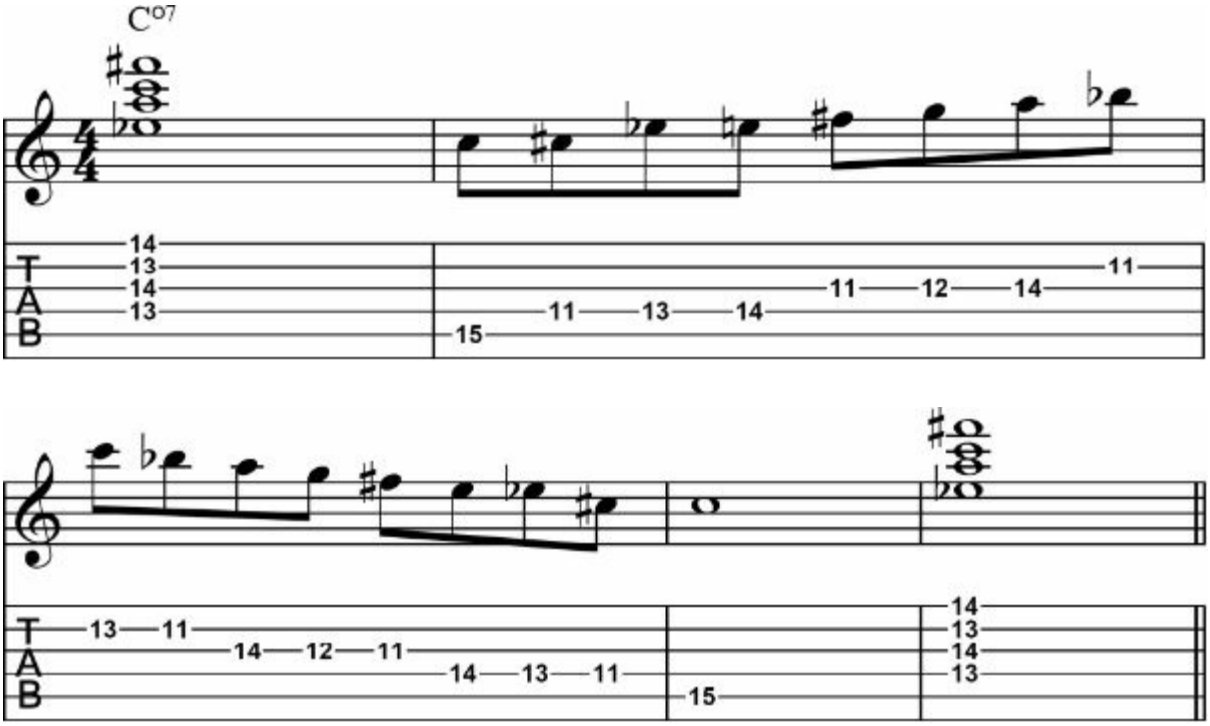


A Half-Whole Diminished Scale



Scale Studies: C Half-Whole Diminished Scale

Pattern 1



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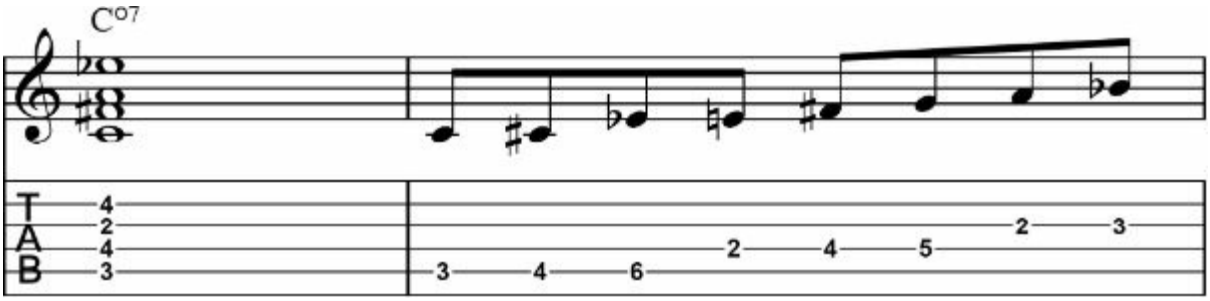

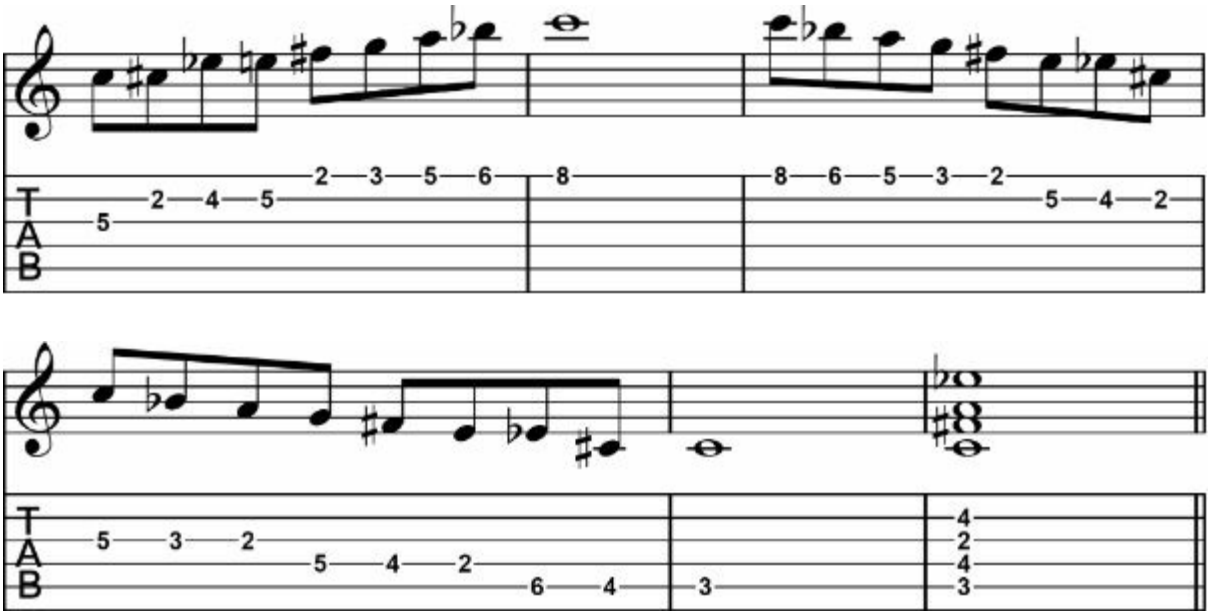

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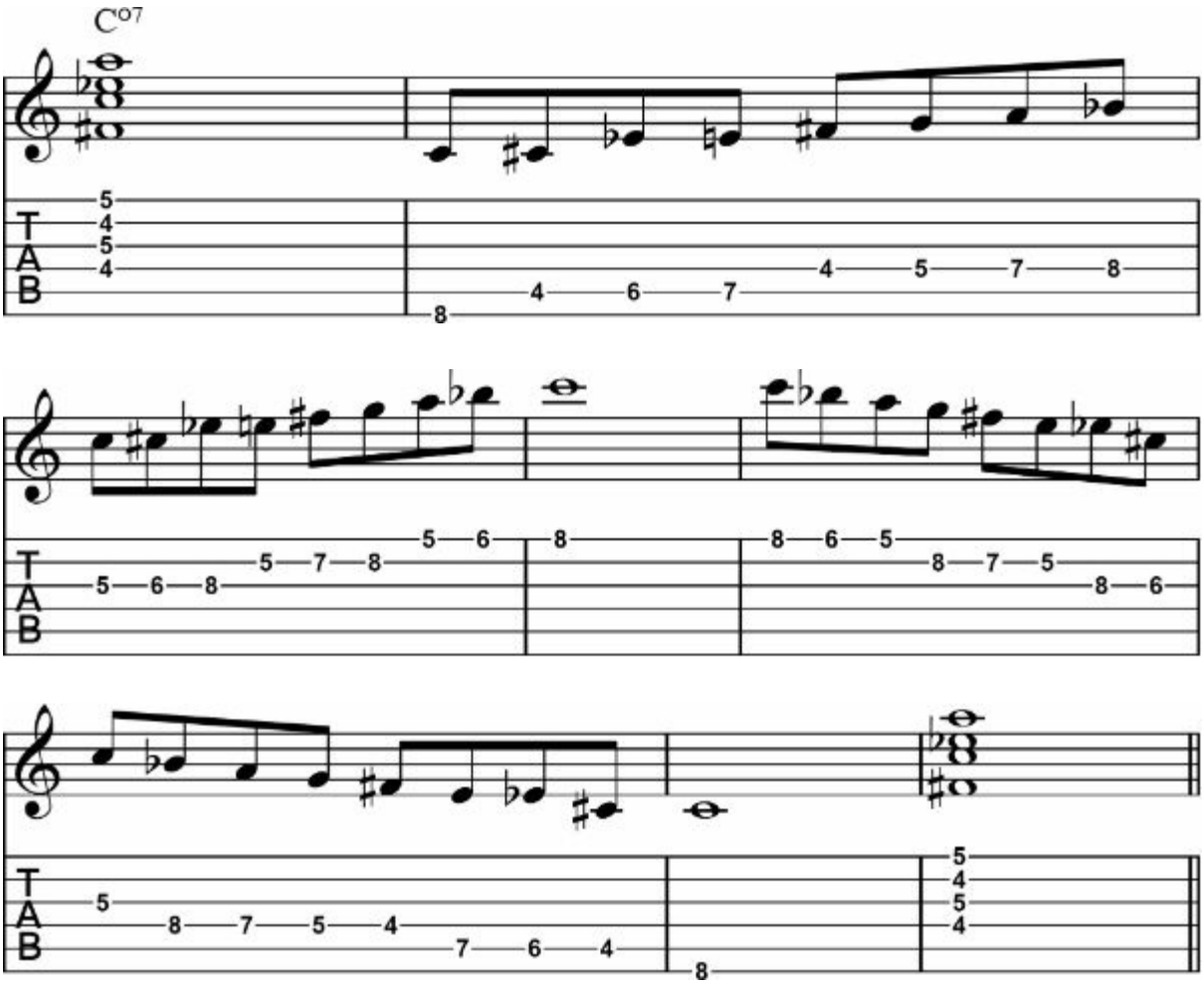

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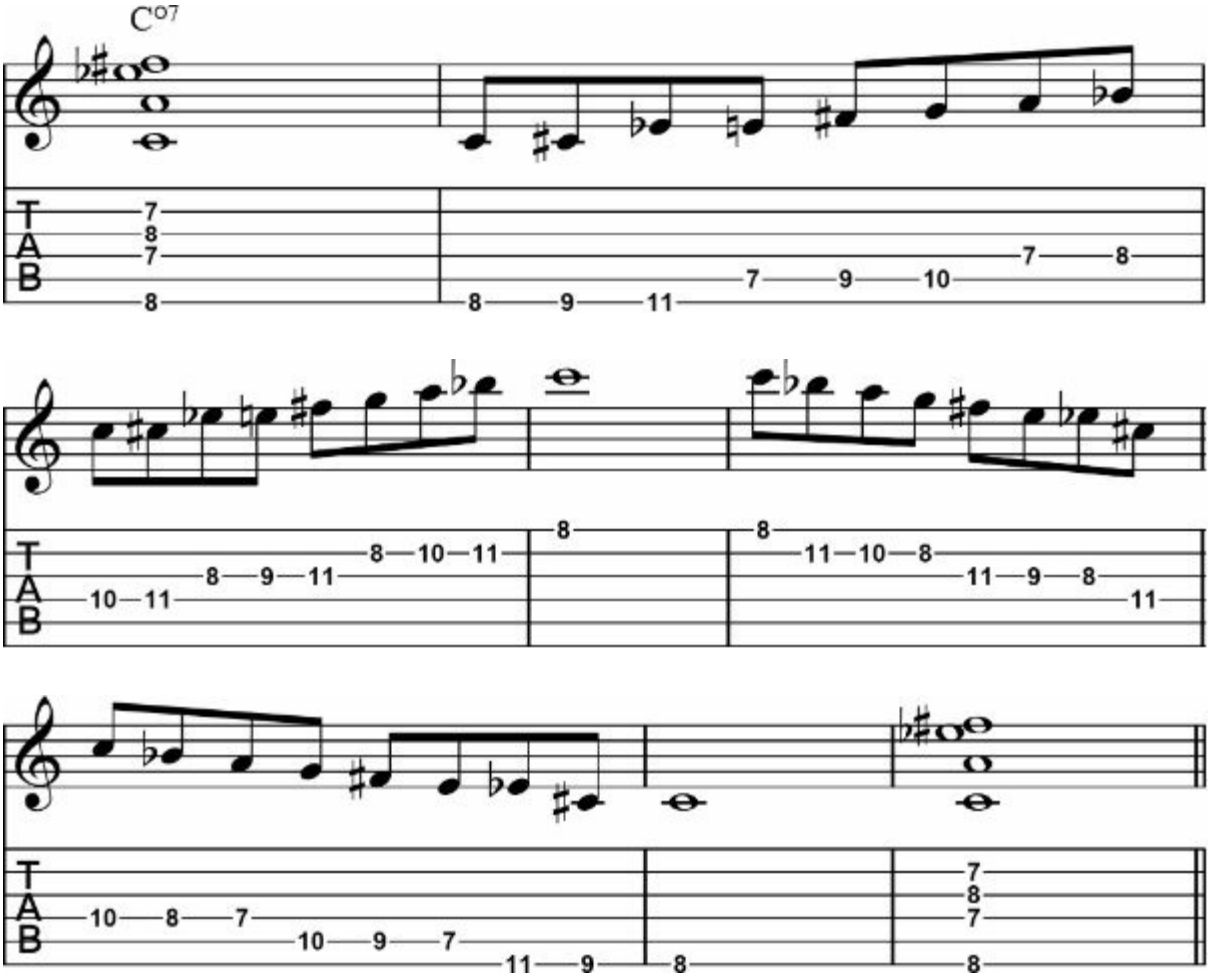
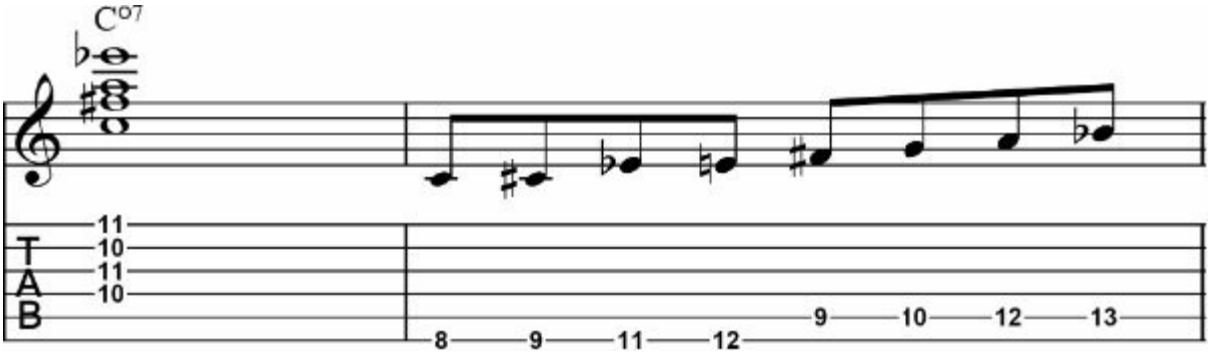
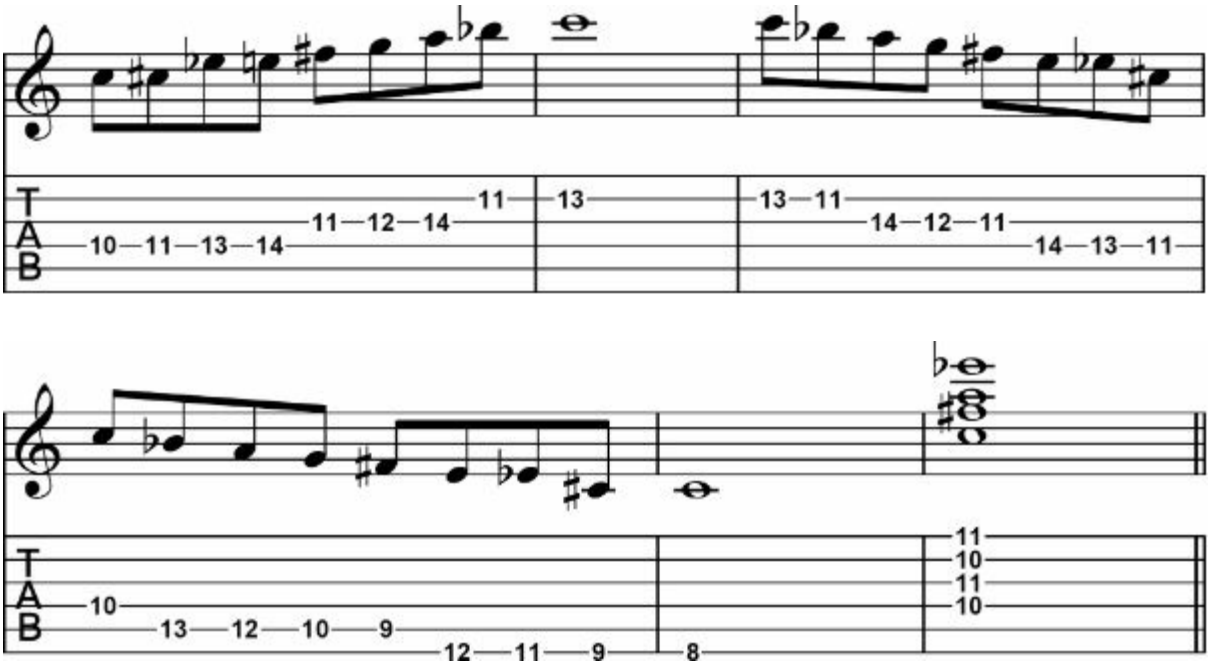


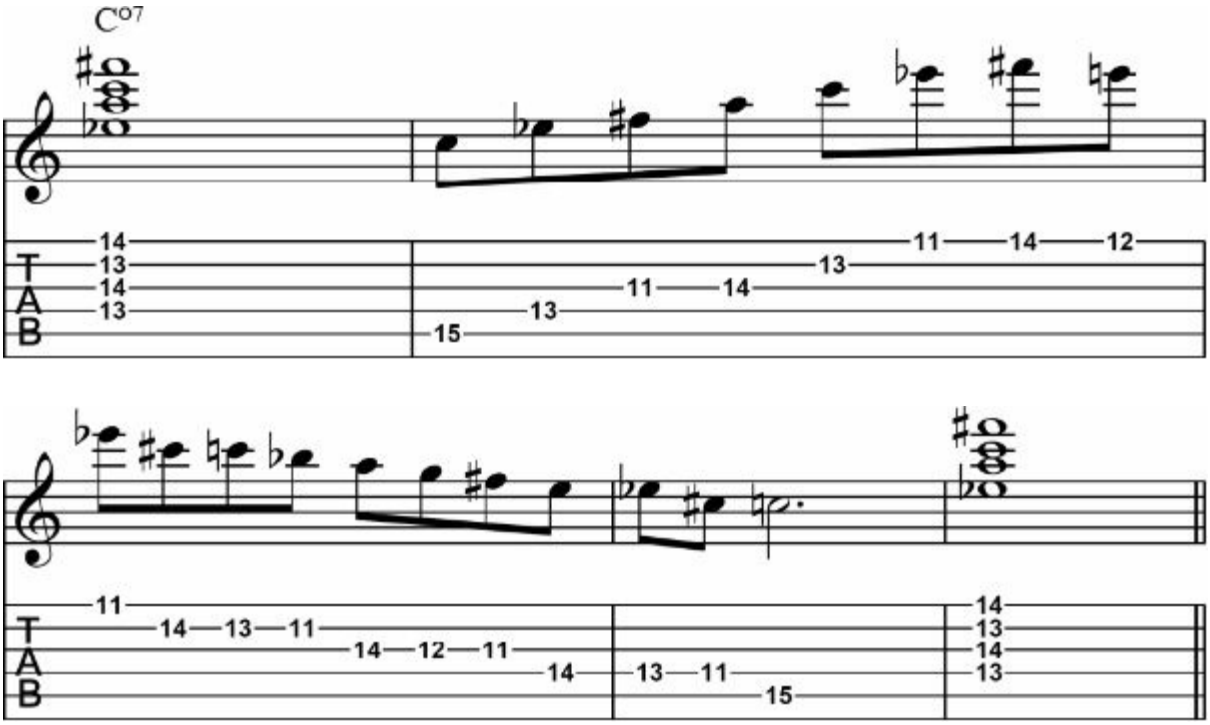
Pattern 5





Arpeggio & Scale Studies: Cdim7 & C Half-Whole Diminished Scale

Pattern 1



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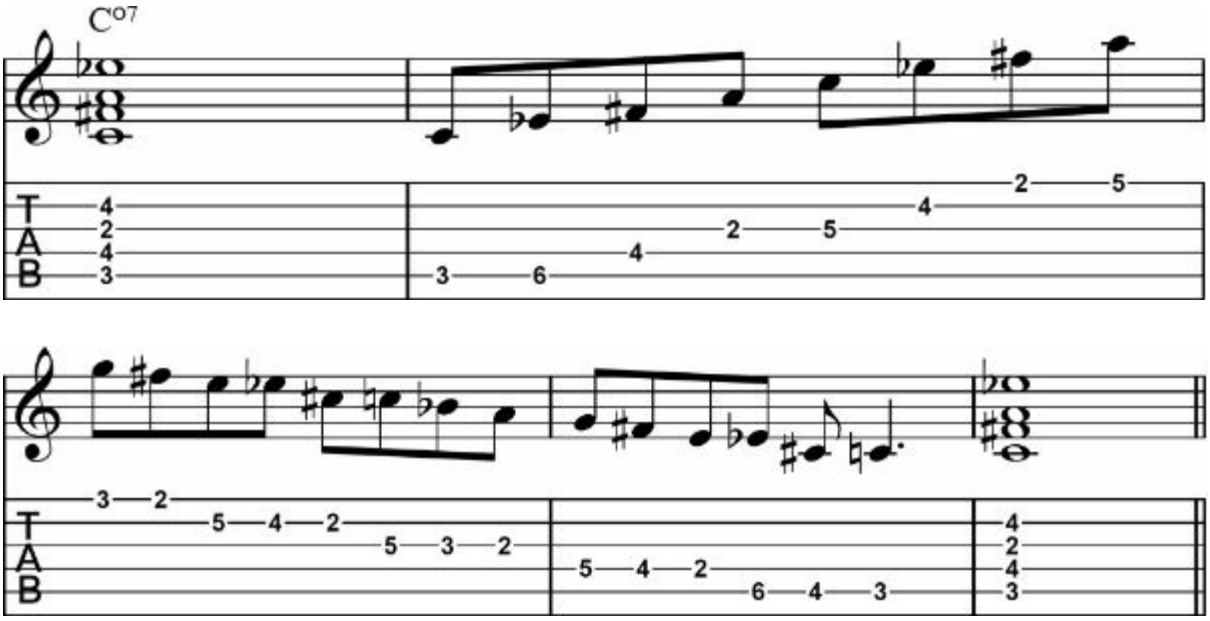

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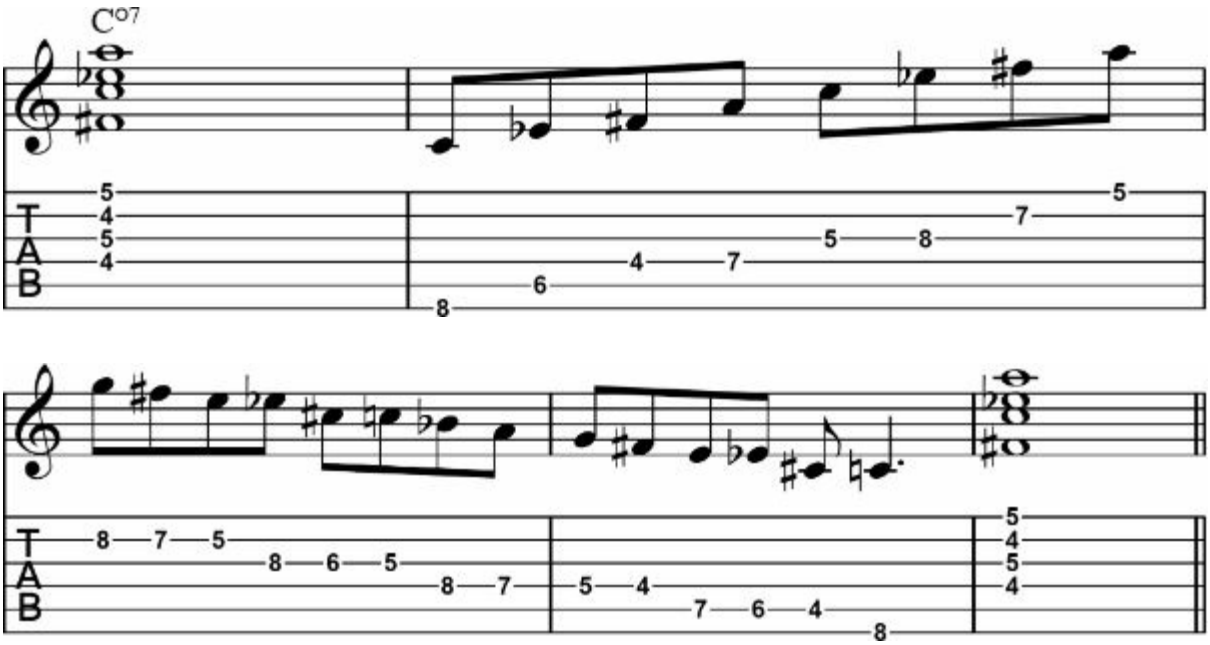

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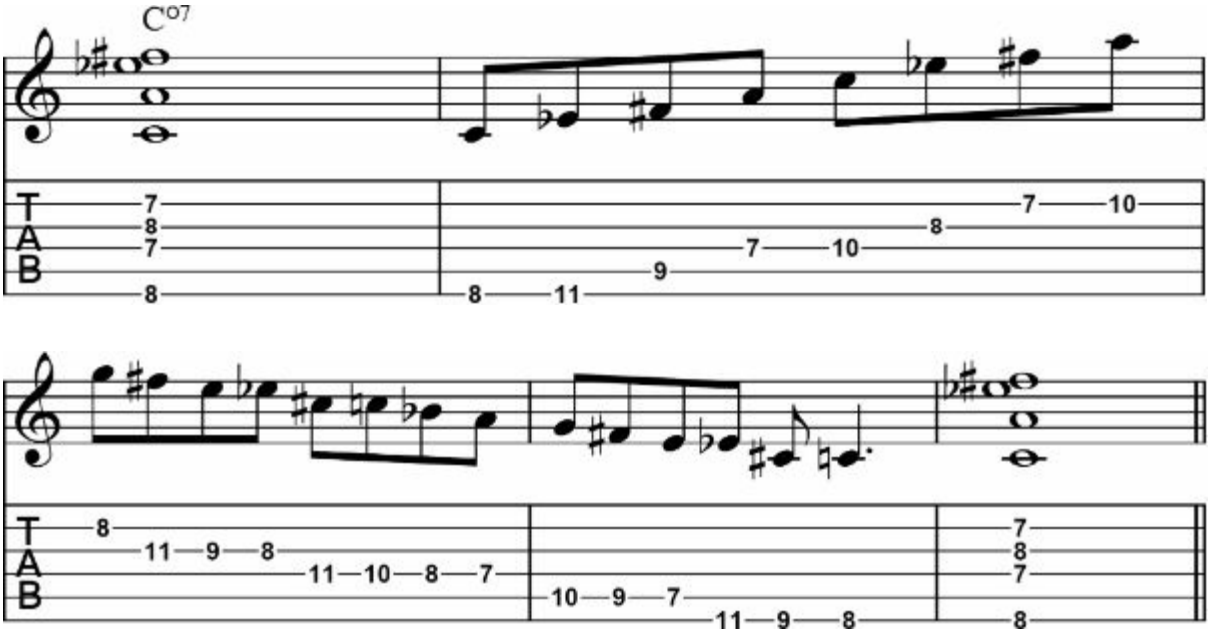
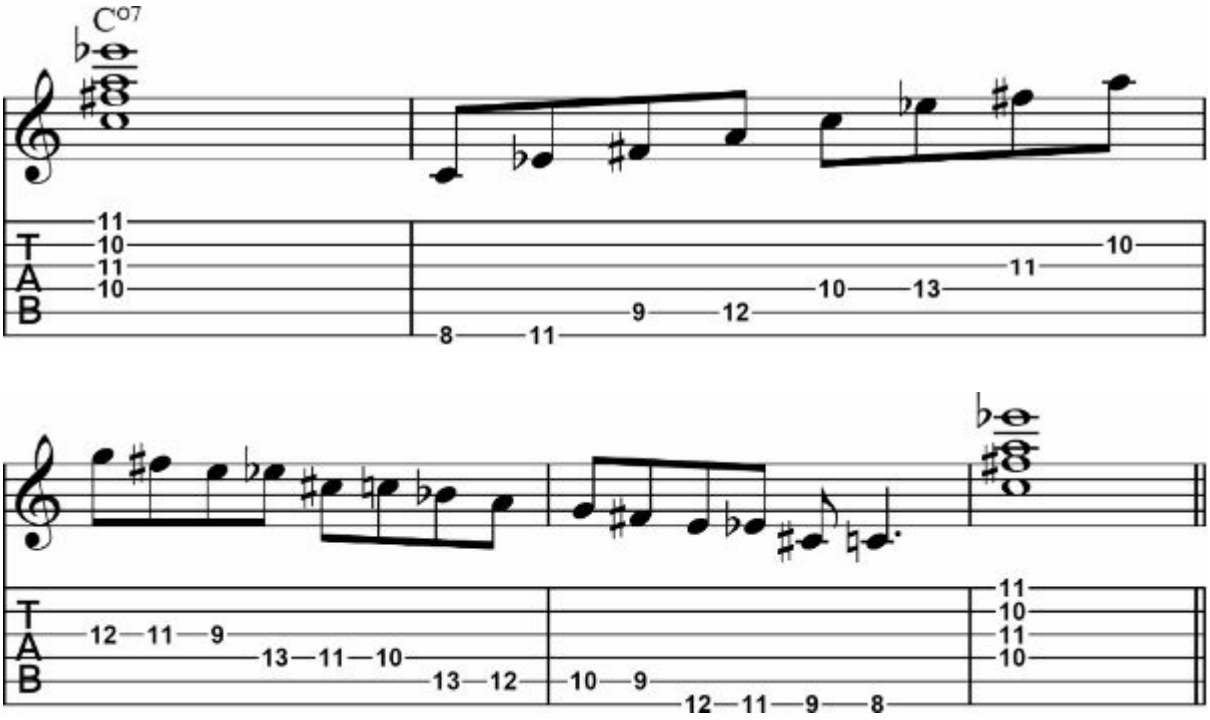


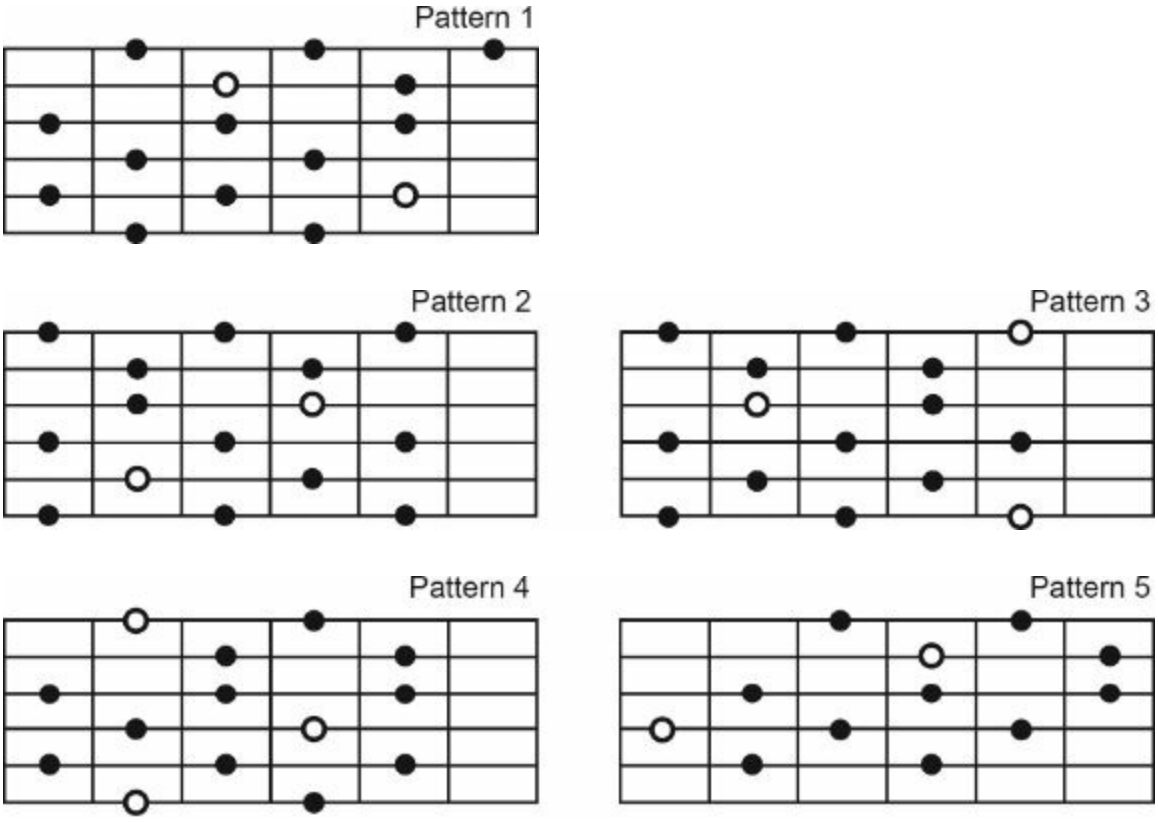
Pattern 5



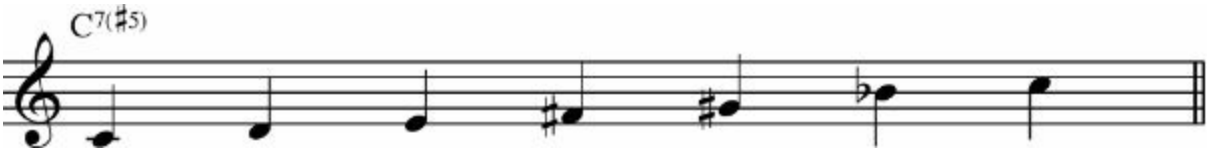
Whole-Tone Scale

The whole-tone scale is another symmetrical scale that has only six notes. As the intervals are all whole steps between notes, the notes and fingering shapes are the same even when you start from any note of the scale. This scale can be played over dominant 7th chord just like the H/W diminished scale but this scale has altered 5th (b5 and #5). The intervals are the root, 2, 3, #4(b5), #5, and b7. Jim Hall is the master player of this scale.

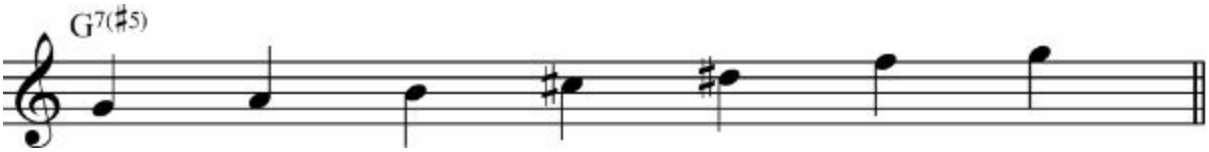
Fingering Patterns



C Whole-Tone Scale

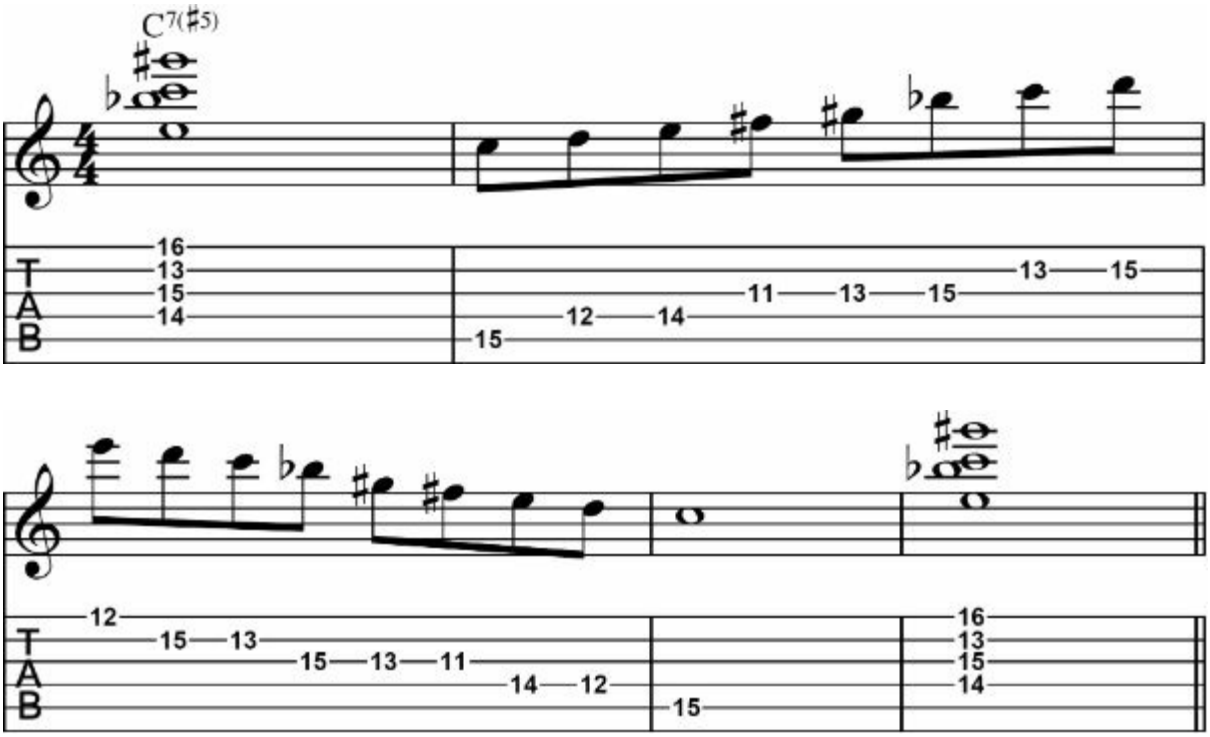


G Whole-Tone Scale



Scale Studies: C Whole-Tone Scale

Pattern 1



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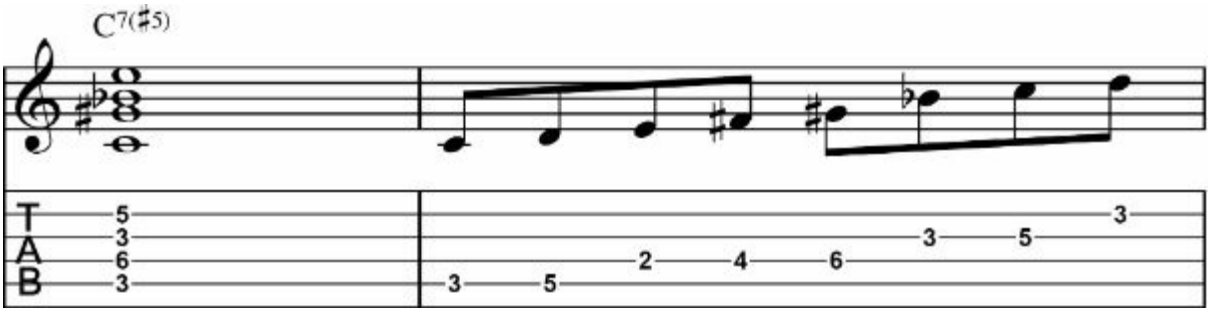

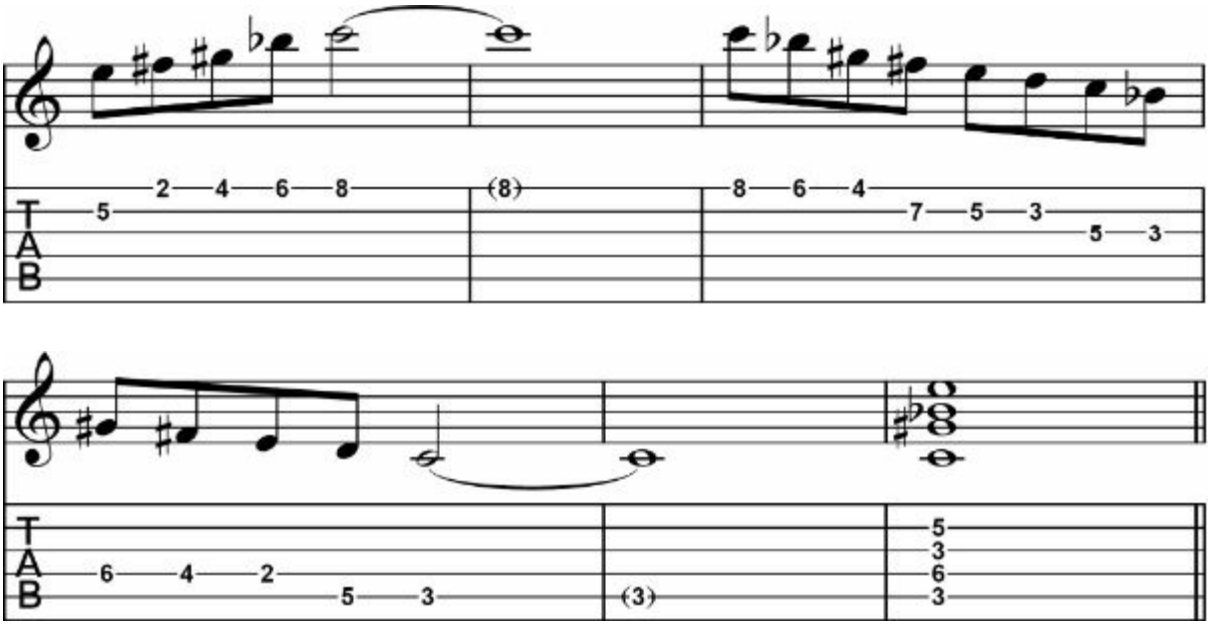

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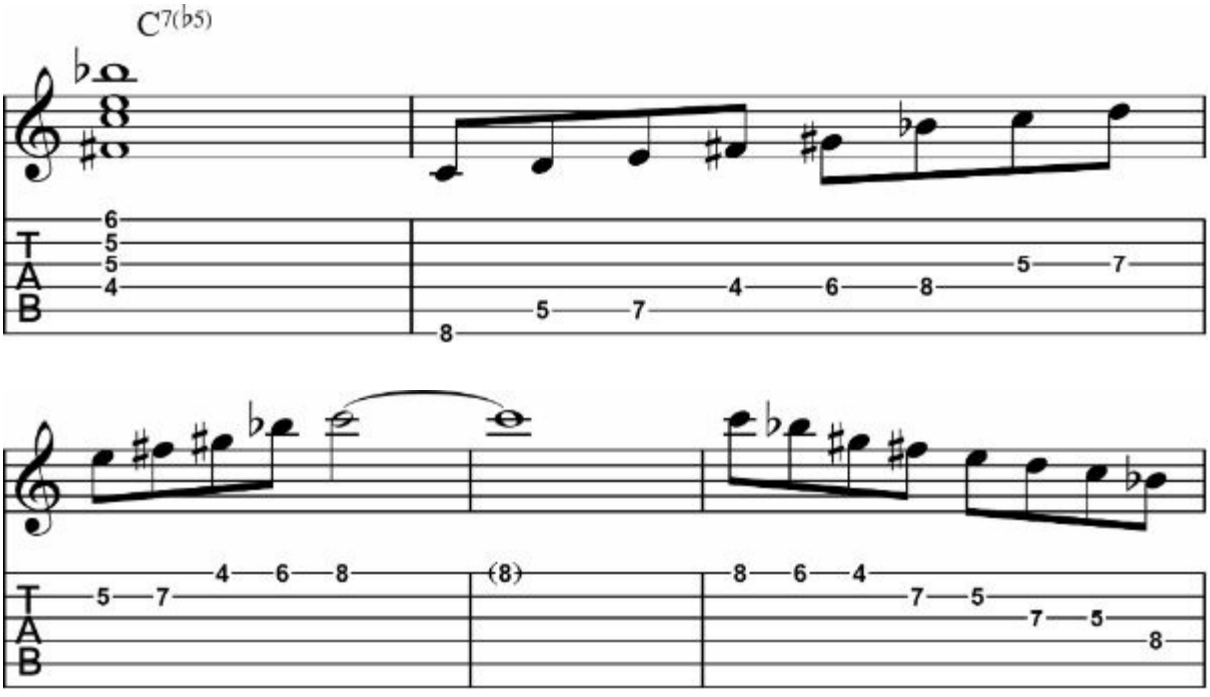

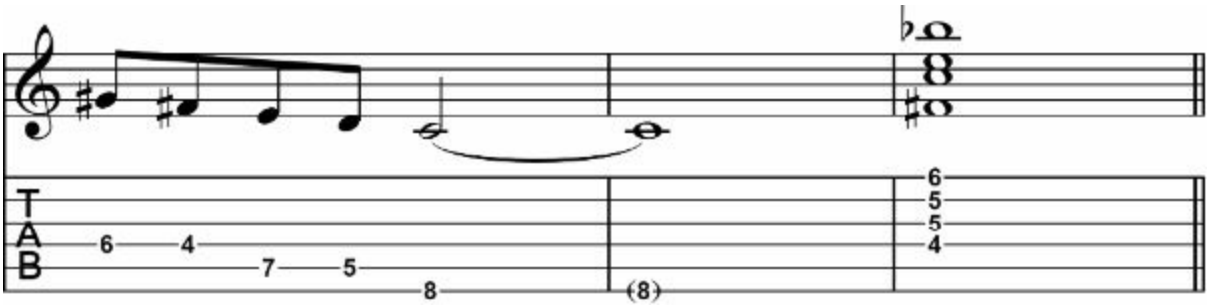

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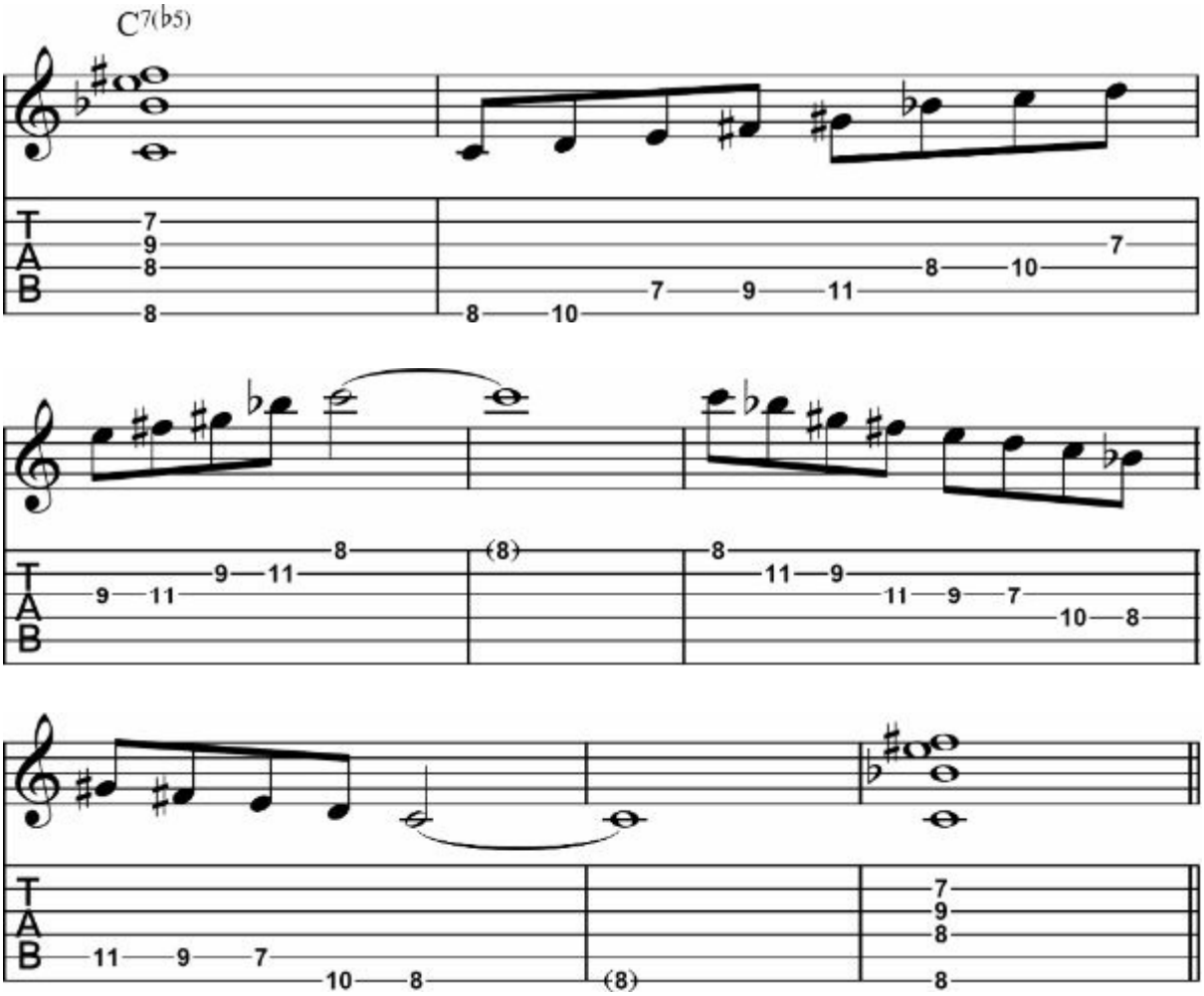
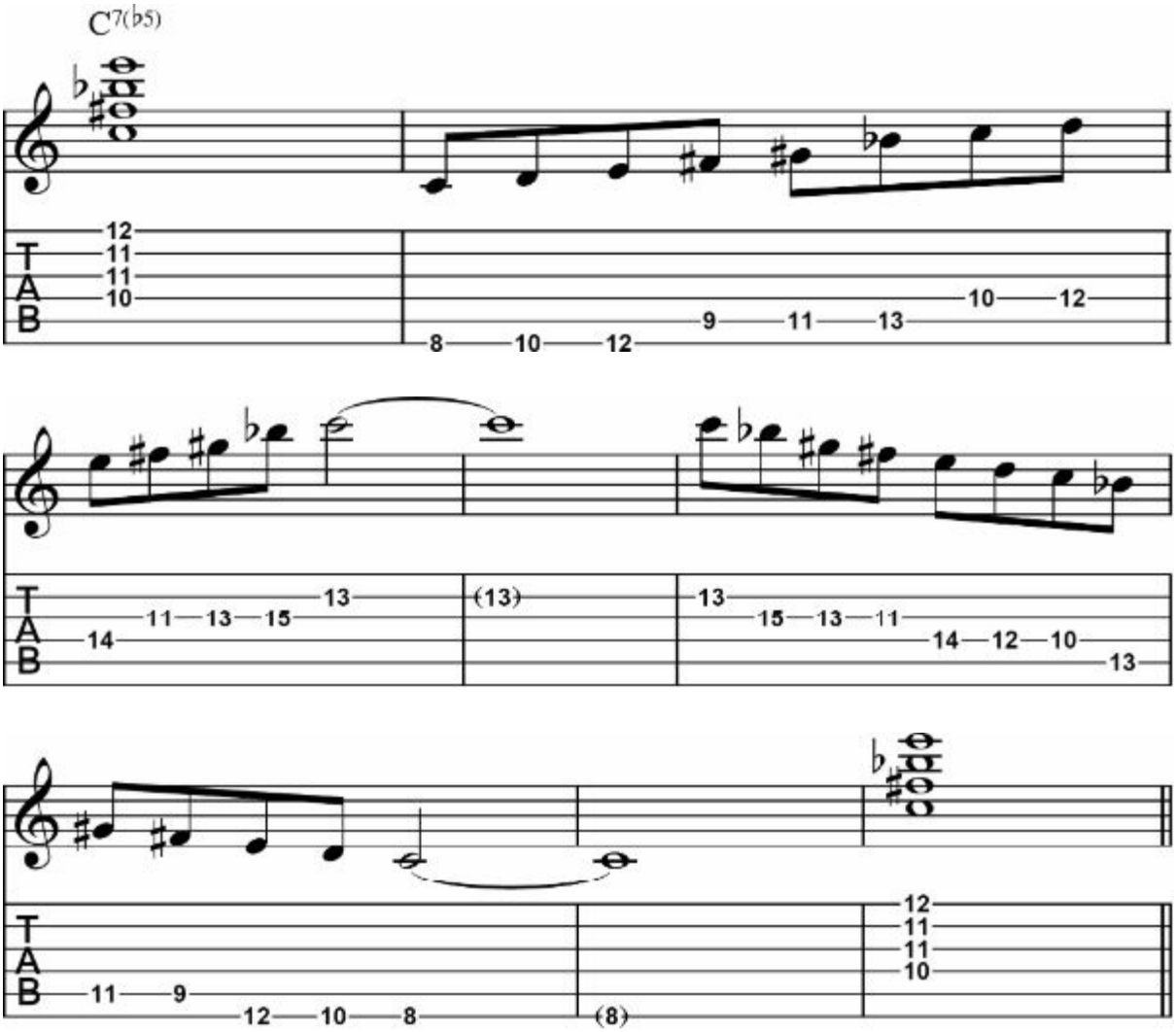
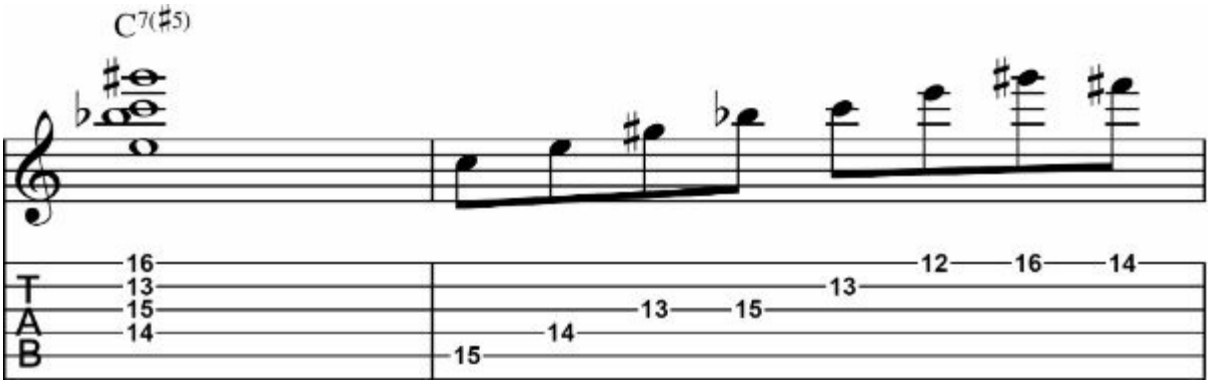


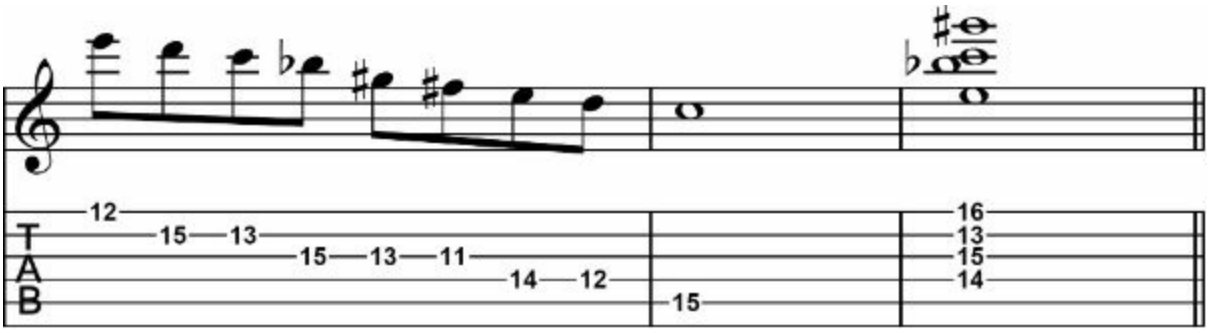
Pattern 5



Arpeggio & Scale Studies: C7(#5, b5) & C Whole-Tone Scale

Pattern 1





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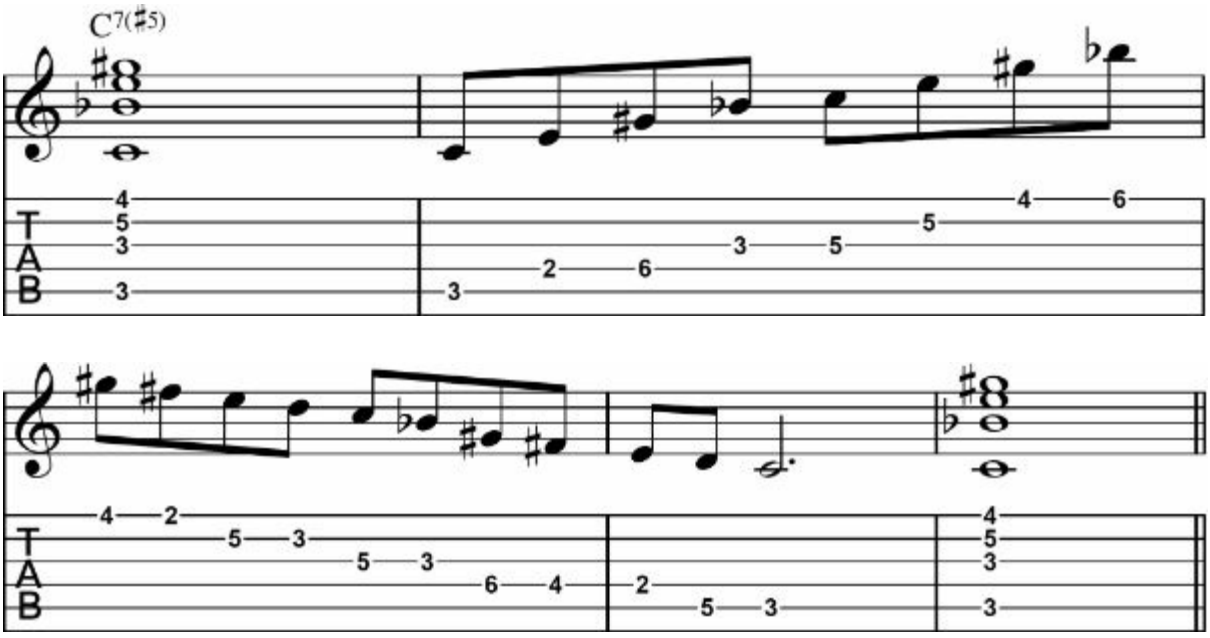
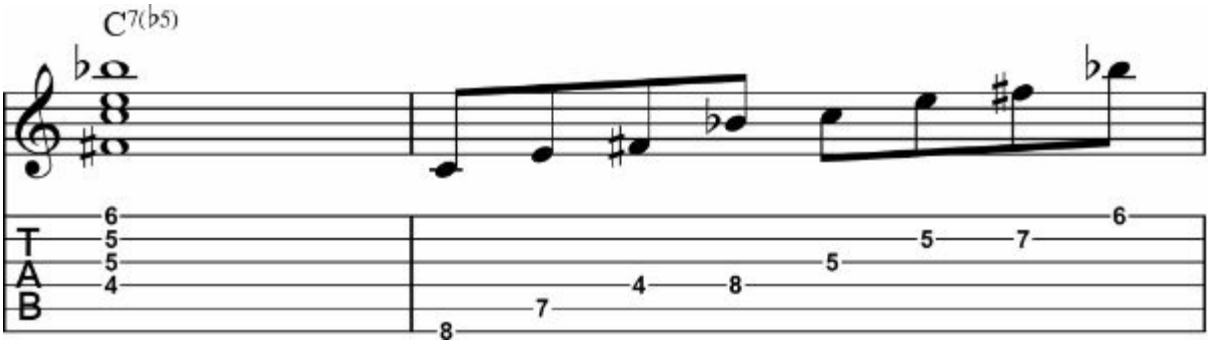
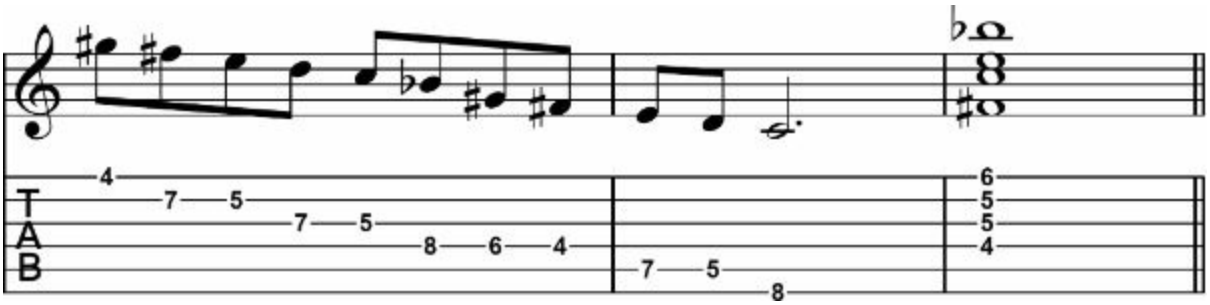


Pattern 3





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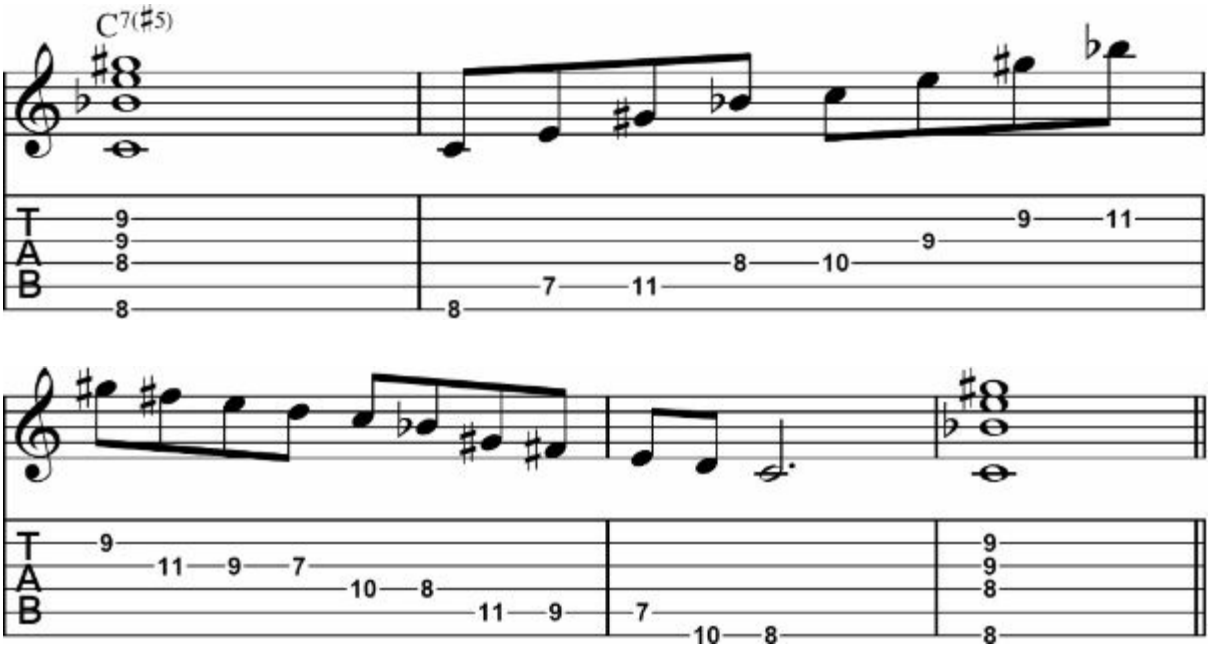
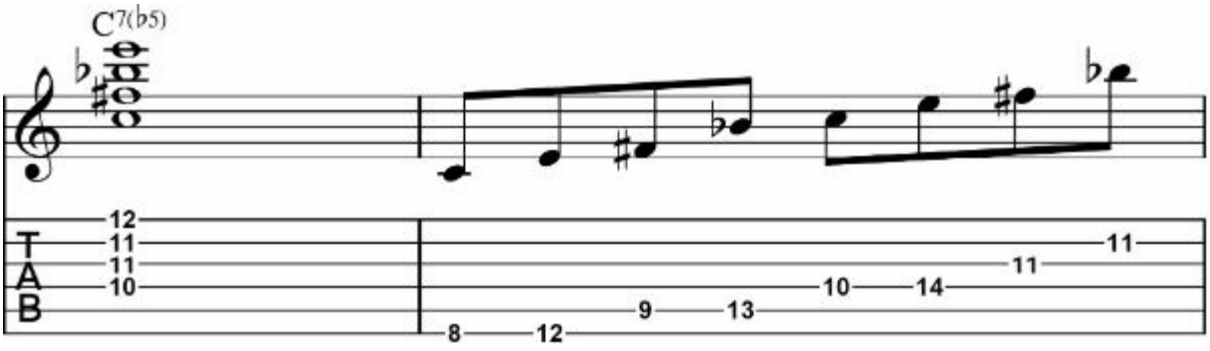
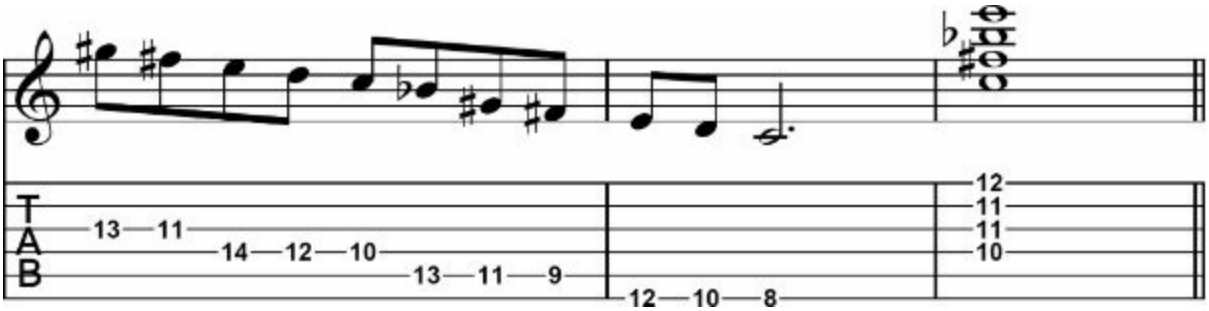


Pattern 5

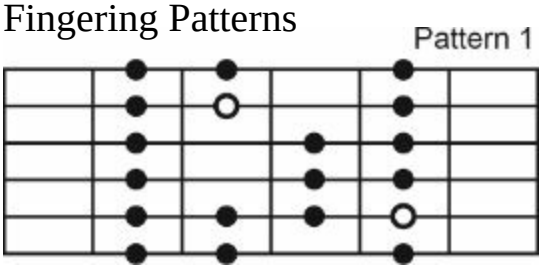


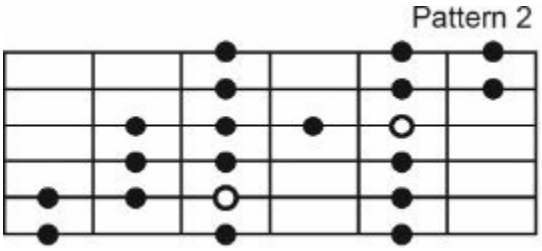


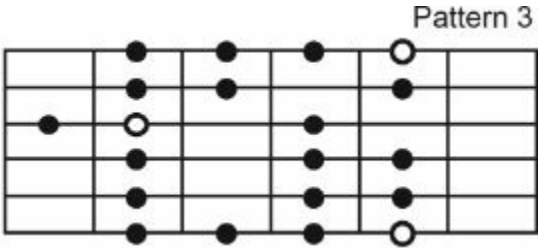
Bebop Dominant Scale

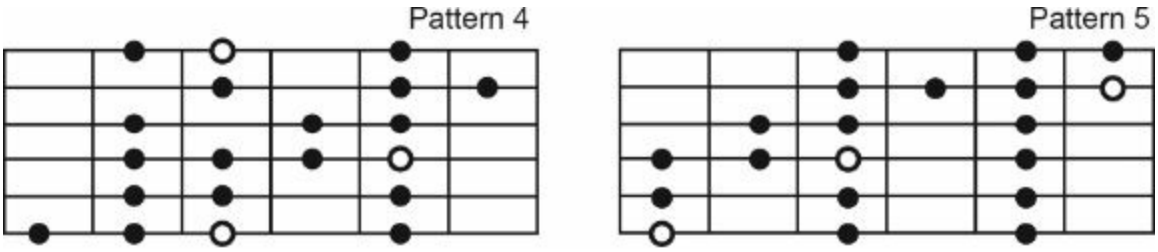
The bebop dominant scale is the Mixolydian mode with a chromatic passing note added between the 7th and the root. The bebop dominant scale is usually played over V chords and II-V progressions. As the bebop scales are harmony and rhythm oriented scales, you need to care about where you place the chromatic note. During a count of eight beats, 1-and, 2-and, 3-and, 4-and, if you play the chromatic note on and-beat, then the arpeggio notes of the chord will be placed naturally on the down-beat. This rhythmic approach makes the phrase smoother and similar to Charlie Parker's sound. This scale was established by David Baker. Check out his book "How to play bebop".

Fingering Patterns

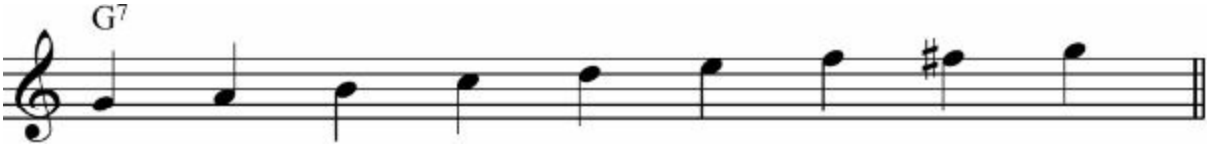




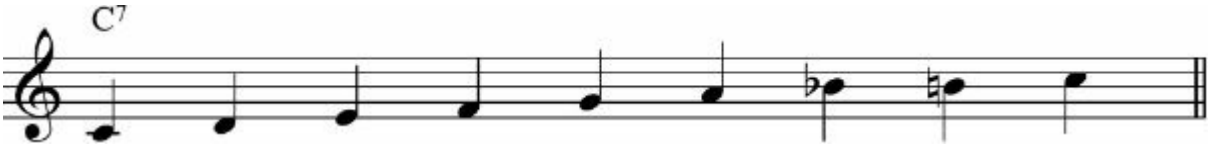




G Bebop Dominant Scale

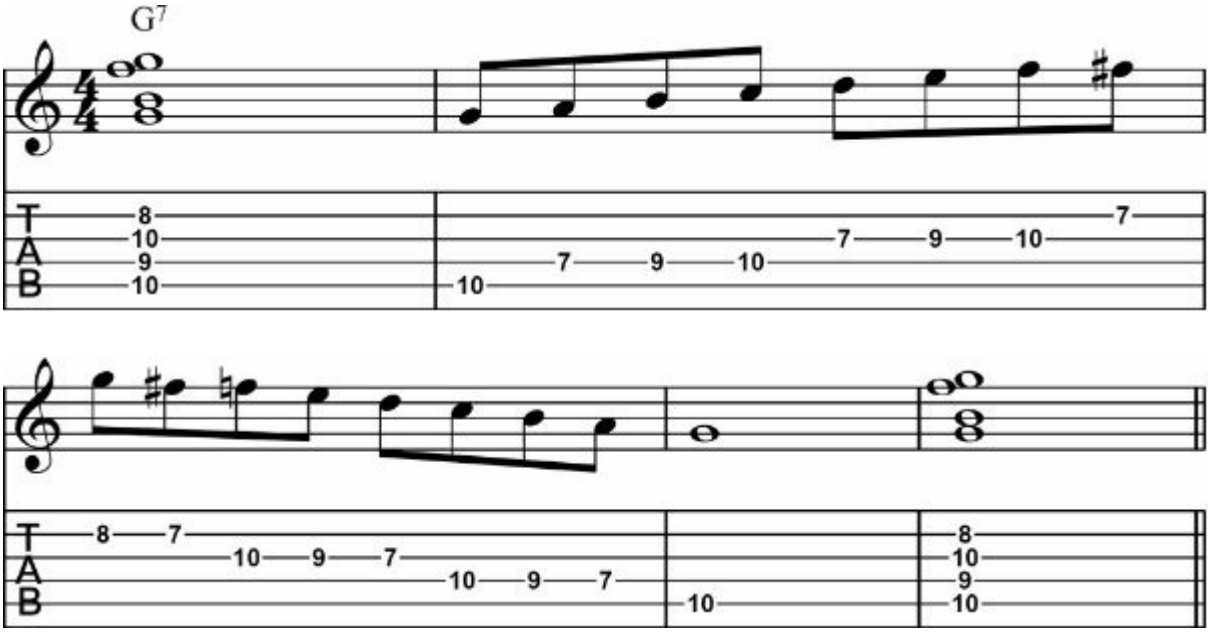


C Bebop Dominant Scale

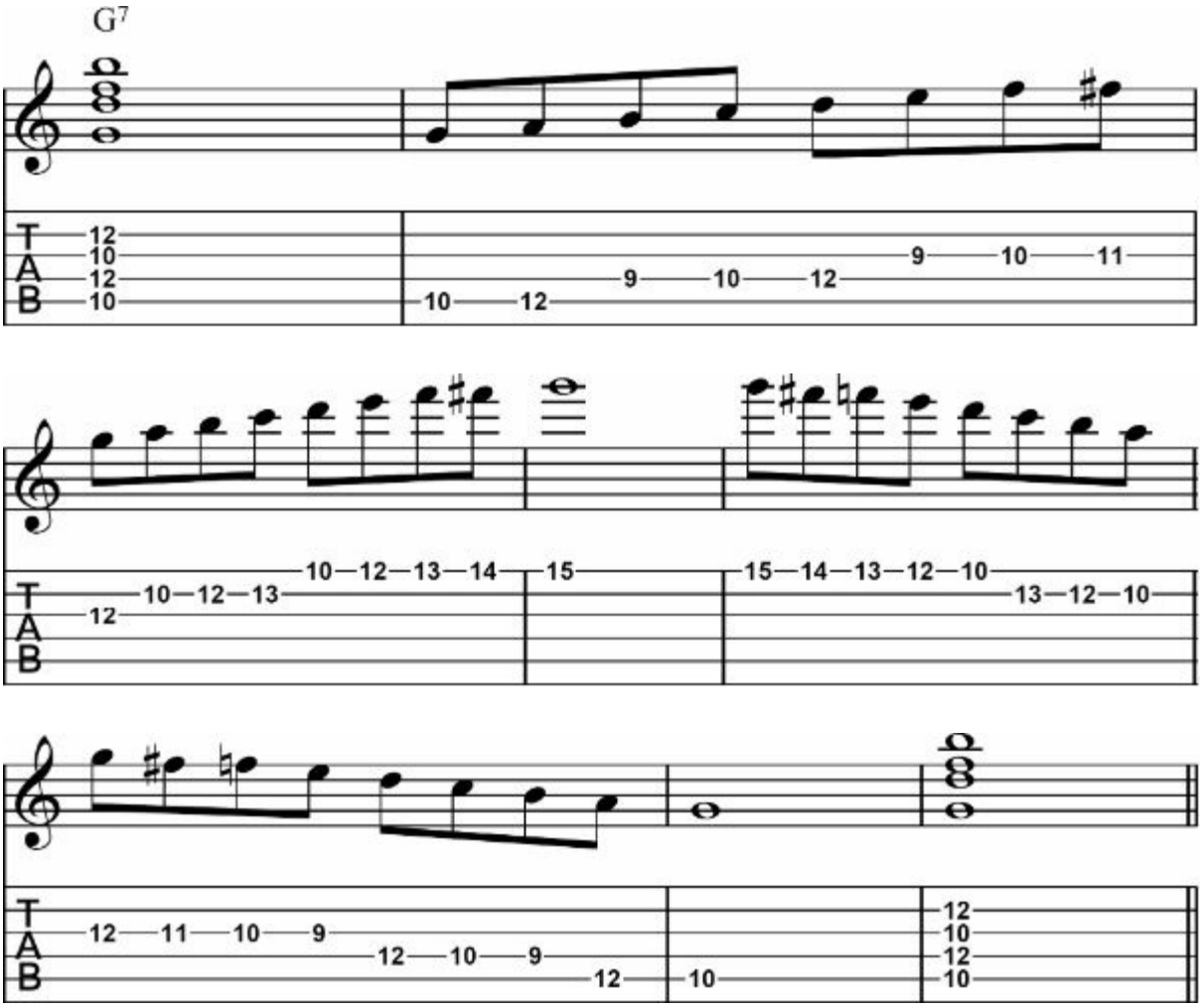


Scale Studies: G Bebop Dominant Scale

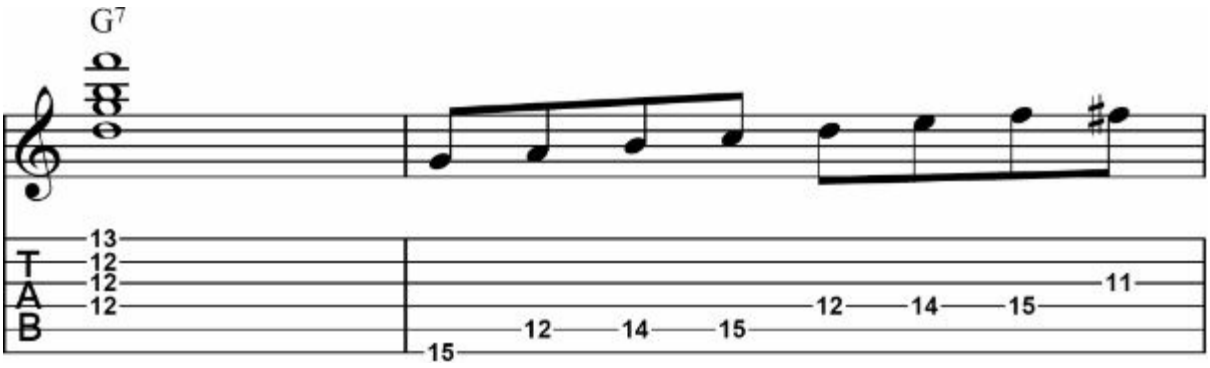
Pattern 1

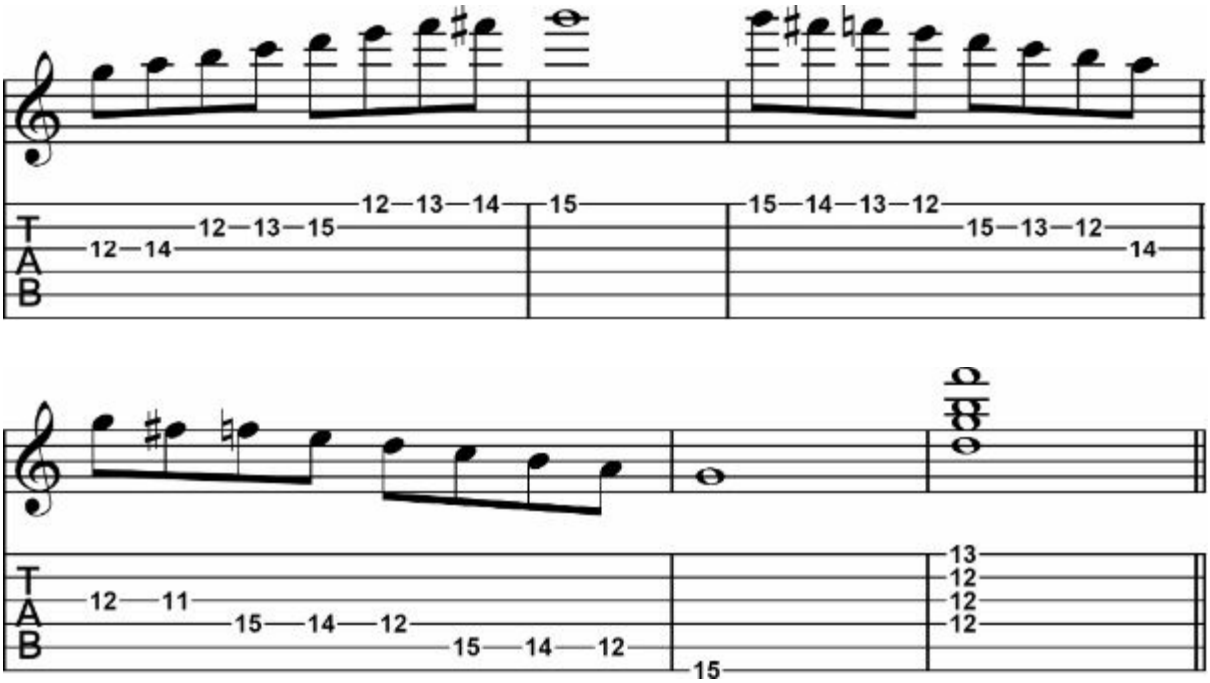


Pattern 2

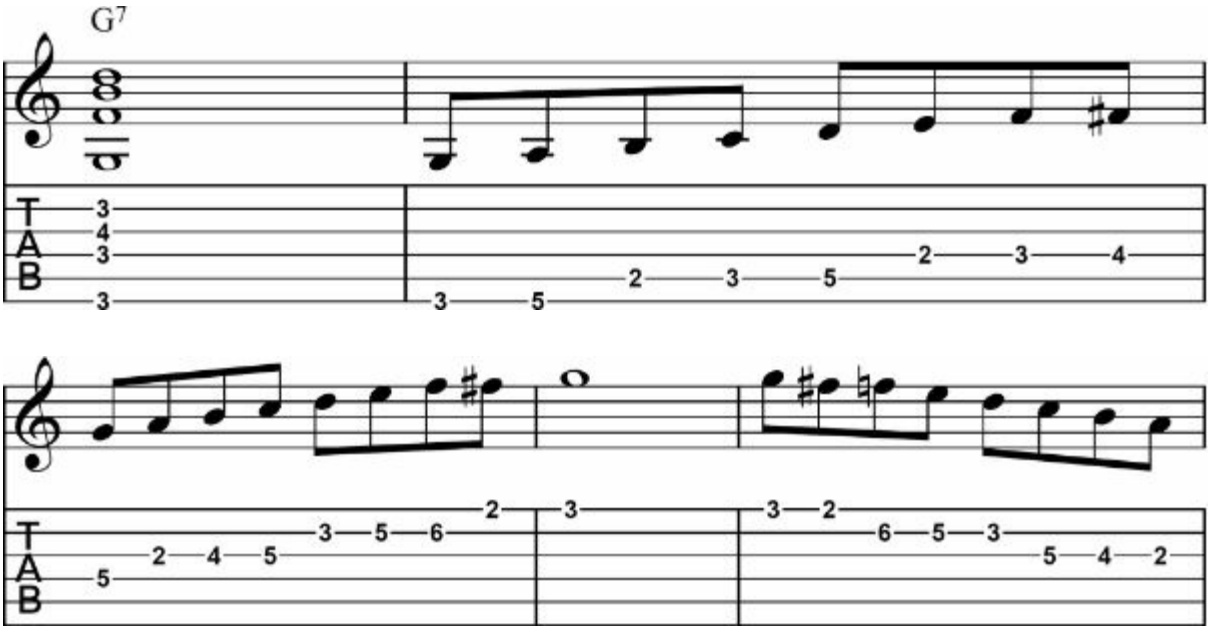


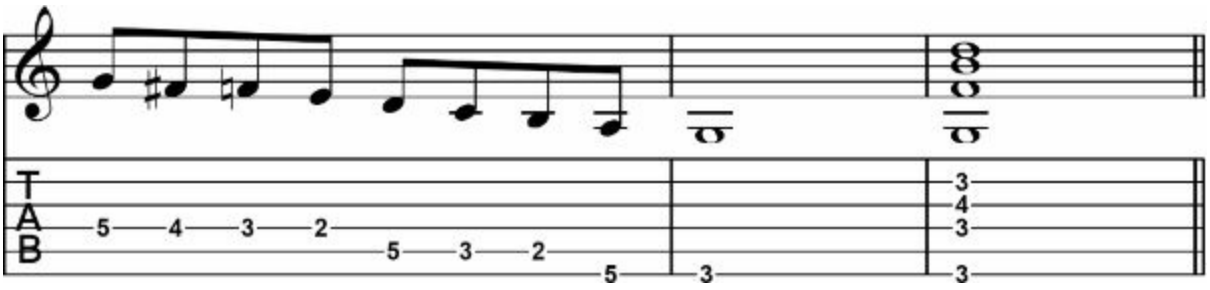
Pattern 3



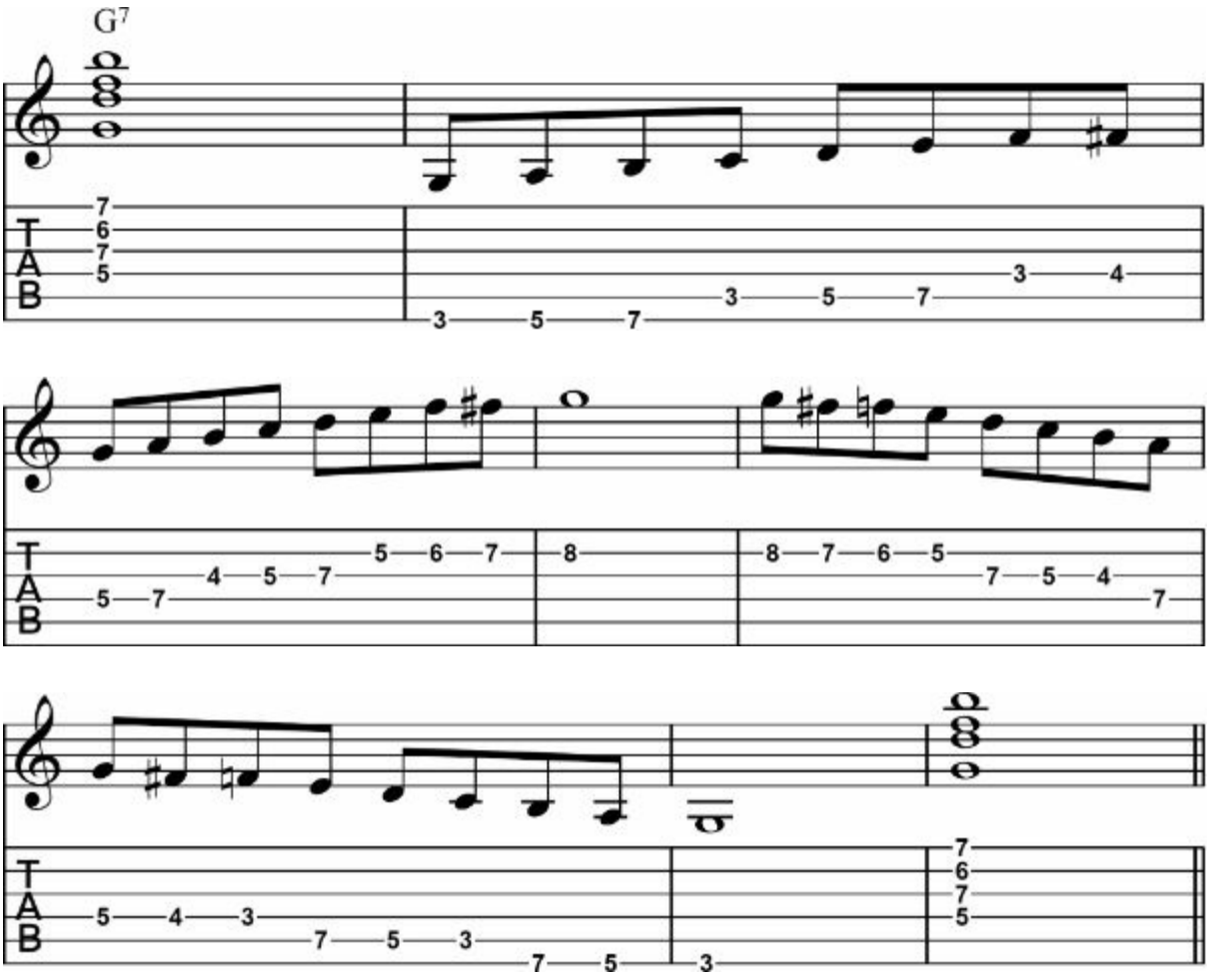

T
A
B
12 13 14 15
12 14 12 13 15
15 14 13 12
15 13 12 14
12 11 15 14 12 15 14 12
15
13 12 12 12

Pattern 4


G7
T
A
B
3 4 3 3
3 5 2 3 5 2 3 4
5 2 4 5 3 5 6 2 3
3 2 6 5 3 5 4 2

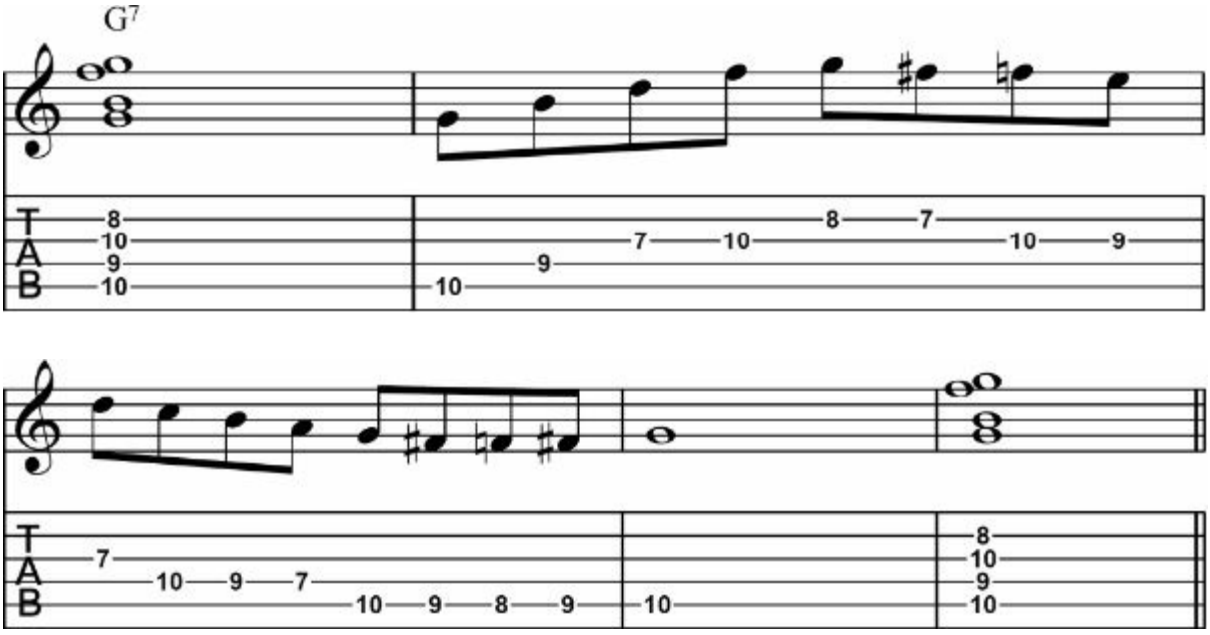


Pattern 5



Arpeggio & Scale Studies: G7 & G Bebop Dominant Scale

Pattern 1



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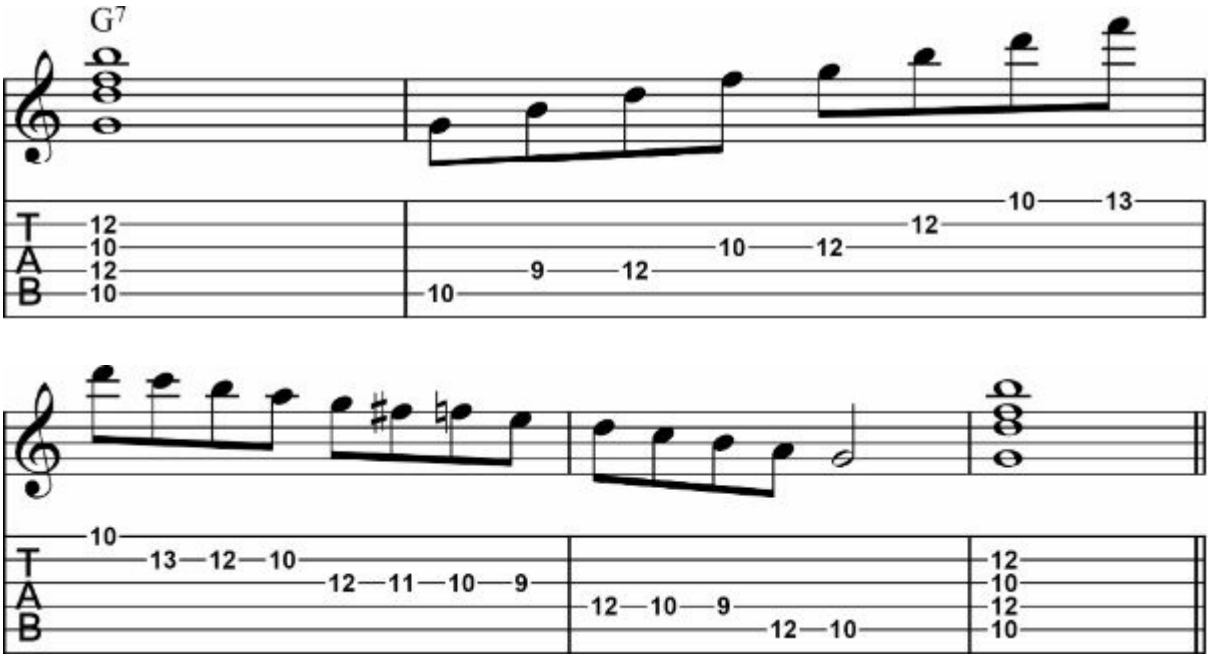
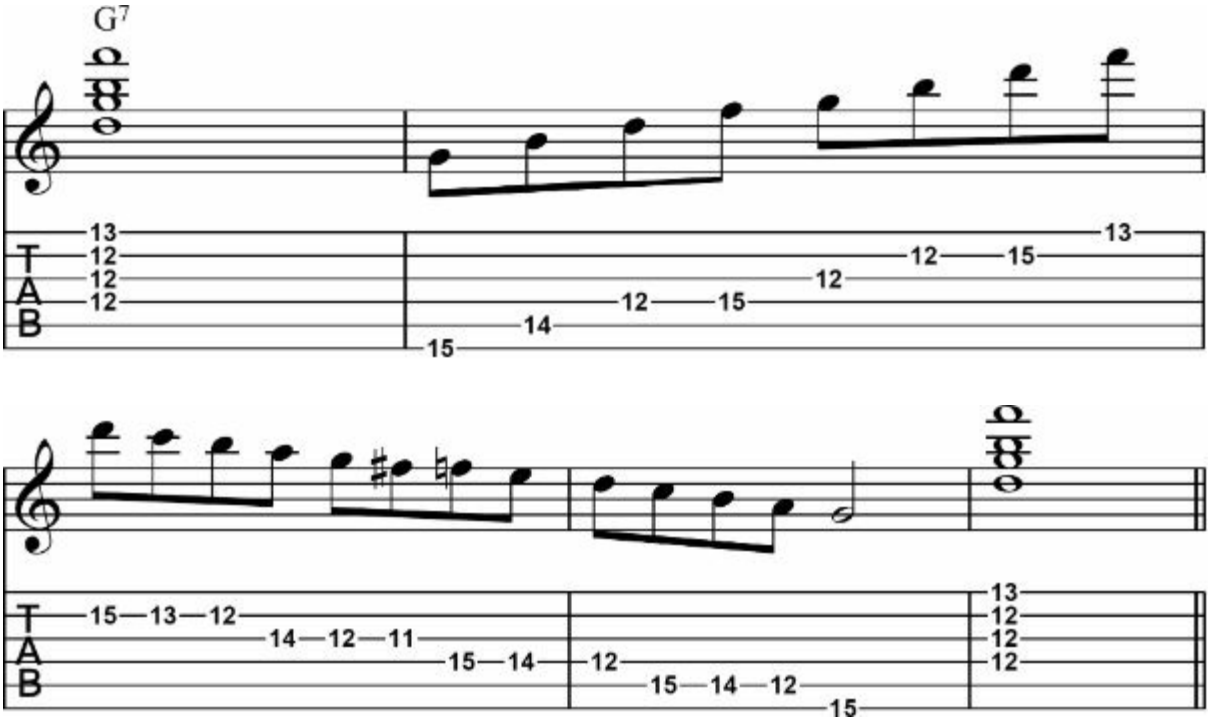
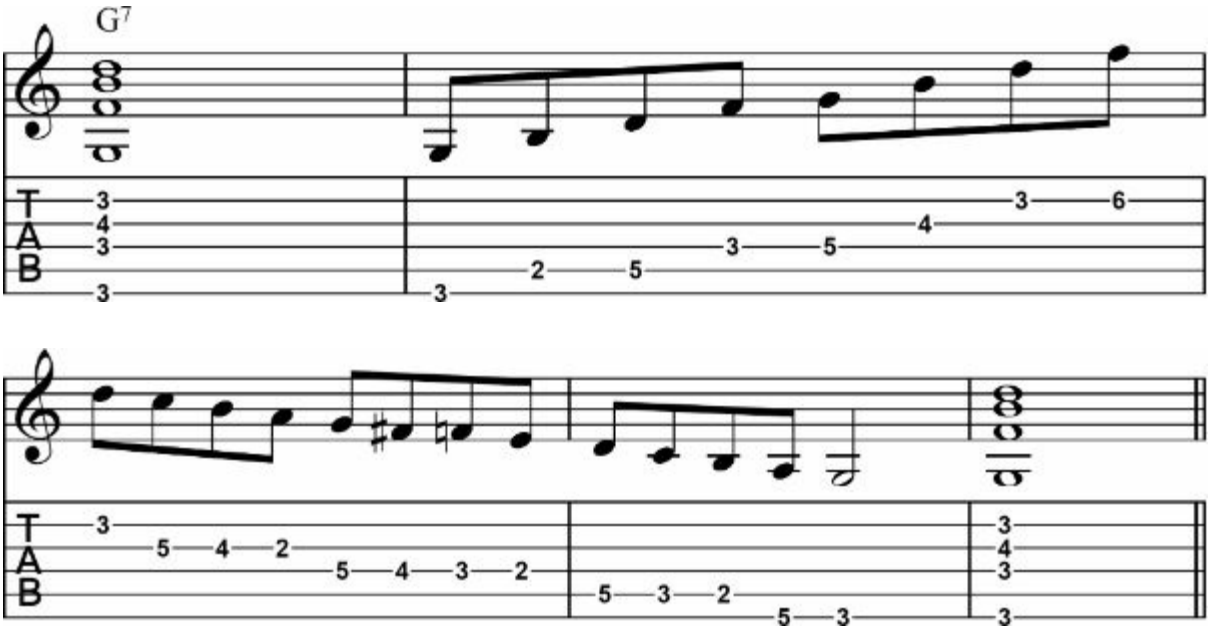


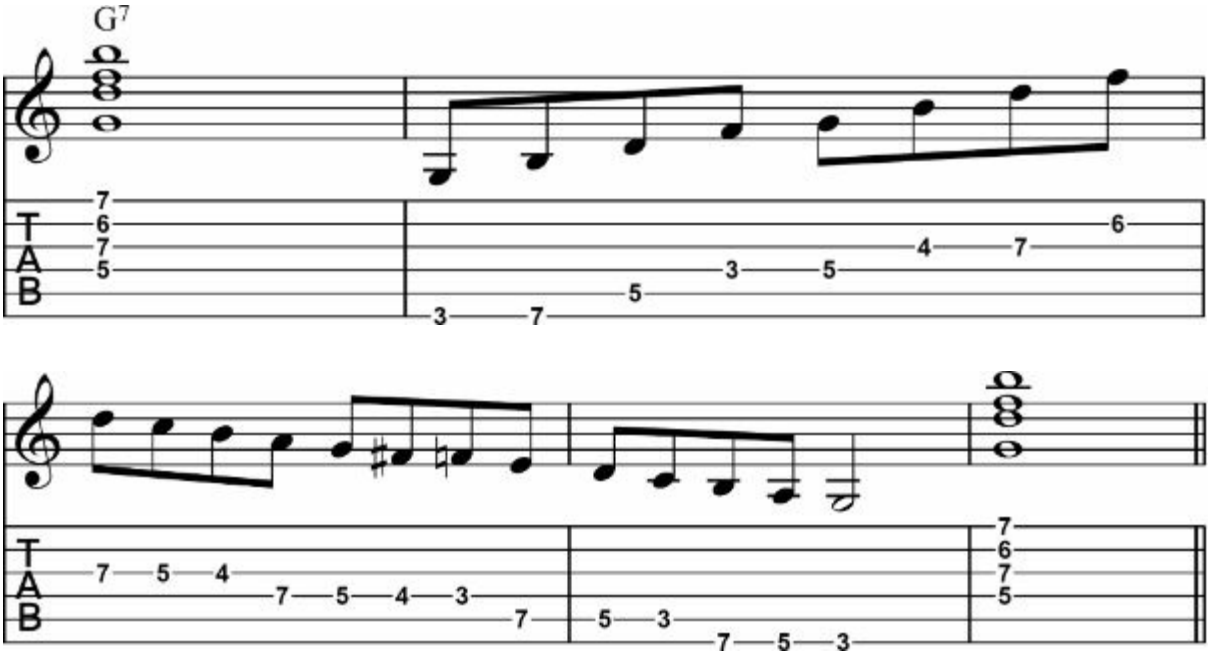
Pattern 3



Pattern 4



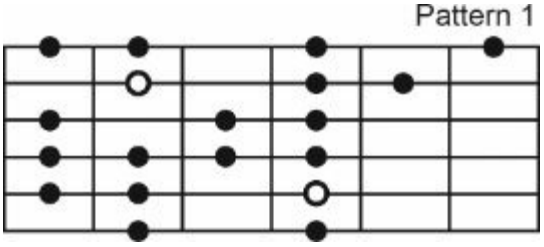
Pattern 5

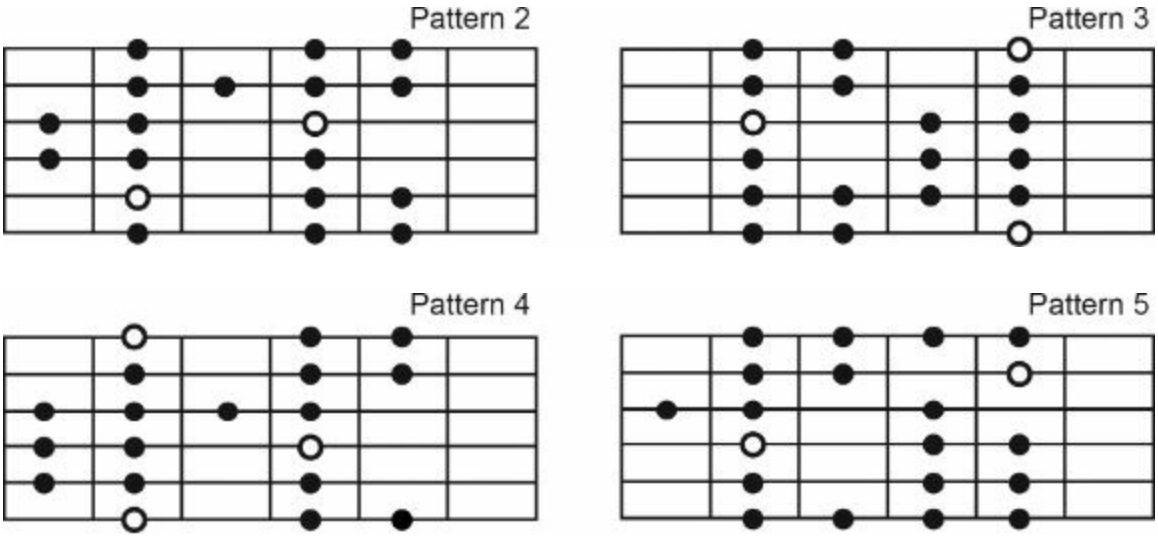


Bebop Dorian Scale

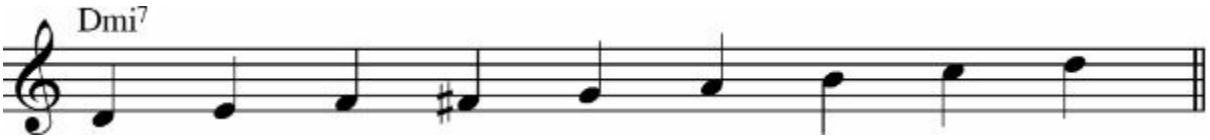
The Bebop Dorian scale is a Dorian mode with a chromatic passing note added between the 3rd and 4th notes. This Bebop Dorian scale can be played over IImi7 chord. In the same key, The II Bebop Dorian and V Bebop Dominant have the same notes.

Fingering Patterns

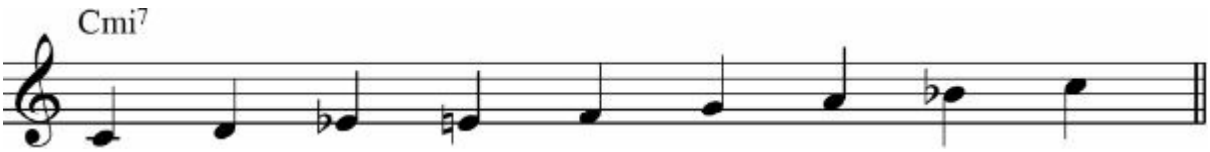




D Bebop Dorian Scale

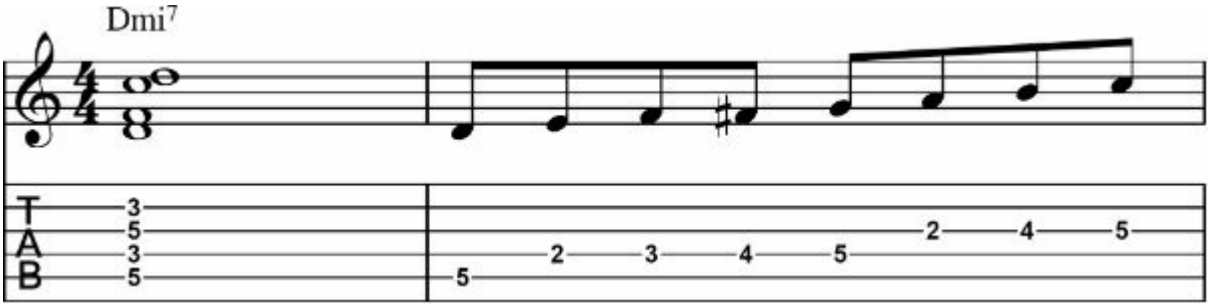


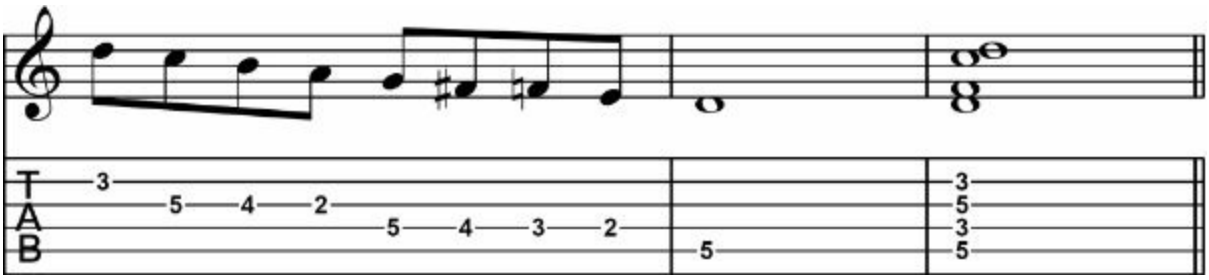
C Bebop Dorian Scale



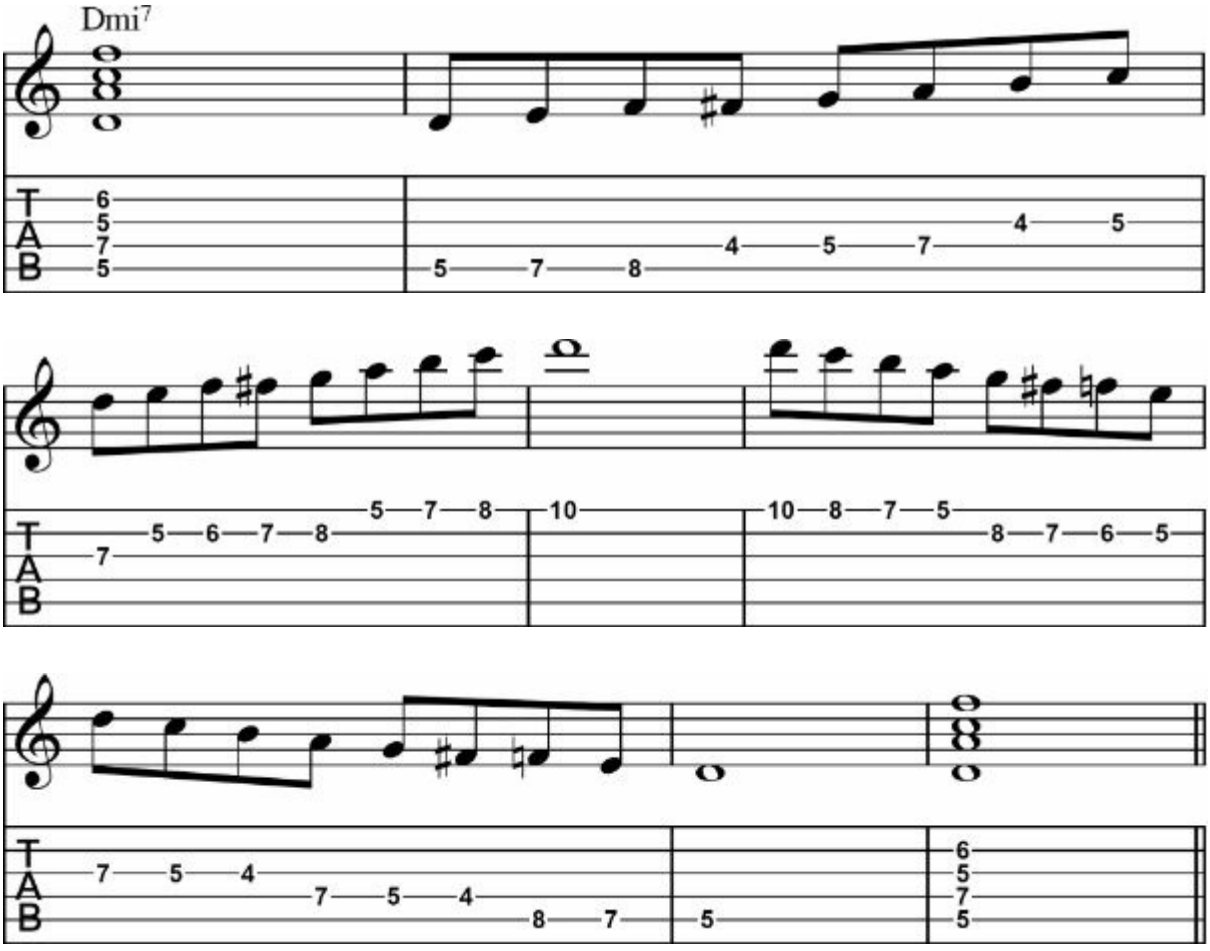
Scale Studies: D Bebop Dorian Scale

Pattern 1

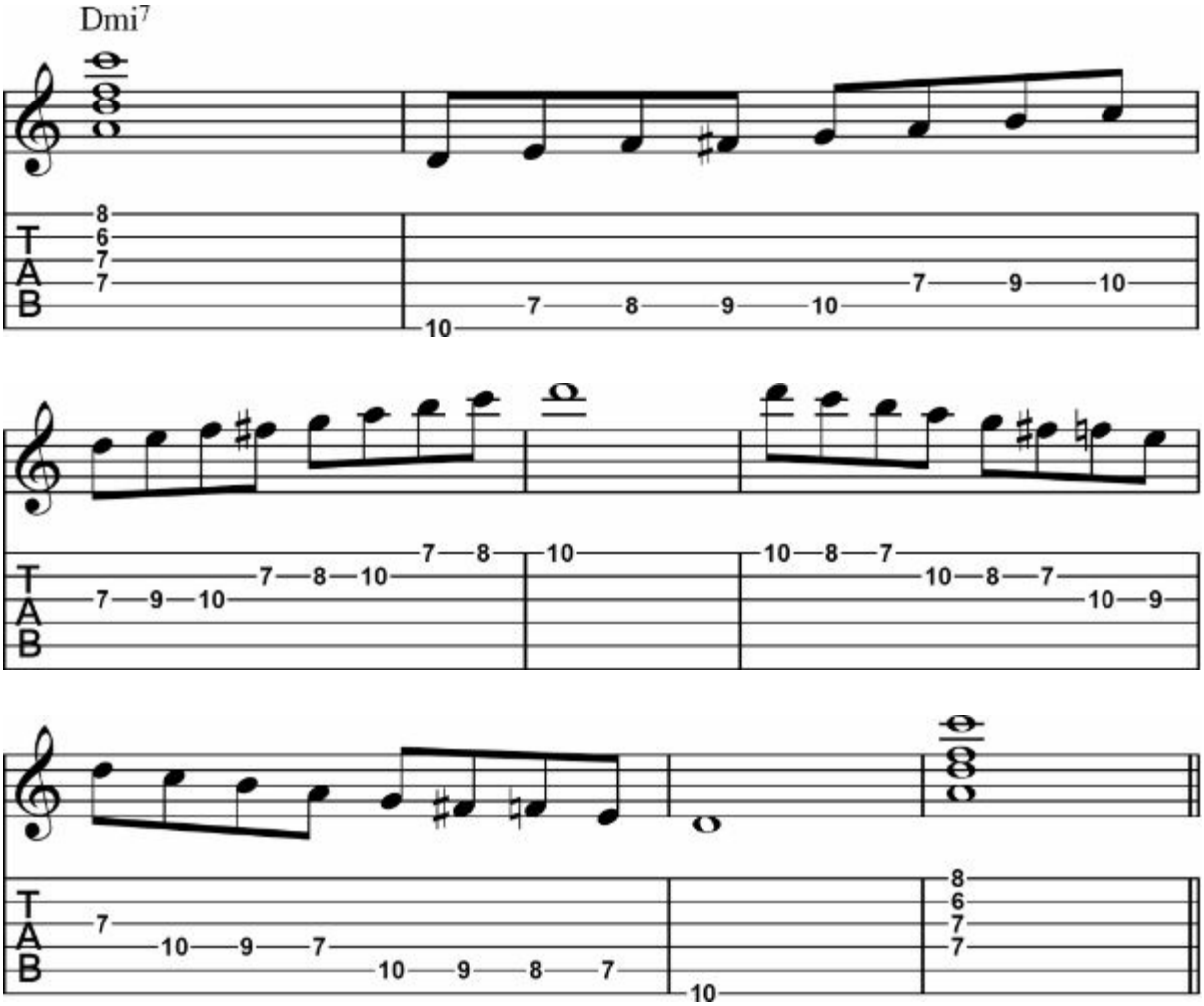




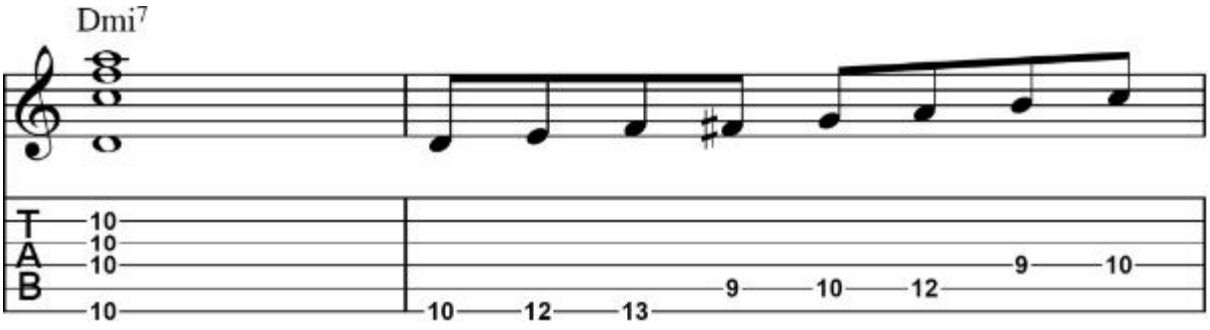
Pattern 2

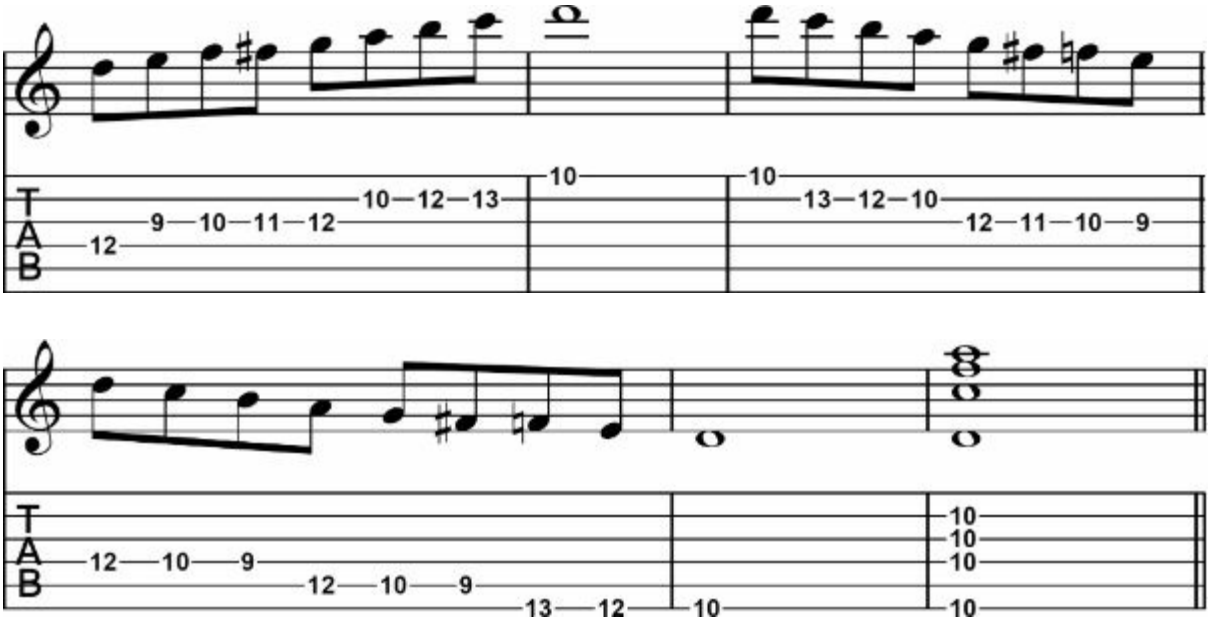


Pattern 3

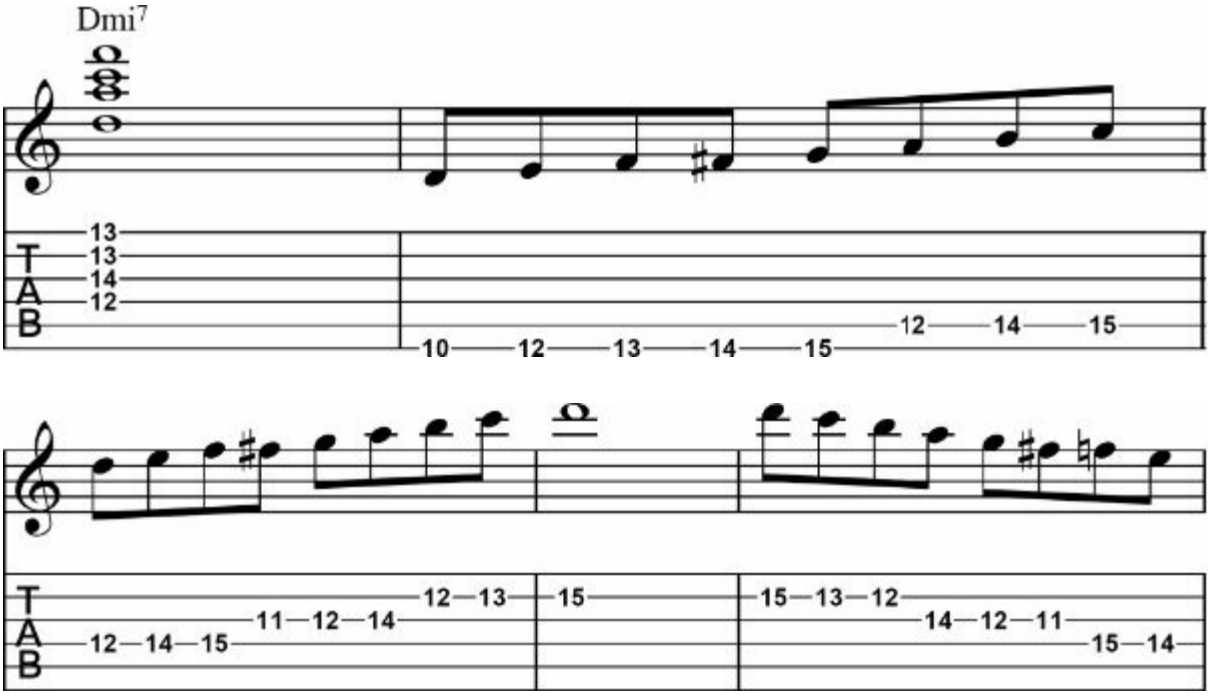


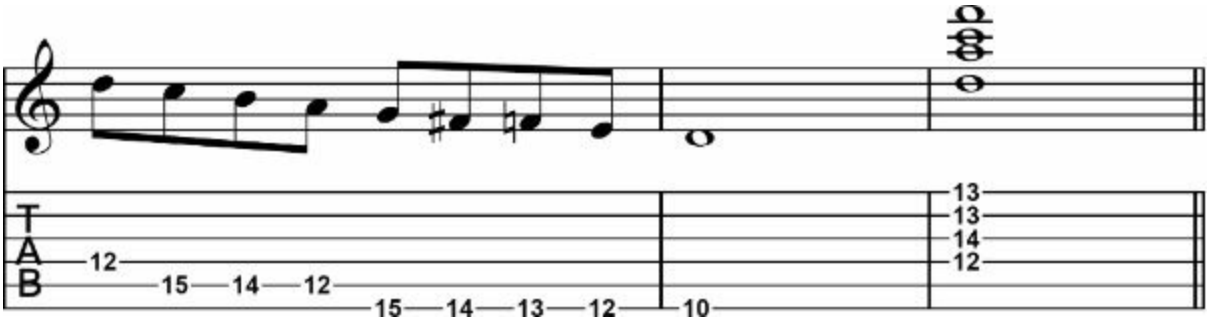
Pattern 4




T
A
B
12
9 10 11 12
10 12 13
10
10
13 12 10
12 11 10 9
12 10 9
12 10 9
13 12
10
10
10
10
10

Pattern 5


Dmi7
T
A
B
13
13
14
12
10 12 13 14 15
12 14 15
12 14 15
11 12 14
12 13
15
15 13 12
14 12 11
15 14



Arpeggio & Scale Studies: Dmi7 & D Bebop Dorian Scale

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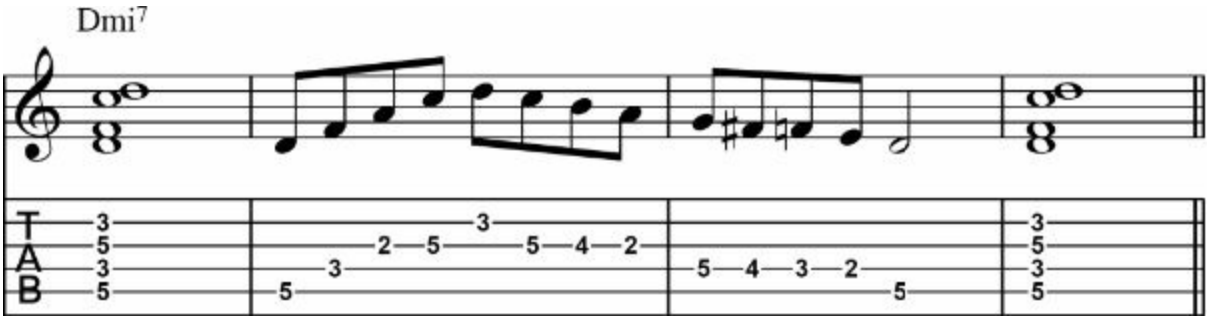
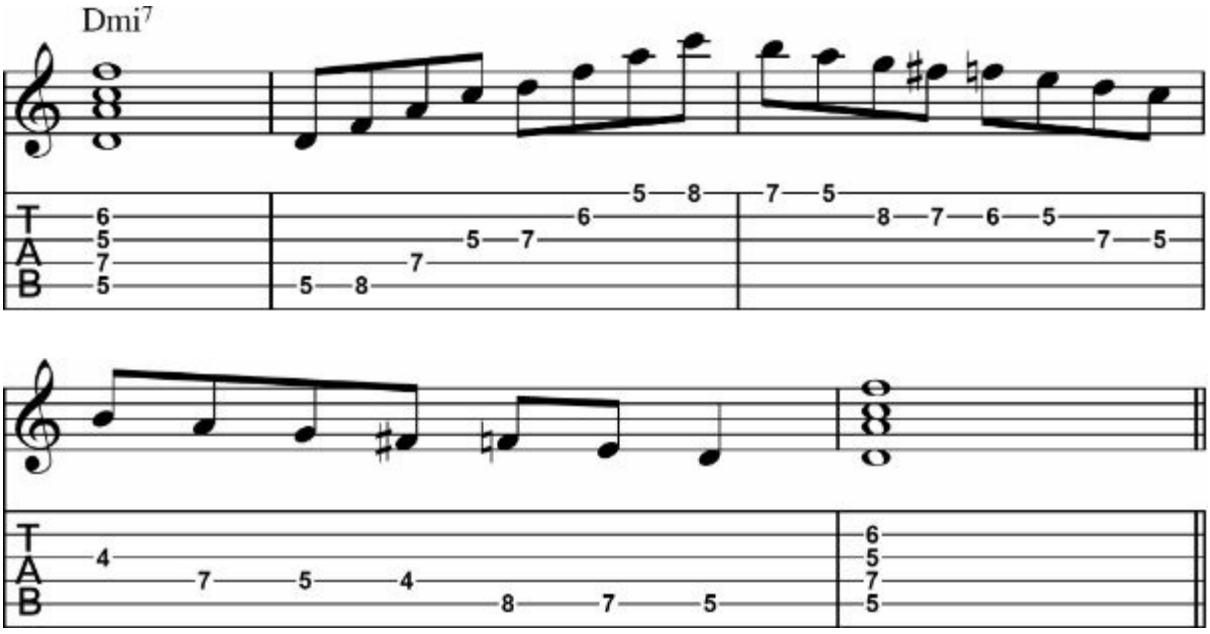
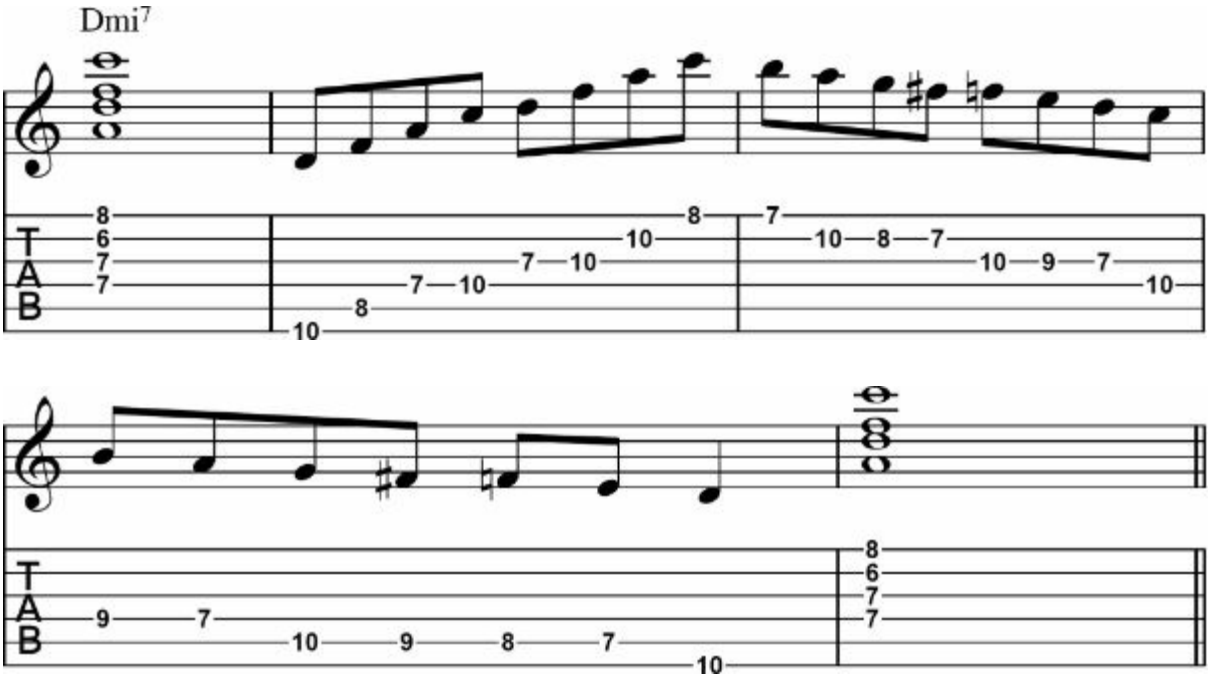


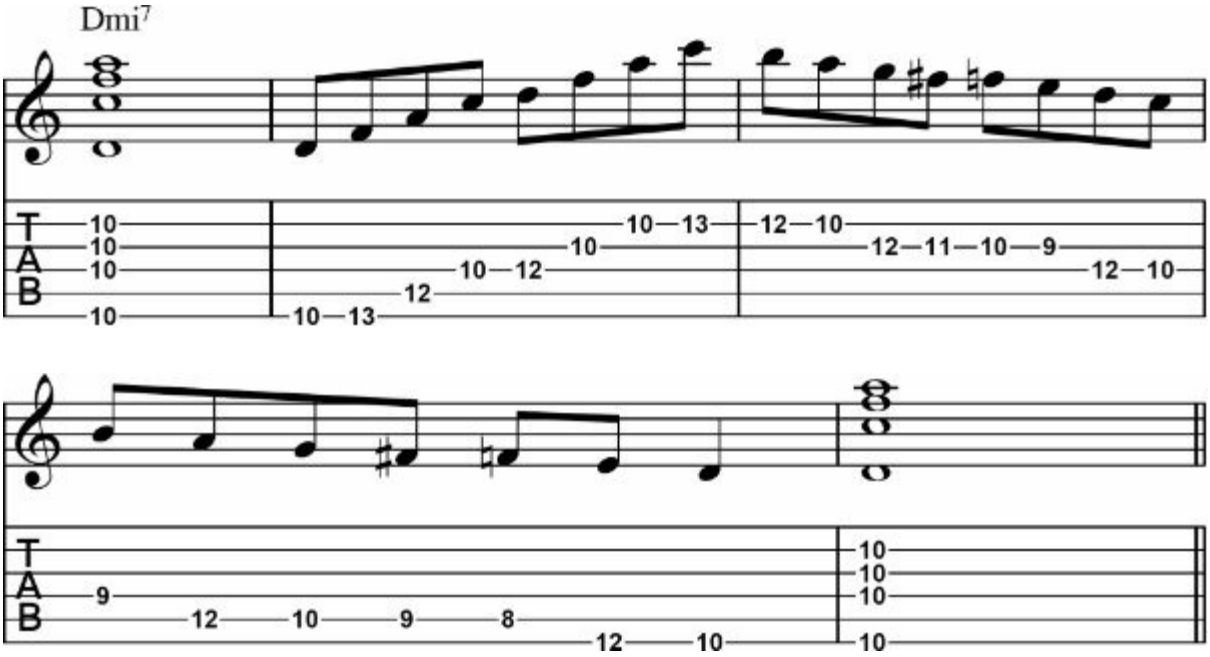
Pattern 2



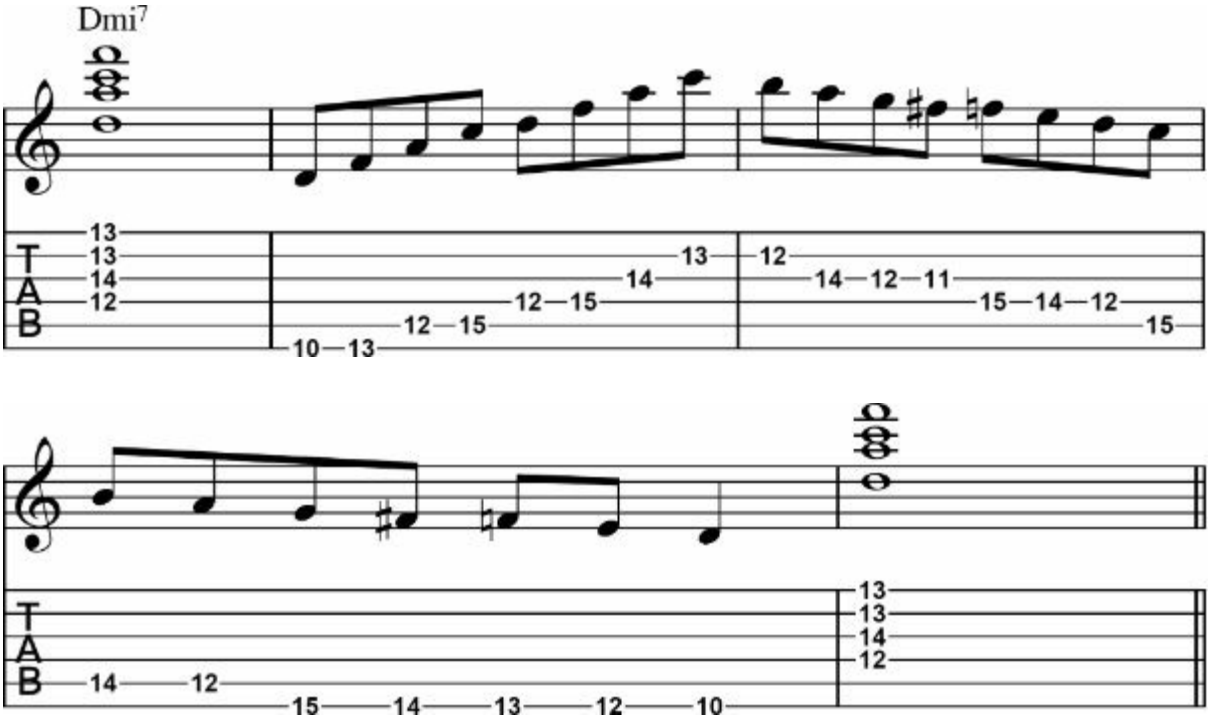
Pattern 3



Pattern 4



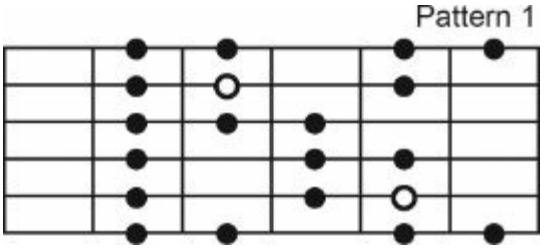
Pattern 5

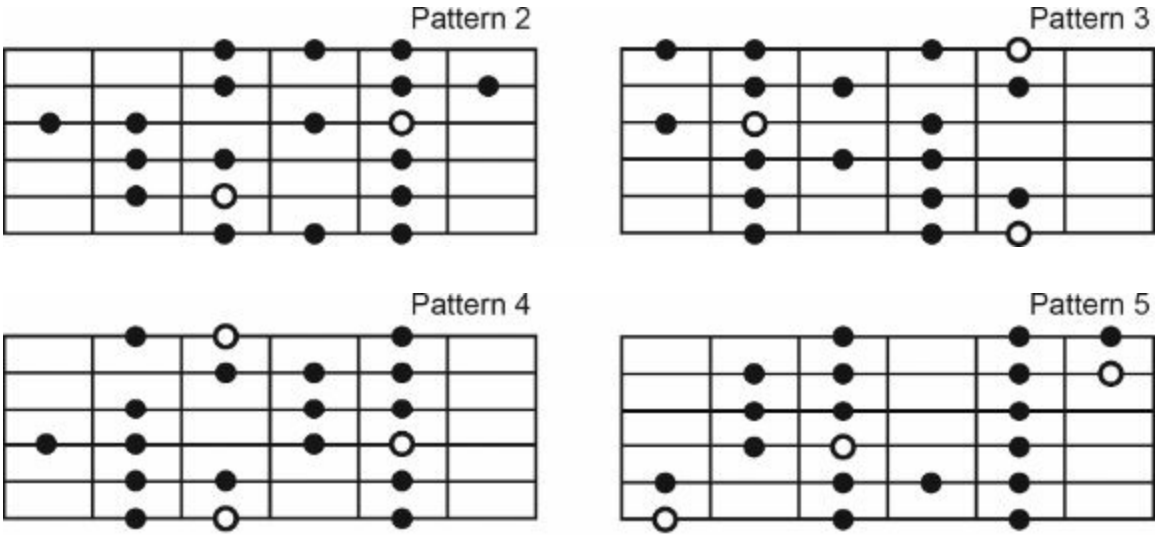


Bebop Major Scale

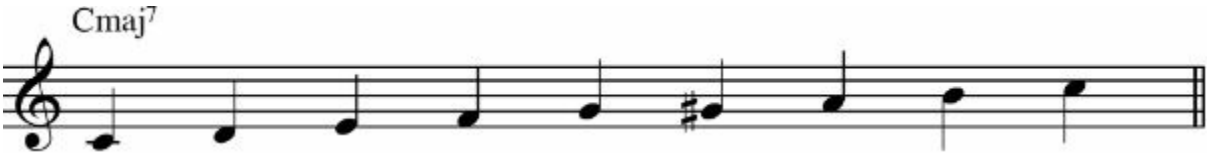
The bebop major scale is the major scale with a chromatic passing note added between the 5th and 6th notes. The chromatic note should be played on and-beat for best results.

Fingering Patterns

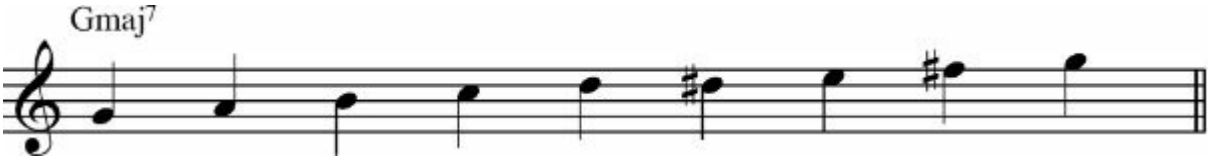




C Bebop Major Scale

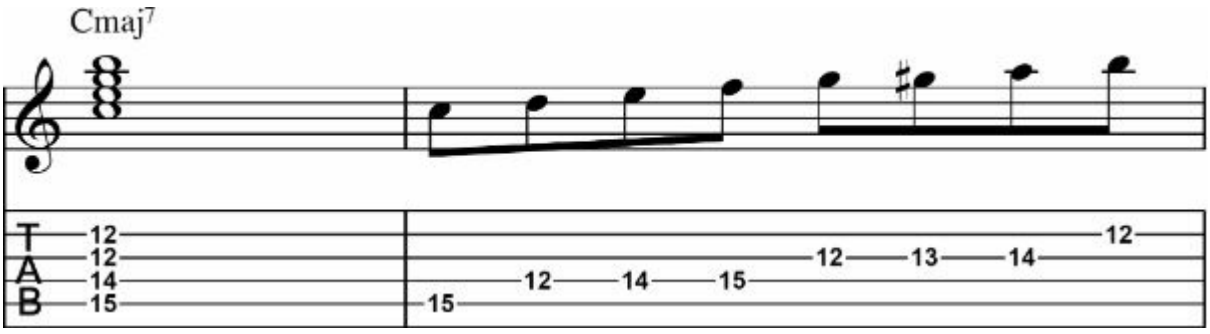


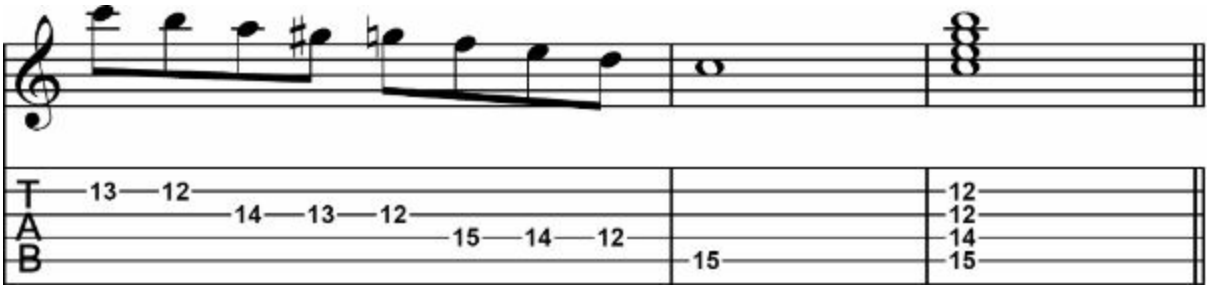
G Bebop Major Scale



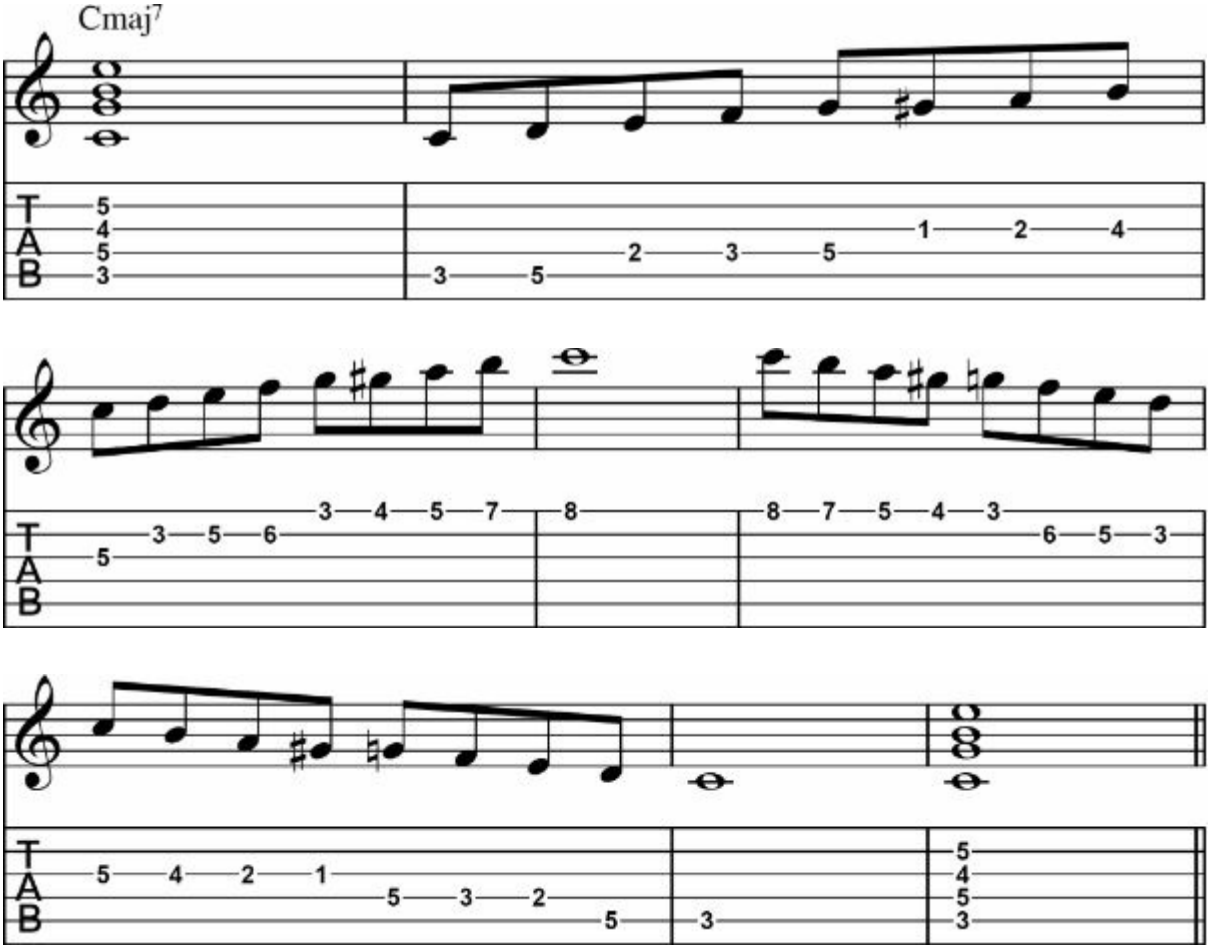
Scale Studies: C Bebop Major Scale

Pattern 1

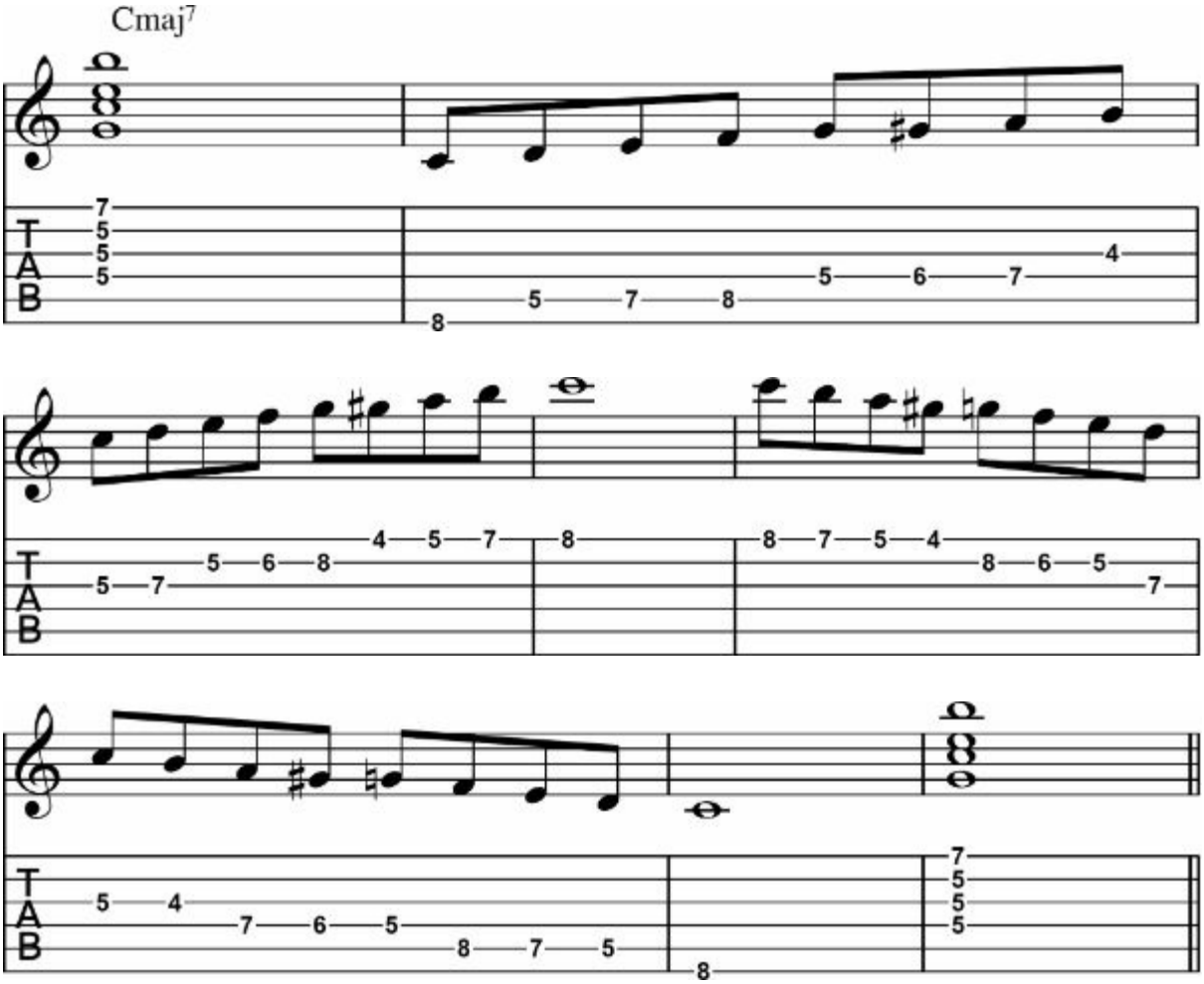




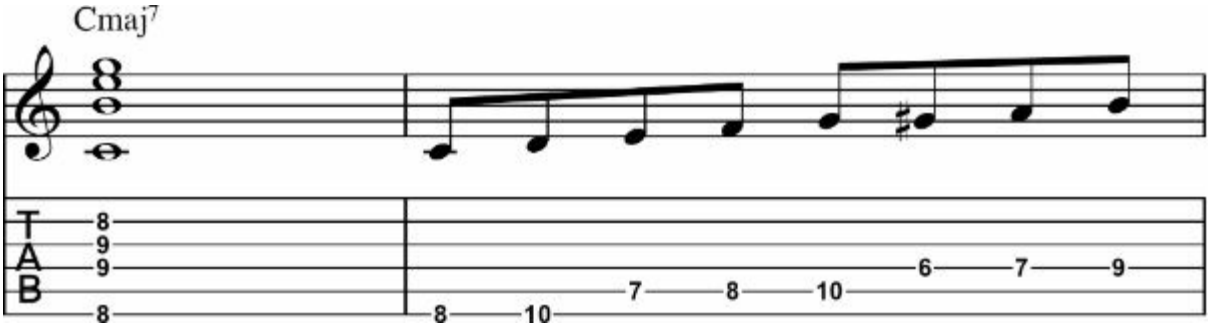
Pattern 2

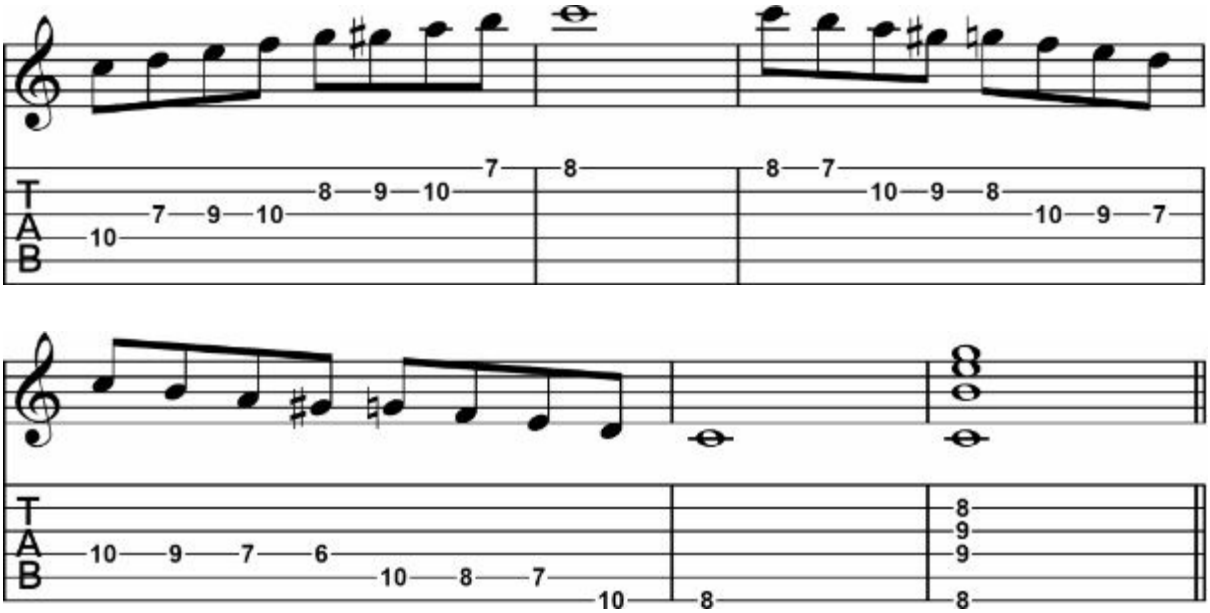


Pattern 3

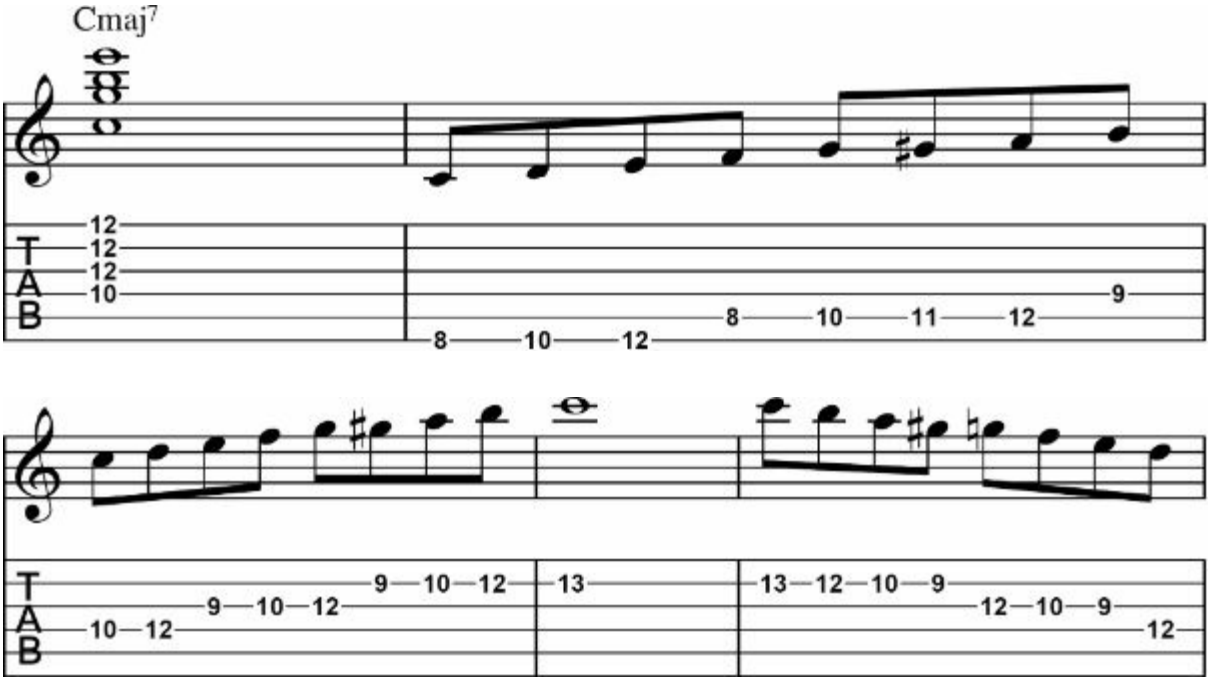


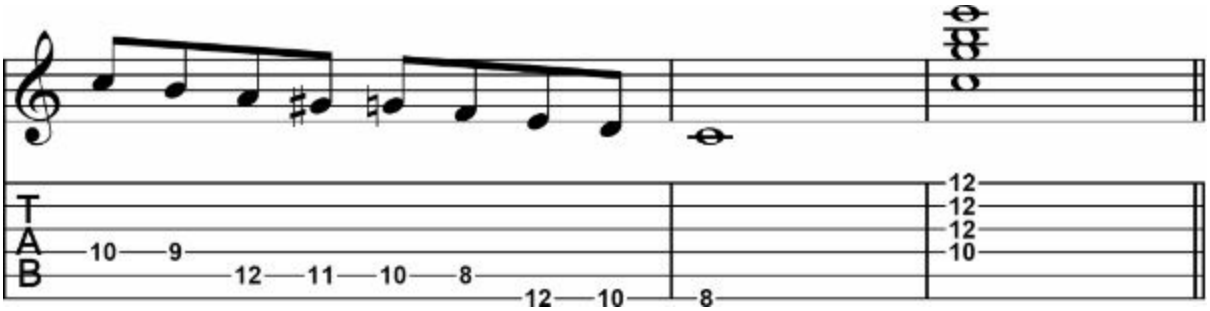
Pattern 4




T
A
B
10 7 9 10 8 9 10 7 8 8 7 10 9 8 10 9 7
10 9 7 6 10 8 7 10 8 8 9 9 8

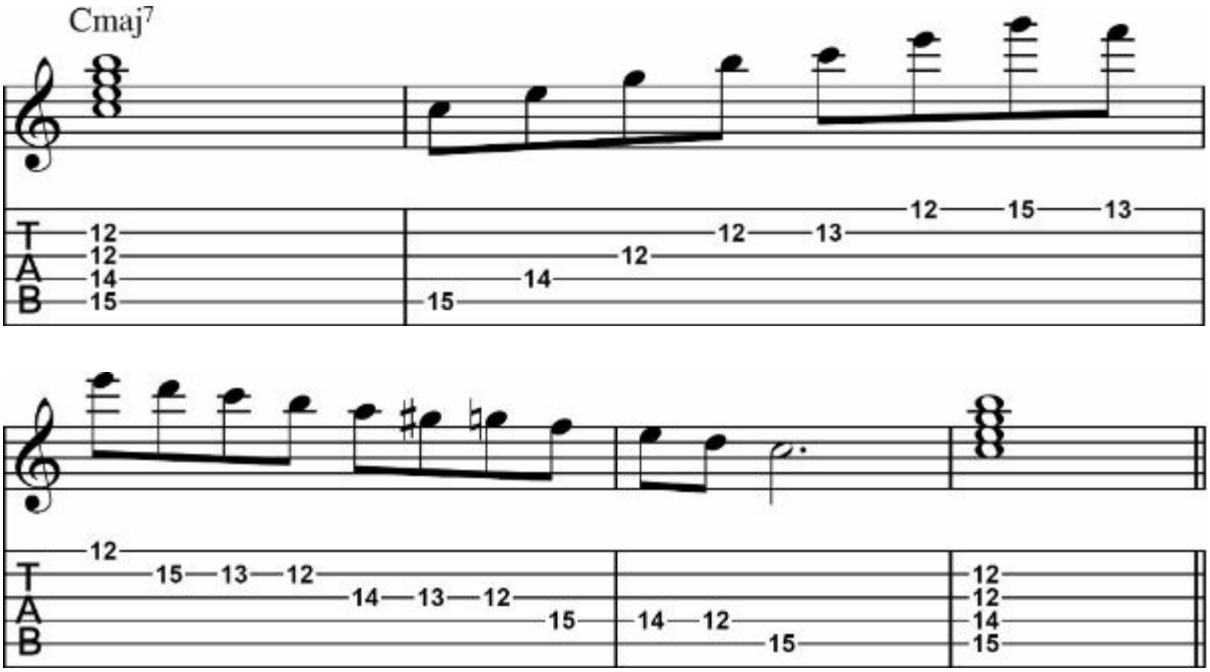
Pattern 5


Cmaj7
T
A
B
12 12 12 10 8 10 12 8 10 11 12 9
10 12 9 10 12 9 10 12 13 13 12 10 9 12 10 9 12

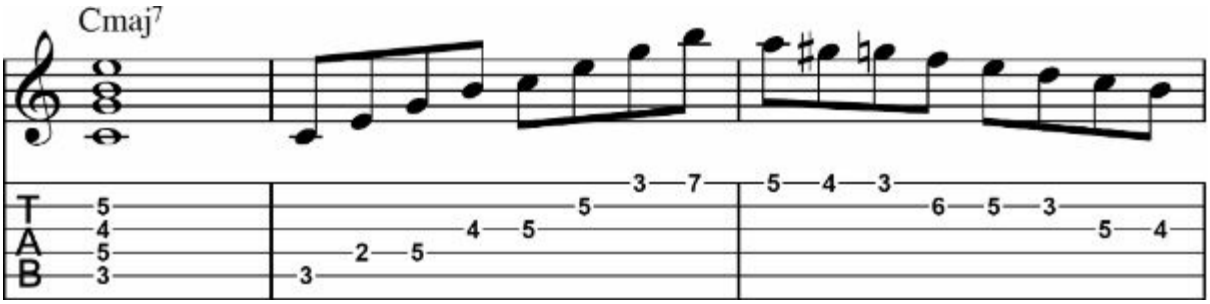


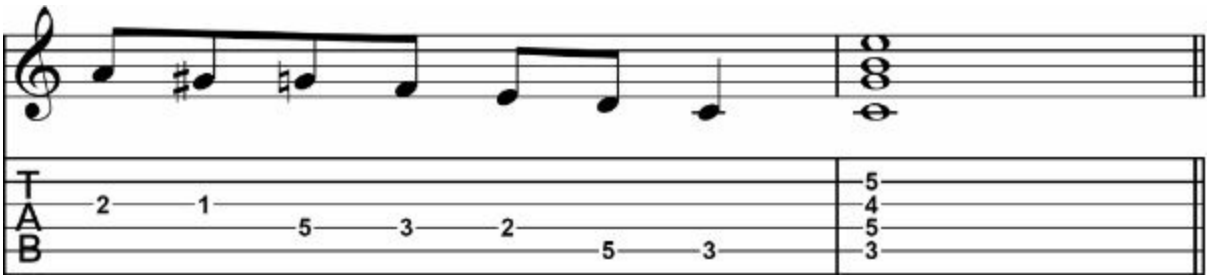
Arpeggio & Scale Studies: Cmaj7 & C Bebop Major Scale

Pattern 1

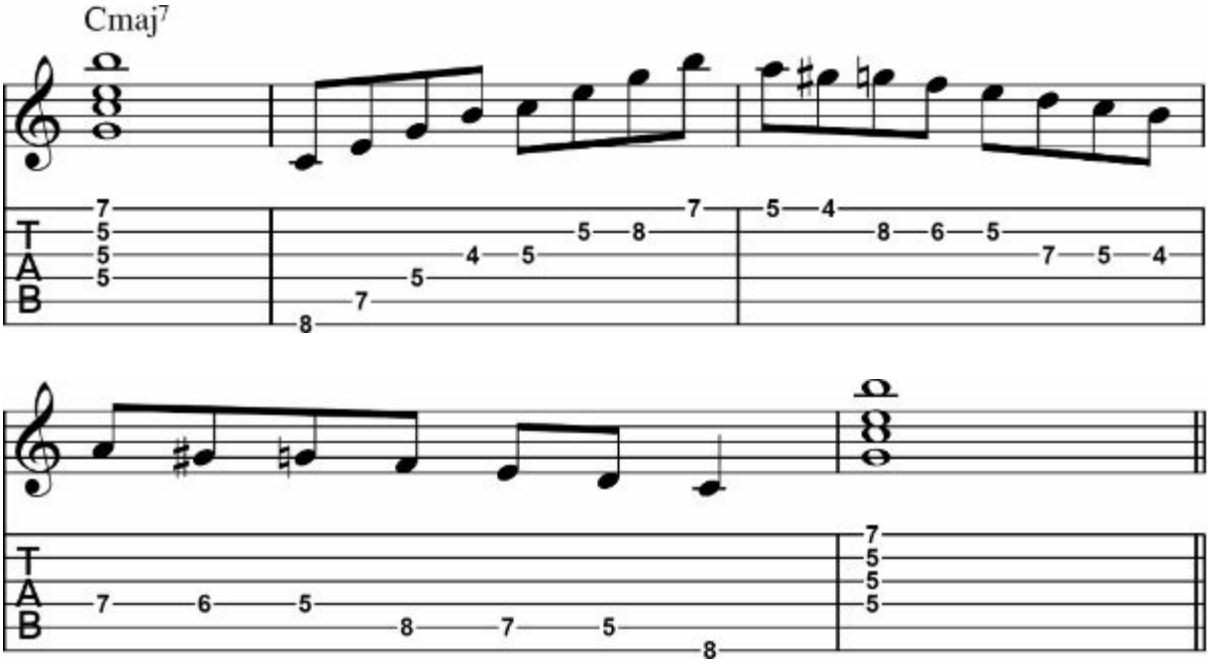


Pattern 2

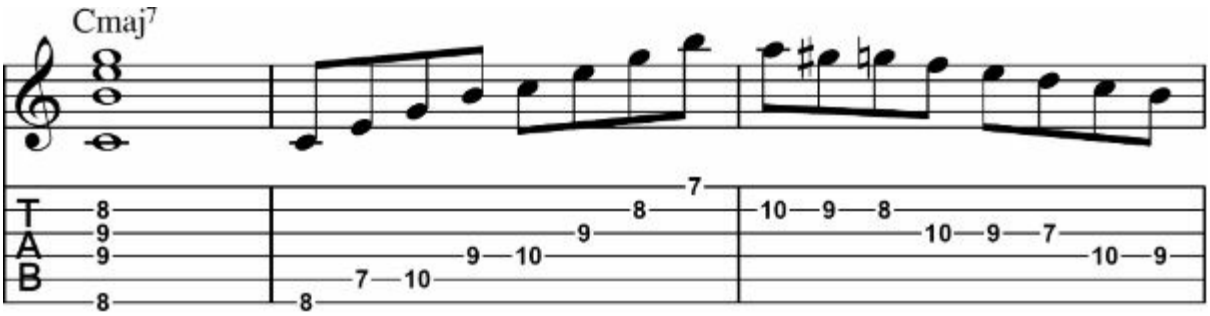


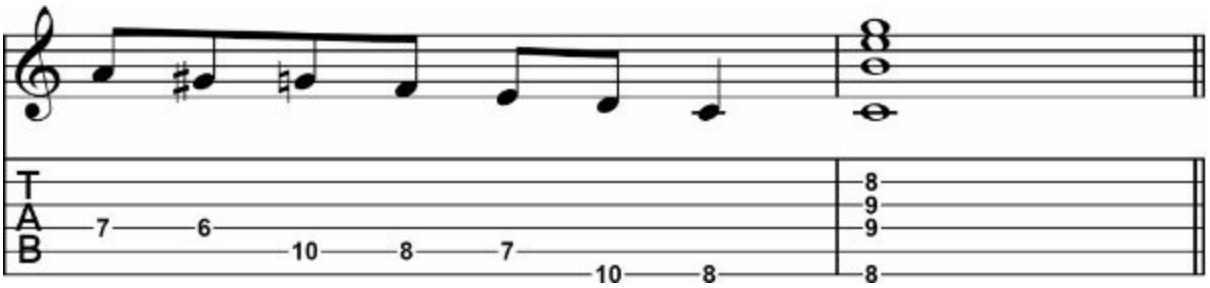


Pattern 3



Pattern 4

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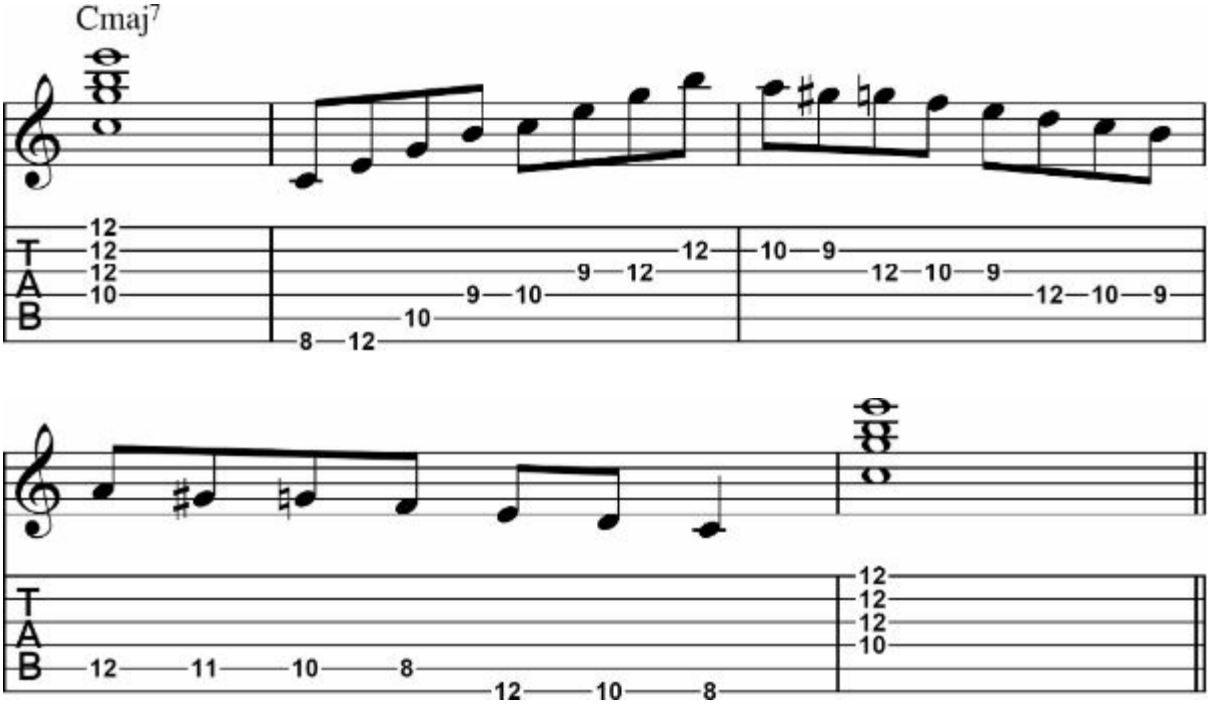
Pattern 5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