

Rock Guitar - Lesson 5 (already???)

The fingering exercise from lesson four was not designed to sound good, but it got your fingers on the fret board and made you think about what goes into making a good sounding note. I'd recommend continuing with that exercise for the rest of your life.

To make something sound musical, it will have to follow the rules of music. Now I know what you're probably thinking. Not more theory... Well this is more theory, but it's about the bare minimum that you should know. It's important stuff. It'll give you musical 'power', an ability to create and learn things with ease. After practice that is!

The Major Scale:

NOTE: One tone is two frets on a guitar, a half or semi tone is one fret.

When you arrange notes in a consecutive manner, it's called a scale. Each note in a scale will have a musical 'gap' between them. The correct term for a musical gap is 'interval'. Intervals are measured in half tones, and if you can remember back to earlier discussions (I can't...) the letters used to make up the available note names (A-G) usually have intervals of one tone between them. The exception is with B->C and E->F. They naturally have a semi-tone between them.

To construct a Major scale, you need to have the proper intervals between the notes. There is a pattern of intervals that you use to determine the correct intervals. We've seen it before, its:

Tone Tone Semitone Tone Tone Tone Semitone REPEAT

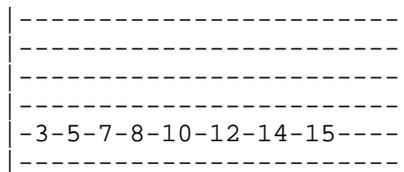
Seven notes slot in between the interval descriptors. If you begin your scale on a C note and ascend until you reach B, those notes will fit the pattern automatically.

C-t-D-t-E-s-F-t-G-t-A-t-B-s

If you start on a different note, as we've seen, the pattern does not fit automatically. You need to adjust some of the notes by making one or more of them sharp. In some cases, one or more will be made flat. Never both though.

NOTE: To make a note sharp, raise it's pitch by a semitone. Do the opposite for flat.

Below is how to play a C major scale on the A string. Try it.

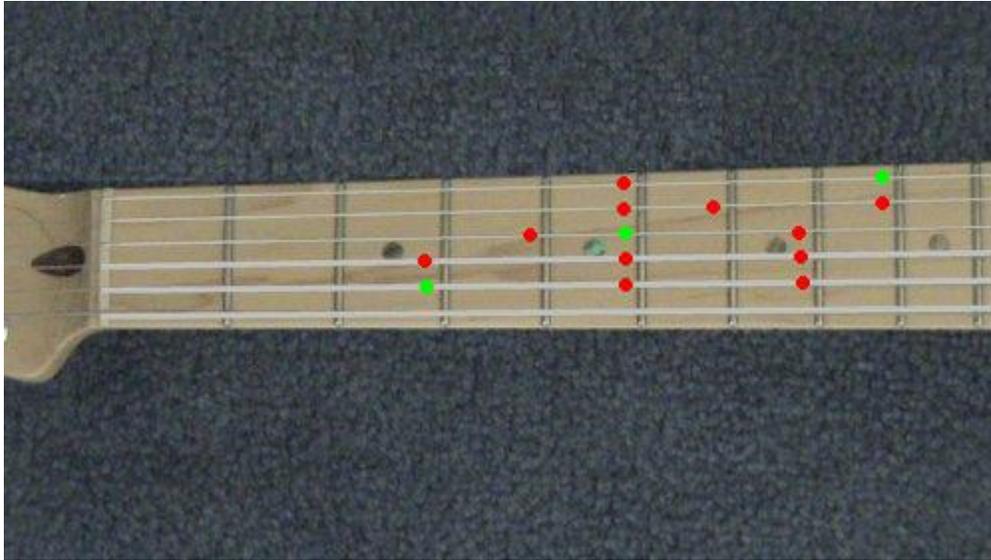


It feels rather awkward right? You can't imagine ever playing this quickly. That's because of the moving up the neck. Also, that scale is only over one octave. We need a better way!

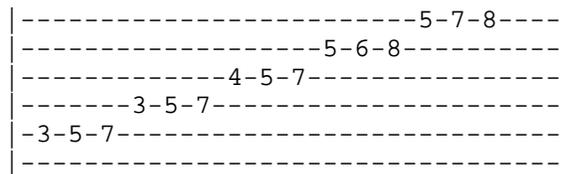
A Better Way to Major:

Of course, you can see a better way to play scales on a guitar. We simple use the other strings. You can forget all the tone tone semitone mumbo jumbo for now. An interesting aspect of the guitar neck is that once you have a pattern of notes in one place, you can simply slide that whole pattern up or down the neck and all the notes will still be correct.

So consider the following formation of notes:

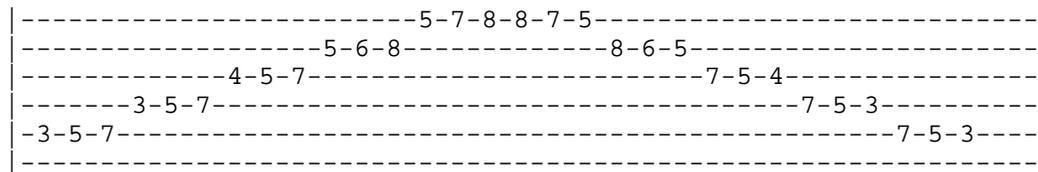


This is a Major Scale formation. Any notes you play from this formation, will be part of a major scale who's name is whatever the green notes are. The green notes are known as 'root note'. In this case, the root notes fall on C's, so the pictured scale is C Major. If you liked, you could move this whole arrangement up or down so that the green dots fell on other notes and the scale would be the major scale of that name. Here's how to play this scale:



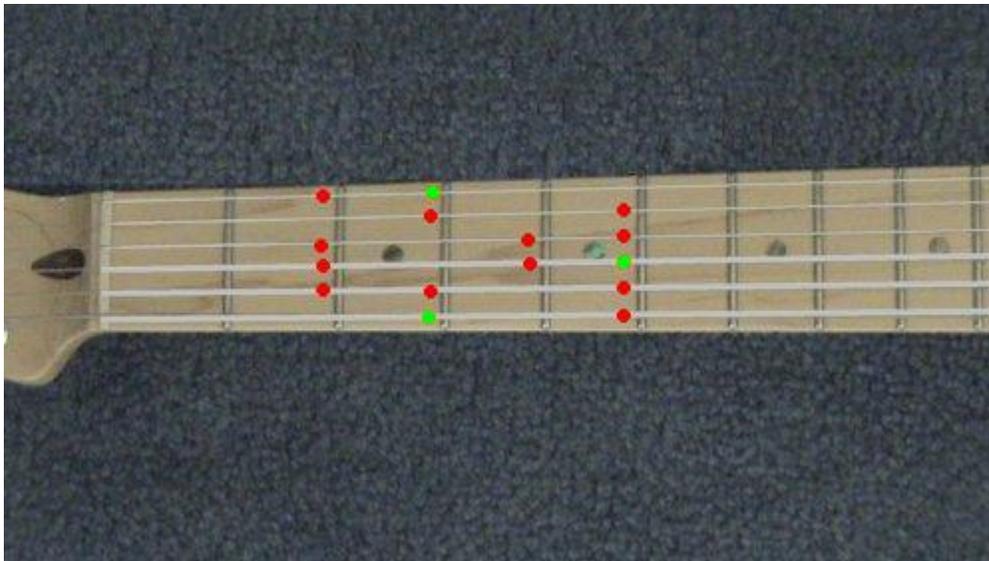
Try that. You will start with your index finger, then your 3rd finger, then your 5th. There are no hard and fast rules on which finger to use, but you should opt for the least up/down the neck movement as possible.

Once you're comfortable with the above exercise, try this one:



It's the same, except you reverse back down the scale.

Because the lowest root note from this scale is on the A string, it's known as a root five scale. Here's another major scale, but it's root note is on the low E string. It's a root six scale formation.



And to play this one:

-----2-3-----
-----2-4-----
-----2-4-5-----
-----2-4-5-----
-----2-3-5-----
-----3-5-----

Up, and down:

-----2-3-3-2-----
-----2-4-----4-2-----
-----2-4-5-----5-4-2-----
-----2-4-5-----5-4-2-----
-----2-3-5-----5-3-2-----
-----3-5-----5-3-----

EXERCISE:

Take these four patterns and move them around. Find out which root note you are starting on also.

DO NOT try and play them fast. Try to play them cleanly and with proper technique. If you don't you'll be playing fast wrongly. If you play something well, and practice enough, speed is a side effect and you will play fast, well.

Practice:

You need to practice these scales if you ever want to play solos well. You also need to keep practicing those chords. I hope by now, you can envision yourself becoming a guitarist. After practicing what I've shown you so far, you have the preliminary knowledge to begin learning songs and solos! Yes, the first lessons and exercises are boring, but you'll be thankful that you put in the effort to learn things correctly. The foundation knowledge gives you scope.

See you next week.