

How to Practice Scales

By Andrew Wasson

Step #1). Make a 5-Day Practice Plan

In order to cycle through as many areas of scale practice as possible (and not get bored) it is important to have a plan. Your plan should cover several days and allow for varied work on each day. Let's look at a typical 5-Day Practice Routine.

	<u>Day 1</u>	<u>Day 2</u>	<u>Day 3</u>	<u>Day 4</u>	<u>Day 5</u>
Keys:	C	F	A	Ab	?
	G	Bb	E	Db	?
	D	Eb	B	Gb	?

Use days one through four (doing your best) to cover all of the musical keys. On day five - keep it open to work on keys that perhaps never got the attention they deserved.

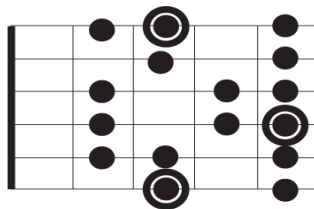
KEEP IN MIND...

Practicing can be interrupted or even sometimes, (due to personal schedules), practice time can become diminished day to day if you're having a bad week. If you had a fantastic practice week, use Day 5 to simply review. Or, use it to spend time on an area you find especially fun, (perhaps improvising or composing a jam track).

Step #2). Commit the Geometry of Each Shape to Memory

Make a study of the shape below. Memorize it so you do not need to look at the page while performing the scale. Always begin and end the scale on the lowest pitch circled dot.

MAJOR SCALE PATTERN 4:



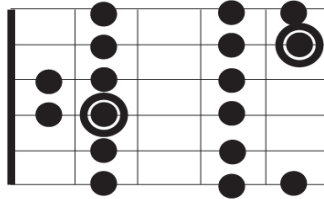
Note: The circled dots are the scales keynotes or Tonic Notes. If you want a, "G Major," scale, then the circled dots need to be located upon, "G," notes.

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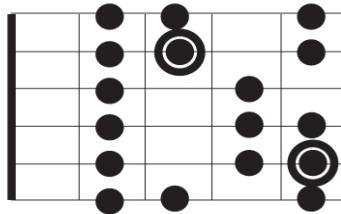
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Make a study of the shapes below. Memorize them so you do not need to look at the page while performing the scale. Always begin and end the scale on the lowest pitch circled dot, (Tonic).

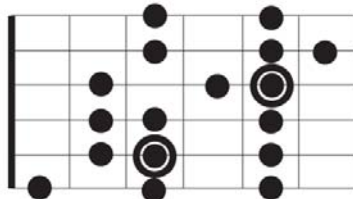
MAJOR SCALE PATTERN 5:



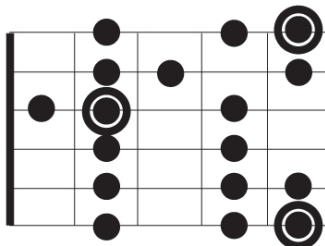
MAJOR SCALE PATTERN 1:



MAJOR SCALE PATTERN 2:



MAJOR SCALE PATTERN 3:



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Step #3). Begin Practice with a Metronome

Start off at a slower pace (between mid 60's to mid 70's b.p.m.).

Work through all of the rhythmic durations building metronome speed:

- Eighth-Notes, Eighth-Note Triplets, Sixteenth-Notes.

Have an initial goal of reaching Sixteenth-Notes at a speed of between 92 - 100 b.p.m.

Once that goal has been reached, further develop the scales with work on Sixteenth-Note triplets and Thirty-Second Notes. The metronome speed will likely need to be lowered to a slower (approx. 60 b.p.m. metronome rate) to achieve this level of speed.

Step #4). Practice moving between scale shapes.

Since the scales overlap, it doesn't take much effort to move between two adjacent scale patterns. An excellent process to begin with is to ascend up one shape and descend down an adjacent shape.

Remember to use a metronome and begin (and end) on the tonal center note. In other words, if you are practicing "G Major Scale," be sure to begin and end on the "G."

Step #5). Apply "Scale Sequencing Patterns" to the shapes.

Scale sequencing is slightly time consuming the very first times one practices it. However, the good news is once they are learned, the sequence is able to be transferred quite rapidly to another pattern.

NOTE: Be careful not to overdo it.. The sequences can be quite demanding on the hands.

Common sequences include:

(a). Diatonic 3rd's: 1 - 3, 2 - 4, 3 - 5, 4 - 6, etc.

(b). Ascending 4th's: 1 - 2 - 3 - 4, 2 - 3 - 4 - 5, 3 - 4 - 5 - 6, etc.

(c). Ascending 3rd's & Back: 1 - 2 - 3 - 1, 2 - 3 - 4 - 2, 3 - 4 - 5 - 3, etc.

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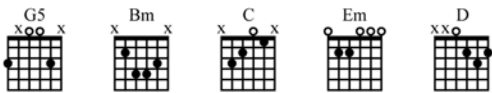
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Step #6). Study the use of each scale over jam track progressions.

Too often students begin practicing scales, but then stop because they cannot understand how the scales are properly used to create music. It is vital that students practice using the scales over jam track progressions. Only through this type of practice can one truly understand the applied use of scales in context. And, of course, get very good at using them.

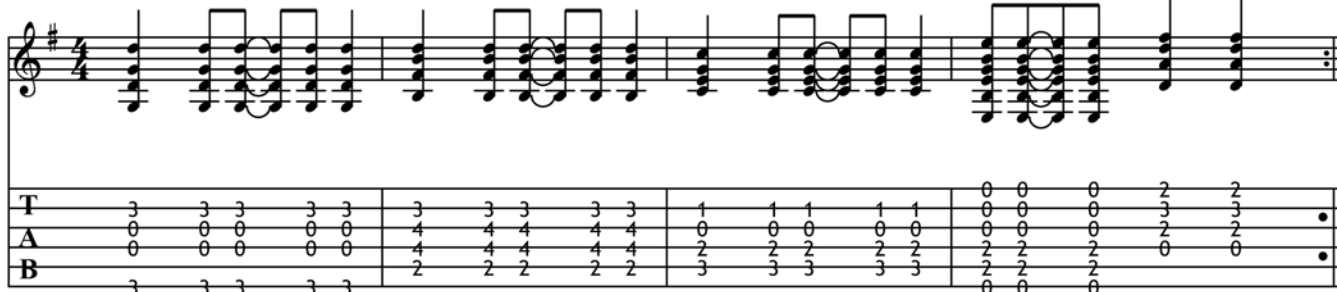
Excellent cross over study of rhythm guitar occurs when students write progressions in key and record the progressions for later use as jams. This method also helps build better knowledge of the use of harmony and theory through applied application.

Practice the progression below. It is written in the key of G Major. Play the chord changes along with the Jam Track provided free for download on our website. When you feel good about the chords, the sound of the changes and the groove begin practicing improv. over the progression using the "G Major Scale," Patterns.



Moderately ♩ = 88

G5 Bm C Em D



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

Step #7). Also work on the Pentatonic Scales & Arpeggios

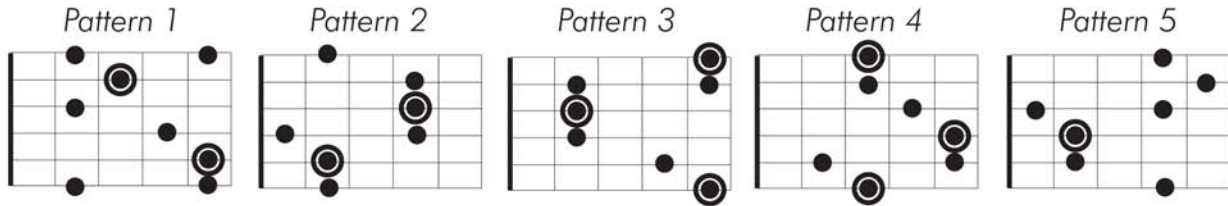
It can be far too easy to limit ones work to only scale practice. However, by applying equal time (as you work on the scales) to the study of Pentatonics and arpeggios, you will notice massive benefits when practicing improvisation.

Patterns for all other the scales, (as well as arpeggio's), are given on the pages that follow.

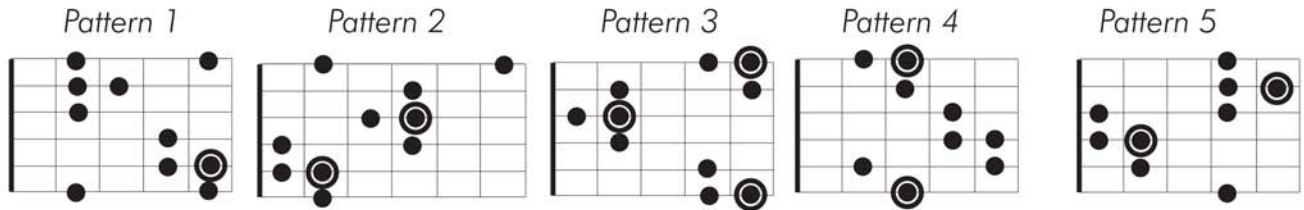
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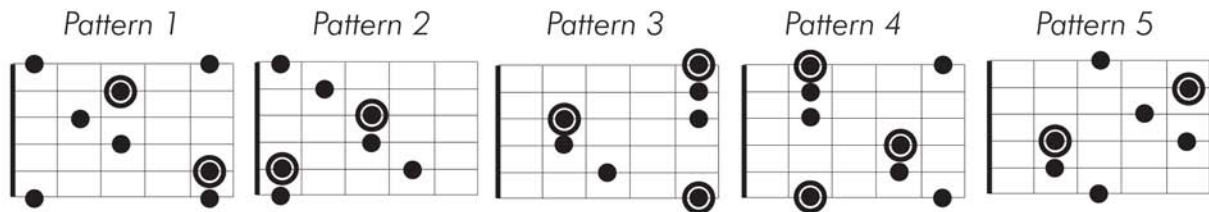
Major Triad Arpeggio: 135



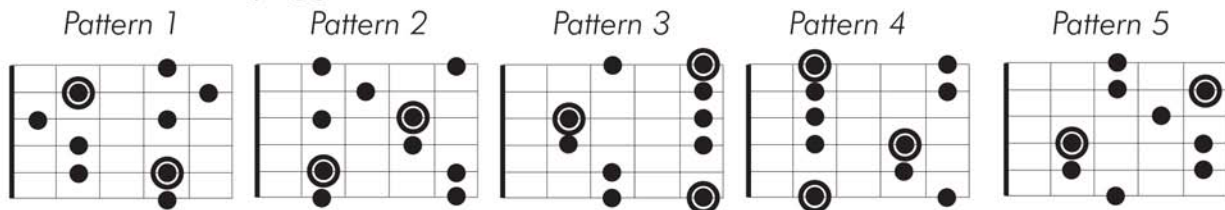
Major 7th Arpeggio: 1357



Minor Triad Arpeggio: 1^b35



Minor 7th Arpeggio: 1^b35^b7



Dominant 7th Arpeggio: 135^b7

