



Intermediate Acoustic Lead

How To Solo & Improvise With The Major Scale



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INTERMEDIATE

ACOUSTIC LEAD GUITAR

Introduction

Hello and welcome to this free lead guitar course!

Everything in this free course can be played on any Electric Guitar too, I'll just be using the acoustic in the videos and made this course with acoustic guitarists in mind.

This is ideal for anyone wanting to learn how to **improvise to create solos**, or if you want to learn the techniques to enable you to **play higher level guitar solos**.

This course is intended for those who want play lead guitar over backing tracks and songs in any major key. This is great for genres such as pop, country, folk and major key rock songs.

This course also goes very well as an accompaniment to my [Fingerstyle course - click here](#) to learn more about that!

If you prefer the Rock, Blues and metal genres, then this course isn't really for you. My Rock Lead Guitar course would be better suited for this - which is coming out very soon. More info at the end of this ebook!

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Lesson 1 – Major Scale Position 1

Welcome to this **free lead guitar course** where we're looking at how to solo using the Major Scale on acoustic guitar.

This first lesson will show you how to play the **Major Scale** over 2 octaves, in what is known as 'position 1'.

Major Scale Introduction

The major scale is a 7 note scale. It is the foundation of all western music. While the [minor pentatonic scale](#) can be more commonly used in Rock and Blues solos, the major scale is used in all, yes ALL other genres including pop, folk, country and even major sounding Rock songs.

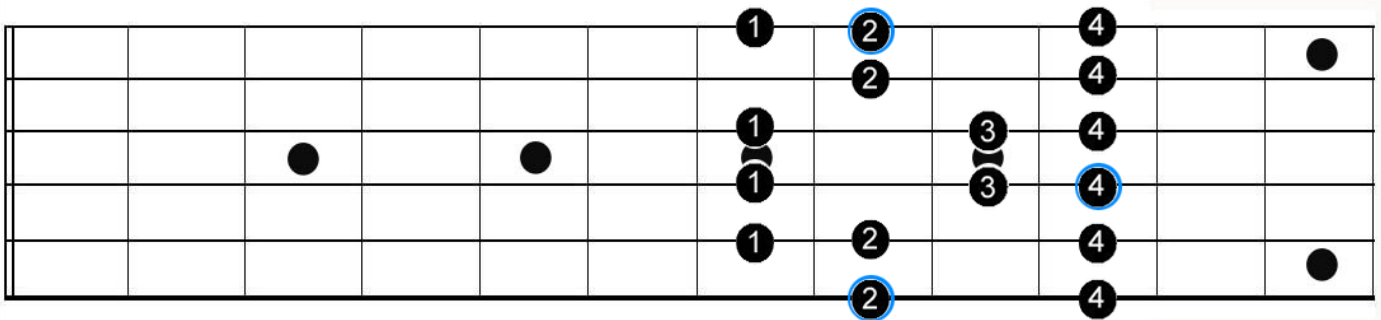
The easiest way we can play this scale is in open position. I have a whole series dedicated to this. If you are new to single note playing or the major scale in general, definitely check out this series of videos first BEFORE proceeding any further with this course!

[C major scale series in open position – Link](#)

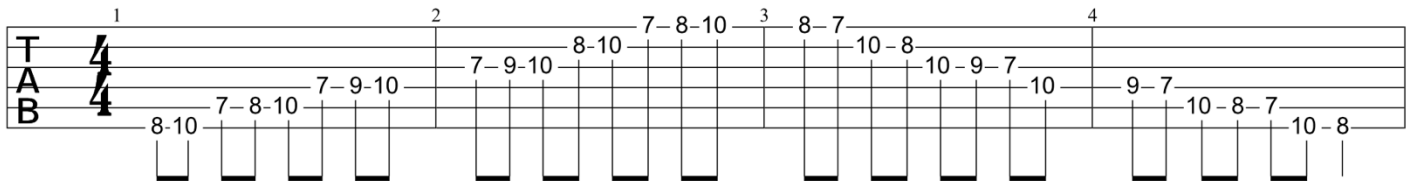
Major Scale Position 1

So that we can play this scale in ANY key, we need to learn it in a higher position on the neck. This means we can learn this 1 shape, and move it up or down the neck to play it in any key! The most popular and common position to do this is Position 1, shown below.

C MAJOR SCALE POSITION 1 DIAGRAM



C MAJOR SCALE POSITION 1 TAB



The first note on the thickest string should be played with the middle finger (strange if you are not used to it). The little finger is also used on every string, making it tougher to learn than the minor pentatonic.

If you really, really struggle with playing this, try out some [finger exercises](#) first to get your fingers to coordinate better. This bit of the course is the most physically challenging bit to play. From this lesson onwards, the focus is far more on creativity and smaller patterns on the fretboard. So please, put the time in now to learn this scale correctly and you will reap the rewards later in this course!!

Lesson 2 – Major Scale All Over The Neck

There are 5 positions that we can play the major scale on guitar (in the previous lesson, we learned position 1, which is by far the most common). Learning all 5 positions will enable you to play the major scale all over the neck. However, this can take a long time to learn.

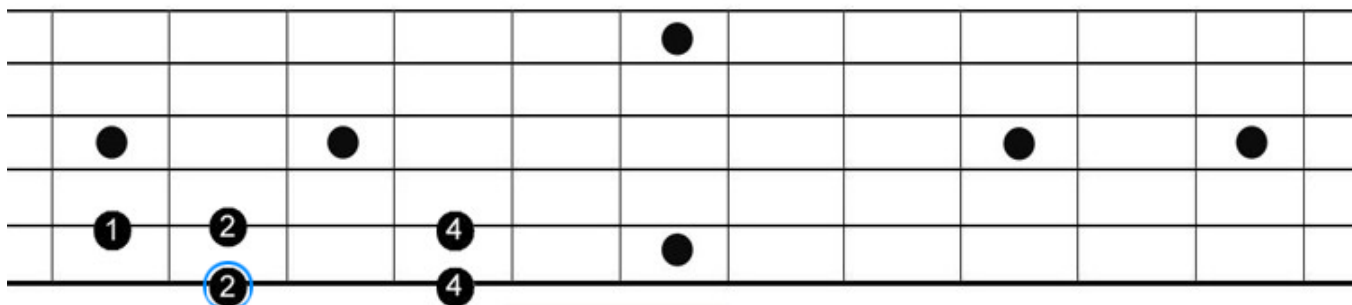
A higher priority at this stage and in the course is to learn to create melodies and make music from the notes we already know. To do this, we can play notes from position 1 all over the neck very easily, and this lesson will show you how to do just that.

Before we start, it's important to know what an octave is. An octave is the distance (aka interval) between two notes that have the same letter name. For example, the C major scale has the notes C D E F G A B C, with the first and last C notes being an octave apart.

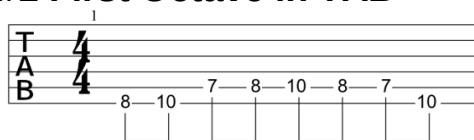
Play the notes ascending then descending as indicated in the TAB, then play in a loop 4 times at an even pace. Go slow enough so that you don't make any note mistakes. Do this for each of the TAB & diagrams on these pages.

C Major Scale First Five Notes - First Octave

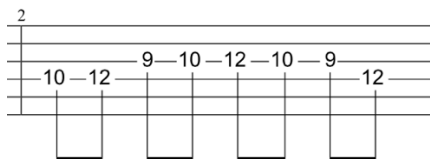
In these diagrams, the numbers represent which fingers to use. The notes actually played are C, D, E, F and G, which are the first 5 notes of the major scale. Again, these octaves are circled in blue and the numbers indicate which finger to play the note with.



#1 First Octave in TAB

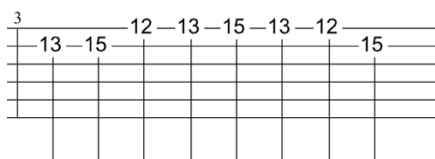


#2 C Major Scale First Five Notes - Second Octave



#3 C Major Scale First Five Notes - Third Octave

The notes written in light grey are the first 5 notes of the major scale, but two octaves higher than the first set of notes. The notes actually played are still C, D, E, F and G.



The real advantages of this method are;

1. Each group of notes uses the same finger motions, making each one simple to play
2. As the letter names of the notes are the same at each octave, we can learn what these notes will SOUND like when we play them, making for an easier transition into improvisation and melody writing.
3. Learn notes from 3 different positions of the major scale without much effort!

Lesson 3 – Major Scale 3 Note Pattern

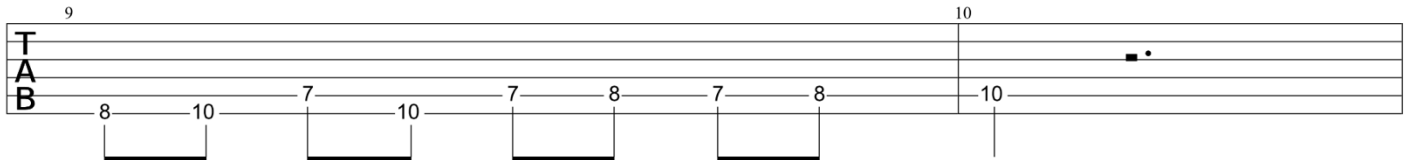
A pattern is a sequence of notes which is repeated, but each repetition begins from a different note. This technique is often used in melody writing and improvisation and is great for technique too.

Here we'll look at two common patterns, but there are many others that can be used. Each pattern here just uses the major scale notes we have already learned. I'll describe how each pattern is played, but we'll need to follow the TAB to ensure you are playing each one correctly.

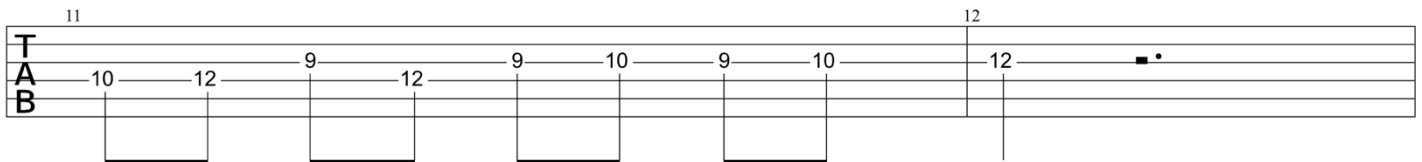
3 Note Pattern Octave 1

We'll start by just covering this 3 note pattern with the 3 octaves from the previous lesson, here's octave 1.

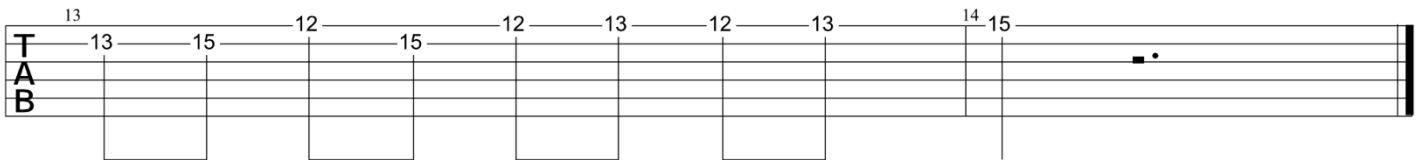
In each of these patterns we play three notes of the major scale, then go back one, then the next three notes from there, back one, three notes etc. The TAB should be followed to check you are playing it correctly.



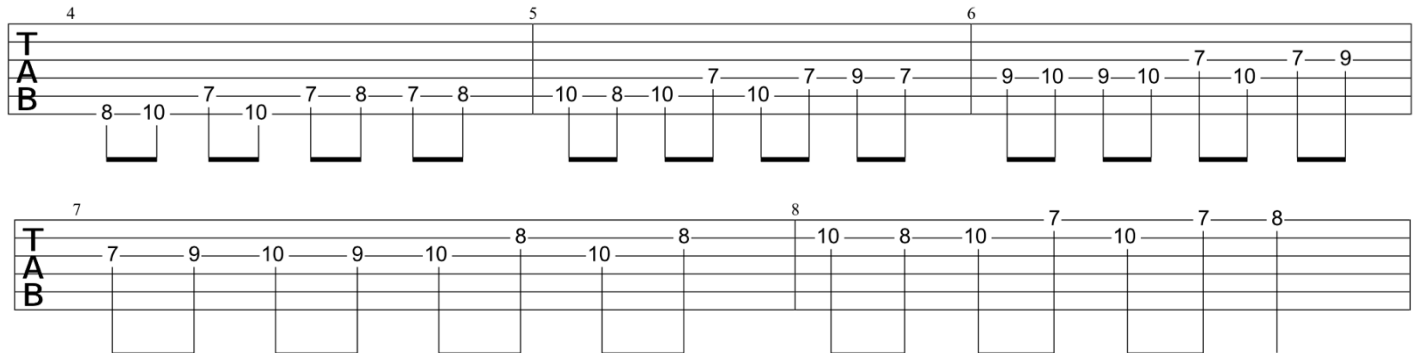
3 Note Pattern Octave 2



3 Note Pattern Octave 3



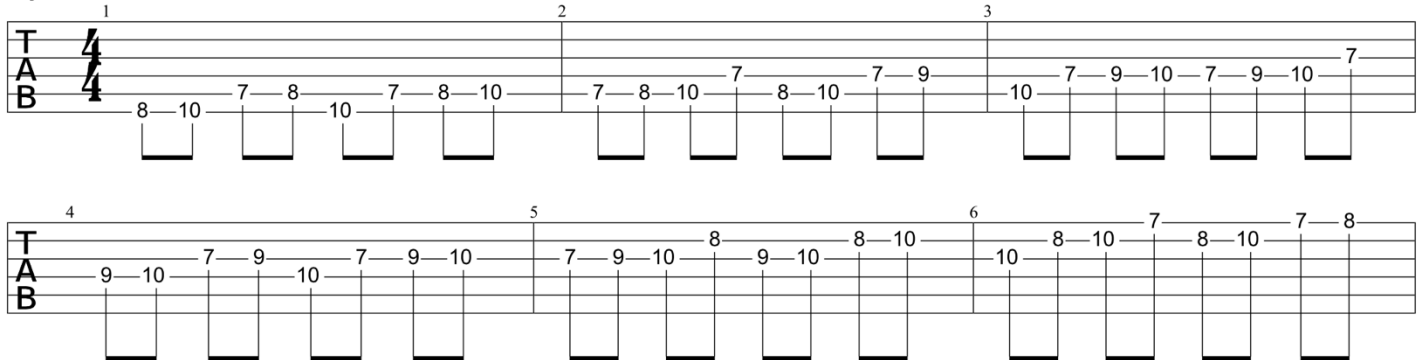
3 Note Pattern With Major Scale Position 1



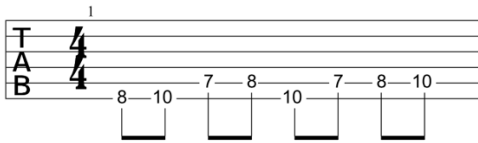
Lesson 4 - Major Scale 4 Note Pattern

In this pattern we play four notes of the scale, back one, four notes, back one, etc. This has a very different sound and feel to the previous pattern, but it's the same concept. We could create more complex patterns, but these are the most helpful to learn at this stage.

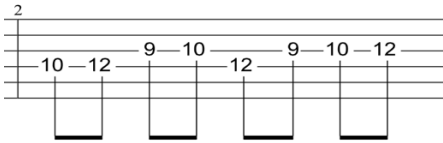
Major Scale - 4 Note Pattern TAB



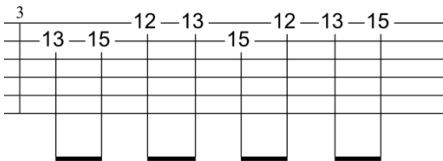
4 Note Pattern - Octave 1



4 Note Pattern - Octave 2



4 Note Pattern - Octave 3



Lesson 5 – Play A Guitar Solo Using Arpeggios

Many lead guitar parts and solos can be based more on the chords they are playing over rather than notes from a scale. Here, we'll learn how to do that and get some ideas on how to make it sound great!

An arpeggio is a chord but played one note at a time. In this context, we'll want to play the chord higher up the neck so it sounds like a lead part, especially when playing over backing tracks (that are available for free with this course in the dashboard area!)

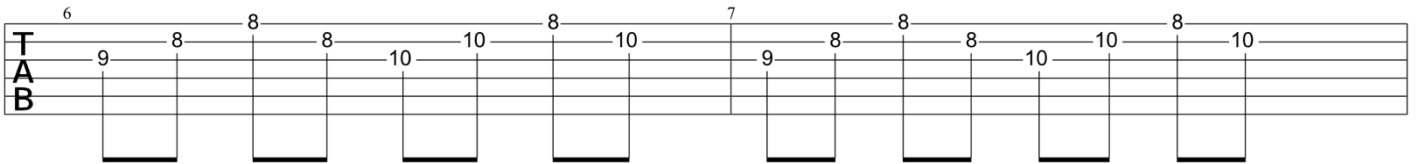
Great examples include the intro of Where The Street Have No Name by U2, many songs by The Eels and the classic intro of Stairway To Heaven by Led Zeppelin!

In the video tutorial, I demo the chord sequence C major to F major, played like this.

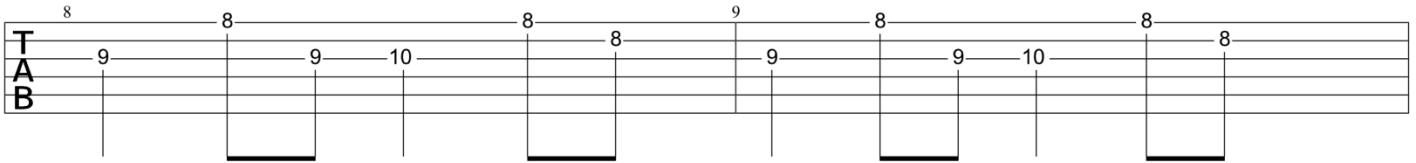
C	F	C	F
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The TAB below show different ways we could solo over this chord sequence using arpeggios of the C major chord and the F major chord. However, these should be used as examples only. As long as the chord you use in the arpeggio matches the chord in the backing track, you could pick ANY string and it will always sound right!

Arpeggio example 1



Arpeggio example 2



Lesson 6 – How to Improvise Using The Major Scale

Now we have covered how to play the major scale in many different ways, the time has come to try and use these notes to create melodies and solos over backing tracks or even your favorite songs!

EVERYONE finds this scary at first. However, even if you only want to learn solos from your favorite songs, learning basic improvisation is a crucial step – do not skip this step!

Here's my five step method to creating a solo over ANY backing track or song. This method will work for any scale or genre, but is particularly effective when using the major scale over a major key backing track!

Step 1 – Play the major scale that is the same as the key of the backing track in scale order

e.g. for backing track in the key of C major, we would improvise using the C major scale for example. This is where you have to bite the bullet and just start, hopefully you will be surprised how fine this sounds!

Step 2 – Do the same as above, but stop after every 2 to 5 notes.

You can either change direction or continue in the same direction. You can either let the last note ring or let it stop. There is no right or wrong, only a matter of subjective taste. The only thing I recommend at this step is to not miss any notes out, or you may play notes that are not in the scale.

Step 3 – Do the same as above, but now start from a different note after some of the pauses.

No need to do this after every pause, but choose any other note to start from so long as it is from the scale. You can try using the patterns from lesson3 of this course, or even the arpeggios from lesson 4!

Step 4 – Change up the rhythm.

Once you have had a few attempts at improvising and are reasonably satisfied with what you are playing, try using a different rhythm for your lead line. We could even just improvise using 1 note and keep it interesting using a syncopated rhythm i.e. a rhythm that uses a more complex rhythm.

Step 5 – Above all, just keep playing.

So long as you only play notes from the same major scale as the key of the song i.e. C major scale over a song in the key of C major, it will sound at least acceptable. It can be a tough thing for many people to get used to, especially non singers or those from completely non-musical backgrounds. However, if you truly want to learn intermediate or higher level lead guitar in any genre, you must learn basic improvisation and have a practical grasp of the concept of musical keys.

These skills can take time to bed, but learning to improvise is the equivalent to learning how to make the guitar talk, so don't expect that to happen overnight, but I believe if you follow the steps above, learning how to make the guitar talk will be inevitable!

The time has come! The below video shows me playing a simple chord sequence in the key of C major for around 2 minutes. You now need to use the steps above and have a go at improvising over it using the C major scale! You can also use any other backing track you wish.

Lesson 7 – How To Improvise In Any Key!

I have added this lesson just to make sure everyone is confident improvising in any major key. All this involves is moving the major scale shape up or down the neck so that the root (first note) of the scale matches the key of the song. To do this, all you need to know is the name of each note on string 6 (thickest string). If you are new to what each note is called, what sharps and flats are etc check out [this free video from my Beginners Course](#).

To get you started improvising in other keys, this course includes 3 free audio backing tracks that you can practice this improvising idea over. You'll find these in the dashboard area of this website when you sign up. It will forever be free to sign up to this website, and by doing so you get these free backing tracks, free ebooks as well as being able to save your favorite lessons and track your progress. Basically, it's all the benefits of a subscription website - free! Sign up and get your free backing tracks here.

Simple Method To Know The Key To Any Song Instantly

Knowing what key a song is in can be very tricky. However, there is a simple way to know the key of a song straight away, especially if the song includes mainly major chords.

Here's three things to look for when first thinking about the key of a song;

1. First chord
2. Last chord
3. Most Common chord

Not all of these have to be the case, and this does not work every time. However, for simple 3, 4 or 5 chord songs, the rules above tend to apply no matter what key the song may be in.

Let's take this simple chord sequence below.

|C |F |G |C |

By now, you should know this chord progression is in the key of C either from general knowledge, or because it ticks all three points above.

Let's look at a longer, more complex sequence.

|C |G |Am |F |
|C |Am |C |F |

C is the first chord of each line and C is the most common chord, but it is not the last chord. This is still in the key of C, even though not every rule applies. Remember, these three things are not the reason a song is in a certain key, they are just a quick way to get an idea of what the key is without the need to memorise every chord in every key.

Common Guitar Keys

The most common guitar keys, therefore the ones to practice first and get comfortable playing in are (in order easier to harder) C, G, D, A and E. This is because there are fewer sharps and flats and fewer barre chords in the easier keys, so it is easier to find the chords in the key.

Here are the chords of each of these common keys written out for your future reference.

Key of C major; C - Dm - Em - F - G - Am

Key of G major; G - Am - Bm - C - D - Em

Key of D major; D - Em - F#m - G - A - Bm

Key of A major; A - Bm - C#m - D - E - F#m

Key of E major; E - F#m - G#m - A - B - C#m

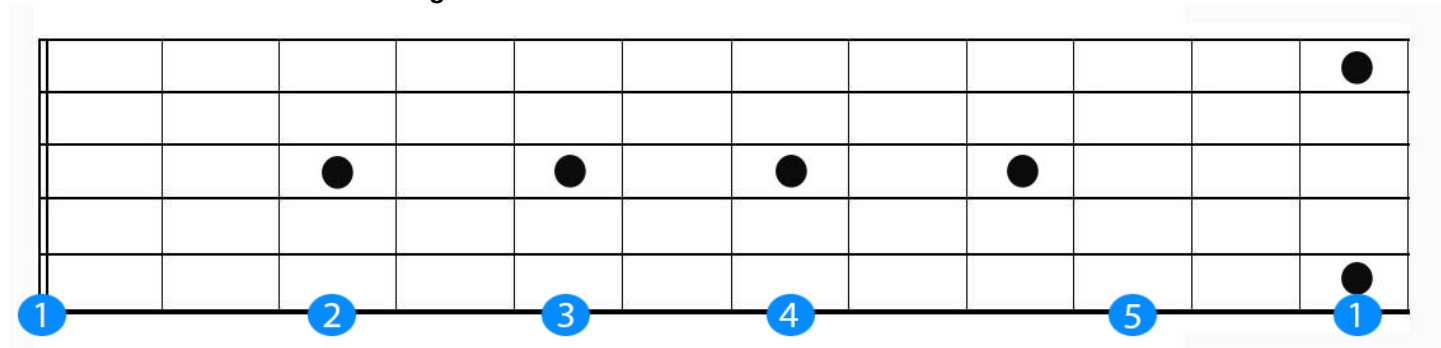
The keys of A major and E major are also commonly associated with Rock and blues genres, which can be more based on the minor pentatonic scale. If that is of interest to you, check out my [Lead Guitar Course](#), which has a much larger focus on learning licks and techniques for improvisation using the minor pentatonic and other related Rock and Blues scales.

Lesson 8 – Scales on 1 string & Intervals

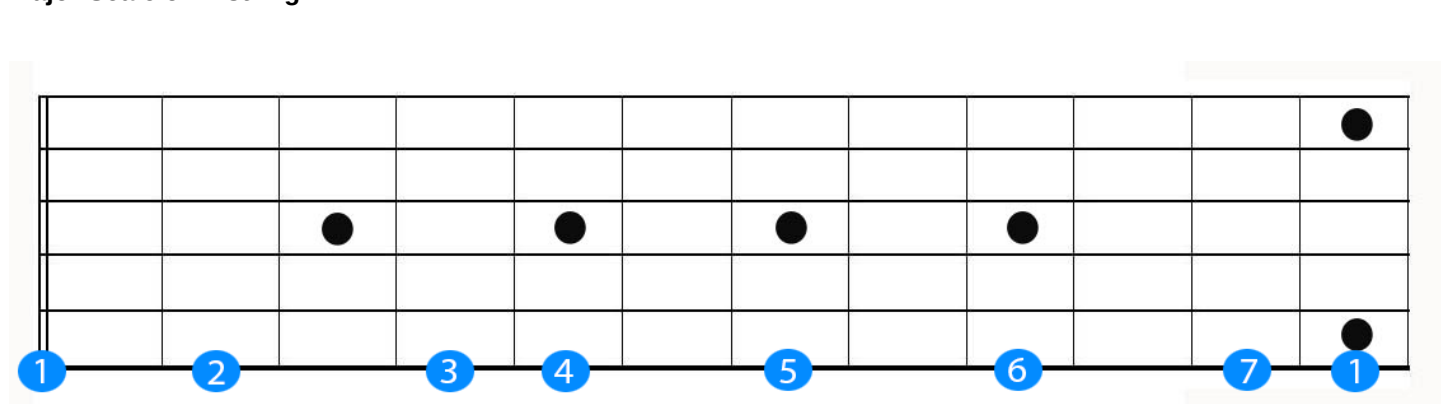
On top of learning scales in 'positions' i.e. position 1, position 2 etc. it is so important to be able to play any scale you learn on 1 string.

This is because when you learn a scale on 1 string you can see the intervals more clearly. An interval is the distance between any 2 notes. In higher level guitar, scales chords and melodies are all learned and mastered in terms of the intervals they use - we'll be doing more on intervals in the future.

Minor Pentatonic Scale on 1 string



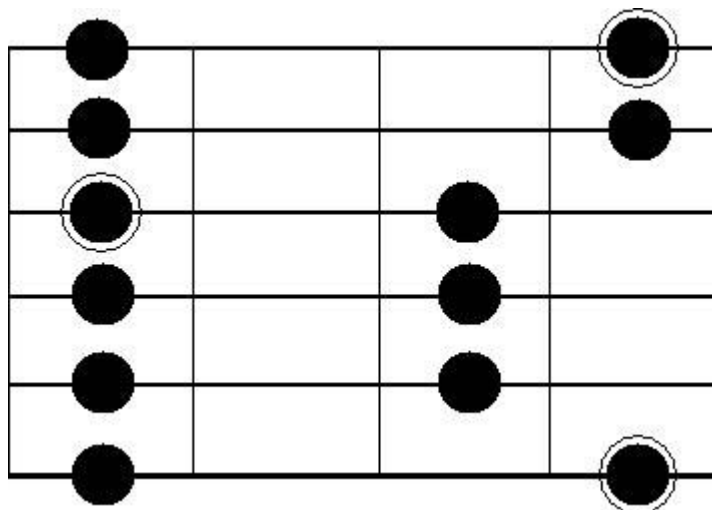
Major Scale on 1 string



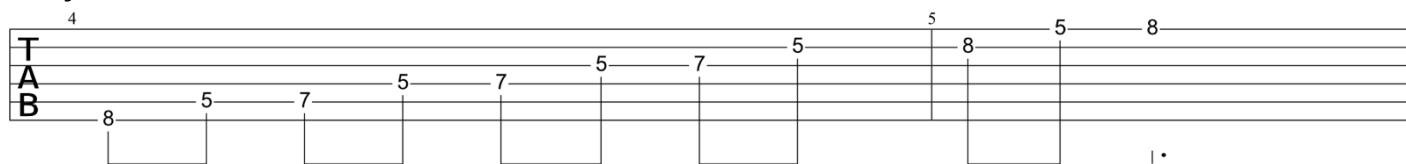
Lesson 9 – The Major Pentatonic Scale

To round up this major scale series, we're going to cover how to play the Major Pentatonic Scale. This uses a very similar shape to the minor pentatonic, but sounds very different and is used for more major sounding songs, similar to the backing tracks in this course.

Major Pentatonic Scale Diagram



C Major Pentatonic Scale in TAB



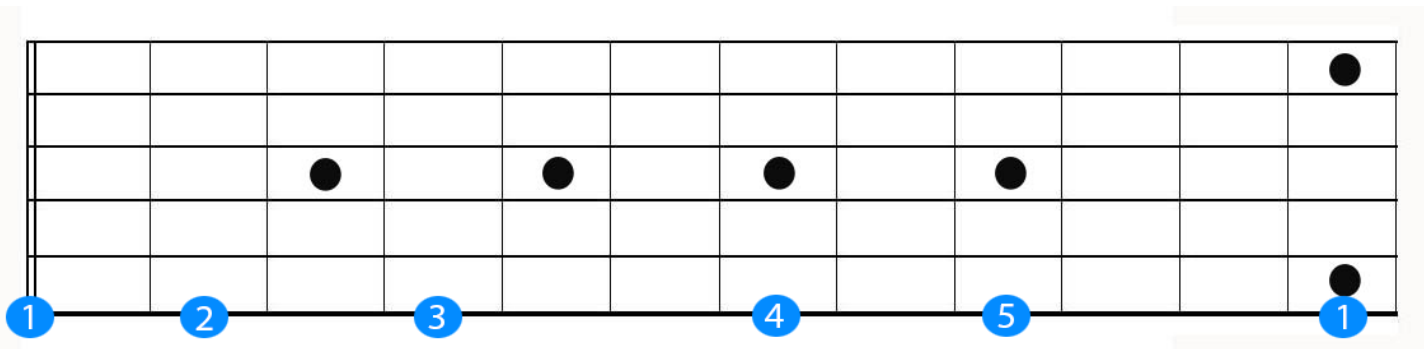
Major pentatonic vs minor pentatonic relations

The real trick here is understanding that both use the same shape on the fretboard, but we start on the little finger for the Major Pentatonic, rather than finger 1. This is the main thing to keep in mind to play both scales correctly.

Note wise, the major pentatonic has 5 notes, the full major scale has these same notes plus 2 extra, making it a 7 note scale. The 8th note of the full major scale is the octave where the scale simply repeats the same note names again but at a higher pitch.

Major Pentatonic on 1 string

Here's how to play the major pentatonic scale on 1 string so you can see the intervals and compare it to the other scales on the previous page. Remember, you can do this on any string, and the string name is the same as the scale name!



Lesson 10 – Major Scale Backing Tracks

There are 6 free backing tracks that accompany this course in the [dashboard section of andyguitar.co.uk](https://andyguitar.co.uk/dashboard). You should use these to practice improvising over!

I've included a brief suggestions of how to improvise over each of them, including what key, etc. There's videos of me playing of each of them [on the website here!](#)

Track 1 in C major - "F That"

This backing track uses chords in the key of C. Use the C major scale exclusively and get started improvising by following each of the steps in lesson 6! Learn how to play the rhythm parts to this backing track in my [improver guitar course](#), which includes the TAB and a full tutorial for this track!

Track 2 in G major - "Infinity"

Now we'll get started improvising in other keys. Use the G major scale or the G major pentatonic scale to improvise over this track. You may also with to try using the G major scale on 1 string- which would be the 3rd string!

Track 3 in G major - "Golden fields"

This track is in G major, but begins on an E minor chord. E minor is the relative minor key to G major - which means both have the same chords! Give it a go with the same methods you use on track 2.

Track 4 in D major - "Don't Be Blue"

This track uses the chords D, A, Bm and G in a loop for most of the song. The D major scale or D major pentatonic should be used, as well as perhaps the major scale played on the D string...spotting a theme now? Good! ☺

Learn how to play the rhythm parts to this backing track in my [improver guitar course](#), which includes the TAB and a full tutorial for this track!

Track 5 in E major - "Pseudo Barre Chords"

Learn how to play the rhythm parts to this backing track in my [improver guitar course](#), which includes the TAB and a full tutorial for this track!

Track 6 in G major - "Random City In Europe"

This George Ezra inspired track is in the key of G major. Now is the time to really mix everything you have learned in this course and maybe even try some string bending! Learn how to play the rhythm parts to this backing track in my [improver guitar course, which includes the TAB and a full tutorial for this track!](#)

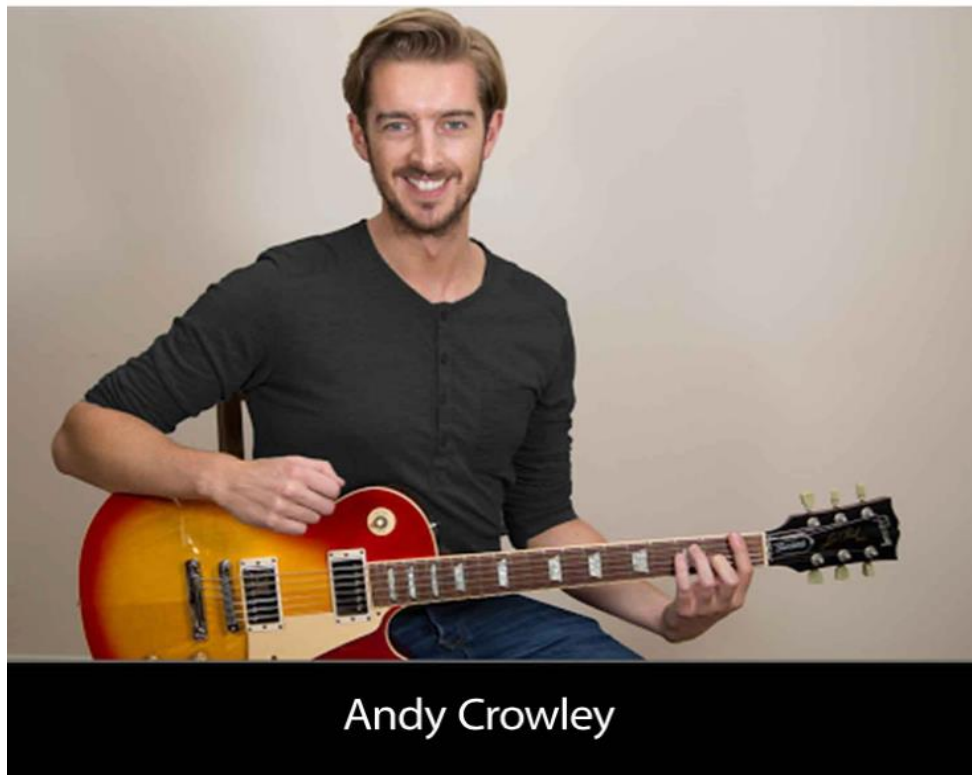
Track 7 in G major - "Campfire Rock"

Another track in G major, which is probably the most common guitar key for acoustic music. Because this track is slower, you may be able to get some faster rhythms in without worrying too much about the timing. For example, 16th rhythms (which the rhythm guitar part is playing from around 20 seconds in) should be possible. Just because the track is slow, doesn't mean you have to play a slow lead part over it! Learn how to play the rhythm parts to this backing track in my [improver guitar course, which includes the TAB and a full tutorial for this track!](#)

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