

Scale Comparison

This is a side-by-side comparison of several scales and modes. The scales in this lesson are all written across one string to make it easier to compare intervals. These scales include the Chromatic Scale, Whole Tone Scale, the Major Scale and its modes, Natural Minor, Harmonic Minor, Melodic Minor, Major Pentatonic, Minor Pentatonic, and the Blues Scale.

[Click here](#) for a video covering this lesson, which includes played demonstrations.

Click these links to learn how to play many of these scales:

[Three Ways to Play a Chromatic Scale](#)

[Five Ways to Play a Major Scale](#)

[Five Ways to Play a Minor Pentatonic Scale](#)

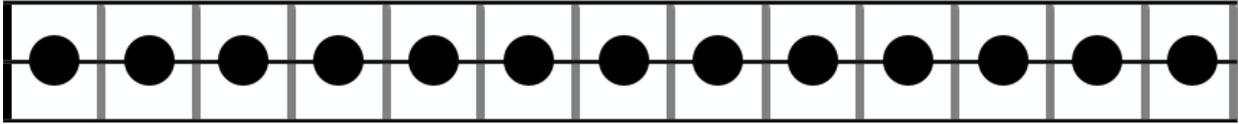
[Five Ways to Play a Blues Scale](#)

[Five Ways to Play a Minor Scale](#)

[Five Ways to Play a Harmonic Minor Scale](#)

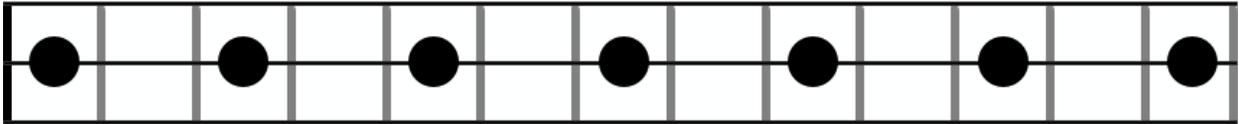
[Five Ways to Play a Melodic Minor Scale](#)

Half Steps/Chromatic Scale



Most scales are made up of different patterns of half steps and whole steps. On the guitar, a half step is one fret's distance. The diagram above shows the Chromatic Scale along one string. The Chromatic Scale is all half steps.

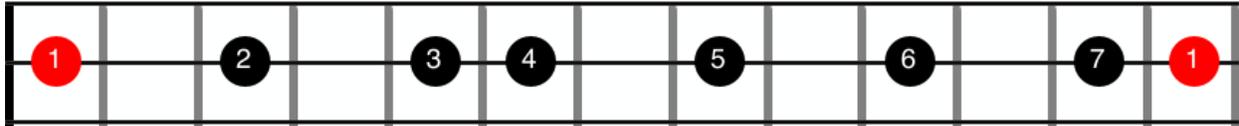
Whole Steps/Whole Tone Scale



Whole steps are two frets distance. The diagram above shows the Whole Tone scale along one string. The Whole Tone Scale is all whole steps.

[Click here](#) for the video demo.

Major Scale (Ionian Mode)



The diagram above shows the Major Scale. When written on one string, it's easy to see the whole steps and half steps. No matter the starting note, every Major Scale has the same pattern:

W-W-H-W-W-W-H. (W = Whole Step and H = Half Step)

The numbers in the diagram refer to scale degrees. In Western music, we compare all scales to the Major Scale. While the Major Scale can be thought of as 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-1, other scales might include altered notes, such as $b3$ (flat 3) or $\#4$ (sharp 4). A $b3$ is a half step lower than the 3 would be in the Major Scale. A $\#4$ is a half step higher than the 4 would be in the Major Scale.

Starting on the next page, we'll compare the Major Scale modes:

- Ionian
- Dorian
- Phrygian
- Lydian
- Mixolydian
- Aeolian (Natural Minor)
- Locrian

Ionian is simply the Major Scale, so we'll look at Dorian next.

[Click here](#) for the video demo.

Dorian



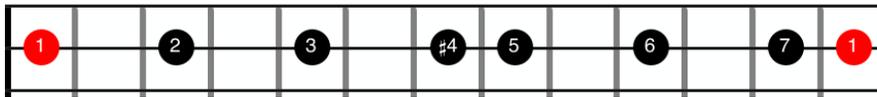
Compared to the Major Scale, the Dorian Mode has a **b3** and **b7**. You can think of this as a type of **Minor** scale because of the **b3**.

Phrygian



Compared to the Major Scale, the Phrygian Mode has a **b2**, **b3**, **b6**, and **b7**. You can think of this as a type of **Minor** scale because of the **b3**.

Lydian



Compared to the Major Scale, the Lydian Mode has a **#4**. You can think of this as a variation of the **Major** Scale.

Mixolydian



Compared to the Major Scale, the Mixolydian Mode has a **b7**. You can think of this as a variation of the **Major** Scale.

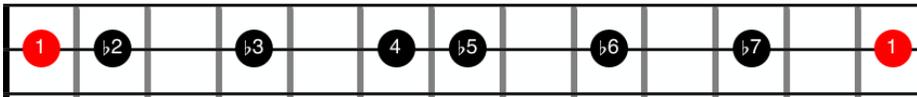
[Click here](#) for the video demo.

Aeolian/Natural Minor



Compared to the Major Scale, the Aeolian Mode has a **b3**, **b6**, and **b7**. The Aeolian Mode is more commonly called the Natural Minor Scale. We'll go over the Natural, Harmonic, and Melodic Minor scales on the next page.

Locrian



Compared the Major Scale, the Locrian Mode has a **b2**, **b3**, **b5**, **b6**, and **b7**. You can think of this as a type of **Minor** scale because of the **b3**.

[Click here](#) for the video demo.

Natural Minor (Aeolian Mode)



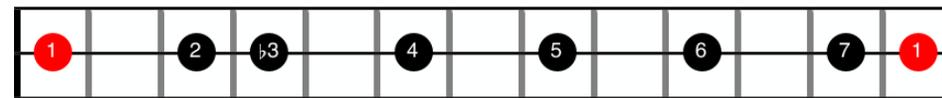
The diagram above shows the Natural Minor Scale, which is the Aeolian Mode from the previous page. The Natural Minor Scale has a **b3**, **b6**, and **b7**. The Harmonic and Melodic Minor Scales are variations of the Natural Minor.

Harmonic Minor



The diagram above shows the Harmonic Minor Scale. Compared to Natural Minor, the Harmonic Minor Scale has a “7” instead of a **b7**. In other words, the Harmonic Minor is the same as Natural Minor except for a raised 7th.

Melodic Minor



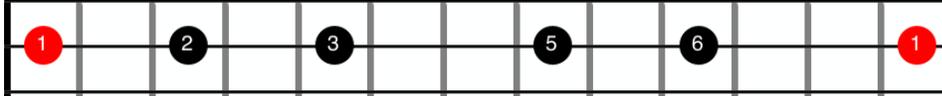
The diagram above shows the Melodic Minor Scale. Compared to Natural Minor, the Melodic Minor Scale has a **natural “6” and “7”**.

In classical music theory, the Melodic Minor is played with the natural “6” and “7” ascending and as a Natural Minor descending, with a **b6 and b7**. In non-classical styles, especially jazz, we typically practice the Melodic Minor scale with the natural “6” and “7” both ascending **and** descending.

[Click here](#) for the video demo.

Major Pentatonic Scale

In this last section, we'll cover the Major Pentatonic Scale, Minor Pentatonic Scale, and Blues Scale.



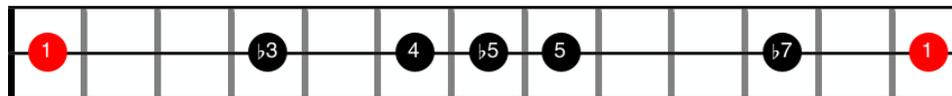
The diagram above shows the Major Pentatonic Scale. Compared to the Major Scale, the Major Pentatonic Scale includes the scale degrees 1-2-3-5-6. You can also think of it as the Major Scale **without** the 4th and 7th scale degrees. There are no half steps in the Major Pentatonic Scale.

Minor Pentatonic Scale



The diagram above shows the Minor Pentatonic Scale. Compared to the Major Scale, the Minor Pentatonic Scale includes the scale degrees 1-b3-4-5-b7. You can also think of it as a Natural Minor Scale **without** the "2" or "b6." There are no half steps in the Minor Pentatonic Scale.

Blues Scale



The diagram above shows the Blues Scale. The Blues Scale is exactly the same as the Minor Pentatonic except for the b5 between the "4" and the "5".

[Click here](#) for the video demo.

We looked at these scales along one string to make it easier to compare. To put them to practical use, you need to play them from string to string. These video lessons can help you with that:

[Three Ways to Play a Chromatic Scale](#)

[Five Ways to Play a Major Scale](#)

[Five Ways to Play a Minor Pentatonic Scale](#)

[Five Ways to Play a Blues Scale](#)

[Five Ways to Play a Minor Scale](#)

[Five Ways to Play a Harmonic Minor Scale](#)

[Five Ways to Play a Melodic Minor Scale](#)