



C Major Scale for Beginners: Lesson 3

By Christopher Schlegel

What is the C major scale?

Remember, the major scale formula:

1st note, whole step, 2nd note, whole step, 3rd note, half step, 4th note, whole step, 5th note, whole step, 6th note, whole step, 7th note, half step, 8th note (which is one octave higher than the first note).

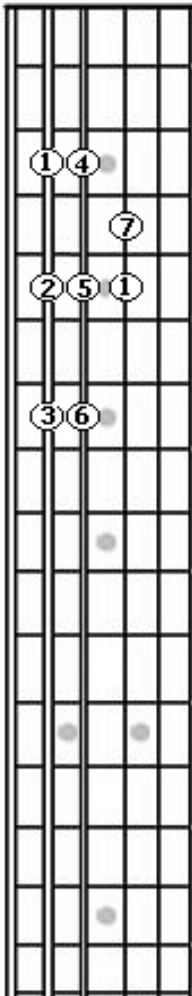
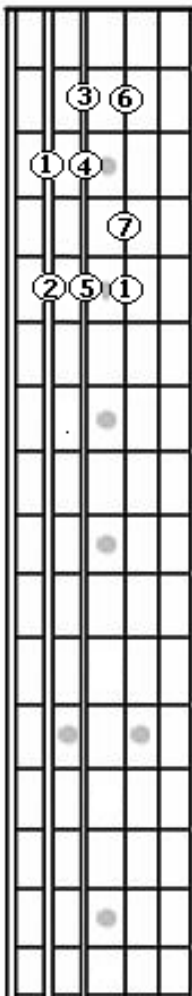
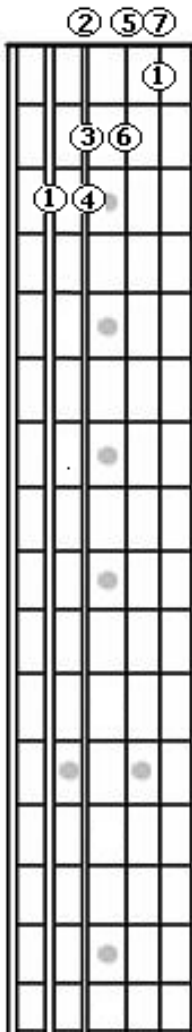
In the previous lesson we learned to place this formula on the fretboard of the guitar. We took some music theory and put it into practice. In this lessons we will look at a couple of reasons the major scale is so important in music and so powerful a tool.

It forms the basis of the vast majority of the melodies of songs from Ancient Greece, to the chants of the Middle Ages, to the Baroque, Classical and Romantic Era. To this day in jazz, pop, rock, blues and country, it is the basis of melody and harmony and chord construction.

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C Major Scale Patterns

Pattern 1	Fret #s	Pattern 2	Fret #s	Pattern 3 "Open Position"	Fret #s	
	1		1		1	
	2		2		2	
	3		3		3	3
	4		4		4	4
	5		5		5	5
	6		6		6	6
	7		7		7	7
	8		8		8	8
	9		9		9	9
	10		10		10	10
	11		11		11	11
	12		12		12	12
	13		13		13	13
	14		14		14	14
	15		15		15	15

C Major Scale Formula

① WS ② WS ③ HS ④ WS ⑤ WS ⑥ WS ⑦ HS ①
 WS = Whole Step
HS = Half Step

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Every major scale has exactly the same formula. This means that you can use any of the 12 notes of the octave to start a scale: A, A-sharp, B, C, C-sharp, D, D-sharp, E, F, F-sharp, G, G-sharp. Then apply the formula and get a major scale named by the note you started on. Therefore, the D major scale starts on D, and the D-sharp major scale starts on D-sharp and so on.

So, the D major scale has these notes:

D = 1 (1st scale degree) - root note
E = 2 (2nd scale degree) - second
F-sharp = 3 (3rd scale degree) - major third
G = 4 (4th scale degree) - fourth
A = 5 (5th scale degree) - fifth
B = 6 (6th scale degree) - major sixth
C-sharp = 7 (7th scale degree) - major seventh
D = 8 (8th scale degree) - octave of root

This is why each scale has a different pattern of letters, but a similar sound: they all have the same set of internal intervals between their scale "degrees" or notes.

So, this is how we identify the notes of the major scale in music theory. Notice that this is how we also identified them when we were first thinking about intervals. But instead of labeling all 12 notes of the octave, we are only interested in the notes that make up the major scale at this time. The concept of intervals and the 12 half-step intervals of the octave are the foundation of western tonality and music. The major scale is (along with the harmonic possibilities derived from it) the foundation of western music melody conception.

If you take nothing else from these lessons on the C major scale, remember this: The major scale is very important; you should learn it, be able to recognize its sound and practice being able to play it anywhere on your guitar.

C Major Scale

Linear Pattern

1 2

T
A
B 3 5 7 8 10 12 14 15

Pattern 1

3 4

3 5 7 3 5 7 4 5

Pattern 2

5 6

3 5 2 3 5 2 4 5

Pattern 3 - "Open Position"

7 8

3 0 2 3 0 2 0 1

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C Major Scale Notes

C D E F G A B C