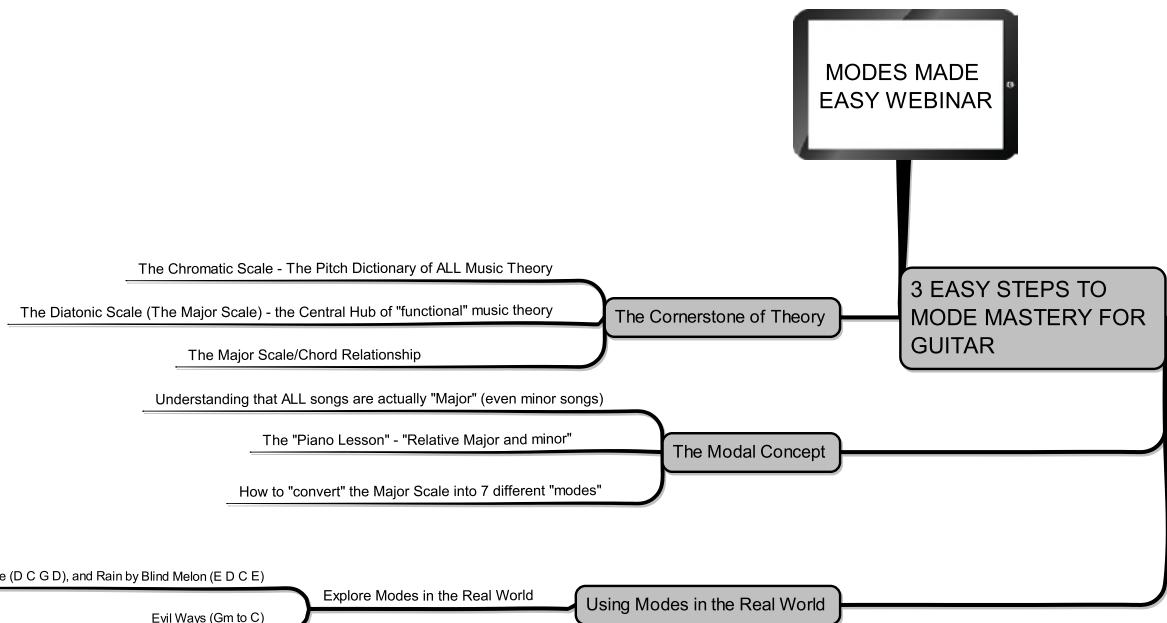


# **3 Easy Steps to Mode Mastery for Guitar**





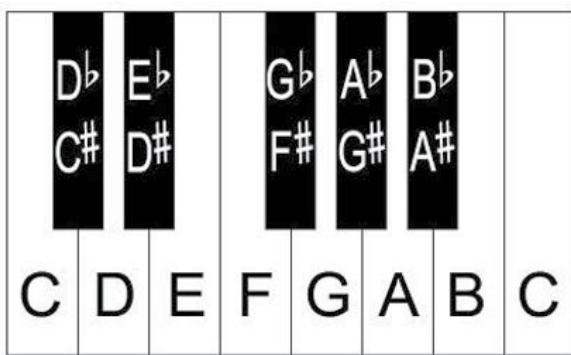
## INTRODUCTION

This course will deal with the ins and outs of the diatonic scale called modes and their relationships to the music that we play. Modes have been a very confusing topic for many guitar students over the years, making modes impossible to use in playing, hence the need for this course to go into practical details regarding them.

## THE CHROMATIC SCALE

The chromatic scale is a sequence of 12 notes. It starts from a particular note all the way up to its octave. Each note in the chromatic scale is a half-step interval apart from the next. Think of the chromatic scale as a dictionary of notes.

In a piano keyboard that has 88 keys, there are only 12 notes that get repeated over and over in octaves.



The chromatic scale has seven primary notes namely A, B, C, D, E, F and G. These are the notes one can play over the white keys of the piano keyboard. The black keys (called *accidentals*) provide access to the other five notes found in between the primary notes. A black key immediately to the right of a white key is called a *sharp* (#) and the one to the left is called a *flat* (♭).

Because each black key can be found in between two white keys, these accidentals have two names i.e. *enharmonic* names. For example, C♯ is the same note as D♭.

When we look at the piano keyboard, we find that there are no black keys between B and C and E and F, and this is why we say that there is no B♯ (which is actually C) or E♯ (F). Remember the term “**BE**” as a shortcut to remembering this.

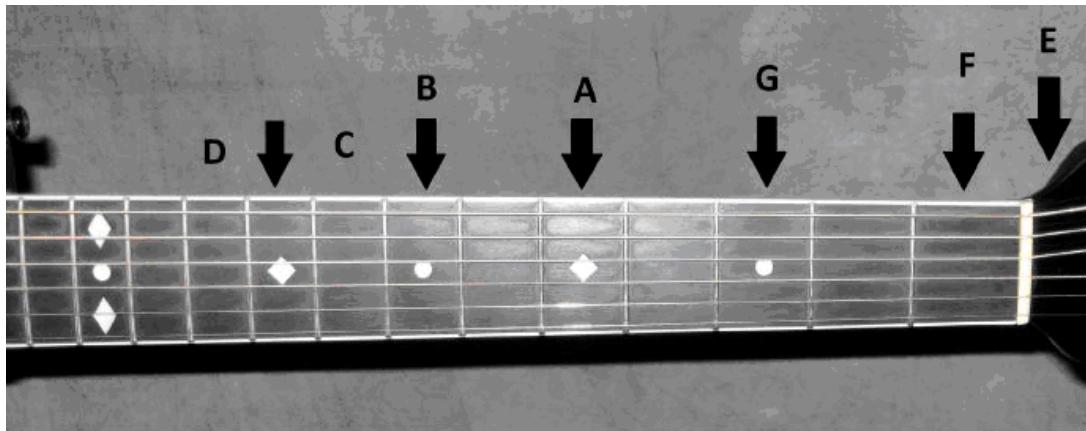
Given the explanation of sharps and flats on the piano keyboard, we can also say that *sharp* always means to raise something by a half step and *flat* means to lower something by a half step.

When we look at the guitar’s fretboard, the chromatic scale can be easily realized. This is because the frets of the guitar actually divide the fretboard in half steps. The row of notes from the open E of the 6<sup>th</sup> string up to the 12<sup>th</sup> fret is a chromatic scale starting in E!

**Ex.1 Chromatic Scale**

The image shows musical notation on a staff and tablature on a guitar neck. The staff has a treble clef and a '4' time signature. The tablature shows the strings T (top), A, and B, with fret numbers 0 through 12 below the neck. The notes are represented by vertical stems with small circles at the top, indicating pitch. The chromatic scale consists of 12 half-steps, starting from C and ending at B.

If we know how the chromatic scale works, we only need to memorize a number of notes per string and we can, by analogy, find the rest of them easy:



1. Memorize the primary notes (i.e. those with no sharps or flats) on the fretboard up until the 12<sup>th</sup> fret. Start out with the 6<sup>th</sup> string first. Use the dot inlays of your fretboard as guides.
2. Once we know where these notes are, we can easily find all the accidentals by way of analogy, keeping in mind "BE" (no B<sup>#</sup> or E<sup>#</sup>, no C<sup>b</sup> or F<sup>b</sup>). If it is a sharp, it should just be one fret above the primary note. If it is a flat, it's one fret below.

## SCALE THEORY

If the chromatic scale is the “dictionary” of musical notes, it is not very useful in a musical sense necessarily. From the chromatic scale, however, we draw other kinds of scales to make music. The scale that will be in focus for this course is the **diatonic** scale (a.k.a the do-re-mi-fa-so-la-ti-do scale). Another kind of scale very familiar to guitar players is the **pentatonic** scale (five-note scale).

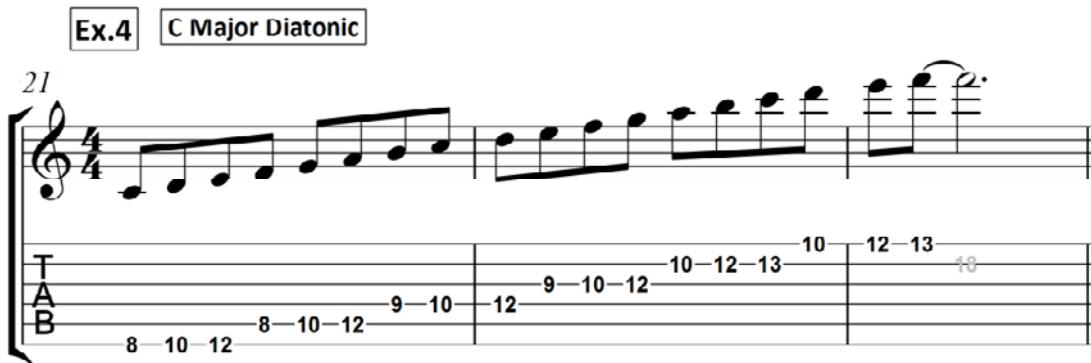
When we look at the seven primary notes from our chromatic scale starting at C (C, D, E, F, G, A, B - all the white notes of the piano keyboard), this is a diatonic scale. All of the 12 key signatures used in music are based on diatonic scales i.e. every diatonic scale in any key must have some sort of “do” or “C” to start out with and follow that pattern of intervals

## THE DIATONIC SCALE

To further the discussion about diatonic scales, we will start out with the C major scale. We choose the key of C for this because it has no sharps or flats plus the major scale serves as a basis or starting point for discovering modes and minor scales:

**Ex.4 C Major Diatonic**

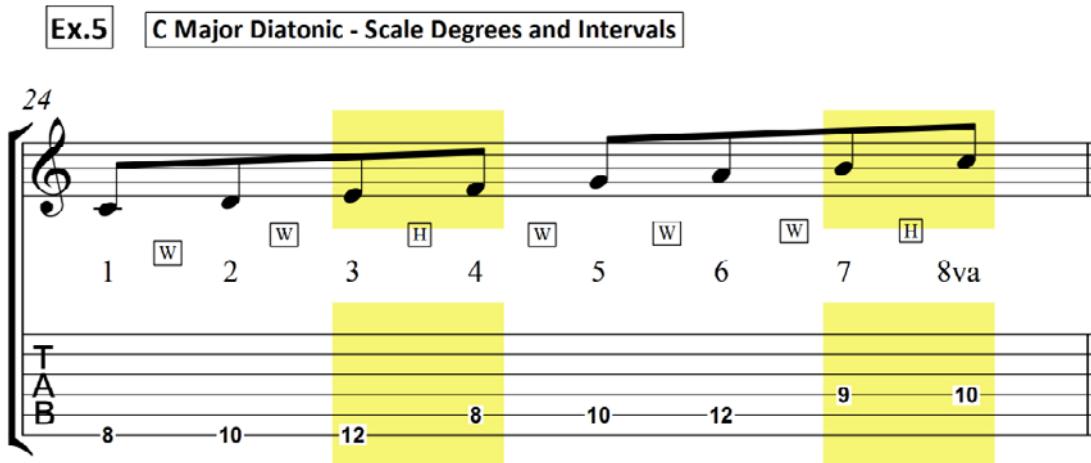
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One key concept in understanding the diatonic scale is the **interval** (the distance between two notes). To come up with a diatonic scale, we need a combination of whole and half steps (hence the term “diatonic scale” meaning a scale with whole and half steps).

**Ex.5 C Major Diatonic - Scale Degrees and Intervals**

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If we examine the rest of the notes of the scale, we can come up with seven triads out of seven notes. Looking deeper into it, we will notice that triads I, IV, and V are major and triads ii, iii, and vi are minor:

95 **Ex.13** Triads I-vi of C Major

So, we can sum up that in the major scale:

1. I, IV, and V are always major triads.
2. ii, iii, and vi are always minor triads.
3. The  $vii^0$  is always a diminished triad.

Take note that everything that will be discussed in this course regarding music theory in general will be based on the major scale. Matter of fact is that most of the concepts we know about music will always revolve around the major scale as a basis, even minor scales and key signatures.

From here we can create a chart showing the triads of the C major scale:

| <b>I</b> | <b>ii</b> | <b>iii</b> | <b>IV</b> | <b>V</b> | <b>vi</b> | <b>vii<sup>o</sup></b> |
|----------|-----------|------------|-----------|----------|-----------|------------------------|
| <b>C</b> | <b>D</b>  | <b>E</b>   | <b>F</b>  | <b>G</b> | <b>A</b>  | <b>B</b>               |
| <b>E</b> | <b>F</b>  | <b>G</b>   | <b>A</b>  | <b>B</b> | <b>C</b>  | <b>D</b>               |
| <b>G</b> | <b>A</b>  | <b>B</b>   | <b>C</b>  | <b>D</b> | <b>E</b>  | <b>F</b>               |

G major scale:

| <b>I</b> | <b>ii</b> | <b>iii</b> | <b>IV</b> | <b>V</b>  | <b>vi</b> | <b>vii<sup>o</sup></b> |
|----------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------------------|
| <b>G</b> | <b>A</b>  | <b>B</b>   | <b>C</b>  | <b>D</b>  | <b>E</b>  | <b>F#</b>              |
| <b>B</b> | <b>C</b>  | <b>D</b>   | <b>E</b>  | <b>F#</b> | <b>G</b>  | <b>A</b>               |
| <b>D</b> | <b>E</b>  | <b>F#</b>  | <b>G</b>  | <b>A</b>  | <b>B</b>  | <b>C</b>               |

As an additional learning activity, it is suggested to write similar charts in all keys.

## INTRODUCTION TO MODES

What is a mode? A mode is simply a degree i.e. placing emphasis on a certain note or chord to make it central to the music. In the major diatonic scale, we have seven notes meaning that it gives us seven triads as well as seven modes. If, for example, in the key of G we place emphasis on the A minor chord, we are actually playing the in the second mode since Am is the second chord along the sequence of the major scale. In effect, the way we get modes is the same way we get our minor key. A minor key is simply another mode along a major scale!

In any major key signature, placing emphasis on the first chord (I) or note gives us the first mode. This mode is called **Ionian**. For example, in the key of G, the Ionian mode starts with G (the I chord). The Ionian mode is also the same as our as **major** scale starting at the root or key.

The names of all the relative modes of the major scale, from first to seventh (as well as whether or not they are major or minor), are as follows:

1. **Ionian** - major
2. **Dorian** - minor
3. **Phrygian** - minor
4. **Lydian** - major
5. **Mixolydian** - major
6. **Aeolian** - minor
7. **Locrian** – minor/diminished

We can chart our modes according to the scale degree or chord it starts out with:

| Mode       | Starting/Emphasized Scale Degree | Starting/Emphasized Chord |
|------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Ionian     | 1                                | I                         |
| Dorian     | 2                                | ii                        |
| Phrygian   | 3                                | iii                       |
| Lydian     | 4                                | IV                        |
| Mixolydian | 5                                | V                         |
| Aeolian    | 6                                | vi                        |
| Locrian    | 7                                | vii°                      |

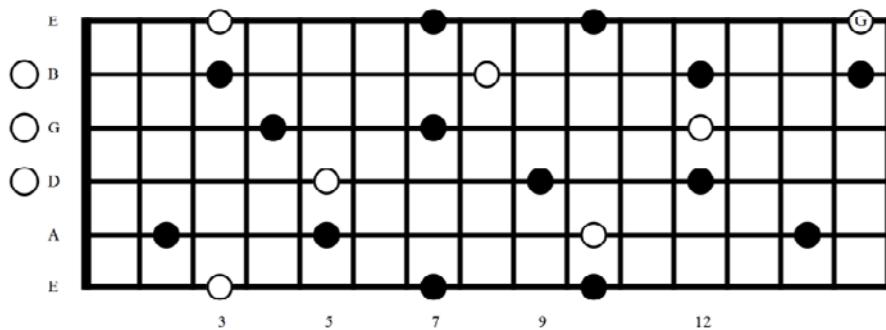
In the key of G, here are the modes and their starting notes or chords:

| Mode       | Starting Note | Starting Chord |
|------------|---------------|----------------|
| Ionian     | G             | G              |
| Dorian     | A             | Am             |
| Phrygian   | B             | Bm             |
| Lydian     | C             | C              |
| Mixolydian | D             | D              |
| Aeolian    | E             | Em             |
| Locrian    | F#            | F#dim          |

## IONIAN MODE: CHORD TONES VS. NON-CHORD TONES

**Ex.38** **IONIAN MODE**

**G Major Arpeggios**



**247 Chord Tones**

Musical notation for Chord Tones starting at measure 247. The top staff shows a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The bottom staff shows the guitar neck with fingerings: 3-7-5, 5-7-8, 7-10-7-8, 7-4-5, and 5-7. The notation consists of eighth-note patterns.

**249 Non-Chord/Color Tones**

Musical notation for Non-Chord/Color Tones starting at measure 249. The top staff shows a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The bottom staff shows the guitar neck with fingerings: 5-3-7-4-7-5, 5-7-5-8-5-7-5, 5-7-4-7-3-5. The notation consists of eighth-note patterns.

## **Other Concepts Discussed in Modes Made Easy**

### **Interval Study**

**Learn scales in all 12 keys and all 7 of their positions across the fretboard**

### **Chromatic Scale theory**

### **Diatonic Scale theory**

### **Pentatonic to Diatonic Conversions**

### **Chordal Theory (triads and expansions)**

### **Chord Conversion shortcuts**

**Color Tone emphasis (modal emphasis (non-chord tones) vs. Chord Tone emphasis (for all 7 modes) when soloing**

### **Chord Chasing concept**

### **Modal Superimposition**

### **Multi-Modal Situations (Modal Multiple Choice)**

### **Real-world Quick Mode tricks**

### **Undefined Modal situations (Metal and others)**

### **Parallel Modes Concept**

**We will explore MANY popular songs and discuss their modal structure and how to solo over them**