

# Lesson Nine:

Scales & Keys

*Minuet in G Major*

*Shalom Chaverim*

*"F"-It*

Major Scale Patterns

Improvisation & the Lead Guitarist

*No Words, No Wisdom*

# Scales & Keys

**Scale:** a pattern of steps (whole, half, 1½) between one note and its octave.

**Major Scale:** starting on any note, a pattern of the following steps: **W W H W W W H**, where W=whole step and H = half step. The starting note is considered the **root**, or **tonic** of the scale.



'C' major scale =

C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C
	\	/	\	/	\	/	\
	w		w		h		w
				w		w	
					w		w
						h	

**Minor Scale:** starting on any note, a pattern of the following steps: **W H W W H W W**.




'A' minor scale =

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A
	\	/	\	/	\	/	\
	w		h		w		w
				w		w	
					w		w
						h	

**Key:** a musical *key* is the major or minor scale around which a piece of music is centered, i.e., the key of *C major* is based on the C major scale. The notes within a key have a specific relationship (based on the step patterns above) that reinforce the scale's root as the key or *tonal center*. Chords are built off of each note in a key. Notes and chords that exist in a key are said to be **diatonic** (within the key).

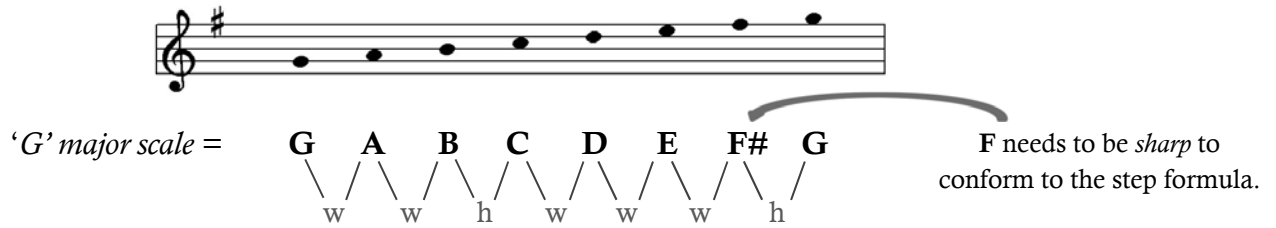
**Key Signature:** a series of sharps or flats placed on specific staff lines/spaces directly after the clef that indicate: 1) which notes are to be played sharp or flat throughout the piece in any octave; 2) the name of the key; and 3) the scale choices available when improvising.

	G		C		D		G
	↑		↑		↑		↑
	key signature:		F#		F#		F#
	one sharp (F#) =						
	key of G major						



Each key signature can indicate either a major or *relative minor* key six scale steps above the major key's root. In the example above, one sharp can indicate either the key of *G major* or *E minor*. In most cases, the last melodic note or supporting chord will give the key. The above example clearly resolves or comes to rest in G major. Major keys have a happy or bright quality; minor keys tend to be sadder or darker.

*Why key signatures?* 1) to save us the trouble of putting an accidental in front of every diatonic note that needs one; and 2) to maintain a sense of *tonality* by adhering to the scale step formula. For example:

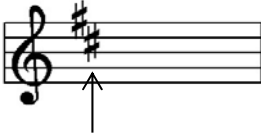


'G' major scale = G A B C D E F# G


w w h w w w h

F needs to be *sharp* to conform to the step formula.

There are 15 key signatures in total. For a comprehensive look, see the *Circle of Fifths* in the *Appendix*. A few common, guitar-friendly key signatures are listed below. For a **quick method** to figure out a key signature, note the following - **Sharp keys:** a half step up from the last sharp gives the major key. **Flat keys:** the second to last flat gives the major key (except for **F major**).



last sharp = C#;  
half step up =  
key of **D major** or **B minor**

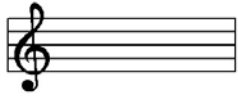



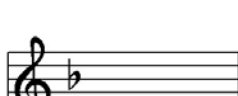



2<sup>nd</sup>-to-last flat =  
key of **Eb major** or **C minor**

Major Keys

Relative Minor Keys

# of sharps/flats

C		Am	0
G		Em	1 sharp – F#
A		F#m	3 sharps – F#, C#, G#
E		C#m	4 sharps – F#, C#, G#, D#
F		Dm	1 flat – Bb
Bb		Gm	2 flats – Bb, Eb

# Minuet in G Major

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 -1750)

Musical notation for Minuet in G Major, showing two staves of music in 3/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The first staff has an F# note marked with a downward arrow, and the second staff has an F# note marked with an upward arrow.

# Shalom Chaverim

(Peace My Friends)

Traditional Israeli Folk Song

key of Em  
↓  
**Moderato**

1                      2                      3                      C                      D

Sha - lom chav-er-im, Sha - lom chav-er-im, Sha - lom, sha -

G    B7    Em

lom, Le - hit - ra - ot, le - hit - ra - ot, Sha - lom, sha - lom

*Shalom Chaverim* can also be played as a 2 or 3-part **round**: when *group 1* reaches the number 2, *group 2* begins; when *group 1* reaches the number 3, *group 3* begins. When playing as a round, just strum an *Em* chord for any accompaniment.

# “F”-It

Common time  
=  $\frac{4}{4}$   
↓

8-Bar Blues – G.M.

# Major Scale Patterns

Practice the following **major scale pattern** in C major. The fret numbers coincidentally correspond to the correct left-hand fingers.

**Fingerstyle:** alternate *i-m* or *m-i* with both free strokes and rest strokes.

**Pick-style:** alternate picking using downstrokes (▣) on the beat and upstrokes (∨) off the beat.

Ex. #1

Bar 1

Bar 5

The previous scale can be represented on a **scale grid** as follows:

Ex. #2

numbers = fret-hand fingerings .. squares = scale roots ..

When practicing scales, always start from the lowest root (in this case C). Ascend then descend the entire pattern before ending back on the lowest root. It may be helpful to visualize the pattern of notes on each individual string.

**Guitar 2:** try the following pattern in C major. The triangle indicates an alternate note fingering.

Ex. #3

To **transpose** these patterns to other keys, assign the root (□) to the desired key note on the same string and build accordingly. The patterns are *movable* and remain the same, only the root note changes.

The *Appendix* contains a complete set of major scale patterns for those wanting more..

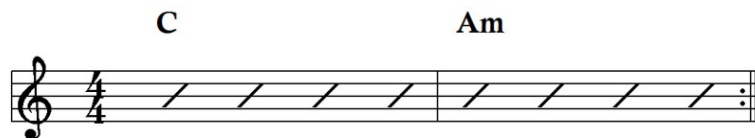
# Improvisation & the Lead Guitarist

At its most basic level, **improvisation** is the art of *making it up as you go along*. The term most often applies to a **soloist** but can refer to an ensemble engaging in *collective improvisation* or ‘just jamming, man.’ As beginning improvisers, it is helpful to think of notes in a scale much like words in the dictionary. Like toddlers learning to speak a **language**, we develop *vocabulary*, first by constructing short musical ideas (*motifs*). We connect these ideas to create longer statements (*phrases*). Statements grow into sentences (*themes*). Sentences develop into paragraphs (*sections*).

Great improvisers possess the following qualities: 1) *technical facility* on their instrument; 2) the ability to organize, develop, and execute vocabulary (*licks*, ideas, concepts) spontaneously; 3) the ability to engage in *conversation* with other musicians in *context* (the song) – this implies being a good *listener* and leaving *space* for others to interact; 4) the ability to communicate *story* for musicians and audience members alike.

**Lead guitarists** are called upon to take a *leading role* in the music. This can involve performing an opening riff or melodic line but often includes improvising solos as described above.

**Homework Exercise #1:** 1) record yourself playing the following simple chord progression in C major; 2) practice improvising short, melodic phrases using the notes from the major scale patterns; 3) start simply by limiting yourself to a 2-3 string range within the pattern before expanding.

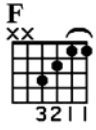


**Homework Exercise #2:** 1) play the following musical ideas/motifs; 2) practice incorporating them into your scale improvisations in Homework Exercise #1.

**Guitar 2:** the following phrase or *line* is made up of several shorter motifs.

# No Words, No Wisdom

*No Words, No Wisdom* features a **gospel**-influenced progression in the key of **C major**. It is used as the basis for such classic hits as "Let It Be" (The Beatles) and "No Woman, No Cry" (Bob Marley). The verse uses a **bass-chord** approach as well as a **connecting bass line** or *bass run* in the 4<sup>th</sup> measure. New chord in the Verse:



which features a **partial barre** that requires you to flatten your first finger and fret *two* strings (E1 & B2). The curved line above the grid indicates a barre. Work on collapsing the knuckle nearest the tip to make it happen. Two new chords in the Chorus: **Am7**=A minor 7<sup>th</sup>; **Fmaj7**=F major 7<sup>th</sup>.

Slowly

*Intro / Verse / Solo:*

*Chorus:*

The bridge features a traditional **reggae chop** (percussive chord stabs) off the beat.

*Bridge:*

**Form:** *Intro - Verse - Chorus - Verse - Chorus - Solos (in C major, over verse) - Bridge - Chorus (2x .. end)*