

Lesson II

Scales

G and Em chords

Guitar fingerboard/sequence of frets

Accidentals (sharps, flats, natural signs)

Review of Lesson II

A. Scales

A scale is a series of tones in any key. A major purpose of playing scales on the guitar is to develop coordination between the right and left hands. However, there are many other reasons for playing scales, since scales are the basis for chords, melodies, improvisation, and many other aspects of music. As you continue your journey of learning the guitar, you will find yourself using scales for the development of your technique. For this reason, it may be useful to view scales as flexible tools that can be used for any purpose you choose. There have been times I have played scales for hours each day to focus on my left hand development (strength, coordination, speed) or sometimes my right hand development. I use them as warm-ups for practice, and they sometimes become the focus of my practice. The important thing about scales is to know why you are playing them. If you don't have a purpose for playing them, they can become boring and redundant. As a beginner, you should play scales for five to ten minutes at the beginning of each practice session. If you like them, you can certainly play them longer.

Whenever you learn a scale in this course, it would be a good idea to memorize it as quickly as you can. When a scale is memorized, you can pay more attention to your hand positions and finger movements.

Many scales follow the “**Do, Re, Me, Fa, Sol, La, Ti, Do**” pattern. This one, however, does not. This scale is intended as an exercise that encompasses all the notes in the first position of the guitar.

B. Scale in Open Position

This scale is classified as being in open position because it uses open strings along with others that are pressed down. The numbers on the frets of the diagram below indicate which left hand fingers to use for pressing down the notes. If the number is a zero (O), you play the string without pressing down any fret. For now, keep the right hand simple by using your right hand thumb to pluck each note. This will allow you to concentrate on your left hand. After learning the left hand pattern, you can begin using your “i” finger to pluck each note. Your eventual goal is to be able to alternate your “i” and “m” fingers to play the entire scale forward and backward.

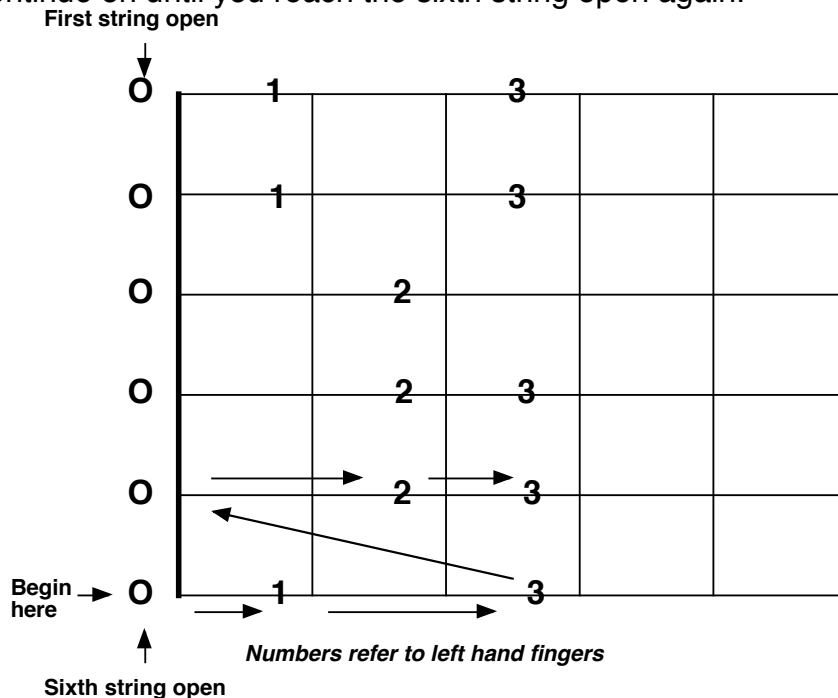
Instructions for the scale in open position:

1. Begin by playing the sixth string open (the low bass note E).
2. Next, press down the sixth string, first fret with your first finger and pluck that note with your right hand thumb (or “i” finger).
3. Press down the sixth string, third fret with your third finger.
4. Next, play the fifth string open (nothing pressed down).
5. Continue playing one note of the scale at a time until you reach the first string, third fret.

When you have reached the first string, third fret, play it once.

Then, you play it in reverse:

1. Go back and play the first string, first fret.
2. Then play the first string open.
3. Play the second string, third fret.
4. Play the second string, first fret, etc.
5. Continue on until you reach the sixth string open again.

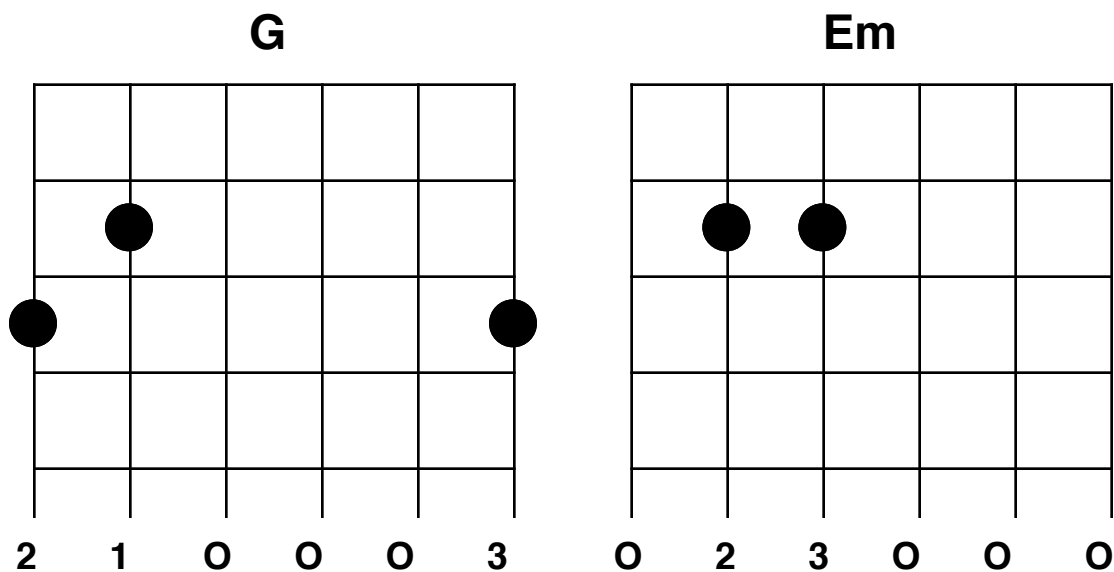


C. G and E minor Chords

Here are two new chords: G (major) and Em (minor). When referring to Em, always include the word minor, or it will be assumed that it is a major chord. These two chords have different sound characteristics. The G chord sounds bright/happy; the Em chord tends to sound solemn/sad.

Many beginning students have some difficulty playing the G chord because of the stretch between the first and sixth strings. This difficulty can be eliminated if the following approach is used:

1. Put your second finger on the sixth string, third fret.
2. Put your first finger on the fifth string, second fret.
3. Completely relax your hand and move your third finger vertically down to the first string, third fret. (This is a general rule - always relax your fingers apart - do not try to force them apart.)



D. G and Em Chord Study

The following exercise uses only the G and Em chords. Tap your foot at a steady pace and begin strumming the G chord. Try not to miss a beat when making the chord changes, and keep tapping your foot throughout the example. Use downward strums, and check the time signatures.

4/4

G G Em Em

G Em Em G


G G Em G

Em G Em G Em G Em G

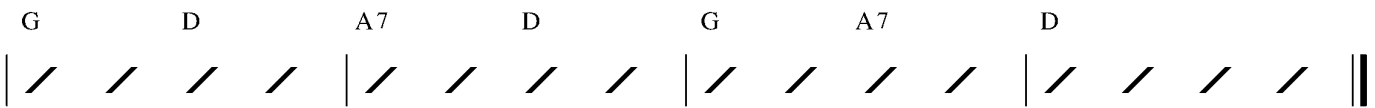
The following exercises use the D, A7, G, and Em chords and different time signatures.

(D, A7, G, Em)

G Em G Em G D G Em



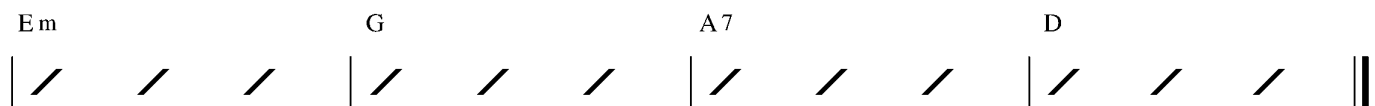
G D A7 D G A7 D



G Em A7 D



Em G A7 D



E. The Guitar Fingerboard - Sequence of Frets

This diagram is a picture of the guitar fingerboard. On the left side of the diagram are the names of the open strings, which should already be memorized. On the top horizontal line, which represents the first string, are the names of each of the frets up to and including the 12th fret.

This sequence (from open E to E on the 12th fret) should be memorized forward and backwards in order to put it to full use. Memorizing this sequence (along with the open strings) will enable you to find any note on the fingerboard.

Note: # = sharp; ♭ = flat. These symbols will be explained in section "F".

First string

	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D	D#	E
E												
B												
G												
D												
A												
E												

Sixth string

Very important!:

*This is the sequence that all music follows in half steps (fret to fret on the guitar). Using the first string as an example, wherever you have an **E** note, the next higher fret will always be an **F**. Wherever you have an **F**, the next higher fret will always be an **F#** (sharp). Wherever you have an **F#**, the next higher fret will always be a **G** and so on until you reach the 12th fret. This sequence will never change as long as you are moving in an ascending manner from one fret to the next.*

The Good News:

All the strings on the guitar use this same sequence. The only difference between the pattern on each string is the starting note of each string.

Example:

The first string starts with an open **E**, so the first fret has to be **F**, according to the sequence. The second string, however, begins with the open note **B**. According to the **sequence of frets** we learned on the first string, after every **B** comes a **C** (see the seventh fret of the first string). Therefore, the first fret of the second string *has* to be a **C**. The second fret on the second string *has* to be a **C#**, the third fret has to be a **D**, and so on. *What this tells you is: **After you memorize the names of the six open strings and the frets on the first string, you will have a method for finding the names of any note on the entire fingerboard.***

Since the sequence of frets is so important to a beginner, I recommend reading this page as often as it takes to understand it completely. If you ***do understand*** this sequence, you should be able to fill in the name of each note on every fret for each string in the above diagram. If it is filled in correctly, the note on the 12th fret of each string should be the same note as that open string.

F. Accidentals - Sharps, Flats and Natural Signs

Accidentals: signs which alter notes by raising or lowering them.

(sharp) - raises a note one half step (one fret)

b (flat) - lowers a note one half step (one fret)

♮ (natural) - cancels a sharp or flat; returns a note to its original position (or pitch)

In the sequence of frets, you see sharps next to many of the notes. This is because of the direction we are moving. As we move up the fingerboard from the open string toward the 12th fret, we are raising the pitches. When raising pitches, we use sharps (except when moving from **E** to **F** or from **B** to **C**). When beginning on the 12th fret and lowering each pitch, it is more correct to use flats. Using flats would assign different names to the frets (although the pitches sound the same).


Notice how the notes are named in the following sequences:

E, F, F#, G, G#, A, A#, B, C, C#, D, D#, E

→ *from the open E* → *ascending to the 12th fret*

E, F, G_b, G, A_b, A, B_b, B, C, D_b, D, E_b, E

← *descending from the 12th fret to the 1st string open* ←

Note: The natural sign () will be explained when you learn to read music.

The good news about flats:

If these ascending and descending forms confuse you, do not be alarmed. The concept of the sequence of frets can be simplified by eliminating the flats for now and only using sharps (whether ascending or descending). Although it is not technically correct to descend in sharps, it will facilitate your current understanding of the fingerboard.

G. Review of Lesson II

1. What is the definition of a scale?

2. a. Name these signs:

 _____

 _____

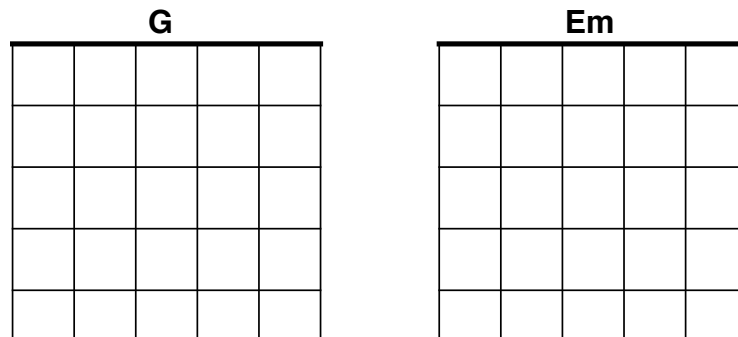
 _____

b. As a group, these signs are called _____.

3. Write the sequence of the frets of the first string.

(1st string open) E _____ E

4. Place the dots on the correct frets and strings for these chords.



5. Write the fingering for the scale in open position. Include the open strings.

