

**So, you think you  
know your scales?!**

**Tim Wolfe, Jr.**

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This little book grew out of decades of practicing from method books, studying etudes, and scouring the internet for scans of hand-written exercises from some of the all-time great bassists and bass teachers, while trying to organize my own practice routine in a way that seemed manageable. There's already an overwhelming amount of material available to us for practicing; this book is my own distillation of some of it as I've learned to explain it to my students. I've been teaching at the college level for a decade, and privately for longer than that, and in the past year or so I came to the realization that I was constantly writing (by hand!) the same information over and over again, semester after semester.

To me, the best thing the student can do for themselves is to keep a daily practice journal. The amount of music and other material we have to juggle in our practice routine, from lesson assignments (methods, etudes, scales and arpeggios, etc.) to ensemble repertoire, gig repertoire, transcriptions, not to mention the stuff we want to just do for ourselves for fun, can be quite difficult to keep track of (how many days has it been since I last practiced X?). The information I've organized in the follow pages is purposefully incomplete; the application and organization of it is up to you.

This book is designed to aid the advancing music student in furthering their development of technique, intonation, and knowledge of theory and harmony. It is my belief that this book is accessible to any instrumentalist or vocalist, but examples are geared toward double bassists, both by register choices and by including sample fingerings. Non-bassists will still gain a full advantage from the scale and arpeggio exercises in this book, making necessary adjustments to their instrument's particular needs. Additionally, articulation variation with bow markings is included, but the variety of articulations can be applied to any instrument (example, use as tonguing variations for wind instruments). While some of the scale examples contain suggested fingerings for the double bass, most do not as the student should explore variations of fingerings for all exercises.

Order of book:

- major scales
- major 7 arpeggios
- practicing with a variety of subdivisions
- bowing variations
- interval variations
- modes of the major scale built within the same key signature
- explanation of mode spellings, compared to parallel major scale
- major 13th arpeggios
- modes of major 13th arpeggios, parallel from the same root

Two-octave major scales, major 7th arpeggios, and major 13th arpeggios, are written out in all 12 keys, all other scale/mode/arpeggio exercises are written out only in the key of F as example, with the expectation that the student will transpose them through all keys. It is to the student's benefit to perform all of these exercises and transpositions in their mind and ears only.

When practicing any scale, mode, or arpeggio exercise, the student should use a reference drone for pitch; this aids in both the development of the ear and the left hand. Preferable is a recording which plays both the root and perfect fifth; recommended are recordings titled “Cello Drones for Tuning and Improvisation” or “The Tuning C.D.” Both are available on most streaming platforms. Apps such as “Drone Tone Tool” ([www.dronetonetool.com](http://www.dronetonetool.com)) is also recommended. If only a single pitch drone is available (such as any digital pitch pipe wave form), set the drone to the fifth of the key signature (example, when practicing in the key of G, place a single-pitch drone on “D”). Always use a metronome, set to a relatively slow tempo (I vary the tempo of my own daily scale and arpeggio practice, usually somewhere between 50 and 60 bpm). Play the assigned scale/mode/arpeggio starting with whole notes, then moving through the following rhythms: half notes, quarter notes, eighth notes, triplets, sixteenth notes, and if the student wishes, continue through further subdivisions of quintuplets, sextuplets, and even septuplets.

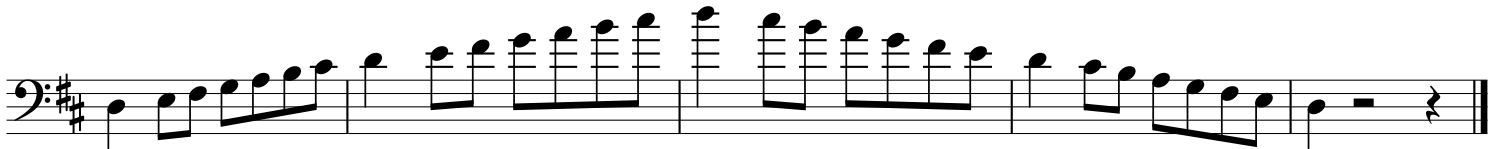
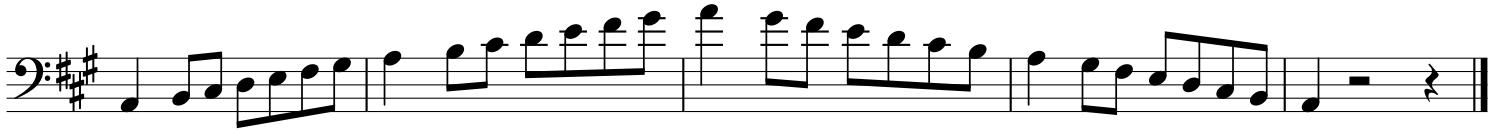
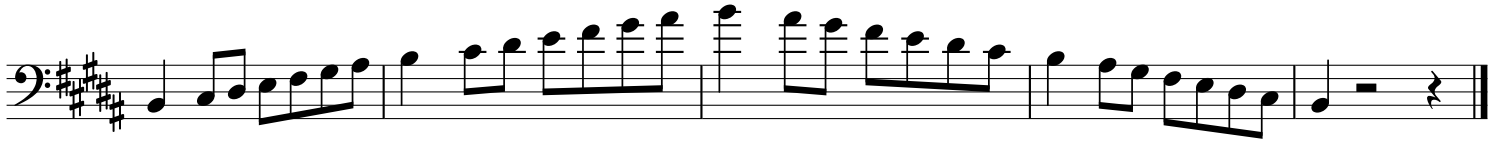
A note: because of the realities of time constraints, plus the need for variety in our practice routine, it is understood that not every bowing or rhythmic variation needs to be applied to every single scale, mode, and arpeggio (though it does benefit the student to do so). I recommend randomizing your practice routine if that benefits a particular student’s learning style. There are purposefully only twelve bowing exercises, even though many more exist, because I like to use a 12-sided die in my teaching studio, both to randomize key choices and bowing choices, making things less predictable for my students.

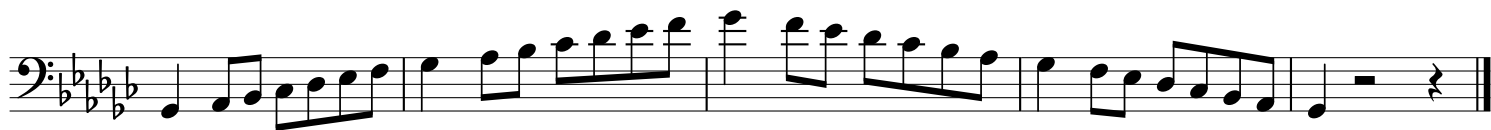
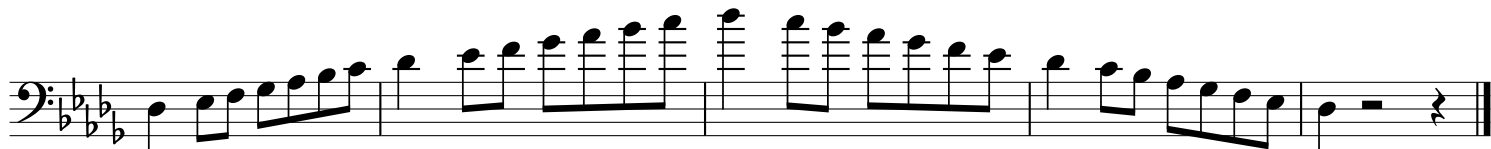
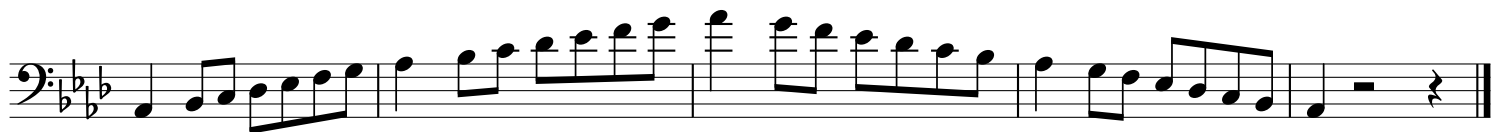
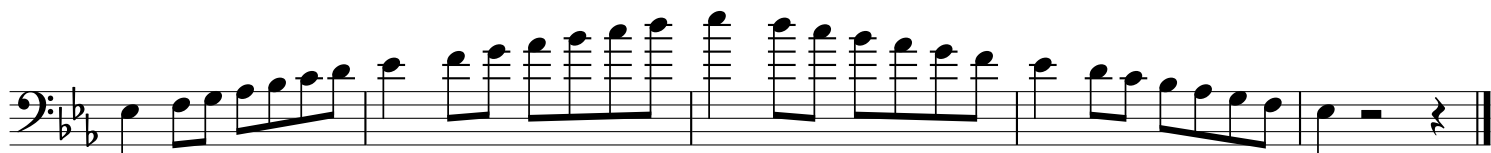
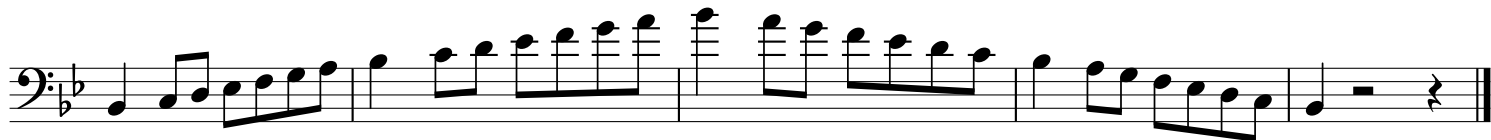
Happy practicing!

# Major Scales

Two octaves around the cycle

Wolfe





# Major Scales

Ascending chromatically - Double Bass Fingerings

Wolfe

0 1 4 0 1 4 1 2 4 1 2 1 4 2 4

1 4 0 1 4 0 2 4 0 2 4 1 4 2 4

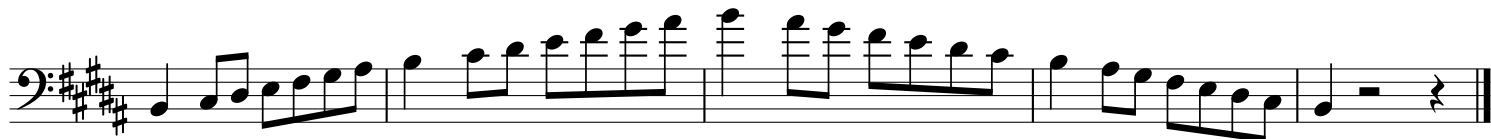
1 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 4 2 4

2 0 1 2 0 1 4 0 1 2 4 1 4 2 3

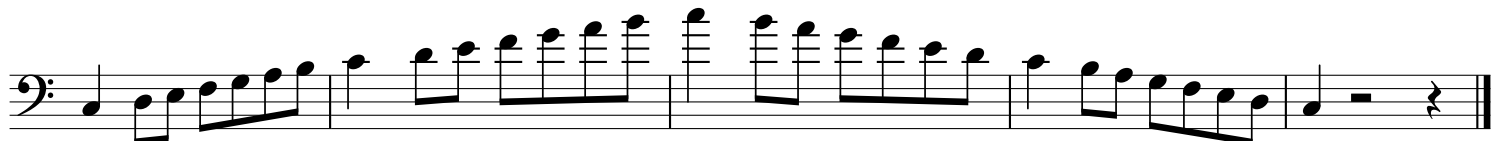
4 1 2 4 1 4 0 1 4 2 4 1 4 2 3

0 1 4 0 1 4 1 2 4 2 4 1 4 2 3

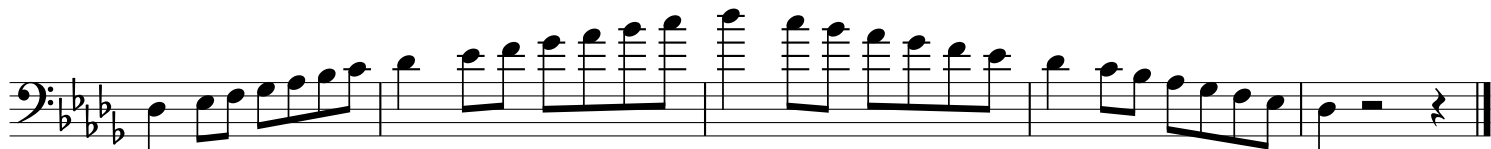
1 4 0 1 4 0 2 4 1 4 1 4 + 1 2



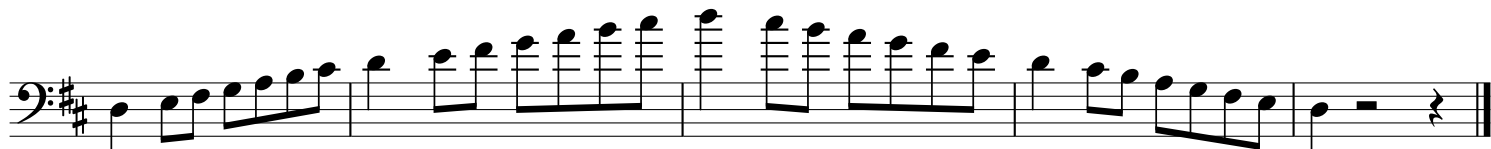
1 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 4 1 4 + 1 2



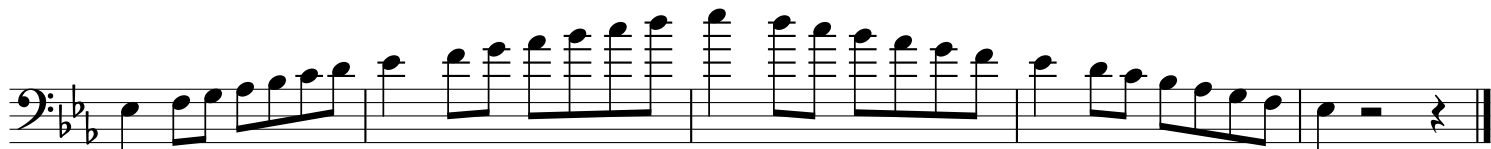
2 0 1 2 0 1 4 1 4 2 4 + 1 2 3



4 1 2 4 1 1 4 1 4 2 4 + 1 2 3



0 1 4 0 1 4 2 4 1 4 + 1 3 2 3



1 4 0 1 4 1 4 1 4 + 1 3 1 2 3

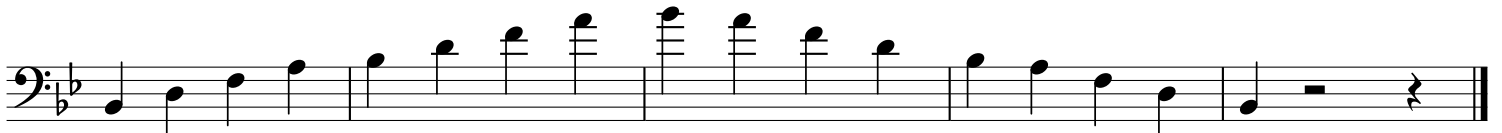
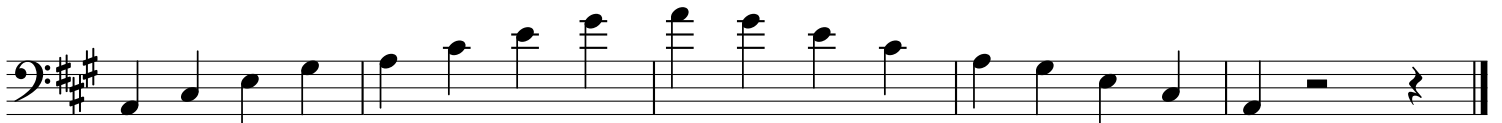
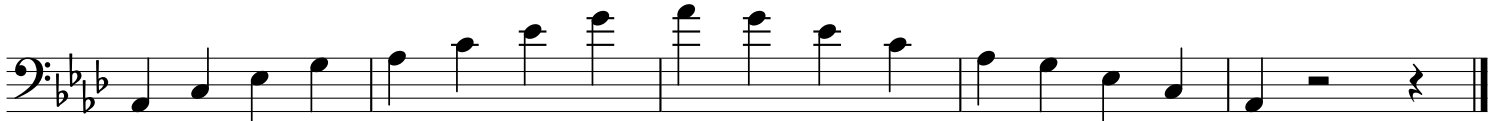
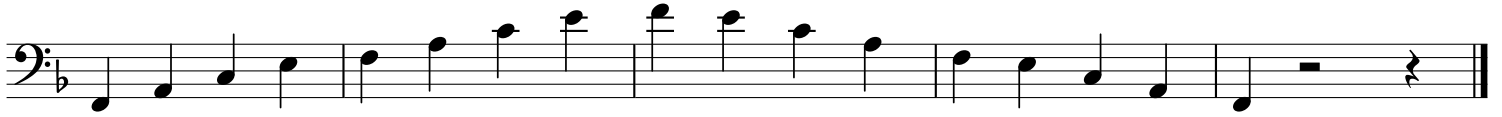
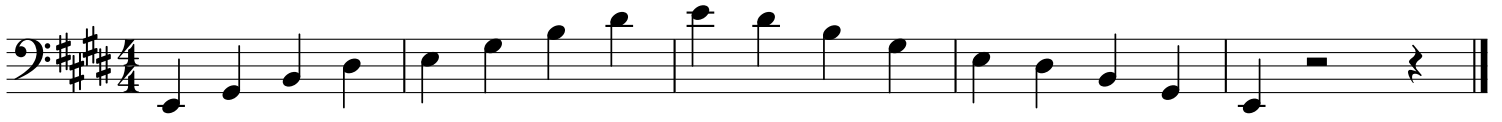
These are only the author's suggestions for fingerings; lots of other variations exist for each key.

For a full study of fingering variations across the fingerboard, the author suggests  
"The School of Agility: A Technical Method of the Scale System for String Bass" by Eugene Levinson

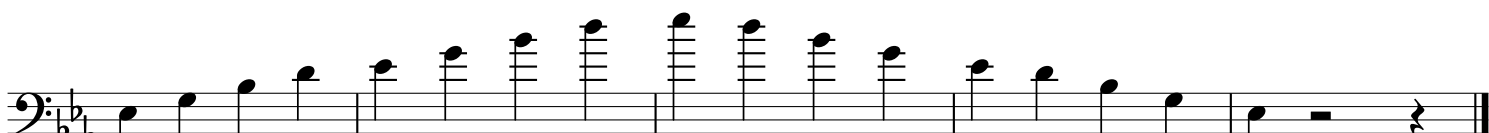
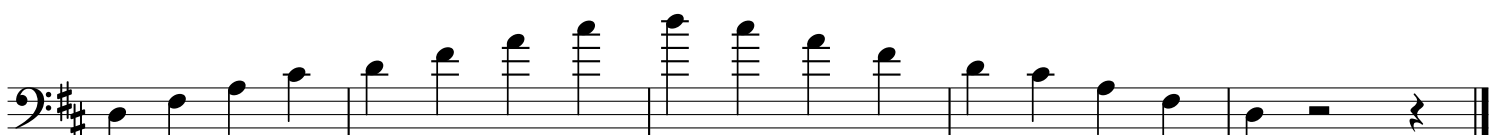
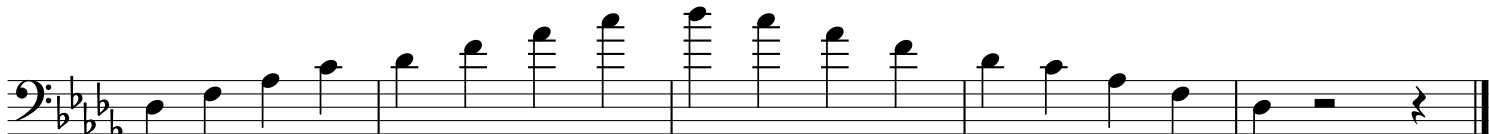
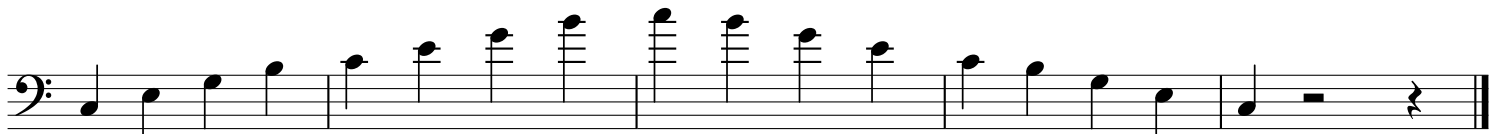
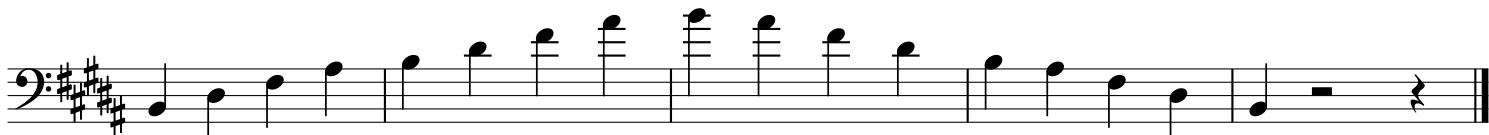
# Major 7th Arpeggios

Ascending chromatically

Wolfe







It can be a practical to additionally take some of higher register keys (C, Db, D, Eb) down a full octave, excepting the starting pitch, as in the above example.

Explore variations of fingerings for each key; tempo, rhythm, bowing, etc. can affect fingering choices.

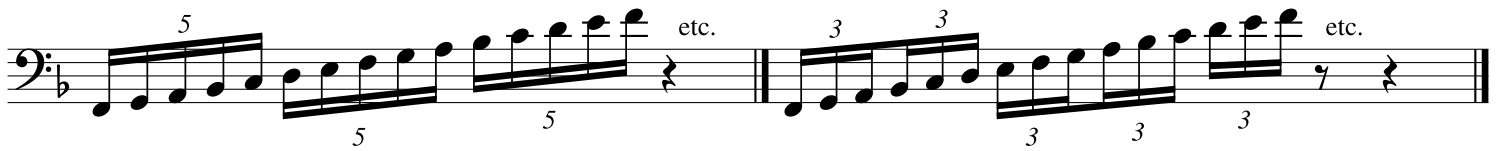
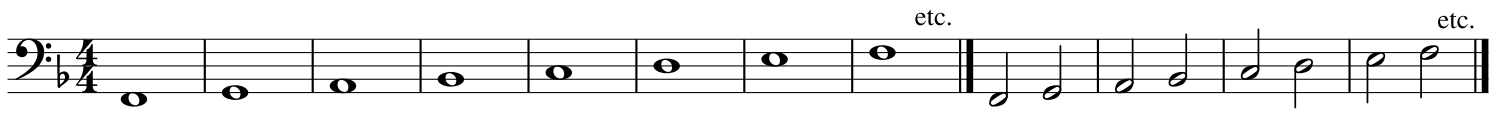
Practice with a variety of subdivisions, articulations, etc. as one would with scales.

# Practicing scales

Slow tempo - metronome suggested between 50-60 bpm

Wolfe

♩ = 50-60



ALWAYS use a metronome and a drone. Do not force the faster subdivisions, take care to pace yourself. Accuracy is always the goal, we must strive for accurate pitch, accurate time, and beautiful tone production.

Take time to explore bowing and articulation variation (see following page) as well as variations in dynamics and tone.

This same approach will also be applied to arpeggios.

# Bowings for scales

4/4 and 6/8 variations

Wolfe

The image displays 12 numbered musical examples of bowing variations for scales, arranged in three rows. Each example is written on a bass clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat).  
- Examples 1-4 are in 4/4 time. Each consists of two measures of an ascending scale. Above the notes are bowing symbols: squares (downbow) and inverted triangles (upbow).  
- Examples 5-8 are also in 4/4 time. Example 5 has two measures with bowing symbols. Example 6 has two measures with bowing symbols. Example 7 has two measures with bowing symbols. Example 8 has two measures with a slur over the entire scale.  
- Examples 9-12 are in 6/8 time. Each consists of two measures of an ascending scale. Example 9 has bowing symbols. Example 10 has bowing symbols. Example 11 has bowing symbols. Example 12 has a slur over the entire scale.

These are only a few examples of bowing variations which the student can use when practicing, applicable to any scale or mode. Each measure should be applied to the entire scale, ascending and descending, in which ever number of octaves the student is currently practicing, starting at a slow tempo and gradually increasing in tempo as the student progresses.

Many method books and etude books contain many more variations like these, including rhythmic alterations (dotted eighth-sixteenth). For more examples, the student may look at Simandl pages 69 and 70, Hrabě etude #45, and others.

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# Scale variations

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**3rds** a. b. c.

etc. etc. etc.

**4ths** a. b. c.

etc. etc. etc.

**5ths** a. b. c.

etc. etc. etc.

**6ths** a. b. c.

etc. etc. etc.

**7ths** a. b. c.

etc. etc. etc.

# Modes of Major

within the same key signature (relative)

Wolfe

Ionian (major scale) Dorian




Phrygian Lydian



Mixolydian Aeolian (natural minor scale)



Locrian Ionian (major scale)



The modes of the major scale should be practiced not only with the rhythm provided on this page, but also in a similar fashion to the interval variations on the previous page (uninterrupted running 16th notes).

Modes of the major scale spelled out, as relating to parallel major scale (beginning on the same starting pitch):

Ionian:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Dorian:	1	2	b3	4	5	6	b7
Phrygian:	1	b2	b3	4	5	b6	b7
Lydian:	1	2	3	#4	5	6	7
Mixolydian:	1	2	3	4	5	6	b7
Aeolian:	1	2	b3	4	5	b6	b7
Locrian:	1	b2	b3	4	b5	b6	b7

Parallel modes of major can be played in the following order, which not only moves one note at a time, but also moves key signatures through the cycle.

Lydian:	1	2	3	#4	5	6	7
Ionian:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mixolydian:	1	2	3	4	5	6	b7
Dorian:	1	2	b3	4	5	6	b7
Aeolian:	1	2	b3	4	5	b6	b7
Phrygian:	1	b2	b3	4	5	b6	b7
Locrian:	1	b2	b3	4	b5	b6	b7

# Modes of Major

Parallel relationship - with accidentals

Wolfe

Ionian

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Dorian

1 2 b3 4 5 6 b7

Phrygian

1 b2 b3 4 5 b6 b7

Lydian

1 2 3 #4 5 6 7

Mixolydian

1 2 3 4 5 6 b7

Aeolian

1 2 b3 4 5 b6 b7

Locrian

1 b2 b3 4 b5 b6 b7



# Modes of Major

Parallel relationships - key signatures by cycle

Wolfe

Lydian

1 2 3 #4 5 6 7

Ionian

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Mixolydian

1 2 3 4 5 6 b7

Dorian

1 2 b3 4 5 6 b7

Aeolian

1 2 b3 4 5 b6 b7

Phrygian

1 b2 b3 4 5 b6 b7

Locrian

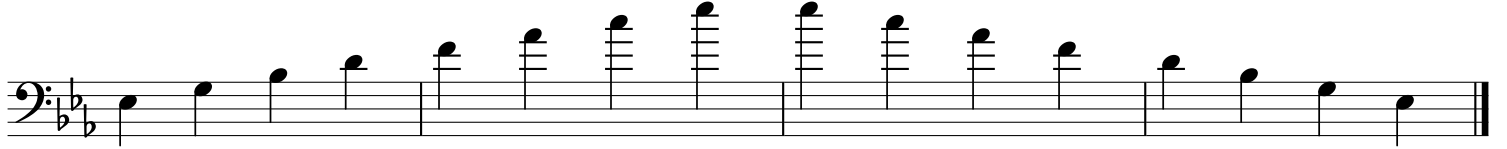
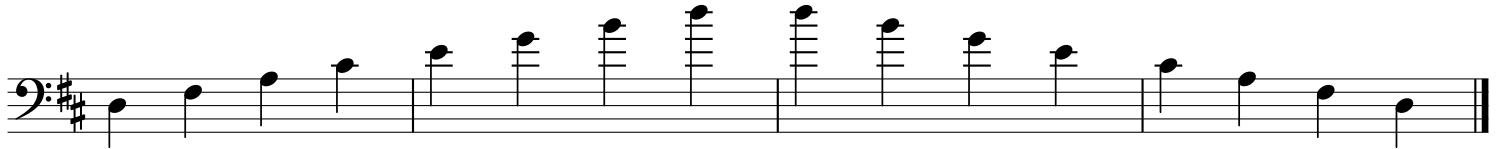
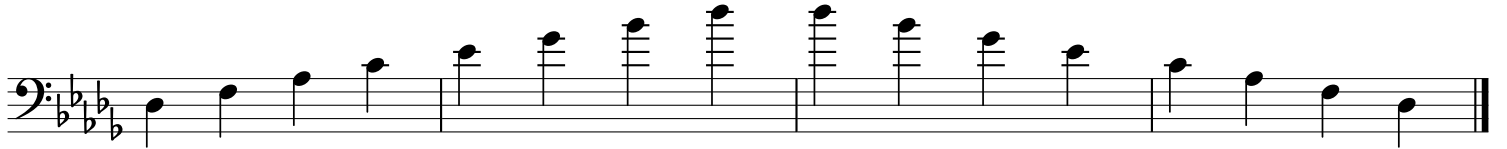
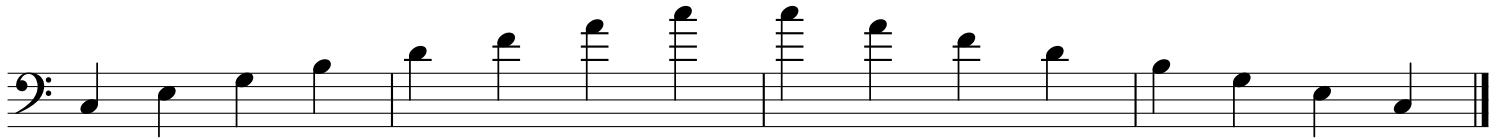
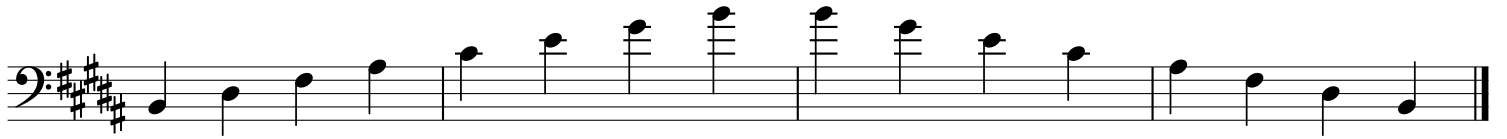
1 b2 b3 4 b5 b6 b7

# Major 13th Arpeggios

Ascending chromatically

Wolfe

root 3rd 5th 7th 9th 11th 13th root



Modes of the major scale spelled out as 13th arpeggios, relating to parallel major 13th arpeggio (beginning on the same starting pitch):

Ionian:	1	3	5	7	9	11	13
Dorian:	1	b3	5	b7	9	11	13
Phrygian:	1	b3	5	b7	b9	11	b13
Lydian:	1	3	5	7	9	#11	13
Mixolydian:	1	3	5	b7	9	11	13
Aeolian:	1	b3	5	b7	9	11	b13
Locrian:	1	b3	b5	b7	b9	11	b13

Parallel modes of major can be played in the following order, which not only moves one note at a time, but also moves key signatures through the cycle.

Lydian:	1	3	5	7	9	#11	13
Ionian:	1	3	5	7	9	11	13
Mixolydian:	1	3	5	b7	9	11	13
Dorian:	1	b3	5	b7	9	11	13
Aeolian:	1	b3	5	b7	9	11	b13
Phrygian:	1	b3	5	b7	b9	11	b13
Locrian:	1	b3	b5	b7	b9	11	b13

# 13th Arpeggios

parallel modes of the major scale

Wolfe

Ionian (major)                      Dorian

1 3 5 7 9 11 13 15      1 b3 5 b7 9 11 13 15

Phrygian                      Lydian

1 b3 5 b7 b9 11 b13 15      1 3 5 7 9 #11 13 15

Mixolydian                      Aeolian (nat. minor)

1 3 5 b7 9 11 13 15      1 b3 5 b7 9 11 b13 15

Locrian                      Ionian (major)

1 b3 b5 b7 b9 11 b13 15      1 3 5 7 9 11 13 15