



# MINOR

KEYS | PROGRESSIONS | SOLOING



## All Things Minor

MINOR - The other world of harmony. Think of it as the darker, more harmonically richer brother of major.

Some things are the same – but a few things are different.

Let's talk about some of the differences in this wonderful world of minor.

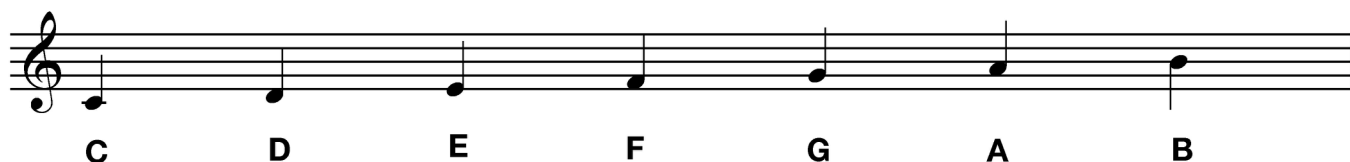
To get started let's talk about scales...

What makes a scale, any scale, minor? The answer: the flatted 3<sup>rd</sup>.

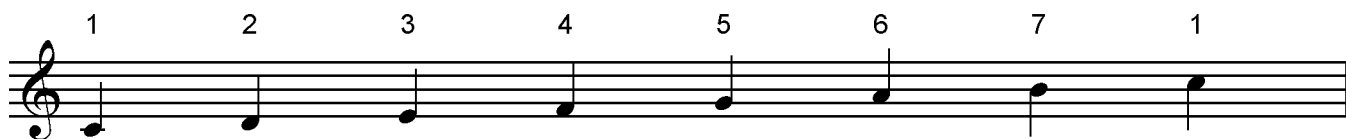
Don't look at any other step of the scale yet, just look at the 3<sup>rd</sup> step. Is it minor? Is it flatted from the traditional major scale 3<sup>rd</sup> step. If so, then you have a "minor" scale.

There are several different types of minor scales – some that are modal and a few important others.

Here is a C Major scale...



Or, if you think of it as numbers it would look like this...



Now, think of it as a number line extending in each direction - which is truly what a scale is. A scale isn't just seven pitches – it's a collection of those 7 pitches extended over every octave.



The major scale is a small portion of a much larger collection of the same notes.

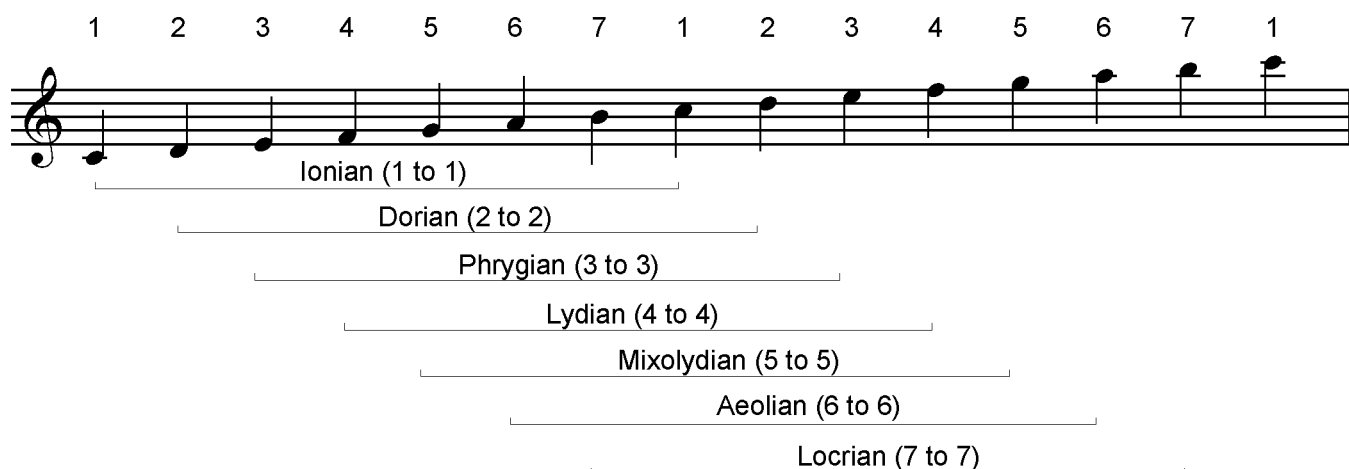
# Minor Scales: Modes

A mode takes an octave range of notes and adjusts it within the key so that the starting and ending note are different. So, instead of going from C to C as in the case of a one octave C major scale, you could also go from D to D, or from E to E. Keep in mind; you are still in the key of C. You are simply shifting over the starting and ending notes of a one-octave scale.

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When you do this, seven different scales, called modes, are derived all sharing the same key signature. Each of these seven modes has a unique name.

Here is a chart with these seven modes and their names.



Another way to think about the relationship between modes and a related key is this.

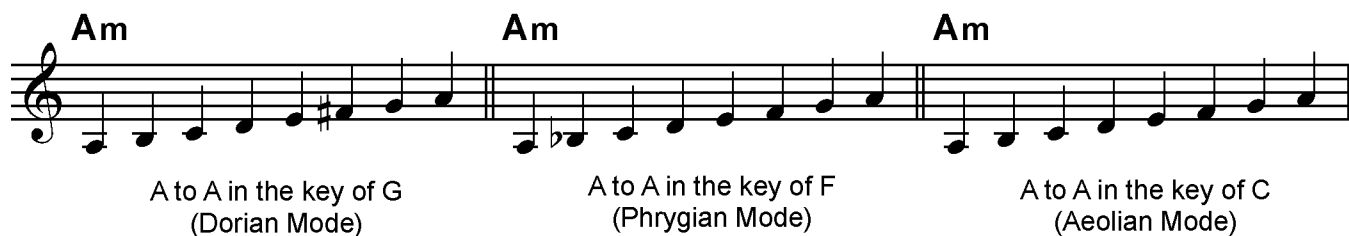
The <b>Ionian</b> mode starts/ends on the...	<b>1st</b> step of the key.	In C, going from C to C.
The <b>Dorian</b> mode starts/ends on the...	<b>2nd</b> step of the key.	In C, going from D to D.
The <b>Phrygian</b> mode starts/ends on the...	<b>3rd</b> step of the key.	In C, going from E to E.
The <b>Lydian</b> mode starts/ends on the...	<b>4th</b> step of the key.	In C, going from F to F.
The <b>Mixolydian</b> mode starts/ends on the...	<b>5th</b> step of the key.	In C, going from G to G.
The <b>Aeolian</b> mode starts/ends on the...	<b>6th</b> step of the key.	In C, going from A to A.
The <b>Locrian</b> mode starts/ends on the...	<b>7th</b> step of the key.	In C, going from B to B.

Modes that sound "minor" are the ones built off of the 2nd, 3rd, and 6th scale steps - the Dorian, Phrygian, and Aeolian.

So, let's say you need to solo over an Am chord and you're looking for some new ways to create fresh sounds. Well, an Am chord appears in three different keys - the keys of G, F, and C. So, if you were soloing in Am, then you have three different minor modes as possible choices to solo over.

- "A" Dorian = From A to A in the key of G.
- "A" Phrygian = From A to A in the key of F.
- "A" Aeolian = From A to A in the key of C.

Notice that each of these modes contains the main tones of an Am chord which are A-C-E. But each mode has a slightly different overall sound because of the other notes in the key involved.

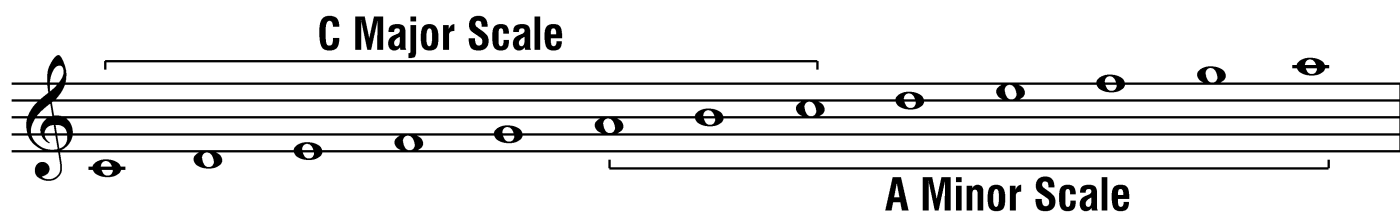


So, to sum up, mentally switching your soloing from the framework of licks and pentatonic patterns to looking at a chord and relating it to a variety of different modes can bring about some unexpected and creative sounds in your playing.

## Minor Scales: Natural, Harmonic, Melodic

So, looking modally we found three minor scales or modes – Dorian, Phrygian, Aeolian. But there are also three other minor scales that are good to know.

Let's first look at the NATURAL MINOR SCALE. This one is easy, it's just the same as the Aeolian mode.

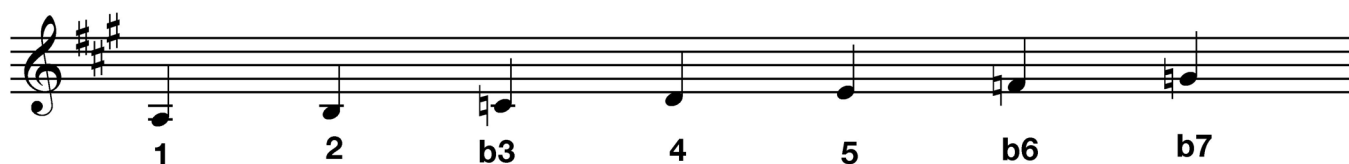


**In any key, if you start on the 6<sup>th</sup> step of the major scale you get the natural minor scale.**

Now, look at the same pitches but from the reference point of the root note – the key of A major.

### NATURAL MINOR SCALE

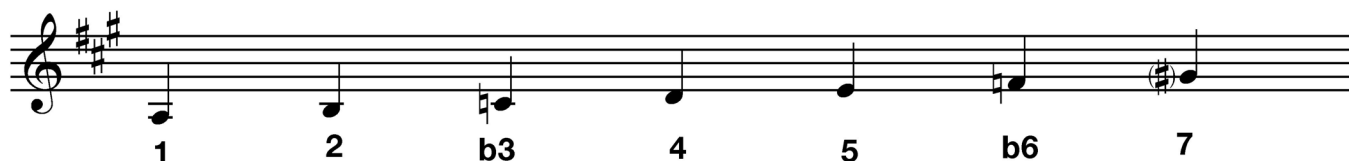
This would be the A Natural Minor Scale. (Notice the scale formula.)



## HARMONIC MINOR SCALE

To get the harmonic minor scale, only one note changes. Change the “G” to a “G#”

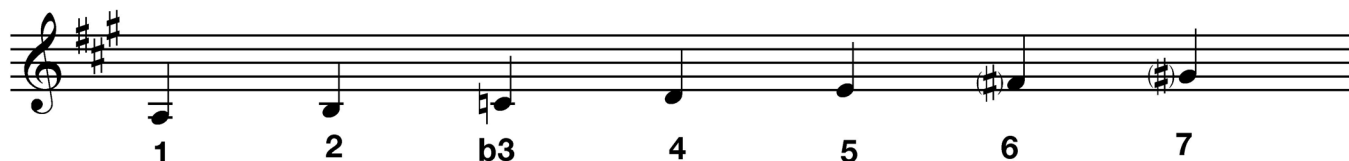
This is the A Harmonic Minor Scale. Note the wide (step and a half) interval between the “b6” and the “7”. This gives the harmonic minor scale a unique sound.



Harmonic minor scales are great for soloing over the “V” chord in a minor key. For example, to solo over an E7 in the key of Am, you could use the A harmonic minor scale.

## MELODIC MINOR SCALE

A melodic minor scale is the same as the major scale with the flatted 3<sup>rd</sup> step. You can think of it as a minor scale on the first half of the scale and a major scale for the last half.



In most modern guitar playing, you’ll hardly ever need to use this scale.

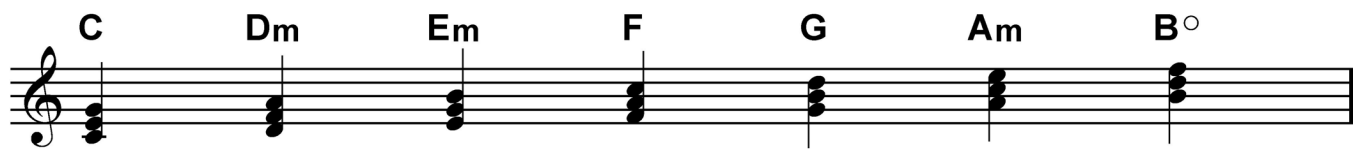
# What Minor Scales are Important?

- 1) Natural Minor Scale (Aeolian Mode)
- 2) Dorian Mode
- 3) Harmonic Minor Scale

Learn the minor modes and how they work – primarily the natural minor (Aeolian), and Dorian. And learn the harmonic minor scale. Don’t spend time working on the others. They are informative to know about but not of much practical use.

# Minor Chord Harmony

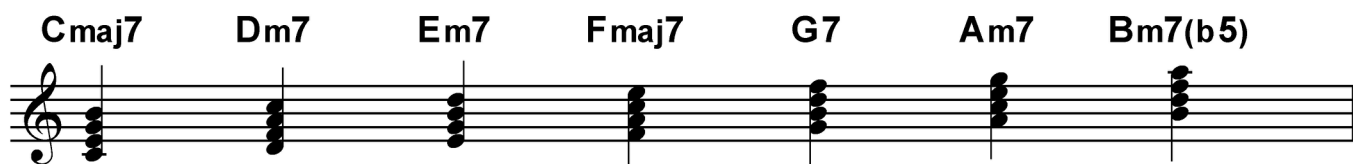
Now, let's apply some of these concepts to chords and harmony. To begin, think of the harmonized major scale and it's relationship of major, minor and diminished chords shown here in the key of C triads.



C Dm Em F G Am B°

I iim iiim IV V vim vii dim

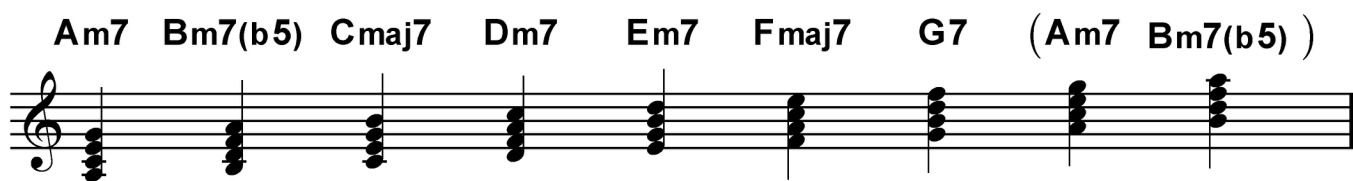
And, if extended to four note chords...



Cmaj7 Dm7 Em7 Fmaj7 G7 Am7 Bm7(b5)

I maj7 iim7 iiim7 IVmaj7 V7 vim7 viim7(b5)

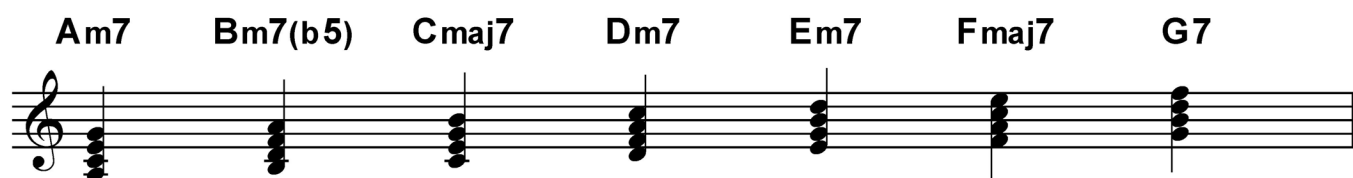
Just like our extended major scale, these chords can be extended in either direction...



Am7 Bm7(b5) Cmaj7 Dm7 Em7 Fmaj7 G7 (Am7 Bm7(b5))

vim7 viim7(b5) I maj7 iim7 iiim7 IVmaj7 V7 (vim7 viiim7(b5))

Now, think of these chords in relation to their root key of A. (These are the same chord relationships as shown in C major – just looking at them from the perspective of A.)



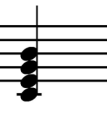
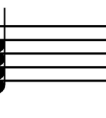
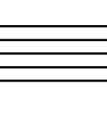

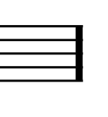


Am7 Bm7(b5) Cmaj7 Dm7 Em7 Fmaj7 G7

im7 iim7(b5) bIIIImaj7 ivm7 vm7 bVIImaj7 bVII7

Notice the orientation of chords – particularly the minor “V” chord. This creates a very modal sound.

Since, five chords (V) tend to want to sound major, if we change the five chord from minor to major we get this arrangement of chords.

<b>A<sup>m</sup>7</b>	<b>B<sup>m</sup>7(b5)</b>	<b>C<sup>ma</sup>7</b>	<b>D<sup>m</sup>7</b>	<b>E<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>F<sup>ma</sup>7</b>	<b>G<sup>7</sup></b>
						
<b>i<sup>m</sup>7</b>	<b>ii<sup>m</sup>7(b5)</b>	<b>bIII<sup>ma</sup>7</b>	<b>iv<sup>m</sup>7</b>	<b>V<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>bVI<sup>ma</sup>7</b>	<b>bVII<sup>7</sup></b>

This arrangement of chords is the standard flow of chords in a minor key.