

The Modes Of The Major Scale - Overview

There are seven modes of the major scale and each one has its own “mood”, or distinct sound. Knowing the modes gives you the ability to create various moods and textures. They also open the door to additional soloing options.

Modal playing is often thought as an abstract and mysterious entity, one that requires a black belt in music theory to understand. That is not true. You can be playing modally with just a little coaching and practice.

Utilizing the modes will generate interval structures that are different than the major scale and therefore produce unique sound qualities.

Each mode has its own unique sound or “mood” due to its unique interval structure. Some modes are more major sounding and some more minor sounding. My modal methodology requires that you first know your major scales. We will get to all seven modes through the major scales.

Think of the modes as being variations of the major scale. You will be starting on and emphasizing a note in the scale other than the root note.

There are seven notes in the major scale and each one corresponds with a different mode. So there are seven modes of the major scale and they always appear in this order: Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian, and Locrian. Memorize the mode names and their order. The order of the modes is very important.

Learn the major scales and how to link them as they are diagrammed out in the written lessons under “Major Scales”. Once you know your major scales you don’t have to learn a whole new set of scales for each mode. You will then know all the modes of the major scale because you will be using those same major scale shapes to play all the modes.

You will be starting on any of the six shapes on a note other than its root. Keep in mind it’s all about the mood or distinct sound of each mode - that’s the key, it’s all about the sounds.

Besides knowing your major scale, (Ionian Mode), get proficient with the Aeolian Mode, Dorian Mode, Lydian, and then Mixolydian mode. These modes are used most often in blues and rock and we will focus on them in the coming written lessons.

THE SEVEN MODES OF THE MAJOR SCALE

1st mode - **Ionian** (same as the Major scale)

2nd mode – **Dorian** (same as Aeolian but with a raised 6th)

3rd mode - **Phrygian** (same as Aeolian but with a b2nd)

4th mode – **Lydian** (same as Ionian but with a #4th)

5th mode – **Mixolydian** (same as Ionian but with a b7th)

6th mode – **Aeolian** (same as Natural Minor)

7th mode – **Locrian** (dissonant, same as Phrygian with a b5th)

KEY POINTS:

Think of the Modes simply as variations of the major scale.

Anytime you play a major scale and start on and emphasize a note other than the root, you are playing in the modes.

Each mode has its own unique sound or “mood” due to the unique interval structure of each mode.

Some modes are more major sounding and some more minor sounding.