

Music Modes

Here is the key of C major: C, D, E, F, G, A, B

In the "learning to improvise" lessons, we looked at how if we improvise using the first note of the scale, we get a major scale (or Ionian), and if we start on the sixth note of the scale, we get the minor (or Aeolian) scale. Now we are going to look at what happens if you begin a scale on the other notes of the scale.

Look at the chart below:

	Ionian	Dorian	Phrygian	Lydian	Mixolydian	Aeolian	Locrian
KEY	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
C	C	D	E	F	G	A	B
G	G	A	B	C	D	E	F#
D	D	E	F#	G	A	B	C#
A	A	B	C#	D	E	F#	G#
E	E	F#	G#	A	B	C#	D#
B	B	C#	D#	E	F#	G#	A#
F#	F#	G#	A#	B	C#	D#	E#
Db	Db	Eb	F	Gb	Ab	Bb	C
Ab	Ab	Bb	C	Db	Eb	F	G
Eb	Eb	F	G	Ab	Bb	C	D
Bb	Bb	C	D	Eb	F	G	A
F	F	G	A	Bb	C	D	E

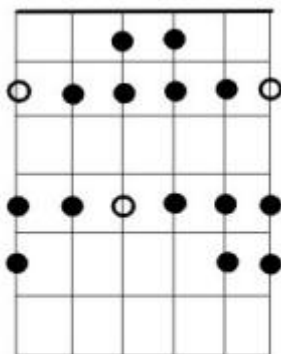
The chart shows every musical key, and the notes in the keys. Each note the key s given a number at the top, for example, the first note in the key of C is a C, and it is called the first (shown by the Roman numerals,) the second note, the D is the second, and so on. Each note is also given a name (above the numerals.) The first note of the scale is called the Ionian, the second the Dorian, and so on. We have already established that if you begin your scale on the Ionian note of the scale, you get a major sound. If you begin on the sixth note, the Aeolian, you get a minor sound.

The Dorian Mode

If we begin our scale on the second note of the key, we will play the Dorian mode. In the key of C major, the notes will be: D, E, F, G, A, B, C, or in chord form: Dm, Em, F, G, Am, Bdim, C. We have now created a different sound. The Dorian mode is a minor mode, and is similar to playing in the Aeolian mode, but with a slight sound difference. This mode is used in Latin/Latin rock songs a lot.

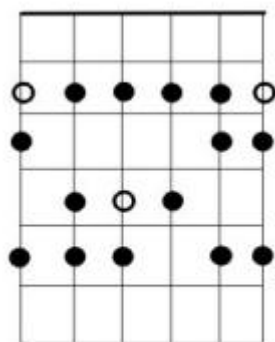
Remember, if you are playing in the Dorian starting on the D note, you are actually playing in the key of C. If I want to start on a C note, but play the Dorian mode, you will be playing in the key of Bb.

Here is the guitar chart for this mode:



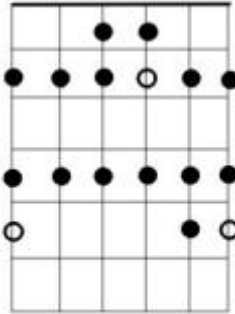
The Phrygian Mode

If we begin our scale on the third note of the scale, we are playing in the Phrygian mode. The notes in the key of C will be: E, F, G, A, B, C, D. It is another minor mode. The Phrygian mode creates a Spanish sound, especially when you go between the first two note, or chords, of the mode.



The Lydian Mode

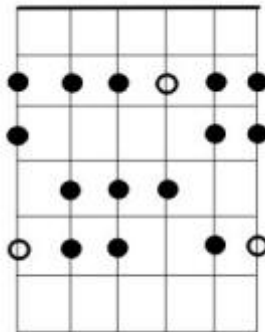
Beginning on the fourth note of the major key gives us the Lydian mode, which in the key of C major goes: F, G, A, B, C, D, E. It is a major mode, similar to the major (Ionian) mode.



The Mixolydian Mode

The Mixolydian mode begins on the fifth note of the scale, so in the key of C major, the notes are:

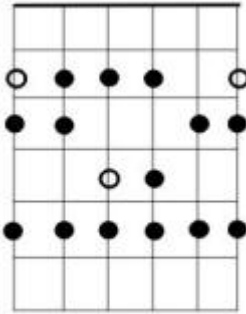
G, A, B, C, D, E, F. It is also a major mode. This mode is often used instead of the minor pentatonic in rock and blues songs.



The Locrian Mode

The Last of the modes to look at is the Locrian mode. It is unusual, because it is not a minor or major mode, but a diminished mode. In the key of C major, the notes are: B, C, D, E, F, G, A

It has quite a odd sound to it - try this pattern:



This has been a quick introduction to the modes of music. In the key of C, no matter which note I begin on in the scale, I will still be in the key of C major. At the same time as being in the key of C major, I will also be in the key of D Dorian, E Phrygian, and so on. Beginning on different notes of the key can give us different sounds, but we will still be playing in the same major (and minor) key.

