

Joe's Lessons

Playing Lead: Working with Scale Formulas

Scale formulas are ways to play the scale according to different starting places on the fret board. Use scale formulas to locate where to hold your hand on the fret board. For each "scale-formula" you learn: The 'root note' (starting note for each scale) will be in a different place. This lets you play the same scale in different places on the fret board for added interest (to both you and your listener). Because the root notes' positions change for each 'formula': The 'hammering'¹ note-combinations also change (this is why many favor the "Open G Formula" for major scales and the "Open C Formula" for minor scales even though you can use either formula for both major and minor scales).

Once you learn a formula at one place on the fret board, you can move your 'famous-hand' up and down the fret board locating the desired scale by placing your hand so that the root for the formula matches the root note on the fret board - (for example, put your root finger for a formula on a "C" note to play the "C" scale). Each scale formula actually represents two scales: A major scale and that scale's "relative minor"² scale; so, when you learn the formula once you actually learn how to play: all 12 major scales and all 12 minor scales using that one formula.

To play lead, put your 'famous-hand' in position on the fret board (so that your formula's root finger(s) match the scale's root name on the fret board). Then, with your 'strumming-hand' in tempo, you may safely play any of the notes represented in the scale-formula you are using. Use any song to practice your scales in a fun way, and when the song ends, try improvising some lead on your own. It takes practice, but you can make practice fun by remembering to stay in tempo. Do not practice with just one hand, make sure your fun hand also gets practice by setting the tempo. As you practice the scales your brain will learn to correlate your 2 hands with the tones and your ear will start dictating your melody lines. **This is why it is so important to make sure that your guitar is in tune at all times when you play.**

¹ **Hammering** - a technique where your 'fun-hand' plucks a string once - playing a note held down by your #1 finger and then 'hammers' the #3 finger down (or any other finger) playing a second note without plucking a 2nd time.

² **Relative Minor** - Every major chord and every major scale has a corresponding "relative minor" chord or scale. They both have the same notes, but in a different order (i.e.... they are inversions of each other). So, while we use the same fingering for the 'C' major and it's relative minor 'Ami' scale, we start the 'C' scale from a 'C' note and we start the 'A Minor' scale from an 'A' note. To find a note's relative minor: Put your #4 finger on the fret board at Major's root note, then look at the fret that your #1 finger would play this is the corresponding Relative Minor('s root). EASY!

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The Open 'G' Scale Formula

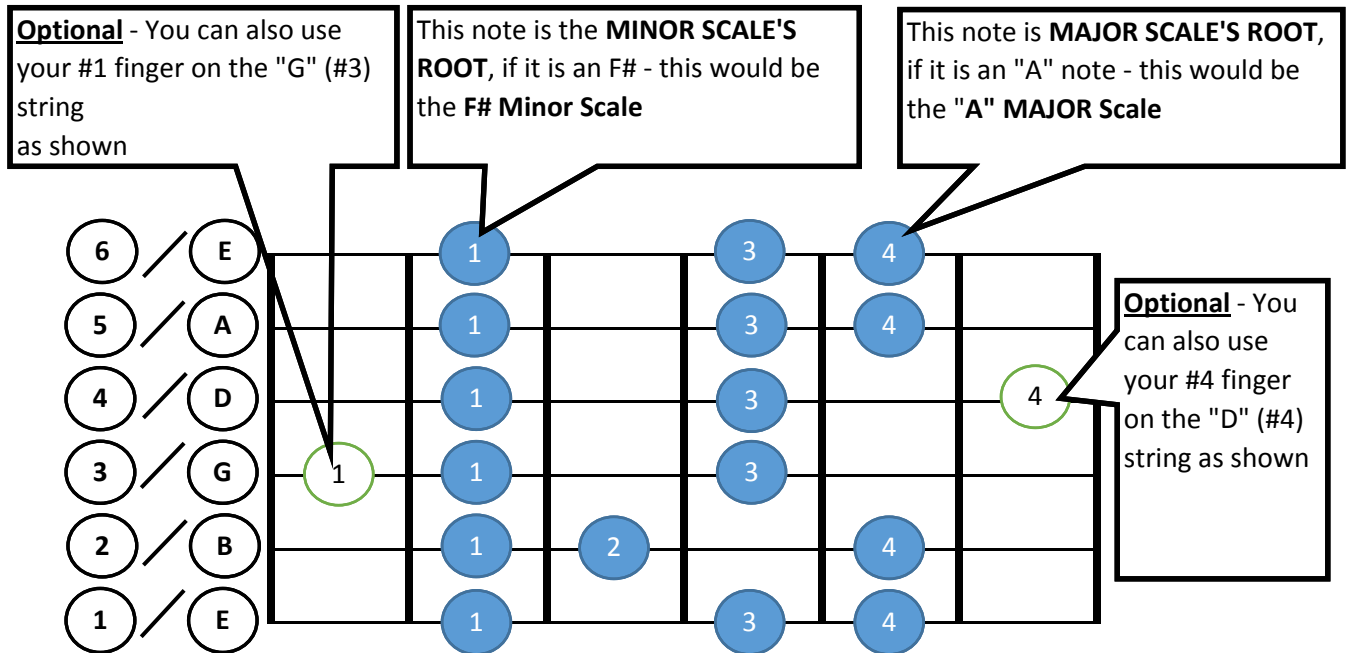
The Open 'G' Scale Formula is an easy way to learn how to play lead guitar. Because it contains the Root Chord arranged so conveniently by simply barring your #1 finger pressing the ('B, G', D') strings at once (the root is the note played on the "G" string), I like to use this formula to embellish my chord playing by adding lead and bass notes directly from the scale formula.

The Major Scale's Root is located by finding the desired scale's root note with your #4 finger on either "E" (#1 & #6) string. For example if your #4 finger is at the 5th fret (as below) the corresponding note on the "E" (#1) string would be an "A" note so this would be the "A Major Scale".

To play in the "A" major scale (key), move your #4 finger to any "A" note on the "E" #6 or #1) string.

To play in the "A" Minor scale (key), move your #1 finger to any "A" note on the "E" (#6 or #1) string.

The Relative Minor Scale's Root is located by finding the desired scale's root note with your #1 finger on either "E" (#1 & #6) string. For example if your #1 finger is at the 2nd fret (as below) the corresponding note on the "E" (#1) string would be an "F#" note so this would also be the "F# Minor Scale". **(This is an easy way to find every major's relative minor, put your pinky (#4) finger on the fret board at the root note and the relative minor will be found at the fret where your #1 finger would lie - this works no matter what string you use. - JJ)**



The diagram above is a mirror image of the guitar neck as played by a "righty". Notice the "A" (#5) and both "E" (#1 and #6) strings are exactly alike.

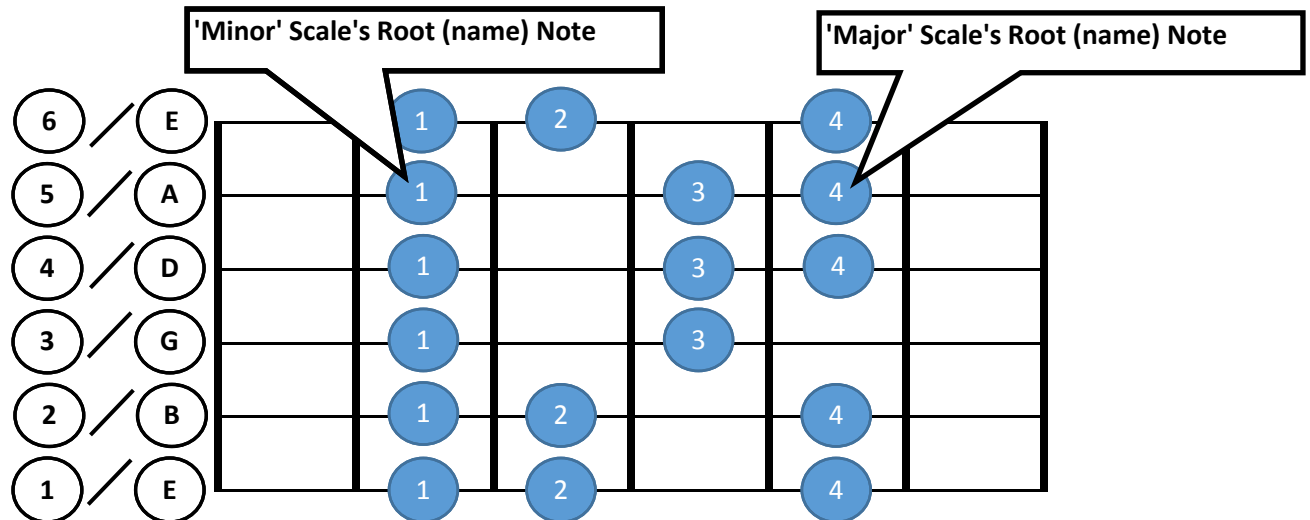
Rather than stretching my #4 finger on the "D(#4)" string, I prefer to play this note by sliding my #1 finger back one fret on the "G(#3) string. I like to use "slide transitions"¹ in my lead and using my #1 finger on the "G" (#3) string is a lot easier than stretching my #4 finger on the "D" (#4) string.

¹**Slide Transitions** - Slide = do not lift your hand from the fret board while Transitioning (= moving your hand in either direction up or down the fret board).

The Open 'C' Scale Formula

The Open 'C' Scale Formula is very similar to the "Open 'G' Scale Formula". It is actually a little easier to play since you do not have to worry about the Optional notes (Sliding the #1 finger back or the extending the #4 finger further out). The Major Scale Root note is still the #4 finger but on the 'A' (#5) string, the Minor Scale Root note is where you would expect - at the #1 finger again on the 'A' string.

I like to begin by using the Open 'C' Scale Formula when I am playing a song in a minor key, however, I still switch it up by using the Open 'G' Formula at some point. The more formulas you have at your disposal the more you can move your hand up and down the fret board - this keeps it interesting and gives you additional octaves to create your melody lines with.



Use the 'A' / '#5' string to find any Major or Minor Scale:

To find a Major Scale: Just slide your #4 finger to the Root (name) of the Major Scale you are looking for To find a

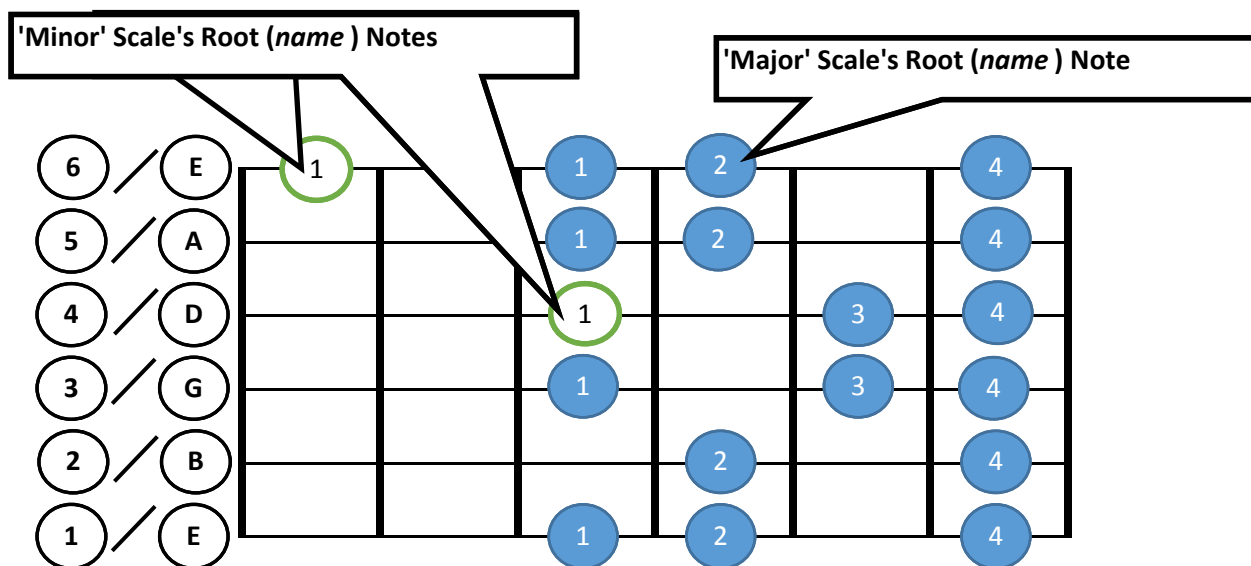
Major Scale: Just slide your #1 finger to the Root (name) of the Major Scale you are looking for

Then follow the Scale Formula above - JJ

Notice that 'B' string and both 'E' strings are played the same, and that the 'A' and 'D' strings are also the same. Notice that the 'hammering' opportunities include a lot of #1 - #2 combos as well as #1 - #3 combos.

The #2 Finger Shuffle Formula

I call this formula the #2 Finger Shuffle Formula because the root is found with the #2 finger (on the Low E (#6) string) and because it is so easy to play Rock & Roll with this formula. Use your #2, #1 and #4 fingers to play the notes of the major chords. I use this formula mostly for Major Scales.



Use either 'E' string to find any Major Scale:

Just slide your #2 finger to the Root (name) of the Major Scale you are looking for and follow the formula above.

For Minor scales - Slide your #1 finger to the Root of the Minor scale you are looking for then slide your hand up two more frets and follow the formula above. ("Once you are comfortable with finding the notes on the fretboard you can find the Minor root on the 'D' string, also shown above, to begin your Minor scale in this formula." Need help? "Joe's Lessons - Extras Folder") - JJ