

Modes of the Major Scale

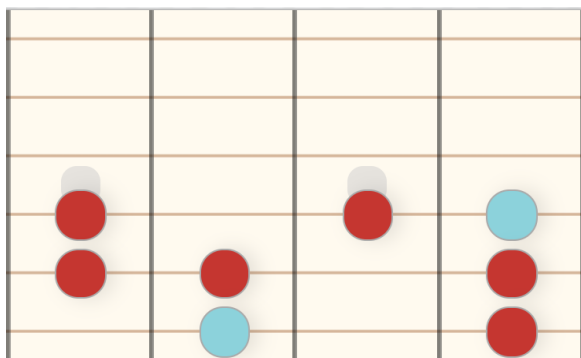
A **mode** is a scale defined by its relationship to another scale. Modes share all of the same notes with their parent scales, but differ in their tonic/root note. Every scale has modes, and the major scale has seven—one for every note in the scale.

To derive each mode, play the parent major scale starting from the scale degree that corresponds with its mode number:

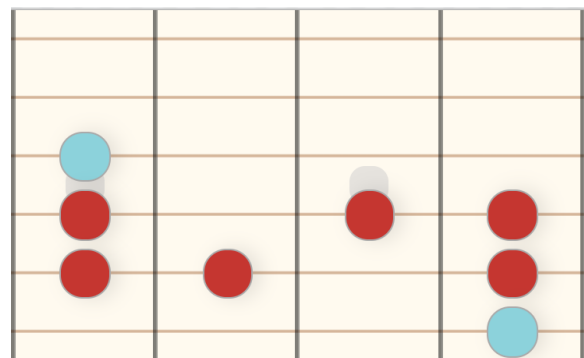
1. Ionian: The major scale starting from scale degree 1 (the ionian mode is synonymous with the major scale)
2. Dorian: The major scale starting from scale degree 2
3. Phrygian: The major scale starting from scale degree 3
4. Lydian: The major scale starting from scale degree 4
5. Mixolydian: The major scale starting from scale degree 5
6. Aeolian: The major scale starting from scale degree 6
7. Locrian: The major scale starting from scale degree 7

Below are the seven one-octave modes of the C Major scale in 7th position. Blue dots represent roots:

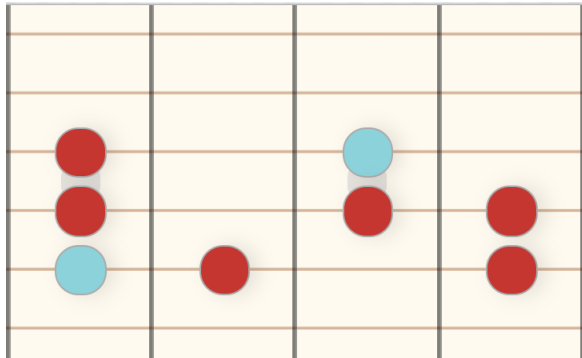
C Ionian (Major)



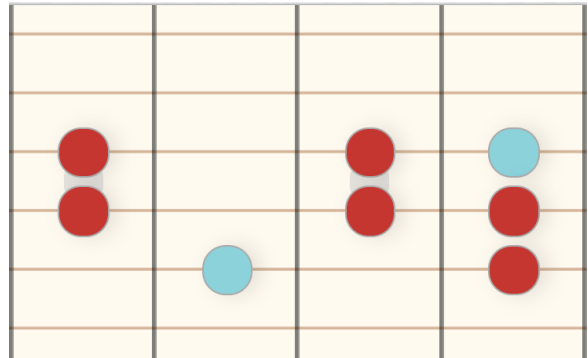
D Dorian



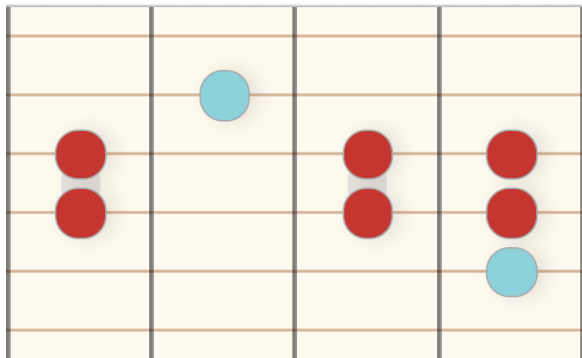
E Phrygian



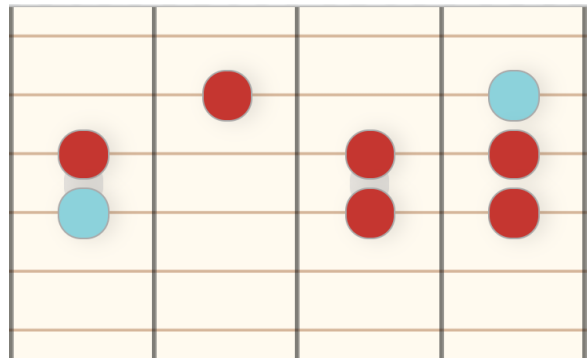
F Lydian



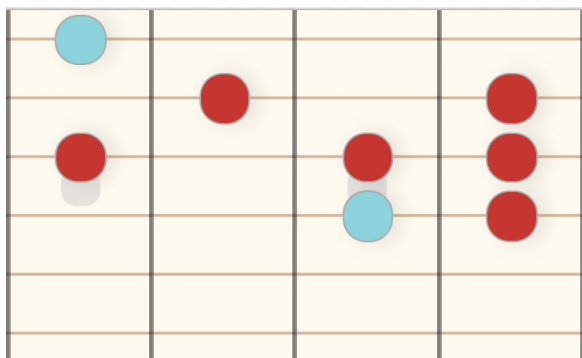
G Mixolydian



A Aeolian (Natural Minor)



B Locrian

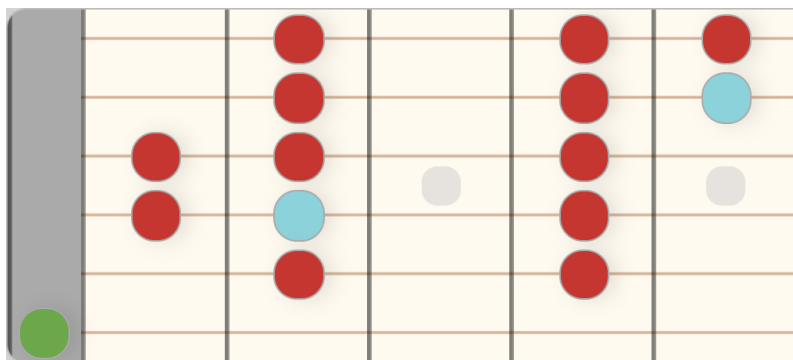


It is most helpful to learn the modes as they relate to the major scale:

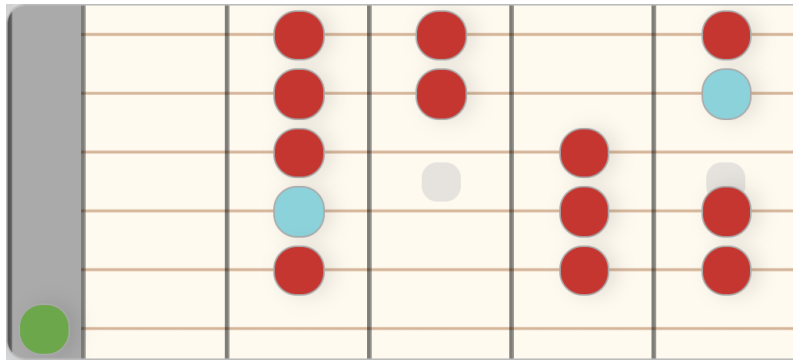
Mode 1	Ionian	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Mode 2	Dorian	1	2	b 3	4	5	6	b 7
Mode 3	Phrygian	1	b 2	b 3	4	5	b 6	b 7
Mode 4	Lydian	1	2	3	#4	5	6	7
Mode 5	Mixolydian	1	2	3	4	5	6	b 7
Mode 6	Aeolian	1	2	b 3	4	5	b 6	b 7
Mode 7	Locrian	1	b 2	b 3	4	b 5	b 6	b 7

To learn the modes as absolutes, play each mode in one key (in this case, E Major) and use the low open E pedal to establish pitch centricity:

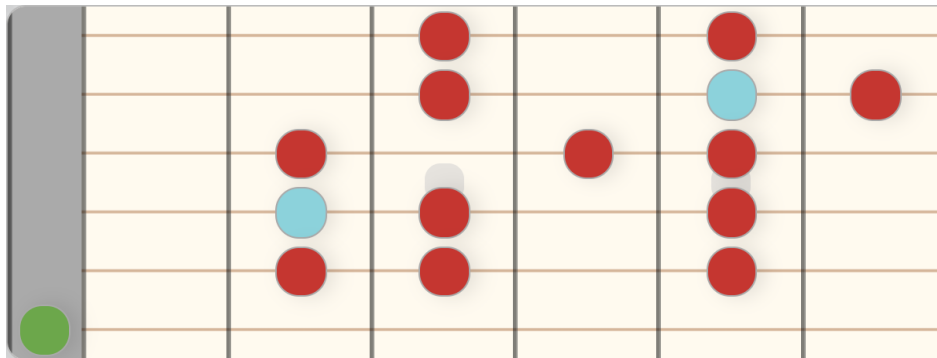
E Ionian



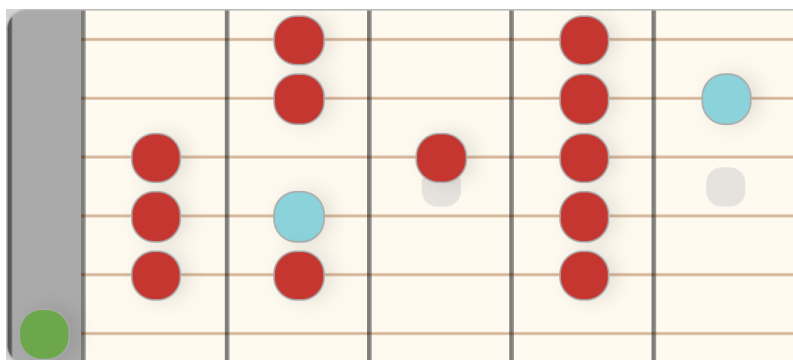
E Dorian



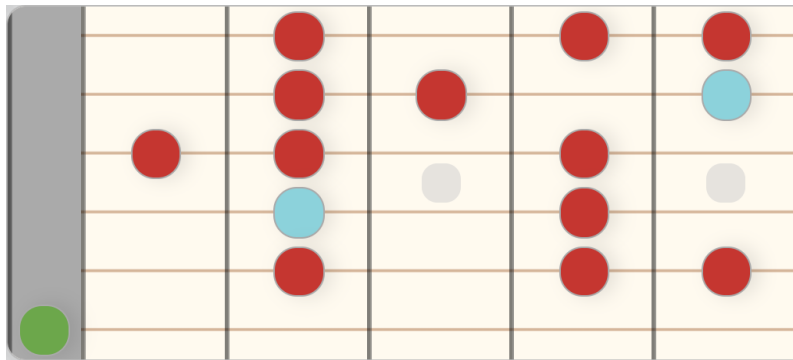
E Phrygian



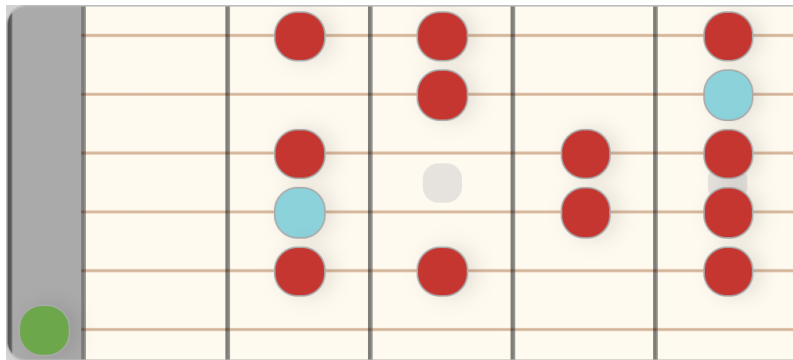
E Lydian



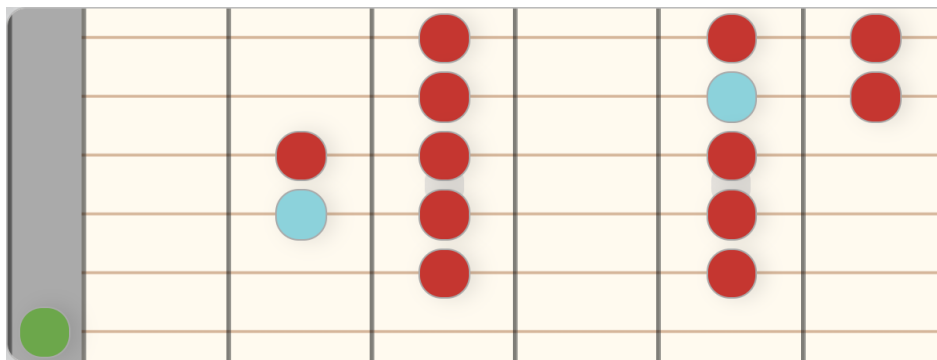
E Mixolydian



E Aeolian



E Locrian



Remember that each of these scales uses the same shapes as the major scale (think CAGED), since they share all of the same notes. They are only different in the perceived pitch center.

Modes are helpful in improvising melodies over chord changes. Use the modes over the following chords when constructing your own solos:

1. Ionian: major chords
2. Dorian: predominant minor chords
3. Phrygian: iii chords
4. Lydian: major7 chords, IV chords
5. Mixolydian: dominant 7th chords
6. Aeolian: minor chords
7. Locrian: half-diminished 7 chords ($\emptyset 7$)