

Lesson 2 – Beginning Open Position C Major – Zone 1

Introduction

In this lesson, I introduce the C major scale, played in the open position, that is, up by the nut. I use open strings where possible. There are three variants of the scale that I wish to show, the M-L scale, the L-M scale and the extended scale. There are many more possibilities.

I also want to show three major triadic chord forms. The triads are all three note chords, and they are the most basic chords. Chords based on the I, IV and V notes of the major scale are the most basic chords of all. In this lesson, the C major, F major and G major chords are introduced.

Because degree I of the scale is found on the 2nd and 5th strings, I call this area of the fretboard zone 1. The rationale for this will become clearer over time, as we see C major done in five different but overlapping positions on the fingerboard in later lesson series.

This lesson will probably take an hour, but with a student who is already experienced, it should be half of an hour.

C Major Open Position Scales – Zone 1

The M-L scales are one octave scales with their starting tonic note closer to the nut than the octave note (also degree I). A partial M-L scale and a full M-L scale are shown below. These are both M-L form 5 major scales. The M-L form starting on the 2nd string is continued up the neck to make a full octave. The M-L form ending on the 5th string cannot be continued down the neck since the limit is the nut.

The notes, the degree of the scale and the left hand fingers used to fret the notes are shown. The frets are numbered down the left side.

Note that for the left hand fingering, the index finger is “i”, the middle finger is “m”, the ring finger is “r”, and the little finger is “l”. An unfretted string is open or “o”.

Zone 1 M-L C Major Scale Form 5 – low strings																	
Notes				Scale Degrees				Fingering									
String				String				String									
6	5	4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1
E	A				Nut	III	VI				Nut	o	o				Nut
F					1	IV					1	i					1
	B				2		VII				2		m				2
G	C				3	V	I				3	r	r				3

Zone 1 M-L C Major Scale Form 5 – high strings																			
Notes						Scale Degrees						Fingering							
String						String						String							
6	5	4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1		
				E	Nut					III	Nut					o	Nut		
				C	F	1				I	IV	1					i	i	1
						2						2							2
				D	G	3				II	V	3					r	i	3
						4						4							4
				A		5					VI	5						m	5
						6						6							6
				B		7					VII	7						r	7
				C		8					I	8						l	8

The L-M scales are one octave scales. In most positions, they start with the little finger, and end an octave higher with the middle finger. Here, since there are open strings, they start with the ring finger. Form 5 L-M scales have a degree I closest to the body on the 5th string and a degree I closest to the nut on the 2nd string.

Zone 1 L-M C Major Scale Form 5																	
Notes						Scale Degrees						Fingering					
String						String						String					
6	5	4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1
		D	G	B	Nut			II	V	VII	Nut			o	o	o	Nut
				C	1					I	1					i	1
		E	A		2			III	VI		2			m	m		2
	C	F			3		I	IV			3		r	r			3

The extended scales go across the width of the neck. The 5th form scales have tonic notes on 5th and 2nd strings.

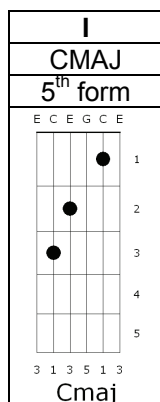
The extended scale for C major in zone 5 shows all of the notes in a band or a zone with the tonic of the scale on the 5th string and the 2nd string, but the scale includes notes on all strings. A scale always starts on the tonic, so there are two partial scales and a full scale here.

Zone 1 Extended C Major Scale Form 5																	
Scale Degrees						Scale Degrees						Fingering					
String						String						String					
6	5	4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1	6	5	4	3	2	1
E	A	D	G	B	E	III	VI	II	V	VII	III	o	o	o	o	o	o
F				C	F	IV				I	IV	i				i	i
	B	E	A				VII	III	VI				m	m	m		
G	C	F		D	G	V	I	IV		II	V	r	r	r		r	r

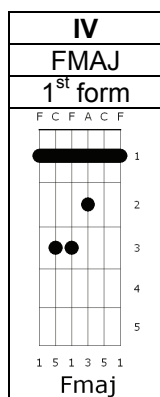
New Chord Shapes – 3 chords in C major

Note that on the chord charts, the root note of the chord is the same as the note on the degree of the scale, given as a roman numeral.

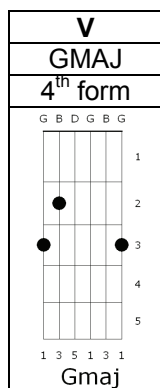
The C major chord is one of the first learned by guitarists. It is not the easiest chord, but will in time become easy. It is usually played with the index finger on the 1st string (numbering from the right), the middle finger on the 4th string, and the ring finger on the 5th string.



The F major chord is usually played by beginners with the 5th and 6th strings not used. This means that the index finger has to play both the 1st and 2nd strings. Using a finger to cover more than one string is called a bar. In this case, a partial bar. If you extend the index finger all the way across to cover the 6th string as well, you are playing a full bar. The middle finger plays the note on the 3rd string, the ring finger plays the note on the 5th string, and the little finger plays the note on the 4th string. Bar shapes are hard to do. Usually it takes many hours of playing to achieve a clean sound. However, these types of chords provide great flexibility in playing, as you can move them up and down the neck to make different chords.



The G major chord is also one of the first learned. It involves a good stretch of the hand. It is usually played with the ring finger on the 1st string, the middle finger on the 6th string, and the index finger on the 5th string.



Triads on major scale degrees I, IV, and V in C Major

In the following chart, the I, IV and V chords of C major are shown in order of ascending perfect fourths. Later on, the rationale for this will become

Chords on Scale Degree in Ascending Perfect Fourths			Scales
V	I	IV	Extended Scale
GMAJ 4 th form	CMAJ 5 th form	FMAJ 1 st form	
<p>Gmaj</p>	<p>Cmaj</p>	<p>Fmaj</p>	<p>C Major</p>

clear, but note that the chord forms go 4th, 5th, and 1st. This is not an accident, as the form numbering is meant to match the cycle of perfect fourths as it is found on a guitar tuned in standard tuning.

The scale actually starts on degree I, the C note on the 5th string and ends on degree I, the C note on the 2nd string. The other notes

before and after are partial scales.

Theory

Chord Formulas

All major triads have the following relationships amongst their notes:

Assume that there is a major scale built on the tonic note (degree I) of the chord. That is, the note that names the chord and the note that names the scale are the same. In the case of the C major chord, we would use a C major scale. In the case of the G major chord, we would use a G major scale, and so on. Do not worry about the fact that we are actually in the key of C major, and therefore are not using a G major scale. Now, in the C major scale, the I, III, and V degrees are C, E, and G. The musical interval between C and E is a major 3rd. It is a 3rd because there are three note names between C and E inclusive: C, D, and E. It is major because such an interval with five semitones is major. We can use identical logic for the G major chord, and the F major chord. The interval between C and G is a major 5th. It is a 5th because there are 5 note names between C and E inclusive: C, D, E, F and G. It is major because such an interval with seven semitones is major. We can use identical logic for the G major and the F major chord. In modern parlance, this is called the chord formula, and it is usually written as: 1, 3, 5. If you look at the preceding chord charts, at the bottom, you can see that 1, 3 and 5 appear, but are sometimes duplicated, and are not in order. This is permitted. The doubling of notes, or their re-ordering does not change the naming of the chord. Each different order of notes is called an inversion, by the way.

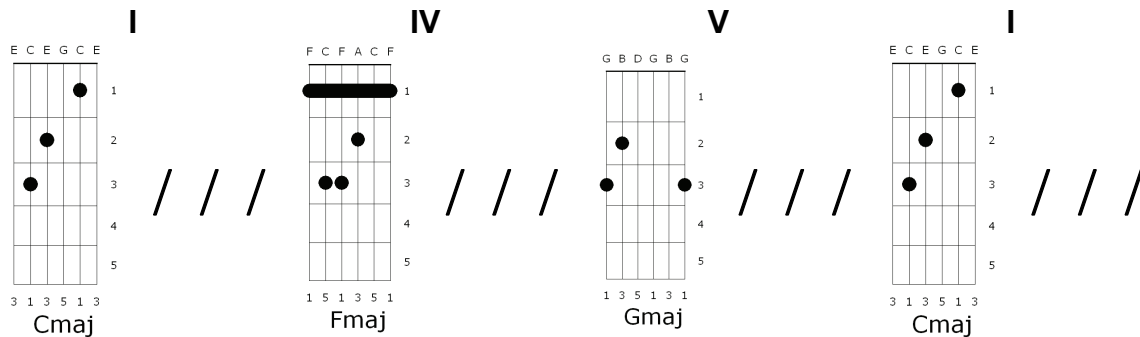
Chords on each degree of the scale

In the preceding charts, you can see that the I, IV and V degrees of the scale have a chord built on them. In this case, each is a major triadic chord. Also, each note of the chord is a note from the C major scale. This is not accidental. In the next and all subsequent lessons, we will continue this pattern for all degrees of the scale. For now, just remember that the I, IV and V degrees of the major scale have a chord built on top of them using the major chord formula of 1, 3, 5, in some inverted order.

Strumming Chords

4 /4 time

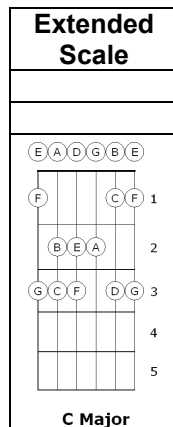
Play the following chord progressions at a slow tempo. Strum downwards from the 6th string to the 1st string, with four downward strums per chord. Strum on the chord symbol and once more for each forward slash. The four strums mean four beats and then a chord change. Give a little bit more emphasis to the 1st and 3rd strums. This is probably the most common rhythm.



Note that the progression of chords and their degrees is I major, IV major, V major and back to I major. This is a fundamental set of chords, and can be used to support many, many simple tunes.

Playing Scales

Starting at the C note on the 5th string, play this extended C major scale up to the G note on the 1st string. Then play it backwards to the open E note on the 6th string. Finish by playing it forwards again until the C note on the 5th string. Learn this pattern, and learn the names of the notes and the corresponding degrees of the scale. This is not a trivial bit of memorization for most people, but it is worth the effort.

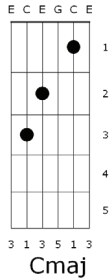


Practice Piece: She'll be Coming 'round the Mountain

The old children's song, She'll be Coming 'round the Mountain, is presented here, with lyrics and easy chords. Strum this.

Verse 1

She'll be

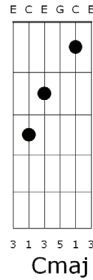


Cmaj

coming

/ / /

'round the mountain

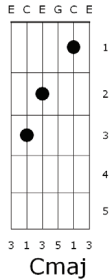


Cmaj

comes.

/ / /

She'll be

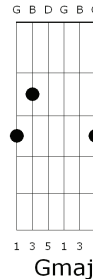


Cmaj

coming

/ / /

'round the mountain

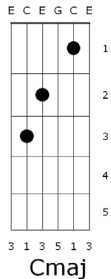


Gmaj

comes.

/ / /

She'll be

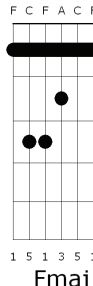


Cmaj

coming

/ / /

'round the mountain; She'll be

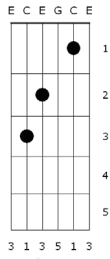


Fmaj

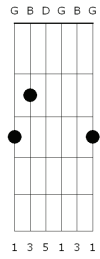
coming

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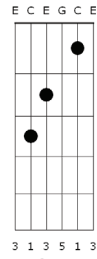
'round the mountain; She'll be



Cmaj



Gmaj



Cmaj

coming 'round the mountain when she comes.

Verse 2

She'll be driving six white horses when she comes
 She'll be driving six white horses when she comes
 She'll be driving six white horses
 She'll be driving six white horses
 She'll be driving six white horses when she comes

Verse 3

Oh, we'll all come out to meet her when she comes
 Oh, we'll all come out to meet her when she comes
 Oh, we'll all come out to meet her
 Oh, we'll all come out to meet her
 Oh, we'll all come out to meet her when she comes

Verse 4

We will kill the old red rooster when she comes
 We will kill the old red rooster when she comes
 We will kill the old red rooster we will kill the old red rooster
 We will kill the old red rooster when she comes

Verse 5

We'll all have chicken and gravy when she comes
 We'll all have chicken and gravy when she comes
 We'll all have chicken and gravy we'll all have chicken and gravy
 We'll all have chicken and gravy when she comes