

The Primary Triads in Minor Keys

As in the major keys (see Book 2, page 75), the most important triads of a minor key are built on the 1st, 4th and 5th scale degrees of the minor scale. They are called the **PRIMARY TRIADS** or primary chords of the key and are identified by the Roman numerals *i*, *iv* and *V*. These three triads contain every note of the minor scale.

A Harmonic Minor

A musical staff in bass clef showing the A Harmonic Minor scale. The notes are A, B, C, D, E, F, G# (labeled 7 (raised)), and A. Triads are indicated by Roman numerals below the staff: *i* (A minor) on A, B, C; *iv* (D minor) on D, F, A; and *V* (E Major) on E, G#, A. The scale degrees 2, 3, 6, and 8 are also labeled below the staff.

- Notice that the *i* and *iv* chords are minor chords because they consist of the root, a minor 3rd and a perfect 5th (see page 92).
- The *V* chord is a major triad, as in the major scale, because it consists of a root, major 3rd and perfect 5th. The G is sharpened because the A harmonic minor scale has the 7th raised a half step.

HARMONIC MINOR TRIAD SCALE

In the harmonic minor scale, triads built on the:

- 1st and 4th scale degrees are minor triads,
- 5th and 6th scale degrees are major triads,
- 2nd and 7th scale degrees are diminished triads (see page 93),
- 3rd scale degree is an augmented triad (see page 93).

Two musical staves showing the Harmonic Minor Triad Scale. The top staff is in treble clef and the bottom staff is in bass clef. Both staves show the same sequence of triads: *i* (Am), *ii°* (B°), *III+* (C+), *iv* (Dm), *V* (E), *VI* (F), *vii°* (G°), and *i* (Am). The notes for each triad are written on the staff lines.

Exercises

- 1** Build the primary triads for each minor scale by adding two notes to the 1st, 4th, and 5th notes of each scale to complete the triad. Use the harmonic minor scale (raised 7th). Name each triad.

E minor

A musical staff in treble clef for the E minor scale. The notes are E, F#, G, A, B, C, D, and E. Triads are indicated by Roman numerals below the staff: *i* (Em) on E, F#, G; *iv* (Am) on A, C, E; and *V* (B) on B, D, E.

E minor

A musical staff in bass clef for the E minor scale. The notes are E, F#, G, A, B, C, D, and E. Triads are indicated by Roman numerals below the staff: *i* (Em) on E, F#, G; *iv* (Am) on A, C, E; and *V* (B) on B, D, E.

D minor

A musical staff in treble clef for the D minor scale. The notes are D, E, F, G, A, Bb, C, and D. Triads are indicated by Roman numerals below the staff: *i* (Dm) on D, E, F; *iv* (Gm) on G, Bb, D; and *V* (A) on A, C, D.

D minor

A musical staff in bass clef for the D minor scale. The notes are D, E, F, G, A, Bb, C, and D. Triads are indicated by Roman numerals below the staff: *i* (Dm) on D, E, F; *iv* (Gm) on G, Bb, D; and *V* (A) on A, C, D.

Minor Chord Progressions

Because the i, iv and V triads contain all the notes of the harmonic minor scale, they can be used to accompany most simple melodies in minor keys. In many chord progressions, the V7 chord is used instead of the V triad.

Am Dm Am E E7 Am

i iv i V or V7 i

To make this minor chord progression sound smoother, the iv chord is moved to the 2nd inversion, and the V (or V7) chord is moved to the 1st inversion.

In the iv chord, the 5th (A) is moved down an octave.

In the V chord, the 3rd (G#) and 5th (B) are moved down an octave.

In the V7 chord, the 3rd (G#), 5th (E) and 7th (D) are moved down an octave.

2nd inversion
1 octave lower

iv iv^{6/4}

1st inversion
1 octave lower

V V⁶

1st inversion
1 octave lower

V7 V^{6/5}

The following positions are often used for smooth progressions. Notice there is a common tone between each chord.

Root Position 2nd Inversion Root Position 1st Inversion Root Position

i iv^{6/4} i V⁶ or V^{6/5} i

Remember, when a triad is not in root position (close position), the root is always the upper note of the interval of a 4th. When a V7 chord is not in root position (close position), the root is always the upper note of the interval of a 2nd.

Exercises

- Write the chords in root position in the key of E minor. Write the chord symbols for each above the staff.
- Rewrite the above chord progression to make it sound smoother. Add chord symbols.
- Write the chords in root position in the key of D minor. Write the chord symbols for each above the staff.
- Rewrite the above chord progression to make it sound smoother. Add chord symbols.

Em Am Em B B7 Em

i iv i V and V7 i

Em Am/E Em B/D# B7/D# Em

i iv^{6/4} i V⁶ and V^{6/5} i

Dm Gm Dm A A7 Dm

i iv i V and V7 i

Dm Gm/D Dm A/C# A7/C# Dm

i iv^{6/4} i V⁶ and V^{6/5} i

Modes Related to the Major Scale: Ionian, Mixolydian and Lydian

Just like a major or minor scale, a MODE is a scale of eight notes in alphabetical order. A mode can begin on any scale degree of a major scale using the key signature of the parent scale.

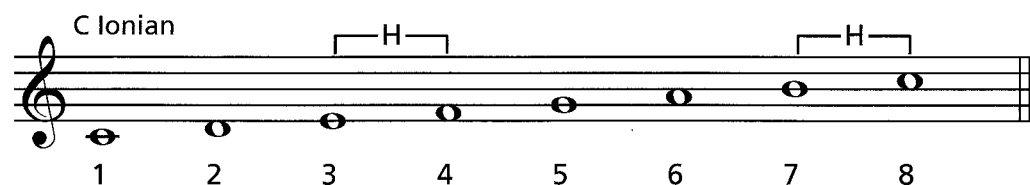
In the key of C, for example, a mode can begin and end on C (I), on D (ii), on E (iii), etc.—no sharps or flats would be used. There are seven modes altogether and each has a Greek name. In the key of C, the modes are:

Beginning on	C	—	Ionian mode (major scale)
	D	—	Dorian mode
	E	—	Phrygian mode
	F	—	Lydian mode
	G	—	Mixolydian mode
	A	—	Aeolian mode (natural minor scale)
	B	—	Locrian mode

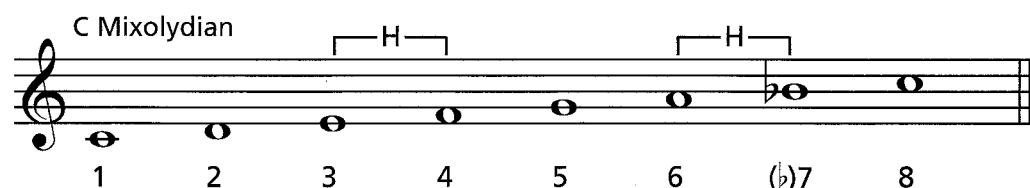
To easily learn how to build any mode on a keynote, it is helpful to relate the keynote to a major or natural minor scale with slight alterations.

The following three modes relate to the major scale. (H = half step.)

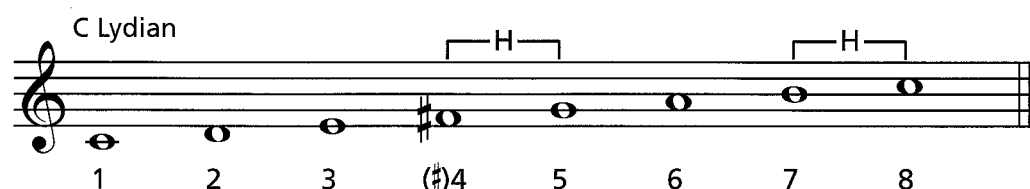
IONIAN MODE—
a major scale.



MIXOLYDIAN MODE—
a major scale with the
7th lowered a half step.



LYDIAN MODE—
a major scale with the
4th raised a half step.



Exercises

1 Fill in the missing notes in the following Ionian modes.

G Ionian



F Ionian



2 Fill in the missing notes in the following Mixolydian modes.

G Mixolydian



F Mixolydian



3 Fill in the missing notes in the following Lydian modes.

G Lydian



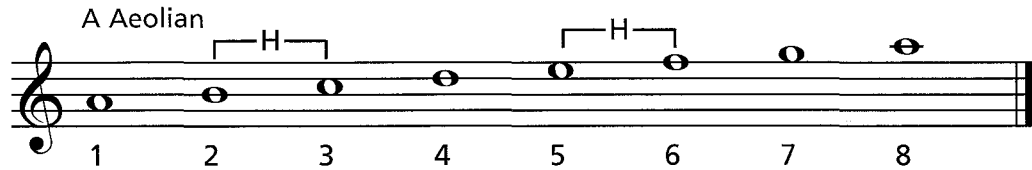
F Lydian



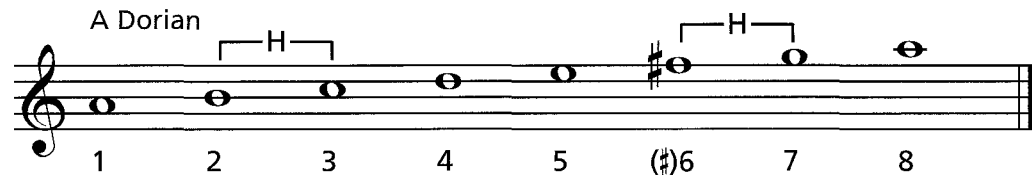
Modes Related to the Minor Scale: Aeolian, Dorian, Phrygian and Locrian

The following four modes relate to the natural minor scale.

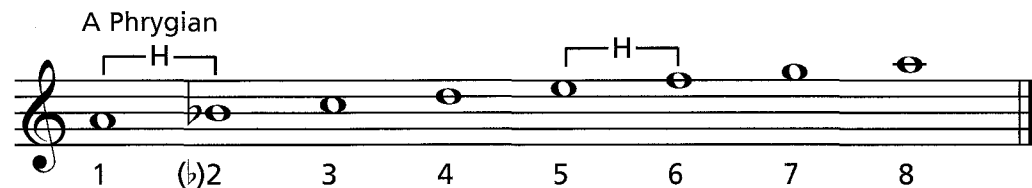
AEOLIAN MODE—
a natural minor scale.



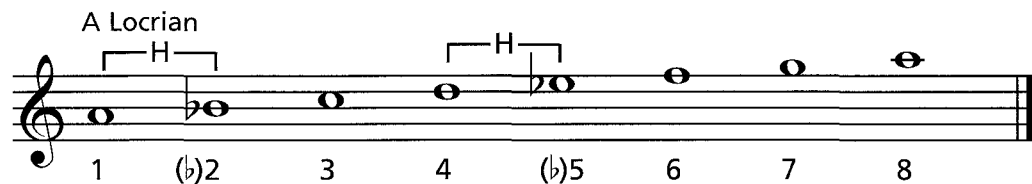
DORIAN MODE—
a natural minor scale with
the **6th raised** a half step.



PHRYGIAN MODE—
a natural minor scale with
the **2nd lowered** a half step.



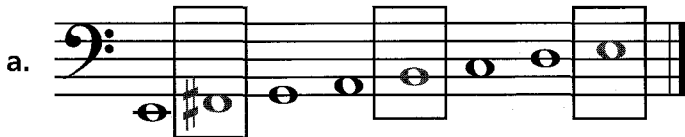
LOCRIAN MODE—
a natural minor scale with
the **2nd and 5th lowered** a
half step. This mode was
not used in ancient times
and is only occasionally
used in modern music.



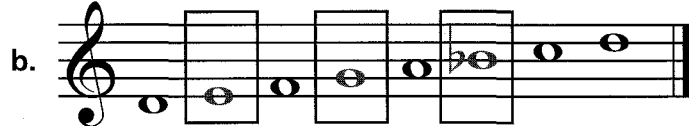
Exercises

1 Fill in the missing notes in the following aeolian modes.

E Aeolian

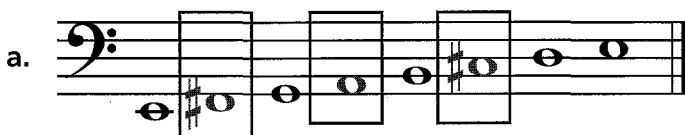


D Aeolian

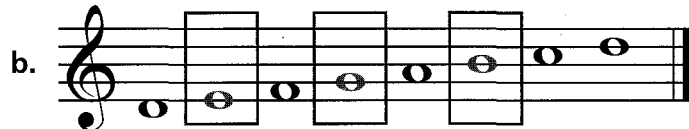


2 Fill in the missing notes in the following dorian modes.

E Dorian

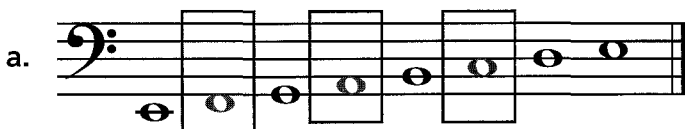


D Dorian



3 Fill in the missing notes in the following phrygian modes.

E Phrygian



D Phrygian



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Examples:

1 Play Example 1, right.

2

i iv V7 i V7 i

In Examples 3-6 you will play 2 scales each for letters a-e. The first scale will be major in Examples 3 and 4 and minor in Examples 5 and 6. If a scale contains a note in brackets [], first play the scale using the letter name indicated above the bracketed note and then play the scale a 2nd time using the actual note.

3

Play a major (or ionian) scale followed by a mixolydian scale (Example 3, right).

a. M

b. b7

c. b7

d. M

e. b7

4

Play a major scale followed by a lydian scale (Example 4, above).

a. M

b. #4

c. M

d. #4

e. #4

5

Play a natural minor (or aeolian) scale followed by a dorian scale (Example 5, above).

a. m

b. #6

c. #6

d. m

e. #6

6

Play a natural minor scale followed by a phrygian scale (Example 6, above).

a. m

b. b2

c. m

d. b2

e. b2

Track 14

1 Listen to the chord progression in A minor with all the chords in root position.

Am Dm Am E7 Am

Track 15

2 You will hear i, iv and V7 root position chords in the key of A minor. Write the Roman numerals for the missing chords on the lines. The example will be played twice.

i iv V7 i V7 i

Track 16

3 Listen to a major (or ionian) scale followed by a mixolydian scale. Listen for the lowered 7th in the mixolydian scale.

C Major (Ionian)

C Mixolydian

The 1st scale in each example is major. Write whether the 2nd scale is major (M) or mixolydian (b7).

a. M b. b7 c. b7 d. M e. b7

Track 17

4 Listen to a major scale followed by a lydian scale. Listen for the raised 4th in the lydian scale.

C Major (Ionian)

C Lydian

The 1st scale in each example is major. Write whether the 2nd scale is major (M) or lydian (#4).

a. M b. #4 c. M d. #4 e. #4

Track 18

5 Listen to a natural minor (or aeolian) scale followed by a dorian scale. Listen for the raised 6th in the dorian scale.

A Minor (Aeolian)

A Dorian

The 1st scale in each example is minor. Write whether the 2nd scale is natural minor (m) or dorian (#6).

a. m b. #6 c. #6 d. m e. #6

Track 19

6 Listen to a natural minor scale followed by a phrygian scale. Listen for the lowered 2nd in the phrygian scale.

A Minor (Aeolian)

A Phrygian

The 1st scale in each example is minor. Write whether the 2nd scale is natural minor (m) or phrygian (b2).

a. m b. b2 c. m d. b2 e. b2