

JAZZ PIANO LESSONS . ONLINE

MODES

A COMPLETE GUIDE



MODES

Modes are scales that are played from a different starting and ending note. The order of the notes change, the importance of the individual notes change and the feel of the scale is changed.

Modes were used for 1000's of years before jazz musicians started using them to improvise over chord progressions and even play modally like with the tune 'So What'.

COMMON MODERN MODES

The most common jazz modes are derived from the major scale. It's also common to use the melodic and harmonic minor to create modes. Less common are the Harmonic Major and the Double Harmonic. We will look at all of these but dive deep into the first 3 (the major, melodic and harmonic minor).

MAJOR SCALE

MODES

These modes are the ones you need to learn first. There are two ways to think of modes.

To think of the mode as simply starting at a different spot of the scale. This is the way these modes are derived. Eg: D Dorian is 2nd mode of C Major. C Major has no flats or sharps so start on D and play the notes of C major.

To think of the mode as it relates to the parallel major scale. Eg: D Dorian compared to D Major. D Major has F# and C# but D Dorian has no sharps so we need to lower the 3rd and 7th notes using this method.

Sometimes it is helpful to think one way, and at times the other way.

For example, I find it easier to think of the mixolydian mode as b7 rather than than the 5th mode.

Likewise, I usually find it easier to think of the Locrian as the 7th mode instead of thinking b2, b3, b5, b6, and b7.

The next two pages show you the two ways to work out the major scale modes.

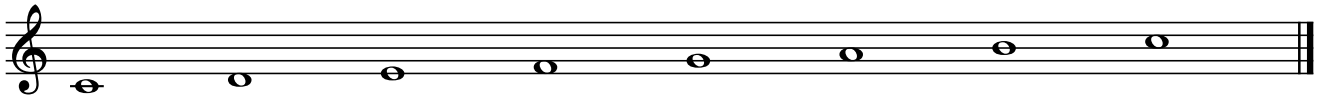
To know what scale to play with what chord Just play the same number mode as the number chord you are playing. If playing the 4th chord, play the 4th mode.

Modes of C Major


Cmaj7 Dm7 Em7 Fmaj7 G7 Am7 Bm7^(b5)



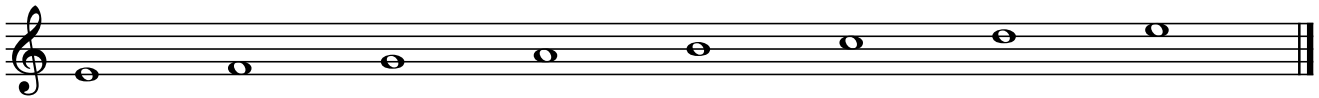
1. Ionian



2. Dorian




3. Phrygian



4. Lydian



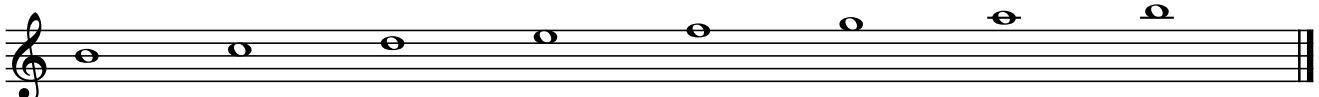
5. Mixolydian



6. Aeolian



7. Locrian



1.

Modes starting on C

Ionian



Dorian



Phrygian



Lydian



Mixolydian



Aeolian



Locrian



FIRST STEPS

To start with, learn the dorian and use it for any minor chord the mixolydian and use it for the dominant 7 chord and the ionian and use that for the major chord.

Once you know that really well and it's under your fingers, start thinking about using the lydian for major as well and Phrygian and aeolian of the minors as well too.

Initially play the corresponding chord with mode. I.e: if your minor chord is the VI chord then use the aeolian because its the 6th mode.

Then you can switch it up and play other modes that are related but that take you away from the original key. This will sound a little 'outside' but still pleasing to the ear.


In other words, you can play the dorian, Phrygian or aeolian with any minor 7 chord, or combination of all 3 if you like. With the major chords you could use the Ionian or the lydian. Eg you could use the Lydian (4th mode) when you are playing the 1st chord.

This kind of thinking opens up a whole lot more when we throw in the the modes of the melodic and harmonic minor scales.

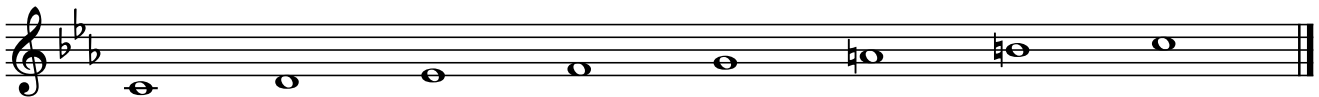
Learn these mode real well first, getting them under your fingers and knowing the names. The names of these modes will be helpful when we are learning the melodic and harmonic minor modes, as we will relate them back to those names.

Modes of C Melodic Minor

Cm(maj7) Dm7 Ebmaj7^(#5) F7 G7 Am7^(b5) Bm7^(b5)



1. Melodic Minor (Minor Jazz Scale)



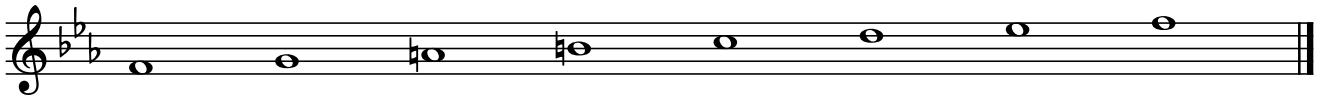
2. Dorian b2 or (phrygian #6)



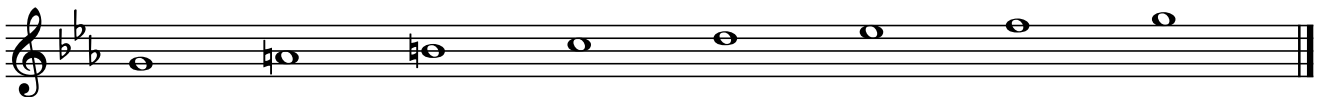
3. Lydian #5 (Lydian Augmented)



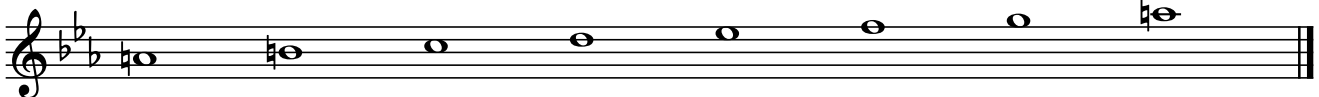
4. Lydian b7 (Lydian Dominant or overtone scale)



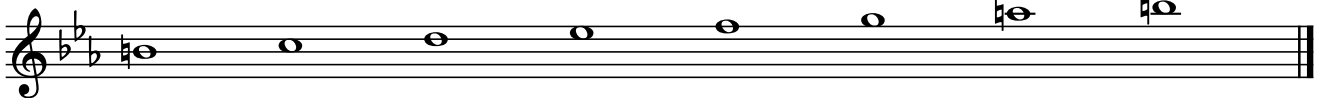
5. Mixolydian b6



6. Aeolian b5 (Locrian #2 or natural 2)

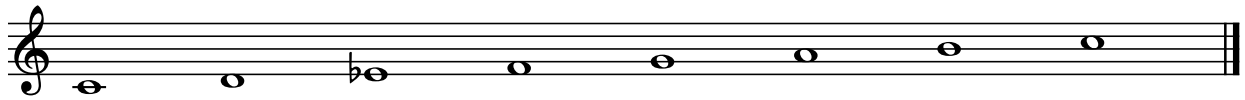


7. Altered Dominant (Super Locrian)

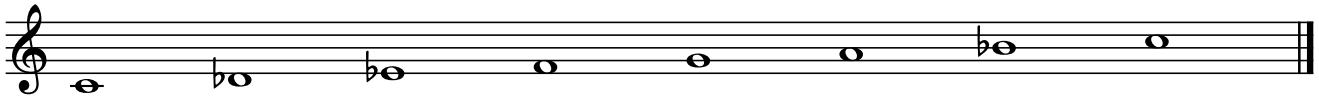


Melodic Minor Modes starting on C

1. Melodic Minor (Minor Jazz Scale)



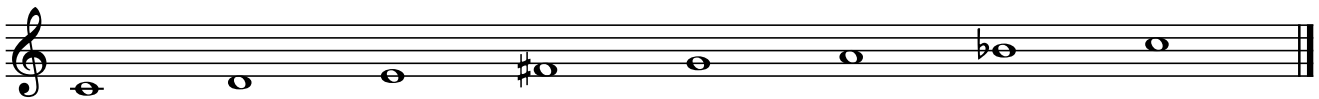
2. Dorian b2 or (phrygian #6)



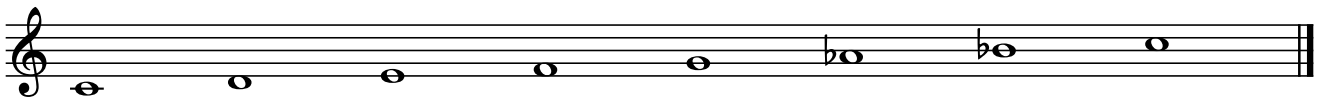
3. Lydian #5 (Lydian Augmented)



4. Lydian b7 (Lydian Dominant or overtone scale)



5. Mixolydian b6



6. Aeolian b5 (Locrian #2 or natural 2)

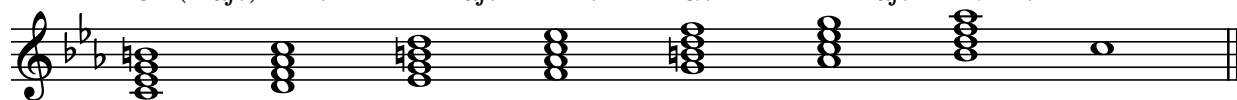


7. Altered Dominant (Super Locrian)

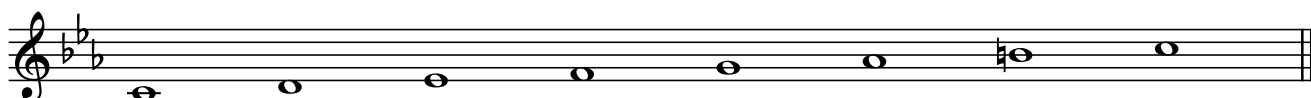


Modes of C Harmonic Minor

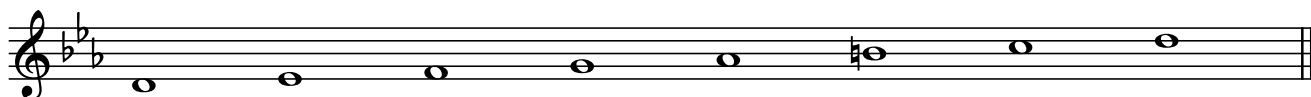
Cm(maj7) Dm7^(b5) Ebmaj7^(#5) Fm7 G7^(b9) Abmaj7 Bdim7



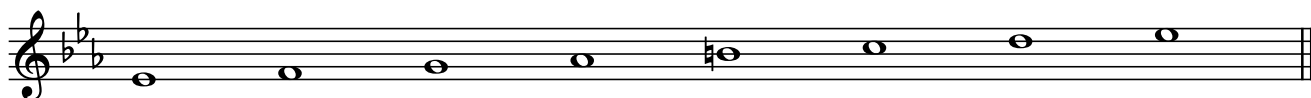
1. Harmonic Minor



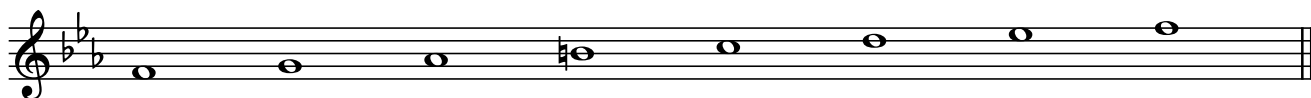
2. Locrian #6 (or natural 6)



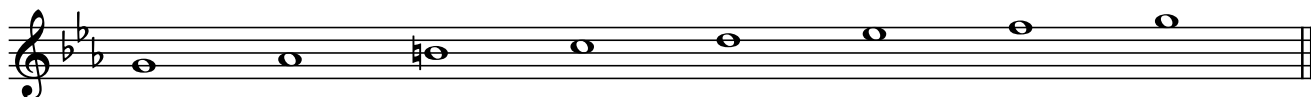
3. Ionian #5



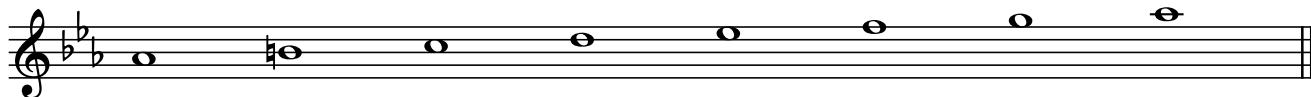
4. Dorian #4



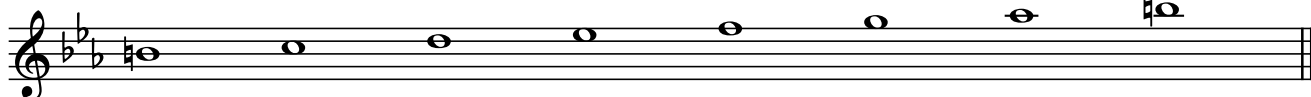
5. Phrygian Dominant



6. Lydian #2



7. Altered Diminished



Harmonic Minor Modes starting on C

1. Harmonic Minor



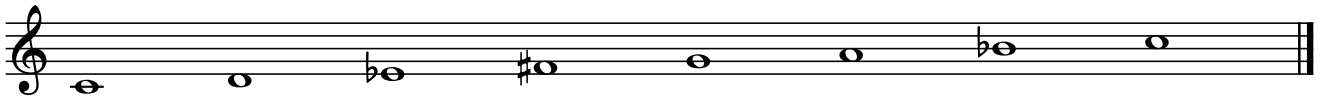
2. Locrian #6 (or natural 6)



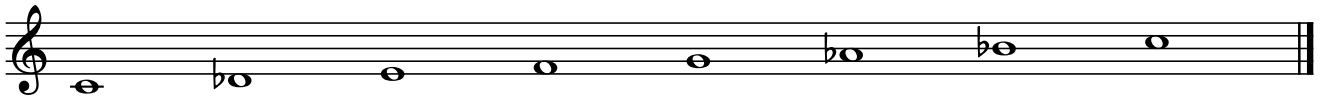
3. Ionian #5



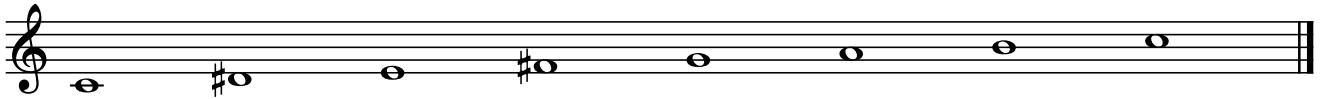
4. Dorian #4



5. Phrygian Dominant



6. Lydian #2



7. Altered Diminished



NEXT STEPS

Practise the different modes you could choose to play with one particular chord.

For example looking at a Minor 7 chord in each key, you could think of it as the 2nd, 3rd or 6th mode of the major key or the 2nd of the Melodic minor, or the 4th of the Harmonic minor. A Major 7th chord could be thought of as 1, 4 (Maj) or 6 (H. Min).

MAJOR KEY

Musical notation for Major Key chords. The chords are: Cmaj7, Dm7, Em7, Fmaj7, G7, Am7, and Bm7^(b5). Each chord is represented by a treble clef and a staff with notes indicating the chord structure.

MELODIC MINOR

Musical notation for Melodic Minor chords. The chords are: Cm(maj7), Dm7, Ebmaj7^(#5), F7, G7, Am7^(b5), and Bm7^(b5). Each chord is represented by a treble clef, a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb), and a staff with notes indicating the chord structure.

HARMONIC MINOR

Musical notation for Harmonic Minor chords. The chords are: Cm(maj7), Dm7^(b5), Ebmaj7^(#5), Fm7, G7^(b9), Abmaj7, and Bdim7. Each chord is represented by a treble clef, a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb), and a staff with notes indicating the chord structure.

FINAL THOUGHT

There are more modes than this arrggggh, when does it end!

Two more scales worth considering (and the modes that can be derived from those scales are the Harmonic Major and the Double Harmonic. I'll let you check that out for yourself if you are interested.

Modes are useful, but in the end they are really just a guide of what you could choose to play. They shouldn't dictate to you what you have to play.

The fact that we can swap between modes over the one chord shows us something important. After you have played the important guide tones and chord tones you can kind of fill out a scale using a whole bunch of different notes.

Every mode that works with C Major 7 has C E G and B in it. It can have F or F# in it, or A or Ab or D, D# or Db (if you use double harmonic) etc. The important thing is that it has C E G and B.

So what now?

Play these modes that are perhaps new to you. Get to know the sound. Some you will like the sound of more than others. So practise those and use them in your playing. The other thing is to get to know your chord and guide tones real well and know the other notes are optional and there is a theory reason behind why they are possibilities (even if you can't remember exactly what that reason is) who cares If it sounds good then play it.

Continue to develop and trust your ears. Expose your ears to new sounds, but also train them to identify so you can use your ears to guide your playing.

Trust your fingers too. What you practise will eventually naturally come out on the keys. Have fun!

