

Harmonized Major Scales

To harmonize a major scale, play that scale horizontally along one string while playing chords from that scale on top of it. In this lesson, you'll learn how to harmonize scales with root notes on the 4th, 5th, and 6th strings using 7th chords and Major 6 chords.

For this lesson to make sense, you'll need to know

1. How to play a major scale along one string using the WWHWWWH pattern.
2. Note names on the 4th, 5th, and 6th strings.
3. Major 7, Major 6, Minor 7, Dominant 7, and Minor 7(b5) chord shapes with roots on the 4th, 5th, and 6th strings. We'll cover these shapes as we go.
4. Which types of chords to play on each scale degree.

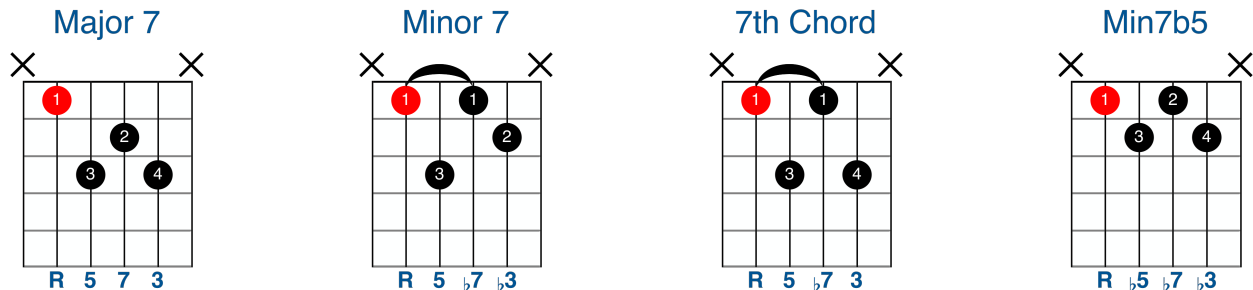
Chords and Scale Degrees

As you play these scales, think in terms of scale degree: 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 and then 1 again at the octave. When you add chords on top of your scales, **you'll always play them in the same order**:

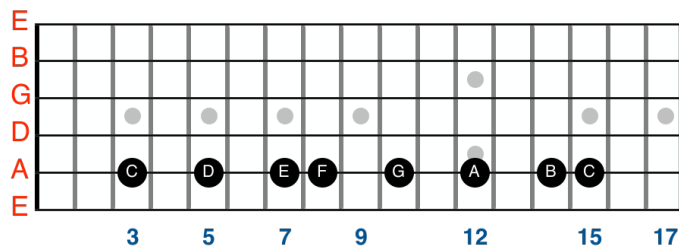
- 1 Chord: Major 7 or Major 6
- 2 Chord: Minor 7
- 3 Chord: Minor 7
- 4 Chord: Major 7 or Major 6
- 5 Chord: Dominant 7 (otherwise known simply as a 7th chord)
- 6 Chord: Minor 7
- 7 Chord: Minor 7(b5), also called Half-Diminished

Harmonized Scales with 5th String Roots • Video Lesson

We'll begin with 5th string roots using various "A" shapes from the CAGED system. The root of each chord appears in red.



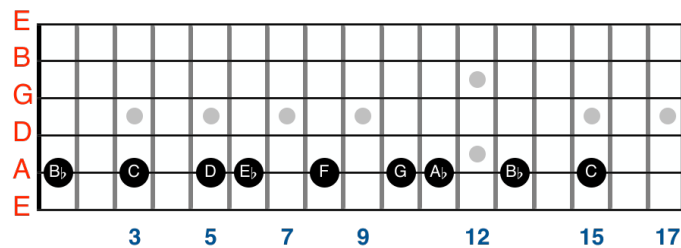
We'll use the shapes above to harmonize a C scale on the 5th string. First, play a C major scale up and down the 5th string so you know where to place your root notes. As you do so, name your notes, and **also recite the scale degrees**. So, C=1, D=2, E=3, F=4, G=5, A=6, B=7, and C=1 again.



Then play the scale with the chords added. Play **up AND down** the neck.

- Play the Major 7 shape with the root on C (1).
- Play the Minor 7 shape with the root on D (2)
- Play the Minor 7 shape with the root on E (3)
- Play the Major 7 shape with the root on F (4)
- Play the 7th Chord shape with the root on G (5)
- Play the Minor 7 shape with the root on A (6)
- Play the Minor 7(b5) shape with the root on B (7)
- And play the Major 7 shape with root on the C up the neck (1)

You need to be able to do this exercise on any major scale, including those that start in the middle of the fretboard. Here's the same exercise, harmonizing the Eb major scale.



Start as before, playing the scale up and down the 5th string. **Start on the tonic, or 1st scale degree** – in this case, Eb. Play as high as you can comfortably play on the fretboard, then play down to as low as you can play on the fretboard, and then play back up to the tonic. **Always start and end on the tonic.** As before, name your notes, and **also recite the scale degrees**. So, Eb=1, F=2, G=3, Ab=4, Bb=5, C=6, and D=7. **Naming each scale degree helps you think in terms of function rather than individual notes**, making it easier to remember which chord form to play.

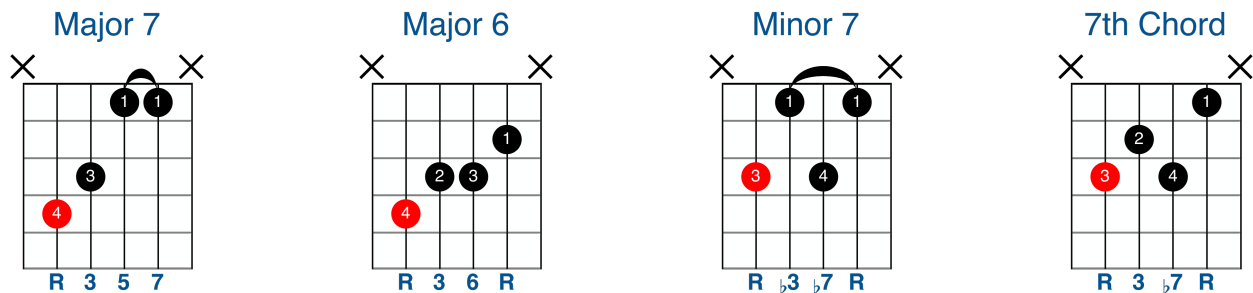
After you play the individual notes of the Eb major scale, play it again with the chords added. Play **up AND down** the neck the way you played the scale, starting and ending on the tonic.

- Major 7 shape with the root on Eb (1).
- Minor 7 shape with the root on F (2)
- Minor 7 shape with the root on G (3)
- Major 7 shape with the root on Ab (4)
- 7th Chord shape with the root on Bb (5)
- Minor 7 shape with the root on C (6)
- Minor 7(b5) shape with the root on D (7)

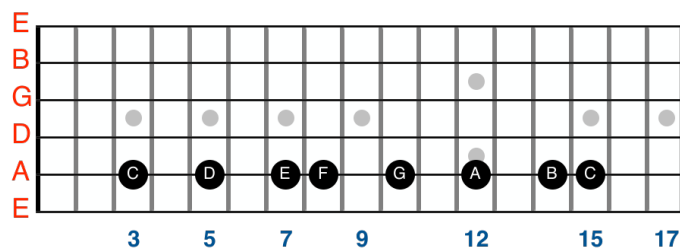
Play harmonized scales like this in all keys.

More Harmonized Scales with 5th String Roots • [Video Lesson](#)

Here are various “C” shapes from the CAGED system.



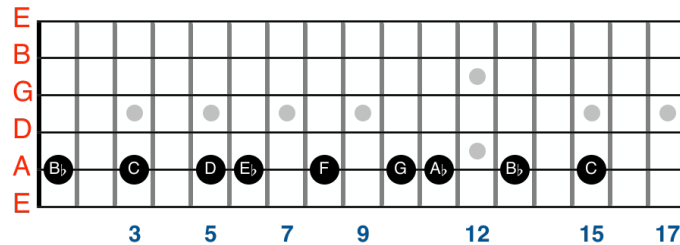
We'll use the shapes above to again harmonize a C scale on the 5th string. **There is no Minor 7(b5) shape in this set.** There is no 5th in this particular Minor 7 shape. The only difference between a Minor 7 and a Minor 7(b5) is the 5th of the chord. With no 5th to flat, you can play this Minor 7 shape on the 7th scale degree. As before, play a C major scale up and down the 5th string naming your notes and reciting the scale degrees. C=1, D=2, E=3, F=4, G=5, A=6, B=7, and C=1 again.



Then play the scale with the chords added.

- Major 7 **or** Major 6 shape with the root on C (1).
- Minor 7 shape with the root on D (2)
- Minor 7 shape with the root on E (3)
- Major 7 **or** Major 6 shape with the root on F (4)
- 7th Chord shape with the root on G (5)
- Minor 7 shape with the root on A (6)
- Minor 7 shape with the root on B (7), functioning in this case as Minor 7(b5).

Again, you should practice harmonizing scales in all keys. We'll harmonize the Eb major scale again, this time with our "C" shape chords from the CAGED system.



Play the Eb major scale up and down the 5th string. **Start on the tonic, or 1st scale degree** – in this case, Eb. Play as high as you can comfortably play on the fretboard, then play down to as low as you can play on the fretboard, and then play back up to the tonic. **Always start and end on the tonic.** As before, name your notes, and recite the scale degrees. So, Eb=1, F=2, G=3, Ab=4, Bb=5, C=6, and D=7.

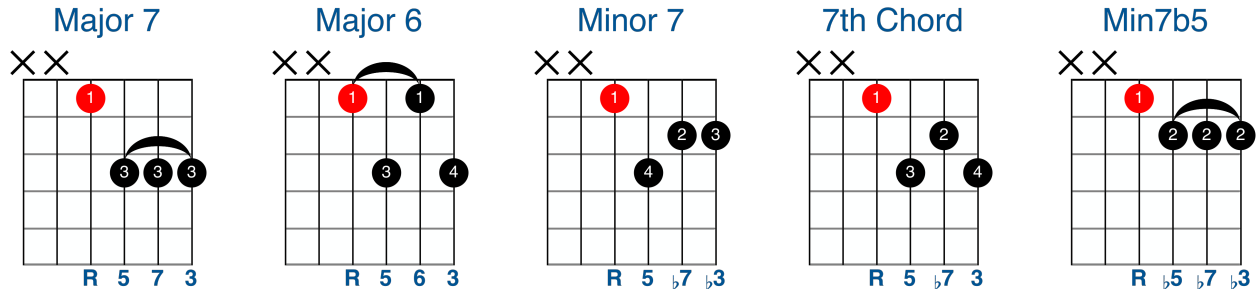
Then play the scale with the chords added.

- Major 7 **or** Major 6 shape with the root on Eb (1).
- Minor 7 shape with the root on F (2)
- Minor 7 shape with the root on G (3)
- Major 7 **or** Major 6 shape with the root on Ab (4)
- 7th Chord shape with the root on Bb (5)
- Minor 7 shape with the root on C (6)
- Minor 7 shape with the root on D (7), functioning in this case as Minor 7(b5).

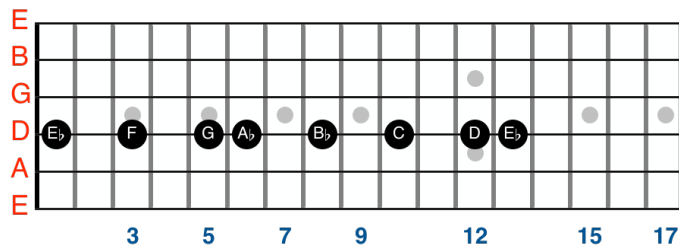
Play harmonized scales like this in all keys.

Harmonized Scales with 4th String Roots • Video Lesson

Now we'll harmonize scales on the 4th string using various "D" shapes from the CAGED system.



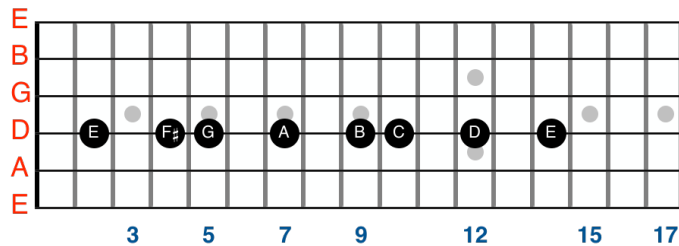
We'll use the shapes above to harmonize an Eb major scale on the 4th string. Begin by playing an Eb major scale up and down the 4th string naming your notes and reciting the scale degrees. Eb=1, F=2, G=3, Ab=4, Bb=5, C=6, D=7, and Eb=1 again.



Then play the scale with the chords added.

- Major 7 **or** Major 6 shape with the root on Eb (1).
- Minor 7 shape with the root on F (2)
- Minor 7 shape with the root on G (3)
- Major 7 **or** Major 6 shape with the root on Ab (4)
- 7th Chord shape with the root on Bb (5)
- Minor 7 shape with the root on C (6)
- Minor 7(b5) shape with the root on D (7)

Practice harmonizing scales in all keys. This time, we'll harmonize the G major scale with our "D" shape chords from the CAGED system.



Play the G major scale up and down the 4th string. **Start on the tonic, or 1st scale degree** – in this case, G. Play as high as you can comfortably play on the fretboard, then play down to as low as you can play on the fretboard, and then play back up to the tonic. **Always start and end on the tonic.** As before, name your notes, and recite the scale degrees. G=1, A=2, B=3, C=4, D=5, E=6, and F#=7.

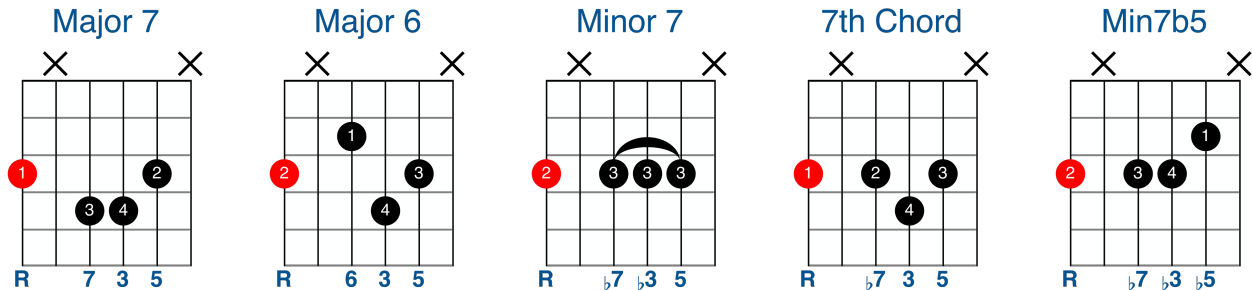
Then play the scale with the chords added.

- Major 7 **or** Major 6 shape with the root on G (1).
- Minor 7 shape with the root on A (2)
- Minor 7 shape with the root on B (3)
- Major 7 **or** Major 6 shape with the root on C (4)
- 7th Chord shape with the root on D (5)
- Minor 7 shape with the root on E (6)
- Minor 7(b5) shape with the root on F# (7)

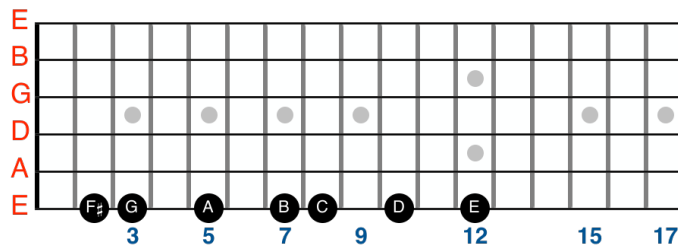
Play harmonized scales like this in all keys.

Harmonized Scales with 6th String Roots • Video Lesson

In this last section, we'll harmonize scales on the 6th string using various "E" shapes from the CAGED system.



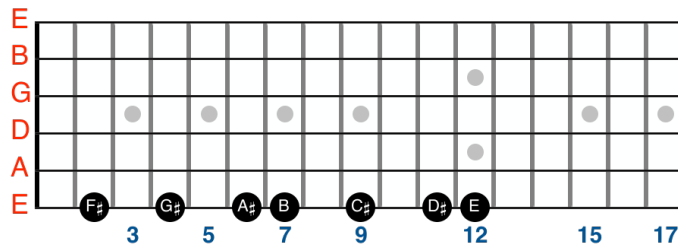
We'll use the shapes above to harmonize a G major scale on the 6th string. Begin by playing a G major scale up and down the 6th string naming your notes and reciting the scale degrees. G=1, A=2, B=3, C=4, D=5, E=6, F#=7, and G=1 again. (In the [video](#), I only play up to the 12th fret E. Then I play down past the starting note and play the F# at the second fret. If your guitar has greater fret access, you can play the F# at the 14th fret and the upper G at the 15th fret.)



Then play the scale with the chords added.

- Major 7 or Major 6 shape with the root on G (1).
- Minor 7 shape with the root on A (2)
- Minor 7 shape with the root on B (3)
- Major 7 or Major 6 shape with the root on C (4)
- 7th Chord shape with the root on D (5)
- Minor 7 shape with the root on E (6)
- Minor 7(b5) shape with the root on F# (7)

As always, practice harmonizing scales in all keys. This time, we'll harmonize the B major scale with our "E" shape chords from the CAGED system.



Play the B major scale up and down the 6th string. **Start on the tonic, or 1st scale degree** – in this case, B. Play as high as you can comfortably play on the fretboard, then play down to as low as you can play on the fretboard, and then play back up to the tonic. **Always start and end on the tonic.** As before, name your notes, and recite the scale degrees. B=1, C#=2, D#=3, E=4, F#=5, G#=6, and A#=7.

Then play the scale with the chords added.

- Major 7 **or** Major 6 shape with the root on B (1).
- Minor 7 shape with the root on C# (2)
- Minor 7 shape with the root on D# (3)
- Major 7 **or** Major 6 shape with the root on E (4)
- 7th Chord shape with the root on F# (5)
- Minor 7 shape with the root on G# (6)
- Minor 7(b5) shape with the root on A# (7)

Play harmonized scales like this in all keys.

Wrap-Up

This is a lot of information to absorb. For starters, I suggest focusing on harmonizing major scales in just one or two ways. For example, you might focus on just the 6th string harmonized scale (the “E” shapes) and one of the 5th string harmonized scales (either the “A” or “C” shapes). As you get comfortable harmonizing scales with these two sets of chords, add the other sets of chords, and make sure to play them in various keys.

It’s easier to understand all this material if you see it demonstrated. Here are links to YouTube videos with explanations and demos:

[4th String “D” Shapes](#)

[5th String “A” Shapes](#)

[5th String “C” Shapes](#)

[6th String “E” Shapes](#)

To understand the theory behind this check out my Guitar Theory Module series. [Click here](#) for the YouTube playlist. [Click here](#) to order the book.