

I FOUR NOTE GROUPINGS 1-5

The first order of business is to find melodies to play on chord changes that "fit" the sound of the changes. Of course, musical improvisation is a subjective art form and what sounds "right" to one player is entirely individual. Without wishing to impose style, the goal is to find what will be considered a means to an end!

The improviser must first look to the chord scales which are the harmonic system. Every chord has its own chord scale. If you know your major chord scales you are off to a good start. If you do not, refer to the chord charts and scale charts in the back of the book. As you know, each degree of the scale commonly facilitates chord and scale changes.

"C" major scale with appropriate numerical



Minor and dominant chord scales are built from the major scale. An explanation on how to determine the scales follows.

NUMERICAL SCALE

For the root of the scale, the first degree is assigned the number 1, the second, the number 2, and so on. This system is presented here. The root of the chord is always "1".

Also, the notes are numbered as they appear (with or without an accidental) in their appropriate scales. For example, the dominant 7 chord has a natural F in its chord scale while a G major 7 chord has an F sharp in its scale. The number 7 refers to either F natural or F sharp depending on the chord being played. When we refer to the 3 or the 7 of a minor chord, it means flat 3 or flat 7 since that is implicit in the scale.



- 1-3-5-7 of D major 7 means: D - F# - A - C#
- 1-3-5-7 of D dominant 7 means: D - F - A - C
- 1-3-5-7 of D minor 7 means: D - F - A - C

FOUR NOTE GROUPINGS: 1-2-3-5, 1-3-4-5

Because there are unlimited possibilities for playing melodies on any given chord, to make progress learning how to improvise it is necessary to limit the infinite musical options. Rather than using all of the notes in the chord scale, in the beginning we will concern ourselves with only four notes as it provides us a kind of jumping off point.

The four note melodic scale segment includes 1 - 2 - 3 - 5 of the major and dominant scales and 1 - 3 - 4 - 5 of the minor scales.



A grouping of four notes creates what is called a chord and this particular grouping is one of the most natural sounding melodies that can be played as a chord.

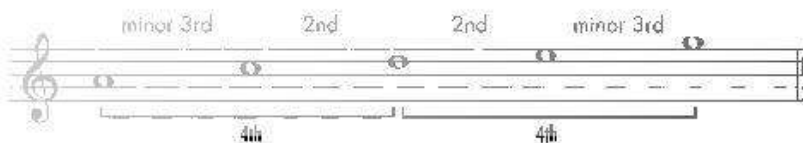
WHY THESE NUMBERS? A THEORETICAL EXPLANATION

These 1 through 5 groupings of notes are derived from the natural series of fifths. Starting with C, build upwards in fifths; that is, C up a fifth to G, G up a fifth to D, D up a fifth to A, A up a fifth to E. Arrange these notes in one octave and we have C-D-E-G which spells out the natural harmonic scale. Rearrange the notes by putting "A" on the bottom creates a minor permutation of the fifth series of notes and two different four note groupings; starting on C, 1-2-3-5 and just starting on the bottom, 1-3-4-5.



The relationship between the C major and A minor scales is then apparent. (Relative minor scales are a minor third below the major scale.) But the more important point being made here is that it is from this series of notes that the numbers 1-2-3-5 for major and dominant chords and 1-3-4-5 for minor chords have been derived. This pyramid of fifths provides very consonant melodies that perfectly describe the sound of each chord.

Both sets of numbers, 1-2-3-5 for major and 1-3-4-5 for minor, contain the same intervals, that is, one minor third and two major seconds, thus keeping the melodies consistent with each other. Also, the notes A-C-D-E-G form what is called a mirror chord. From the center note of the chord, which is D, each half looks the same as the other. The intervals between the notes D, C, and A are the same as the ones between D, E, and G.



Not all are theory buffs so it doesn't matter if you understand the theory behind why these numbers were chosen. When you play them the sound will speak for itself!

THREE WAYS TO DETERMINE MINOR CHORD SCALES:

1. To determine a minor chord scale, take the major scale beginning with the same root and flat the third and seventh degrees.

Example: To find a D minor chord scale; take the D major chord scale and lower the third and seventh by a half step. F sharp becomes F natural and C sharp becomes C natural in the minor scale.

D Major Scale

D Minor Scale

2. You can spell a minor scale by using formula:

Root - whole step - half step - whole step - whole step - half step - whole step.

D Minor Scale

3. Make the third of the minor chord the root of a major scale, then spell that major scale starting and ending on the root of the minor chord.

Example: To find the D minor chord scale for a D minor chord, first answer the question: "D is the second note of what major scale?" The second note of a C major scale so spell the C major scale starting and ending on "D". The C major scale looks the same as a C major scale (that is, no sharps or flats).

D-7 Dominant Scale

THREE WAYS TO DETERMINE DOMINANT CHORD SCALES:

1. To determine a dominant chord scale, take the major scale beginning with the same root and flat the seventh degree.

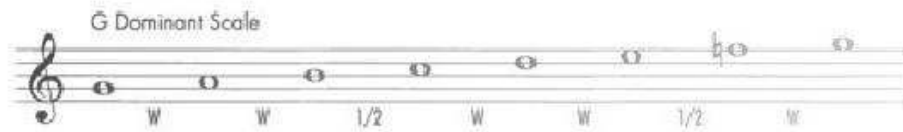
Example: To determine a G dominant 7 chord scale; take the G major chord scale and lower the seventh by a half step. F sharp becomes F natural in the dominant scale.

G Major Scale

G Dominant Scale

2. You can spell a dominant chord scale by using this formula:

Root - whole step - whole step - half step - whole step - whole step - half step - whole step.



3. Make the root of the dominant chord the fifth note of a major scale and ending on the root of the dominant chord.

Example: To determine what chord scale is played over a G dominant chord, first ask the question: "G is the fifth note of what major scale?" "G" is the fifth note of a C major scale. Spell the C major scale starting and ending "G".



PERMUTATIONS OF 1-2-3-5

The purpose of this site system is to help you create and organize musical material. Limiting the possibilities as you improvise helps you deal with the vast musical language available when improvising. Again, for this reason we are limiting ourselves with our scales in the beginning and those four notes (1-2-3-5) for major and dominant chords and 1-3-4 for minor chords.

1-2-3-5 and Dominant
1-3-4 Minor

The 1-2-3-5 and 1-3-4 scales can then be arranged in 24 ways and these different arrangements of the scales include are called permutations.

24 Permutations of 1-2-3-5

1 2 3 5	2 1 5 3	3 1 2 5	5 1 2 3
1 2 5 3	2 1 3 5	3 1 5 2	5 1 3 2
1 3 2 5	2 3 1 5	3 2 1 5	5 2 1 3
1 3 5 2	2 3 5 1	3 2 5 1	5 2 3 1
1 5 2 3	2 5 1 3	3 5 1 2	5 3 1 2
1 5 3 2	2 5 3 1	3 5 2 1	5 3 2 1

24 Permutations of 1-3-4-5

1 3 4 5	3 1 5 4	4 1 3 5	5 1 3 4
1 3 5 4	3 1 4 5	4 1 5 3	5 1 4 3
1 4 3 5	3 4 1 5	4 3 1 5	5 3 1 4
1 4 5 3	3 4 5 1	4 3 5 1	5 3 4 1
1 5 3 4	3 5 1 4	4 5 1 3	5 4 1 3
1 5 4 3	3 5 4 1	4 5 3 1	5 4 3 1

1-2-3-5 Permutations of a C Major chord

The image displays 24 musical staves, each representing a permutation of the notes C, E, G, and B (1-2-3-5) in a C major chord. The notes are written in treble clef. Below each staff, the sequence of fingerings (1, 2, 3, 5) is indicated. The permutations are arranged in six rows of four staves each, corresponding to the 24 permutations listed in the table above.

Note that because the difference between C major 7 and C dominant 7 is the seventh degree, the 1-2-3-5 sequence applies to both chords, that is, the seventh is not included in this grouping of notes.