

# Major Scale Harmony

Chord construction and naming

CΔ                      C7                      Cm7                      C<sup>♮</sup>                      Cm7<sup>♭</sup>5

These chord types can be found in the major scale system. The chords are created by stacking scale tones in thirds on each degree of the scale.

CΔ   Dm7   Em7   FΔ   G7   Am7   B<sup>♮</sup>

I      II      III      IV      V      VI      VII

Because these chords are derived from the C major scale it follows that the C major scale can be used to construct a melody over any one of these chords.

Better still, by starting the scale on the root note of our chosen chord we get a 'mode', which is even more strongly related to the chord because it is based on its root.

e.g., The chord of Dm7 takes 'D' DORIAN ('parent' scale is C major)

Dm7                      D dorian (dorian mode of D)

The essence of the **Modal Approach** is that for any given chord we can derive a scale (sometimes more than one) that works well over it. Here are two other common examples:

G7

use a mode that starts on G and uses notes from C major. This is called the **mixolydian mode** (5th mode of major scale)

CΔ

use the **major scale** itself (also called ionian mode)

Here are each of the modes from the major scale, firstly as they occur in the key of C major and then transposed so that they **begin on the note C**. (Note that the parent scale of transposed mode will also have been transposed.)

ionian                      dorian                      phrygian                      lydian

mixolydian                      aeolian                      locrian

These can then be put in order from BRIGHT to DARK

lydian	BRIGHT	urgent, frantic
ionian		placid, stable, peaceful, resolved
mixolydian		searching, transient, unresolved
dorian		brooding, pensive
aeolian		melancholy, sad, romantic
phrygian		exotic, mysterious
locrian	DARK	angry, tense, ugly

The descriptions are arbitrary but an examination of the parent keys shows that there is a logic to the order.

<b>mode</b>	<b>parent key</b> (when the mode is started on 'C')
lydian	G major
ionian	C major
mixolydian	F major
dorian	Bb major
aeolian	Eb major
phrygian	Ab major
locrian	Db major

Now consider the **chords** that can be derived from each mode. Bear in mind voicings (i.e., the distribution of the notes) and the extra notes which are implied by the use of the mode. (A basic chord contains four notes while a mode contains seven; the extra three can be added to the basic chord.)

The **fully extended chord** shows all the notes from the mode stacked in thirds. This creates a pleasing sound only in the cases of LYDIAN and DORIAN modes. With the other modes tension is created by intervals within the chord. Careful voicing (or omission of certain notes) is required to incorporate the extra notes derived from the mode.

### LYDIAN MODE

#4 is the feature here

Musical notation for the Lydian mode. The top staff shows a series of chords: a basic triad (F4, A4, C5) and a fully extended chord (F4, A4, C5, E5, G5, B5, D6). The bottom staff shows the corresponding scale notes: F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5. The #4 interval (F#4) is highlighted as the feature.

### IONIAN MODE

the 4th is usually avoided

Musical notation for the Ionian mode. The top staff shows a series of chords: a basic triad (F4, A4, C5) and a fully extended chord (F4, A4, C5, E5, G5, B5, D6). The bottom staff shows the corresponding scale notes: F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5. The 4th interval (B4) is highlighted as usually avoided.

### MIXOLYDIAN MODE

care in accommodating the 3rd and 4th

Musical notation for the Mixolydian mode. The top staff shows a series of chords: a basic triad (F4, A4, C5) and a fully extended chord (F4, A4, C5, E5, G5, B5, D6). The bottom staff shows the corresponding scale notes: F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5. The 3rd and 4th intervals (B4 and C5) are highlighted as requiring care in accommodation.

### DORIAN MODE

natural 6 distinguishes this from other minor modes  
chords can be voiced quite freely

Musical notation for the Dorian mode. The top staff shows a series of chords in the treble clef, and the bottom staff shows a bass line in the bass clef. The chords are: F major (F-A-C), F minor (F-Ab-C), F7 (F-A-C-Eb), F7b9 (F-A-C-Eb-Ab), F7b9 (F-A-C-Eb-Ab), F7b9 (F-A-C-Eb-Ab), and F7b9 (F-A-C-Eb-Ab). The bass line consists of the notes: F, Ab, C, Eb, F, Ab, C, Eb.

### AEOLIAN MODE

b6 is the feature  
can sound like a first inversion of major triad

Musical notation for the Aeolian mode. The top staff shows a series of chords in the treble clef, and the bottom staff shows a bass line in the bass clef. The chords are: F major (F-A-C), F minor (F-Ab-C), F7 (F-A-C-Eb), F7b9 (F-A-C-Eb-Ab), F7b9 (F-A-C-Eb-Ab), and F7b9 (F-A-C-Eb-Ab). The bass line consists of the notes: F, Ab, C, Eb, F, Ab, C, Eb.

### PHRYGIAN MODE

b9 creates tension with the root

Musical notation for the Phrygian mode. The top staff shows a series of chords in the treble clef, and the bottom staff shows a bass line in the bass clef. The chords are: F major (F-A-C), F minor (F-Ab-C), F7 (F-A-C-Eb), and F7b9 (F-A-C-Eb-Ab). The bass line consists of the notes: F, Ab, C, Eb, F, Ab, C, Eb. Above the second and third chords, the text "Csusb9" and "DbΔ/C" is written.

### LOCRIAN MODE

usually used over IIØ (i.e., the II chord in a minor II<sup>m</sup>7 V<sup>7</sup> I  
otherwise use with caution due to darkness/heaviness of the sound

Musical notation for the Locrian mode. The top staff shows a series of chords in the treble clef, and the bottom staff shows a bass line in the bass clef. The chords are: F major (F-A-C), F minor (F-Ab-C), F7 (F-A-C-Eb), F7b9 (F-A-C-Eb-Ab), and F7b9 (F-A-C-Eb-Ab). The bass line consists of the notes: F, Ab, C, Eb, F, Ab, C, Eb.

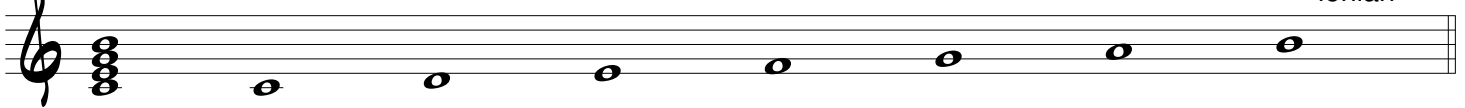
SUMMARY of basic chords  
and their modes from major scale

Major Scale  
Harmony

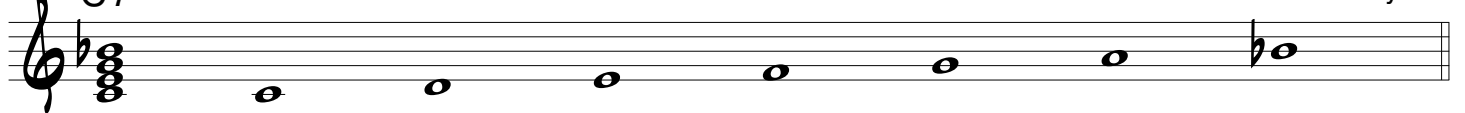
C $\Delta$  C $\Delta$  $\sharp$ 4 C $\Delta$  $\sharp$ 11 lydian



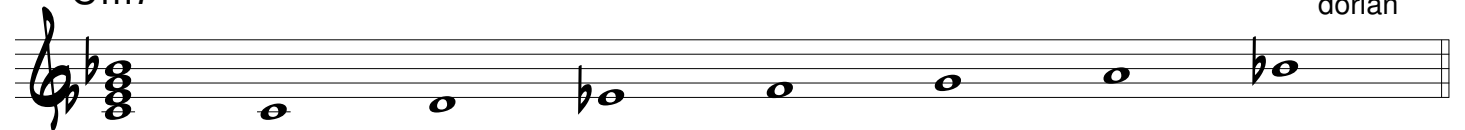
C $\Delta$  ionian



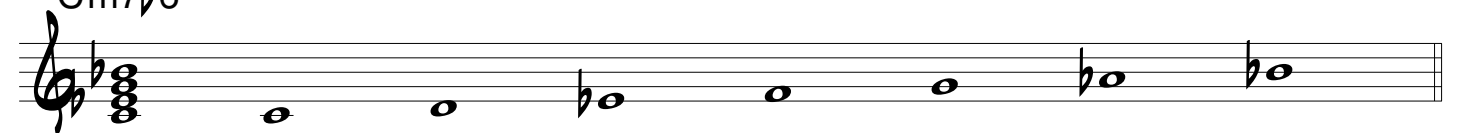
C7 mixolydian



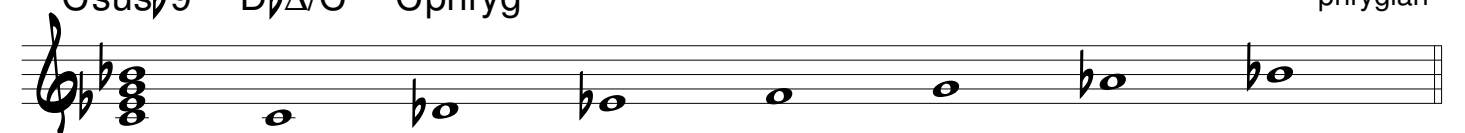
Cm7 dorian



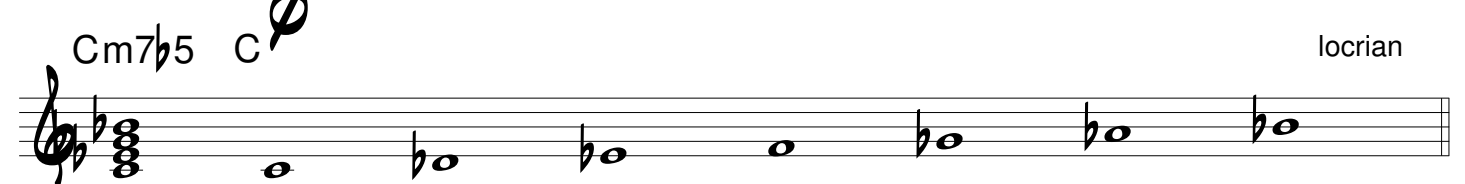
Cm7 $\flat$ 6 aeolian



Csus $\flat$ 9 D $\flat$  $\Delta$ /C Cphryg phrygian



Cm7 $\flat$ 5 C $\emptyset$  locrian



Note that the chord symbols are those which infer use of the mode shown.  
They are not always intended to describe the basic four note chord notated below.