

# So, you think you know your scales?!

## Addendum for Electric Bass

This extra little hand-out is an electric bass specific companion to my scales book. I generally dislike tablature, but as we are looking at very specific fingering variations on the fingerboard of both 4- and 5-string basses, this seems an appropriate use of it. This system came about from noodling around with scale patterns and block shapes, and it has been in my own use for years. By visualizing our scales in groups of three notes and avoiding open strings, we can play a two-octave scale with only one shift (on 4-string bass, no shift at all on 5-string bass), and we can change on which string the shift occurs without changing which finger plays any given pitch. As most young bassists learn early on with one-octave block patterns, shapes can stay the same no matter which key you're in, we just move our hand to a different starting fret!

When we make adjustments to the major scale to get parallel modes (lowering a 7th, raising a 4th, etc.), we don't have to change the basic relationship of visualizing pitch relationships. For example, in the traditional block shapes I learned as a kid, major scales and minor scales placed the 3rd in very different spots of the fingerboard, in relation to the root. The written tablature example of parallel modes only shows the pattern with the shift on the G-string for 4-string bass, but I believe that to be enough information to get the student to apply to the other string shifts, as well as to 5-string bass.

I've been teaching scales to my students this way for many years with great success. At the beginning stages, learn the shapes/fingerings with a strict approach (practice all four shifts equally on the 4-string bass). But, understand that this system is just a starting point for opening up our ability to visualize the fingerboard thoroughly, and we should strive for total freedom of knowing every note on every fret of every string.

A note on stretching a major third (five frets) on one string: DON'T!!! It's unwise to hold your hand in a shape of extreme tension, instead pivot your hand as you move fingers from one fret to another, keeping your thumb in one spot on the back of the neck, behind your middle finger. See the photos on the final page of this booklet.

Tim Wolfe, Jr.

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# Scale and arpeggio fingering system

for the 4-string electric bass

Tim Wolfe, Jr.

## Two-octave scale

### 1. Shift on G string

Bass Guitar

finger: 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 3 4

Bass Guitar

T  
A  
B

### 2. Shift on D string

Bass Guitar

1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 3 4

Bass Guitar

T  
A  
B

### 3. Shift on A string

Bass Guitar

1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 3 4

Bass Guitar

T  
A  
B

### 4. Shift on E string

Bass Guitar

1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 3 4

Bass Guitar

T  
A  
B

\*brackets denote single position, breath marks denote placement of shift

## Two-octave arpeggios to 7th

### 1. Shift on G string

### 2. Shift on D string

Bass Guitar

Bass Guitar

TAB

### 3. Shift on A string

### 4. Shift on E string

Bass Guitar

Bass Guitar

TAB

## Arpeggios to the 13th

### 1. Shift on G string

### 2. Shift on D string

Bass Guitar

Bass Guitar

TAB

### 3. Shift on A string

### 4. Shift on E string

Bass Guitar

Bass Guitar

TAB

# Scale and arpeggio fingering system

for the 5-string electric bass

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## Two-octave scale

5-str. Electric Bass

finger: 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 3 4

5-str. Electric Bass

6 8 10 6 8 10 7 8 10 7 8 10 7 9 10

## Two-octave arpeggio to 7th

5-str. Electric Bass

1 4 2 1 2 1 4 3 4 3 4 1 2 1 2 4 1

5-str. Electric Bass

6 10 8 7 8 7 10 9 10 9 10 7 8 7 8 10 6

## Arpeggio to 13th

5-str. Electric Bass

1 4 2 1 4 2 1 4 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1

5-str. Electric Bass

6 10 8 7 10 8 7 10 10 7 8 10 7 8 10 6



# Modes of Major

Parallel relationship

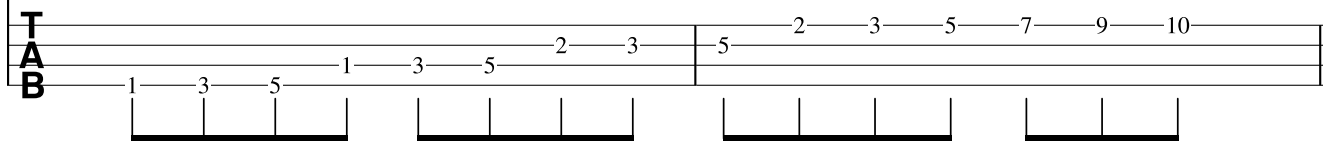
Wolfe

## Ionian

Bass Guitar



Bass Guitar

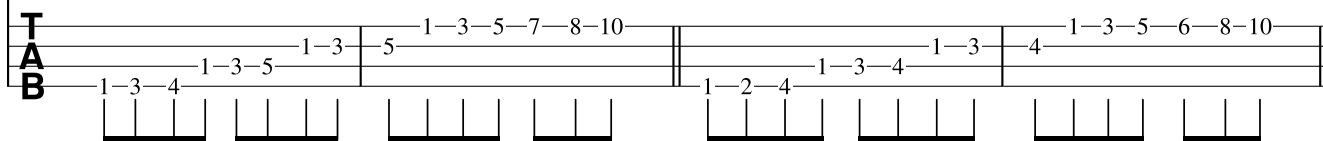


## Dorian

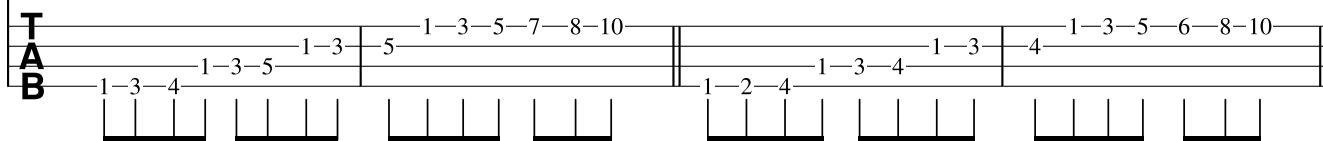
Bass Guitar



Bass Guitar



## Phrygian

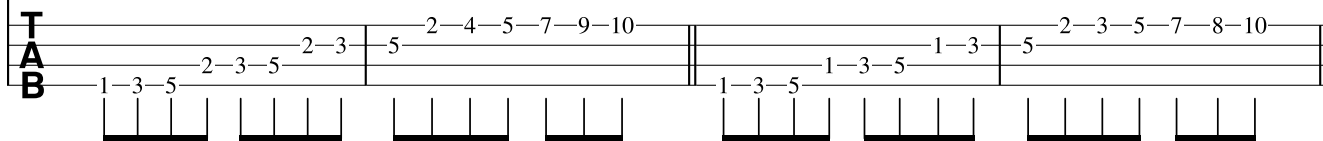


## Lydian

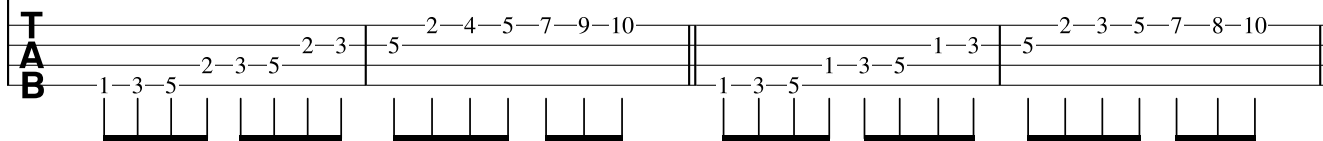
Bass Guitar



Bass Guitar



## Mixolydian

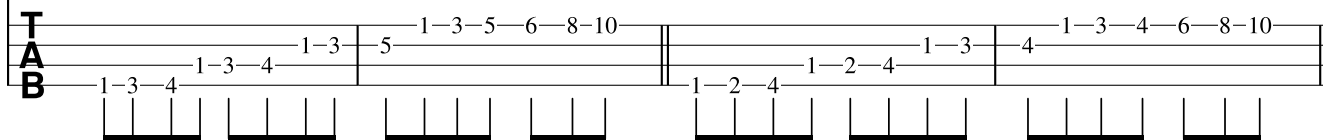


## Aeolian

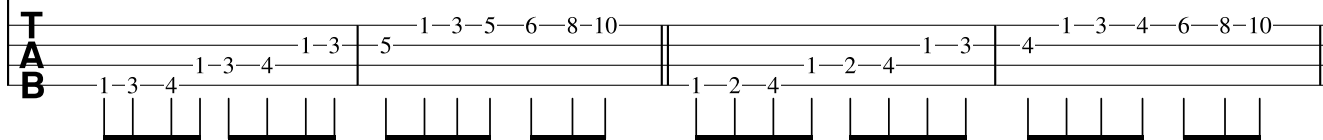
Bass Guitar

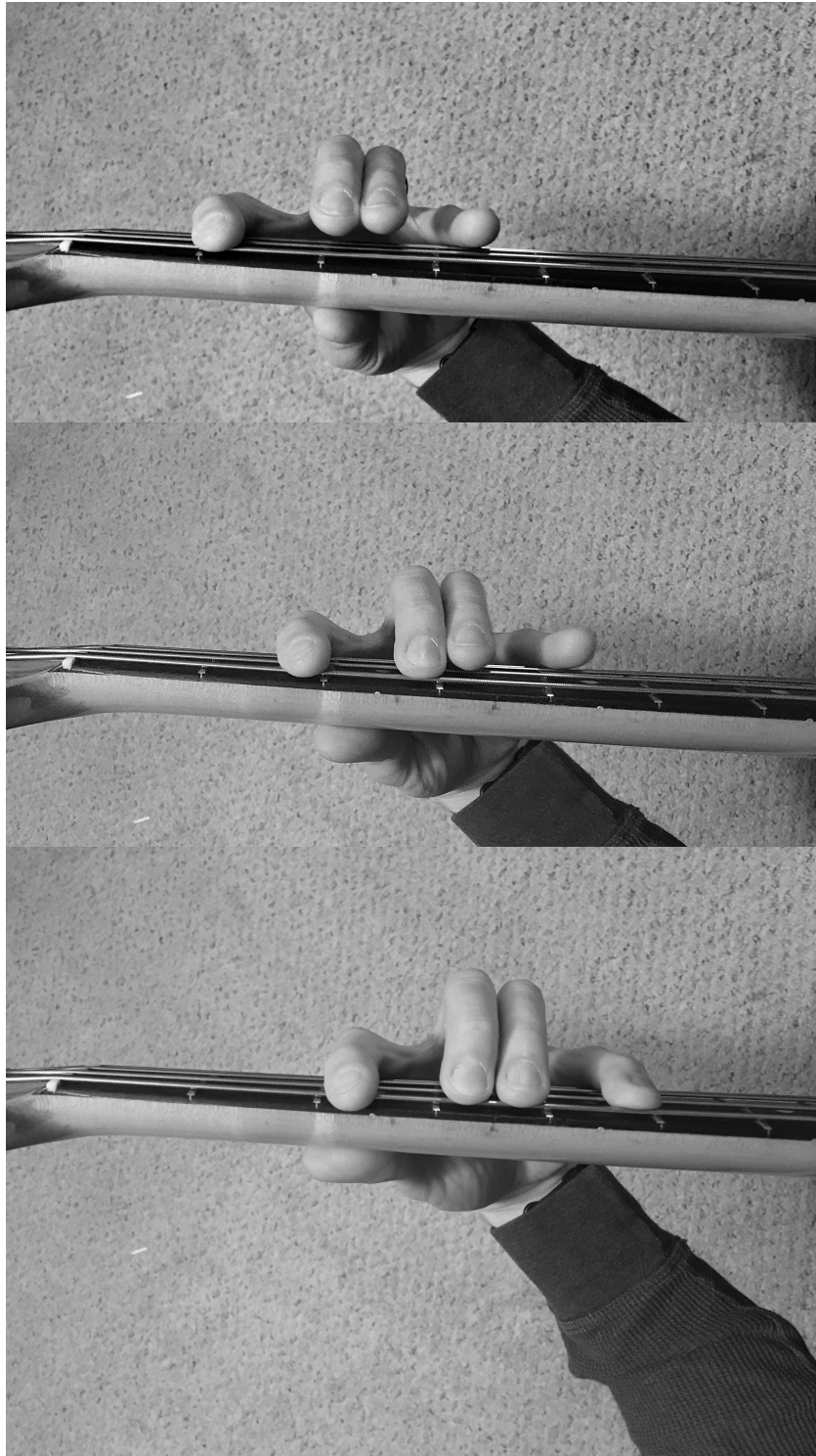


Bass Guitar



## Locrian





Keeping the thumb in one spot, we can pivot to cover a five-fret span on one string without stretching our fingers in an unnecessary way, preventing discomfort and pain.

Instrument set up and musical context are important to keep in mind. This technical approach may not work on instruments with high action or heavy gauge strings. This technique is also better utilized in faster passages, and is not needed when playing long or sustained notes.