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## Core Principle of the Modes

The key to playing the modes is your note selection based on the chord that is currently being played.

Modes can be derived from the major scale and contain the same exact notes. Why learn a new name for the same set of notes? The main reason is to help you focus on the tonal center of the chord instead of the tonal center of the scale. This shift in thinking will help you unlock new sounds. It will also help you play over ANY chord, even those obscure ones that pop up.

The two reasons to play the modes:

- 1) You want to be able to improvise over any chord.
- 2) Your improvisational ideas sound the same and you want to break out of that rut.

Doesn't that sound useful? The good news is that the modes are as easy to play as the major scale. I'm going to show you the two ways that people learn the modes. In my opinion, the best method depends on how you learn.

## How Modes Work

Before we talk about modes, we must talk about harmony, because learning modes is all about the interplay of the harmony (chords) and the mode. To fully understand the modes and to use them correctly, you must know this theory. Most mode lessons confuse people because they skip this information.

## Diatonic Harmony 101

Diatonic harmony is about knowing the chords that come from a key. Most songs are written in a key. Keys have a tonal center, or tonic, which the harmony will gravitate towards. Chord progressions within a key are considered diatonic chord progressions. They contain chords which only use the notes of the key. There are a few more things to know, but let's make sure we know enough about keys and diatonic harmony.

When you play in the key of C, the chord progressions gravitate toward a C major chord. In other words, when you play a C note it feels like the song is done. It relieves all the tension. To learn this feeling, play the following chord progression C-F-G. It should sound unfinished. Now play C-F-G-C. It will sound finished. This is what I mean by gravitating or resolving to C.

The key of C uses the C major scale, which consists of 7 notes: C, D, E, F, G, A, B. Each of these notes map to a degree of the scale, which is a roman numeral indicating the order within the major scale. I=C, ii=D, iii=E, IV=F, V=G, vi=A, vii=B. You'll notice that I capitalized some of the degrees and left others in lower case.

<b>I</b>	<b>ii</b>	<b>iii</b>	<b>IV</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>vi</b>	<b>vii</b>
C	D	E	F	G	A	B

Each degree also maps to a particular chord. If you use only these chords, you are playing a diatonic harmony or a diatonic chord progression. You will notice that the upper-case numerals use major chords and the lower case numerals use minor chords. The vii is diminished, which includes a b3 (minor third) so it is also lower case. It is called diminished instead of minor because it also has a flatted fifth.

<b>I</b>	<b>ii</b>	<b>iii</b>	<b>IV</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>vi</b>	<b>vii</b>
Major	minor	minor	Major	Major	minor	diminished

What this tells you is that you can take the major scale, the degree, and the related chord and form a diatonic chord progression. For example, in the key of C, you would have the following chords:

<b>I</b>	<b>ii</b>	<b>iii</b>	<b>IV</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>vi</b>	<b>vii</b>
C	D	E	F	G	A	B
C Major	D minor	E minor	F Major	G Major	A minor	B diminished

You can also have chord extensions like seventh chords, ninth chords, etc. I will cover those later.

## How Modes Relate to Diatonic Harmony

This is where it gets interesting. Each of the 7 modes map to the same degrees as the chords mentioned above.

<b>I</b>	<b>ii</b>	<b>iii</b>	<b>IV</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>vi</b>	<b>vii</b>
Ionian	Dorian	Phrygian	Lydian	Mixolydian	Aeolian	Locrian

You learned that diatonic chords all gravitate toward the tonic (I chord). When you play a chord, the notes within that chord gravitate toward the root of the chord. You have two gravitational pulls. Modes help you highlight the chord's gravity. The feel changes because of the harmony it is played over. In other words, the chord progression relates to the song's gravity. The mode relates to the chord's gravity. When played properly, it will highlight the chord and its harmony.

Mode	Chord	Mode Notes
C Ionian	C Major 7	C-D-E-F-G-A-B-C
D Dorian	D minor 7	D-E-F-G-A-B-C-D
E Phrygian	E minor 7	E-F-G-A-B-C-D-E
F Lydian	F Major 7	F-G-A-B-C-D-E-F
G Mixolydian	G7	G-A-B-C-D-E-F-G
A Aeolian	A minor 7	A-B-C-D-E-F-G-A
B Locrian	Bm7b5	B-C-D-E-F-G-A-B

Most people think the chord tones sound the best. In each of the modes above that is the 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th notes of the mode. For example, Dm7's chord tones are D, F, A, C. Those notes probably sound the best over Dm7.

### Feels Sometimes Associated with the Modes

Although the feel of the modes is personal and based on note selection above all else, Modes are sometimes related to a certain feel. I listed some descriptions. Play a mode over a progression and see if you can pick out similar qualities.

I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii
Ionian	Dorian	Phrygian	Lydian	Mixolydian	Aeolian	Locrian
Happy	Soulful	Flamenco	Bright	Bluesy	Sad	Sinister

## Two Ways to Learn Modes

Modes are taught in one of two ways, in series or in parallel. When learned in a series, you will learn all the modes in a key. When learned in parallel, you will learn all the modes that start from the same note. Both are useful to know.

### Modes in a Key or Series

You learned that the modes relate to the degree of the major scale. Now you will learn that the modes use the same exact notes as the major scale. They are remembered by their tonal centers, which are different than the major scale's tonal center (except Ionian). They're actually shifted. The table below shows the modes in a series as they relate to the key. One method of playing the modes is to use the major scale (and its patterns), but select your notes based on the mode shift.

Modes should not be used like a scale, rather they should be used as a framework to find the best notes for the given chord.

The selection of notes is a key point that you should not forget. If you don't highlight the better notes of the mode as they relate to the chord, you will not get the feel of the mode. This method doesn't tell you much about that, which is why some people dislike teaching the modes this way.

If you don't highlight the notes of the mode as they relate to the chord, you will not get the feel of the mode.

Mode	Notes													
<b>Ionian (Major Scale)</b>	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C						
<b>Dorian</b>		D	E	F	G	A	B	C	D					
<b>Phrygian</b>			E	F	G	A	B	C	D	E				
<b>Lydian</b>				F	G	A	B	C	D	E	F			
<b>Mixolydian</b>					G	A	B	C	D	E	F	G		
<b>Aeolian (Minor Scale)</b>						A	B	C	D	E	F	G	A	
<b>Locrian</b>							B	C	D	E	F	G	A	B

### Modes in Parallel

Another way of learning the modes is in parallel. This means that you forget the key and learn modes that start from a single note. For example, C Ionian, C Dorian, C Phrygian, etc. To do this, you must know how to modify the major scale to form the desired mode.

Learning modes in parallel is great for two reasons.

1) You only need to know the current chord in the progression (so there is no need to worry about the key).

2) The modal differences are more obvious because you must modify the major scale. This can help you play in a way that gives you the proper feel.

Mode	Note Degrees (Relative to the Major Scale)						
<b>Ionian</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Dorian</b>	1	2	<b>b3</b>	4	5	6	<b>b7</b>
<b>Phrygian</b>	1	<b>b2</b>	<b>b3</b>	4	5	<b>b6</b>	<b>b7</b>
<b>Lydian</b>	1	2	3	<b>#4</b>	5	6	7
<b>Mixolydian</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	<b>b7</b>
<b>Aeolian</b>	1	2	<b>b3</b>	4	5	<b>b6</b>	<b>b7</b>
<b>Locrian</b>	1	<b>b2</b>	<b>b3</b>	4	<b>b5</b>	<b>b6</b>	<b>b7</b>

## Seventh Chords and Modes

You can combine the table above with the chord construction formulas to determine the seventh chords that can be played over the modes.

Major chords follow the formula 1-3-5-7. Both Ionian and Lydian modes contain these notes; therefore either mode can be used.

Minor chords follow the formula 1-b3-5-b7. Dorian, phrygian, and aeolian all contain that formula, therefore any one of them can be played.

Dominant chords use the formula 1-3-5-b7. Only the Mixolydian mode flats the 7th without flattening the 3rd.

Diminished chords use the formula 1-b3-b5 and minor7b5 chords use the formula (1-b3-b5-b7). The only mode with a b5 is the locrian mode; therefore it is used over diminished and min7b5 chords.

These 7th chords are part of diatonic harmony too. They are noticeable when you discuss modes in parallel along with chord formulas. The table below expands on the diatonic chord options we discussed earlier. You'll notice that we added chords but some modes are played over the same exact chords. For example, the ii, iii, and vi degree modes can be played over the same chord types.

I	ii	iii	IV	V	vi	vii
Major Major 7	minor minor 7	minor minor 7	Major Major 7	Major Dominant 7	minor minor 7	diminished minor 7b5

When using seventh chords without extensions, use the following chart to find a compatible mode.

Chord Quality	Mode
Major, Major 7	Ionian, Lydian
Minor, Minor 7	Dorian, Phrygian, Aeolian
Major, Dominant 7	Mixolydian
Diminished, Minor7b5	Locrian

## Chord Extensions

Chord extensions can throw a small wrench in this simplistic approach because they use the 2nd, 4th, and 6th degrees of a scale (also known as the 9th, 11th, and 13th). The following general rules apply if you have a chord with a 9th, 11th, and 13th

If a major chord uses an 11th, use Ionian over Lydian since the Lydian mode has a sharp 11 (or 4th).

For all dominant chords, use Mixolydian.

With minor chord extensions, use dorian by default

If the minor chord has a b13, play aeolian or phrygian.

If the minor chord has a b9, use phrygian.

Chord extensions are advanced harmonies. If you're new to modes, remember that the mode options go down as the chord complexity goes up. Once you've mastered playing over seventh chords, you can be more selective with chord extensions.

Mode options go down as the chord complexity goes up.

## How to Play the Modes

Make sure you fully understand the theory above. Without it, modes will not feel useful. The good news is that modes are often a rut-breaker because they enable you to play in new and exciting ways.

## Mode Patterns in a Key or Series

Determine the degree of the mode you wish to play (example: Dorian starts on the 2nd degree).

Choose a box pattern

Use the degree number as the root note of the chosen pattern.

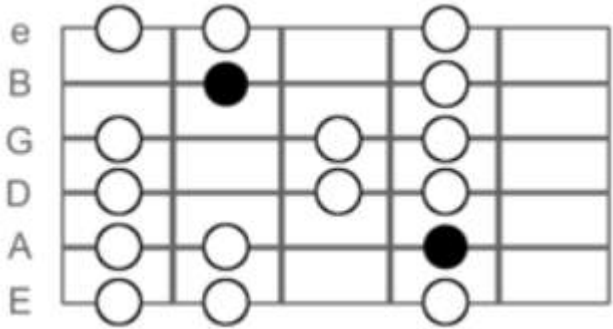
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### Example

- 1) Mixolydian is degree number 5
- 2) Choose a box pattern: Box 1

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B		5		6	
G	2		3	4	
D	6		7	1	
A	3	4		5	
E	7	1		2	

- 3) Chosen pattern rooted on the degree number. Notice how the root notes (black dots) are the 5th degrees of the major scale



## Mode Patterns in Parallel

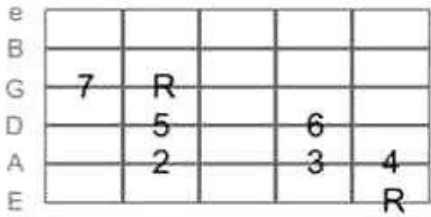
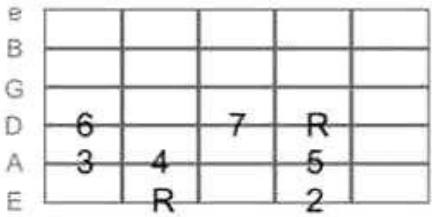
To apply the modes in parallel to patterns, we can take the two basic single-octave major scale (Ionian mode) patterns and modify them for each mode. See the table below for the two basic patterns for each mode.

You can combine the two patterns to create a box pattern or to create a diagonal pattern. Practice moving these patterns to other string sets (don't forget to shift the pattern when you use the 2nd and 1st strings).



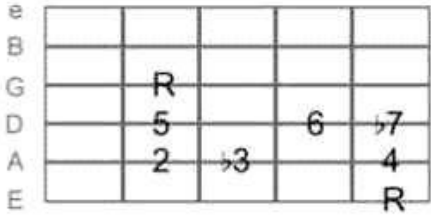
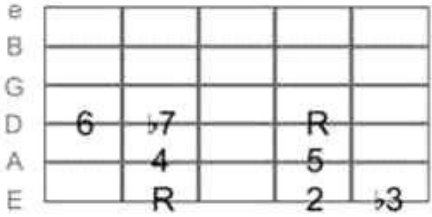
Mode	Pattern 1	Pattern 2
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**Ionian**



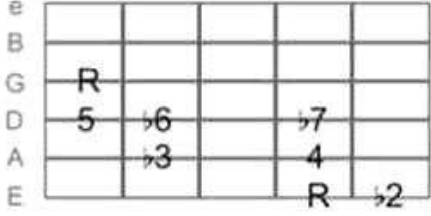
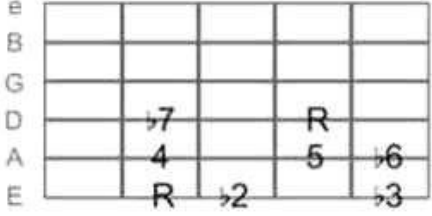
**Dorian**

b3, b7



**Phrygian**

b2, b3, b6, b7



<p><b>Mixolydian</b> b7</p>	<table border="1"> <tr><td>e</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>B</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>G</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>D</td><td>6</td><td>↘7</td><td></td><td>R</td></tr> <tr><td>A</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td></td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td></td><td>R</td><td></td><td>2</td></tr> </table>	e					B					G					D	6	↘7		R	A	3	4		5	E		R		2	<table border="1"> <tr><td>e</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>B</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>G</td><td></td><td>R</td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>D</td><td></td><td>5</td><td></td><td>6</td></tr> <tr><td>A</td><td></td><td>2</td><td></td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>E</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>4</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>R</td></tr> </table>	e					B					G		R			D		5		6	A		2		3	E				4					R					
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## Conclusion

Modes are easy to learn from a pattern standpoint, but have a lot of depth in their usage. Take your time to play and listen to the notes you use as you play the diatonic progressions. This is the only way that you will truly learn to use the modes effectively.