

## Plectrum Banjo Modal Scale Compendium

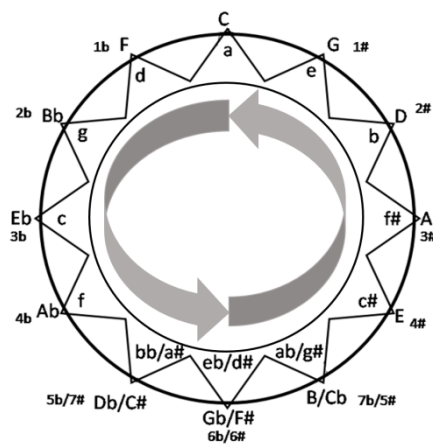
This scale compendium is meant to be a companion to my article in the Spring 2017 edition of BMG magazine; much important information for its use will be found there and *not repeated here*. I highly recommend the magazine! It is a professional publication aimed at serious players of all fretted instruments.

I have previously provided many valid answers for the question of “*why learn scales?*” This compendium asks a deeper question; “*why learn all of them?*” Only by learning *all of them* will you have a *complete* understanding of not only your instrument, *but of music itself!* The more-valid question *here* is “*do I need to practice all of them?*” In this regard I will give you a bit of a break; for the purpose of learning about music, *familiarization* will do (so do it at least once).

During your banjo familiarization tour, it is hoped that you will quickly realize the *physical benefits* of practicing scales—an exercise you have likely *never* subjected your fingers to before—and will be encouraged to make them a regular part of your practice routine (one key a day? Only takes 5 minutes. . .). Once you have learned the full set of Modal Scales (seven of them) *in one key*, it is simply a matter of moving to another area of the banjo fingerboard to play the others. Another benefit is the terminology that you will learn along the way, which will help you learn more going forward.

One very effective practice motivation strategy is to *imagine* how *good* a banjo musician you would be if you simply *knew all this stuff*, and could apply it to your everyday music (that’s what keeps *me* moving!). If you like *that* thought, then set *that ideal* as your goal! I have no magic wand—“*Voila; you are a musician!*”; *only you* can take the brave first step of *learning* and the follow-on steps of *practicing* and *internalizing*.

The scales are presented in Circle of 5<sup>th</sup>s order (in accordance with commonly-accepted Classical practice), which is also how you should learn them; don’t skip over the “dark side of the moon” (the strange keys)! This is done to also provide some instruction and ear training on *that* very-important musical concept. You will notice that the circle starts with the key of C at the top, goes through all of the keys, and eventually returns by logical steps to C. C is the “5” or “dominant” of F (5<sup>th</sup> degree of the F scale—notated with a Roman numeral; V); F is the V of Bb; Bb is the V of Eb; Eb > Ab; Ab > Db; Db > Gb; F# > B; B > E; E > A; A > D; D > G; and finally, G > C. For an idea of what this natural movement sounds like, play *and sing* these examples:



Circle of 5<sup>th</sup>s notes

I have only included one octave in all of these scales (ascending only), and to save further space, have limited them to the 2-2-2 (the most practical) and 3-3-3 (the most

complete) variants; the other scales are fingered exactly like the C scales, which are shown in all four variants, ascending and descending. Realize that the fingering patterns remain the same throughout (except in G, where there are open strings); many keys don’t fit entirely one octave on the fingerboard (in a practical range *without* open strings), so they are moved down one octave at varying points.

With the sincere hope that you dive in and tackle this monster, a little advice; take it slowly! Learn one scale at a time, then practice them *as a set* in Mode order (in the key of C); once you feel comfortable with that, the rest of the keys will easily fall into place. You will soon be amazed at the sheer number of unique scales that *you—YOU!*—know how to play (84 to be exact, each with *four* variants)!

# Modal Scales for the Plectrum Banjo

The key of C is shown in all four variants; all the rest are limited to the 2-2-2 and 3-3-3 variants (ascending only) to save space. Simply apply the same 3-1-3 and 3-2-3 fingerings found in C to the rest for a complete exercise. Each pattern has it's own unique use in music.

**C C Ionian (Major)**

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

2-2-2      3-1-3      3-2-3      3-3-3

**D Dorian (Minor with sharped 6th)**

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

2-2-2      3-1-3      3-2-3      3-3-3

**E Phrygian (Minor with flatted 2nd)**

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

2-2-2      3-1-3      3-2-3      3-3-3

**F Lydian (Major with sharped 4th)**

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

2-2-2      3-1-3      3-2-3      3-3-3

**G Mixolydian (Major with flatted 7th)**

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

2-2-2      3-1-3      3-2-3      3-3-3

**A Aeolian (Natural Minor: This is down one octave to make it easier to read and play.)**

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

2-2-2      3-1-3      3-2-3      3-3-3

**B Locrian (Minor with flatted 2nd and 5th)**

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

2-2-2      3-1-3      3-2-3      3-3-3

**F** F Ionian (Major) G Dorian A Phrygian Bb Lydian

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

C Mixolydian D Aeolian E Locrian

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

**Bb** Bb Ionian (Major) C Dorian D Phrygian Eb Lydian

1 3 1 2 1 3 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 2 4 1 3 2 4 1 3 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 2 3 1 3 2 3 1 2 4 1 3 4 1 3 4 1 3 1 3 1 3 1 2  
 3-5 3-4 3-5 3-5 7-4-6-8 7-8-10 5-7 4-6 5-7 5-7 8-6-8-10 8-10-12 7-8 6-8 7-8 7-8 10-8-10-11 10-12-13 8-10 8-10 8-10 8-10

F Mixolydian G Aeolian A Locrian

4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 3 1 2 1 3 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 2 4 1 3 2 3 1 3 4 1 3 4 1 2 4 2 3 1 3 1 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 3 4  
 12 10-11-13 12-13-15 10-12 10-12 10-12 14 11-13-15 13-15-17 12-14 11-13 12-13 12-14 15 13-15-16 15-17-19 2-3 1-3 2-3 5-3-4-6 5-7-8

**Eb** Eb Ionian (Major) F Dorian G Phrygian Ab Lydian

1 3 1 2 1 3 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 2 4 1 3 2 4 1 3 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 2 3 1 3 2 3 1 2 4 1 3 4 1 3 4 1 3 1 3 1 3 1 2  
 8-10 8-9 8-10 8-10 12-9-11-13 12-13-15 10-12 9-11 10-12 10-12 13-11-13-15 13-15-17 12-13 11-13 12-13 12-13 15-13-15-16 15-17-18 1-3 1-3 1-3 1-3

Bb Mixolydian C Aeolian D Locrian

4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 3 1 2 1 3 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 2 4 1 3 2 3 1 3 4 1 3 4 1 2 4 2 3 1 3 1 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 1 3 4  
 5-3-4-6 5-6-8 3-5 3-5 7-4-6-8 6-8-10 5-7 4-6 5-6 5-7 8-6-8-9 8-10-12 7-8 6-8 6-8 7-8 10-8-9-11 10-12-13

# Ab

Ab Ionian (Major)

Bb Dorian

C Phrygian

Db Lydian

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

1-3 1-2 1-3 1-3 5-2 4-6 5-6 8 3-5 2-4 3-5 3-5 6-4 6-8 6-8 10 5-6 4-6 5-6 5-6 8-6 8-9 8-10 11 6-8 6-8 6-8 6-8

Eb Mixolydian

F Aeolian

G Locrian

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

8-9 11 10-11 13 8-10 8-9 8-10 12-9 11-13 11-13 15 10-12 9-11 10-12 13 11-13 14 13-15 17 12-13 11-13 12-13 15 13-14 16 15-17 18

# Db

Db Ionian (Major)

Eb Dorian

F Phrygian

Gb Lydian

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

6-8 6-7 6-8 6-8 10 7-9 11 10-11 13 8-10 7-9 8-10 11 9-11 13 11-13 15 10-11 9-11 10-11 13 11-13 14 13-15 16 11-13 11-13 11-13 11-13

Ab Mixolydian

Bb Aeolian

C Locrian

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

15 13-14 16 15-16 18 13-15 13-14 13-15 17-14 16-18 16-18 20 3-5 2-4 3-4 3-5 6 4-6 7 6-8 10 5-6 4-6 4-6 5-6 8 6-7 9 8-10 11

# Gb

Gb Ionian (Major)

Ab Dorian

Bb Phrygian

Cb Lydian

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

11-13 11-12 11-13 15 12-14 16 15-16 18 13-15 13-15 12-14 13-15 16 14-16 18 16-18 20 3-4 2-4 3-4 6 4-6 7 6-8 9 4-6 4-6 4-6

Db Mixolydian

Eb Aeolian

F Locrian

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

8 6-7 9 8-9 11 6-8 6-7 6-8 6-8 10 7-9 11 9-11 13 8-10 7-9 8-9 8-10 11 9-11 12 11-13 15 10-11 9-11 10-11 13 11-12 14 13-15 16

**F#** **F# Ionian (Major)** **G# Dorian** **A# Phrygian** **B Lydian**

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

11-13 11-12 11-13 15-12-14-16 15-16-18 13-15 12-14 13-15 16-18-20 14-16-18 16-18-20 3-4 2-4 3-4 6-4-6-7 6-8-9 4-6 4-6 4-6

Note: Gb and F# are the same notes and fingerings, but with different "spellings"; this is important for music reading and music theory purposes, and is why they are both shown.

**C# Mixolydian** **D# Aeolian** **E# Locrian**

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

8 6-7-9 8-9-11 6-8 6-7 6-8 6-8 10 7-9-11 9-11-13 8-10 7-9 8-10 9-11-12 11-13-15 10-11 9-11 10-11 13-12-14 13-15-16

**B** **B Ionian (Major)** **C# Dorian** **D# Phrygian** **E Lydian**

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

4-6 4-5 4-6 4-6 8-5-7-9 8-9-11 6-8 5-7 6-8 6-8 9-7-9-11 9-11-13 8-9 7-9 8-9 8-9 11-9-11-12 11-13-14 9-11 9-11 9-11 9-11

**F# Mixolydian** **G# Aeolian** **A# Locrian**

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

13 11-12-14 13-14-16 11-13 11-12 11-13 15-12-14-16 14-16-18 13-15 12-14 13-15 16-14-16-17 16-18-20 3-4 2-4 3-4 6-4-5-7 6-8-9

**E** **E Ionian (Major)** **F# Dorian** **G# Phrygian** **A Lydian**

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

9-11 9-10 9-11 9-11 13-10-12-14 13-14-16 11-13 10-12 11-13 14-12-14-16 14-16-18 13-14 12-14 13-14 16-14-16-17 16-18-19 2-4 2-4 2-4

**B Mixolydian** **C# Aeolian** **D# Locrian**

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

6 4-5-7 6-7-9 4-6 4-5 4-6 8-5-7-9 7-9-11 6-8 5-7 6-7 6-8 9-7-9-10 9-11-13 8-9 7-9 7-9 8-9 11-9-10-12 11-13-14

**A**

**A Ionian (Major)** **B Dorian** **C# Phrygian** **D Lydian**

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

2-4 2-3 2-4 2-4 6 3-5-7 6-7-9 4-6 4-6 7-5-7-9 7-9-11 6-7 5-7 6-7 9 7-9-10 9-11-12 7-9 7-9 7-9

**E Mixolydian** **F# Aeolian** **G# Locrian**

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

9-10-12 11-12-14 9-11 9-10 9-11 13 10-12-14 12-14-16 11-13 10-12 11-12 14 12-14-15 14-16-18 13-14 12-14 12-14 13-14 16 14-15-17 16-18-19

**D**

**D Ionian (Major)** **E Dorian** **F# Phrygian** **G Lydian**

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

7-9 7-8 7-9 11 8-10-12 11-12-14 9-11 9-10 9-11 12 10-12-14 12-14-16 11-12 10-12 11-12 14 12-14-15 14-16-17 12-14 12-14 12-14

**A Mixolydian** **B Aeolian** **C# Locrian**

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

16 14-15-17 16-17-19 2-4 2-4 6 3-5-7 5-7-9 4-6 4-6 7 5-7-8 7-9-11 6-7 5-7 6-7 9 7-8-10 9-11-12

**G**

**G Ionian (Major)** **A Dorian** **B Phrygian** **C Lydian**

0 2 0 1 0 2 0 2 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 2 4 1 3 2 4 1 3 4 1 2 4 1 2 4 2 3 1 3 2 3 1 2 4 1 3 4 1 3 4 1 3 1 3 1 3 1 2

This is the only incidence of open strings.

0 2 0 1 0 2 0 2 4 1-3-5 4-5-7 2-4 1-3 2-4 2-4 5 3-5-7 5-7-9 4-5 4-5 7 5-7-8 7-9-10 5-7 5-7 5-7

**D Mixolydian** **E Aeolian** **F# Locrian**

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

9 7-8-10 9-10-12 7-9 7-9 11 8-10-12 10-12-14 9-11 8-10 9-10 9-11 12 10-12-13 12-14-16 11-12 10-12 10-12 11-12 14 12-13-15 14-16-17