Guitar Scale Patterns

Two-octave patterns, root to root.

Modes

Ionian (major) 2
Dorian 3
Phrygian 4
Lydian 5
Mixolydian 6
Aeolian (natural minor) 7
Locrian 8

Modes · 3 notes per string

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Dorian · 3 notes per string 10
Phrygian · 3 notes per string 11
Lydian · 3 notes per string 12
Mixolydian · 3 notes per string 13
Aeolian · 3 notes per string 14
Locrian · 3 notes per string 15

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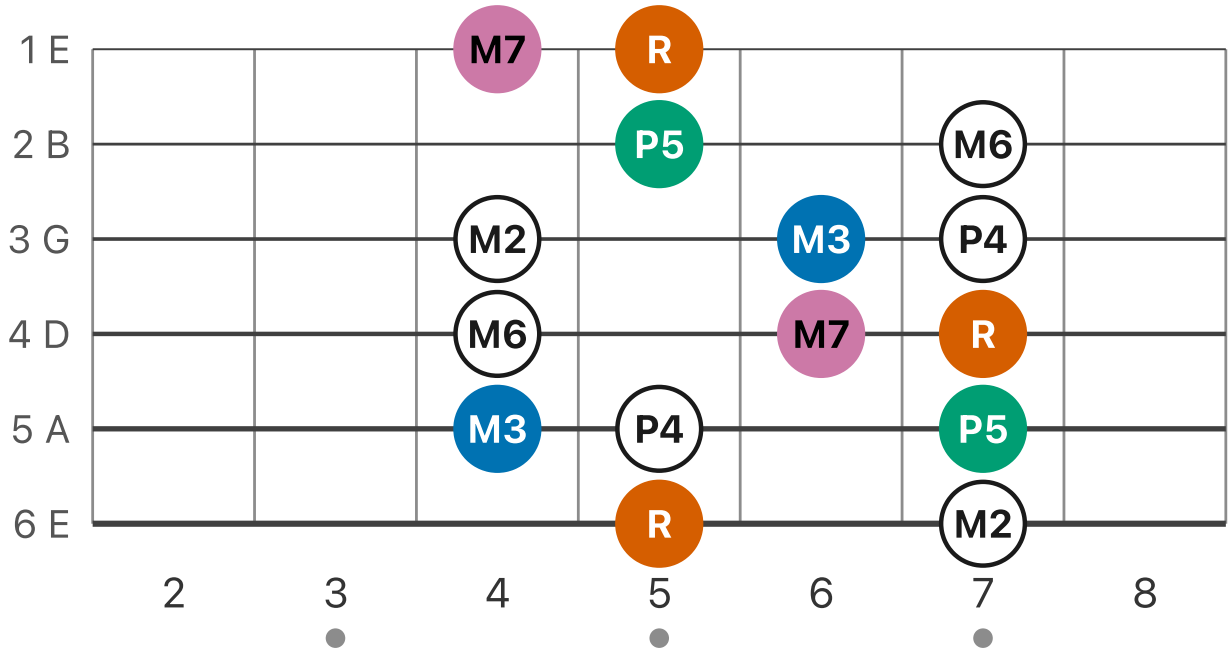
Ionian (major)

1st mode of the major scale

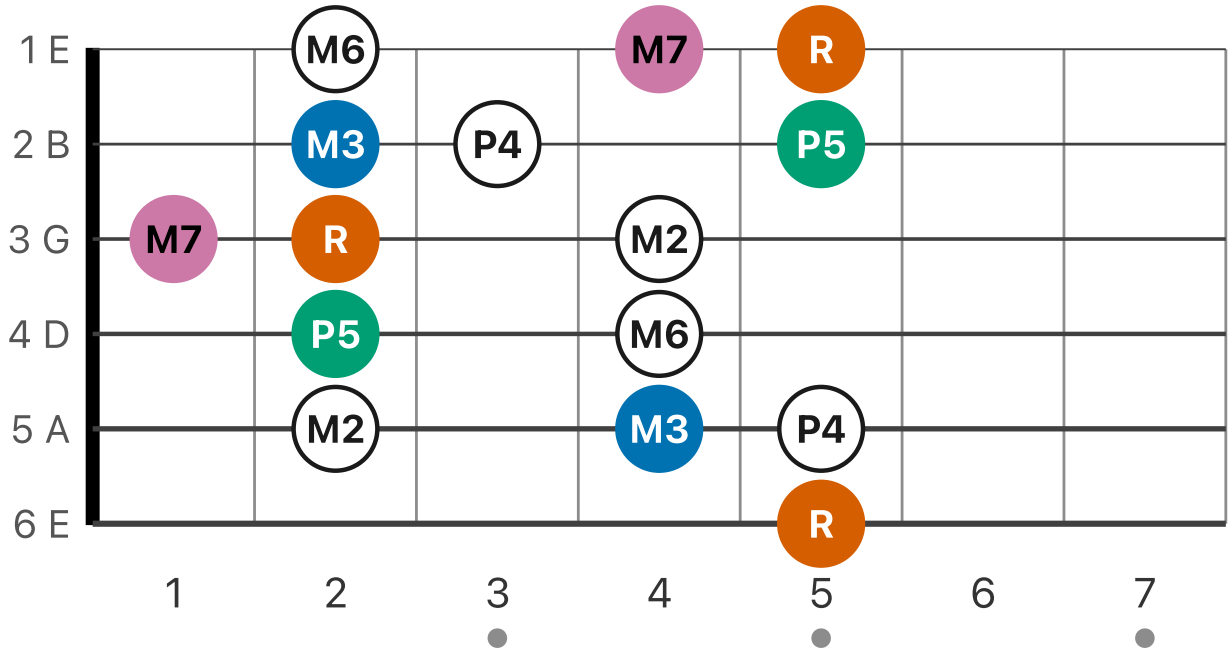
Formula 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **Steps** W W H W W W H

Bright, happy. Use over maj and maj7 chords.

Pattern 1 · root on 6th string, 1st finger (5th fret)



Pattern 2 · root on 6th string, 4th finger (5th fret)



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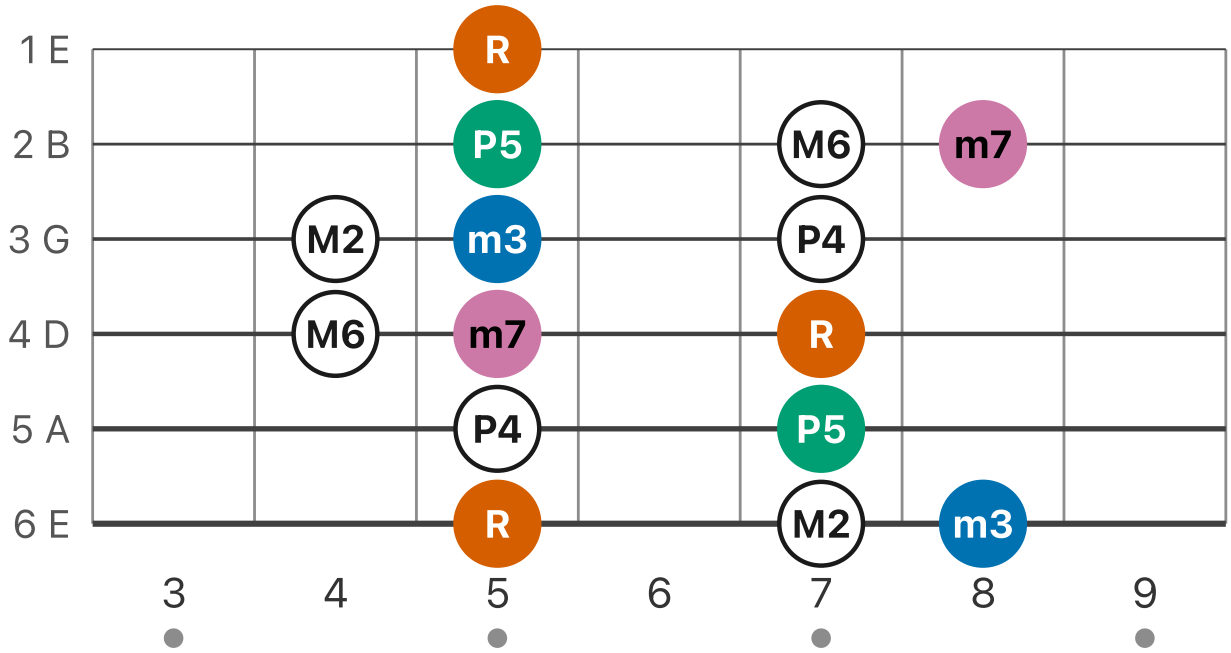
Dorian

2nd mode of the major scale

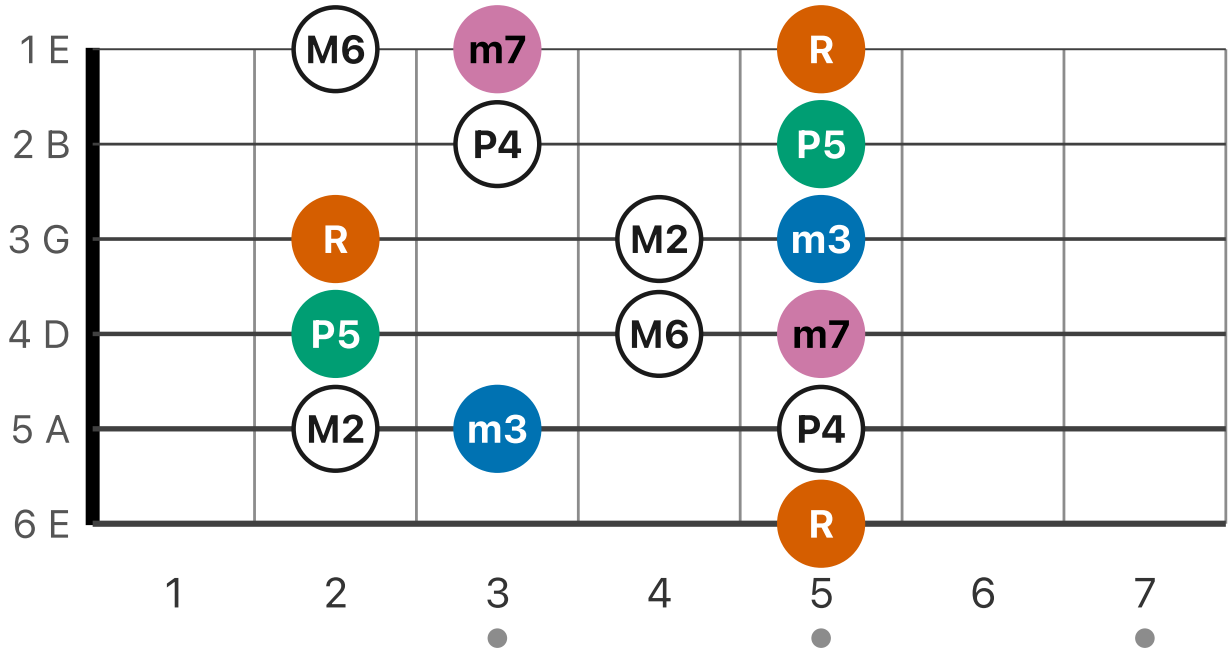
Formula 1 2 ♭3 4 5 6 ♭7 **Steps** W H W W W H W

Minor with a bright 6th. Use over m7 chords. Jazz, funk, Santana.

Pattern 1 · root on 6th string, 1st finger (5th fret)



Pattern 2 · root on 6th string, 4th finger (5th fret)



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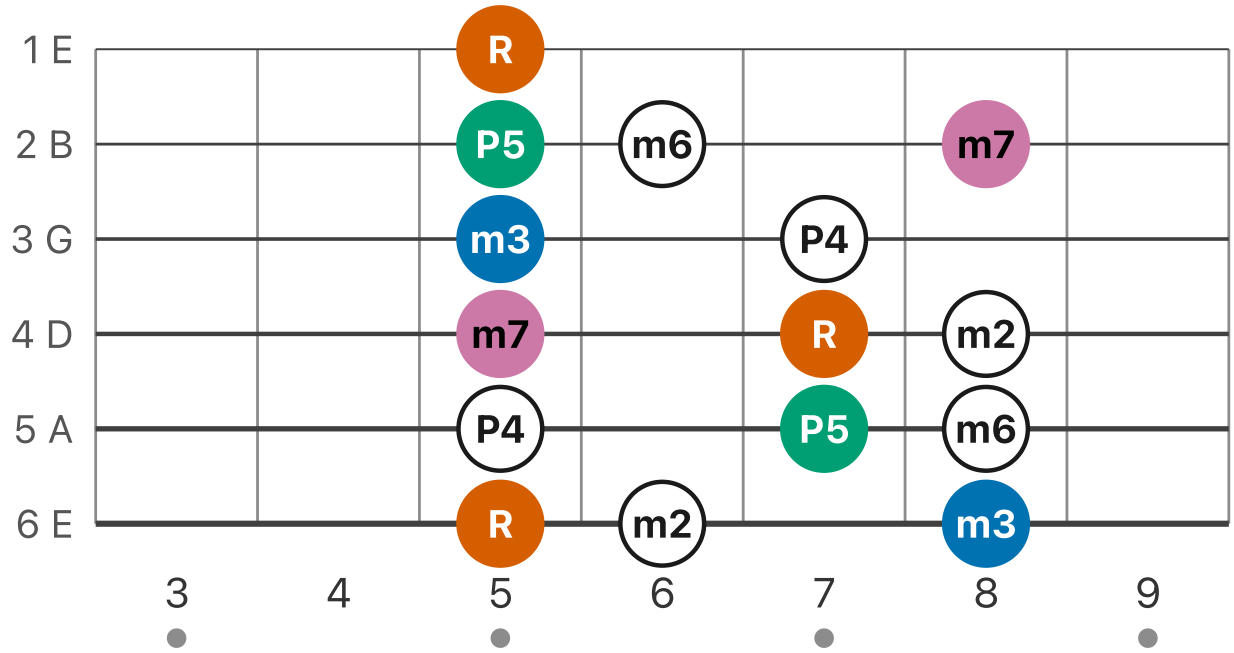
Phrygian

3rd mode of the major scale

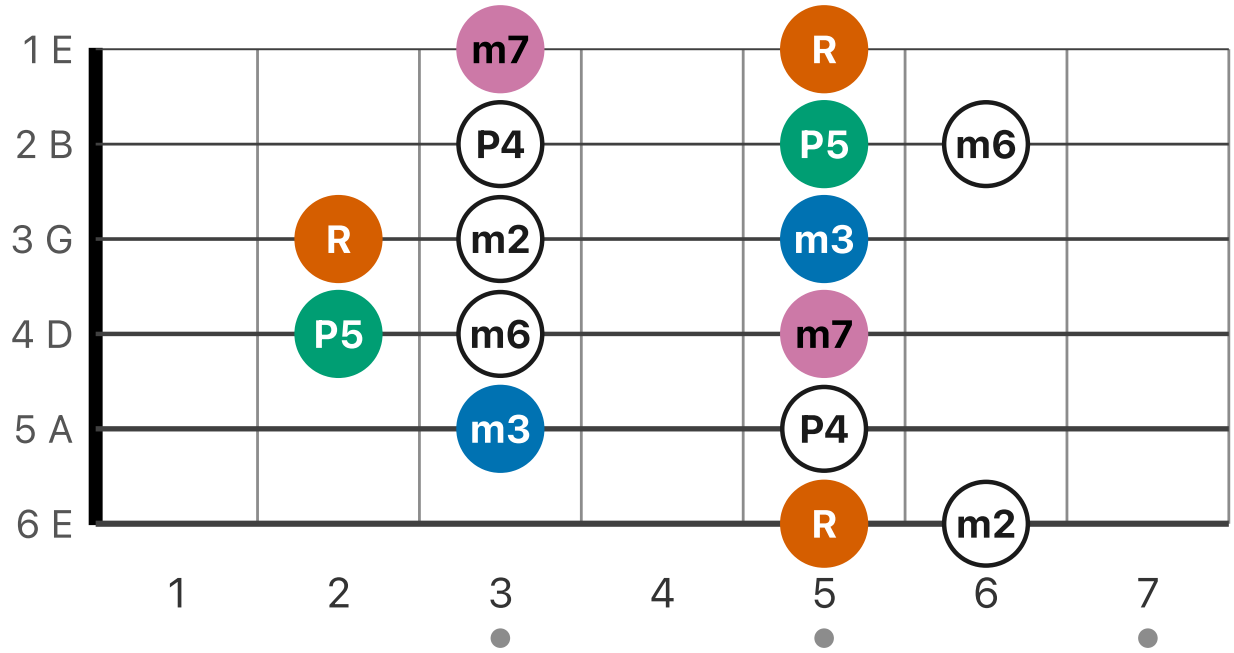
Formula 1 ♭2 ♭3 4 5 ♭6 ♭7 **Steps** H W W W H W W

Dark, Spanish sound from the ♭2. Use over m chords, metal.

Pattern 1 · root on 6th string, 1st finger (5th fret)



Pattern 2 · root on 6th string, 4th finger (5th fret)



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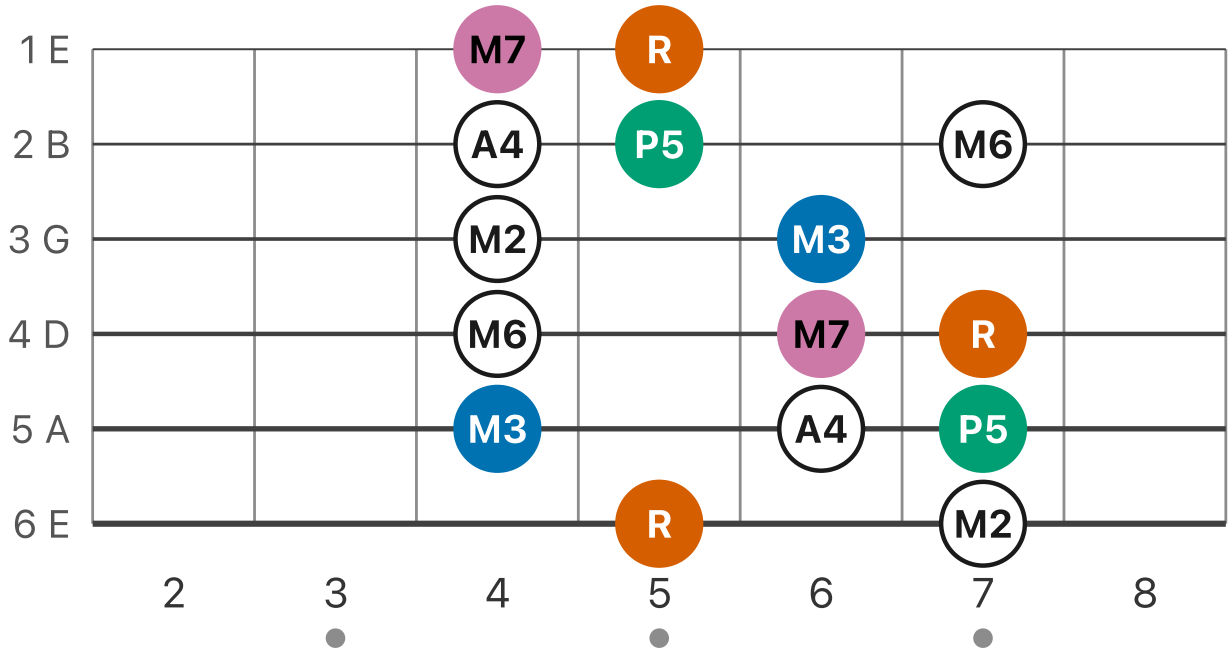
Lydian

4th mode of the major scale

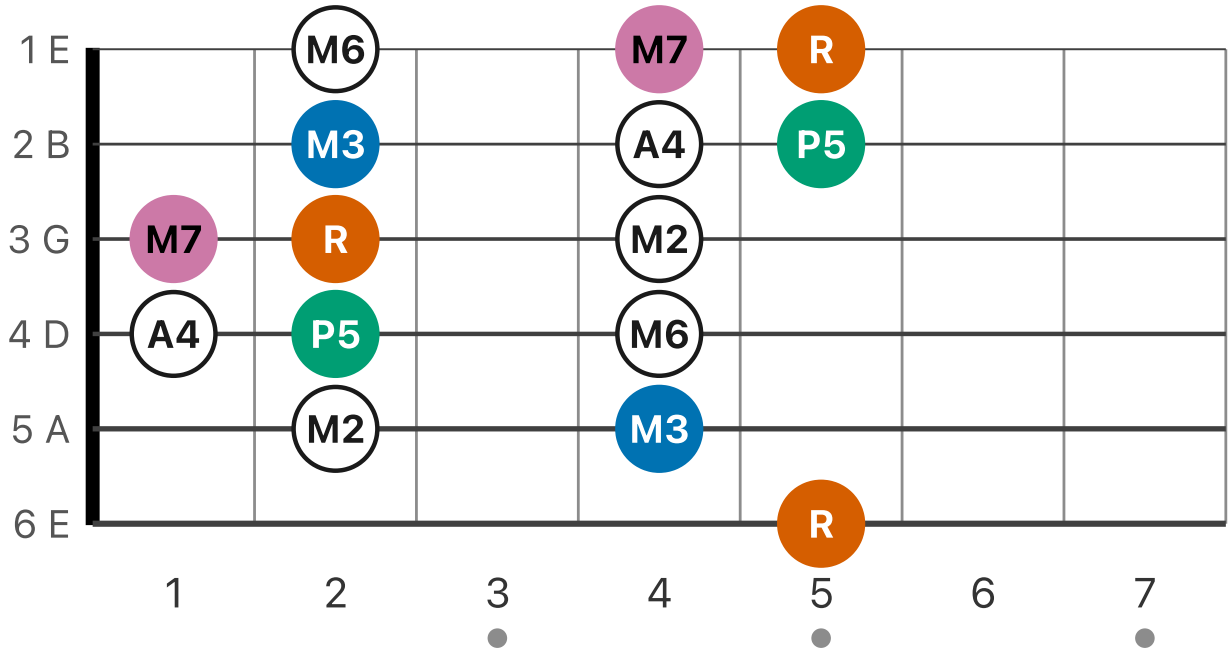
Formula 1 2 3 #4 5 6 7 **Steps** W W W H W W H

Dreamy, floating major from the #4. Use over maj7 chords.

Pattern 1 · root on 6th string, 1st finger (5th fret)



Pattern 2 · root on 6th string, 4th finger (5th fret)



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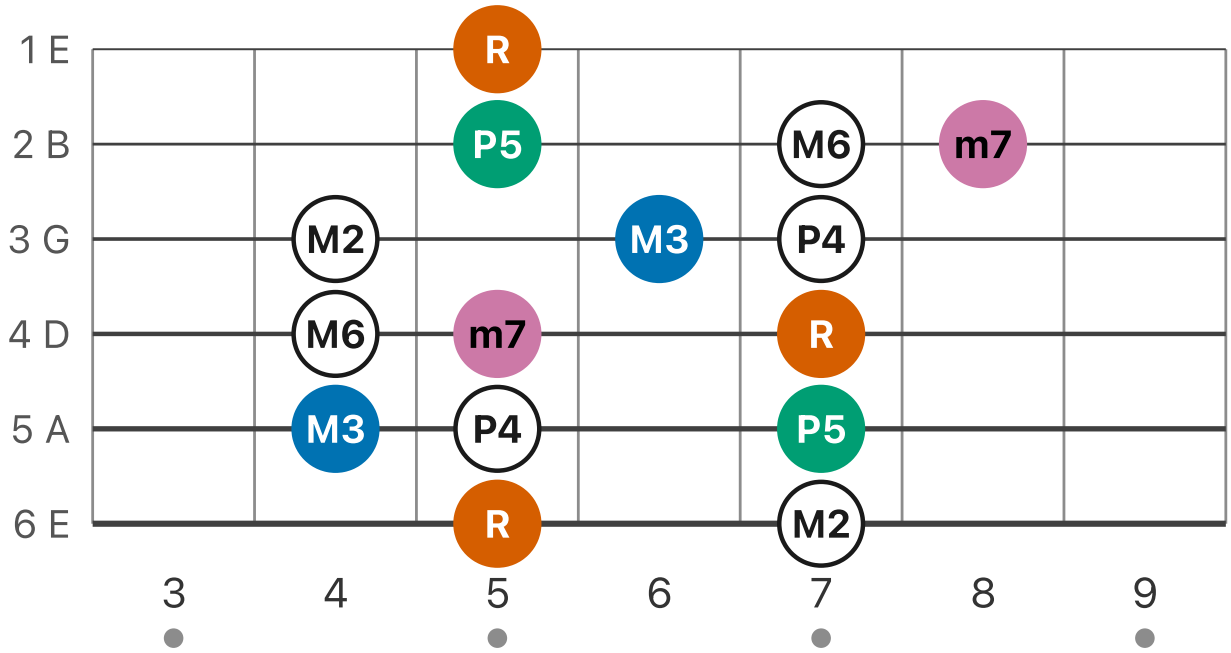
Mixolydian

5th mode of the major scale

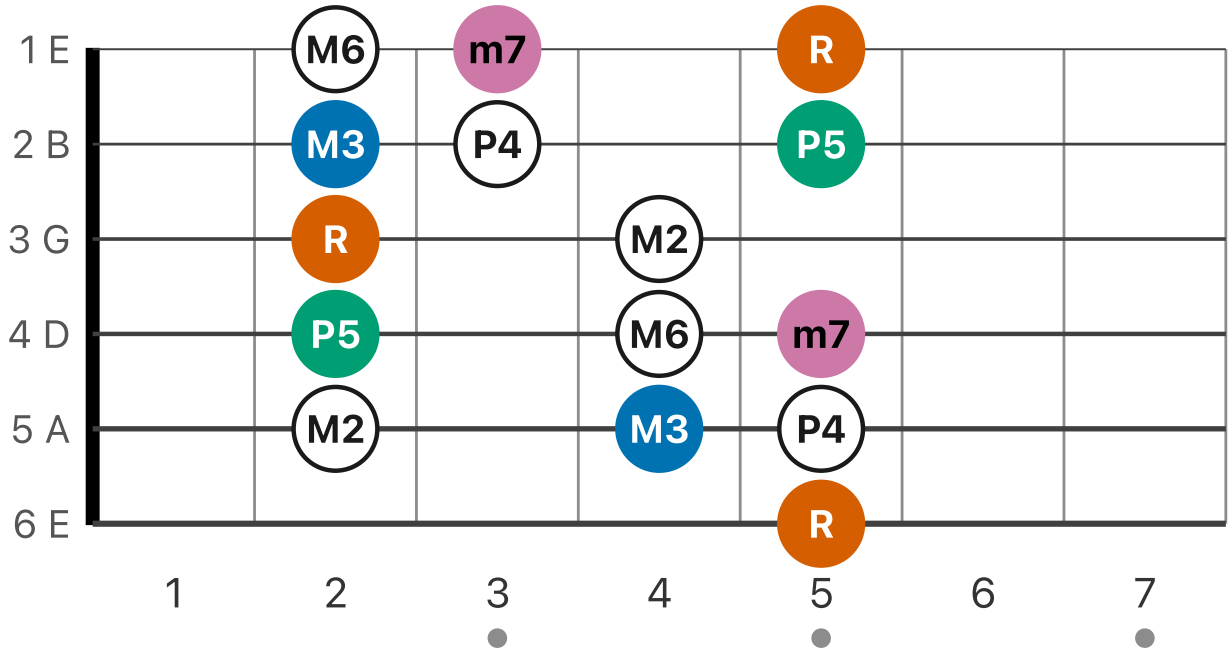
Formula 1 2 3 4 5 6 ♭7 **Steps** W W H W W H W

Major with a ♭7. Use over dominant 7 chords. Blues, rock, country.

Pattern 1 · root on 6th string, 1st finger (5th fret)



Pattern 2 · root on 6th string, 4th finger (5th fret)



Shown in A. Move the root to change key. Root 3rd 5th 7th

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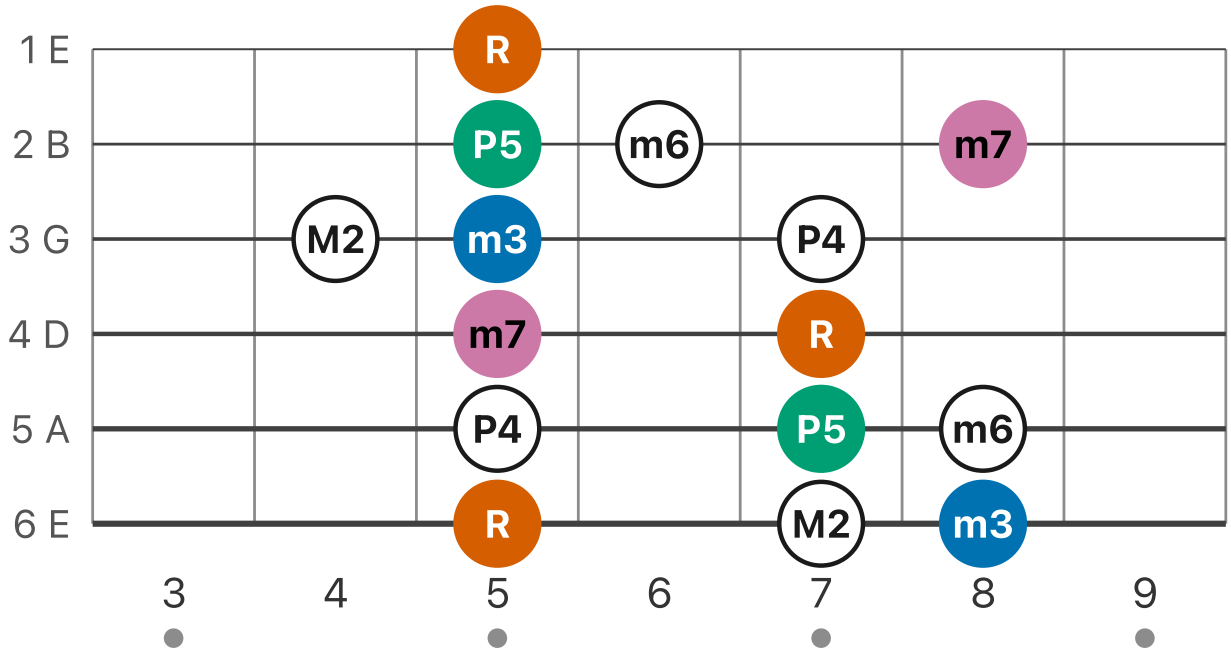
Aeolian (natural minor)

6th mode of the major scale

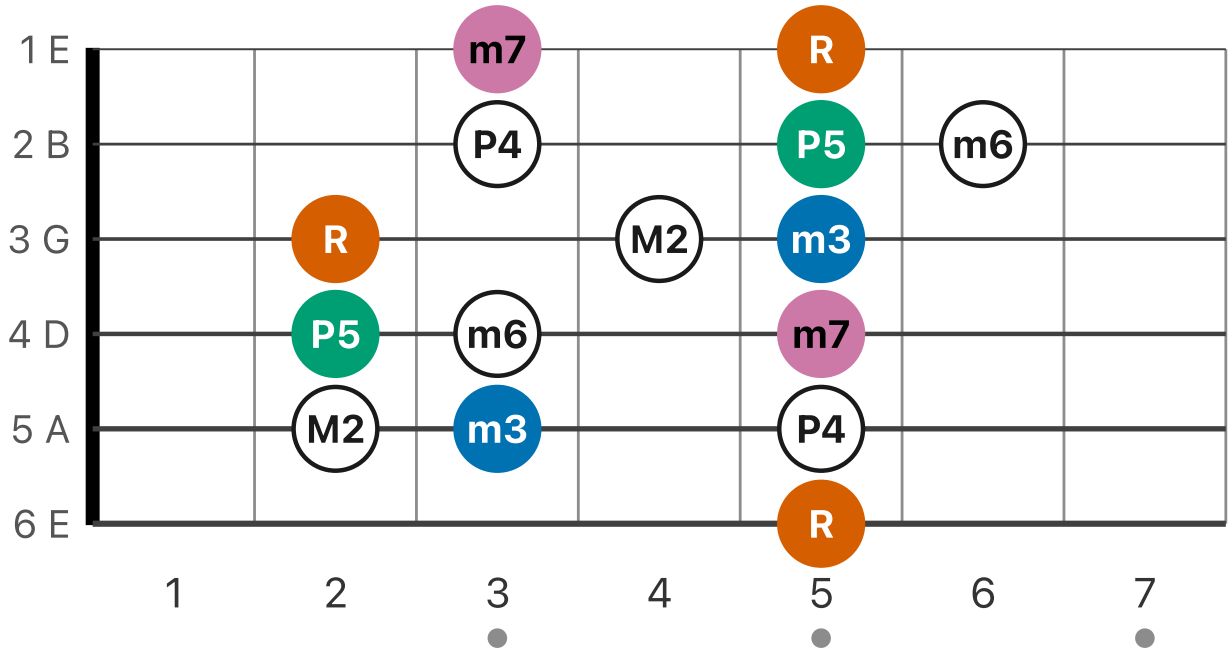
Formula 1 2 ♭3 4 5 ♭6 ♭7 **Steps** W H W W H W W

The standard minor sound: dark, sad. Use over m and m7 chords.

Pattern 1 · root on 6th string, 1st finger (5th fret)



Pattern 2 · root on 6th string, 4th finger (5th fret)



Shown in A. Move the root to change key. Root 3rd 5th 7th

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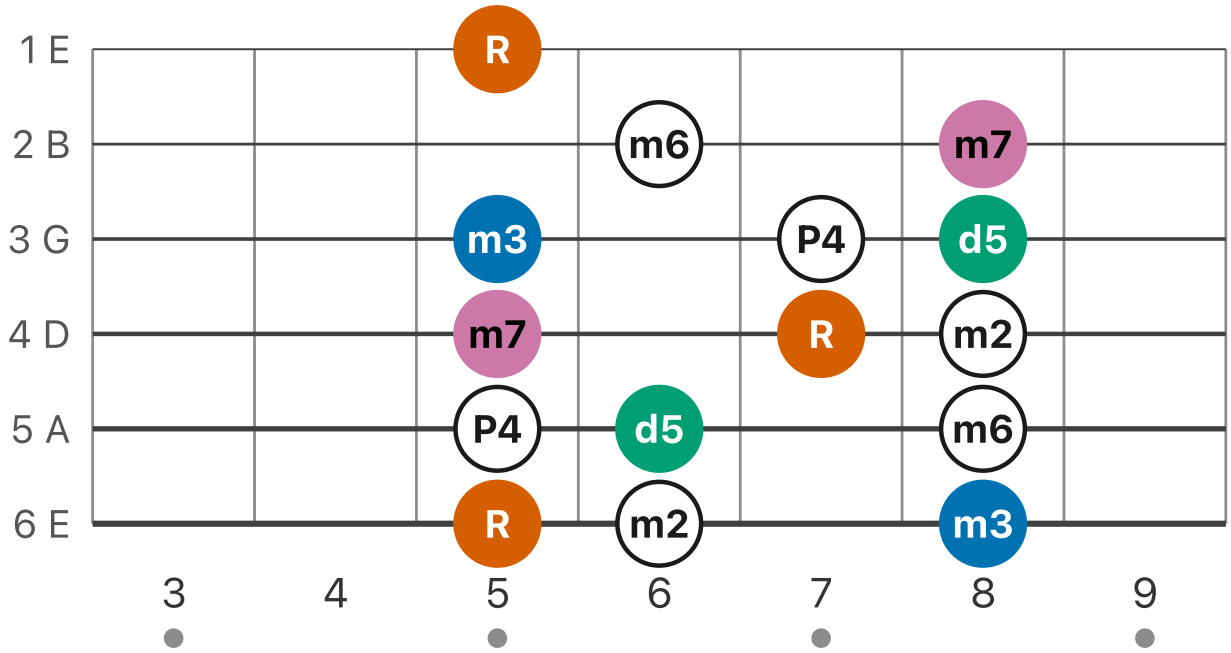
Locrian

7th mode of the major scale

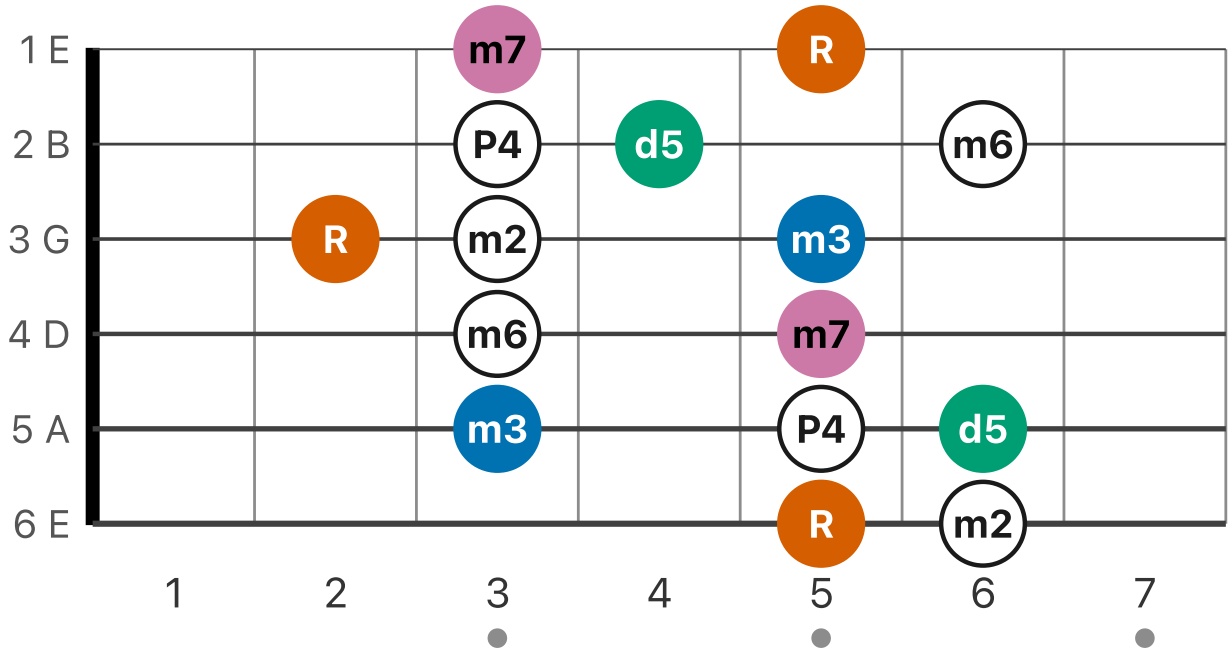
Formula 1 ♭2 ♭3 4 ♭5 ♭6 ♭7 **Steps** H W W H W W W

Unstable, tense. Use over m7♭5 (half-diminished) chords.

Pattern 1 · root on 6th string, 1st finger (5th fret)



Pattern 2 · root on 6th string, 4th finger (5th fret)



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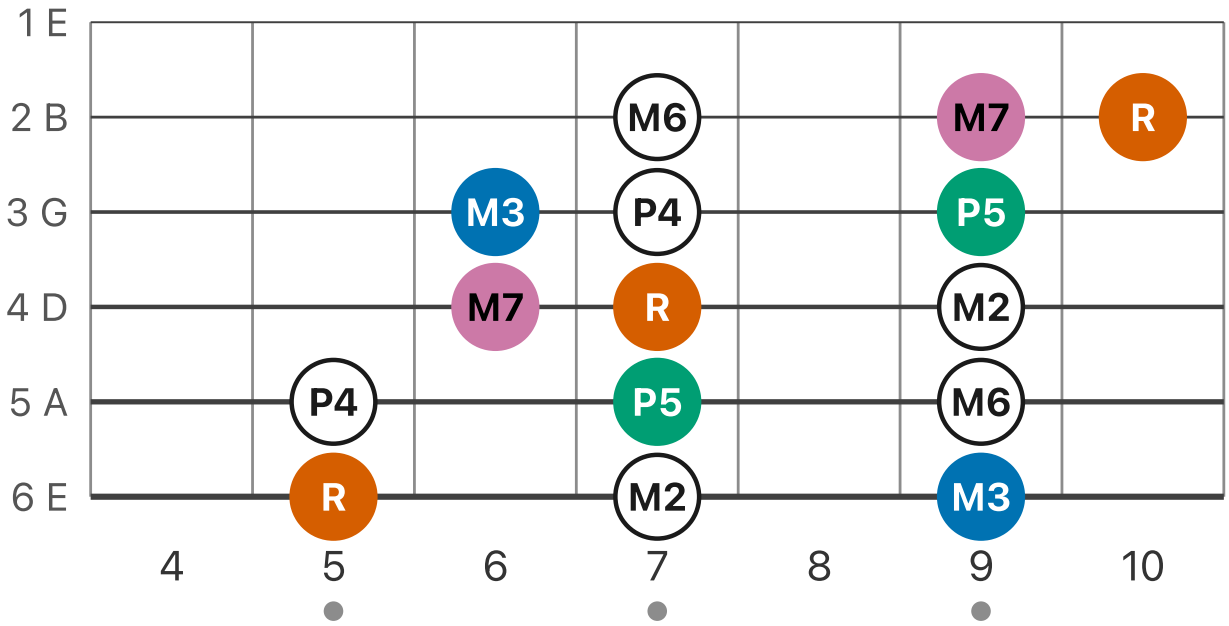
Ionian · 3 notes per string

1st mode of the major scale

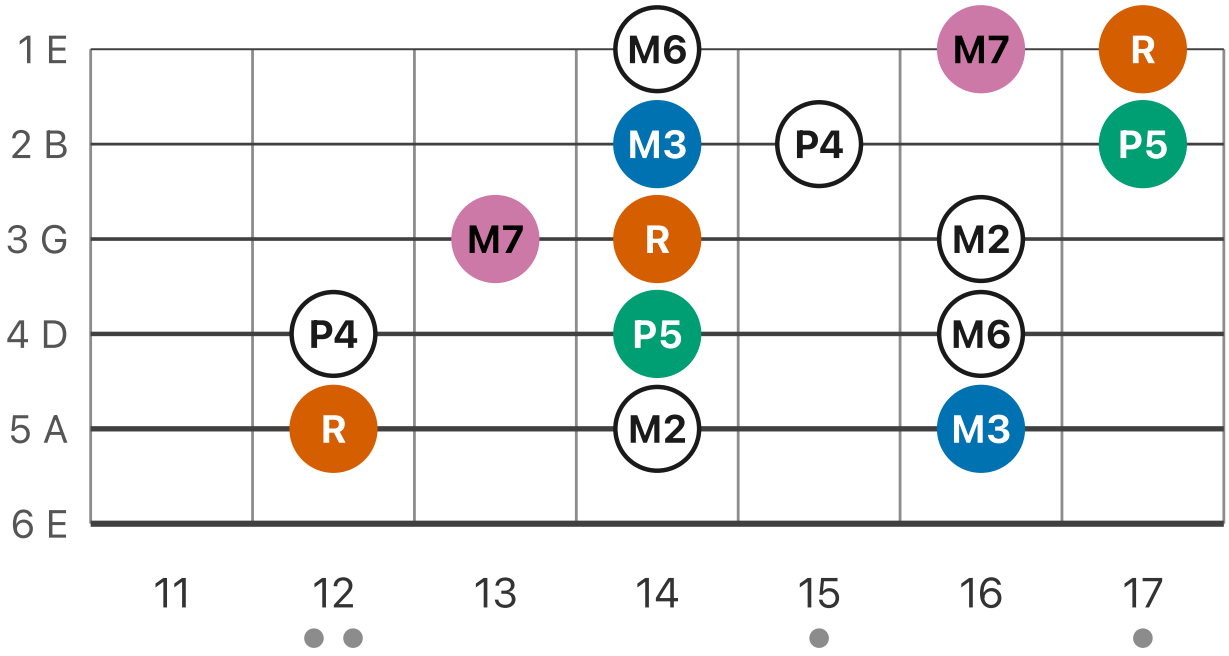
Formula 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **Steps** W W H W W W H

Bright, happy. Use over maj and maj7 chords.

Root on 6th string (5th fret)



Root on 5th string (12th fret)



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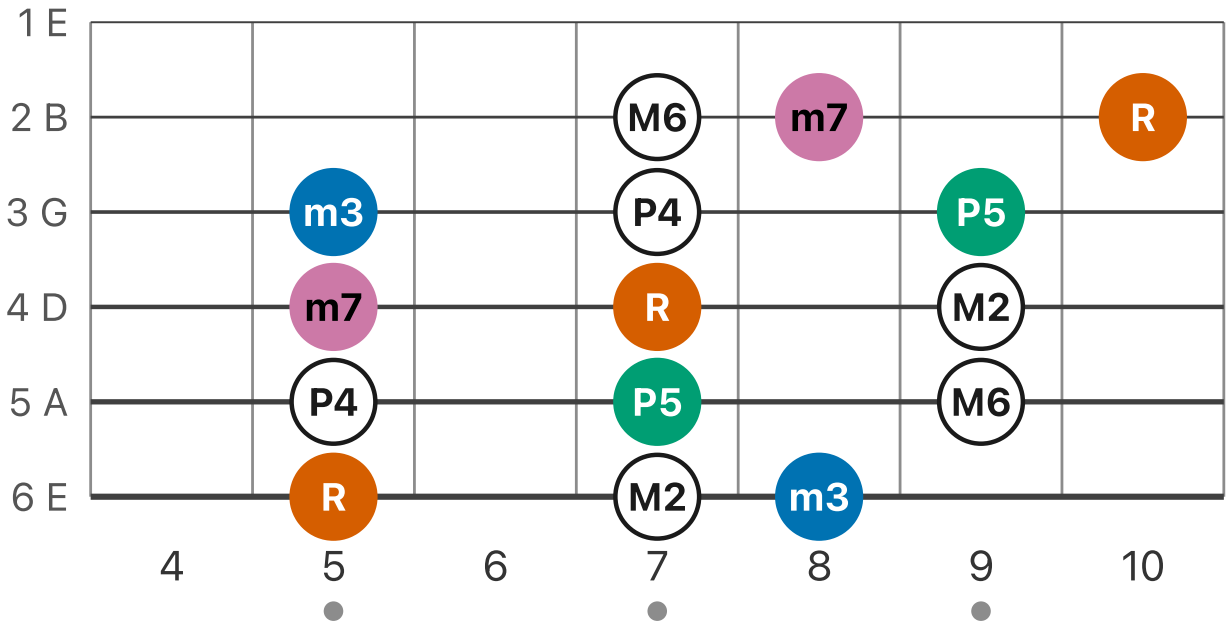
Dorian · 3 notes per string

2nd mode of the major scale

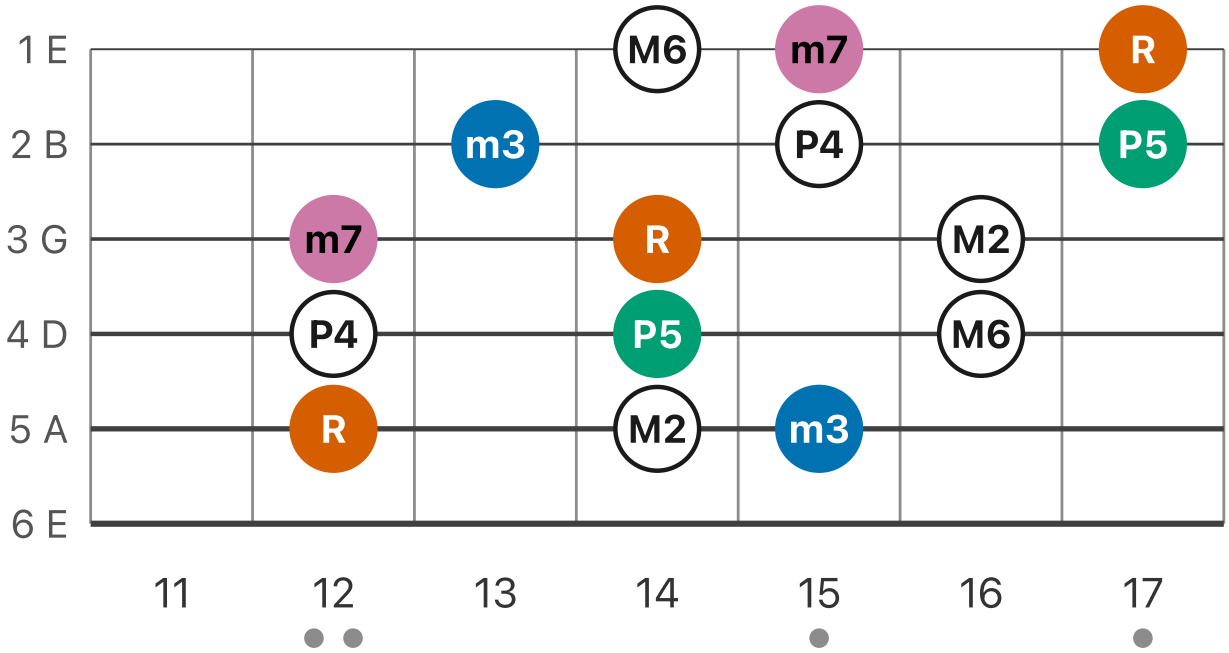
Formula 1 2 ♭3 4 5 6 ♭7 **Steps** W H W W W H W

Minor with a bright 6th. Use over m7 chords. Jazz, funk, Santana.

Root on 6th string (5th fret)



Root on 5th string (12th fret)



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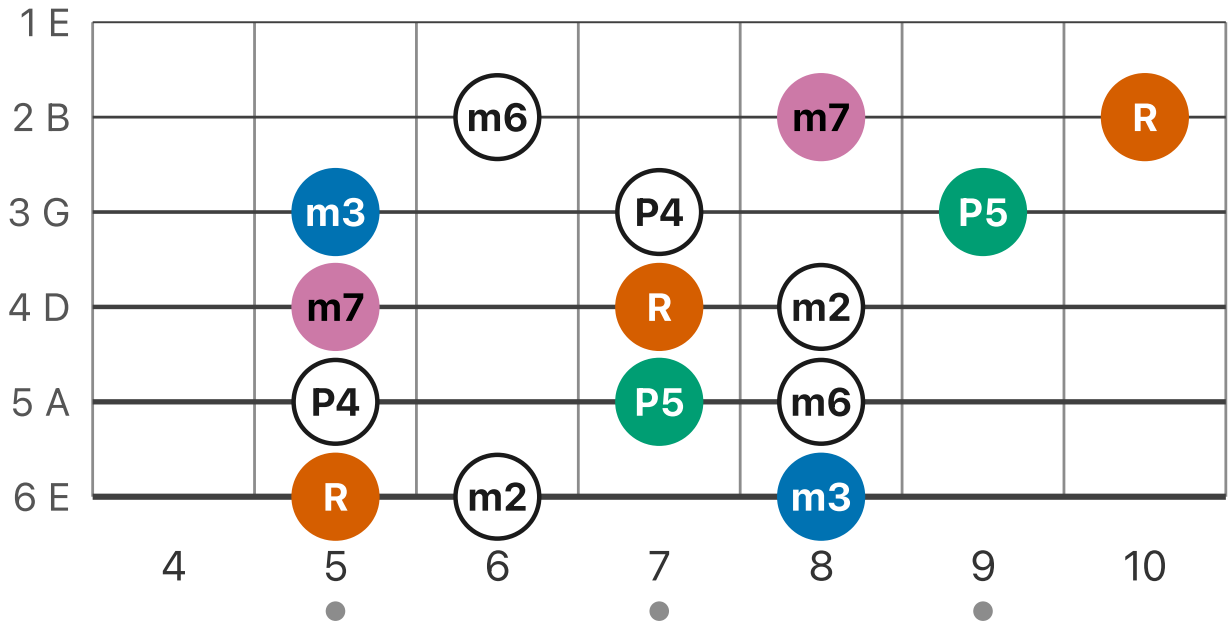
Phrygian · 3 notes per string

3rd mode of the major scale

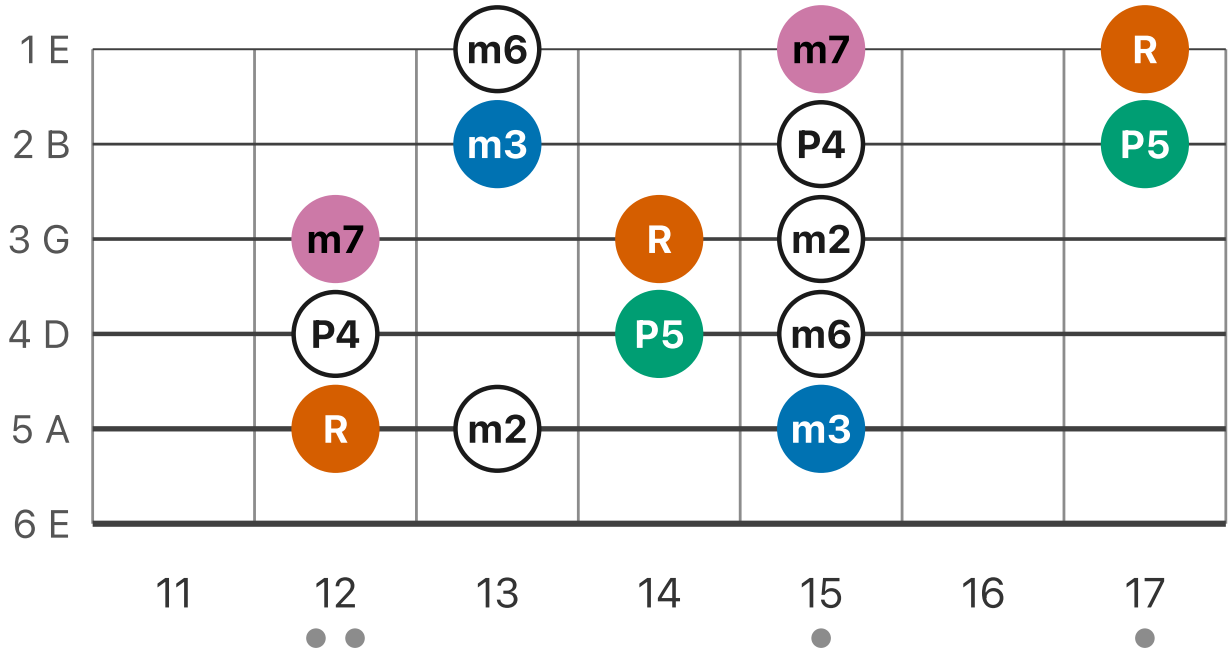
Formula 1 ♭2 ♭3 4 5 ♭6 ♭7 **Steps** H W W W H W W

Dark, Spanish sound from the ♭2. Use over m chords, metal.

Root on 6th string (5th fret)



Root on 5th string (12th fret)



Shown in A. Move the root to change key. Root 3rd 5th 7th

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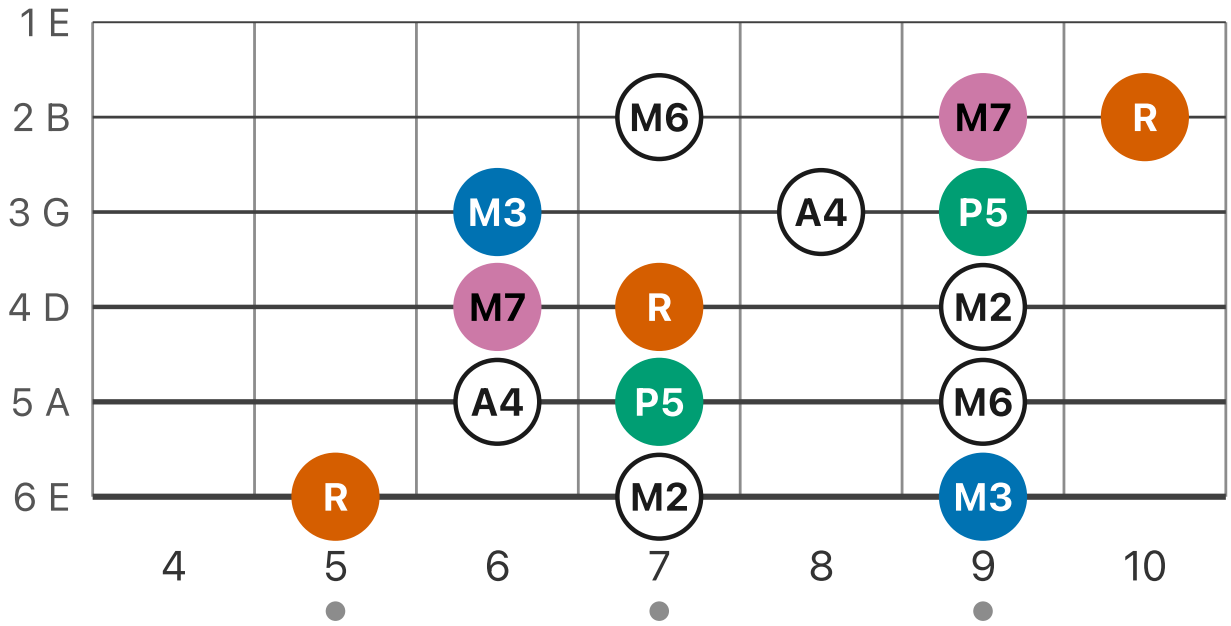
Lydian · 3 notes per string

4th mode of the major scale

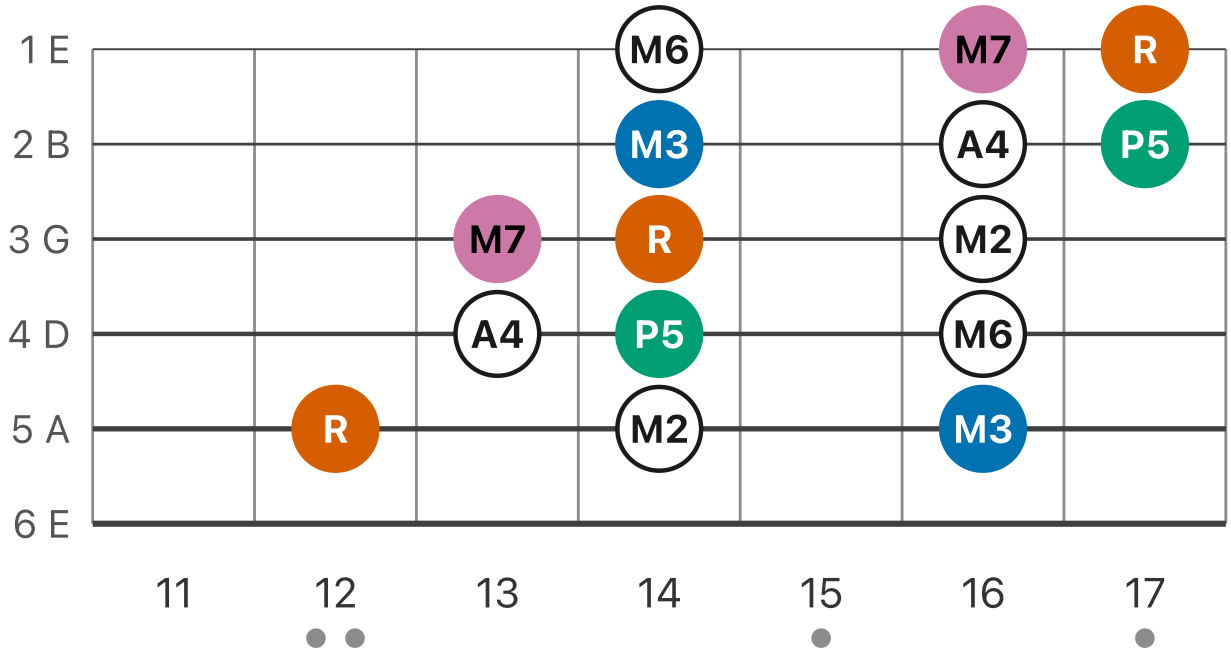
Formula 1 2 3 #4 5 6 7 **Steps** W W W H W W H

Dreamy, floating major from the #4. Use over maj7 chords.

Root on 6th string (5th fret)



Root on 5th string (12th fret)



Shown in A. Move the root to change key. Root 3rd 5th 7th

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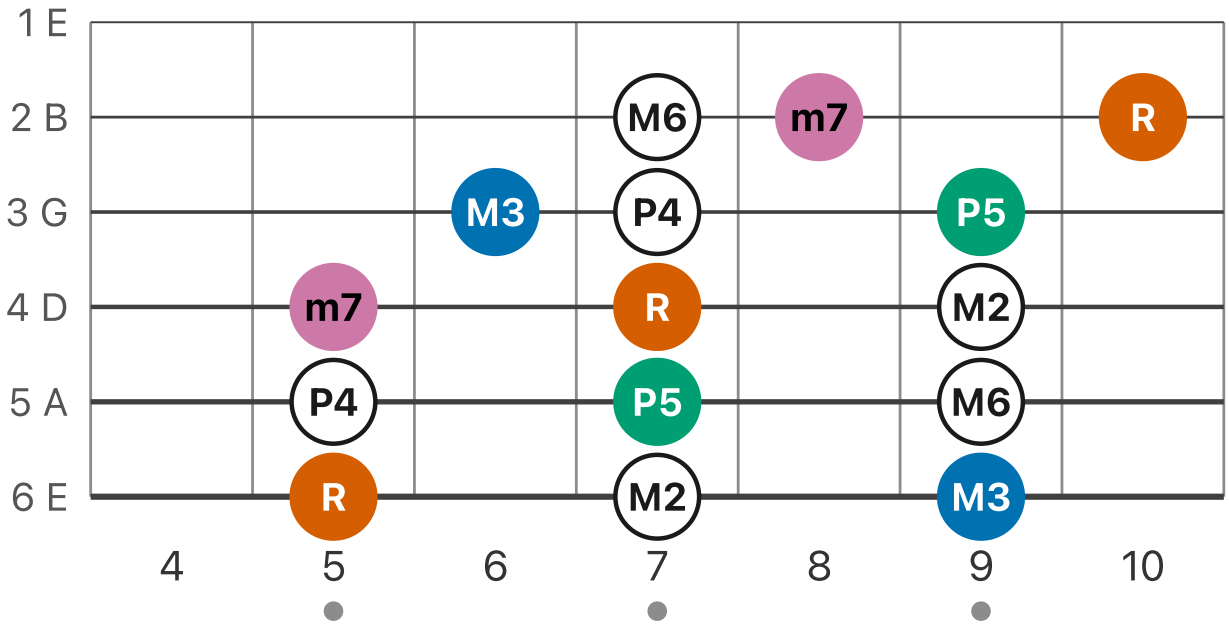
Mixolydian · 3 notes per string

5th mode of the major scale

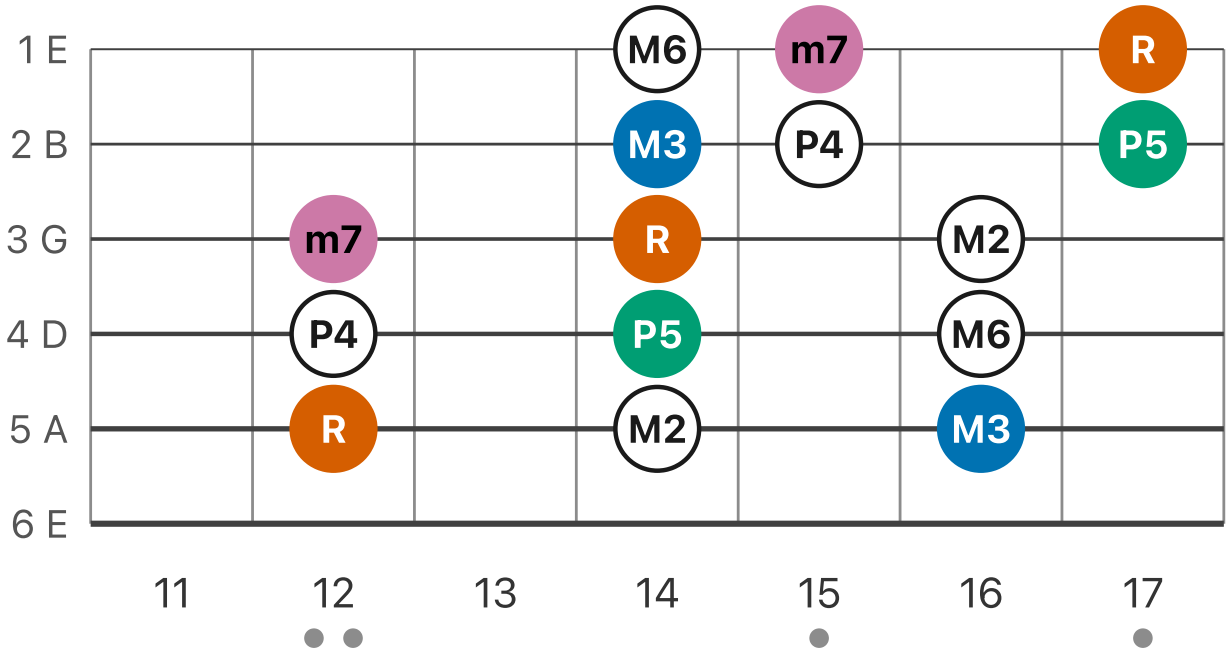
Formula 1 2 3 4 5 6 ♭7 **Steps** W W H W W H W

Major with a ♭7. Use over dominant 7 chords. Blues, rock, country.

Root on 6th string (5th fret)



Root on 5th string (12th fret)



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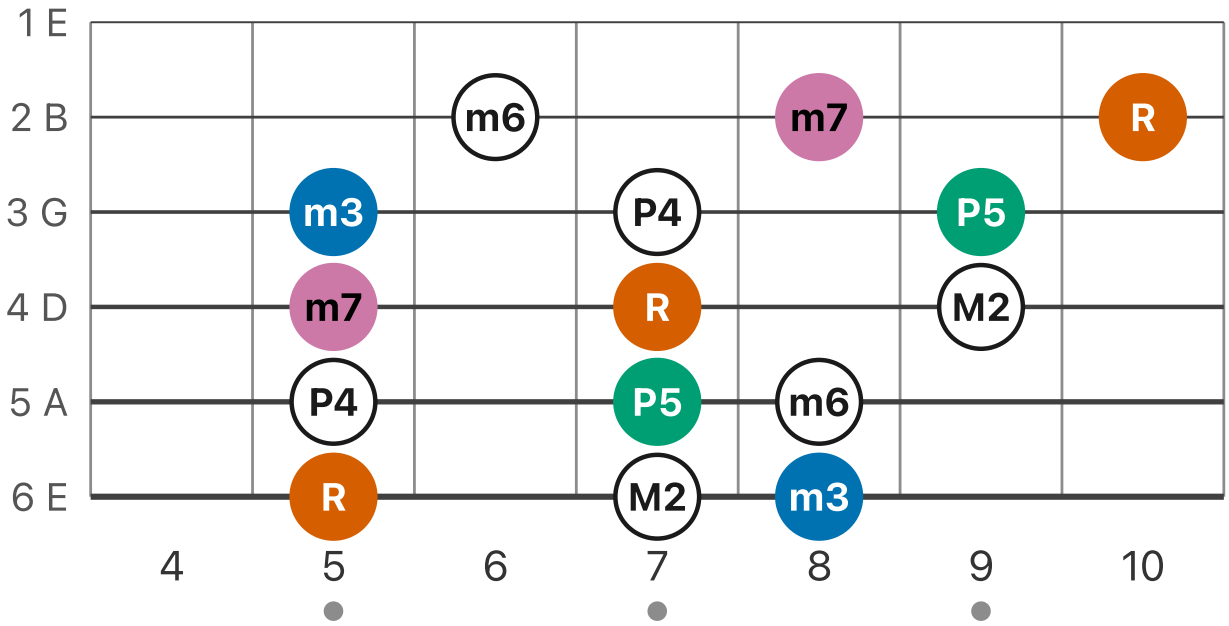
Aeolian · 3 notes per string

6th mode of the major scale

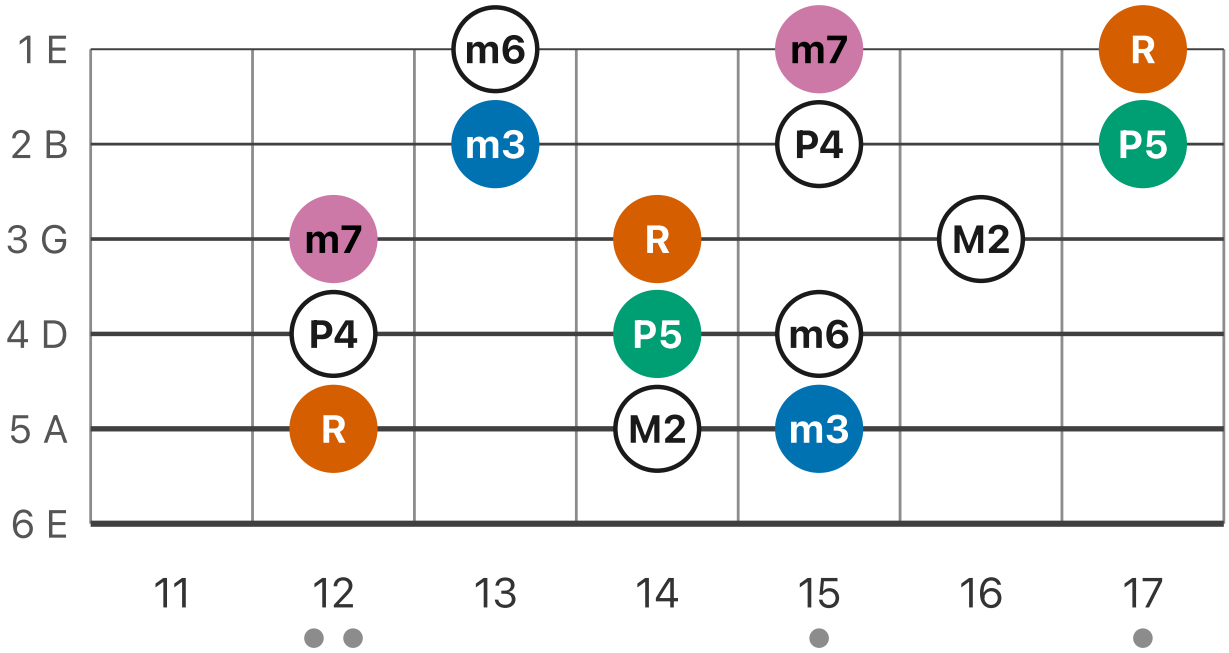
Formula 1 2 ♭3 4 5 ♭6 ♭7 **Steps** W H W W H W W

The standard minor sound: dark, sad. Use over m and m7 chords.

Root on 6th string (5th fret)



Root on 5th string (12th fret)



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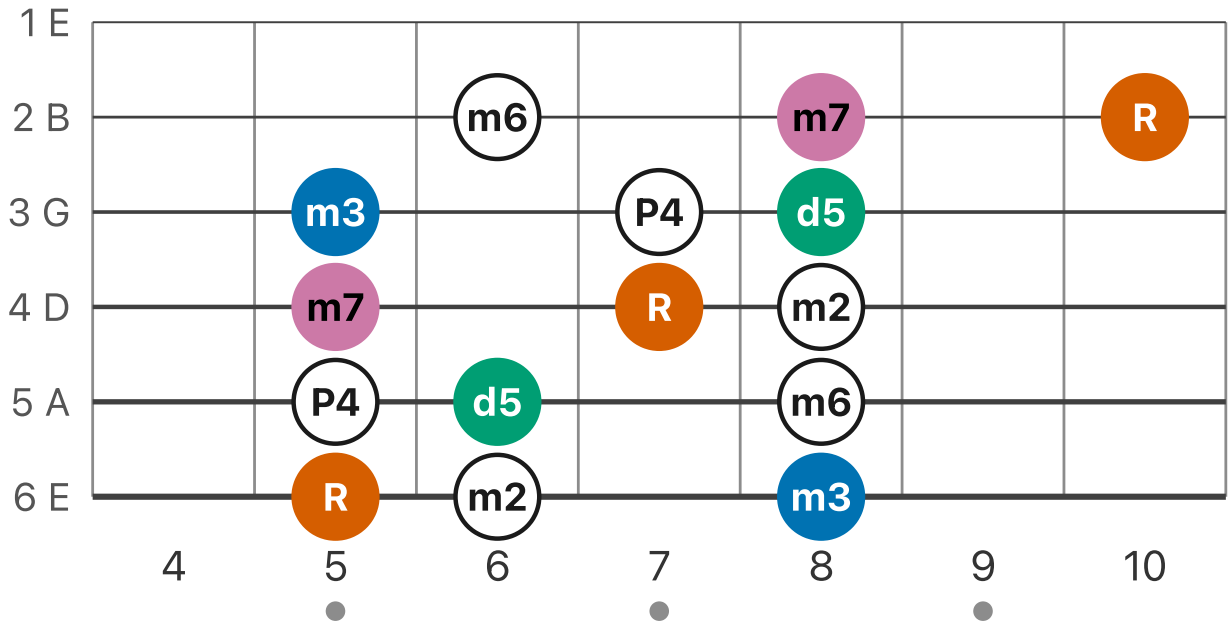
Locrian · 3 notes per string

7th mode of the major scale

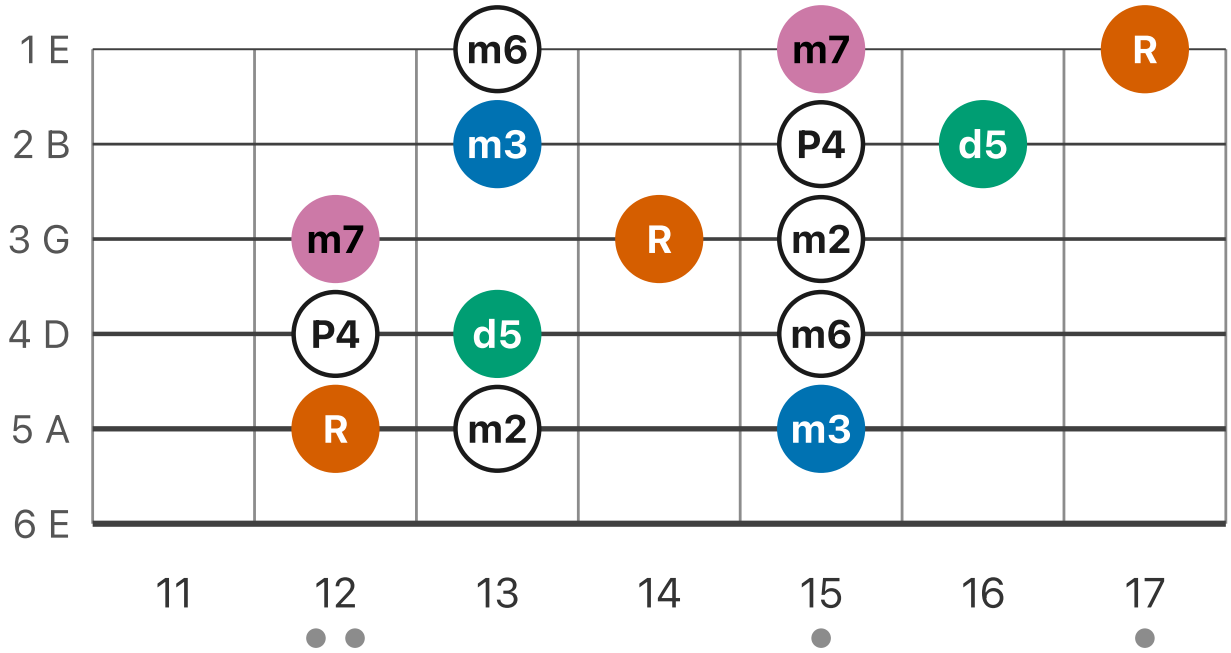
Formula 1 ♭2 ♭3 4 ♭5 ♭6 ♭7 **Steps** H W W H W W W

Unstable, tense. Use over m7♭5 (half-diminished) chords.

Root on 6th string (5th fret)



Root on 5th string (12th fret)



Shown in A. Move the root to change key. Root 3rd 5th 7th

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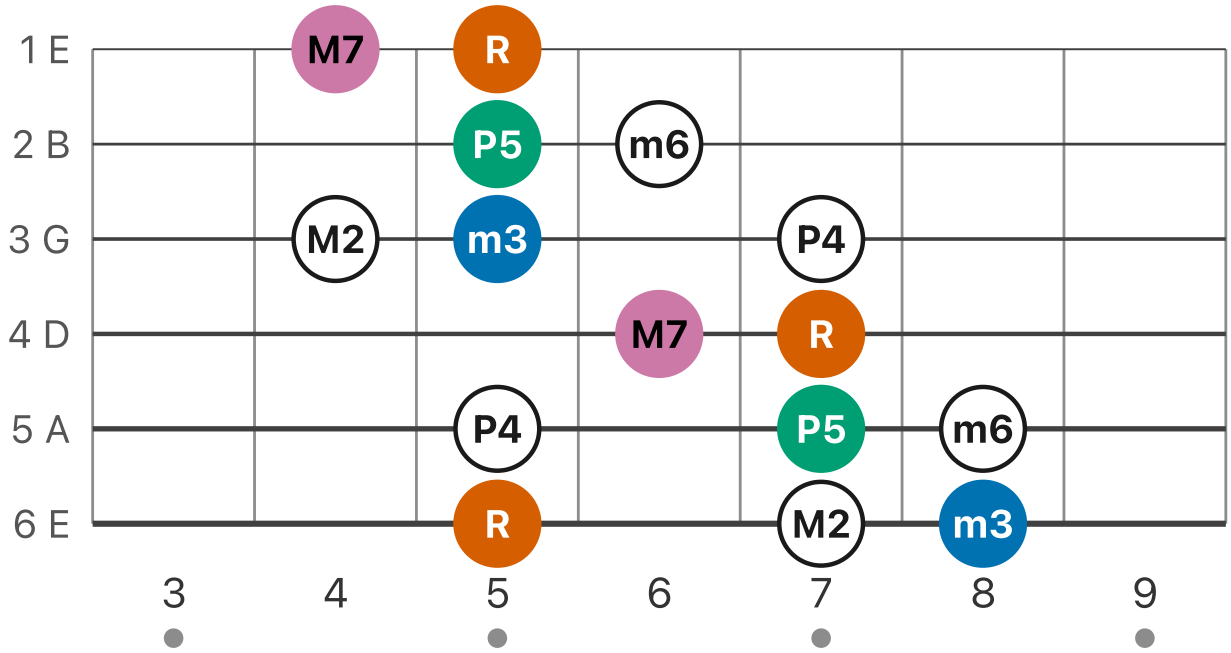
Harmonic minor

Natural minor with a raised 7th

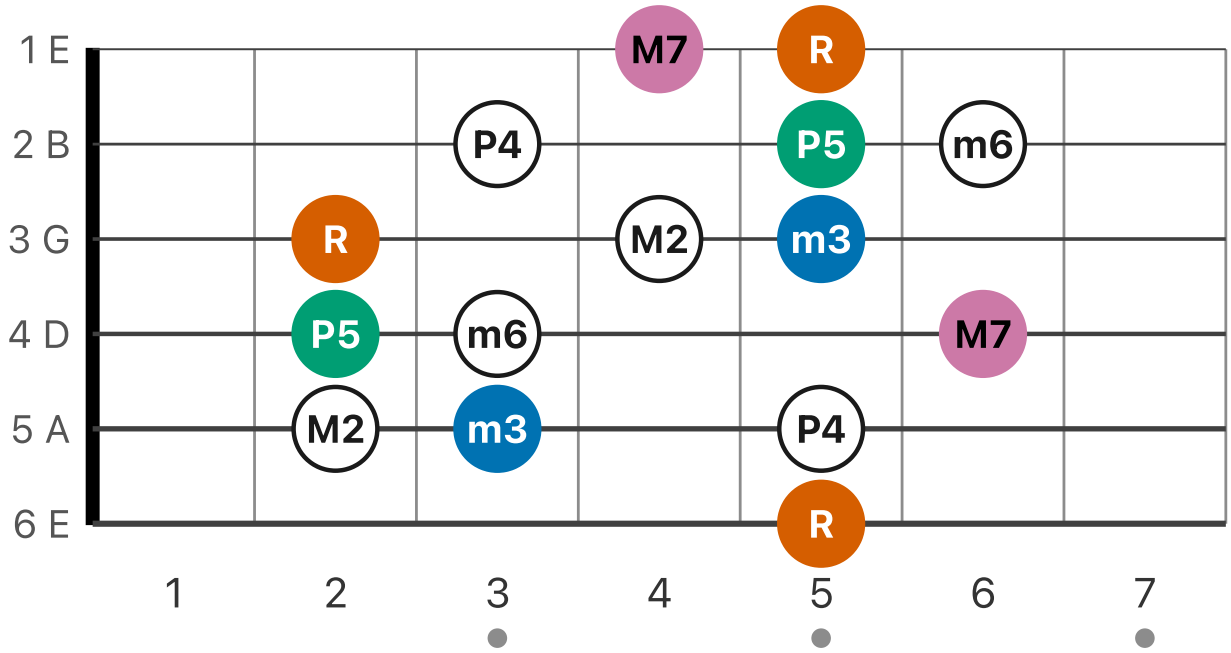
Formula 1 2 ♭3 4 5 ♭6 7 **Steps** W H W W H W+H H

Classical, exotic. The M7 pulls hard to the root over V7–i.

Pattern 1 · root on 6th string, 1st finger (5th fret)



Pattern 2 · root on 6th string, 4th finger (5th fret)



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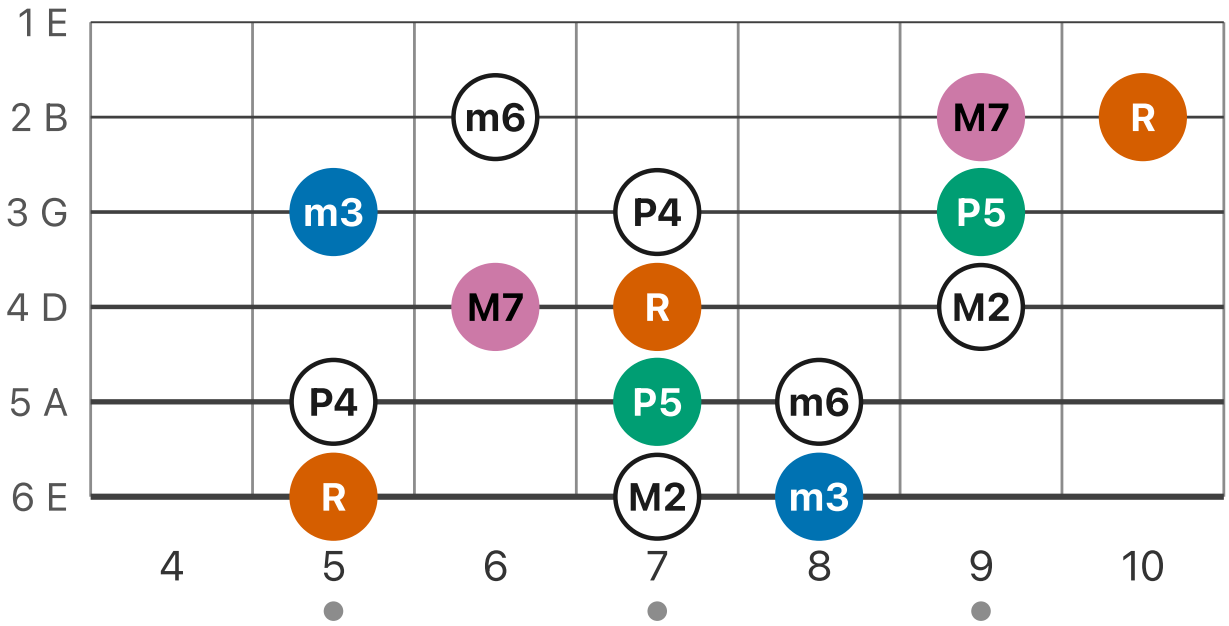
Harmonic minor · 3 notes per string

Natural minor with a raised 7th

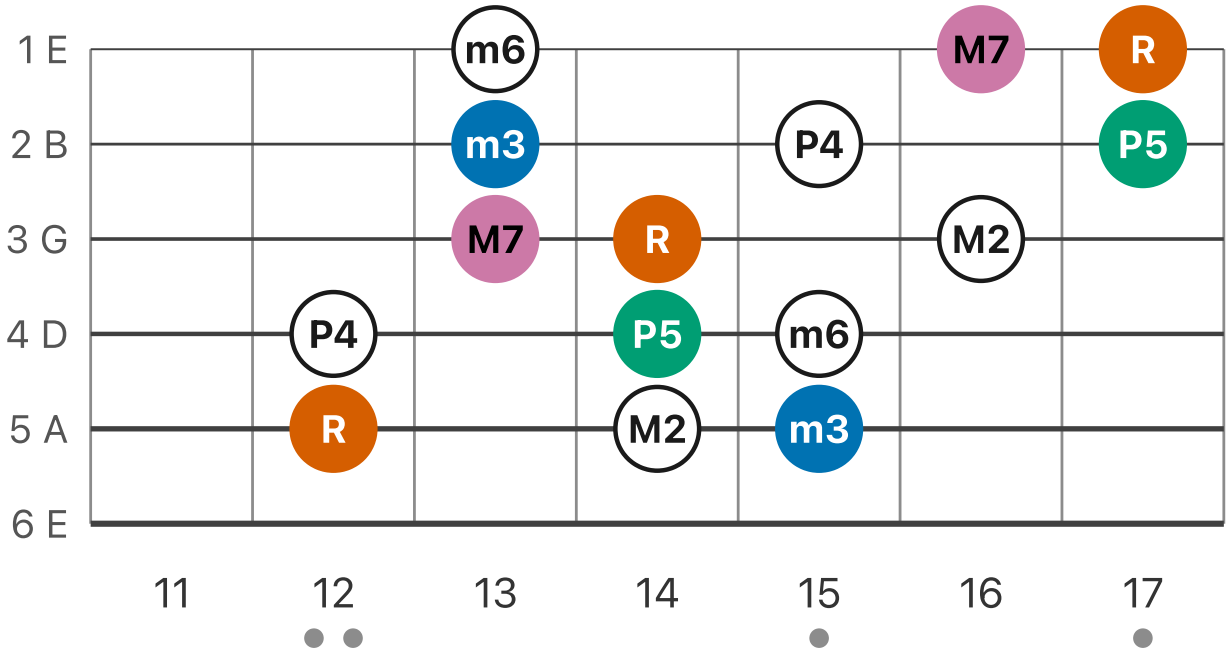
Formula 1 2 ♭3 4 5 ♭6 7 **Steps** W H W W H W+H H

Classical, exotic. The M7 pulls hard to the root over V7–i.

Root on 6th string (5th fret)



Root on 5th string (12th fret)



Shown in A. Move the root to change key. Root 3rd 5th 7th

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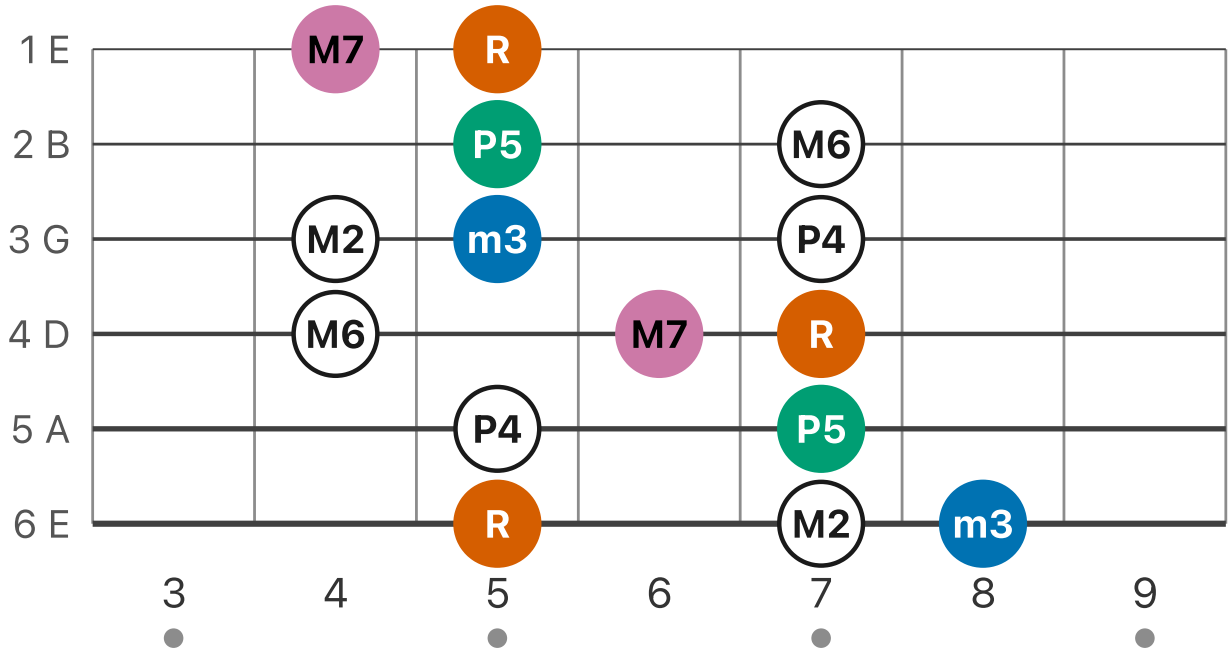
Melodic minor (jazz minor)

Natural minor with raised 6th and 7th

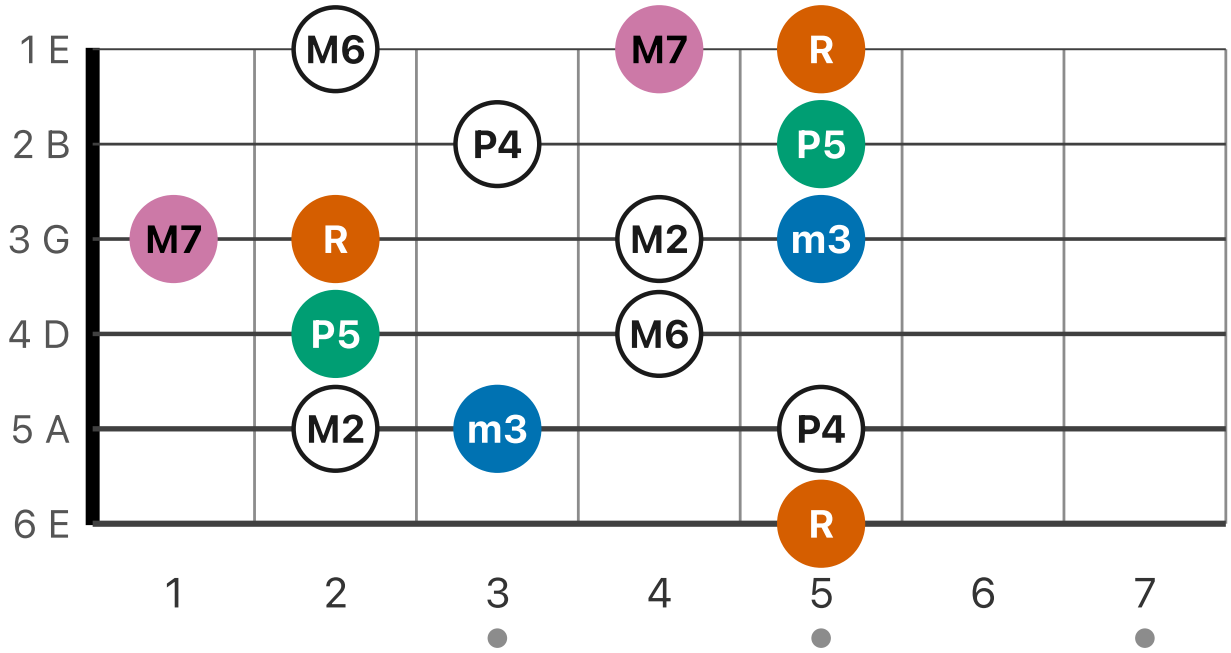
Formula 1 2 ♭3 4 5 6 7 **Steps** W H W W W W H

Smooth, jazzy minor. Use over m(maj7) and m6 chords.

Pattern 1 · root on 6th string, 1st finger (5th fret)



Pattern 2 · root on 6th string, 4th finger (5th fret)



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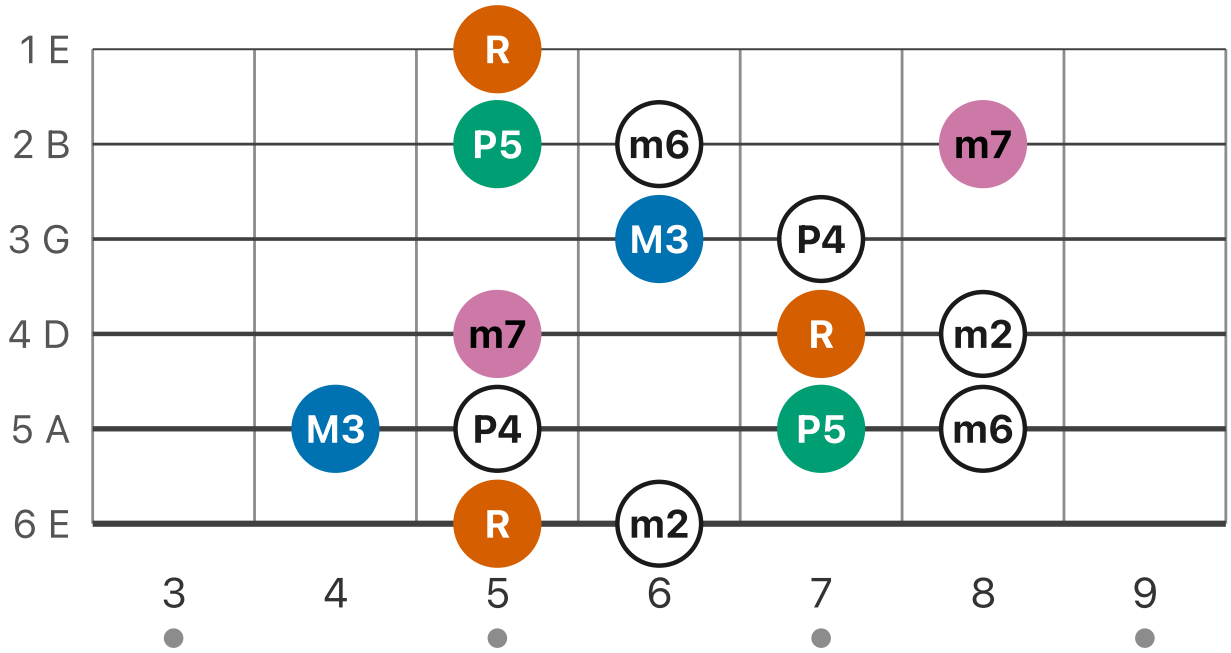
Phrygian dominant

5th mode of harmonic minor

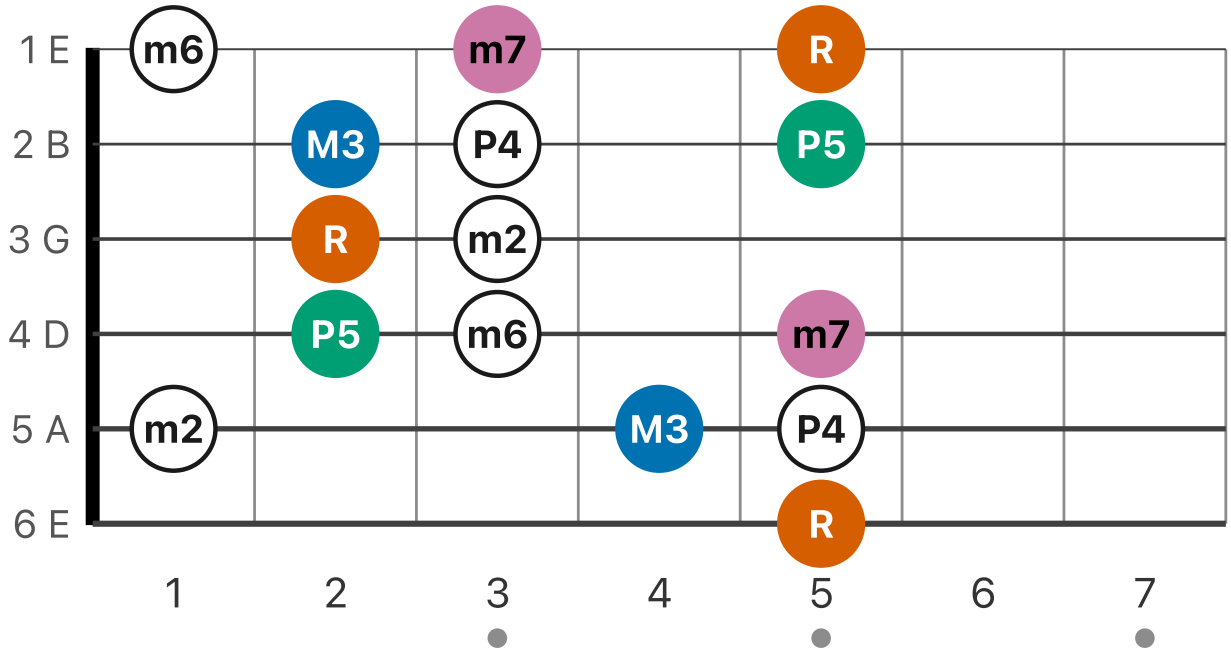
Formula 1 ♭2 3 4 5 ♭6 ♭7 **Steps** H W+H H W H W W

Middle-Eastern, flamenco, metal. Use over the V7 chord in a minor key.

Pattern 1 · root on 6th string, 1st finger (5th fret)



Pattern 2 · root on 6th string, 4th finger (5th fret)



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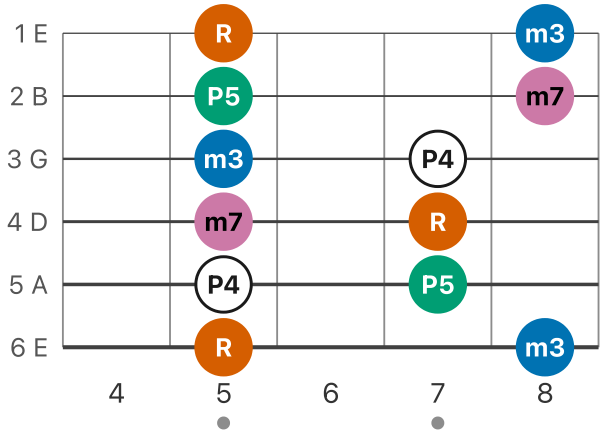
Minor pentatonic

5 positions. Same shapes as major pentatonic, different root.

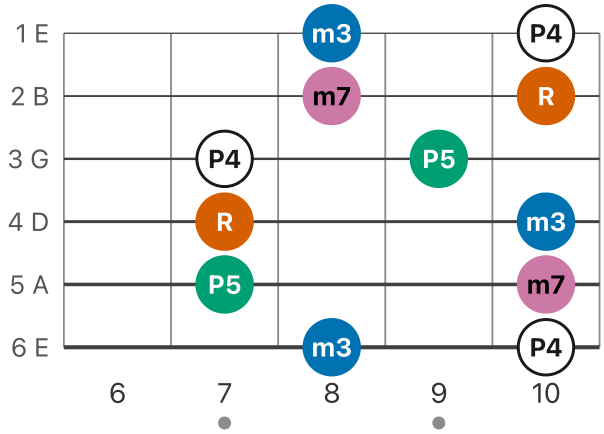
Formula 1 ♭3 4 5 ♭7

The rock and blues workhorse. Use over m, m7 and dominant blues.

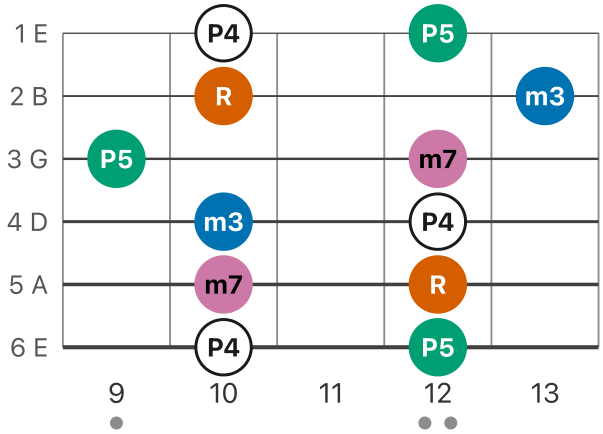
Position 1



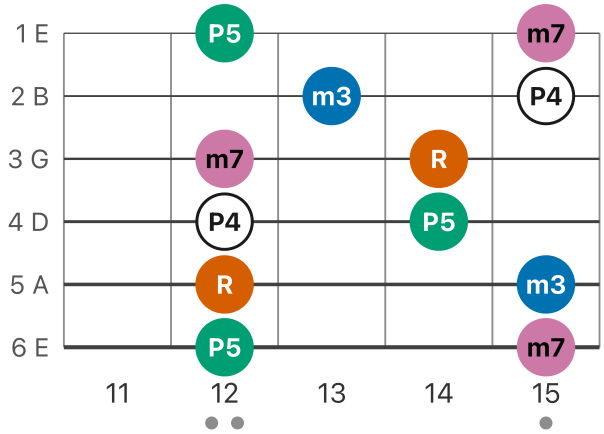
Position 2



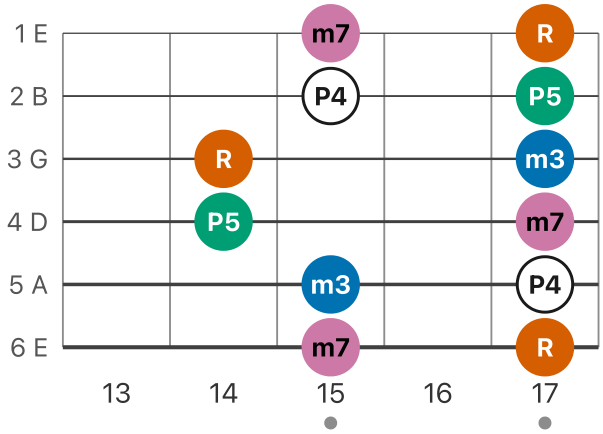
Position 3



Position 4



Position 5



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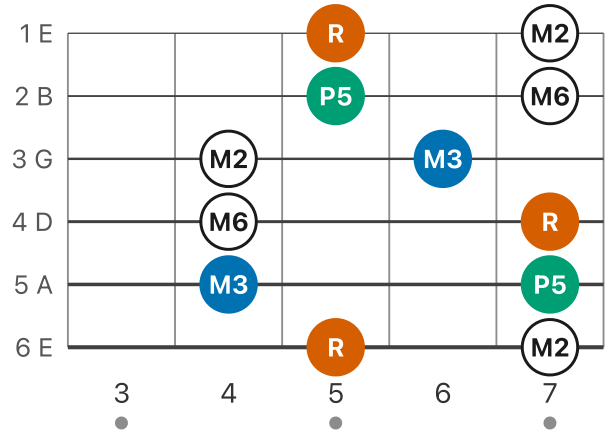
Major pentatonic

5 positions. Same shapes as minor pentatonic, different root.

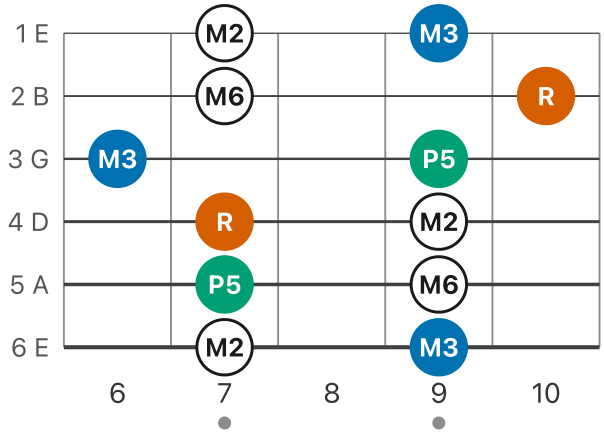
Formula 1 2 3 5 6

Sweet, open sound. Country, southern rock. Use over major chords.

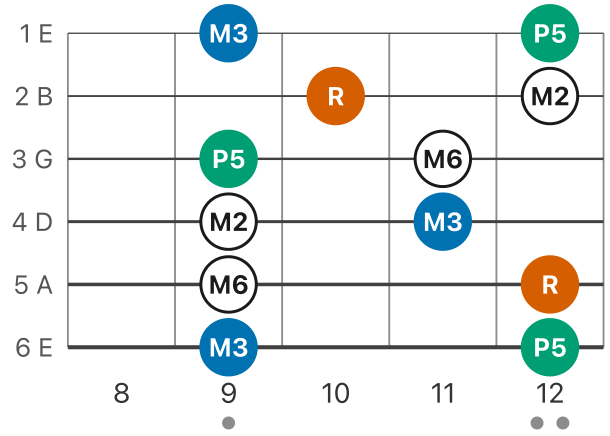
Position 1



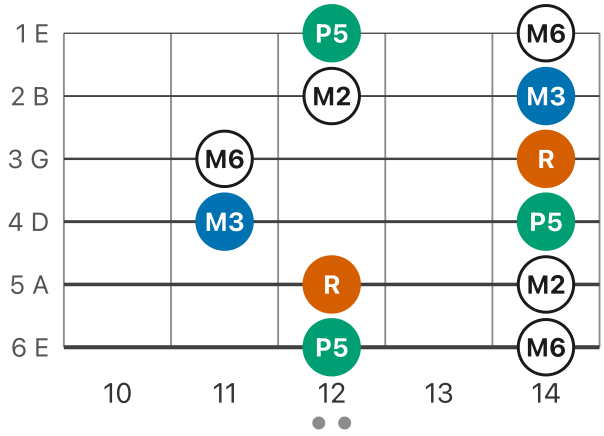
Position 2



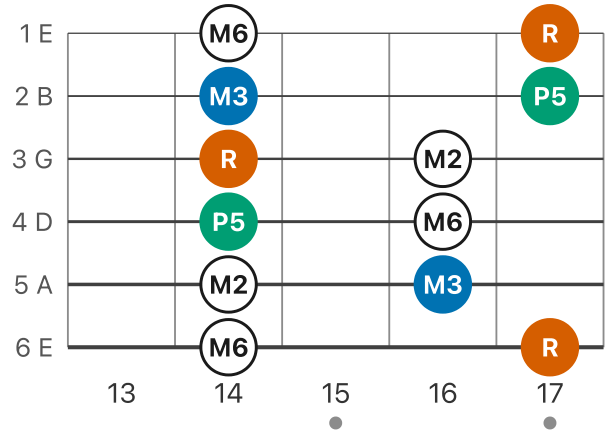
Position 3



Position 4



Position 5



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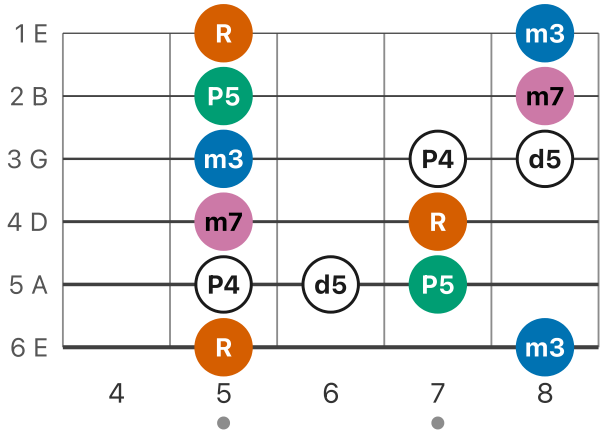
Blues scale

Minor pentatonic plus the ♭5 (the blue note).

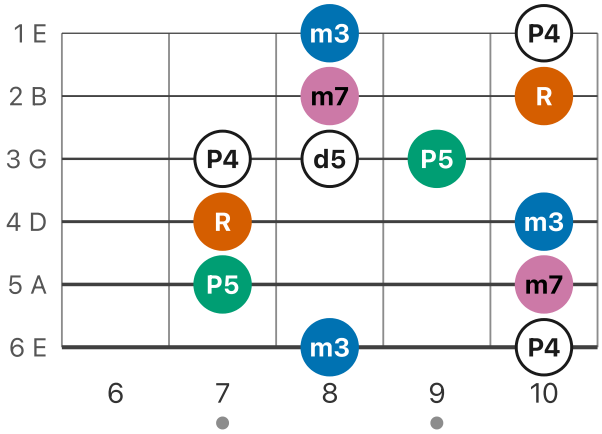
Formula 1 ♭3 4 ♭5 5 ♭7

Use the ♭5 as a passing note between 4 and 5.

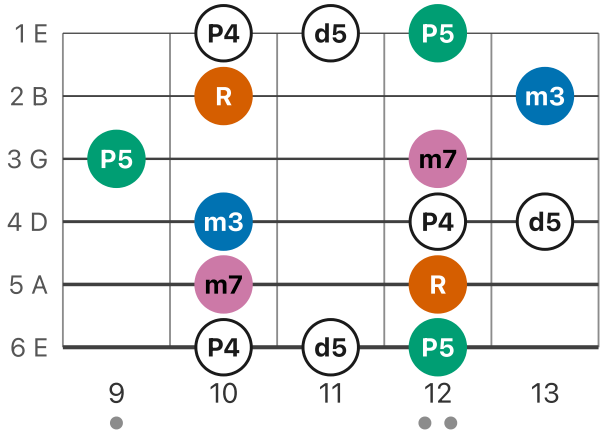
Position 1



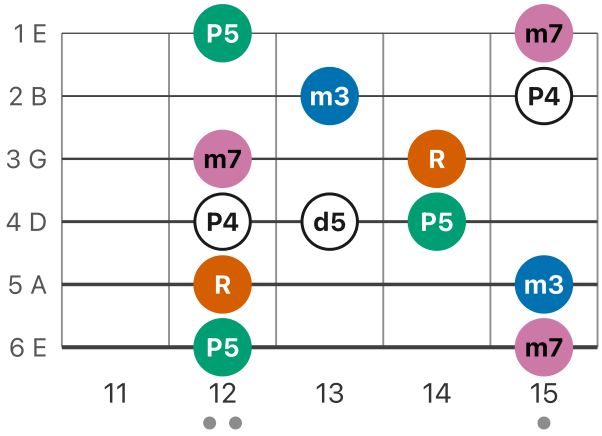
Position 2



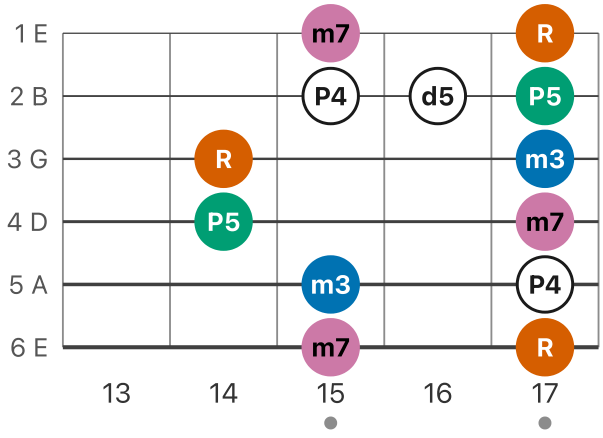
Position 3



Position 4



Position 5



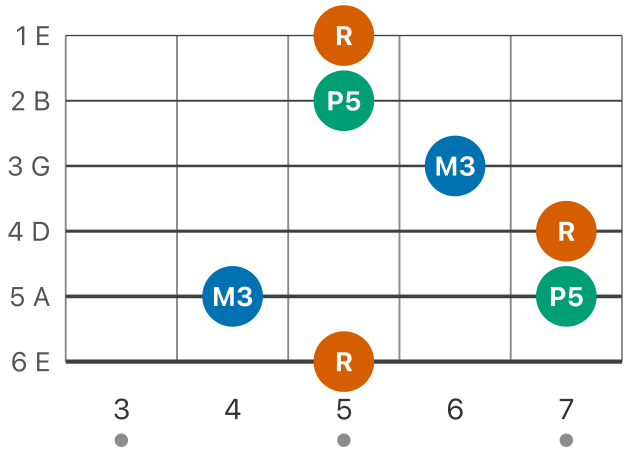
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Arpeggios · root on 6th string

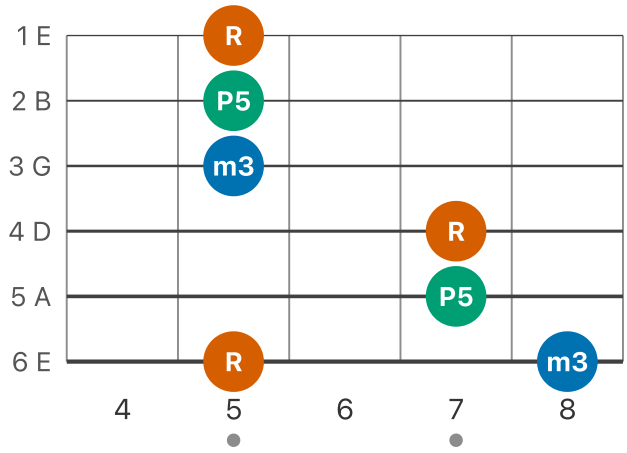
Chord tones only, root to root, 1st-finger position.

Play these over the matching chord so your lines land on chord tones.

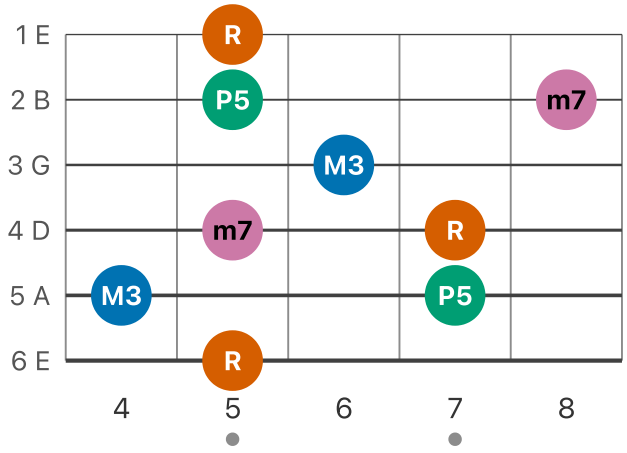
Major · R 3 5



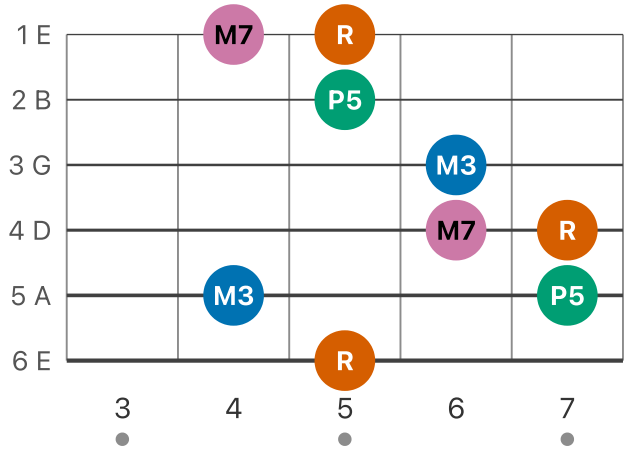
Minor · R ♭3 5



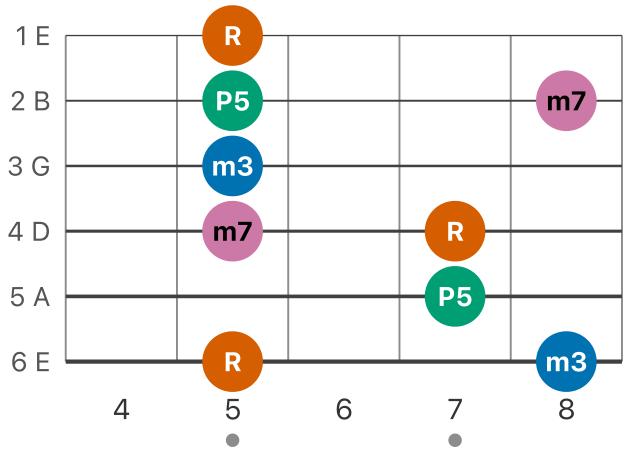
Dominant 7 · R 3 5 ♭7



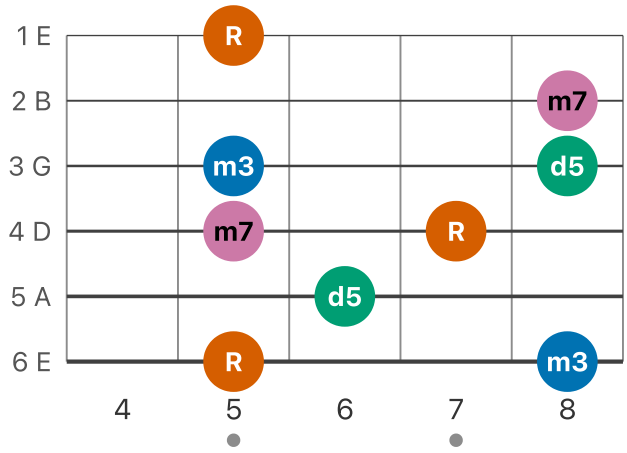
Major 7 · R 3 5 7



Minor 7 · R ♭3 5 ♭7



Minor 7♭5 · R ♭3 ♭5 ♭7



Shown in A. Move the root to change key. Root 3rd 5th 7th

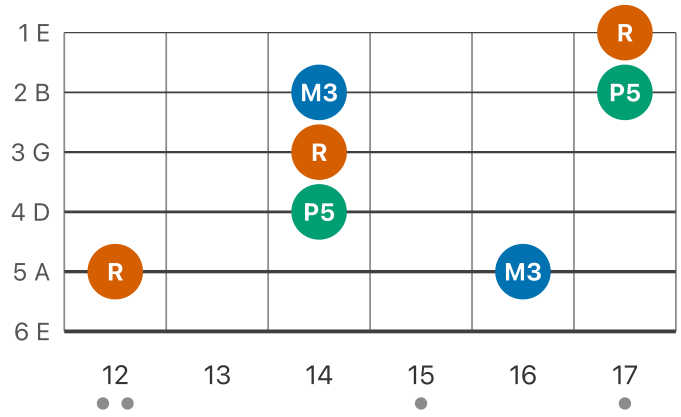
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Arpeggios · root on 5th string

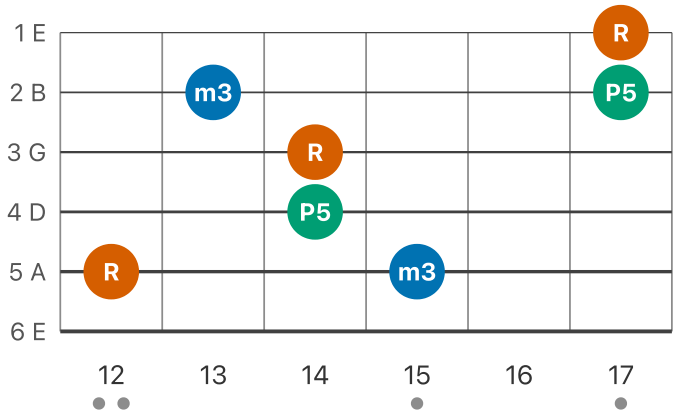
Chord tones only, root to root, 1st-finger position.

Play these over the matching chord so your lines land on chord tones.

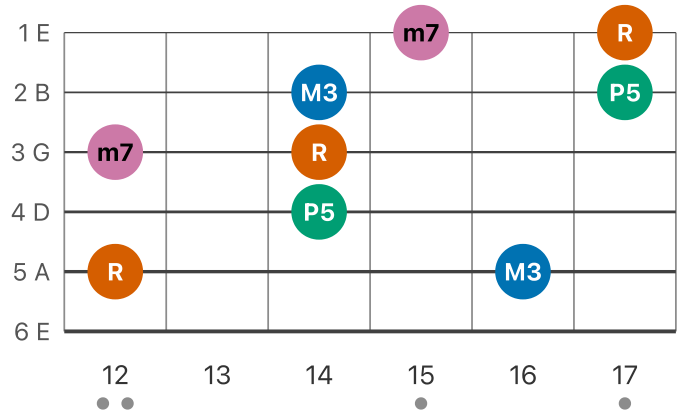
Major · R 3 5



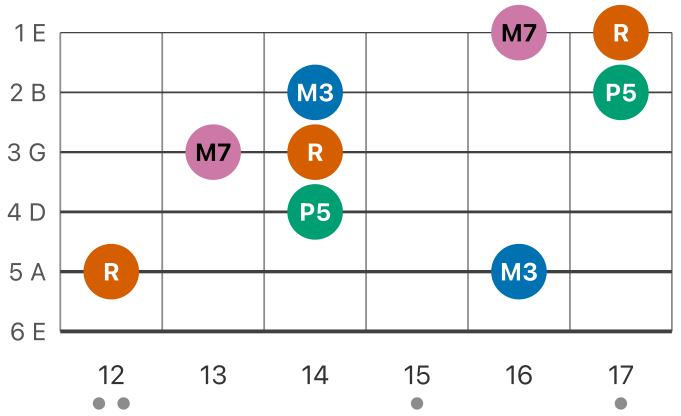
Minor · R ♭3 5



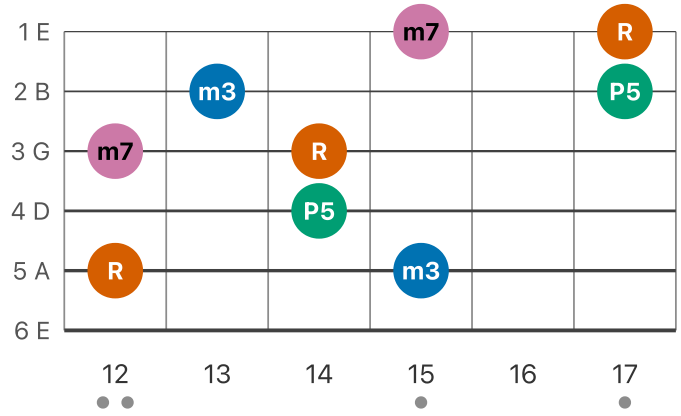
Dominant 7 · R 3 5 ♭7



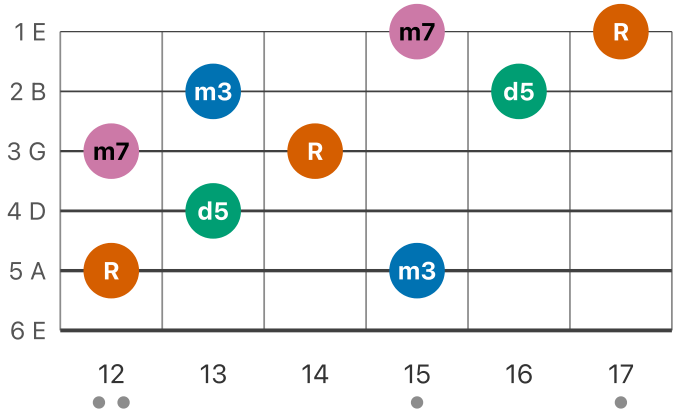
Major 7 · R 3 5 7



Minor 7 · R ♭3 5 ♭7



Minor 7♭5 · R ♭3 ♭5 ♭7



Shown in A. Move the root to change key. Root 3rd 5th 7th

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