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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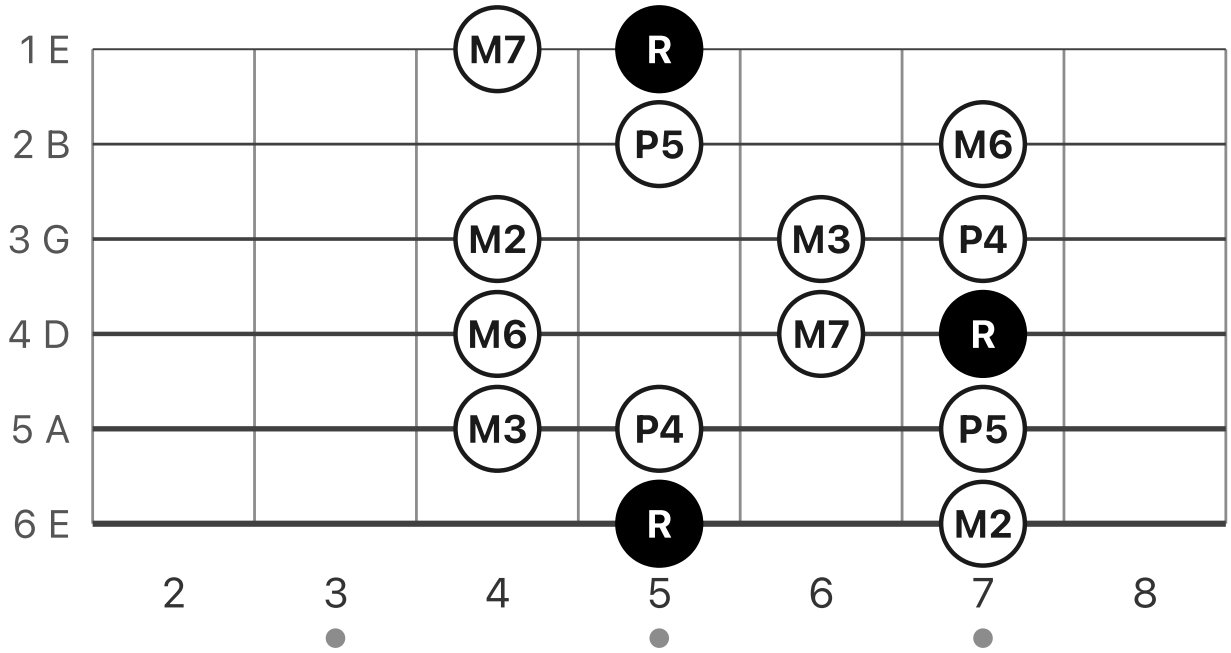
Ionian (major)

1st mode of the major scale

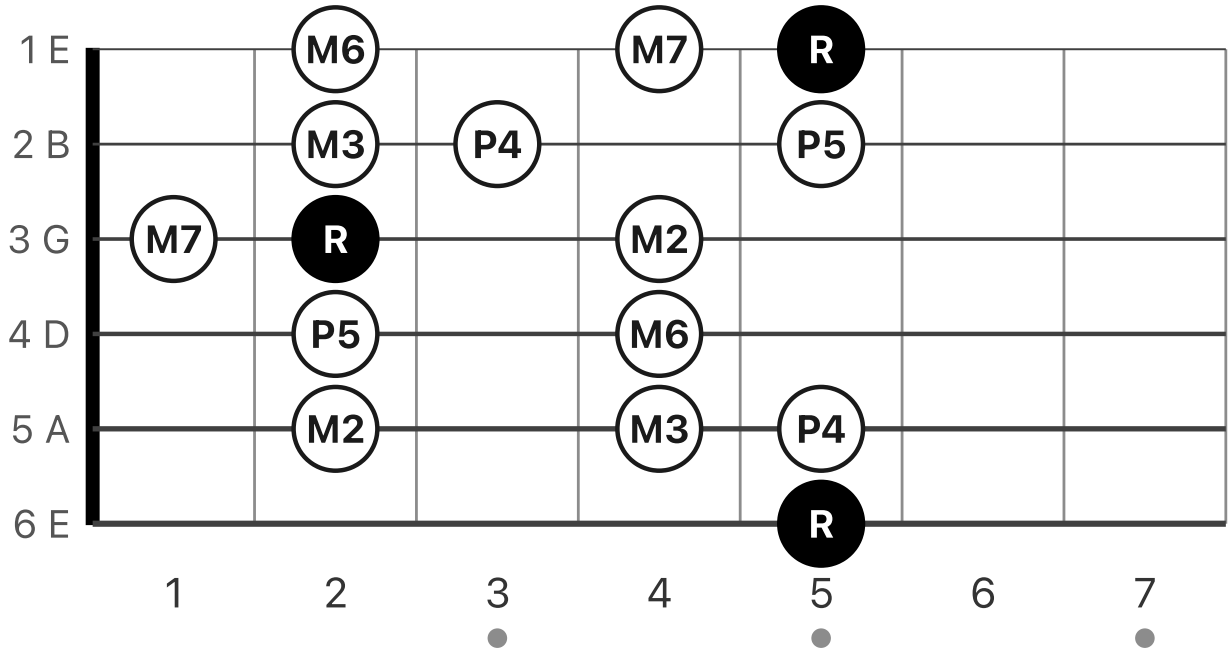
Formula 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **Steps** W W H W W W H

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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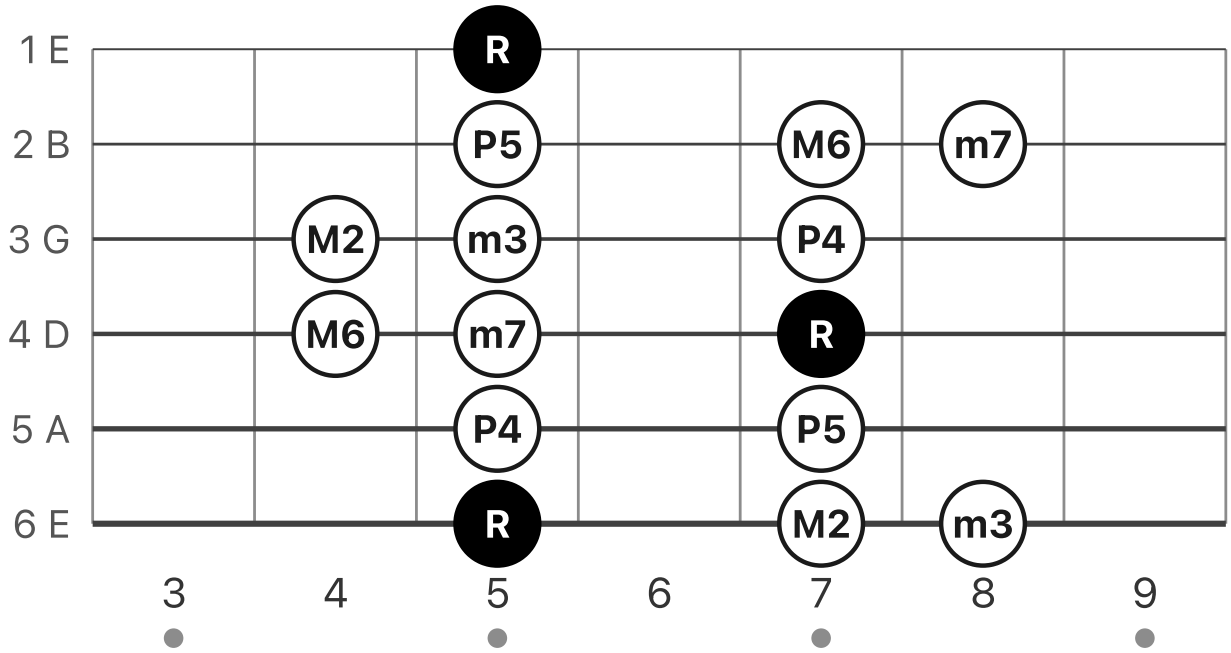
Dorian

2nd mode of the major scale

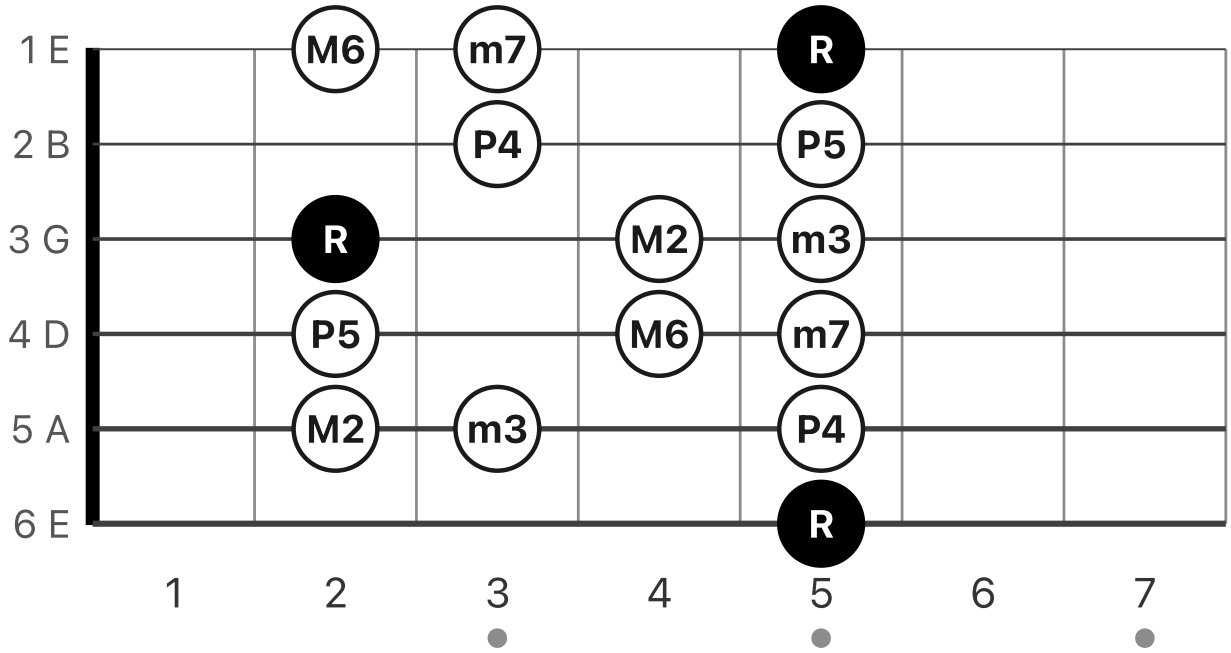
Formula 1 2 ♭3 4 5 6 ♭7 **Steps** W H W W W H W

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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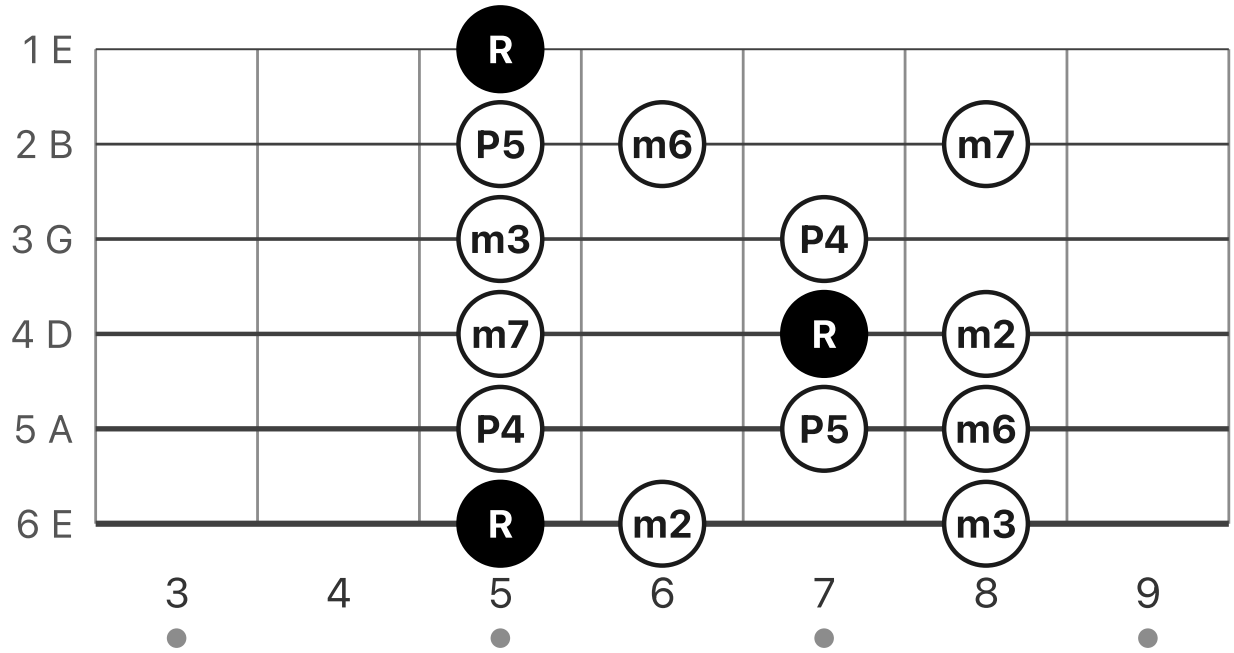
Phrygian

3rd mode of the major scale

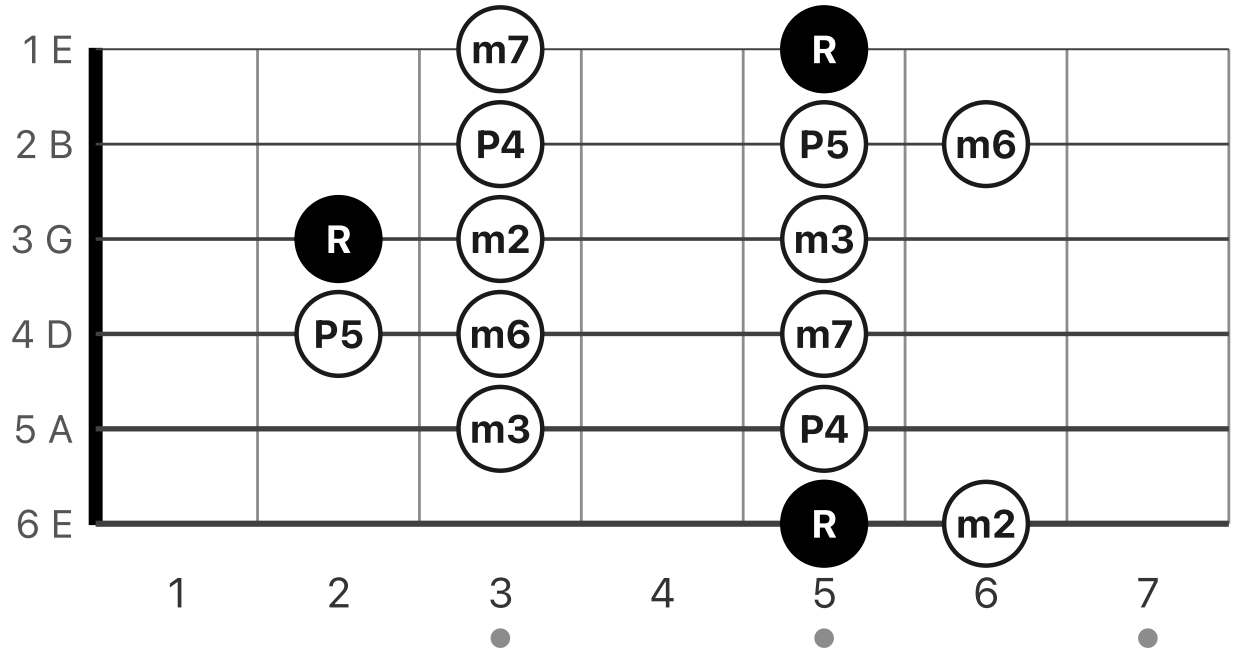
Formula 1 ♭2 ♭3 4 5 ♭6 ♭7 **Steps** H W W W H W W

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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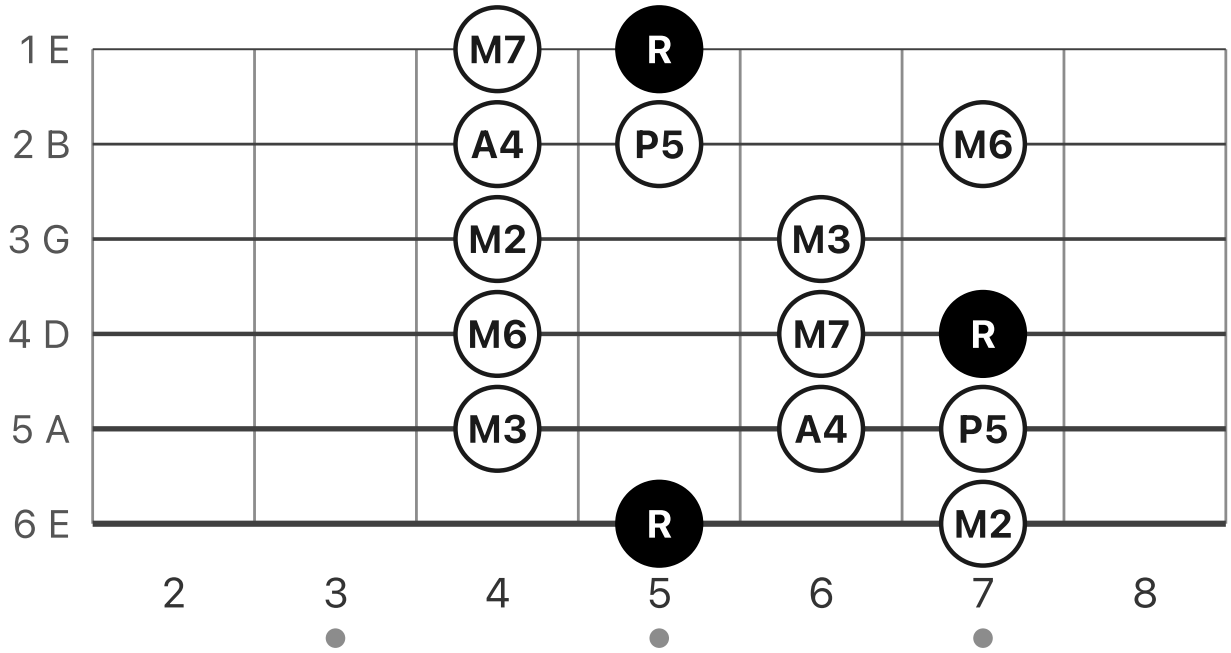
Lydian

4th mode of the major scale

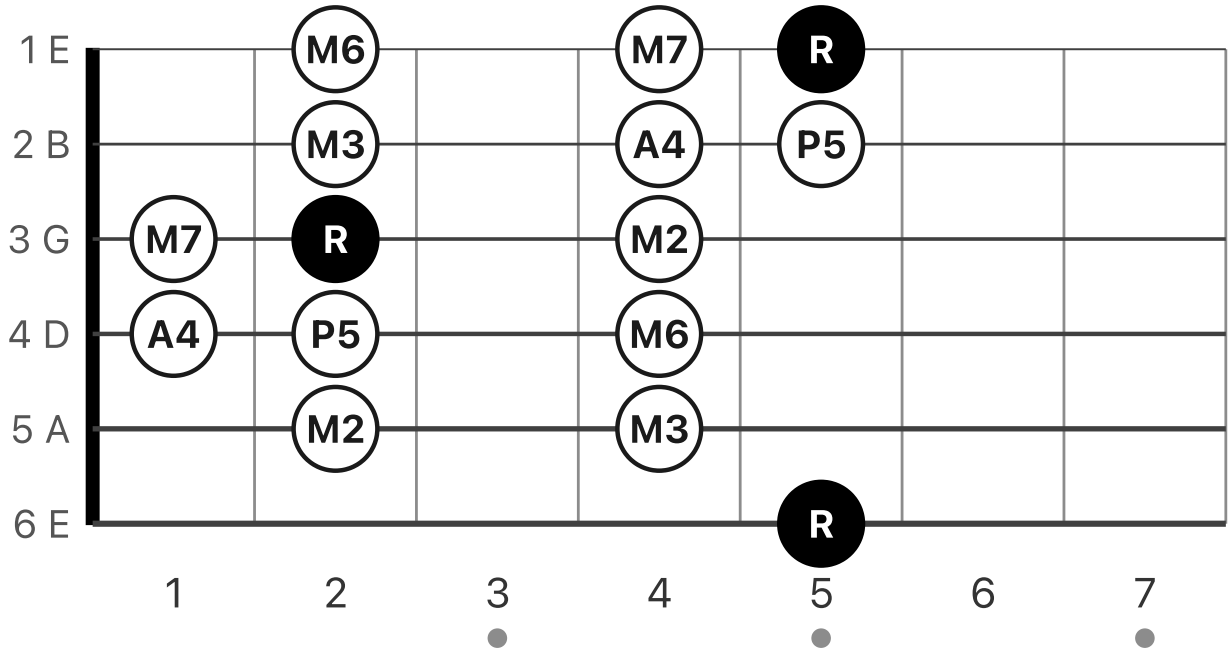
Formula 1 2 3 #4 5 6 7 **Steps** W W W H W W H

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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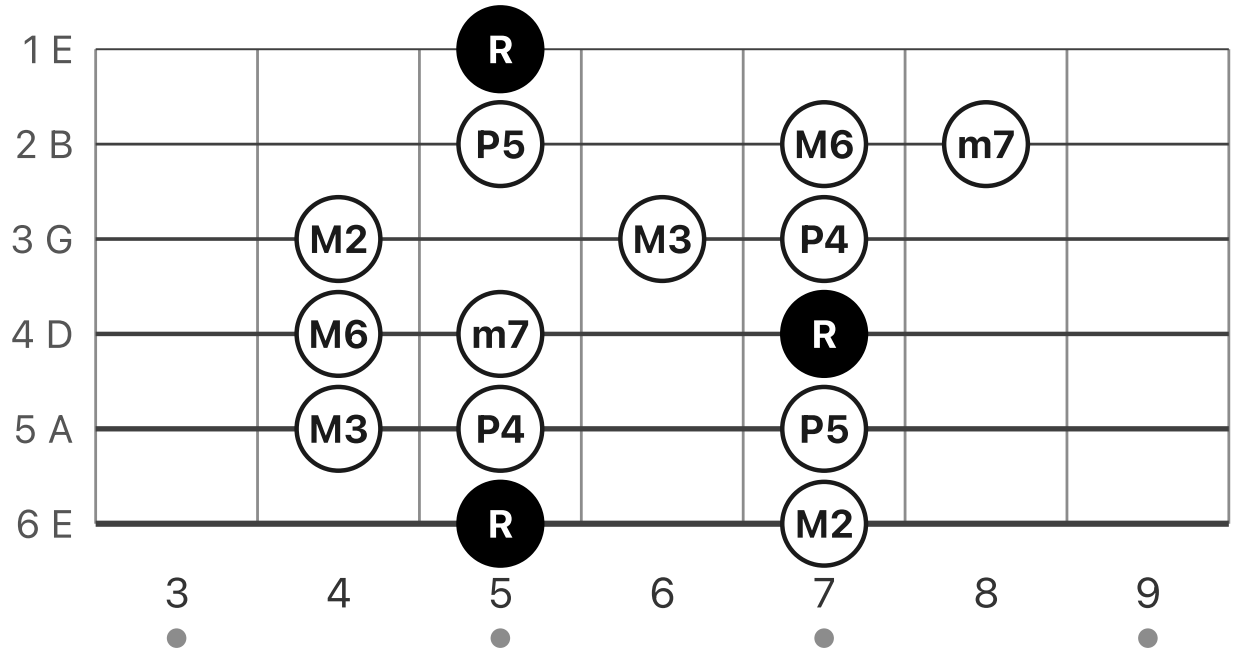
Mixolydian

5th mode of the major scale

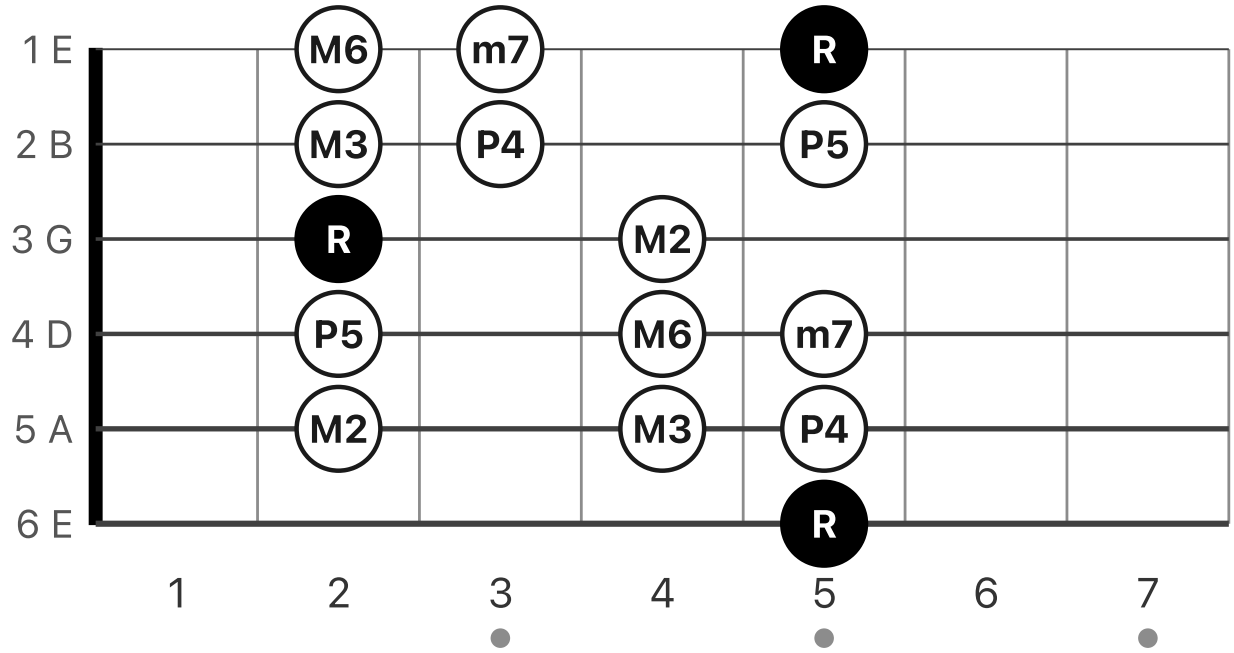
Formula 1 2 3 4 5 6 ♭7 **Steps** W W H W W H W

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. Black dot = root.

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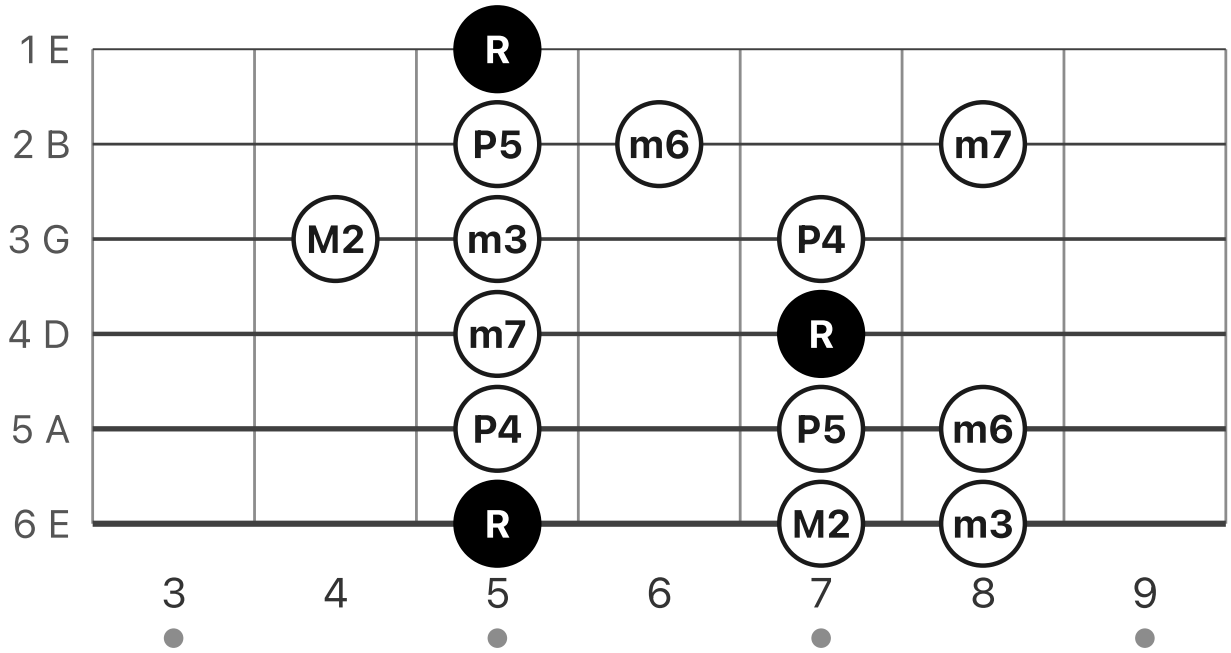
Aeolian (natural minor)

6th mode of the major scale

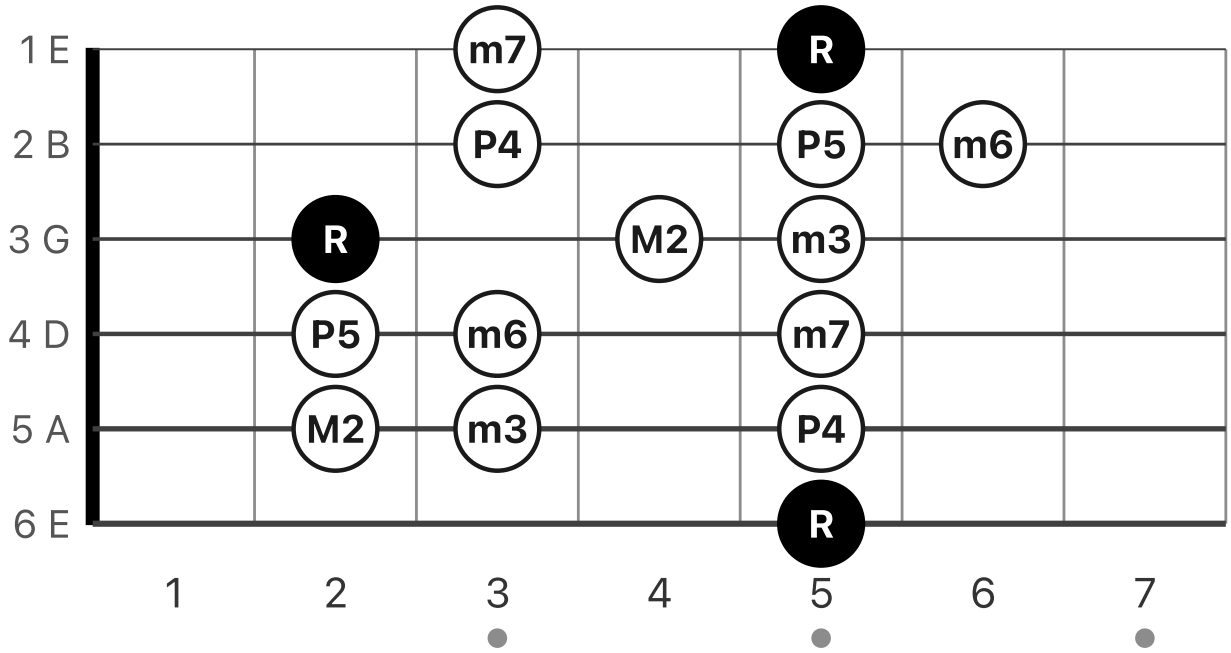
Formula 1 2 ♭3 4 5 ♭6 ♭7 **Steps** W H W W H W W

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)



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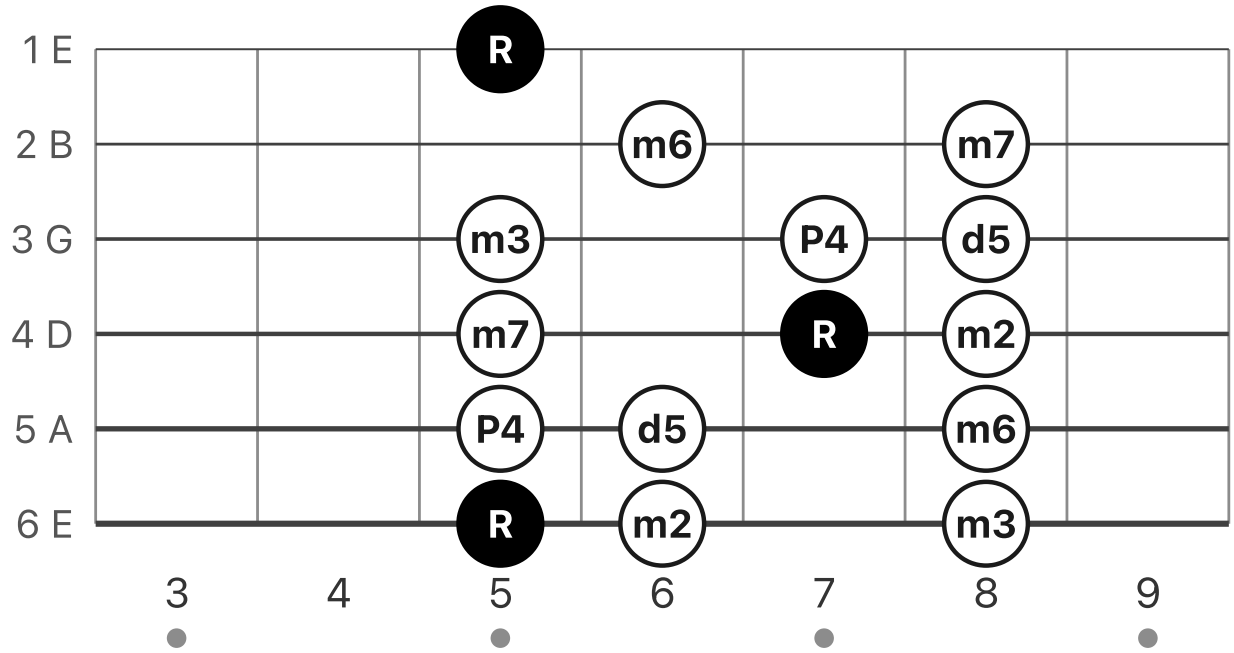
Locrian

7th mode of the major scale

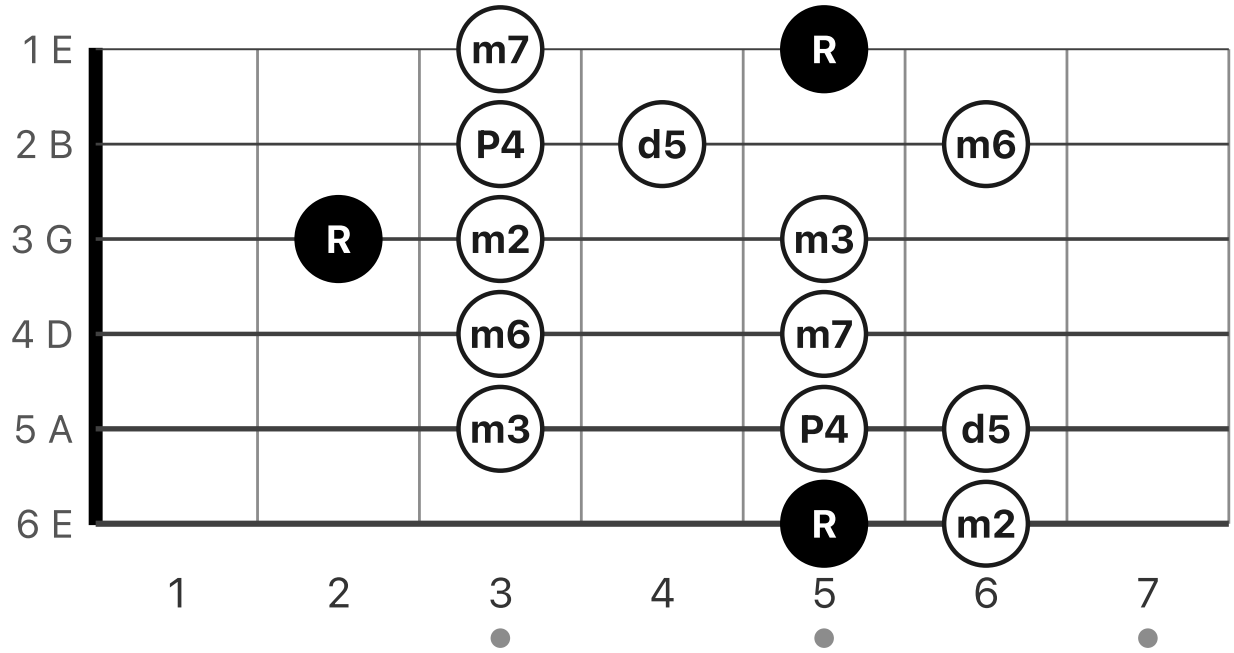
Formula 1 ♭2 ♭3 4 ♭5 ♭6 ♭7 **Steps** H W W H W W W

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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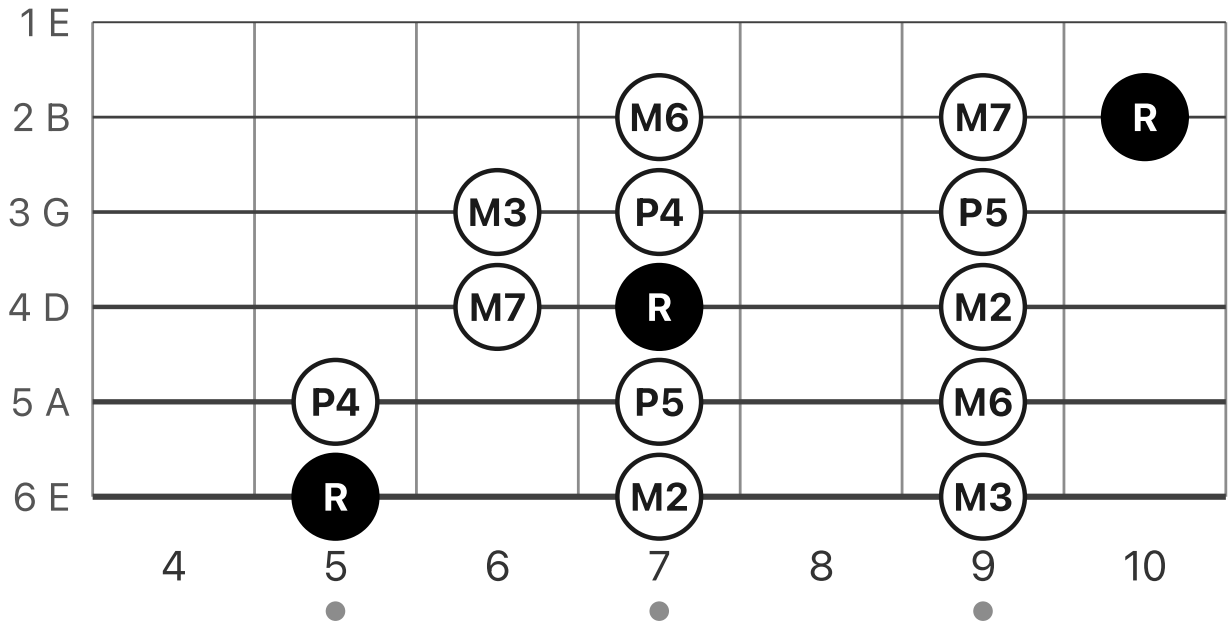
Ionian · 3 notes per string

1st mode of the major scale

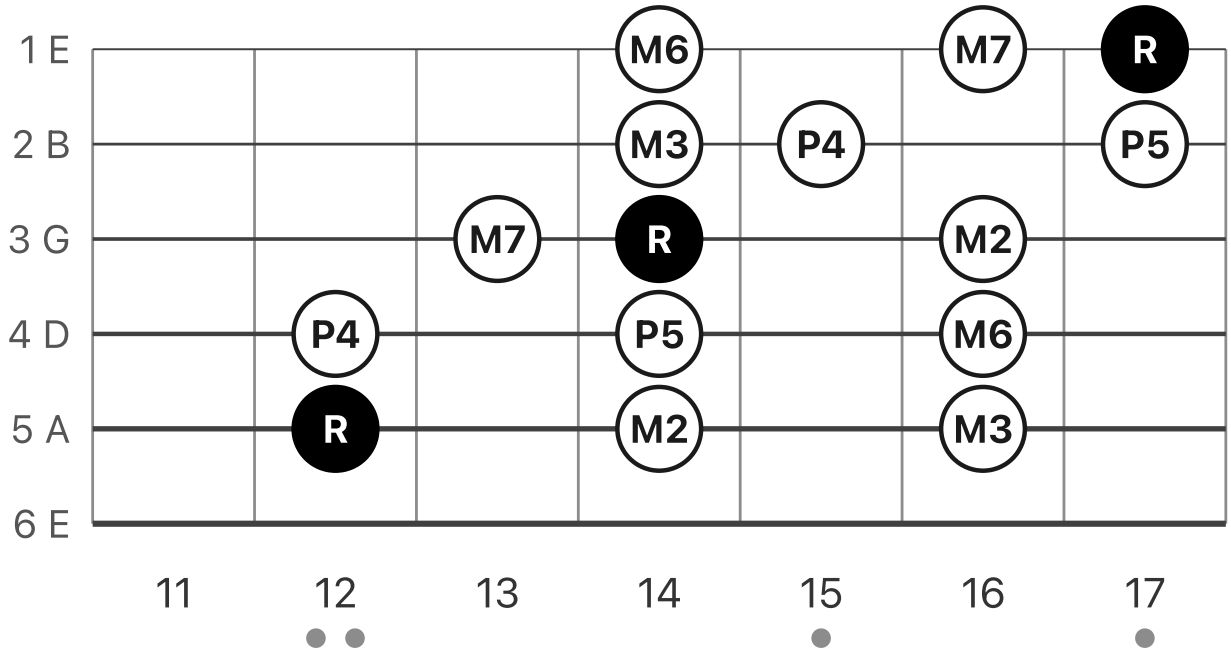
Formula 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 **Steps** W W H W W W H

Bright, happy. Use over maj and maj7 chords.

Root on 6th string (5th fret)



Root on 5th string (12th fret)



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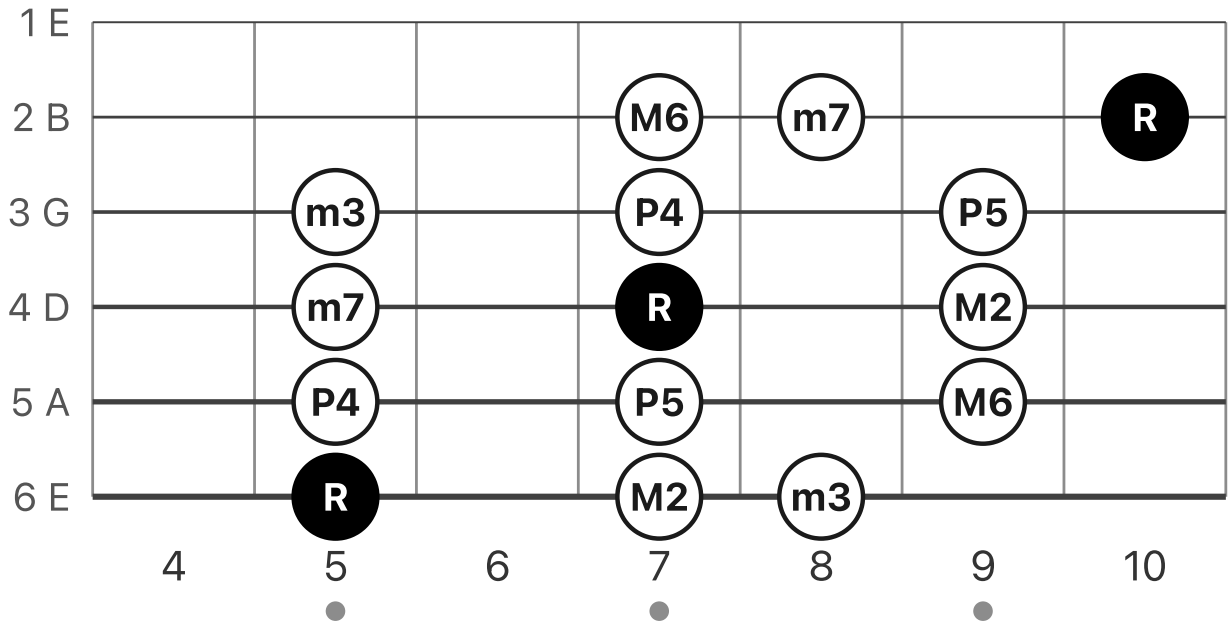
Dorian · 3 notes per string

2nd mode of the major scale

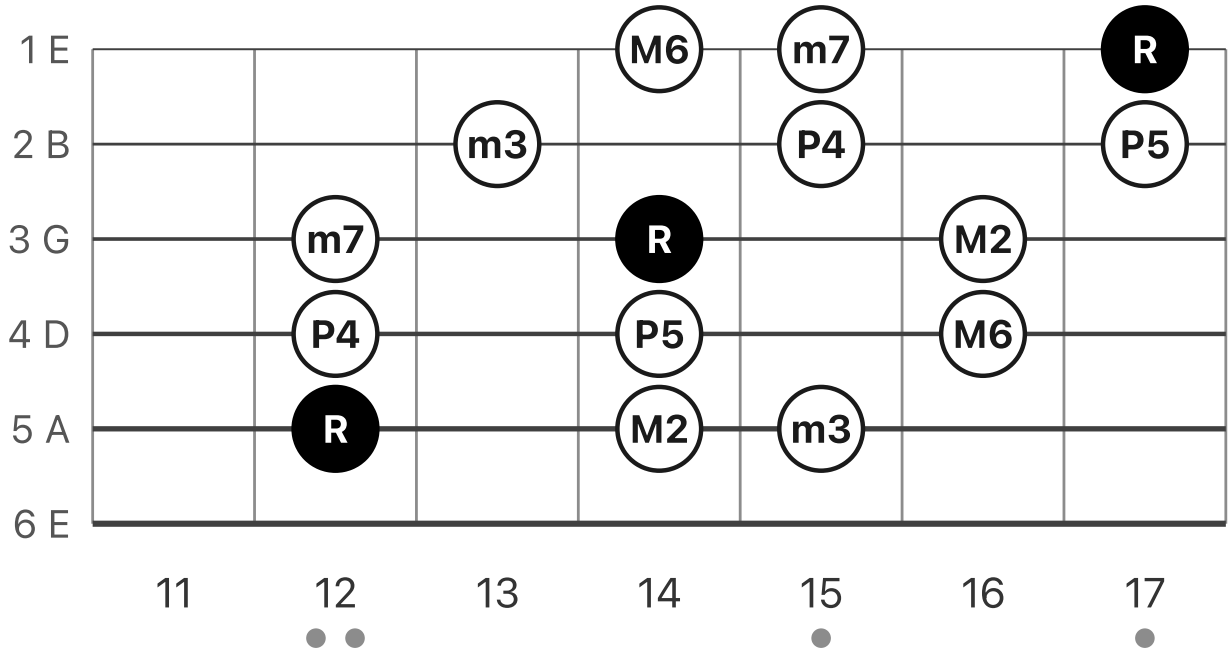
Formula 1 2 ♭3 4 5 6 ♭7 **Steps** W H W W W H W

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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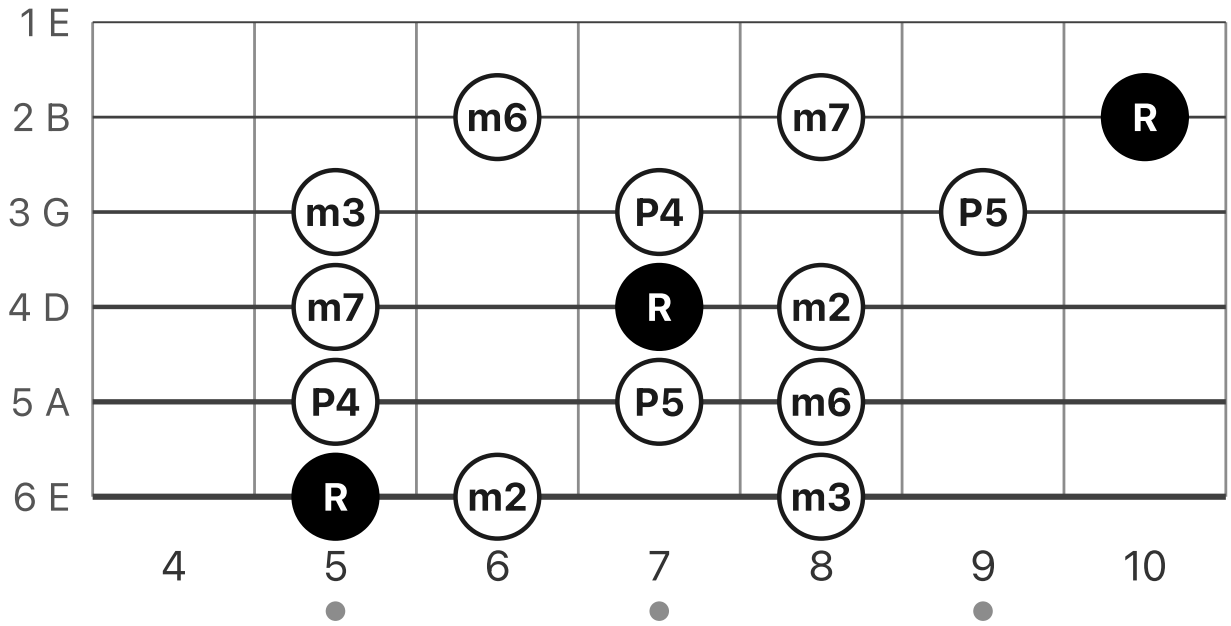
Phrygian · 3 notes per string

3rd mode of the major scale

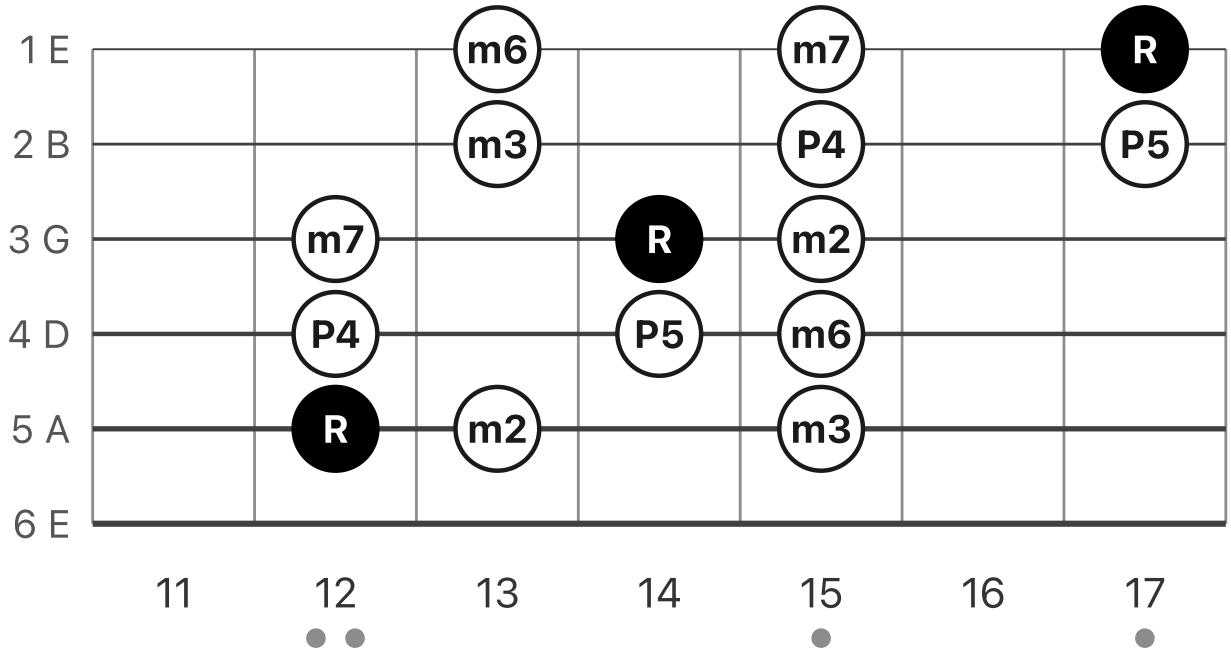
Formula 1 ♭2 ♭3 4 5 ♭6 ♭7 **Steps** H W W W H W W

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

Root on 6th string (5th fret)



Root on 5th string (12th fret)



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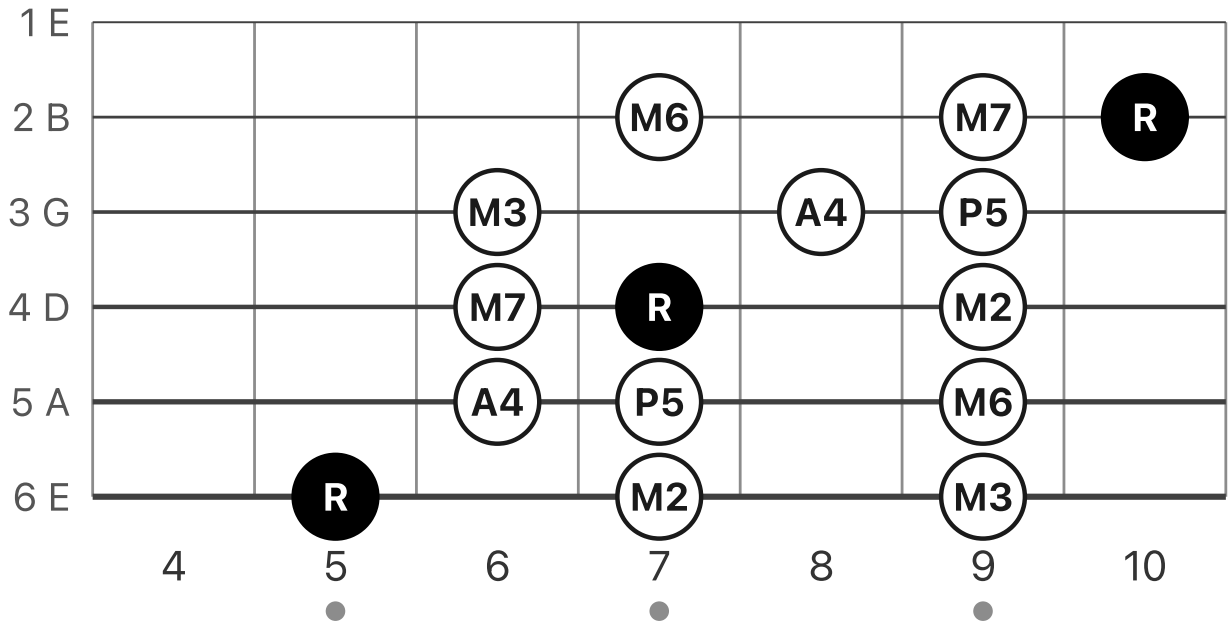
Lydian · 3 notes per string

4th mode of the major scale

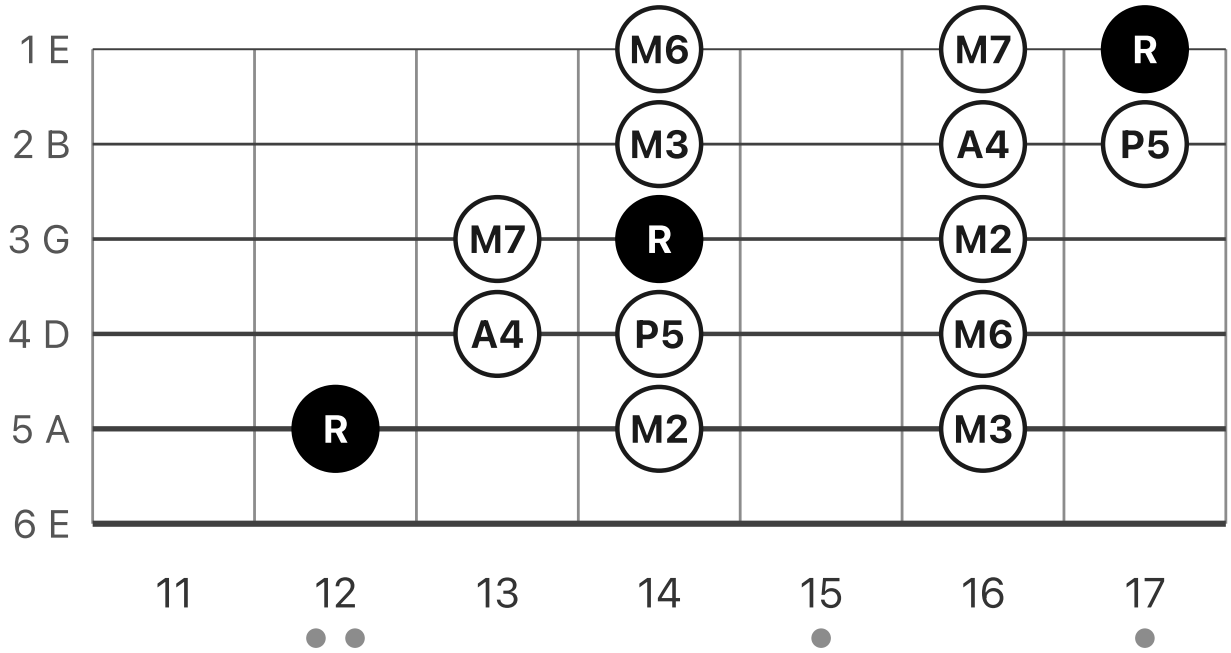
Formula 1 2 3 #4 5 6 7 **Steps** W W W H W W H

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

Root on 6th string (5th fret)



Root on 5th string (12th fret)



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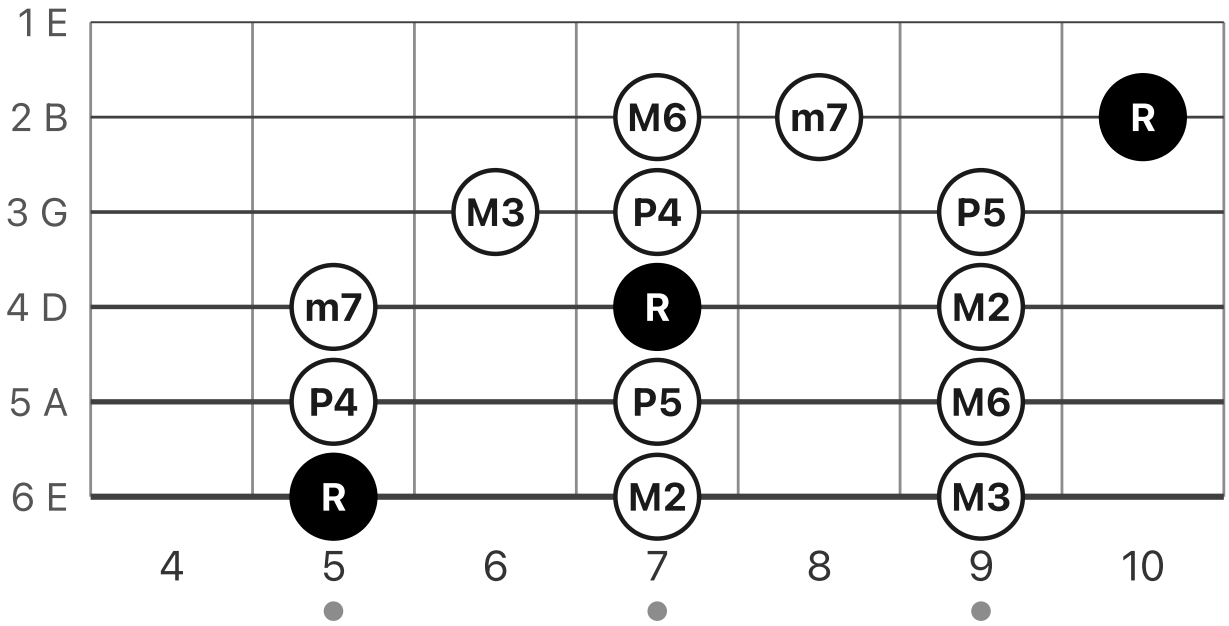
Mixolydian · 3 notes per string

5th mode of the major scale

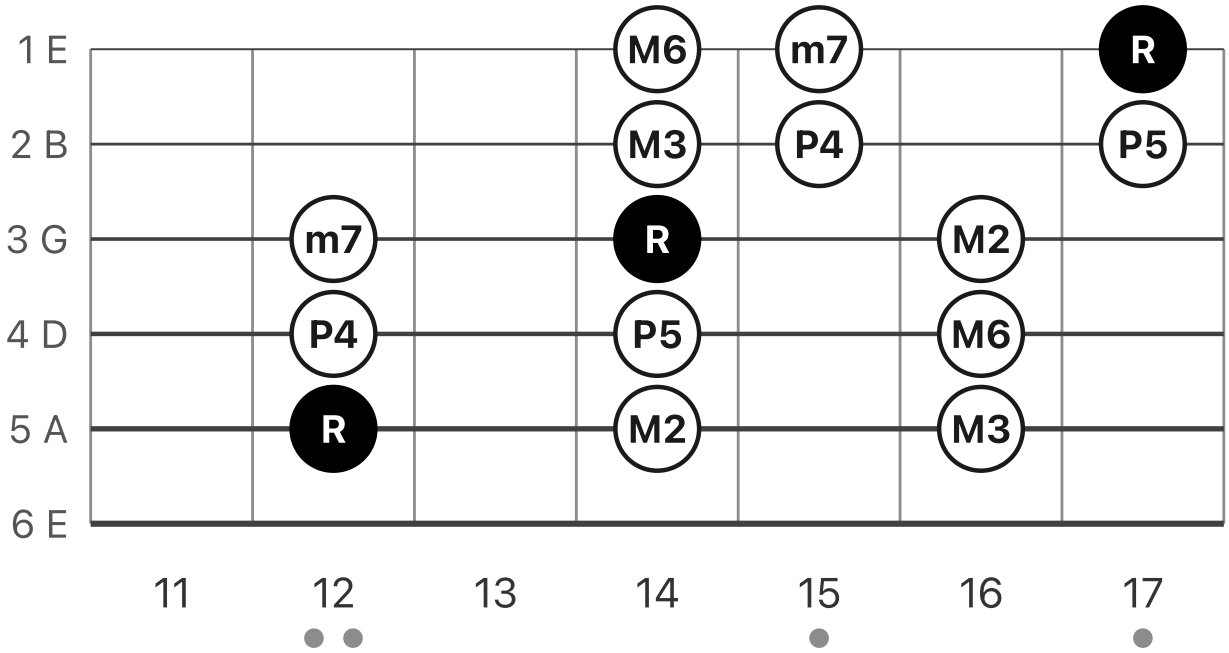
Formula 1 2 3 4 5 6 ♭7 **Steps** W W H W W H W

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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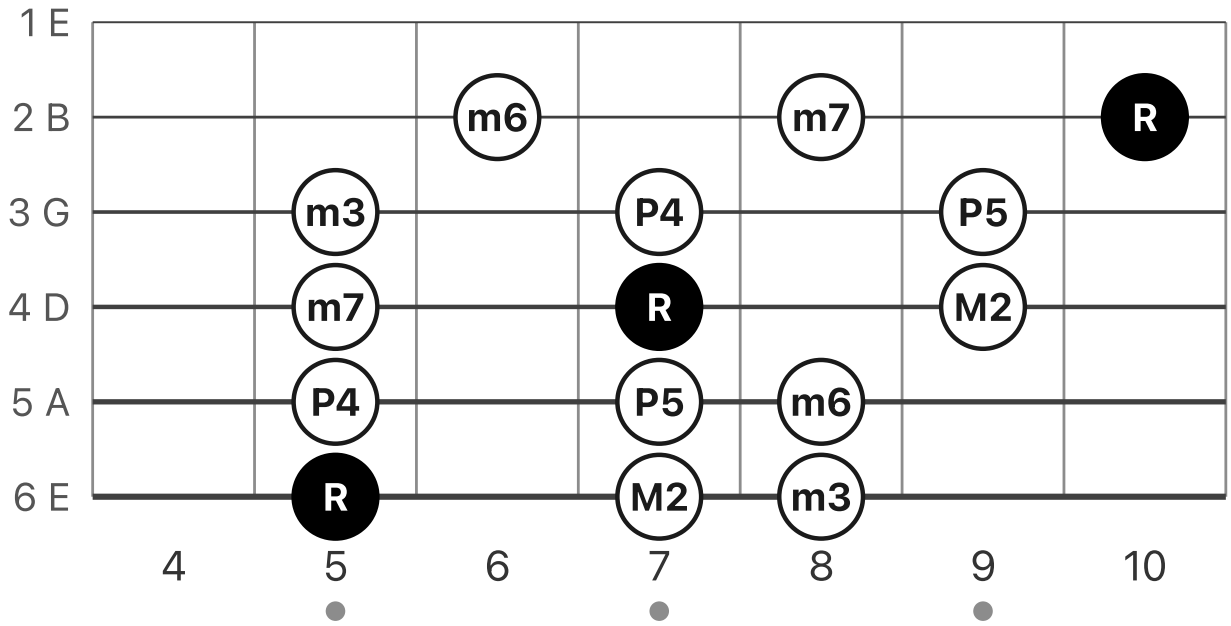
Aeolian · 3 notes per string

6th mode of the major scale

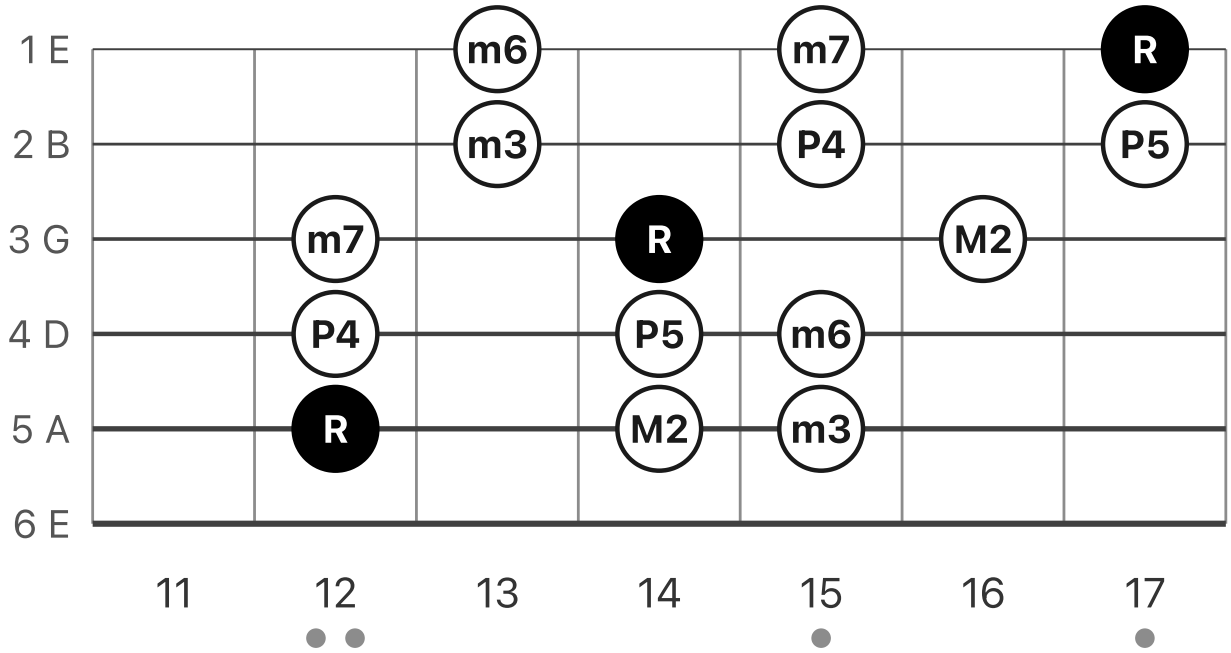
Formula 1 2 ♭3 4 5 ♭6 ♭7 **Steps** W H W W H W W

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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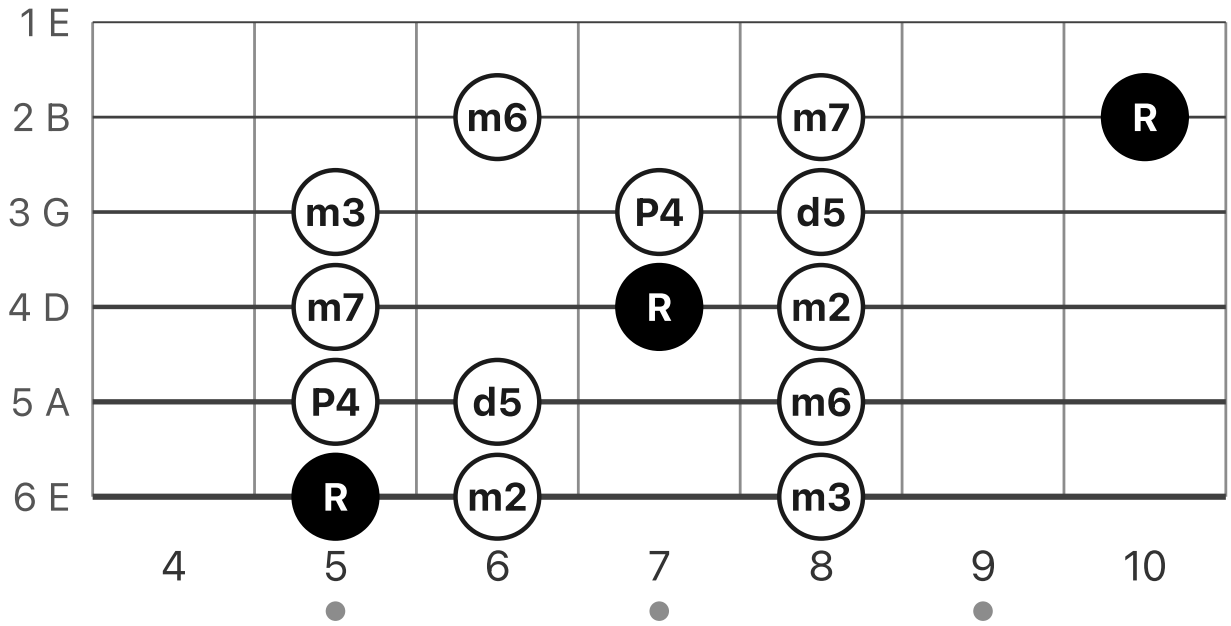
Locrian · 3 notes per string

7th mode of the major scale

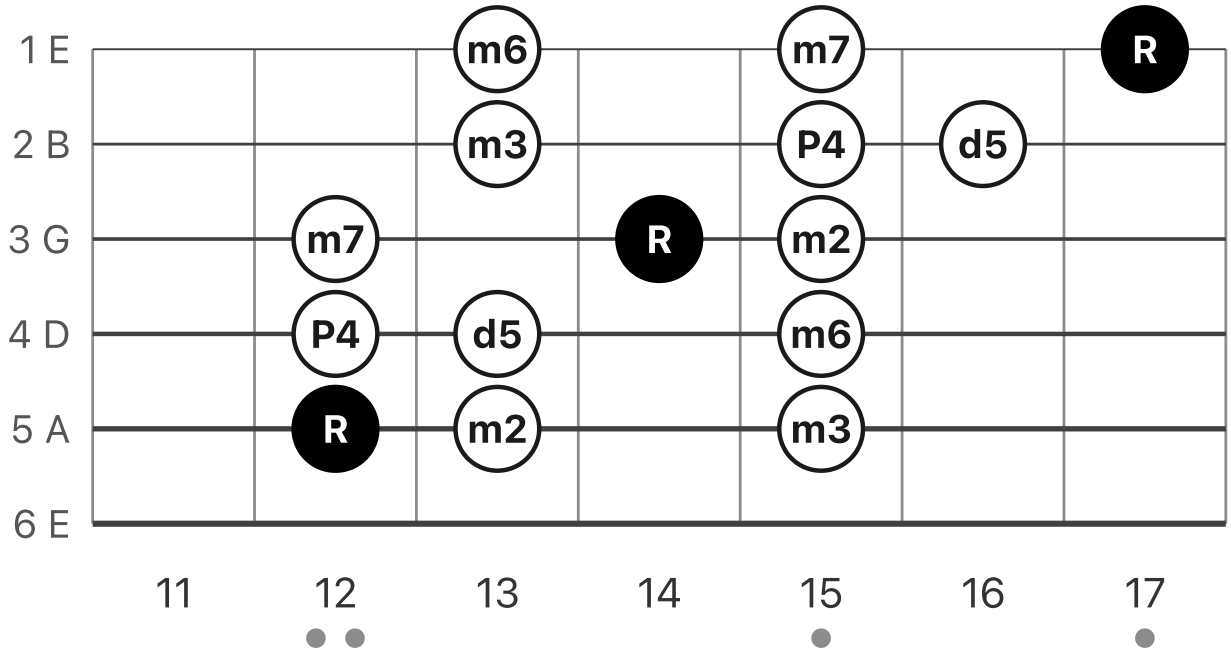
Formula 1 ♭2 ♭3 4 ♭5 ♭6 ♭7 **Steps** H W W H W W W

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

Root on 6th string (5th fret)



Root on 5th string (12th fret)



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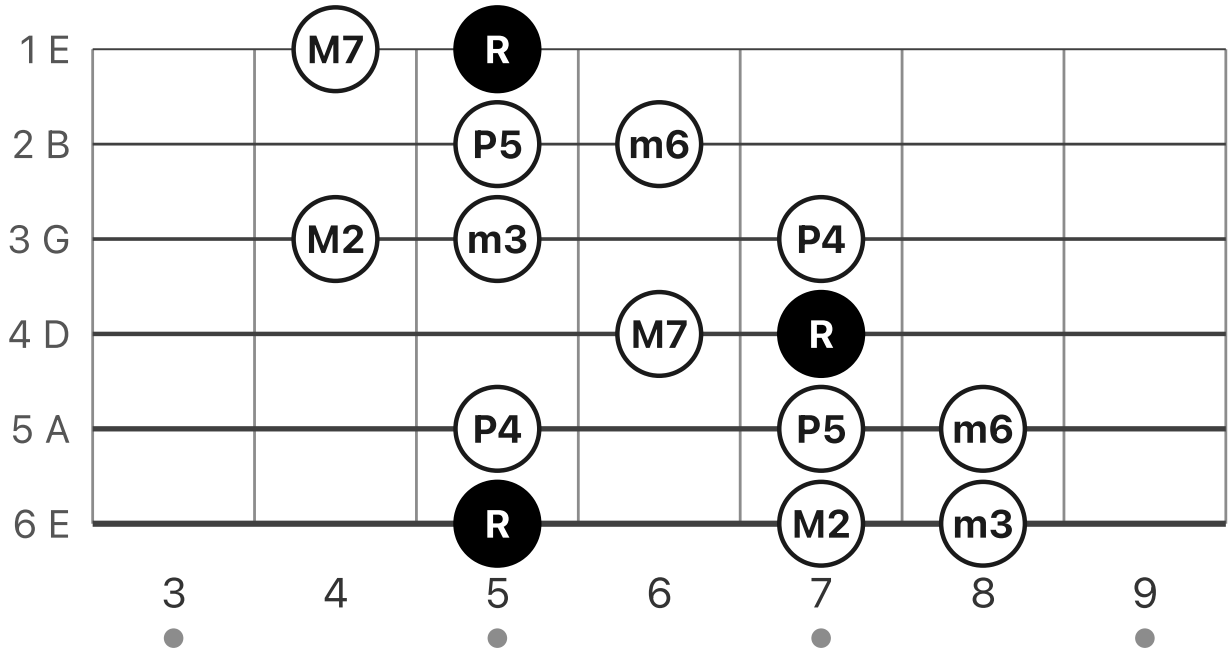
Harmonic minor

Natural minor with a raised 7th

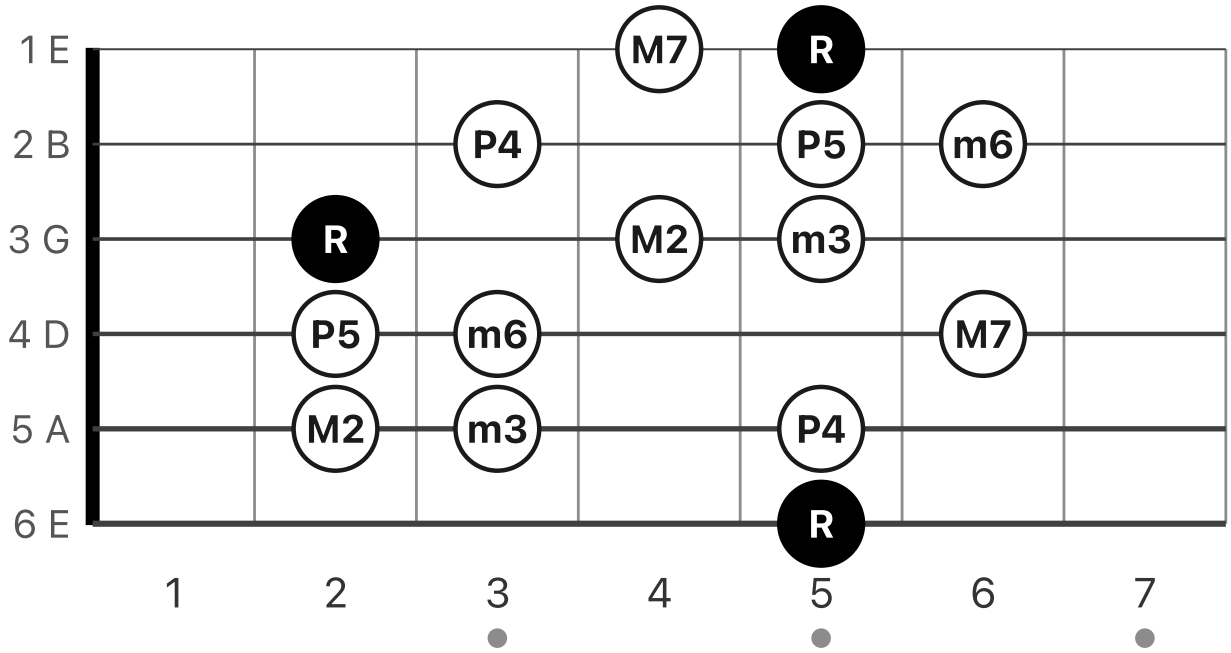
Formula 1 2 ♭3 4 5 ♭6 7 **Steps** W H W W H W+H H

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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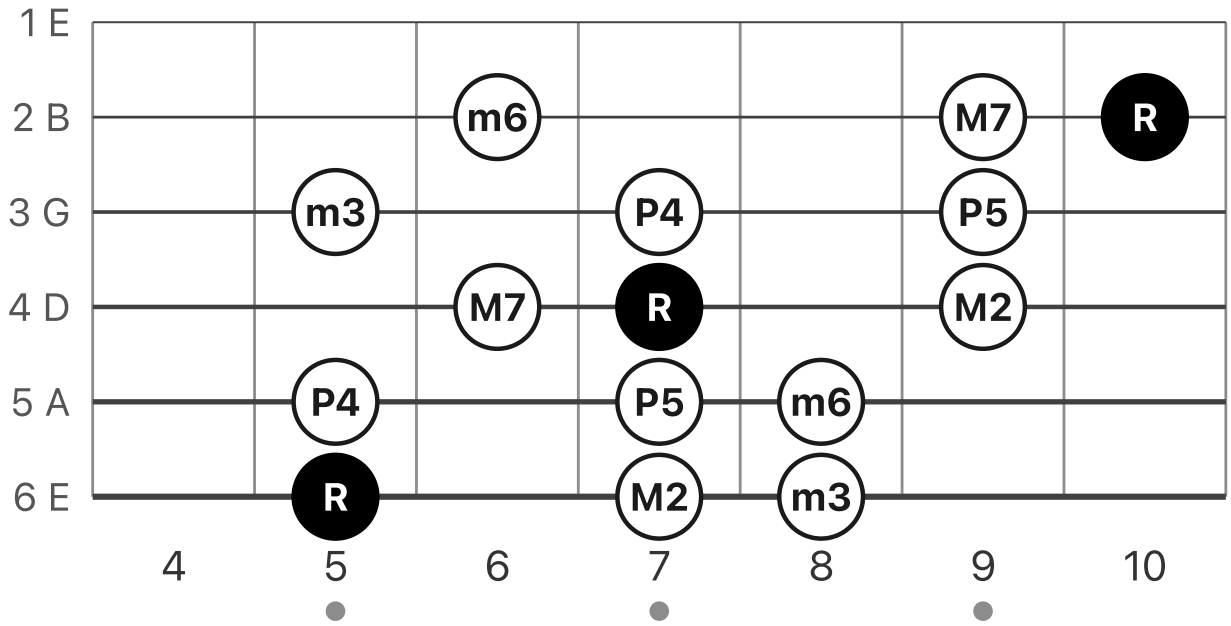
Harmonic minor · 3 notes per string

Natural minor with a raised 7th

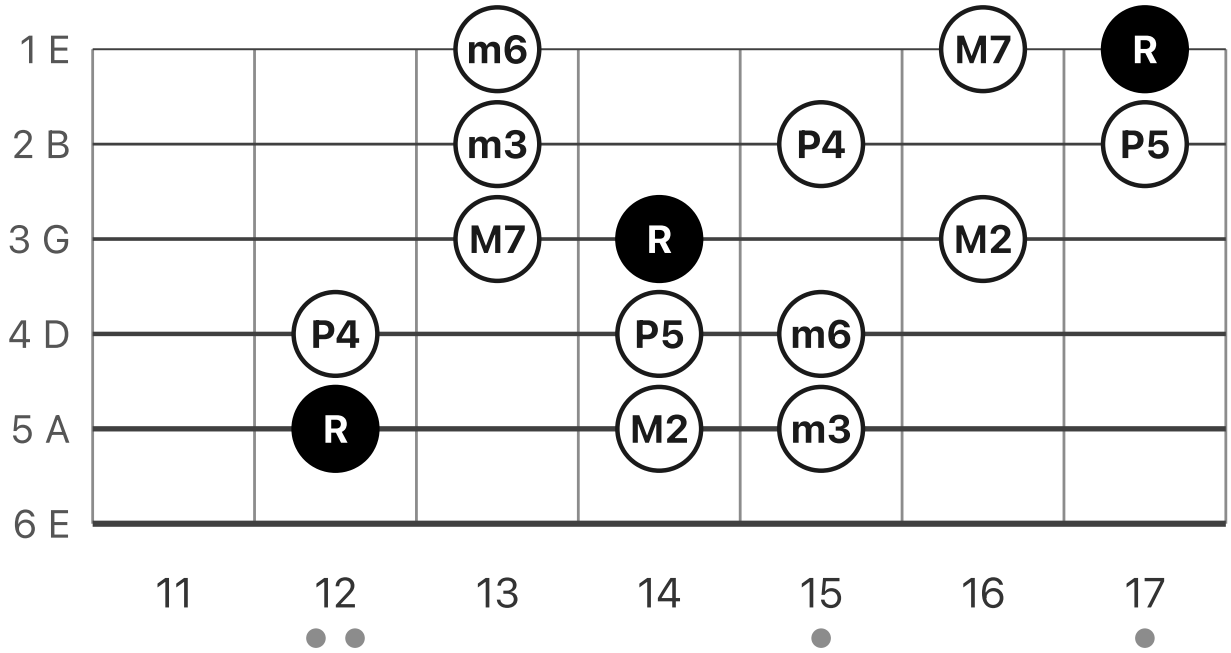
Formula 1 2 ♭3 4 5 ♭6 7 **Steps** W H W W H W+H H

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

Root on 6th string (5th fret)



Root on 5th string (12th fret)



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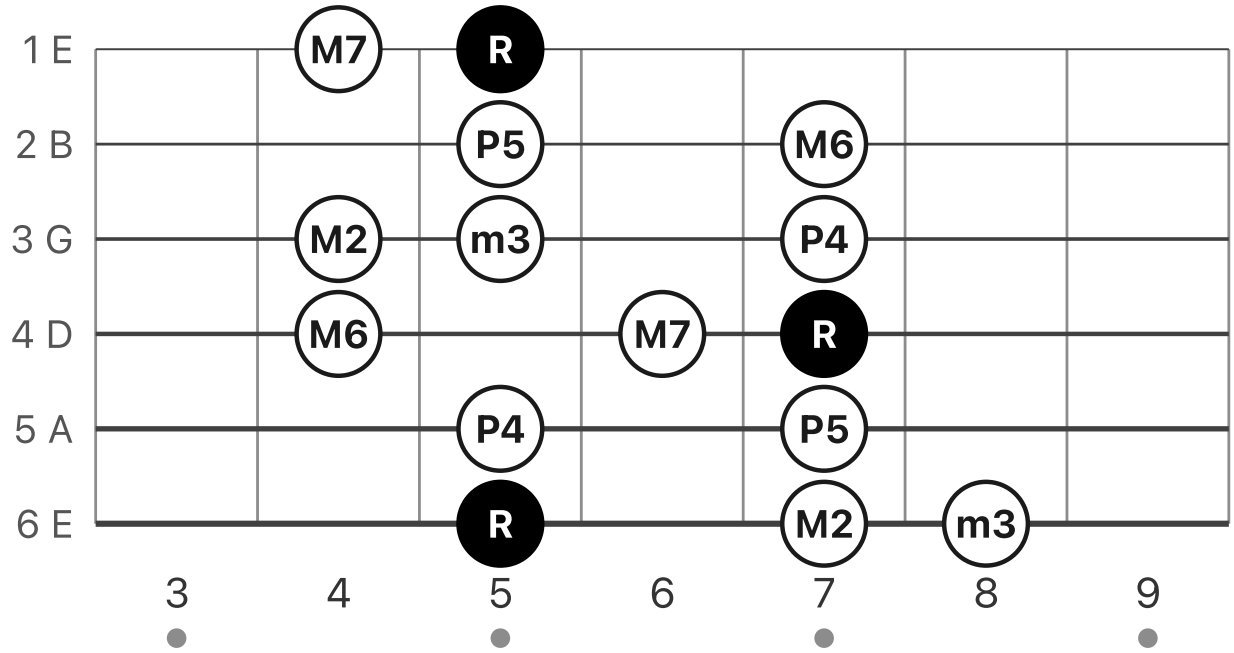
Melodic minor (jazz minor)

Natural minor with raised 6th and 7th

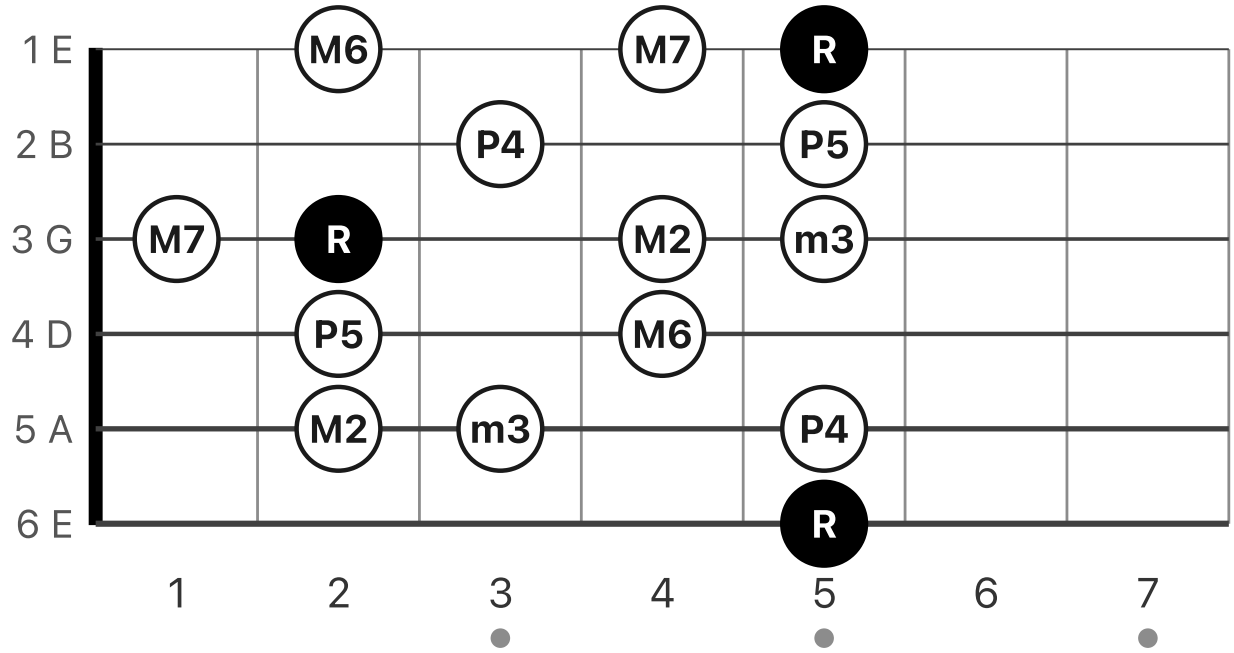
Formula 1 2 ♭3 4 5 6 7 **Steps** W H W W W W H

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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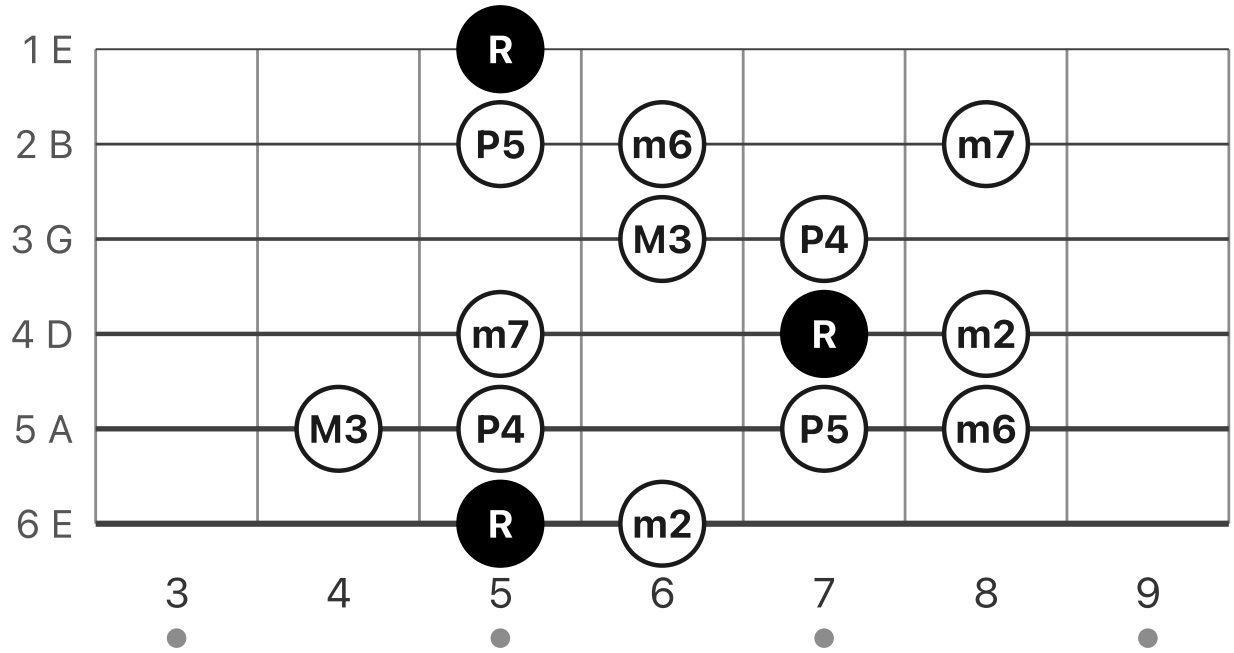
Phrygian dominant

5th mode of harmonic minor

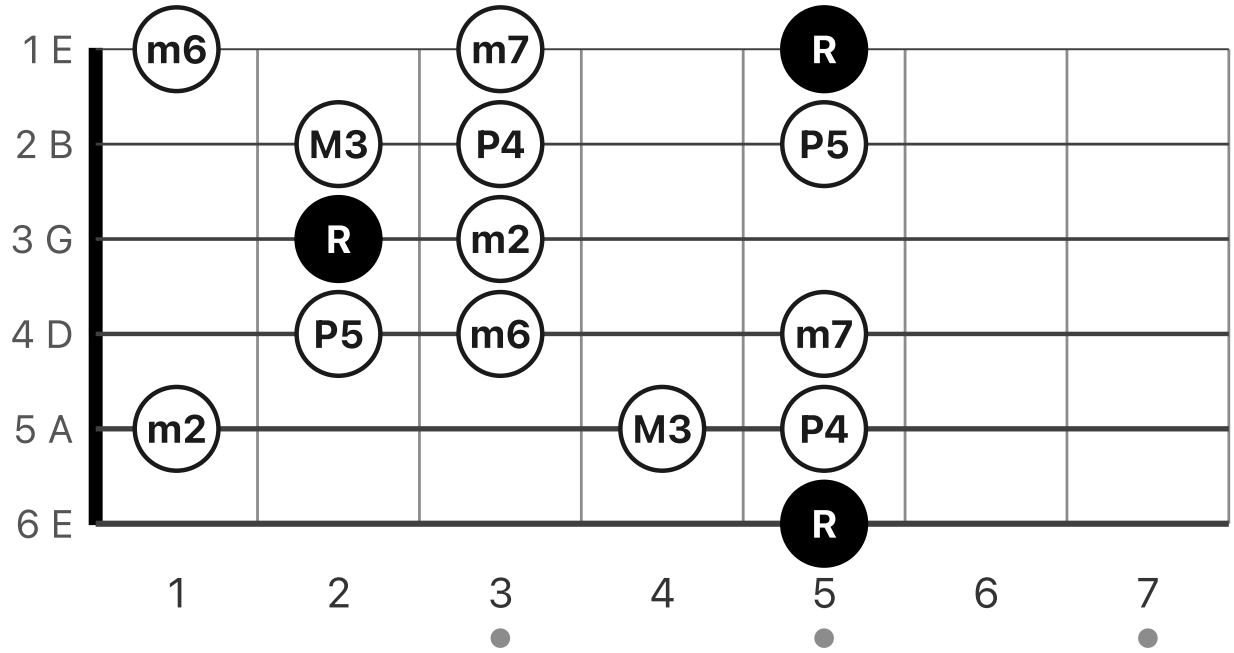
Formula 1 ♭2 3 4 5 ♭6 ♭7 **Steps** H W+H H W H W W

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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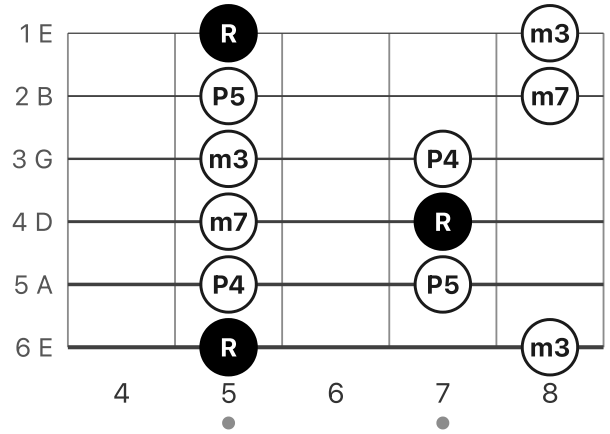
Minor pentatonic

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

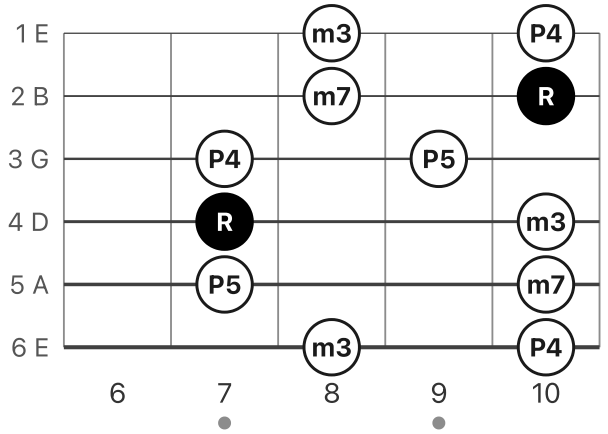
Formula 1 ♭3 4 5 ♭7

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

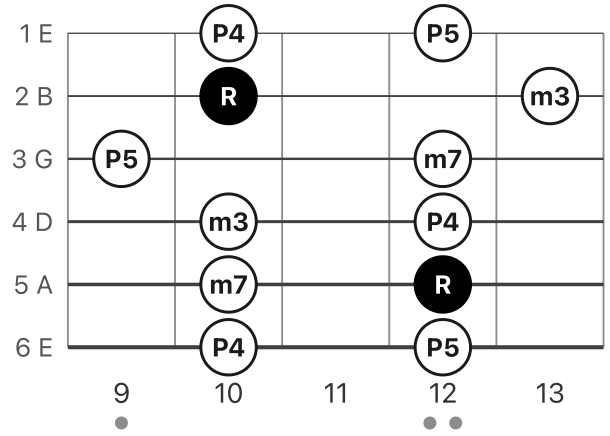
Position 1



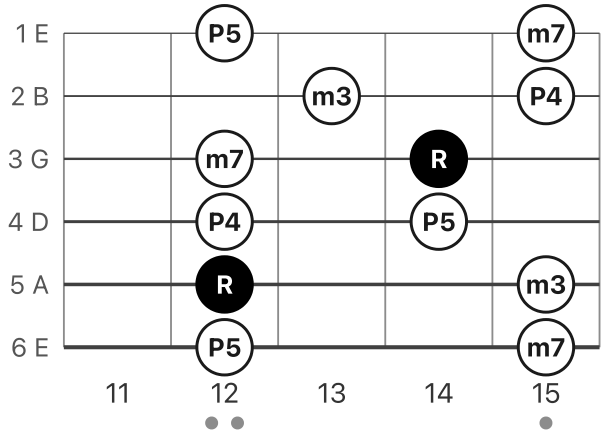
Position 2



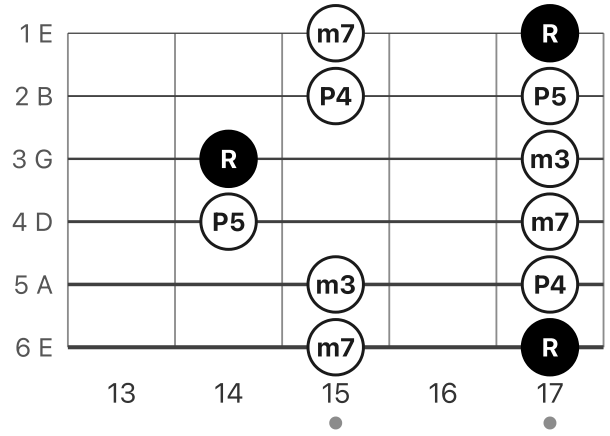
Position 3



Position 4



Position 5



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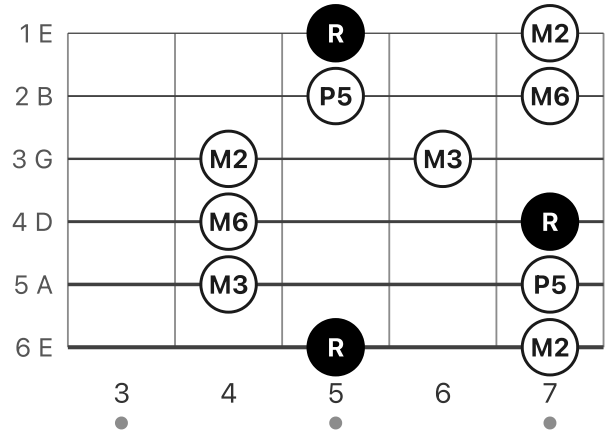
Major pentatonic

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

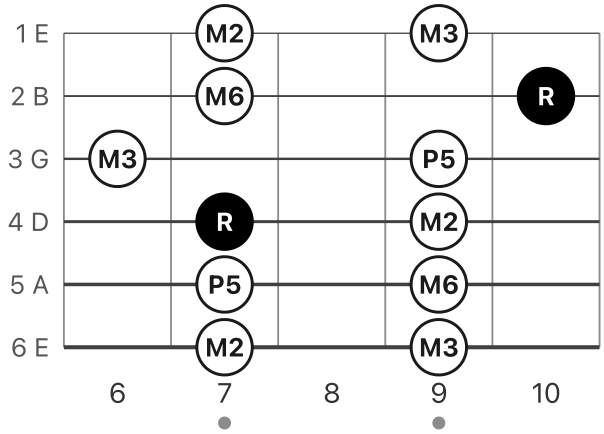
Formula 1 2 3 5 6

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

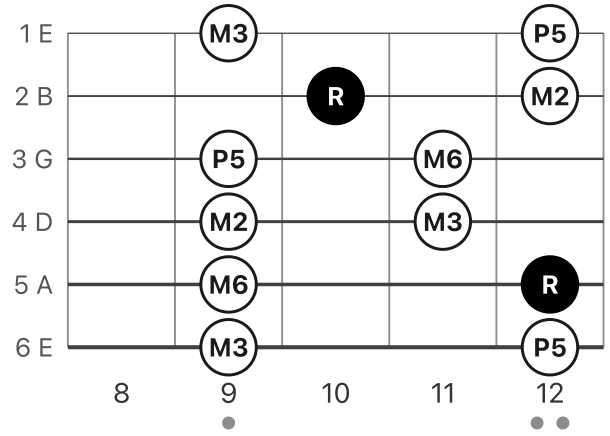
Position 1



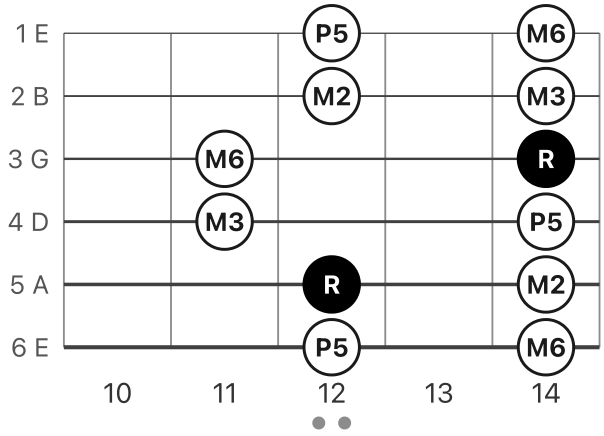
Position 2



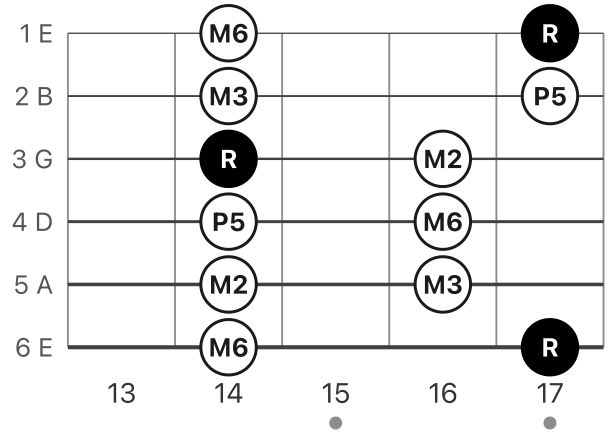
Position 3



Position 4



Position 5



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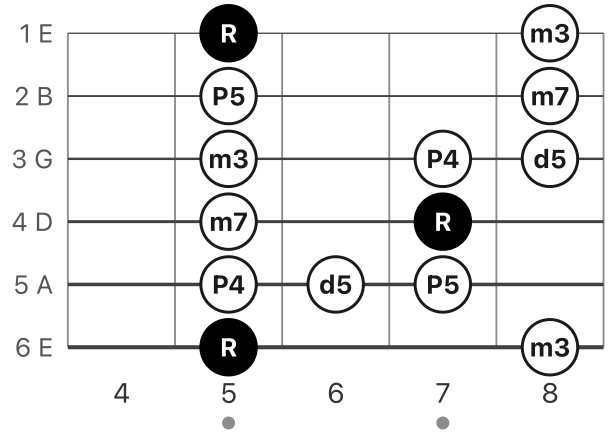
Blues scale

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

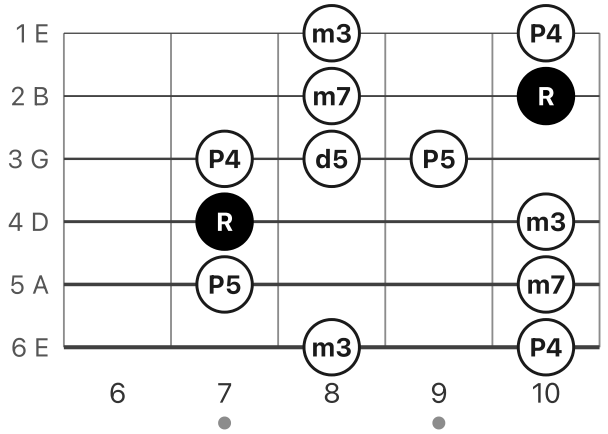
Formula 1 ♭3 4 ♭5 5 ♭7

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

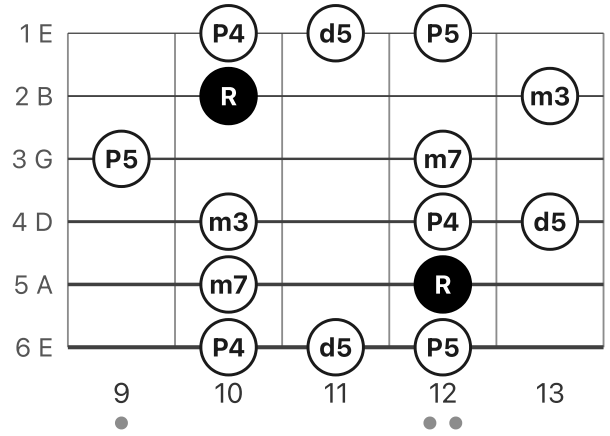
Position 1



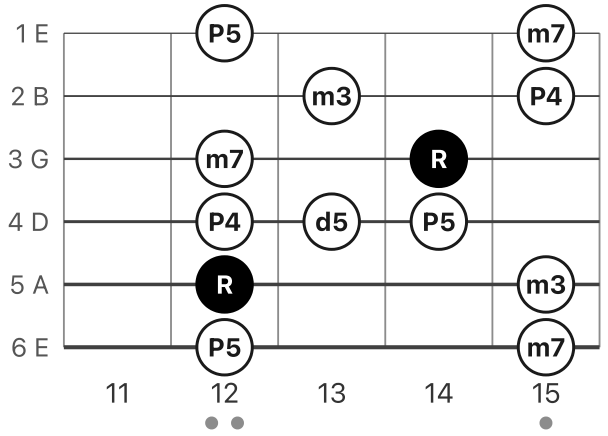
Position 2



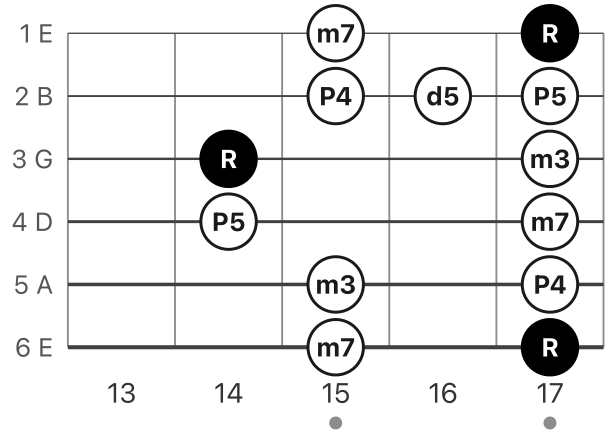
Position 3



Position 4



Position 5



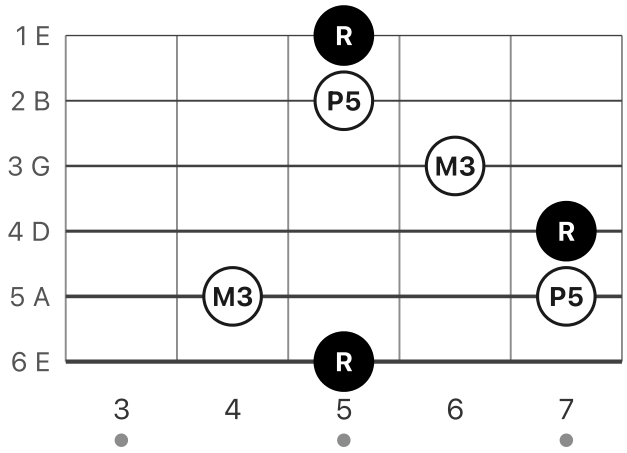
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Arpeggios · root on 6th string

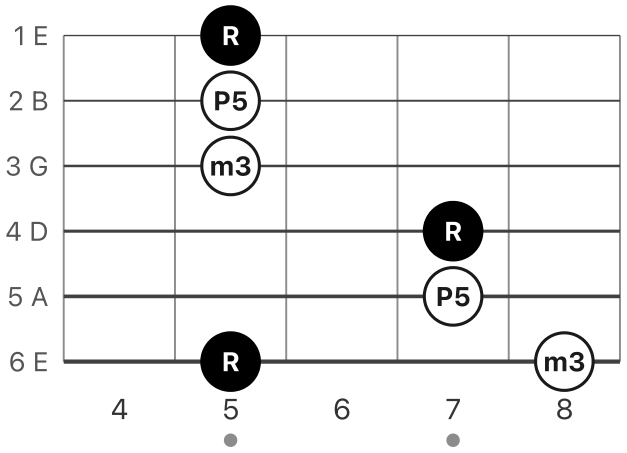
Chord tones only, root to root, 1st-finger position.

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

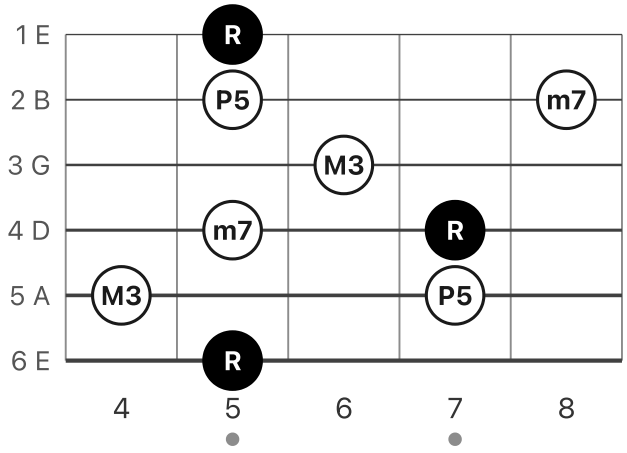
Major · R 3 5



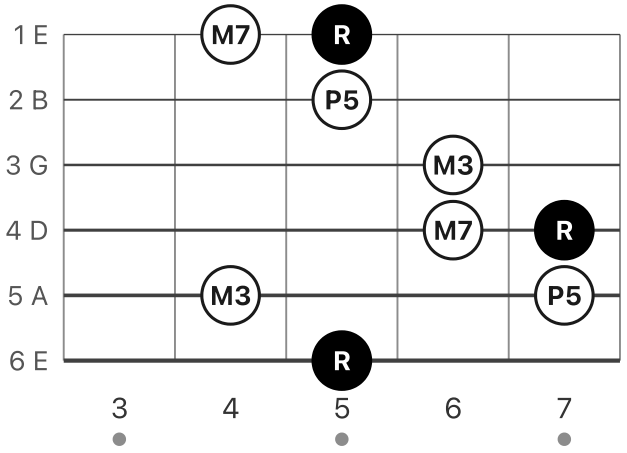
Minor · R ♭3 5



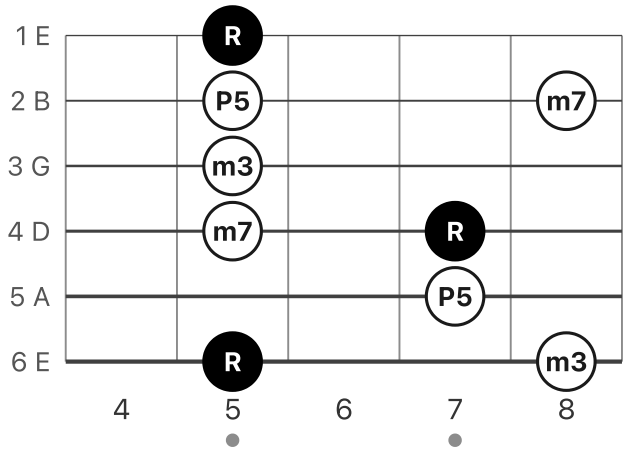
Dominant 7 · R 3 5 ♭7



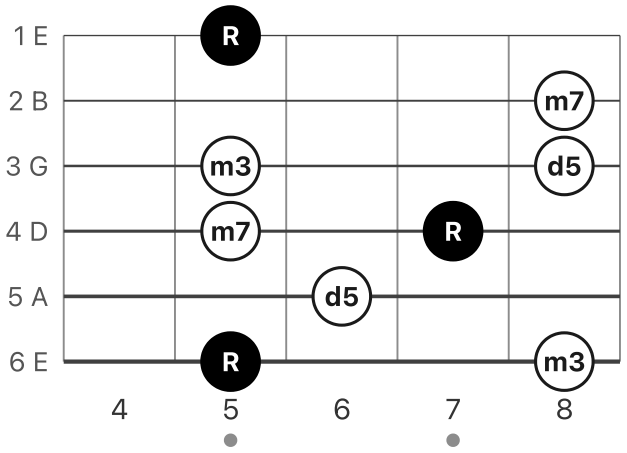
Major 7 · R 3 5 7



Minor 7 · R ♭3 5 ♭7



Minor 7♭5 · R ♭3 ♭5 ♭7



Shown in A. Move the root to change key. Black dot = root.

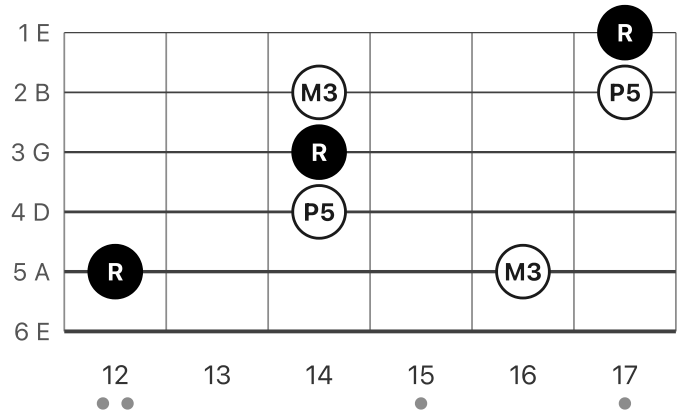
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Arpeggios · root on 5th string

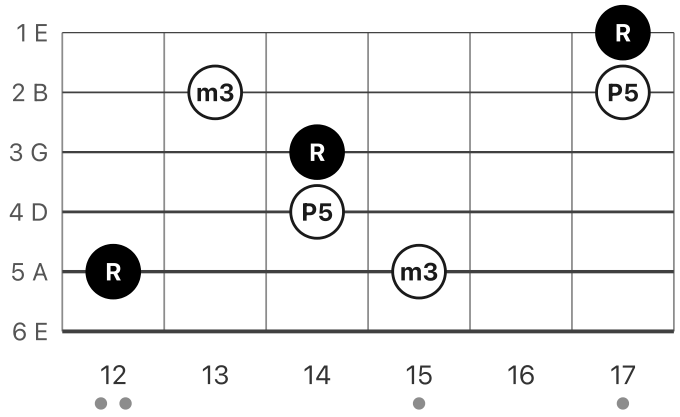
Chord tones only, root to root, 1st-finger position.

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

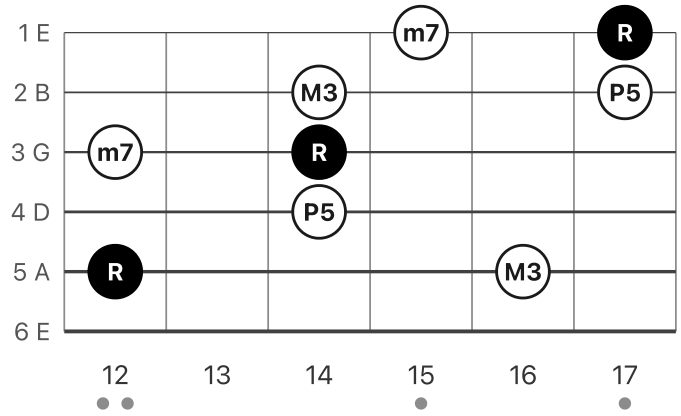
Major · R 3 5



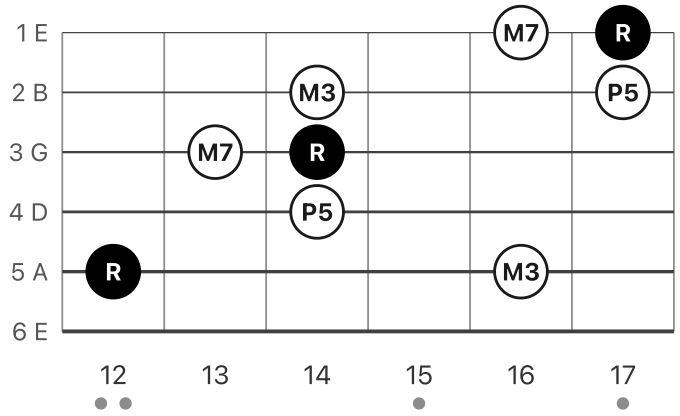
Minor · R ♭3 5



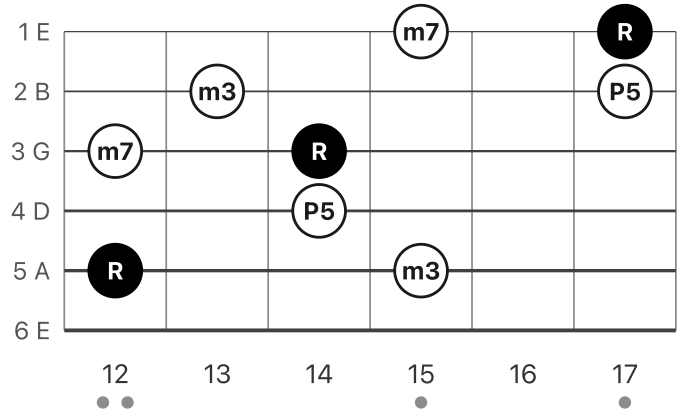
Dominant 7 · R 3 5 ♭7



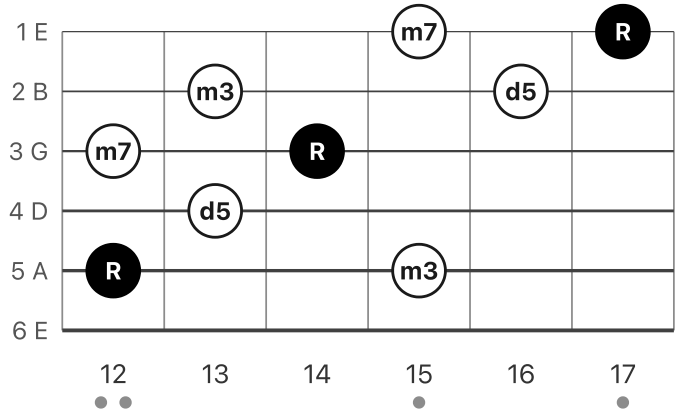
Major 7 · R 3 5 7



Minor 7 · R ♭3 5 ♭7



Minor 7♭5 · R ♭3 ♭5 ♭7



Shown in A. Move the root to change key. Black dot = root.

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