
Practice Playground

Creative Practice for Violin & Fiddle



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How This Book Works

Practice Playground is here to help you become a creative musician, not a collector of exercises.

You'll usually learn each idea in D major, then I'll invite you to move it into other scales you already know. The point isn't to read through pages of written examples or memorize every variation. It's to understand the pattern well enough that you can apply it on your own—to other keys, other tunes, and your own music.

That's why you won't see every exercise written out in all twelve keys. The real learning happens when you move the pattern yourself.

If you get stuck, you can always check the [Appendix](#), where the scales are written out in multiple keys.

Over time, this approach will help you jam with others, pick up patterns and tunes more easily, improvise with confidence, and even compose your own music.

The Practice Cycle

Each lesson follows a simple cycle: **Learn** → **Transfer** → **Play** → **Reflect**.

This keeps practice focused, musical, and alive—without overthinking.

Learn

You start by learning a clear idea: a scale shape, a rhythmic feel, a melodic pattern, or a texture. We keep it simple and grounded, usually in D major, so you can hear and feel what's going on without distractions.

Transfer

Next, you move that same idea somewhere else. You might sing it, play it in a different key, apply it to a tune phrase, or start it on a different string or finger. This is where the idea stops being an exercise and starts becoming yours.

Play

Then you use the idea musically. This might be call-and-response, looping a phrase, playing over a tune, or improvising freely with a few simple rules. You're not trying to be fancy—just curious and present.

Play is fun, but it's also a learning tool. Play helps you integrate things you learn.

Reflect

Finally, you pause and notice. What felt easy? What felt awkward? Did something that felt hard start to feel fun? This short moment of reflection helps the learning stick and guides what you explore next.

This process is the heart of the book. Every time you go through it, you build more freedom, confidence, and musical intuition.

Connection to the Online Course

This book is a companion to the **Practice Playground** online course at FiddleHed.com. Each chapter includes a QR code and link to the corresponding lesson page, where you'll find short and long video lessons, play-along tracks, and further learning links.

The book stands on its own, but the videos and audio tracks will deepen your experience.

Visit the [Practice Playground course page](#) for all lessons, videos, play-along tracks, and further learning resources.



Chapter 1: Major Scale Forms

In this workshop we'll play with scales. A scale is a group of notes arranged from lowest to highest pitch — think of a ladder. You can go up or down.


You can also think of scales as **super-simple melodies**. A lot of famous melodies follow an up-and-down pattern.

We'll fiddle with different scale forms with a D root: major, pentatonic, triads, and top-start variations. We'll close with some call-and-response improv, then practice using the Tune <> Scale Game.

We'll **Learn** the scale forms in D major. **Transfer** them to other keys. Then **Play** with tunes and improvisation.

The goal is musical understanding, confidence, and (wait for it) fun.

If you want to see every scale form written out in full notation across all keys, flip to the [Appendix](#).

Good Sound 
is it's own
Reward 

Major Scale Forms

FUNDamentals

D Major - Even Scale

D0 1 2 3 A0 1 2 3

Even scale — the top note repeats before coming back down.
There's an even number of notes in the scale.

D Major - Odd Scale

D0 1 2 3 A0 1 2 3 E0 A4

Odd scale — the top note passes once before turning around.
There's an odd number of notes in the scale.

D Pentatonic - Even 4/4 time

D0 1 2 A0 1 3

Pentatonic scales are five note scales.
We can extend it slightly by playing notes in the next octave.

D Pentatonic - Odd 4/4 time

D Pentatonic - Even 6/8 time (6 notes)

D Pentatonic - Odd 6/8 time (7 notes)

D Major Triad - Even 3/4 time

D0 2 A0

Triads are three note scales. We can also extend these.

D Major Triad - Odd 3/4 time

D Major Triad - Even 4/4 time

D Major Triad - Odd 4/4 time

ON YOUR OWN

Tune ↔ Scale Game

Pick a tune you know well — memorized is best. Play it with a drone, then switch to its scale. Work through the different forms from this lesson: even, odd, pentatonic, triad, top-start. Keep alternating.

The goal: start hearing the scale inside the tune, and the tune inside the scale. They're the same notes.

Use a drone throughout. Mistakes are creative seeds — don't stop. Feeling adventurous? Change the note order of the scale. Keep it fun. If you're bored, change something.

Visit the [lesson page](#) for short and long videos, play-along tracks, and further learning links.



Chapter 2: Hoedown Journey

The hoedown is a simple rhythmic pattern — **long, short, short** — that shows up everywhere in fiddle music. In this lesson you'll start with it in D major, then move it into intervals and familiar tunes.

You'll improve your timing and rhythmic sense. And develop your creative jamming skills along the way.

We'll **Learn** the basic pattern. **Transfer** it to other scales and tunes. Then **Play** with different variations.

The goal is musical understanding, confidence, and (wait for it) fun.

Hoedown Journey

Rhythmic Variation

Hoedown on D string

D0

D Major - Even

D0

1

2

3

A0

1



D Major Pentatonic - Even

D0

1

2

A0

1

3



D Major Triad - Odd

D0

2

A0

3



Hoedown on Tunes

Mary Had A Little Lamb

D2

1

D0

1

2

A0



For each tune, start with a basic version (without hoedown).

Then play the whole tune with hoedown after looping on the starter phrase.

Twinkle Little Star

D0

A0

1

0

D3

2

1

0



Oh Susannah

D0

1

2

A0

1

0

D2

D0

1



Cross-String Intervals

Each tune you play contains a goldmine of exercises to help you improve your skills. Practice these two-note intervals with the Hoedown pattern. Then transpose to other strings.

Transpose

Use the starter phrases to play G, A and C Major with hoedown.

Variations

Practice variations with all scale forms: even/odd, pentatonics, triads. Then do them in all keys you know.

Long 2 Shorts

ON YOUR OWN

Take It to a Tune

Play the hoedown pattern on an open string until it grooves easily.

Pick a 4/4 tune you know well — a reel, polka, or folk song. Play its scale first with single notes, then with hoedown. Get to the point of flow before touching the tune.

Then play the tune. Pick one short phrase and try adding hoedown to a few notes. Loop it. Pause, adjust, loop again.

Don't try to hoedown the whole tune at once. Get one phrase comfortable — the rest tends to follow on its own

Visit the [lesson page](#) for short and long videos, play-along tracks, and further learning links.



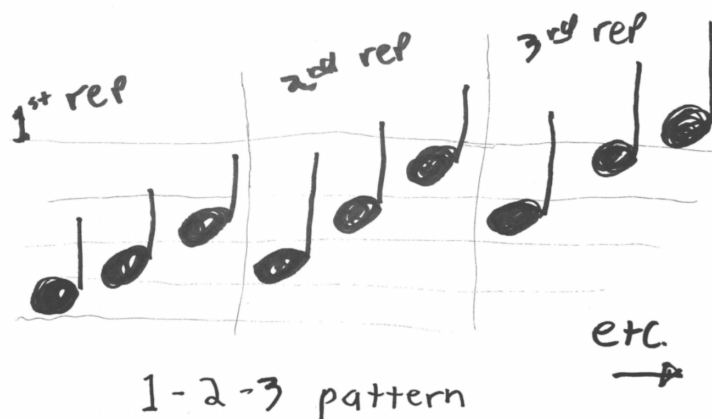
Chapter 3: 1-2-3 Pattern Party

In this lesson you'll learn the 1-2-3 melodic pattern. This will help you learn tunes by ear as well as improvise and compose melodies.

We'll **Learn** the basic pattern one bite at a time with D major scale. Think: "each scale step gets its own little 1-2-3." **Transfer** it to other keys. Then **Play** with reversals, re-patterns, and tune phrases.

This will help your technique, your ability to pick up patterns in tunes and your musical creativity.

When you make mistakes, you might just stumble upon a new melody that you love.



1-2-3 Pattern Party

Melodic Variation

Steps 1-2 Up **Steps 3-4 Up**

D0 1 2 1 2 3 D2 3 A0 D3 A0 1

Steps 1-4 Up

D0 1 2 1 2 3 D2 3 A0 D3 A0 1

Steps 1-4 Up & Down

D0 1 2 1 2 3 D2 3 A0 D3 A0 1 D3 A0 1 D2 3 A0 1 2 3 D0 1 2



Before moving on to the next exercise, try to play steps 5-8 with the 1-2-3 pattern on your own. Hint: it uses the same exact fingering as steps 1-4 but starts on open A.

D Major Scale with 1-2-3, Up/Down

D0 1 2 1 2 3 2 3 A0 D3 A0 1 A0 1 2 1 2 3 2 3 E0 A3 E0 1

Memorize this before attempting the next exercise.

G Major
lower octave
1st two steps
ascending

G Major
upper octave
1st two steps
ascending

C Major
1st two steps
ascending

G0 1 2 1 2 3 D3 A0 1 0 1 L2 G3 D0 1 0 1 L2

Tip: Review the single-note G Major and C Major scales before playing with the 1-2-3 pattern.

Reverse: 3-2-1

3-2-1 Pattern
Steps 1-2
Up

3-2-1 Pattern
Steps 3-4
Up

3-2-1 Pattern
Steps 5-8
Up

D2 1 0 3 2 1 A0 D3 2 A1 0 D3

Same fingering as steps 1-4 but start on A string.

Steps 1-2
Down

Steps 3-4
Down

Steps 5-8
Down

E1 0 A3 E0 A3 2 A3 2 1 2 1 0

Once you get chunk, combine all eight bars to play the 3-2-1 pattern up and down the D Major scale.

D Major Scale
1-2-3 Up/3-2-1 Down

D0 1 2 1 2 3 2 3 A0 D3 A0 1 A0 1 2 1 2 3 2 3 E0 A3 E0 1

E1 0 A3 E0 A3 2 A3 2 1 2 1 0

G Major (lower octave) 3-2-1
Steps 1-2
Up

G Major (upper octave)
Steps 1-2
Up

C Major
Steps 1-2
Up

Use the starter snippet to play the full pattern in G. Same fingering as D Major.

Review single-note G Upper Octave and C Major before attempting with the 3-2-1 pattern.

Other Scale Forms

D Major Pentatonic
1-2-3 Up/3-2-1 Down

Memorize. Then transpose.

Re-pattern

1-2-3-3

3-2-1-1

1-1-2-3

If we repeat the third step, we get a four-note pattern. This works nicely for playing in 4/4 time.

3-3-2-1

1-2-2-3

3-2-2-1

Tune phrases

Perpetual Motion

Kesh Jig (G Major)

1-2-3-3 Variation

*1-2-3 on
G Major Pentatonic*

ON YOUR OWN

Add 1-2-3 to Other Scales You Know

Pick a different root note: G, A, C or whatever you are working on. Play different scale forms for that root note: even & odd, top-down, pentatonic, triad.

Then add 1-2-3 to just the first two steps of each scale form. Get it flowing, then keep chaining until you can run the full scale with 1-2-3 up and 3-2-1 down.

Tune ↔ Improv

Pick a tune you know well. Start with its scale.

Then alternate: tune, then scale with the pattern, then tune again. Think of the scale + pattern practice as an improv section.

If you make a mistake, try to listen to it. If it sounds nice to you, try to refine it as a melodic idea.

Once that feels solid, try other variations like 1-2-3-3 or 3-2-1-1. Always start with one or two steps. Get it grooving before adding more.

Visit the [lesson page](#) for short and long videos, play-along tracks, and further learning links.

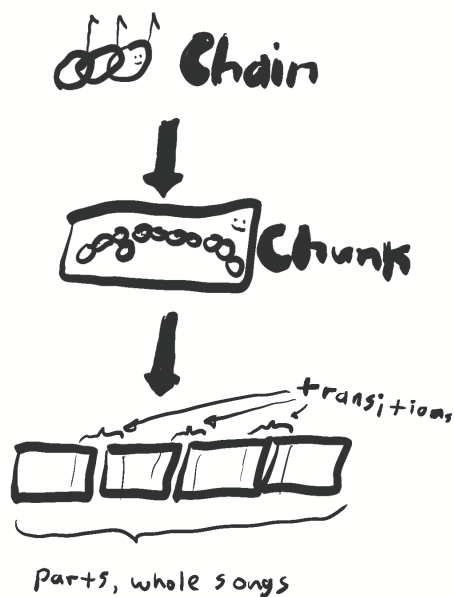


Chapter 4: Chaining Notes and Phrases

Chaining is the practice of building a phrase one note at a time. It improves your tone and bow control, strengthens memory, and turns even familiar tunes into fresh creative material.

We'll **Learn** chaining on a D major scale, then apply it to a tune phrase by phrase. **Transfer** the technique to other tunes and tricky spots. Then **Play** with short note chains as improvisation seeds.

The goal is to improve your technique, develop musical creativity and have fun along the way.



Chaining

Creative Moves – Practice Playground 1.4

Chaining (Forwards)

Use a big "Throwaway Bow" on the last note of each chain. This builds tone.

D Major

Chaining (Backwards)

Chaining A Phrase

You Are My Sunshine, Chaining First Quarter

You Are My Sunshine, First Quarter Loop

You Are My Sunshine, Second Quarter Loop

After chaining the phrase, loop it slowly, until it flows.

You Are My Sunshine, Chaining Second Quarter

You Are My Sunshine, Third Quarter Loop

Musical notation for the first two sections. The first section, 'You Are My Sunshine, Chaining Second Quarter', consists of two measures of music with guitar chords D3, 3, A0, D3, A0, 1, D3, A0, 1, L2, and E0. The second section, 'You Are My Sunshine, Third Quarter Loop', consists of two measures of music with guitar chords D3, A0, 1, L2, E0, 0, A3, L2, 1, and D3. Both sections are in G major and 4/4 time.

You Are My Sunshine, Fourth Quarter

Musical notation for the 'You Are My Sunshine, Fourth Quarter' section. It consists of two measures of music with guitar chords D3, A0, 1, L2, 0, 1, and D3. The section is in G major and 4/4 time.

Chain the Chunks (Forwards)

1st + 2nd Quarters

Musical notation for the 'Chain the Chunks (Forwards) 1st + 2nd Quarters' section. It consists of two measures of music, combining the first two measures of the 'Chaining Second Quarter' section. The section is in G major and 4/4 time.

1st + 2nd + 3rd Quarters

Musical notation for the 'Chain the Chunks (Forwards) 1st + 2nd + 3rd Quarters' section. It consists of two measures of music, combining the first three measures of the 'Chaining Second Quarter' section. The section is in G major and 4/4 time.

You Are My Sunshine, Full song

Musical notation for the 'You Are My Sunshine, Full song' section. It consists of two measures of music, combining the first two measures of the 'Chain the Chunks (Forwards) 1st + 2nd + 3rd Quarters' section. The section is in G major and 4/4 time.

Musical notation for the final part of the 'You Are My Sunshine, Full song' section. It consists of two measures of music, combining the last two measures of the 'Chain the Chunks (Forwards) 1st + 2nd + 3rd Quarters' section. The section is in G major and 4/4 time.

Backwards Chaining

You Are My Sunshine, 4th Quarter



You Are My Sunshine, 3rd + 4th Quarters

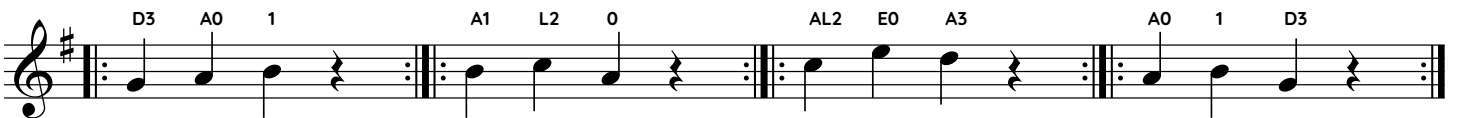


You Are My Sunshine, 2nd + 3rd + 4th Quarters



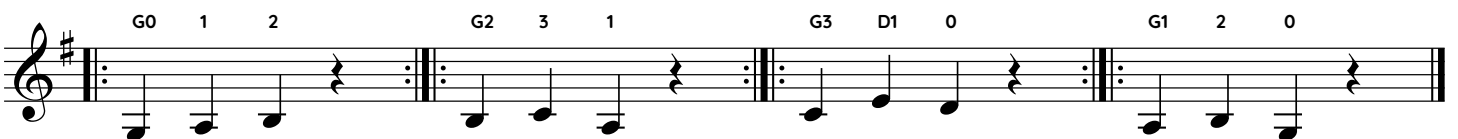
After chaining the second, third, and fourth quarters, play the whole tune again.

3-note Mini-Chains



After chaining the second, third, and fourth quarters, play the whole tune again.
Experiment with adding variations, putting them together in new ways and even changing the note order.

3-note Mini-Chains,
Lower Octave



These Mini-Chains are the same as the line above, only an octave Lower.
Practice octave talking: Play a phrase, a mini chain in the upper octave and then in the lower octave.

ON YOUR OWN

Chain Every Tune You Learn

For any tune you're learning: break it into chunks and chain the notes of each one, forwards and backwards.

Practice with the root drone for the tune to make it feel more musical.

For tunes you already know but want to improve: find the shaky spots and chain those phrases. Then pull out two or three notes that interest you and play with them – add hoedown, try different scale forms, switch octaves or even change the note order.

Then return to the full tune. Tune → chains → improv → tune. Work it in any order.

Visit the [lesson page](#) for short and long videos, play-along tracks, and further learning links.



Chapter 5: Playground Session 1

In this “Remix” workshop, we’ll connect ideas from the first four Practice Playground lessons.

We combine A Dorian, A Minor Pentatonic, A Minor Triad, hoedown rhythm, the 1-2-3 melodic pattern, chaining, and Cluck Old Hen into one creative practice flow.

The goal is to make everything feel as good as playing one note.

Every
Note ↴
Matters

Playground Session 1

Creative Moves

A Dorian
Upper Octave—Even

A0 1 L2 3 E0 1 L2 3

A Dorian has the same notes as G Major.

A Dorian
Upper Octave—Odd

E4

A Minor Pentatonic
Upper Octave—Even

D0 L2 3 E0 L2 3

A Minor Triad
Upper Octave—Even

A0 L2 E0 3

A Minor Pentatonic +
Hoedown

A0 L2 3 E0

A Minor Pentatonic +
Reverse Hoedown

A Minor Pentatonic +
Split Hoedown

A0 L2 3 E0

A Minor Pentatonic +
Offbeat Accent

A Minor Pentatonic +
Georgia Shuffle

**A Minor Pentatonic
1-2-3 Pattern**

**A Minor Pentatonic
1-2-3 Up, 3-2-1 Down**

A Minor Pentatonic—Lower Octave

A Minor Triad—Lower Octave

**Cluck Old Hen
A Part**

**Chain notes for Cluck Old Hen
A Part, First Quarter**

**Cluck Old Hen
A Part, Second Bar +
Hoedown**

Use a big "Throwaway Bow" on the last note of each chain.

**Octave Talking:
Cluck Old Hen First Bar**

Hear this as a conversation.
Practice Octave Talking on phrases from other tunes you know.

Melodic seed phrases

For each seed, transpose to other strings (5th) or in octaves. Apply any variations you know.
Combine them like legos, or do octave talking. Use as improv ideas for the Tune <> Improv game.

ON YOUR OWN

Playground Session (for any tune)

Apply what you learned in this lesson to any tune (no matter what level).

Pick a tune. Then practice:

- Its diatonic scale (7 notes)
- Its pentatonic scale (5 notes)
- Its triad (3 notes)

Practice the tune:

- Chain notes for each Chunk
- Loop each Chunk
- Chain the Chunks

Then remix:

- **Even and Odd Versions** (7, 5, 3 note “scale sizes”)
- **Hoedown Variations**
- **1-2-3 Variations**
- **Apply the Same Variations You Practiced on the Scale to the Tune**
- **Tune ↔ Improv**

Visit the [lesson page](#) for short and long videos, play-along tracks, and further learning links.



Appendix 1

Core Scales

D Major

Even Scale

D0 1 2 3 A0 1 2 3

Odd Scale

D0 1 2 3 A0 1 2 3 E0 A4

Pentatonic - Even - 4/4 time

D0 1 2 A0 1 3

Pentatonic - Odd - 4/4 time

Pentatonic - Even - 6/8 time (6 notes)

A3

Pentatonic - Odd - 6/8 time (7notes)

E0 A4

Major Triad - Even - 4/4 time

Major Triad - Odd - 4/4 time

E1

Top-first - Odd Scale

E0 A4 A3 2

Full Range (1st position)

G0 1 2 H3 E0 1 L2 3 4

G Major

Even Scale

G0 1 2 3 D0 1 2 3

Odd Scale

G0 1 2 3 D0 1 2 3 A0 D4

Pentatonic - Lower Octave

G0 1 2 D0 1 3

Pentatonic - Upper Octave

D3 A0 1 3 E0 L2

Pentatonic - Lower Octave
6/8 time

D3

Pentatonic - Lower Octave
6/8 time

D3 A0 1 3 E0 L2

Major Triad - Lower Octave

G0 2 D0

Major Triad - Upper Octave

D3 A1 A3 EL2

Top-first - Odd Scale

A0 D4 D3 2

Full Range
(1st position)

A0 1 L2 3 E0 1 L2 3 4

A Major

Upper Octave

A0 1 2 3 E0 1 2 3

Lower Octave

G1 2 H3 D0 1 2 H3 A0 D4

Pentatonic - Upper Octave

Pentatonic - Lower Octave

A0 1 2 E0 1 3 G1 2 H3 D1 2 A0 D4

Pentatonic - Lower Octave
6/8 time

Pentatonic - Lower Octave
6/8 time

Major Triad - Upper Octave

Major Triad - Lower Octave

A0 2 E0 3 G1 H3 D1 A0

Top-first - Odd Scale

E4 3 2 1 E0 A3 2 1 A0

Full Range
(1st position)

GL1 1 2 H3 D0 1 2 H3 A0 1 L2 3 E0 1 L2 3 4

E Dorian

Even Scale

D1 2 3 A0 1 2 3 E0



Odd Scale

E1



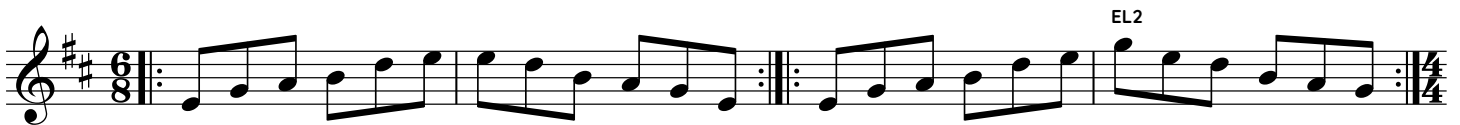
Pentatonic - Even -
4/4 time (6 notes)

D1 3 A0 1 3 E0

Pentatonic - Odd -
4/4 time (5 notes)



EL2



Major Triad - Even -
4/4 time

D1 3 A1 E0

Major Triad - Odd -
4/4 time

EL2



Top-first - Odd Scale

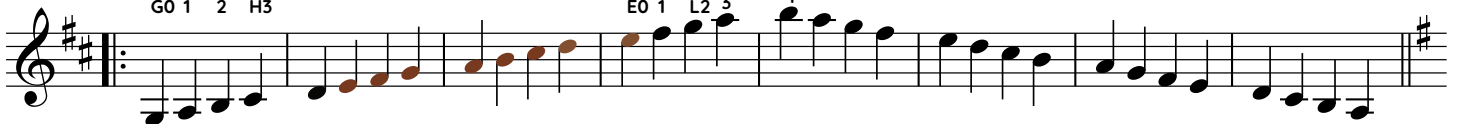
E1 0 A3 2 1 0 D3 2 D1



Full Range
(1st position)

G0 1 2 H3

E0 1 L2 3 4



A Dorian

Upper Octave

Musical notation for the Upper Octave A Dorian scale. The scale is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5, G5, A5. Fingerings are indicated above the notes: 1, 2, 3, E0, 1, 2, 3.

Lower Octave

Musical notation for the Lower Octave A Dorian scale. The scale is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4. Fingerings are indicated above the notes: G1, 2, H3, D0, 1, 2, H3, A0, D4.

Minor Pentatonic - Lower Octave

Musical notation for the Minor Pentatonic scale in the lower octave. The scale is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are G3, A3, B3, C4, D4. Fingerings are indicated above the notes: G1, 3, D0, 1, 3, A0.

Minor Pentatonic - Upper Octave

Musical notation for the Minor Pentatonic scale in the upper octave. The scale is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are A4, B4, C5, D5, E5. Fingerings are indicated above the notes: A0, L2, 3, E0, L2, 3. The piece ends with a double bar line and a 6/8 time signature.

Pentatonic - Lower Octave 6/8 time

Musical notation for the Pentatonic scale in the lower octave in 6/8 time. The scale is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are G3, A3, B3, C4, D4. Fingerings are indicated above the notes: G1, 3, D0, 1, 3, A0.

Pentatonic - UPPER Octave 6/8 time

Musical notation for the Pentatonic scale in the upper octave in 6/8 time. The scale is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are A4, B4, C5, D5, E5. Fingerings are indicated above the notes: A0, L2, 3, E0, L2, 3. The piece ends with a double bar line and a 4/4 time signature.

Major Triad - Upper Octave

Musical notation for the Major Triad in the upper octave. The scale is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are A4, B4, C5. Fingerings are indicated above the notes: A0, L2, E0, 3.

Major Triad - Lower Octave

Musical notation for the Major Triad in the lower octave. The scale is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are G3, A3, B3. Fingerings are indicated above the notes: G1, 3, D1, A0.

Top-first - Odd Scale

Musical notation for the Top-first - Odd Scale. The scale is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are E4, F#4, G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5. Fingerings are indicated above the notes: E4, 3, L2, 1, E0, A3, L2, 1, A0.

Full Range (1st position)

Musical notation for the Full Range (1st position) A Dorian scale. The scale is written on a treble clef staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are G0, A0, B0, C1, D1, E1, F#1, G1, A1, B1, C2, D2, E2, F#2, G2. Fingerings are indicated above the notes: G0, 1, 2, 3, D0, 1, 2, 3, A0, 1, L2, 3, E0, 1, L2, 3, 4.