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Most guitar players at some point in their learning find modes to be a mysterious and scary concept. I've met hundreds of students who were convinced that modes are difficult to understand. But nothing could be farther from the truth.

To understand modes, you just have to apply a little bit of logic. Modes are nothing more than different starting places on primary scales such as the major scale. If you know a major scale, you automatically also know the seven diatonic major modes. How is that possible? Let's start by understanding how a major scale is constructed. Scales are built using a sequence of whole steps and half steps.

The first line in Example 1 is a C major scale showing the sequence of: whole step, whole step, half step, whole step, whole step, whole step and half step. All major scales, no matter what key, follow the same sequence. The Greek name for a major scale is called the Ionian mode.

If we start on the second note D, and follow the exact same sequence of half steps and whole steps until we arrive at D an octave higher, we will have created a D Dorian mode. D Dorian is nothing more than a C major scale beginning on the second note D.

To create an E Phrygian mode, we simply follow the same sequence again but this time starting on and ending on the third note E. And as we start on subsequent notes of the C major scale, the Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian and Locrian modes will be constructed.

The important thing to remember is that all seven modes are nothing more than different starting points of the original major scale. For example, the G mixolydian mode is built from the notes of the C major scale starting on the fifth degree G. The sequence of half steps and whole steps remains as they were in the original C major scale. It's the shifting of half steps and whole steps that give modes their unique sound.

Example 1 shows all seven modes generated from a C major scale. The last line of the example shows the C major scale harmony. These are the 7th chords built off each scale tone and it is very important for our adventure into modes that you know and understand these chords. In fact, learn the modes by combining these three points; the **name**, **major scale degree** and **chord type** like this:

***Ionian - 1 - Maj7***

***Dorian - 2 - min7***

***Phrygian - 3 - min7***

***Lydian - 4 - Maj7***

***Mixolydian - 5 - Dom7***

***Aeolian - 6 - min7***

***Locrian - 7 - min7b5.***

# Modes of the C Major Scale

## Example 1

**C Ionian**

Whole Step   Whole Step   1/2 Step   Whole Step   Whole Step   Whole Step   1/2 Step

**D Dorian**

**E Phrygian**

**F Lydian**

**G Mixolydian**

**A Aeolian**

**B Locrian**

## C Major Scale Harmony

<b>I</b>	<b>II</b>	<b>III</b>	<b>IV</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>VI</b>	<b>VII</b>
<b>Cmaj<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>Dm<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>Em<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>Fmaj<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>G<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>Am<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>Bm<sup>7</sup><sub>b5</sub></b>