

# PRACTICAL JAZZ SCALE/CHORD PRACTICE, PART 1

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**Scales** are essential to practice because they are a part of the alphabet of jazz. While there are many concepts to learn when studying the language of jazz improvisation, knowledge of scales is basic, and in fact scales are part of the foundation for many styles of music. **Chords**, which are combinations of scale notes, are also very important to practice. They can be played linearly or/and harmonically, depending on which instrument. Very much of what happens melodically and harmonically in jazz (and all other Western music styles) can be described in terms of scales and chords. Also, many classic jazz solos contain parts of scales and chords -- another good reason to practice them!

If you're already familiar with Major scales, the exercises below show a practical way for scale/chord practice to help build jazz improvisation skills. They incorporate the full scale to the 9th and the corresponding standard 9th chord (which is based on the scale notes 1, 3, 5, 7 & 9), played bidirectionally. The 9th is present since most jazz chords include the 9th. Scale note numbers are included as well, since they represent both scale/chord degrees and harmonic functions in diatonic situations. It is helpful to sing or think the note numbers while practicing the scales/chords (slowly at first), to reinforce this relationship. As usual with all practice, these exercises should be practiced musically, with excellent sound, strong clear rhythm, and clear articulation -- either consistent swing or straight 8th legato tongue, or varied articulations (listen to jazz masters for more ideas). As soon as possible, they should be practiced from memory. They are written below in C, but should be practiced in all 12 keys.

Common chord symbols for each chord are included for reference. *Regarding chord symbols:* jazz charts will often list seventh chords (such as Cmi7 or C7), but for most jazz songs, chordal players will typically include the 9th (and other higher scale degrees) in their voicings of those chords. That's part of the special sound of jazz harmony, and all the more reason to include the 9th in scale practice.

Ordinarily, scale note numbers that describe harmonic function are written as Roman numerals (such as ii- V7 I for 2-5-1), but in this case, standard Arabic numerals are used for simplicity. The scales/chords in this document (Part 1) are some of the most commonly used in jazz, but this exercise can be applied to almost any scale/chord, with variations as needed.

**C MAJOR (IONIAN) SCALE TO THE 9TH** **C MAJOR CHORD TO THE 9TH (C MA7 OR C MA9 OR C Δ)**

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 3 5 7 9 7 5 3 1

**C DOMINANT 7TH (MIXOLYDIAN) SCALE TO THE 9TH** **C DOMINANT 7TH CHORD TO THE 9TH (C7 OR C9 OR C13)**

1 2 3 4 5 6 b7 8 9 8 b7 6 5 4 3 2 1 3 5 b7 9 b7 5 3 1

**C MINOR (DORIAN) SCALE TO THE 9TH** **C MINOR CHORD TO THE 9TH (Cmi7 OR Cmi9 OR C-7 OR C-9)**

1 2 b3 4 5 6 b7 8 9 8 b7 6 5 4 b3 2 1 b3 5 b7 9 b7 5 b3 1

**C HALF-DIMINISHED (LOCRIAN) SCALE TO THE (b) 9TH** **C HALF-DIMINISHED CHORD TO THE (b) 9TH (C mi7b5 OR C-7b5)**

1 b2 b3 4 b5 b6 b7 8 b9 8 b7 b6 b5 4 b3 b2 1 b3 b5 b7 b9 b7 b5 b3 1

**C MINOR-MAJOR 7TH (ASCENDING MELODIC MINOR) SCALE TO THE 9TH** **C MAJOR-MINOR 7TH CHORD TO THE 9TH (C mi/MA7 OR C-Δ7)**

1 2 b3 4 5 6 7 8 9 8 7 6 5 4 b3 2 1 b3 5 7 9 7 5 b3 1