

## Piano Lesson: The C-major Chord - How To Use The Right Scale

When you improvise you need to know the relationship between chords and scales. You can of course use your ear when you improvise over chord changes but you will benefit from the freedom of knowing what you are doing when you press down the keys to create music. Let us start with the C-major chord. In this piano lesson you will use your left hand to play chords and your right hand for scale improvisation. You can practice improvising with your left hand and playing chords with your right hand too. You are the one to decide what you need to practice. This article is not written on a music sheet so I can not use traditional sheet music notation. I will instead use the note names together with an indication of which octave to play the note. Here is the C-major chord for your left hand: C: C3 E3 G3 The number three tells you to play the chord in the third octave of a common piano keyboard. That is, a keyboard with 88 keys. The important thing to remember is that the fourth octave is the middle octave of a keyboard. C4 is the famous middle C or keyhole C on an traditional piano. Okey, it is time to see what scale to use together with the C chord. The most common choice would be to use a C-major scale as a base for your improvisations. The C-major scale consists of the white keys on your piano. Here is the C-major scale in the fourth octave: C4 D4 E4 F4 G4 A4 B4 As soon as you can play a piano scale by heart it is time to create music with it. You can practice to play patterns built upon these scale notes. Here are a few examples: C4 E4 G4 B4 D5 B4 G4 E4 C4 E5 B4 D5 C5 B4 G4 E4 C4 B3 C4 D4 E4 G4 A4 4B C5 E5 B4 Another common scale to use together with the C-major chord is the C-major pentatonic scale. This scale consists of only five notes in each octave instead of the seven notes in the C-major scale. This scale is constructed by omitting the fourth and seventh note in the major scale. Here are the notes: C4 D4 E4 G4 A4 The pentatonic scale has a few benefits: 1. With only five notes it can be used together with more chords without interfering with the chord notes. 2. It is so interesting as it is that you can create melodic patterns by just playing it up and down the keyboard. Let us create a pattern with this scale: C4 D4 E4 G4 D4 E4 G4 A4 E4 G4 A4 C5 You can also play it the other way: C5 A4 G4 E4 A4 G4 E4 D4 G4 E4 D4 C4 Before we finish this piano lesson we have to take a look at another interesting scale. It is the C Lydian scale. It resembles the C-major scale but with a F# instead of F. Here is the scale written out: C4 D4 E4 F#4 G4 A4 B4 As I mentioned before the scale looks a lot like the major scale with the exception of the raised 4th. The raised 4th gives the ear the sensation of momentum and it sounds modern. Many people feel that the normal F is dissonant together with the C major chord. The F# on the other hand can be used the same way as the other notes in the scale. Here are two examples of patterns: C4 E4 G4 F#4 A4 C5 B4 G4 E4 C5 B4 G4 E4 A4 F#4 E4 D4 The important thing with all these scales is to create your own melodies. Give yourself time to practice slowly which will give your heart and mind time to create music.

### About the Author

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