

# Demystifying Modes

Modes can be very confusing at first glance – this sheet sets out to simplify things somewhat.

To read a good general overview of modes, visit: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Musical\\_modes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Musical_modes)

In simple terms, a mode is a row of (usually) seven notes. There are 84 basic modes, not counting more advanced altered versions, such as the Lydian Dominant. These 84 note rows are made up from 7 modes on each of 12 different note names. The most important modes are:

Ionian, Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Mixolydian, Aeolian and Locrian. Let's look at them in a bit more detail.

## Ionian

Put simply, is the same as the Major scale that we all know and love to hate!

## Dorian

Play a Dorian mode on any note by using the major scale notes of a tone below. E.g. F Dorian uses the notes F to F of Eb major scale, which is a tone below. Dorian modes are used over Minor 7<sup>th</sup> chords, and are integral to understanding a II-V-I chord progression. Massively useful!!

## Phrygian

Play a Phrygian Mode by using the major scale notes of 2 tones below. E.g. A Phrygian uses the notes A to A of F major, 2 tones below. Phrygian is used on susb9 chords; don't panic, this is not used as much as others – more on the Phrygian later on!

## Lydian

Play a Lydian Mode by using the major scale notes of a Perfect 4<sup>th</sup> below. E.g. F# Lydian uses the notes F# to F# of the C# major scale, a Perfect 4<sup>th</sup> below. Lydian modes are useful over major 7<sup>th</sup> chords, where the sharpened 4<sup>th</sup> degree helps lessen the tension of the 4<sup>th</sup> note – play an F over a C major 7 chord to see what I mean! Now play an F# -see!/? Really quite useful!!

## Mixolydian

Play a Mixolydian Mode by using major scale the notes of a Perfect 5<sup>th</sup> below. E.g. E Mixolydian uses the notes E to E of the A Major scale, a Perfect 5<sup>th</sup> below. Mixolydian modes are used over Dominant 7<sup>th</sup> chords – the flattened 7<sup>th</sup> corresponds to the b7 of the chord. Massively useful!!

## Aeolian

Play an Aeolian Mode by using the major scale notes of a minor 3<sup>rd</sup> above. E.g. Bb Aeolian Mode uses the notes Bb to Bb of the Db major scale, a Minor 3<sup>rd</sup> above. Aeolian Modes have a minor sound, but have a flattened 6<sup>th</sup> note; not surprisingly, this works well over minor chords with a b6. Not used a huge amount.

## Locrian

Play a Locrian Mode by using the Major scale notes of a semitone above. E.g. an E Locrian uses the notes of E to E of an F major scale, a semitone above. Locrian modes, because of their unique makeup, are used in Minor Scale harmony, and for this reason will be looked at in more detail later.