

## Tip of the Month – Fast Scales


Many piano students are afraid that their teacher will have them play endless scales. Both Howard and I played scales for our respective teachers for years. However, the kind of scale practice that most teachers assign (parallel scales in one or more octaves) rarely shows up in real music.

A great deal of classical music has scales, often very fast scales. But they aren't usually parallel octaves. They are often a scale in one hand with the other hand playing some accompaniment pattern. The scales should sound lively and brilliant, and of course they should be fast. But how do you get them really fast?

This month's Tip gives you some ideas of what and how to practice to get your scales the fastest – without the drudgery many of us remember from early lessons.

Let's start with five finger scales.

8th note five finger scales - fast



This could be any five finger pattern – major or minor over the matching triad chord. It might be good to take 1 key a day and play all the scale chords. For example in the key of C you would play this 4-bar pattern for C, Dm, Em, F, G, Am, Bdim, and end on C

When you get good at playing fast eighth-notes, you can move on to playing five finger scales in rhythm with quarter-notes, eighth-notes, 8<sup>th</sup> note triplets, and sixteenth notes. Try to keep a steady pulse as you play through all for patterns. (Hint: don't start the quarter notes too fast, or you won't be able to do the 16<sup>th</sup> notes.) See the next 4 lines for how you might do it for a C chord and C 5-finger scale. Notice that the left hand patterns can change and be anything you are working on.

Keep a steady pulse to end

Musical notation for the first system, measures 1-7. The right hand plays a steady eighth-note scale. The left hand plays a steady pulse of chords.

8

Musical notation for the second system, measures 8-12. The right hand plays eighth-note patterns, including a triplet. The left hand plays a steady pulse of chords.

Could use any LH rhythm pattern

13

Musical notation for the third system, measures 13-16. The right hand plays eighth-note patterns, including triplets. The left hand plays a steady pulse of chords.

17

Musical notation for the fourth system, measures 17-20. The right hand plays eighth-note patterns, including triplets. The left hand plays a steady pulse of chords.

Then you can go on to octave (or multiple octave) scales. Again, one hand is playing the scales and the other is providing an accompaniment pattern. Here is a simple C scale. Try to keep a steady pulse as you change from quarter notes to 8<sup>th</sup> notes, to triplet 8<sup>th</sup> notes, and 16<sup>th</sup> notes. You will notice that the pattern requires only 1 octave for quarter notes, 2 octaves for 8<sup>th</sup> notes, 3 octaves for triplets, and 4 octaves for 16<sup>th</sup> notes. Have fun.

# Scales in Rhythm

Keep a steady pulse throughout

The first system of music consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a sequence of quarter notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a steady eighth-note pulse: C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3.

5

The second system of music consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a sequence of eighth notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a steady eighth-note pulse: C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3.

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The third system of music consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a sequence of eighth notes with triplets: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a steady eighth-note pulse: C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3.

13

The fourth system of music consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a sequence of eighth notes with triplets: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a steady eighth-note pulse: C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3.

15

The fifth system of music consists of two staves. The upper staff is in treble clef and contains a sequence of eighth notes with triplets: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. The lower staff is in bass clef and contains a steady eighth-note pulse: C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3, C4, B3, A3, G3, F3, E3, D3, C3.

Can be any scale, major, minor, or blues scale