

Spelling Triads Quickly And Easily

Understanding how to quickly spell all types of triads is an essential skill that all musicians should have. There are many methods that people use to learn their triad spellings, all of which are valid. Some require you to be able to know your intervals fluently, some have you counting half-steps. I hope this method will get you quickly up to speed without a ton of study material to go through.

The method that I am going to use in this tutorial uses theory material that we have already learned in the “Understanding Keys” lesson on the site. If you haven't read that lesson's tutorial and you don't already know how to spell ALL of your major scales, I recommend going to www.GuitarLessons365.com and doing a search on “Understanding Keys” to find it and download it.

So let's get down to business and figure out how to spell all of our triads confidently.

First and foremost, you need to be able to quickly spell any major scale. As you probably know the major scales consists of seven tones which are numbered just like this: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7... Hard HUH..

So we want to regard those seven tones of a major scale as being completely unaltered, and we will consider anything different that that say: 1 2 b3 4 5 6 7 as just an alteration of the major scale.

Ok so now that we have that out of the way, we first need to determine what triad we want to spell. We will start with major triads. First, determine which exact triad you want like A Major, D Major and so forth. We will start with C major since that is the simplest scale to spell. So here it is all laid out.

C Major Scale

C D E F G A B

So if we want to figure out a C Major Triad from those seven tones all we have to do is find the 1st note 3rd note and 5th note. So that would be C E G. Those are the 3 tones that make up a C Major Triad. This will work for any major triad you want except for the highly altered ones like Dbb Major and such. But they are so rarely used, don't worry about them right now. We want to study stuff you will actually use right now.

So this means that if I want a D major triad, just figure out a D Major Scale: D E F# G A B C#, then figure out the 1st tone which is D, then 3rd which is F# then 5th which is A. So a D Major triad is spelled D F# A.

So now that we know major triads or can at least start figuring them out, we are ready to figure out all other types of triads like this. First of all, we will look at the notes of any major triad 1 3 5 to be completely unaltered, and every other triad type is just an altered major triad. So knowing this we just have to analyze the differences between a major triad and all other triads. The differences are like this.

Major Triad

1 3 5

Minor Triad

1 b3 5

Diminished Triad

1 b3 b5

Augmented Triad

1 3 #5

So what this means is if you want to figure out a C Minor triad, you first need to figure out a C Major triad which is C E G, the 1st, 3rd and 5th of the C Major scale, then flat the 3rd note. So that would give you C Eb G, it's that simple. You can figure out all of your triads just by altering your major triads.

If you want a C Diminished triad, all you need to do is take the usual C Major Triad C E G, and flat both the 3rd AND 5th to get C Eb Gb. Or an Augmented triad would be C E G#.

So I guess you can gather from this that it is essential to know your major triads really well first, then it is simply a matter of a few alterations to find the exact triad type that you need.

I know it seems like a lot of work to be able to spell your triads because you have to be able to spell your major scale, figure out your major triad, then alter it to the triad you want. But the key to remember here is to think of this method as a way of getting these spellings in your head, that is all. There is no way you would ever be quick enough at this method to be able to use it in a live improvisational setting.

The goal is just to be able to spend enough time with these until after a while you just know your scales and triads cold, without having to figure them out all the time. This will come sooner than you think if you consistently work with this method. After all, there aren't that many major scales or triads to deal with anyway, so it isn't like you will be trying to memorize hundred's of random triads.

So take this method and try to work with it consistently everyday for at least a few weeks and you will find yourself becoming more and more familiar with these triads. And since triads are the building blocks of ALL larger chord and arpeggio forms, you can be sure that getting fluent with this method will completely change the way you approach music.

Also, if you feel up to it, after you can spell these triads you might want to check out the other triad lessons at www.GuitarLessons365.com, because in those lessons you learn how to actually play all of them across the neck very systematically. Just go to the site and do a search on "Triads".

Have Fun!!
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