



Violin/Viola, Piano: 3 octave fingerings

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QUIK FAQ - Top 20 Violin Questions

Note that there are quite a number of fingerings possible for the three octave scales; this handout simply provides a means of memorization for the purpose of auditions. See also:

- [Carl Flesch, *Memoirs*](#) - free download from Universal Library
 - Carl Flesch: Scale Studies: [Violin](#) | [Viola](#)
 - Handout: [Analysis of Carl Flesch *Scale System*](#)
 - [Free one- to three-octave Printable Violin and Viola Scales](#)
 - [John Krakenberger: Galamian Scale System - Methodology](#)
 - [Two Octave Major and Minor scales for violin, viola, cello and bass](#)
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Makeup of Major and Minor Scales

Every major scale has a relative minor, which has the exact same key signature, but starts three, 1/2 steps *below* the tonic in the major. Minor scales have three forms:

1. Natural: Exact same notes as the relative major, without any chromatic alteration;
2. Melodic: Raised 6th and 7th step in the ascending form; the descending form is like the natural;
3. Harmonic: Raised leading tone (both ascending and descending), which causes a step-and-a-half interval between the 6th and 7th steps.

Note also that works are not in "melodic minor" or "harmonic minor" keys; rather, composers sprinkle these configurations throughout the work.

Key Areas (Major)

	G	F
	D	B flat
	A	E flat
C	E	A flat
	B	D flat
	F#	G flat
	C#	C flat

Key Areas (Minor)

	e	d
	b	g
	F#	c
a	c#	f
	g#	b flat
	d#	e flat
	a#	a flat

Parallel keys are a different thing altogether; what makes them parallel is that the scale starts on the same note - but the key signatures are different. For example:

C Major (no sharps or flat) / c minor (three flats)

G Major (one sharp) / g minor (two flats)

D Major (two sharps) / d minor (one flat)..etc.

So the question really is, if an audition is asking for a "Parallel melodic minor scale" -- parallel to what Major key? You will need to find that out, and then play a scale on that same tonic note but with the melodic minor construction -- which of course is a raised 6th and 7th step in the ascending form, and the "natural" form in the descending.

Supposing that the auditioner wants a melodic minor scale parallel to the A Major; then you would play a melodic minor scale starting on the pitch "A," thus:

a b c d e f# g# a g natural f natural e d c b a

Identifying Key Signatures

The order of the sharps (from left to right) is Fat Cows Gulp Daises And Eat Beans. The Flats are the opposite: BEADGCF.

Rule for Sharp Keys: The key is 1/2 step above the last sharp (sharp furthest to the right).

Rule for Flat Keys: The key is the next to the last flat. With F Major, you have to memorize that it's one flat, since there is no "next to last."



Order of Sharps →

F C G D A E B

← Order of Flats

Graphic from *Key signatures* by Catherine Schmidt-Jones

Method for Memorizing Fingerings - Violin

With respect to three octave scales on the violin, all the scales which start with the second finger, can have the same fingering. One rule for memorization is "up on the A, down on the E" (Viola, of course would be "up on the D, down on the A"). In other words, you shift up on the A string in the ascending form of the scale, but come down on the top string, in the descending form.

Second finger scales include those scales with the tonic on:

B flat, B, C, C#/D flat, D, E flat, E, F, and F#/G flat

FINGERING:

- Play two of the scale notes on the A string, then shift up;
- On the E, it's 1-2 (shift), 1-2, then an extension at the end: 1-2-3-4-4;
- The descending form is 4-4-3-2-1, 2-1,2-1;
- then cross over to the A string

The three non-second finger scales are:

- G:
 - Ascending: on the A, 3rd position; E string, 1-2, 1-2-3-4-4
 - Descending: down to first on E; 4-4-3-2-1, 2-1, 2-1
- A flat
 - Ascending: on the A, 3rd position; E string, 1-2, 1-2-3-4 (no extension)
 - Descending: down to first on E; 4-4-3-2-1, 3-2-1, 2-1
- A (same as A flat)
 - Ascending: on the A, 3rd position; E string, 1-2, 1-2-3-4 (no extension)
 - Descending: down to first on E; 4-4-3-2-1, 3-2-1, 2-1

Steps and Half-Steps

Rules:

- Half steps in major scales: 3-4, 7-8 (numbers refer to scale steps)
 - Half steps in minor:
Always 2-3 (primary "minor" characteristic)
harmonic: 1 1/2 steps between 6-7
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Violin Scale Books

Galamian has a scale study method covering much the same material, but includes more contemporary harmonies, more diverse choice of fingerings, and a separate book with bowing options. Notes are only note heads, which is different than the Carl Flesch.

An even more contemporary scale and arpeggio study book with a jazz/rock influence is Mark Wood's Electrify Your Strings. This may be studied with an acoustic instrument and is well worth examining.

For fiddlers, I recommend the Mel Bay Fiddling Chord Book.

Violin Scale Books

A Tune A Day Beginning Scales for Violin

Barbara Barber: Scales for Advanced Violinists

Susan Brown: Two Octave Scales And Bowings For The Violin

Paul Rolland, James Starr: Three Octave Scale Fingering Alternatives

Hrimaly: Scale Book - violin

Schradiack: School Of Violin Technics: Bk. 1, Bk. 2, Bk. 3

Sitt: Scales Studies For Violin, Op. 41

Carl Flesch: Scale Studies - violin

Galamian Contemporary Violin Technique: Vol. 1, Vol. 2.

Viola Scale Books

Barbara Barber: Scales for Advanced Violists

Susan Brown: Two Octave Scales And Bowings For The Viola

Castleman/Koob: Tonal Applications of Finger Patterns

The Galamian Scale System For Viola (Volume 1)

Mogill Scale Studies - viola

Schradiack: School Of Viola Technics: Bk. 1, Bk. 2, Bk. 3

Carl Flesch: Scale Studies - viola

Dr. Michael Kimber: Scales, Arpeggios, and Double Stops for the Violist

Method for Memorizing Fingerings - Piano

- The following major scales have the same fingering: C, G, D, A, E, B/C flat.
RH: 123 12345
LH: 543 21321
Note that the "3's are together"
- F Major, the left hand is the same as above, but the right hand:
RH: 1234 1234

The less consistent scales on the piano are the following (please practice these carefully until they become "second nature"):

- B flat:
RH: 21 23 1234
LH: 43 14 3213
- E flat:
RH: 31234 123
LH: 32143 213
- A flat:
RH: 231 23 123
LH: 321 43 213
- D flat/C#:
RH: 231 234 12
LH: 321 432 13
- G flat/F#:
RH: 234 123 12
LH: 432 132 14

In the major there are three sets of enharmonic fingerings. While the tonality may be somewhat different on stringed instruments, depending on context, the notes are exactly the same on the piano (though phrasing is related to key structure); thus the fingering of the enharmonic pairs is the same:

B/C flat
F#/G flat
C#/D flat

Piano Scale Books

Hirschberg *Scales and Chords Are Fun*: Bk. 1 (Major), Bk. 2 (Minor).

Schaum, *Scales and Pieces in All Keys*: Bk. 1, Bk. 2.

Palmer, Manus, Lethco: *Scales, Chords-1st Book*

Palmer, Manus, Lethco: *Complete Book of Scales*

Ada Richter: *Know Your Scales and Arpeggios*

The Brown Scale Book

Franz Schulz: *Scales and Chords in all Keys*

James Francis Cooke: *Mastering Scales and Arpeggios*

Walter Macfarren: *Scale and Arpeggio Manual*

A Dozen A Day

Preparatory, 1, 2, 3, 4

Play with Ease in Many Keys

Mini Book

Hanon

Junior Hanon

The Virtuoso Pianist in 60 Exercises - Complete (Spiral Bound)

Jazz Hanon

Jazz Chord Hanon: 70 Exercises for the Beginning to Professional Pianist

Blues Hanon: 50 Exercises for the Beginning to Professional Blues Pianist

Salsa Hanon: 50 Essential Exercises for Latin Piano