

SEVERAL PATHS TO UNDERSTANDING MUSICAL MODES

Mode	White Key	Major/minor basis	Altered scale degree
Ionian (also Major)	C	Major (natural - no change)	None
Dorian	D	minor + 1#	#6
Phrygian	E	minor + 1 \flat	\flat 2
Lydian	F	Major + 1#	#4
Mixolydian	G	Major + 1 \flat	\flat 7
Aeolian (also minor)	A	minor (natural - no change)	None
Locrian	B	minor + 2 \flat (diminished basis - tritone)	\flat 2 \flat 5

Mnemonic Device: I Don't Play Loud Music At Lunch

Mode: this is the name of the mode.

White Key: using a piano, if you start on this white key and play only white keys through a one-octave scale, this is the mode you are playing. If not familiar with the piano, then start on this pitch as tonic, and play only natural notes through a one-octave scale.

Major/minor Basis:

A description of the major basis (Lydian & Mixolydian):

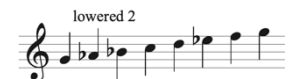
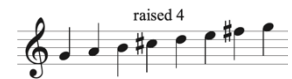
1. Start with a major key, for example, D Major (2 sharps – F & C)
2. Add the next step
 - a. Lydian – add a sharp, so that you now have F, C, and (ADDED) G sharps to create a D Lydian Scale. **Which sharp do you add? Add the sharp that comes next in the ORDER OF SHARPS for all key signatures – FCGDAEB** (*Mnemonic = Fat Cats Go Down Alleys Eating Birds*)
 - b. Mixolydian – add a flat, so that you now have only F-sharp (by adding one flat, you have eliminated or subtracted the C#) to create a D Mixolydian Scale

A description of the minor basis (Dorian & Phrygian):

1. Start with a minor key, for example, C Minor (3 flats – B, E & A)
2. Add the next step
 - a. Dorian – add a sharp, so that you now have B & E flats (by adding one sharp, you have first eliminated or subtracted the A-flat) to create a C Dorian Scale.
 - c. Phrygian – add a flat, so that you now have B, E, A, and (ADDED) D flats to create a C Phrygian Scale. **Which flat do you add? Add the flat that comes next in the ORDER OF FLATS for all key signatures – BEADGCF** (*Mnemonic = BEAD Greatest Common Factor*)

Altered Scale Degree: if you start with a tonic Major or minor scale (remember the “Major/minor basis” scales) and alter this scale degree, you will create the mode of that key. For example:

1. To turn a G Major Scale (1 sharp – F) into a G Lydian Scale:
 - a. According to the chart, we RAISE the 4th scale degree (which is C)
 - b. Now G Lydian has F and C-sharp (NEW raised 4th scale degree)
2. To turn a G Minor Scale (2 flat – B & E) into a G Phrygian Scale:
 - a. According to the chart, we LOWER the 2nd scale degree (which is A)
 - b. Now G Phrygian has B, E and A-flat (NEW lowered 2nd scale degree)



One More Bit: G Major (1 sharp) becomes G Mixolydian by adding 1 flat (which means first eliminating or subtracting the one sharp – you can't just add flats and have both flats and sharps in the key signature, silly!).

G Mixolydian has no sharps or flats...but wait...isn't that C Major? Not quite – they may look the same at a glance, but G Mixolydian has “G” as the significant note, the tonic, the common note of melodic resolution.