

Scales are groups of notes used in music. A "Scale" and a "Key" have the same notes. By learning scales, reading music in different keys becomes much easier.

In 2005 I learned a system of scale practice from Leigh Howard Stevens, which he called "Artist Scales". I adapted this system to my regular practice routine and teaching. It is designed to tackle a range of concepts specific to keyboard percussion and music preparation. Mastery of "Artist Scales" will require addressing and correcting a vast majority of issues common to keyboard percussion playing.

"Artist Scales" Rules:

- 1) 3 octaves, no pause
- 2) Alternating Sticking LRLR etc.
- 3) NO STEP side to side => Wide stance, lean left to right
- 4) Crescendo Up/Diminuendo Down => one long phrase beginning to end

Every scale has a pattern. Every Major scale has the same pattern. Patterns are made of "steps". A step is the distance between two notes.

Scale Pattern for Major Scales: Whole-Whole- Half -Whole-Whole-Whole- Half

Example: C D E F G A B C

If you know the pattern, you know all 12 Major scales.

Use the pattern starting on each note in the following order:

Circle of 4ths/5ths: C-F-Bb-Eb-Ab-Db-Gb-B-E-A-D-G-C

It is common for a student to take 30 minutes or more to complete "Artist Scales" with all correct notes in each scale, following all rules the first time. The goal time is 3 minutes.

How to learn "Artist Scales":

- 1) No Metronome. Allow yourself to work each scale with the pattern at your own speed
- 2) Play only correct notes. Go slow enough to be confident in each note in the pattern
- 3) Count note-to-note using the scale pattern, then notice the larger scale "picture".

How to master "Artist Scales":

- 1) Shift focus from the pattern/picture to the phrasing. Listen to the long Cresc/Dim
- 2) Be aware of what you do. If you know, you can choose to change or stay the same
- 3) Replace judgements of "good" and "bad" with actions for how to improve. "I missed Eb because I'm bad" does not help you improve. "I will use my pattern to play Eb" does.

This method teaches all the basics of how to learn and prepare yourself in any situation. By mastering "Artist Scales" you master yourself and your own learning process.