

Guitar inspiration

HOW TO HARMONIZE A GUITAR SOLO

FULL GUIDE & TABS
for the YouTube Video Lesson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1Em7EtpexQ>

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thank you

Thank you for checking out this **FREE PDF** for this 'How To Harmonize A Guitar Solo' YouTube Lesson.



Buy me a coffee

If you like my work, consider **supporting** my YouTube channel via buymeacoffee.com/gtrinspiration

I sincerely hope this detailed TAB will **inspire you** to continue to develop **your guitar playing!**

If you have any questions, you can leave a comment on my YouTube channel or e-mail me at maarten@guitar-inspiration.com

Maarten

HOW TO HARMONIZE A GUITAR SOLO



YouTube Lesson Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1Em7EtpexQ>
YouTube Performance Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=14ZuDsMCOLQ>
YouTube Backing Track: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VUHZ-o4JFqc>

■ INTRODUCTION

Hi, guitar player! I bet you love the unmistakable sound of two distorted guitars playing a harmonized guitar solo. In this guide, you'll find the advice you need to create your very own dual guitar harmony (in diatonic thirds).

I've broken this tutorial down in **3 steps**. I'll use a harmonized solo in B minor that I wrote over a classic heavy metal backing track. On my YouTube channel, you can find the video that accompanies this lesson, as well as a performance of the harmonized solo AND the backing track (in a separate video).

I hope this free guitar lesson will help you a few steps forward on your guitar journey. May your guitar harmonies be inspiring & powerful!

maarten

April 2020

■ ESSENTIAL LISTENING

There are tons of great examples of harmonized guitar solos, e.g. The Eagles' Hotel California (solo), Thin Lizzy (The Boys Are Back In Town), Iron Maiden (The Trooper), Queen (I Want To Break Free) and many more I'm forgetting.

After careful consideration, I've picked **my personal top 3**

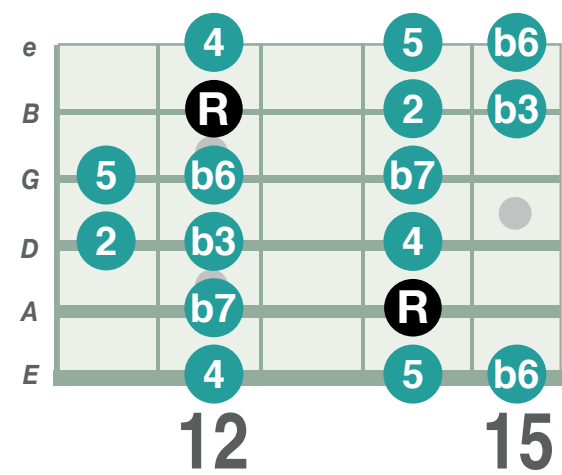
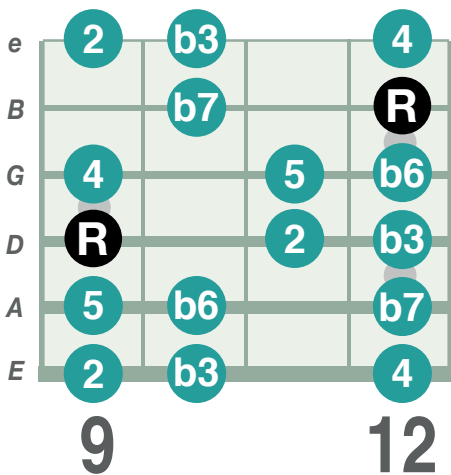
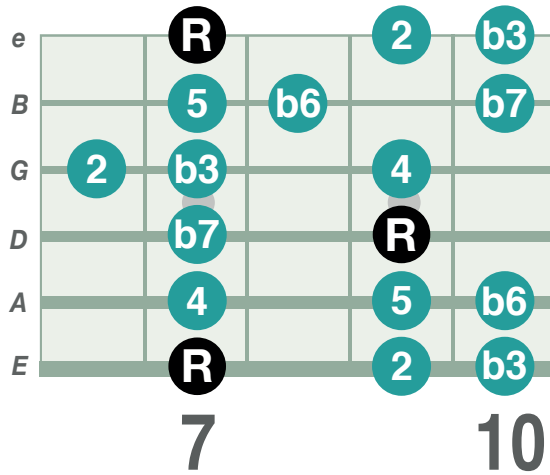
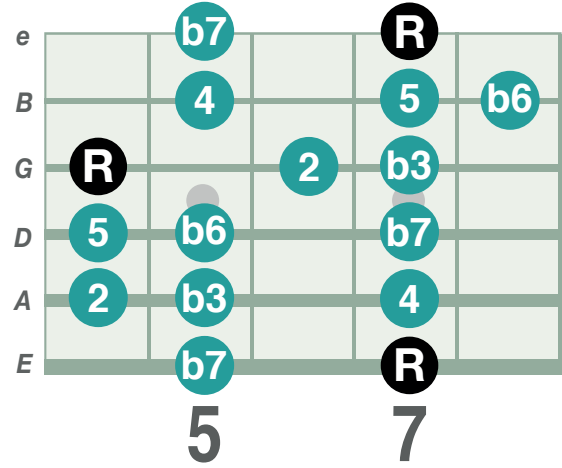
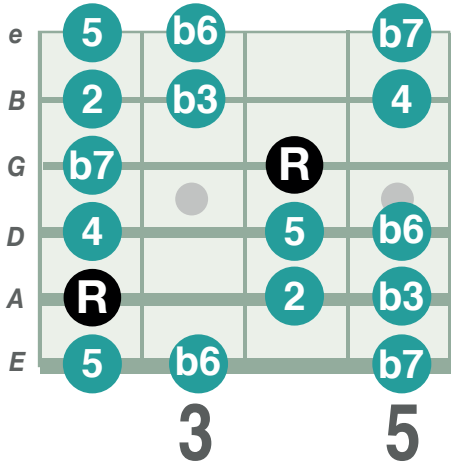
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Allman Brothers - Jessica (1973)
My dad explained the concept of twin harmony to me with the Allman Brothers as an example. I have an enormous respect for the raw creativity and musicianship of this band. More about the Allman Brothers on page 6!
- 


Boston - More Than A Feeling (1976)
Tom Scholz showed the world how it's done in this Boston classic, laden with guitar harmonies and even more guitar harmonies. *Absolutely mind-blowing.*
- 


Ratt - Round & Round (1984)
I've loved this song ever since I heard it in GTA Vice City (V-Rock!). After some classic shredding, the mid-song guitar solo evolves into full-blown twin harmony mayhem like only the 80s could deliver.

B NATURAL MINOR



STEP 1: KEY & SCALE

- what **key** is the song? Is it major or minor?
- what **scales** are you using?

In my example, the key of the song is **B minor**, and the scale that I predominantly use, is the **natural minor**.

► The B minor scale

Musical notation for the B minor scale in 4/4 time. The top staff shows the scale in treble clef with notes B, C#, D, E, F#, G, A, B. The bottom staff shows the corresponding guitar fretboard positions: 9, 6, 7, 9, 7, 8, 10, 7.

STEP 2: CHOICE OF INTERVAL

- what is the **harmonic distance** between the 2 melodies that are played simultaneously?
- do you play the second melody **above or below** the first one?

Commonly used intervals are **thirds**, **fourths** and **fifths**.

One of the more common ways of harmonizing is a **diatonic third above** the original melody, so I chose this in this tutorial. To harmonize my solo in diatonic thirds, I'm going to **reference** every note of it against the minor scale and then locate the note that is a up a third.

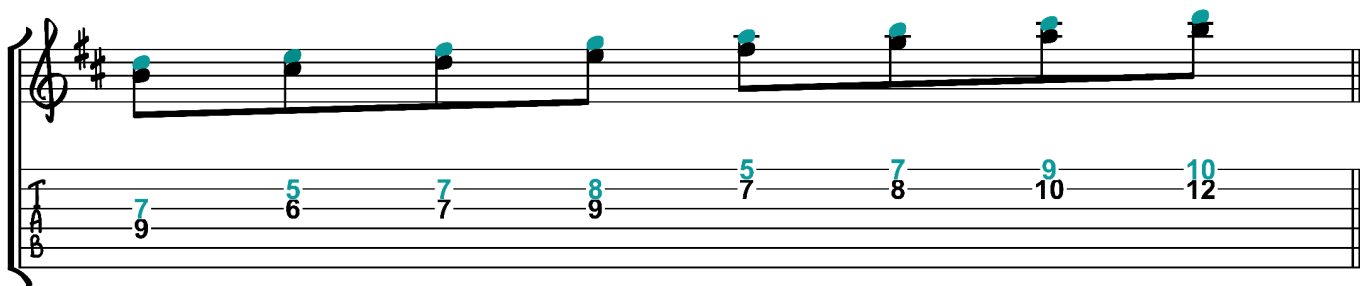
► Let's practise harmonizing the B minor scale!

Musical notation for the B minor scale with diatonic thirds. The top staff shows the scale in treble clef. The bottom staff shows the corresponding guitar fretboard positions. Colored arrows indicate the interval from the first staff to the second staff: B to D (yellow), C# to E (green), D to F# (yellow), E to G (green).

count: 1 2 3
1 2 3

To locate the note that is a diatonic third higher, just count to 3, where 1 is the note you start from, and 3 is note that is 2 scale degrees higher. So B becomes D (yellow) and C# becomes E (green). On the staff, this corresponds with ‘jumping over’ a note in the scale.

► B minor scale fully harmonized in thirds



FAQ “Can’t I just count frets”?

As a rookie, I was oblivious to scales, but I knew pretty soon that a minor third corresponded to 3 frets on the guitar. Wanting, that Brian May-sound, I harmonized guitar parts for another player in my band by counting ‘3 frets up’, only to discover that it sounded right...well...**sometimes**. Some of the notes sounded **terrible!**

As my rookie mistake made clear, the diatonic third interval that is used to harmonize can be **minor** (3 frets on the guitar neck) or **major** (4 frets on the guitar neck). For example:

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>C# to E</p> <p><i>minor third</i></p> <p>C# D E</p> <p>6 7 9</p> <p>3 FRETS UP</p> <p>1 2 3</p> | <p>D to F#</p> <p><i>major third</i></p> <p>C# D E</p> <p>7 9 11</p> <p>4 FRETS UP</p> <p>1 2 3</p> |
|---|--|

That’s why it is safer to count scale degrees instead of frets.

FAQ “Is there an approach *without* music theory?”

Yes, use your ears!

In an interview with Guitar World, Dickie Betts (**Allman Brothers**) told the reporter that Duane Allman & him figured out the twin harmonies solely by ear. If it sounded great to them, they went with it, even if their note choices were not what you would expect, based on music theory.¹

Beauty lies in the ears of the beholder. So even if you don’t use any theory at all, you can still get decent results with trial and error. And to be honest, even if you use all theoretical principles correctly, some harmonisations may still sound... ‘meh’... In that case, consider changing the interval to a perfect fourth or fifth, or leave out the harmonized part completely.

My recommendation: harmonize with music theory, and keep everything in check with your ears ;-)

STEP 3: APPLICATION

Finally, it’s time to **apply** the basic theory behind harmonizing to the solo in my video. Below, you can see the first 2 bars of the solo. These are repeated at bar 9 when the harmonization starts.

Guitar 1

Guitar 2

¹source: Guitar World Presents ‘Dear Guitar Hero’: The World’s Most Celebrated Guitarists Answer Their Fans’ Most Burning. Chapter on Dickie Betts.

■ WHERE IT GETS TRICKY ;-) 6 PRO TIPS

▶ Pro Tip #1 Keep It Easy

If these are the first steps in the world of dual-guitar harmony, keep things simple. Start with a basic melody with **chord tones**, long notes, and basic rhythms.

▶ Pro Tip #2 Bends

Harmonizing parts with string bends can be challenging because you change the pitch of the string in a continuous fashion and by a certain **bending speed**. It is essential to match this bending speed in the harmonized part to keep the interval between the melodies steady. This can be tricky with two guitar players, but even matching your own bending speed on a recorded solo can be an exciting (but fun) challenge.

▶ Pro Tip #3 Vibrato

Another factor that can play a role is **vibrato** (on long notes and/or bends). Keep the vibrato light (or leave it out) when you play with 2 guitar players. I find vibrato to be less of an issue when layering my own solos, because - like many players - I have my own personal way of doing it.

▶ Pro Tip #4 Balancing Volume

Something I learned when writing arrangements for horn sections is that the human brain tends to identify the upper part in a harmony as the main melody. Because of that, sometimes, I will **lower the volume of the upper part** a little bit in the mix to balance the two parts better.

▶ Pro Tip #5 Roll Off The Highs

What also helps to make the two parts blend is to roll off the high frequencies in of the two guitars. You can do this with the tone pot on the guitar, or with the E.Q. in your D.A.W. In that way, the transients (pick attacks, string plucks) of only one of the two guitars are clearly heard, while the other ones are somewhat buried. That keeps these rhythmically equal transients from fighting with each other in the mix.

▶ Pro Tip #6 Have Fun, But Don't Overdo It

My final piece of advice is to use guitar harmony sparsely. Twin harmonies can be very impressive for the audience (and super fun to play), but if you overdo it, it can become somewhat of a gimmick, at least that is my humble opinion. So when in doubt, leave it out!

► **Modal Mixture**

 **ADVANCED THEORY**

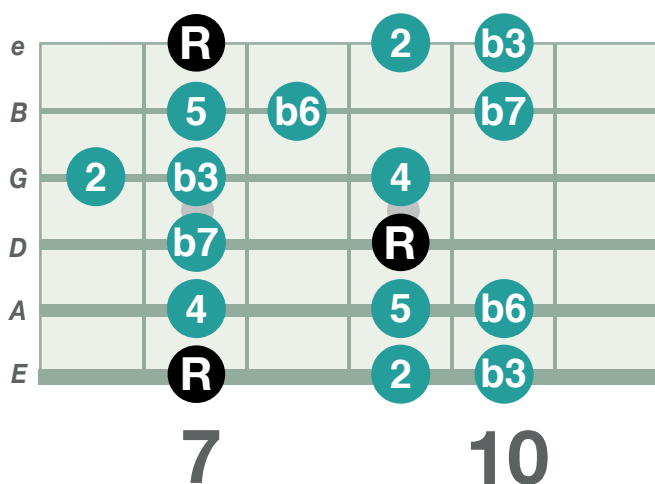
The chords in the song are Bm, G, A & D and F#. The first four of these chords come from the key of B minor, so all of the previous rules apply. But this ‘happy harmonizing’ comes to end on the **F#** chord, because this a chord that comes from B *major* (in B minor, you would expect a Fm). Borrowing a chord from a parallel key is called ‘modal mixture’. Making the V chord in a song ‘major’ is one of the more common applications of modal mixture.

This is important to take into account because this means that **the scale (to improvise or harmonize) changes over this F#-chord**. You could use the B harmonic minor scale (or its 5th mode: F# phrygian dominant) but in my solo I chose to use the **1/2-whole diminished scale**, starting from F#.

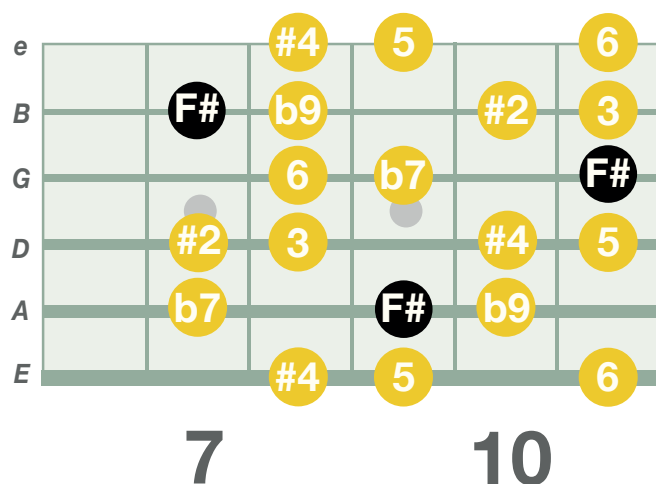


► A handy tool to find the possible scales and modes you can use over a chord is Noel Johnston’s ‘**Voicing Modes**’ Web application. The corresponding book by the same author is a true gem.
<http://noeljohnston.com/voicingmodeswebapp1.html>

B natural minor scale



F# half-whole diminished scale



The diminished scale is a mysterious-sounding scale, but it is **super easy to harmonize**. Just move the entire lick a minor third up (3 frets), you can keep the fingering exactly the same!

To harmonize the diminished scale in thirds, you CAN count (3) frets!

► **Guitar 1**

23

3 3

7 12 9 11 12 9 11 8

► **Guitar 2**

23

3 3

11 15 12 14 15 12 14 11

DOUBLE SHOT

DUAL HARMONY GUITAR SOLO

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5

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SL.

2 7 F#

6 (7) 8 7

9 Bm D G

1 1/2 1 1/2

11 Bm D G

1 1/2 1 1/2

13 **B_m** **D** **G**

1
12 12 10 14 14 15 12 12 14 15

1/2
9 9 7 10 10 12 9 9 10 7

15 **F#** **FINE**

14 12 11 11

6 (7) 8 7 7

17 **(B)**

10 9 7 7 8 8 7 7 7 8 7 9

P.M.-----| H H P

4 19 **D**

ω/BAR-----

21 **G**

ω/BAR-| P.M.-----|

23 **F#7(b9)** AL FINE