

Guitar inspiration

MELODIC SOLOING
with **CHORD TONES & TRIADS**

FULL TAB, NOTATION & PLAYING GUIDE
for the video

<https://youtu.be/TyUb50-a9bQ>

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thank you

Thank you for checking out this FREE “MELODIC SOLOING” LESSON GUIDE



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

I sincerely hope this detailed guide & 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

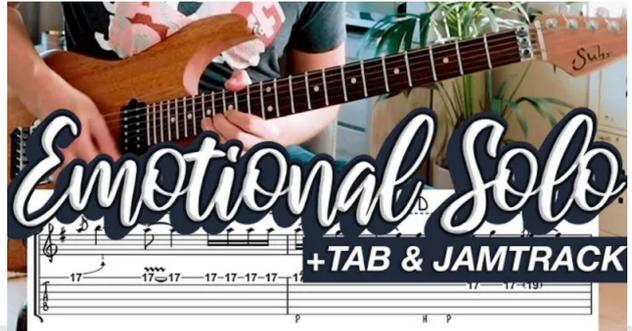
maarten

MELODIC SOLOING **with CHORD TONES & TRIADS**

When you're looking to expand your improvising skills beyond the pentatonic or blues scale, one of the first things you need to learn is targeting **chord tones**, the notes that are part of the chord that is being played (by the rest of the band, or backing track).

In this guitar lesson, you'll learn a method to find basic chord tones by thinking in **triads**. This works over any chord progression! By adding those sweet chord tones to your guitar solos, you'll sound more melodic, and the audience will feel the harmony of your song better.

In the first part of this lesson, I'll explain how to find basic chord tones on the 1st, 2nd, and 3d strings of the guitar (e,B,G-strings).



After that, we'll apply this little bit of theory to analyze the first 8 bars of **this melodic solo** on my channel.



<https://youtu.be/lO7JvgZxDIk>

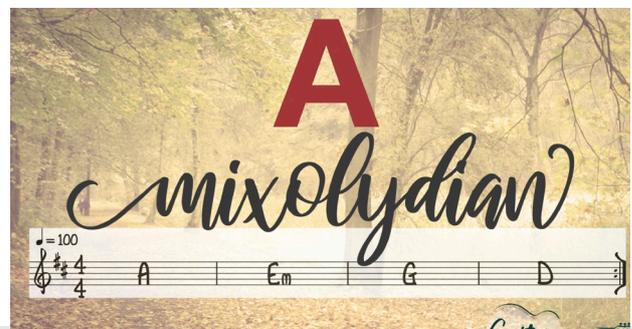
chords for the track:



jam track:

If you want to practice targeting chord tones, it's great to use a Jam Track. You can find a jam track on my channel by clicking the link.

This Jam Track is one of the older tracks on my channel, so I remixed it for this occasion. If you're interested in downloading this remixed version, [click here](#).



<https://youtu.be/w6Ev6rDmY48>

PART 1: CHORD TONES

Chord tones are the notes that make up the chords of your track. Each chord is built from **3 basic chord tones**.

A

The basic chord tones in this **A major chord** are

- R** The **root**, *A*
- 3** The **third**, the note that is a **major third** interval above the root, *C#*.
- 5** The **fifth** the note that is a **perfect fifth** interval above the root, *E*



Circled numbers

The circled numbers represent where each note is in the chord relative to the root. In this lesson, we'll only focus on the root, the 3rd, and the 5th (=basic chord tones).

Now, you probably learned to play an A-chord like this,

All that's in there are these 3 notes. Some of them are played twice: like the A and E. This reinforces the chord, without bringing any new 'information'. The third C# is only played once in this chord shape.

»» What is a triad?

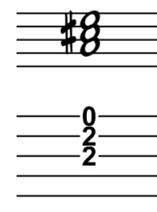
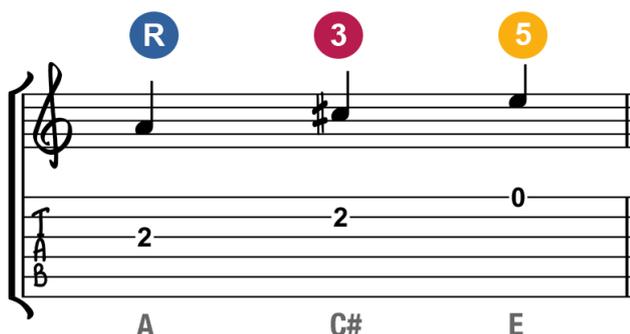
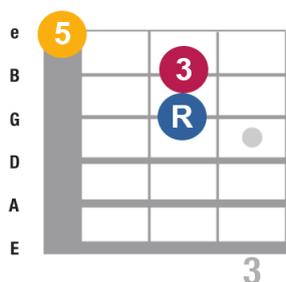
When you arrange these three basic chord tones closely together, stacked in thirds, they are called a triad.

Each of the three basic chord tones is played once in a triad, so think of a triad as the most minimal way of playing a basic chord.



This is the **basic** A major triad:
(played on the 1st, 2nd, and 3d strings)

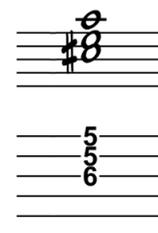
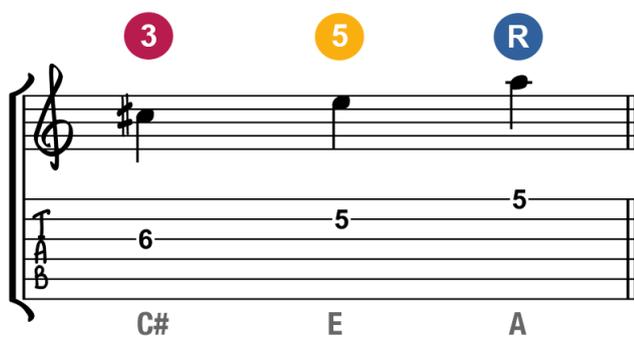
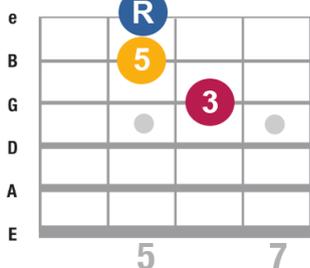
A major triad



Below is also an A major triad, The same notes, but higher up the neck and in another order, with the 3d on the bottom. This is called the **1st inversion triad**:

A major triad

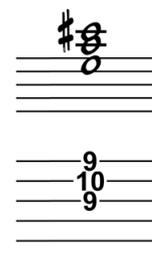
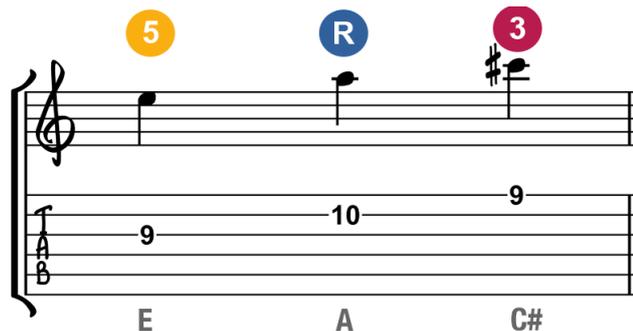
1st inversion



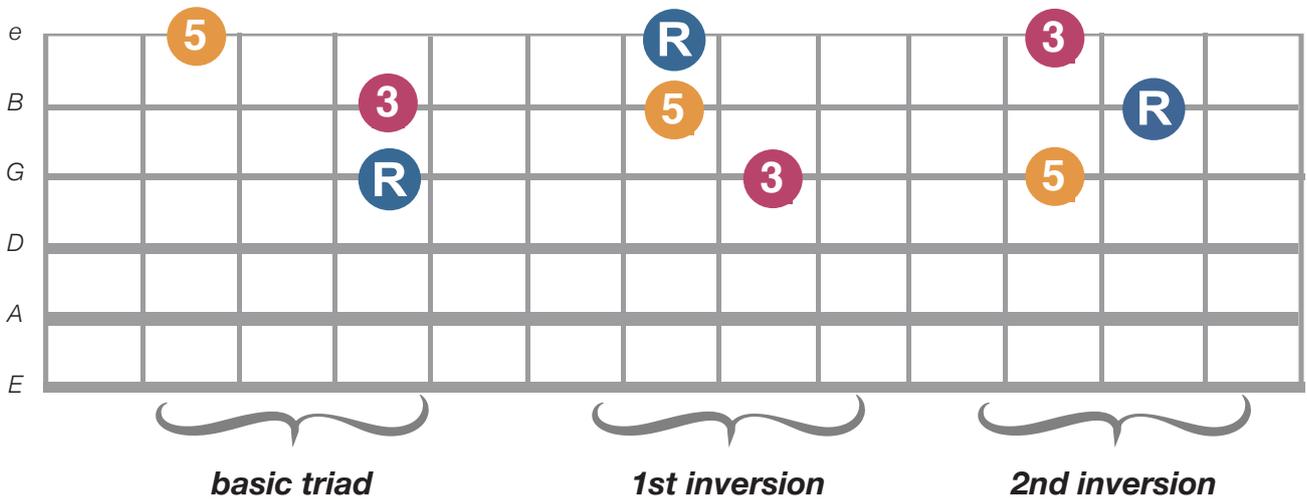
And below is the **2nd inversion**. Again, the same notes, but higher up the neck, this time with the 5th on the bottom. This is called the 2nd inversion triad.

A major triad

2nd inversion

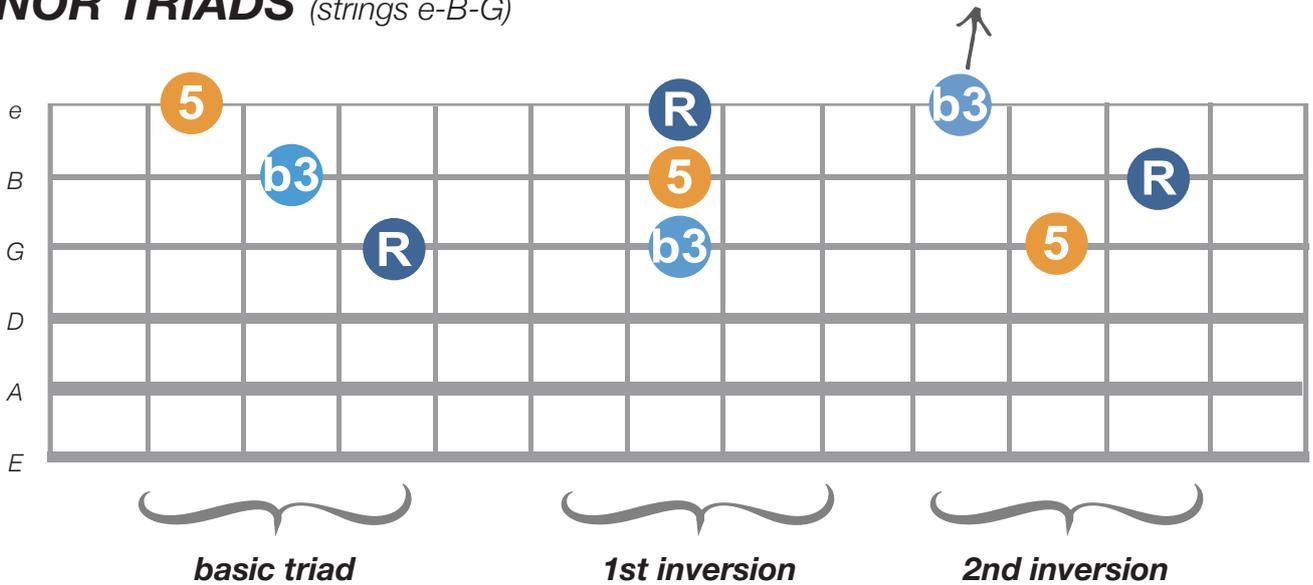


MAJOR TRIADS (strings e-B-G)



MINOR TRIADS (strings e-B-G)

minor chords have a **minor third** interval (b3)



note: these patterns **repeat** an octave up!

➤➤ Why think in triads?



These triad shapes give you the **basic chord tones** for each chord.

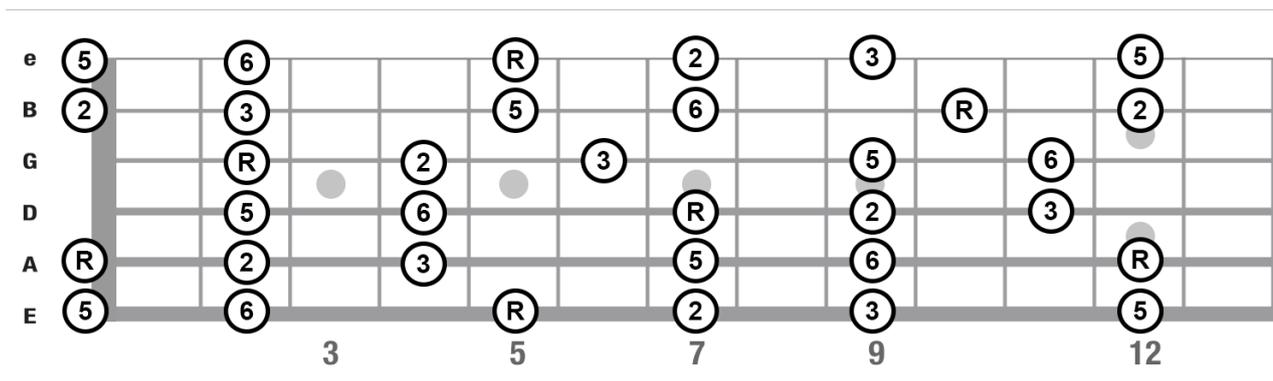
For each major chord, you can use the same major triad patterns.
For each minor chord, you can use the same minor triad patterns.

In other words, you can **move** these patterns up and down the guitar neck as you're improvising.

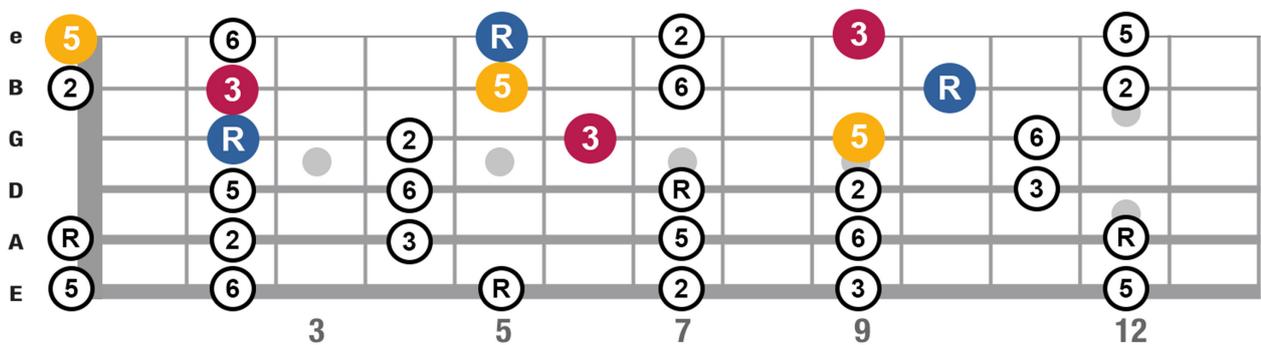
When I improvise, I see the triad shapes lighting up on a set of 3 strings, so I recommend memorizing and visualizing these patterns. **It's easier than learning all the notes**, and you don't have to think about scales or modes.

Usually, I start with a pentatonic scale as a 'base layer' and then put the triads on top as a 'second layer.' Most guitar players are more fluent in the pentatonic scale, but **targetting** a chord tone (by visualizing triads) is a powerful way of adding harmony & melody to your solos.

(!) Important to mention is that these triad patterns **change with each chord, whereas a pentatonic scale is often applicable over the entire chord progression.** So you do have to remain aware of the chord progression.



A major pentatonic scale
(basic layer)



Triad patterns for the A chord on top
(second layer)

PART 2: SOLO ANALYSIS

BAR 1

The diagram for Bar 1 shows an A major chord shape on the guitar fretboard. The notes are marked as follows: 3 (3rd fret, B string), 5 (5th fret, G string), 2 (2nd fret, D string), 3 (3rd fret, G string), 5 (5th fret, B string), and 2 (2nd fret, D string). The musical notation shows a melody in 4/4 time starting on the 10th fret of the B-string, featuring a bend-release-pull-off pattern.

Leaving that little slide intro aside, we're opening on the **10th** fret of the B-string with the A, the root of the first chord, already a **strong chord tone**.

Next is a full step bend up from the **12th** fret on the B-string. That's a bend from the B to the C#, the major third, another chord tone. Release back to the **12th** fret, and then pull-off to the root again.

This **bend-release-pull-off pattern** connects the root and major third and becomes somewhat of a motif in the solo.

BAR 2

The diagram for Bar 2 shows an E minor chord shape on the guitar fretboard. The notes are marked as follows: 5 (5th fret, B string), b3 (b3rd fret, G string), R (9th fret, D string), 5 (5th fret, B string), b3 (b3rd fret, G string), and 6 (6th fret, D string). The musical notation shows a melody in 4/4 time starting on the 12th fret of the G-string, featuring a bend-release-pull-off pattern.

In bar 2, the chord is E minor. Now **we change our triad shapes** to the minor patterns to see where the chord tones for E minor are. On the diagram on the left, you can see the pattern and numbers have changed.

The melody lands on the G on the **12th** fret of the G-string, that is the minor third (b3) of the E minor chord.

This G is a fascinating choice because it isn't part of the A major pentatonic scale, so you wouldn't land on that note when using only that scale. But also, it isn't even part of the A major scale, where you would expect a G#.

Relative to that A in bar 1, this G is a **b7**, suggesting the **A Mixolydian** mode. Actually, the chords for this track come from D major and imply the A Mixolydian mode.

I won't expand too much on modes here; that's a topic for another lesson. But I just wanted to make the point; if you have a nice* chord progression that implies a particular mode, **just by playing chord tones**, you're already bringing out that modal sound, because you're following the harmony. Honestly, this is something that took me years to realize.



***A 'nice' progression**

Famous guitar virtuoso Joe Satriani often writes songs with deceptively simple chord progressions that bring out modal sounds. Check out **'If I Could Fly'**, for example. This song is in the key of D major, but it flirts with E dorian and G Lydian. I used to wonder how Joe was able to make his licks sounds so melodic. The answer lies in the chord progression and how his choice of notes relates to these chords. Very inspiring!

By the way, in minor chords, I like to aim for that minor 3d, for its emotional quality. Try it!

After that G is the same full step bend from the **12th** fret B-string; followed by the **12th** fret on the E-string. Here the melody jumps up quite a bit to root of the chord. Use these bigger jumps sparingly in a melody. A good melodic phrase doesn't jump around too much, but a bigger jump can bring a interesting contrast.

BAR 3

Bar 3 uses the same ideas as in the previous 2 bars, played over the G-chord. First, play the G-the root of the chord on the **12th** fret of the G-string. That's a chord tone.

Next is that same **bend-release-pull-off pattern** as in bar 1. The only difference is how these notes relate to the root of the chord: same lick, different context, different chord tones.

BAR 4

D

Bar 4 brings the 1st phrase to an end, landing on the **11th** fret of the G-string. This is an F#, a chord tone of the D-chord.

PRO TIP

When you write a solo with chord tones, look for elegant ways to **connect chord tones** melodically. In essence, without all the embellishments, this solo has the following **descending melodic line** over the chord progression. Very simple, but it's the chords that do the work:

Descending Melodic Line

And the end of bar 4 is a little pickup to the next melodic phrase. Play two muted sixteenth notes on the G-string, followed by a hammer-on from the **9th** fret to the **11th** fret, and then a pull-off to the **9th** fret. This faster rhythm propels us back into the melody.

BAR 5

A

Bar 5 is identical to bars 1. Repetitions help to make your melody memorable. So don't be afraid to repeat a motif to drive your point home!

BAR 6

Em

Bar 6 starts just like bar 2 with that G on the **12th** fret of the G-string (minor third). After that, we recognize that same bend-release-pull-off pattern that we would normally only expect to see again in bar 7.

BAR 7

G

Bar 7 brings more variation with a full step bend from the **13th** fret on the B-string. We're bending to the D, the **5th** of the B-string. Bend with three fingers for extra strength!

Hold the bend, then strike the bent string once before releasing your 3d finger, **so the pitch drops half a step**. This F# is the #4 over G, implying a Lydian sound. Release it back to the **12th** fret, playing the B (3d).

BAR 8

D

In bar 8, we're ending this second melodic phrase by playing the A again. This is the 5th of the underlying D-chord, but also the note we started from. We've explored a few simple motifs, played around repetition and variation, and now we're back home!

Conclusion

To conclude, I believe that playing basic chord tones brings you closer to the harmony of your song, making for some great, melodic phrases in your guitar solos.

After a while, I've experienced that you start feeling where these chord tones are without thinking too much about it. Like your ear will tell you where to go next when you're improvising or when you can rest on a note for a while.

Don't worry if this lesson came across as a bit theoretical at times. Give this concept some time, print the triad patterns & stick 'em to your wall, and you'll notice too it becomes second nature after a while.

If you'd like me to expand this topic, let me know in the comments on YouTube. In a future lesson, we could look at the triad shapes on other string sets, other chord tones or tensions the b7, other types of triads like diminished triads or topics like playing modes or certain rhythms. Let me know what piques your interest.

Keep on playing that guitar!

maarten

may, 2021