# Piano Scales Practice Guide

For hymn and worship accompaniment

> **The core scales to practice are the 12 major scales and the 12 minor scales (in natural, harmonic, and melodic forms), covering every key.** These form the foundation for piano technique, finger independence, key familiarity, and accompanying music (including hymns and worship songs).

## Major Scales (all 12)

Practice these in order of increasing sharps/flats (the circle of fifths is a common progression). Check off each one as you learn it.

| | Scale | Sharps / Flats |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ | **C major** | No sharps/flats (start here) |
| ☐ | **G major** | 1 sharp: F♯ |
| ☐ | **D major** | 2 sharps: F♯, C♯ |
| ☐ | **A major** | 3 sharps: F♯, C♯, G♯ |
| ☐ | **E major** | 4 sharps: F♯, C♯, G♯, D♯ |
| ☐ | **B major** | 5 sharps: F♯, C♯, G♯, D♯, A♯ |
| ☐ | **F♯ major** or **G♭ major** | 6 sharps / 6 flats |
| ☐ | **C♯ major** or **D♭ major** | 7 sharps / 5 flats |
| ☐ | **F major** | 1 flat: B♭ |
| ☐ | **B♭ major** | 2 flats: B♭, E♭ |
| ☐ | **E♭ major** | 3 flats: B♭, E♭, A♭ |
| ☐ | **A♭ major** | 4 flats: B♭, E♭, A♭, D♭ |

## Minor Scales (all 12)

Each key has three common forms. Practice all three:

- **Natural minor:** same notes as the relative major, just starting on the 6th degree.
- **Harmonic minor:** natural minor with the 7th degree raised by a half step (creates the characteristic augmented 2nd).
- **Melodic minor:** ascending, natural minor with the 6th and 7th raised; descending, usually reverts to natural minor.

The 12 minor keys mirror the majors above (A minor is relative to C major, E minor to G major, etc.).

## Practical Order and Tips for Learning

1. **Start simple:** Master C major (hands separately, then together) for one octave, then two. Focus on even tone, relaxed wrists, and correct fingering (typically 1-2-3-1-2-3-4-5 in the right hand for C major).
2. **Progress by circle of fifths:** Add one sharp or flat at a time. Common early keys for worship/hymn accompaniment are C, G, D, F, B♭, and E♭.
3. **Fingerings:** Standard fingerings exist for every scale (right-hand thumb passes under, left-hand crosses over). Look up or use a reliable chart/app for each key; consistent fingering builds muscle memory. With smaller hands, prioritize scales that avoid extreme stretches; you can also practice broken or arpeggiated versions of wider patterns.
4. **How to practice:**
   - Hands separately first, then together (parallel motion).
   - Use a metronome; start slow and gradually increase speed.
   - Aim for even rhythm, dynamics, and articulation (legato is the default).
   - Practice ascending and descending, one octave then two.
   - Later: contrary motion, in thirds/sixths, or with different rhythms.
5. **Additional useful scales** (after the core majors/minors):
   - Chromatic scale (all 12 notes, useful for technique and runs)
   - Major and minor pentatonic scales (common in contemporary worship)
   - Modes (Dorian, Mixolydian, etc.) if you want to expand for improvisation or modern styles

## Context for Worship Accompaniment

Many hymns and contemporary Christian songs sit in the keys listed above (especially C, G, D, F, B♭). Practicing the related major and minor scales, plus the tonic triad (and common chord progressions) in those keys, transfers directly to playing and singing. Small-hand adaptations (rolling wider intervals, simplified voicings, or focusing on comfortable keys first) work well here.

> Aim for consistency: even 10–15 minutes of focused scale practice several days a week builds technique faster than occasional long sessions. Pair scales with simple chord progressions or hymn excerpts in the same key for practical application.

# After the Major Scales: Exactly What to Play

Every scale below lists the exact keys, bottom to top. **Red notes** are the ones that change from natural minor. Fingers: 1 = thumb, 5 = pinky.

## Step 1: Minor Scales

**How it works, using A minor:** A minor uses the same keys as C major (all white), but starts and ends on A, the 6th note of C major.

- **Natural minor:** play it exactly as written. Same up and down.
- **Harmonic minor:** same as natural, but raise the 7th note one key higher (the very next key to the right, black or white). In A minor, G becomes G♯. Play it the same way going up and coming down.
- **Melodic minor:** going **up**, raise the 6th and 7th notes (F♯ and G♯ in A minor). Coming **down**, play natural minor (G and F go back to white keys).

Learn each key in this order: natural, then harmonic, then melodic. Hands separately first, one octave, slow with the metronome, just like your major scales. The same fingering works for all three forms.

### ☐ A minor

relative of C major · No sharps or flats

| | |
|---|---|
| **Natural** | A – B – C – D – E – F – G – A |
| **Harmonic** | A – B – C – D – E – F – **G♯** – A |
| **Melodic ↑** | A – B – C – D – E – **F♯** – **G♯** – A |
| **Melodic ↓** | A – G – F – E – D – C – B – A (same as natural) |
| **Fingers** | RH 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 \| LH 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 |

### ☐ E minor

relative of G major · 1 sharp: F♯

| | |
|---|---|
| **Natural** | E – F♯ – G – A – B – C – D – E |
| **Harmonic** | E – F♯ – G – A – B – C – **D♯** – E |
| **Melodic ↑** | E – F♯ – G – A – B – **C♯** – **D♯** – E |
| **Melodic ↓** | E – D – C – B – A – G – F♯ – E (same as natural) |
| **Fingers** | RH 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 \| LH 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 |

### ☐ B minor

relative of D major · 2 sharps: F♯, C♯

| | |
|---|---|
| **Natural** | B – C♯ – D – E – F♯ – G – A – B |
| **Harmonic** | B – C♯ – D – E – F♯ – G – **A♯** – B |
| **Melodic ↑** | B – C♯ – D – E – F♯ – **G♯** – **A♯** – B |
| **Melodic ↓** | B – A – G – F♯ – E – D – C♯ – B (same as natural) |
| **Fingers** | RH 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 \| LH 4 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 |

### ☐ F♯ minor relative of A major · 3 sharps: F♯, C♯, G♯

| | |
|---|---|
| **Natural** | F♯ – G♯ – A – B – C♯ – D – E – F♯ |
| **Harmonic** | F♯ – G♯ – A – B – C♯ – D – **E♯** (play F) – F♯ |
| **Melodic ↑** | F♯ – G♯ – A – B – C♯ – **D♯** – **E♯** (play F) – F♯ |
| **Melodic ↓** | F♯ – E – D – C♯ – B – A – G♯ – F♯ (same as natural) |
| **Fingers** | RH 3 4 1 2 3 1 2 3 \| LH 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 4 |

### ☐ C♯ minor relative of E major · 4 sharps: F♯, C♯, G♯, D♯

| | |
|---|---|
| **Natural** | C♯ – D♯ – E – F♯ – G♯ – A – B – C♯ |
| **Harmonic** | C♯ – D♯ – E – F♯ – G♯ – A – **B♯** (play C) – C♯ |
| **Melodic ↑** | C♯ – D♯ – E – F♯ – G♯ – **A♯** – **B♯** (play C) – C♯ |
| **Melodic ↓** | C♯ – B – A – G♯ – F♯ – E – D♯ – C♯ (same as natural) |
| **Fingers** | RH 3 4 1 2 3 1 2 3 \| LH 3 2 1 4 3 2 1 3 |

### ☐ G♯ minor relative of B major · 5 sharps: F♯, C♯, G♯, D♯, A♯

| | |
|---|---|
| **Natural** | G♯ – A♯ – B – C♯ – D♯ – E – F♯ – G♯ |
| **Harmonic** | G♯ – A♯ – B – C♯ – D♯ – E – **F♯♯** (play G) – G♯ |
| **Melodic ↑** | G♯ – A♯ – B – C♯ – D♯ – **E♯** (play F) – **F♯♯** (play G) – G♯ |
| **Melodic ↓** | G♯ – F♯ – E – D♯ – C♯ – B – A♯ – G♯ (same as natural) |
| **Fingers** | RH 3 4 1 2 3 1 2 3 \| LH 3 2 1 3 2 1 4 3 |

### ☐ E♭ minor relative of G♭ major · 6 flats: B♭, E♭, A♭, D♭, G♭, C♭

| | |
|---|---|
| **Natural** | E♭ – F – G♭ – A♭ – B♭ – C♭ (play B) – D♭ – E♭ |
| **Harmonic** | E♭ – F – G♭ – A♭ – B♭ – C♭ (play B) – **D** – E♭ |
| **Melodic ↑** | E♭ – F – G♭ – A♭ – B♭ – **C** – **D** – E♭ |
| **Melodic ↓** | E♭ – D♭ – C♭ (play B) – B♭ – A♭ – G♭ – F – E♭ (same as natural) |
| **Fingers** | RH 3 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 \| LH 2 1 4 3 2 1 3 2 |

### ☐ B♭ minor relative of D♭ major · 5 flats: B♭, E♭, A♭, D♭, G♭

| | |
|---|---|
| **Natural** | B♭ – C – D♭ – E♭ – F – G♭ – A♭ – B♭ |
| **Harmonic** | B♭ – C – D♭ – E♭ – F – G♭ – **A** – B♭ |
| **Melodic ↑** | B♭ – C – D♭ – E♭ – F – **G** – **A** – B♭ |
| **Melodic ↓** | B♭ – A♭ – G♭ – F – E♭ – D♭ – C – B♭ (same as natural) |
| **Fingers** | RH 4 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 \| LH 2 1 3 2 1 4 3 2 |

### ☐ D minor relative of F major · 1 flat: B♭

| | |
|---|---|
| **Natural** | D – E – F – G – A – B♭ – C – D |
| **Harmonic** | D – E – F – G – A – B♭ – **C♯** – D |
| **Melodic ↑** | D – E – F – G – A – **B** – **C♯** – D |
| **Melodic ↓** | D – C – B♭ – A – G – F – E – D (same as natural) |
| **Fingers** | RH 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 \| LH 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 |

## ☐ G minor relative of B♭ major · 2 flats: B♭, E♭

| | |
|---|---|
| **Natural** | G – A – B♭ – C – D – E♭ – F – G |
| **Harmonic** | G – A – B♭ – C – D – E♭ – **F♯** – G |
| **Melodic ↑** | G – A – B♭ – C – D – **E** – **F♯** – G |
| **Melodic ↓** | G – F – E♭ – D – C – B♭ – A – G (same as natural) |
| **Fingers** | RH 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 \| LH 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 |

## ☐ C minor relative of E♭ major · 3 flats: B♭, E♭, A♭

| | |
|---|---|
| **Natural** | C – D – E♭ – F – G – A♭ – B♭ – C |
| **Harmonic** | C – D – E♭ – F – G – A♭ – **B** – C |
| **Melodic ↑** | C – D – E♭ – F – G – **A** – **B** – C |
| **Melodic ↓** | C – B♭ – A♭ – G – F – E♭ – D – C (same as natural) |
| **Fingers** | RH 1 2 3 1 2 3 4 5 \| LH 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 |

## ☐ F minor relative of A♭ major · 4 flats: B♭, E♭, A♭, D♭

| | |
|---|---|
| **Natural** | F – G – A♭ – B♭ – C – D♭ – E♭ – F |
| **Harmonic** | F – G – A♭ – B♭ – C – D♭ – **E** – F |
| **Melodic ↑** | F – G – A♭ – B♭ – C – **D** – **E** – F |
| **Melodic ↓** | F – E♭ – D♭ – C – B♭ – A♭ – G – F (same as natural) |
| **Fingers** | RH 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 \| LH 5 4 3 2 1 3 2 1 |

Notes like E♯, B♯ and F♯♯ (F double-sharp) are just the theory names. Play the key shown in parentheses.

## Step 2: Chromatic Scale (every key, white and black)

Start on middle C and play every key going up to the next C, then back down: C – C♯ – D – D♯ – E – F – F♯ – G – G♯ – A – A♯ – B – C.

- **Right hand:** thumb (1) on white keys, finger 3 on black keys. Where two white keys sit next to each other (E–F and B–C), use 1 then 2.
  C1 C♯3 D1 D♯3 E1 F2 F♯3 G1 G♯3 A1 A♯3 B1 C2
- **Left hand:** the same idea in mirror image. Thumb on white keys, 3 on black keys, and 1 then 2 going down from F to E and C to B.
  Going down from C: C1 B2 B♭3 A1 A♭3 G1 G♭3 F1 E2 E♭3 D1 D♭3 C1

## Step 3: New Ways to Play Your Major Scales

| | Exercise | Exactly what to do (C major first) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ | **Contrary motion** | Right thumb on middle C, left thumb on the C one octave lower. Play C major at the same time, with the right hand going **up** and the left hand going **down**. Your fingers mirror each other (both play 1-2-3, 1-2-3-4-5), so this is often easier than parallel motion. |
| ☐ | **In thirds** | Left hand starts on C, right hand starts on the E above it. Both hands play C major notes upward together (C+E, D+F, E+G…) for one octave, then come back down. |
| ☐ | **In sixths** | Left hand starts on C, right hand starts on the A above it. Both hands play C major notes upward together (C+A, D+B, E+C…). |
| ☐ | **New rhythms** | Play the scale long-short (like "HUMP-ty"), then short-long, then in groups of three with the first note louder. It evens out weak fingers. |

## Step 4: Major Pentatonic (5 notes, great for worship songs)

Take the major scale and leave out the 4th and 7th notes. Play notes 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, then the top note.

| | Key | Keys to play |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ | **C** | C – D – E – G – A – C |
| ☐ | **G** | G – A – B – D – E – G |
| ☐ | **D** | D – E – F♯ – A – B – D |
| ☐ | **F** | F – G – A – C – D – F |
| ☐ | **B♭** | B♭ – C – D – F – G – B♭ |
| ☐ | **E♭** | E♭ – F – G – B♭ – C – E♭ |

## Step 5: Minor Pentatonic

Take natural minor and leave out the 2nd and 6th notes. These use the same keys as the major pentatonic of the relative major (A minor pentatonic = C major pentatonic, starting on A).

| | Key | Keys to play |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ | **A minor** | A – C – D – E – G – A |
| ☐ | **E minor** | E – G – A – B – D – E |
| ☐ | **B minor** | B – D – E – F♯ – A – B |
| ☐ | **D minor** | D – F – G – A – C – D |
| ☐ | **G minor** | G – B♭ – C – D – F – G |
| ☐ | **C minor** | C – E♭ – F – G – B♭ – C |

## Step 6: Two Modes to Try (white keys only)

| | Mode | Keys to play | What it sounds like |
|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | **D Dorian** | D – E – F – G – A – B – C – D (all white keys, D to D) | Minor, but brighter than natural minor |
| ☐ | **G Mixolydian** | G – A – B – C – D – E – F – G (all white keys, G to G) | Major, with a relaxed, bluesy 7th |

## Step 7: Put It to Work in Worship Keys

After the scale in each key, play its home chord (the tonic triad), then the three main chords. Left hand plays the first letter as a single bass note, right hand plays the three-note chord.

| | Key | Home chord | Main chords: I → IV → V → I |
|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | **C** | C – E – G | C (C-E-G) → F (F-A-C) → G (G-B-D) → C |
| ☐ | **G** | G – B – D | G (G-B-D) → C (C-E-G) → D (D-F♯-A) → G |
| ☐ | **D** | D – F♯ – A | D (D-F♯-A) → G (G-B-D) → A (A-C♯-E) → D |
| ☐ | **F** | F – A – C | F (F-A-C) → B♭ (B♭-D-F) → C (C-E-G) → F |
| ☐ | **B♭** | B♭ – D – F | B♭ (B♭-D-F) → E♭ (E♭-G-B♭) → F (F-A-C) → B♭ |
| ☐ | **E♭** | E♭ – G – B♭ | E♭ (E♭-G-B♭) → A♭ (A♭-C-E♭) → B♭ (B♭-D-F) → E♭ |

> **Weekly plan suggestion:** pick one minor key a week, starting with A minor, then E, D, B, G and C (the minors of your worship keys). Each day, play your major scale in that key, the three minor forms, then the chords. That's 10–15 minutes.