



Vladimir Gorbach – On Scales

"We have to very consciously control when we plant, when we relax... [until] a moment in time when it will record onto your implicit brain system and will become automatic."

- Vladimir Gorbach

Outline

1. Scale practice plan
2. Warm up
3. Bonus tips
4. Troubleshooting
5. Additional Resources

Scale Practice Plan

Before you can get "fast" scales, you need **"controlled" scales**, with an emphasis on controlling your timing and the movement of your fingers.

Flexing your finger to pluck the string is only half of the process - **learning to relax your finger on command**, in between plucking, also needs practice and review.



Warming up

Warm up by **playing single notes** (one open string, one picking finger) at 60 BPM, only playing one note for every other beat. On the first beat, pluck the string, on the second beat, plant the finger to prepare to repeat. The point is to keep your hand relaxed, using that pause to rest and reset your hand.

Then practice by **alternating fingers**: i plays, m plants, m plays, i plants. As you do this, steadily for 1 or 2 minutes, feel for tension in your body and try to relax it.

When you feel ready, **double your pace** to play on every beat of the metronome. You need to make this a regular part of your practice in order to improve - for instance, try doing 5 minutes of single-note warmup and 10-15 minutes of scales every other day.

Bonus Tips

When doing rest stroke scales, **make sure your movements aren't too big** - you are aiming precisely for the next string. Make sure that your finger isn't rigid, take care that your wrist is not too high or too flat, and maintain flexibility in your third joint. Your thumb should **follow the rest of your hand**, moving as it does, close to your other fingers. Leaving it on a bass string may add tension to your hand.

You can try warming up by **"waking up the string"** - gently trying to make a beautiful pianissimo sound. Glide through the string without tension. When the guitar starts waking up you might find a rounder tone and a louder natural response from the guitar!



Troubleshooting

If you are having trouble reaching higher speeds, **try going back to slower tempos**, to remember how that felt. Your body may not be ready to move at the higher speed.

You can also try practicing the scales in a **syncopated rhythm**, with every second note held out longer as though it were dotted (8th note - dotted 8th - 8th note - dotted 8th) or with every third note dotted. Remember to rest and relax your hand between each set of notes.

Another method is **speed bursts**, in which a set number of notes are played at a time, at high speed. For instance, playing 3 notes and then pausing before beginning again. Start on an open string but eventually you'll be able to play with your left hand as you practice the bursts.

Additional Resources

Try incorporating Vladimir's scale schedule into your next practice routine. Check out the additional resources to this lesson below or ask Vladimir a question by emailing us at **team@tonebase.co!**

1. [Matt Palmer's lesson on **A-M-I Scales**](#)
2. [Ali Arango's lesson on **Fast Scales**](#)