

Lesson Twenty One

Introducing Triads

Lesson Objectives

- Introduce *Triads* and *Arpeggios*.
- Understand chord construction.
- Perform triad based Grooves.
- Visualise and transfer major triad shapes.

Understanding Triads

A **Triad** is three notes grouped together to form a **Chord**.

Triad is the word used to describe a chord with three notes in.

Chords are usually played on guitar or keyboards. In this case the three notes of the triad are played simultaneously as a chord.

On the bass guitar it is used to play the three notes of the triad separately. This is known as an **Arpeggio**. Arpeggios are useful to a bass player as they enable us to add rhythm when creating a groove.

Triad theory

The three notes of a major triad are taken from the major scale. Look at **Fig 1** below which shows all the notes in the major scale of C.

Fig 1 C Major Scale



A major triad uses the 1st, 3rd and 5th notes of a major scale, as shown in **Fig 2** below. You know this as the root, 3rd and 5th.

Fig 2 C Major Triad



Relating the major scale to the major triad

To show how the major triad relates to the major scale, practice the following exercise where the bass only plays the root, 3rd and 5th of the major scale.

Pay attention to the fingering used-remember to start with the middle (second) finger of the left hand. Major scales and triads are usually played beginning with the middle finger because of the nature of the major scale pattern. We have a fret diagram with the position of the notes and the fingering marked for you. Take a look at **Fig 3**.

Once you have familiarised yourself with the diagram then use the multimedia files to confirm your understanding.

Fig 3 C Major Arpeggio

Note	G	C	E
Fret	5	3	2
Fingering	4	2	1



Exercise 1
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Transferability of major triad shape

The concept of transferability is a subject we have looked at and referred to many times through your studies and applies again to the major triad shape. It is possible to transfer this shape to any note and therefore play any major triad.

The next exercise assumes that you know the position of the notes on the fingerboard following your studies of the first two parts of the course, as well as the major scales for each of the notes. By simply transferring the major triad shape to begin on each of the notes in the exercise you will be able to play the major triad for each note.

Using the same rhythm as in exercise 1, we have connected a bar of each major triad together to help you develop the ability to move between major triads. By the end of the exercise you will be able to play the following triad shapes:

G, F, A, Bb, D, E, Ab, B.

There are 2 instances when we have to amend the major triad shape, **low E major** and **low F major**.

Low E major triad shape

In the case of the major triad of **low E** (which is the lowest note that we can play), we have to start on an open E string. This means that we cannot use the pattern. Instead we need to use an alternative shape. We play the **E** on the open E string, the **G#** on the 4th fret of the E string with the 4th finger, and the **B** on the 2nd fret of the A string with the 1st finger.

Low F major triad shape

When we start the major triad on **low F** we can maintain the basic triad shape with a slight amendment. We play the **F** on the 1st Fret of the E string with the 2nd finger (although for comfort we might want to use the 1st finger), the **A** as an open A string and the **C** on the 3rd fret of the A string with the 4th finger.

Make good use of the multimedia files as always.

Exercise 2
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1 G major triad F major triad

5 A major triad Bb major triad

9 D major triad E major triad

13 Ab major triad B major triad

Developing triad grooves

It is easily possible to create interesting bass grooves by adding some rhythm to a triad. The following examples do exactly that.

Take the time to play through each exercise carefully and make sure you understand what is going on. In exercise 3 each bar contains the three notes of the C major triad. There are four patterns each played for two bars.

The first four bars use a continuous quarter note and eighth note pattern. The second four bars contain rests as well as notes to develop the rhythmic content.

As always make good use of the multimedia files to confirm your understanding of the Exercise before playing.

Exercise 3
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1 3

5 7

Changing chords with triad grooves

In exercise 4 we extend the concept further by introducing a change in chords. When the chord changes you need to transfer the major triad bass groove to the new chord. Effectively you are simply moving the grooves shape!

Exercise 4 uses the major chords of C, F and G.

Make good use of the multimedia files.

Exercise 4 lesson021.ibsit.04



1

3

5

7

Tips for developing your use of triads in grooves

When developing your ability to play triads there are a number of aspects of your playing you need to focus on so that playing of chords on the bass through the use of triads becomes 'second nature'.

Go through the exercises in the lesson again but each time try the following when playing:

1. Memorise the note numbers used in the major triad.
2. Memorise the sound of the major triad, it is the same whatever the chord is.
3. Sing the notes to yourself as you play them to get used to the sound of the triad.
4. Imagine how they sound in your head.

By going through the exercises and focusing on each of these points as you play, you will gradually deepen your understanding and familiarity of triads so that it becomes almost subconscious.