

FINGERING OUTSIDE THE

BOX

A GUIDE TO ALTERNATIVE SCALE FINGERINGS

Fingering blocks are separated by white spaces. These blocks can be tapped out on a table or other hard surface, then visualized and blocked as tone clusters on the keyboard. These blocks can be practiced hands separately and hands together. It is important to memorize the sensation of how the blocks line up between the hands.

Black outlines show points of symmetry where the ascending fingering in the right hand mirrors the descending fingering in the left hand and vice versa. Each scale pattern has two points of symmetry.

Each color represents one scale fingering. Scales with the same amount of black notes are grouped within the same color. For example, since D major and Bb major both have two black notes, they both use the same fingering pattern, although the starting position is shifted to account for the placement of black notes.

Scales of the same color grouping are symmetrical to each other. For instance, an ascending D major scale played by the right hand starting on D is an exact mirror image of a descending Bb major scale played by the left hand starting on D. In this case, the left hand scale would be designated as D phrygian.

Similarly, an ascending Bb major scale in the right hand is exactly mirrored by a descending F# phrygian scale in the left hand. Practicing with the hands in exact reflection is a great tool to help students visualize and sense the spacing between white and black notes in both hands simultaneously.

Tip: in the yellow blocking pattern (used for key signatures with 4 black notes) notice that the 3rd fingers always line up with each other.

Teaching Traditional Scale Fingerings

The yellow pattern happens to match the traditional fingerings for C, G, D, A, and E. When teaching fingerings for these five scales, shift the starting place of yellow pattern so that the left hand begins with the thumb, followed by the 4th finger. The left hand thumb can then be substituted with the 5th finger in the left hand for beginning the scale.

Other Alternate Fingerings

The blue blocking pattern (used for scales with all 5 black notes) can also be used as an alternate fingering for all twelve major scales. The advantage to this method is that the thumbs always line up between the hands. Consequently, some students find this easier than other fingerings. The disadvantage is that one of the hands will be required to cross the 4th finger and sometimes the 3rd finger onto a white note, which requires a greater distance and is less efficient than crossing onto a black note.

In order for this method to work, one of the hands keeps the same fingering as listed in the blocking patterns, while the opposite hand must be shifted so that the thumbs always line up between the hands. In C major for example, if the right hand keeps the normal fingering, the left hand would be shifted so that the thumbs of both hands line up on C and F. Additionally, the 4th finger in the left hand may be used in place of the thumb for convenience when starting the scale (similar to B major).

C Major	C	D	E	F	G	A	B
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4
LH	3	2	1	4	3	2	1

G Major	G	A	B	C	D	E	F#
RH	1	2	3		1	2	3
LH	3	2	1		3	2	1

F Major	F	G	A	Bb	C	D	E
RH	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
LH	3	2	1	4	3	2	1

2 Black Notes

D Major	D	E	F#	G	A	B	C#
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4
LH	2	1	4	3	2	1	3

Bb Major	Bb	C	D	Eb	F	G	A
RH	4	1	2	3	1	2	3
LH	3	2	1	4	3	2	1

3 Black Notes

A Major	A	B	C#	D	E	F#	G#
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4
LH	2	1	3	2	1	4	3

E♭ Major	E♭	F	G	A♭	B♭	C	D
RH	3	1	2	3	4	1	2
LH	3	2	1	4	3	2	1

4 Black Notes

E Major	E	F♯	G♯	A	B	C♯	D♯
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4
LH	1	4	3	2	1	3	2

A♭ Major	A♭	B♭	C	D♭	E♭	F	G
RH	3	4	1	2	3	1	2
LH	3	2	1	4	3	2	1

5 Black Notes

B Major	B	C♯	D♯	E	F♯	G♯	A♯
RH	1	2	3	1	2	3	4
LH	1	3	2	1	4	3	2

C♭ Major	C♭	D♭	E♭	F♭	G♭	A♭	B♭
----------	----	----	----	----	----	----	----

F♯ Major	F♯	G♯	A♯	B	C♯	D♯	E♯
RH	2	3	4	1	2	3	1
LH	4	3	2	1	3	2	1

G♭ Major	G♭	A♭	B♭	C♭	D♭	E♭	F
----------	----	----	----	----	----	----	---

C♯ Major	C♯	D♯	E♯	F♯	G♯	A♯	B♯
RH	2	3	1	2	3	4	1
LH	3	2	1	4	3	2	1

D♭ Major	D♭	E♭	F	G♭	A♭	B♭	C
----------	----	----	---	----	----	----	---