TalkingBass

Creating Bass Fills

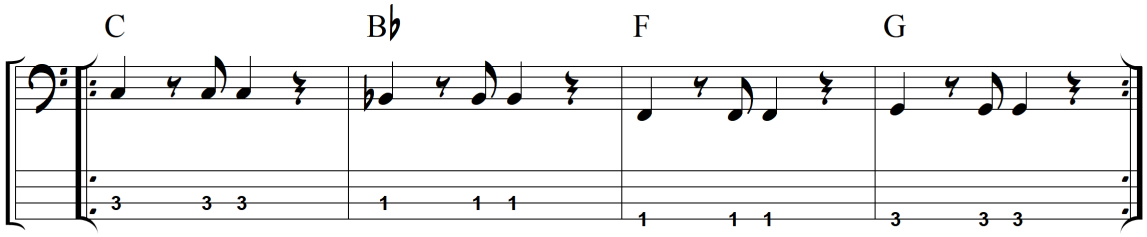
What Is A Fill?

A Fill is a phrase we can use to **embellish a bass line** and signal a **transition** from one section to another.

A great way of understanding fills is to **listen to drummers**. Drum fills are much more noticeable than bass fills but have most of the same elements. Copying the **phrasing and placement of drum fills** can be valuable to any bass player looking for ideas and inspiration *(see video)*

Getting Started

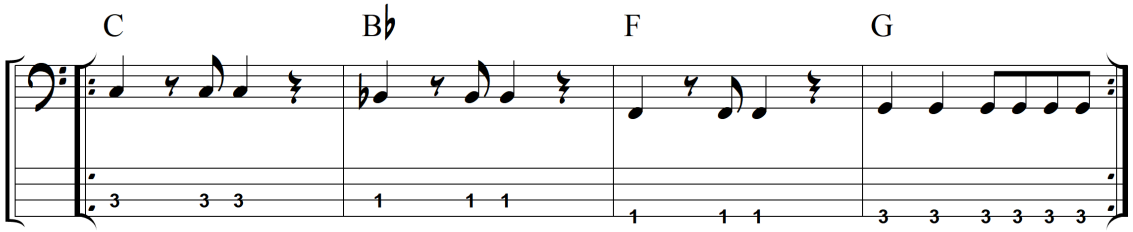
We can use a simple chord progression of **C Bb F G** as a vehicle for practicing fills:



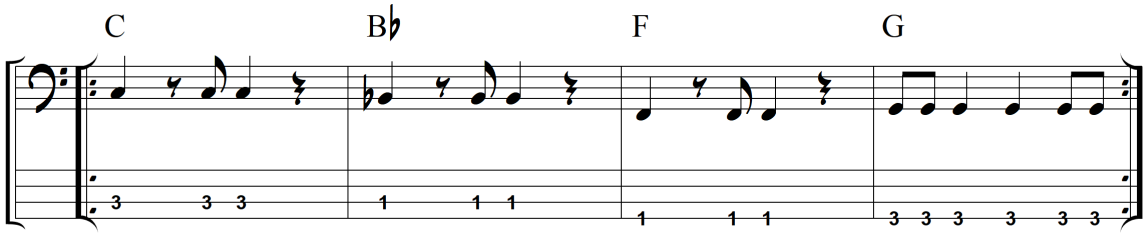
We can then try creating a fill in the **G Major bar** to transition back into the starting C Major.

One of the main elements we need for a fill is **Contrast**. This can be achieved rhythmically, melodically or even harmonically. Let's begin with simple **rhythmic contrast**. Below we see **4 simple rhythmic fills** on a single G Note:

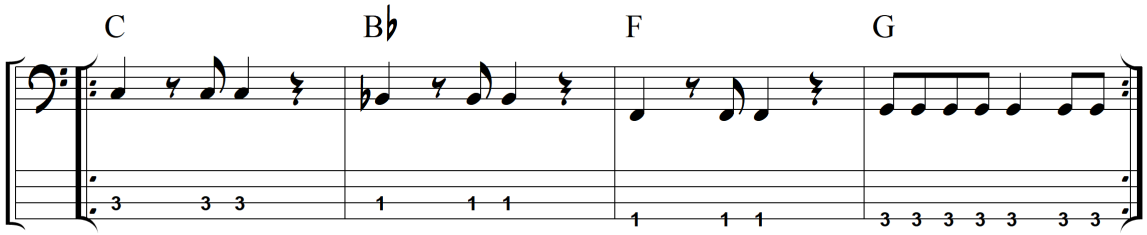
Rhythmic Fill #1



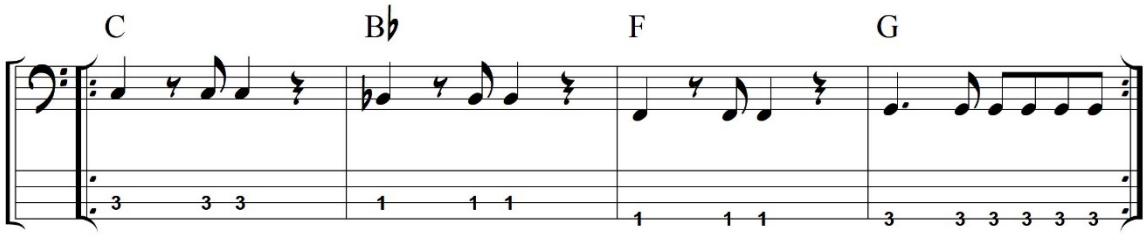
Rhythmic Fill #2



Rhythmic Fill #3



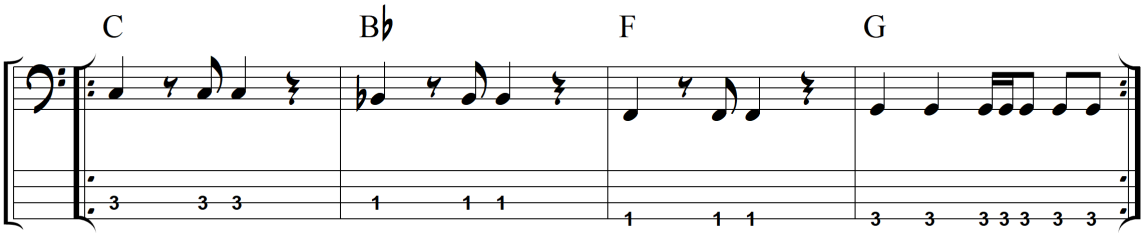
Rhythmic Fill #4



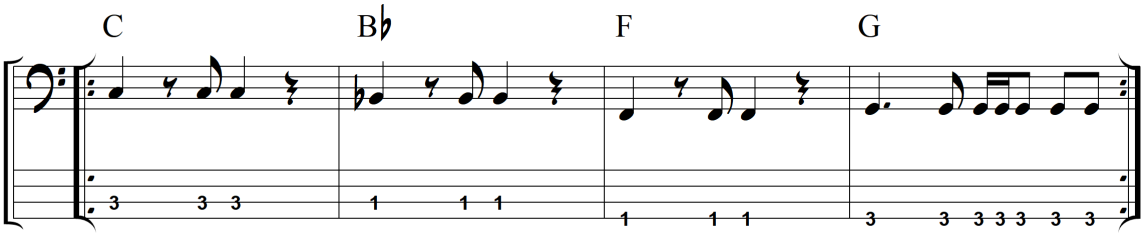
Sixteenth Notes

We can add **sixteenth notes** into our rhythmic fills for extra interest. Below are four examples of mixed eighth and sixteenth note fills *(see video):*

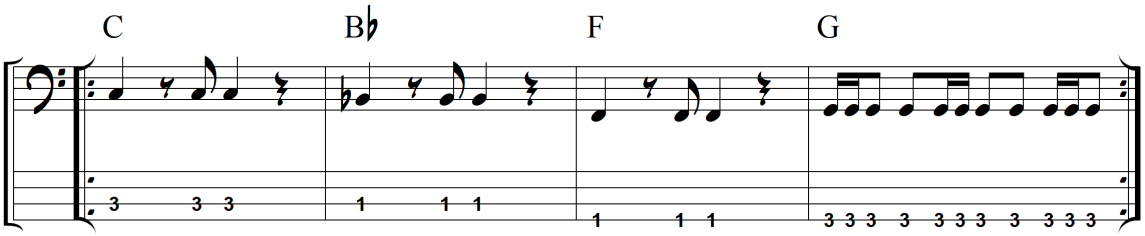
Sixteenth Note Fill #1



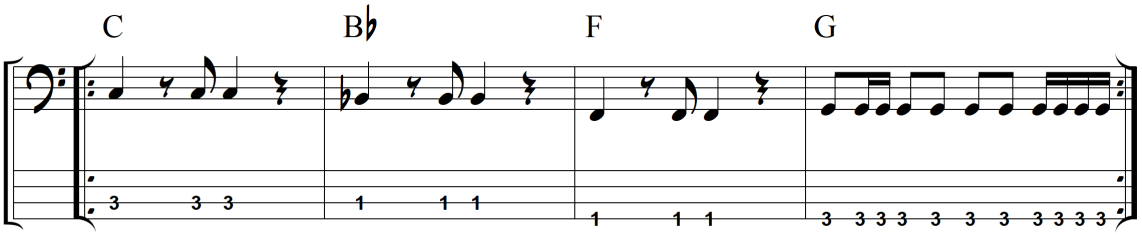
Sixteenth Note Fill #2



Sixteenth Note Fill #3



Sixteenth Note Fill #4

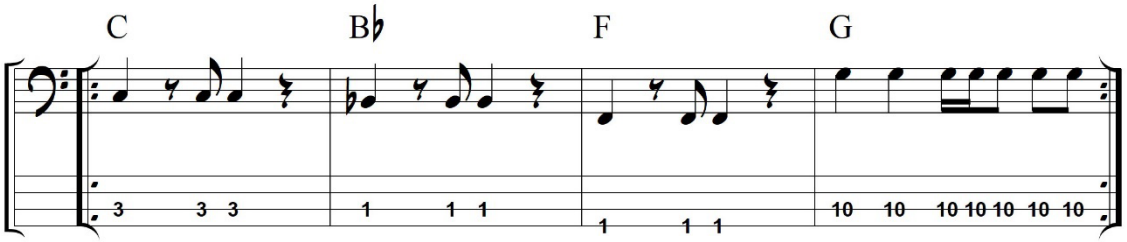


Upper Register Fills

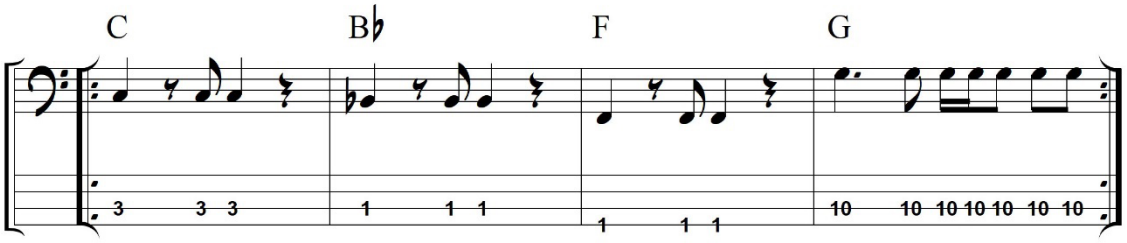
The previous fills were all in the **low register** of the bass. We can catch the ear by moving into a **higher register**.

The previous 16th note fills are listed below but an **octave higher** on the bass:

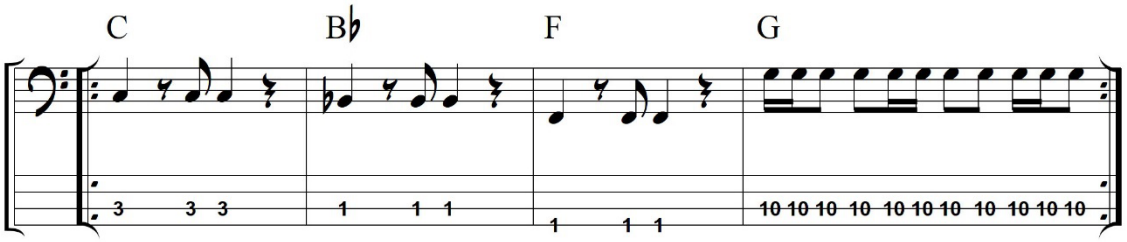
Upper Octave Fill #1



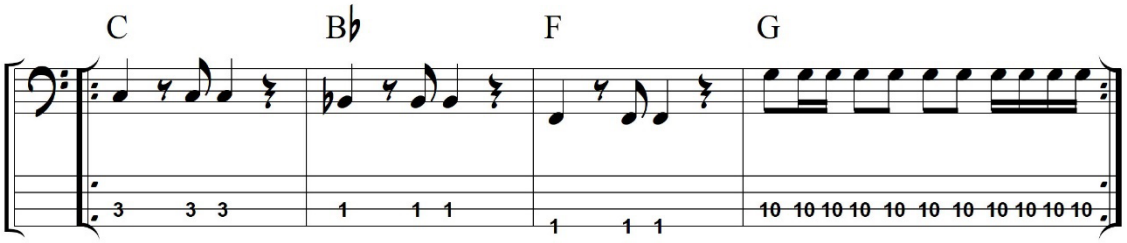
Upper Octave Fill #2



Upper Octave Fill #3



Upper Octave Fill #4



Off Beat Tension

When we create a fill at the end of a section we are creating a transition into the next section. **A cadence point**.

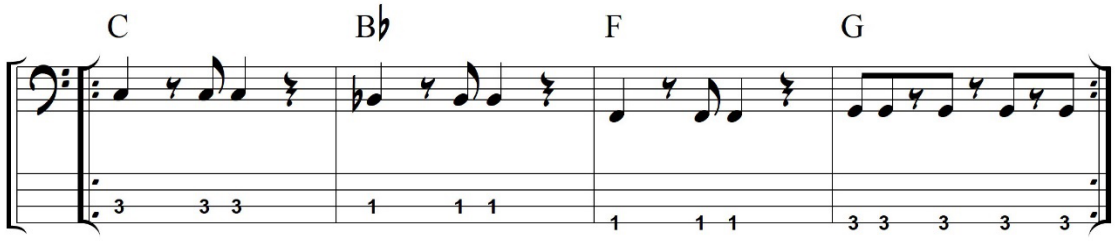
Tension and release is the main musical element we use in creating transitions and cadence. The **Authentic Cadence** (chords 5 to 1) contains a lot of **tension and release** in the harmony.

We can also create tension in our **rhythm** by using the principles we covered in our previous riff lessons.

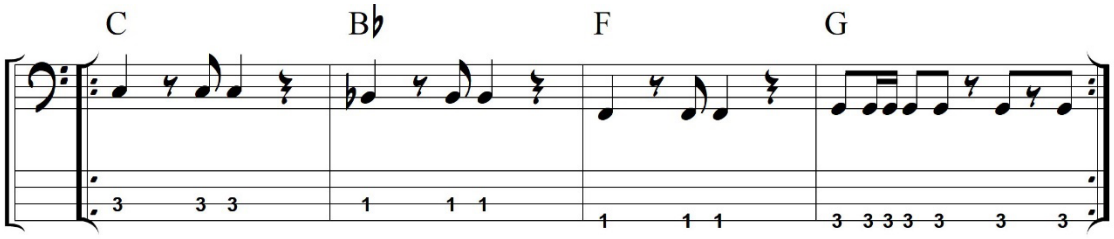
Off beat rhythms contain a lot of tension and energy that can be resolved when we land on the downbeat.

Below we see **four rhythmic fills** making use of **off beat 8th notes** that add tension we release on our return to C Major *(see video):*

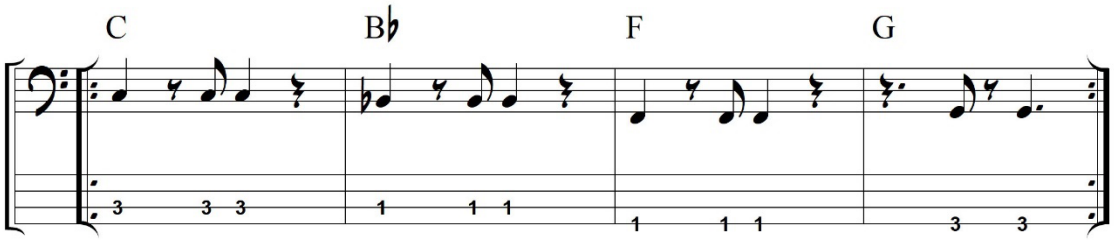
Off Beat Rhythmic Fill #1



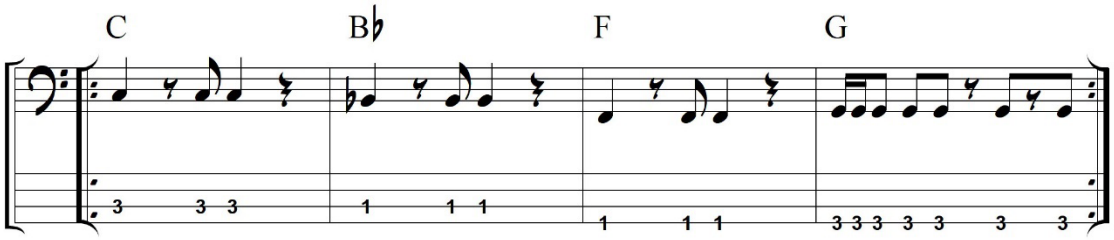
Off Beat Rhythmic Fill #2



Off Beat Rhythmic Fill #3

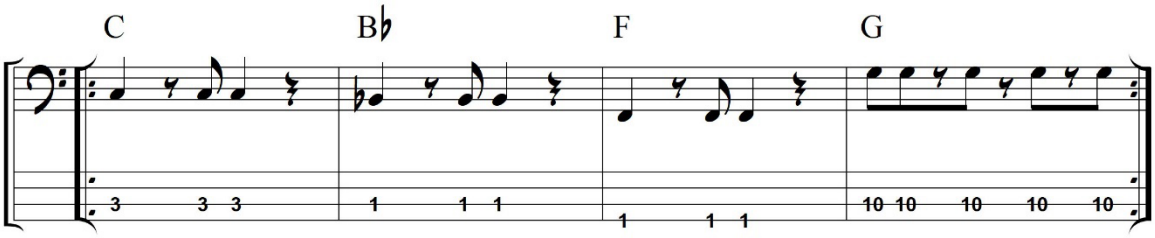


Off Beat Rhythmic Fill #4

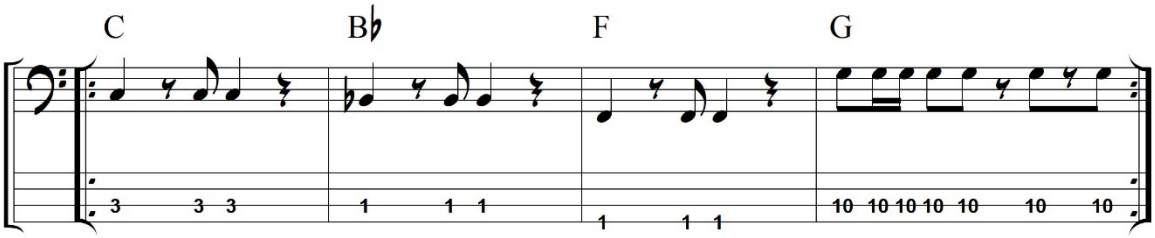


Again, we can play these fills an octave higher in order to catch the ear:

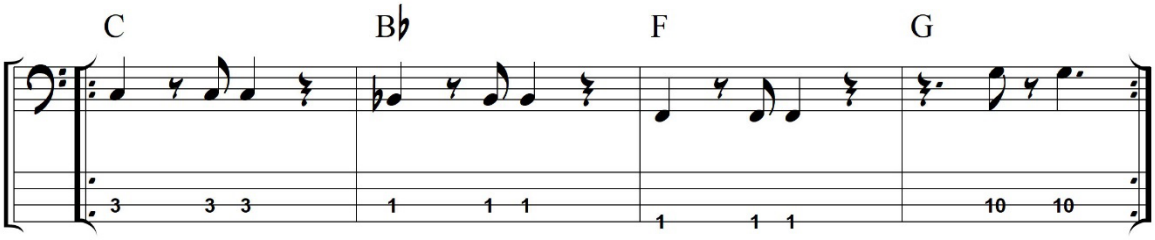
Off Beat Fill (Octave Higher) #1



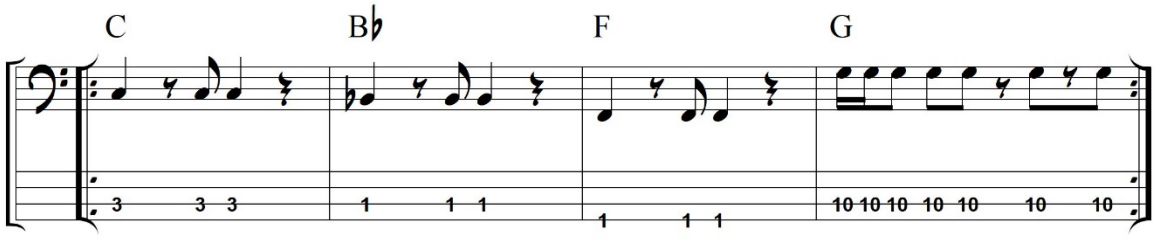
Off Beat Fill (Octave Higher) #2



Off Beat Fill (Octave Higher) #3



Off Beat Fill (Octave Higher) #4



Exercise: *Create 5 different rhythms over the final bar of the chord progression. Practice playing over the supplied track.*

Adding Melody

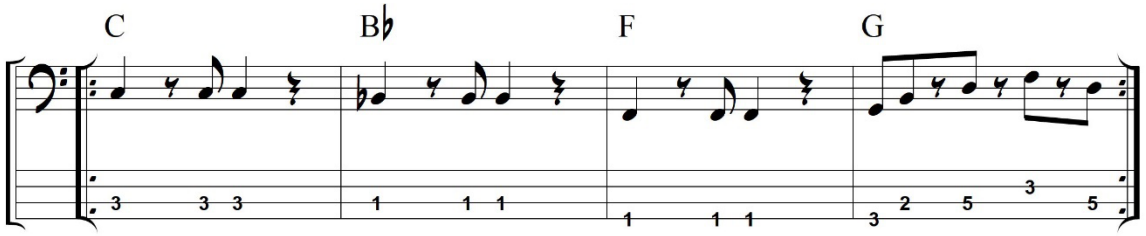
Chord tones should be the first port of call when creating **melodic fills**.

We can practice adding fills to our bass line making use of the **G major or G7 arpeggio.**

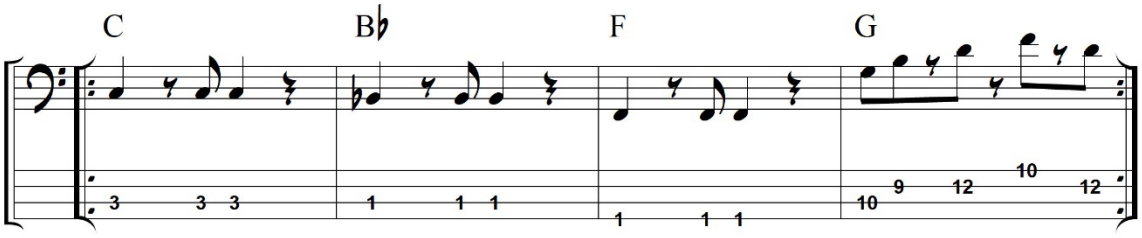
If we use offbeat rhythms to raise the tension we can create a set of fills that work both melodically and rhythmically in making a transition from Chord 5 to chord 1.

Below are six melodic fills making use of **chord tones** *(see video):*

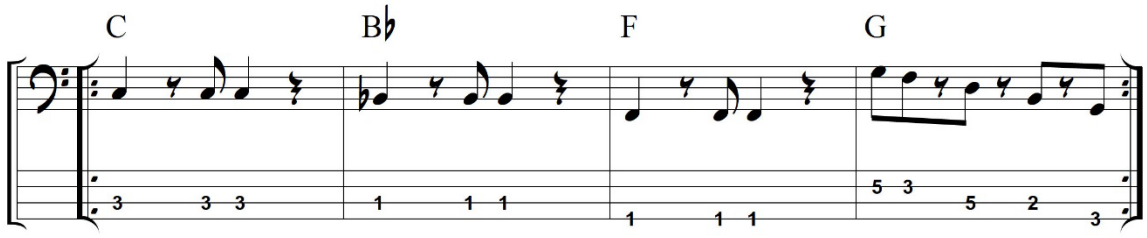
Chord Tone Fill #1



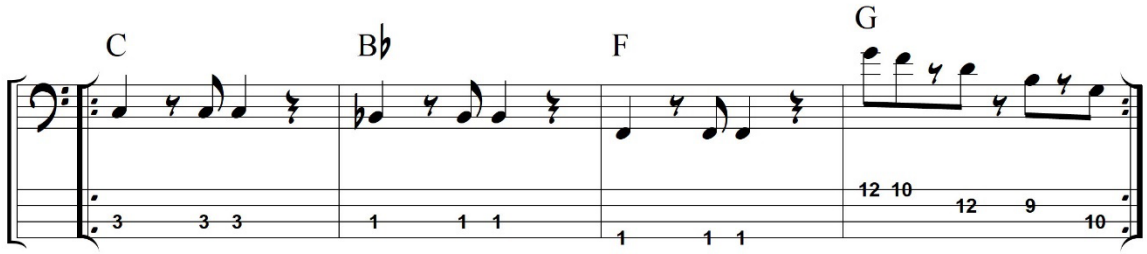
Chord Tone Fill #2



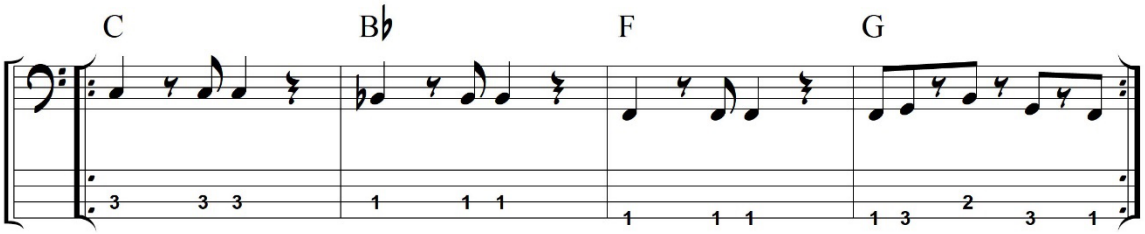
Chord Tone Fill #3



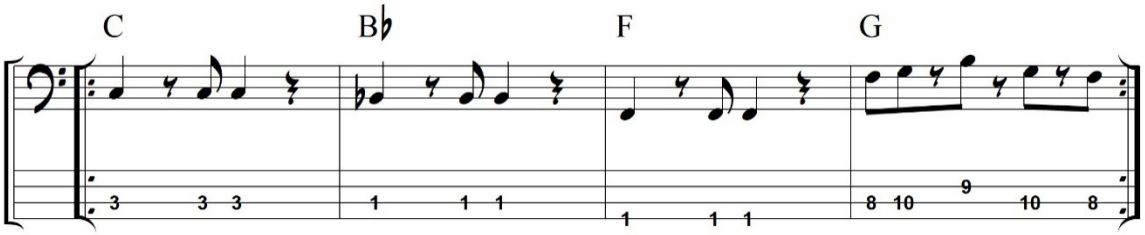
Chord Tone Fill #4



Chord Tone Fill #5



Chord Tone Fill #6



Exercise: *Create 5 Fills over the G Major chord making use of chord tones.*

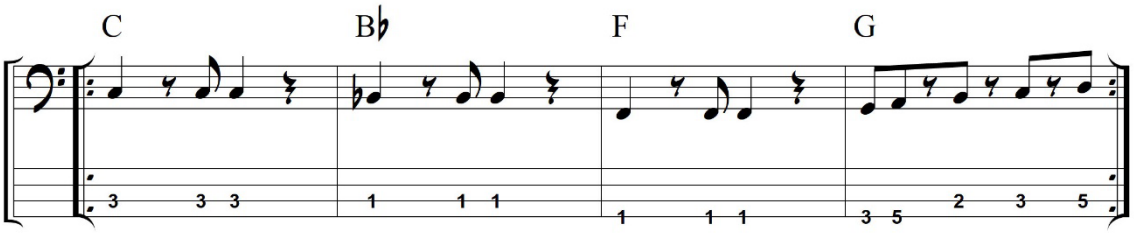
Adding Scales

Now let's try adding some **scale notes** in our fills. We are in the key of **C Major** so the G chord is **chord 5**.

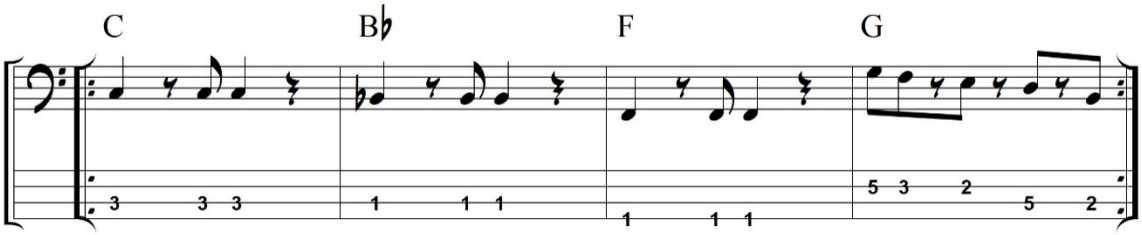
As we covered in the modes lesson, the **Mixolydian Mode** can be used as our **chord scale**.

We can use the same rhythm as the previous fills in creating **scale based phrases**. Below we see three examples (see video):

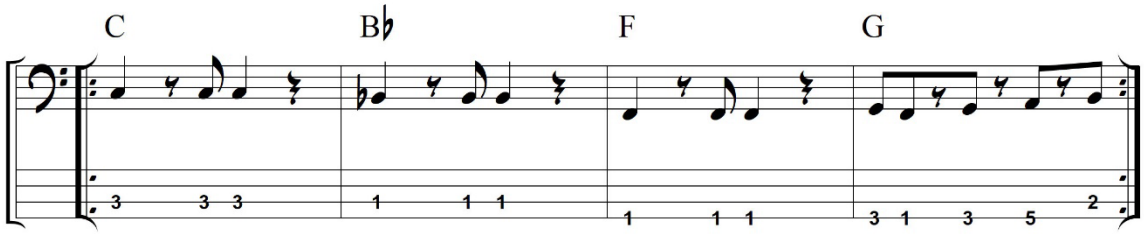
Mixolydian Fill #1



Mixolydian Fill #2



Mixolydian Fill #3

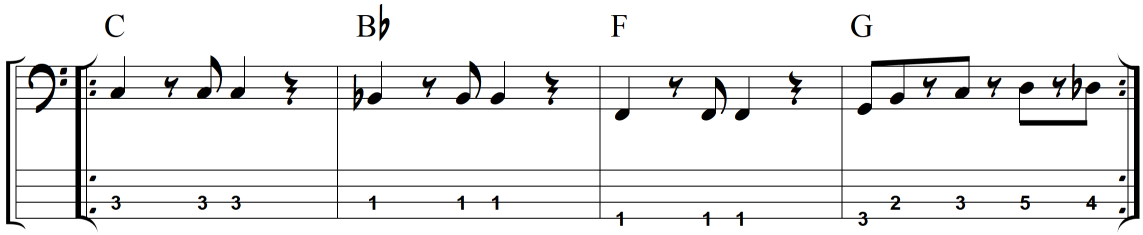


Exercise: *Create five fills making use of the G Mixolydian mode. Play in different registers, play down below your starting note and try above.*

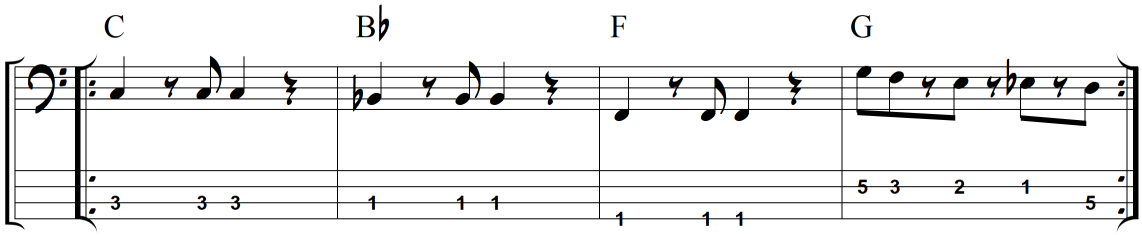
Adding Chromatics

Beyond the Mixolydian scale, we can also fill in the gaps between the scale notes with **chromatic notes** (see video):

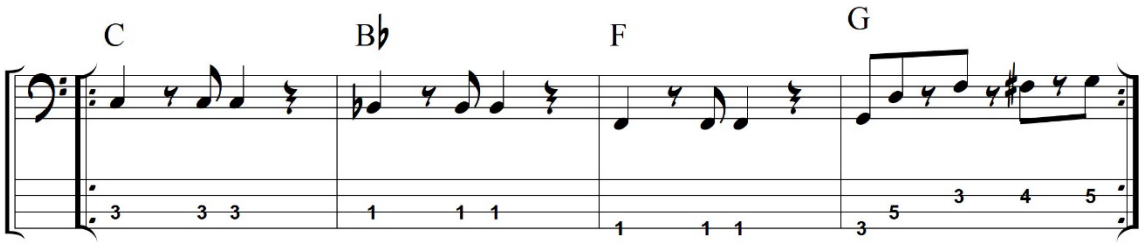
Chromatic Fill #1



Chromatic Fill #2



Chromatic Fill #3



Exercise: *Create five fills using chromatic notes around our basic G Mixolydian Scale. Practice playing the fills over the supplied track.*