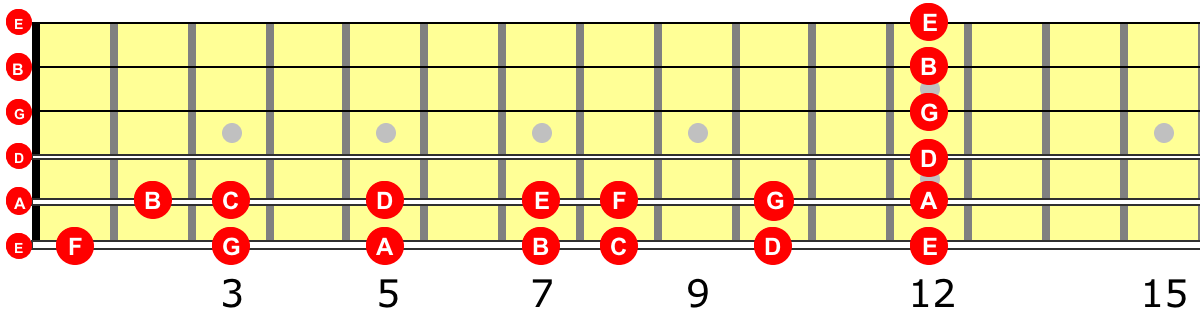


The 12-Tone Musical Alphabet

Knowing your notes on the neck is essential for identifying keys, chords, scales and sight reading. By memorising the 7 'natural' notes (A B C D E F G) on the bottom two strings we can begin to locate notes all over the neck using 'octave' shapes based off these two strings. We'll get into this later on the next page.

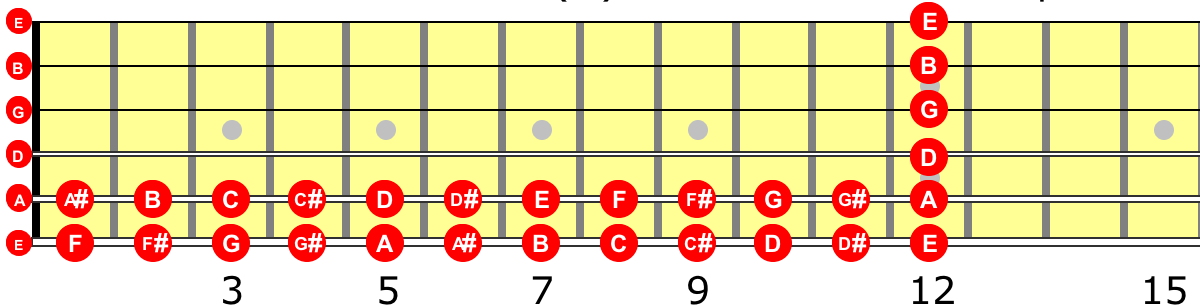
Let's begin with the A (5th) string. Notice how the notes fall on frets 0 2 3 5 7 8 10 12. And for the E (6th) string... 0 1 3 5 7 8 10 12. Begin with the open A string and say the note names in alphabetical order, as you ascend, whilst making a mental note of those fret numbers. Once memorised move on to the E string (starting with the open E)...

The 7 Natural notes



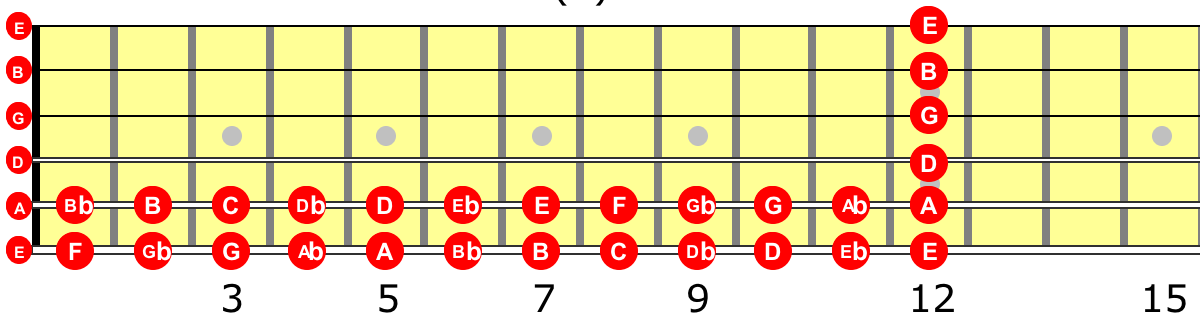
In the gaps we have the 5 sharp (#) and flat (b) tones, known as 'accidentals'. These 7 naturals + 5 accidentals make up the 12-tone musical alphabet. Starting with the open A string, ascend 1 fret at a time, naming each note as you go (A... A#... B... etc). Practise this then move on to the E string...

7 Naturals + 5 Accidentals (#) = 12-Tone Musical Alphabet



In some cases a note is referred to by one of two names. For example: A# and Bb are the same! In this case we say that A# and Bb are 'enharmonic'. The diagram below shows the flat equivalents...

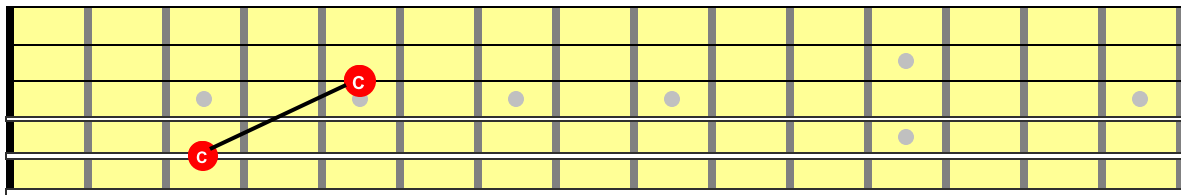
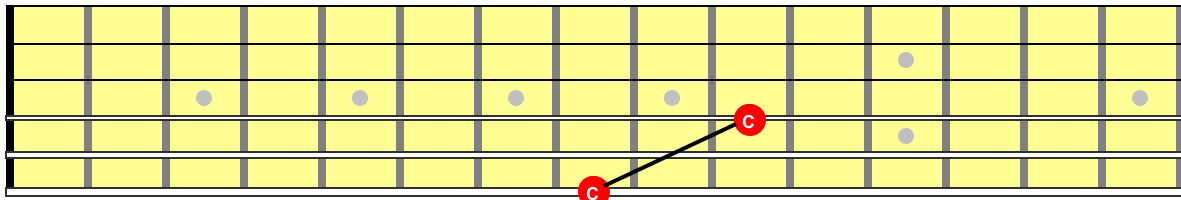
7 Naturals + 5 Accidentals (b)



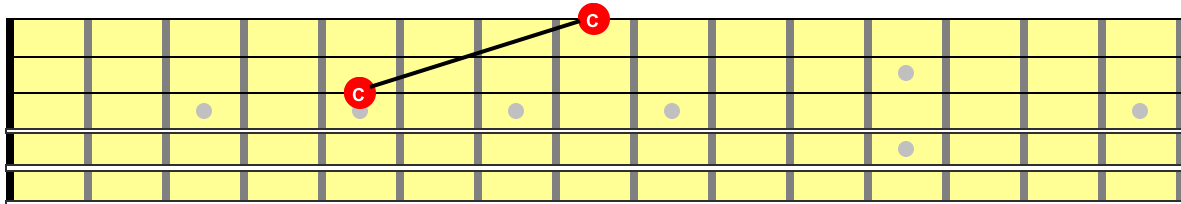
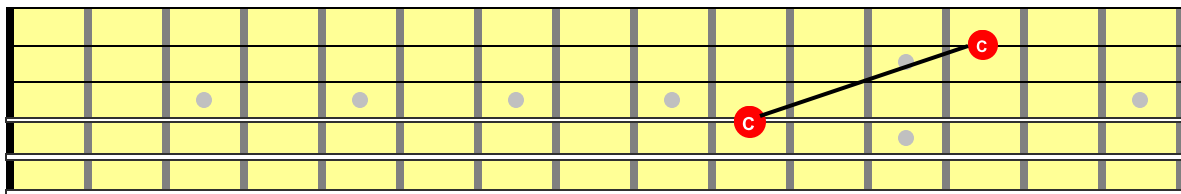
Note: the terms sharp(en) and flat(ten) are also often used to describe the raising or lowering of a pitch by 1 semi-tone (1 fret), respectively.

Octave = same note played at a higher or lower pitch.
These shapes can be used like a shortcut to locate a single note on any of the other 4 strings, based off the 2 strings that we already know.

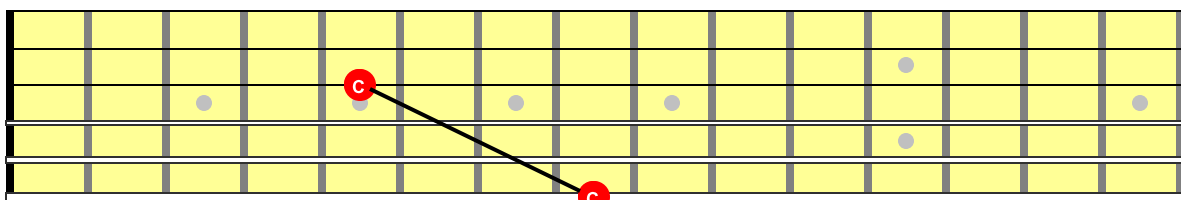
Octave shape 1 - can be played on 4 string pairs.



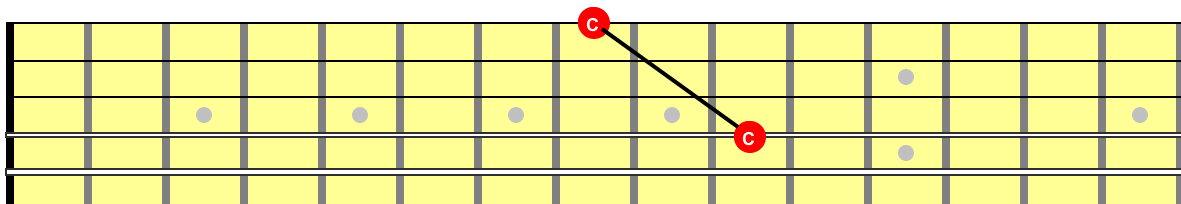
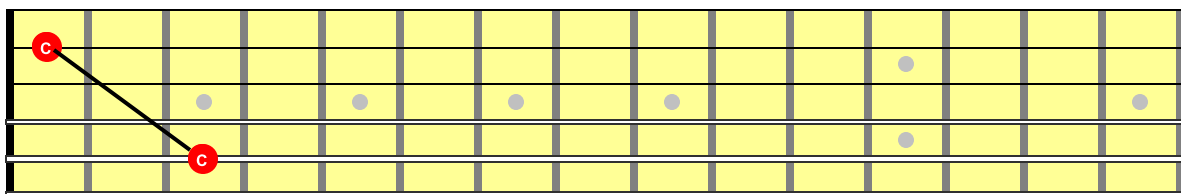
Due to the nature of standard guitar tuning move the highest note up a semi-tone (1 fret) for the next 2 string pairs...



Octave shape 2 - can be played on 3 string pairs.

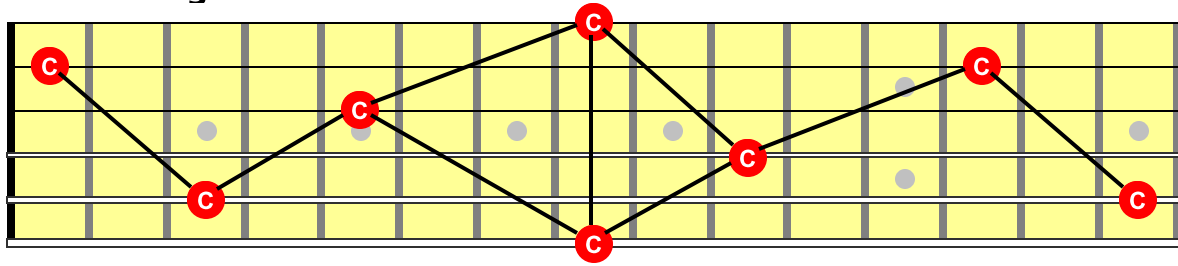


Due to the nature of standard guitar tuning move the highest note up a semi-tone (1 fret) for the next 2 string pairs...

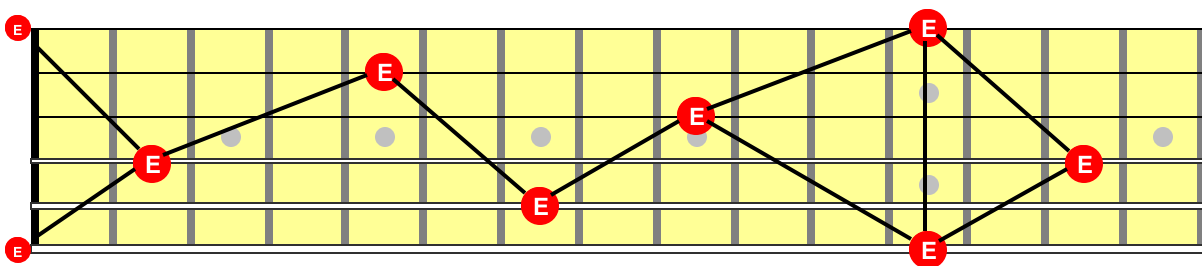
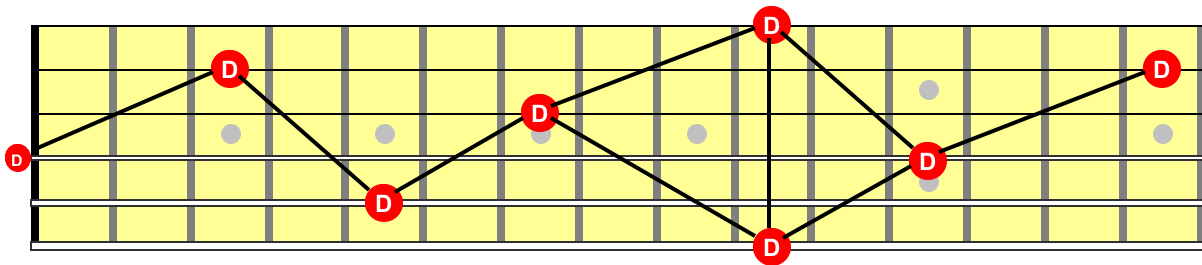
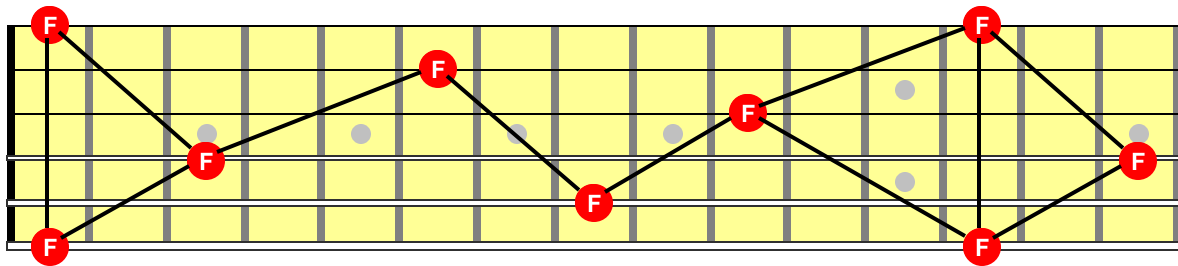
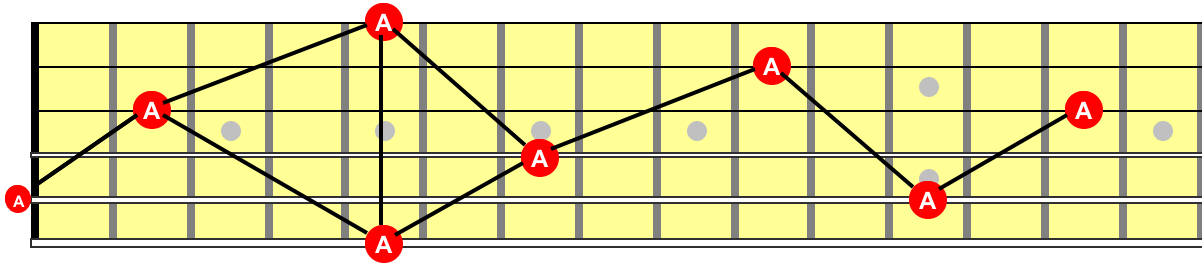


Let's see how this all looks when we connect the dots...

Connecting the dots...



Practise locating and connecting the notes in the following keys. Study the diagrams then have a go at playing them from memory. With practice you will soon become familiar with the reoccurring pattern along the neck.

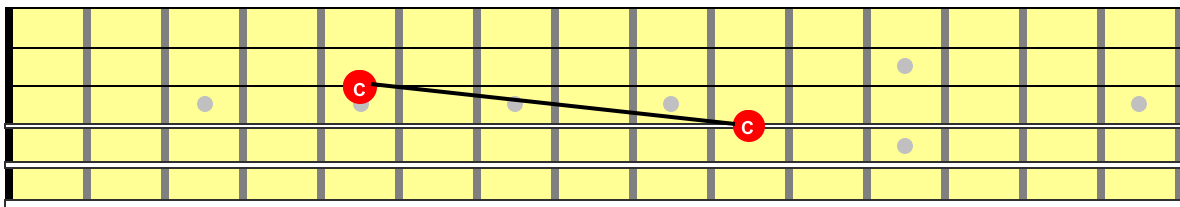
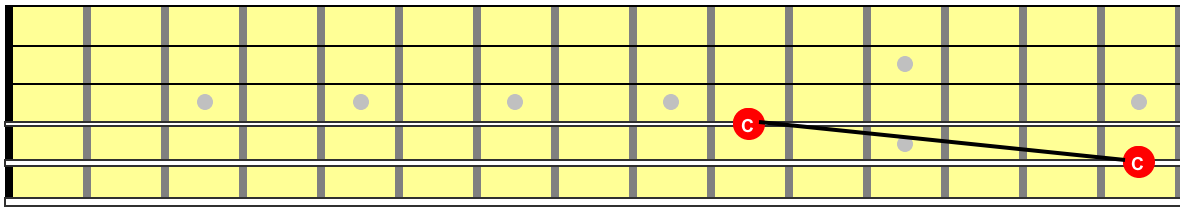
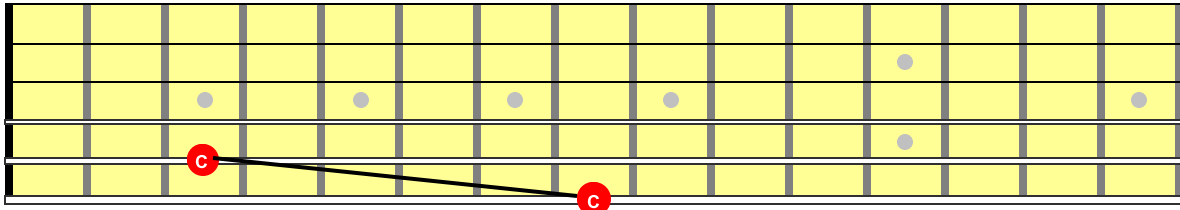


Note: the 1st and 6th string can be connected by a vertical line because they are both tuned to the same note (E). Practise 'connecting the dots' in all 12 keys until you can do this quickly and easily.

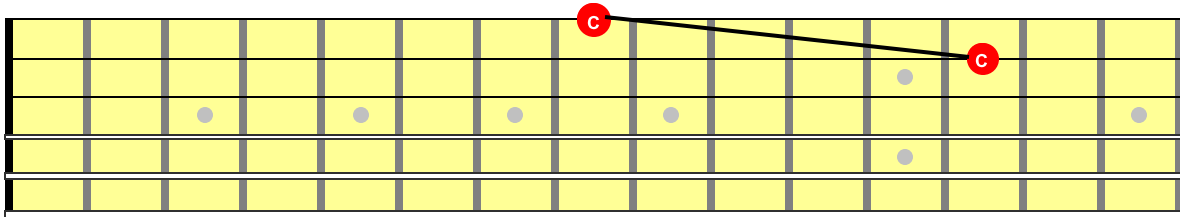
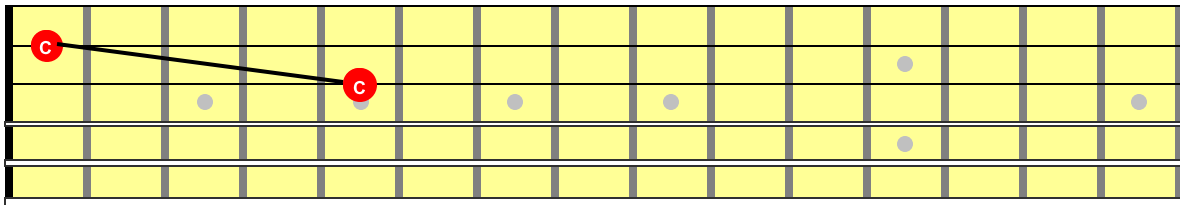
Unison Notes

In addition to octaves it is useful to know where a note occurs at the same pitch. This is called a 'unison'. Only one shape is required.

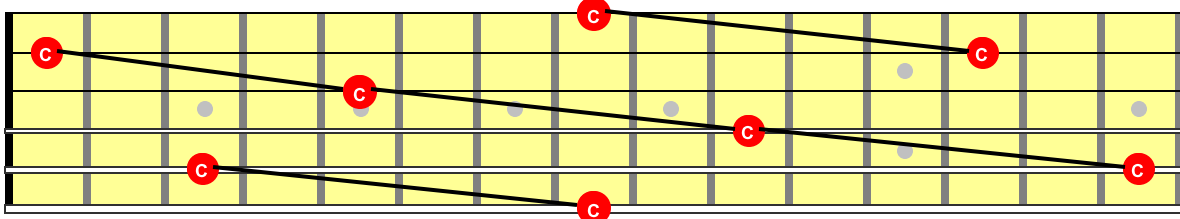
Can be played on 5 string pairs...



Due to the nature of standard guitar tuning move the highest note up a semi-tone (1 fret) for this string pair...

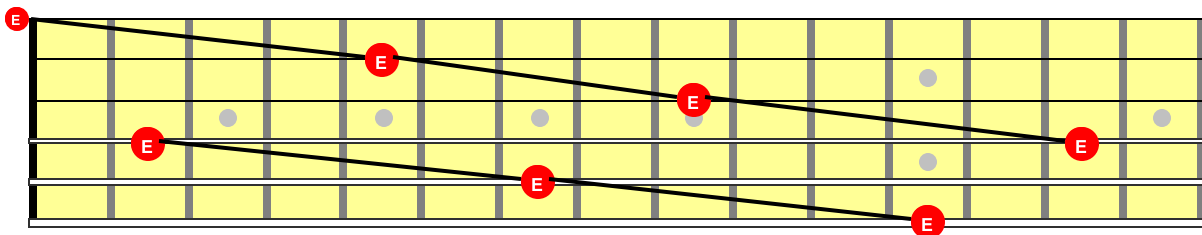
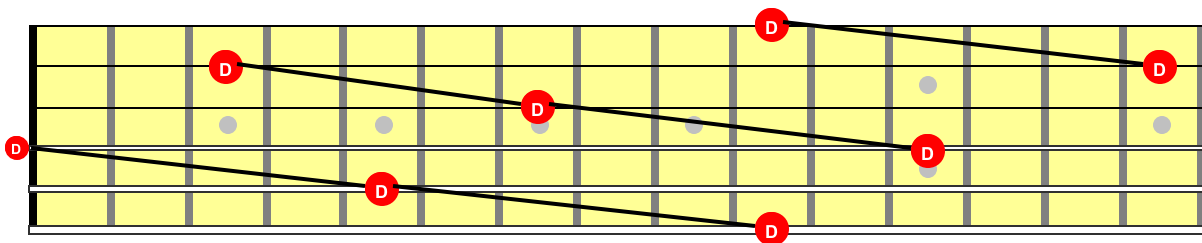
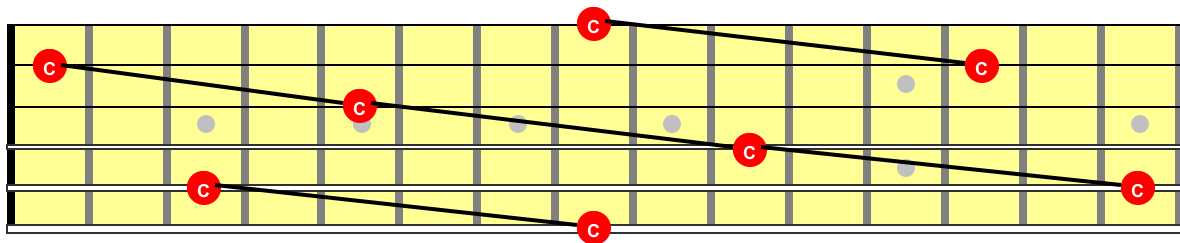
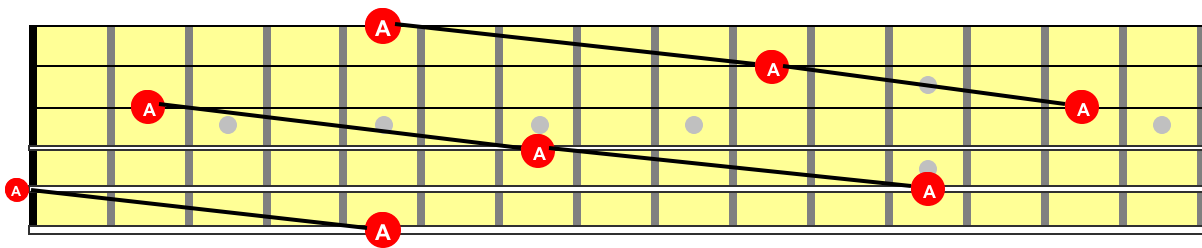
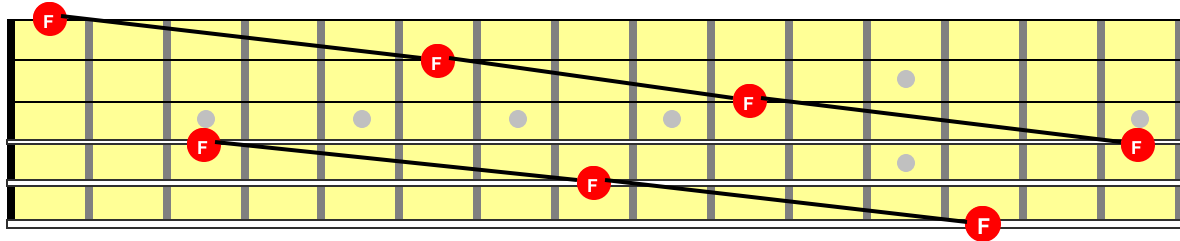


Now connect the dots...



Connecting the Dots - Finding Unisons

Practise locating and connecting the unison notes in the following keys. Study the diagrams then have a go at playing them from memory.



Did you spot the octaves in there too? ;) Now you should be starting to see the bigger picture. Remember to practise these in all 12 keys.

Good Luck!