

MOVING ACROSS THE FINGERBOARD

Getting Stuck In Boxes

A lot of bass players tend to get stuck in boxes when they play and neglect to use the entire length of the fingerboard. When attempting to play a scale using the entire range of the bass, some players might play up to the last note they can play on the G-string in one box, then shift up to a much higher position to finish playing the rest of the notes:

-- SHIFT UP --

The problem here is that we're neglecting 12 of the frets along our fingerboard, not to mention the pause you have to take to shift to the higher position. The goal, then, is to find a way to move along the entire length of the fingerboard without an awkward pause and without missing a note. We'll have to shift positions much more frequently, but that won't be difficult if we make the shifts small. There are many ways to do this, so don't let these couple of exercises hinder your creativity with this exercise. We're using the F Major scale for the purposes of exploiting the full range of the instrument, but you should try and do this with every key!

We'll start by shifting in between our familiar three-note-per-string patterns:

When you're really comfortable with that, try to execute your shifts at different places. Instead of playing the full three notes in a pattern, try just playing two of them then shifting again to your first finger. It really helps to listen to what scale tone comes next in case you're getting lost in your fingerings. Always remember that being able to hear the notes is much more important than being able to memorize fingerings! Also, try and descend differently than you've ascended:

And finally, you don't always have to shift to your first finger; instead, you can shift into the "middle" of a mode (in this example, shifting from Ionian into Dorian using your second finger in the first measure). This helps to make the shifts as painless as possible and allows you to move around the neck very quickly. Still try and descend differently than you've ascended: