What Thirds Look Like on the Bass and Suggested Fingerings

Minor thirds:

![Minor Thirds Diagram]

Major thirds:

![Major Thirds Diagram]

The major third cannot be fingered on the same string without stretching. This is not to say that stretch-fingerings are bad. For example, it was used in the whole tone scale fingerings earlier, so it does have its uses. However, for purposes of consistency and pattern training, it is recommended to use the one-finger-per-fret approach.

**NOTE:** The interval from the open string to the first dot (usually the 3rd fret) is a minor third.

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Major and minor is a reference not only to scales but also to chords, scales and keys. The major or minor third has a profound difference in sound quality. It is the third that defines the principal character of many chords and scales. It is often part of the name of a chord or scale, such as the C major scale, or the chord symbol F#m. Remember that whenever a chord or scale is major it contains a major third, therefore, it is practical to start with the second finger on the fretboard so you can access the major third with the first finger. Whenever a chord or scale is minor, start with the first finger on the fretboard so you can play the minor third with the fourth finger on the same string. You can access both the major and minor thirds from the fourth finger using two strings to create the intervals.

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What Thirds Sound Like

**Harmonically**

Thirds sound harmonious and beautiful. They are *consonant* intervals and have a resting quality to them (home or tonic).

You can distinguish between major and minor thirds by listening for a sort of sonic “cliché:

*Major thirds sound happy*

*Minor thirds sound sad*