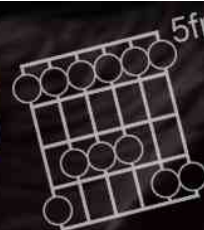




PENTATONIC SCALES

GUITAR TOOLS YOU NEED TO KNOW

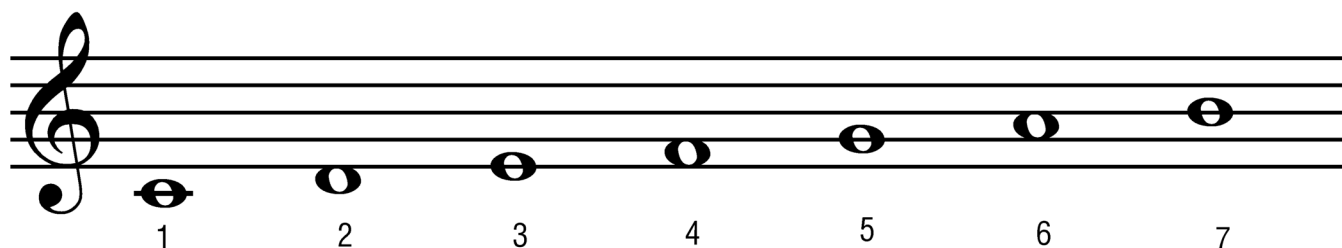


Pentatonic Scales

A pentatonic scale is a 5-note scale derived from the major scale. The five notes of the pentatonic scale create five pentatonic forms that connect together like jigsaw puzzle pieces on the neck of the guitar. Many players know some of the forms but don't understand how they connect together. This lesson shows you how these scales connect together so you can play any pentatonic scale anywhere on the neck.

C Major Scale

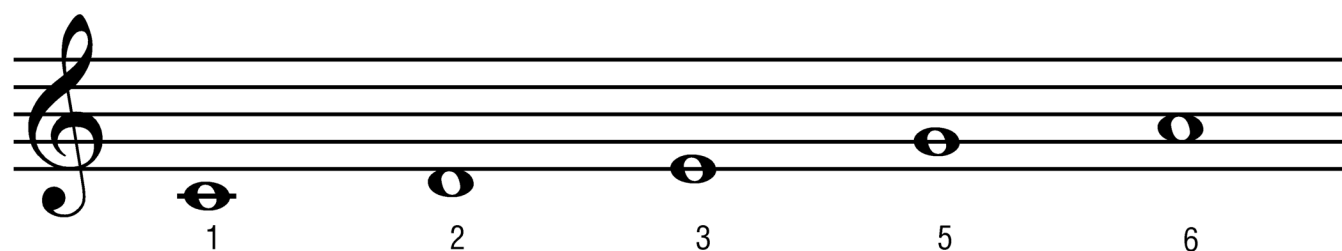
The major scale has 7 notes. Here is the C major scale.



C Pentatonic Scale

The pentatonic scale has 5 notes – hence the name “pentatonic”.

The pentatonic scale is a subset of the major scale and uses the first, second, third, fifth and sixth steps of the major scale. The pentatonic scale omits the 4th and the 7th step of the major scale.



Relative Major and Minor Roots

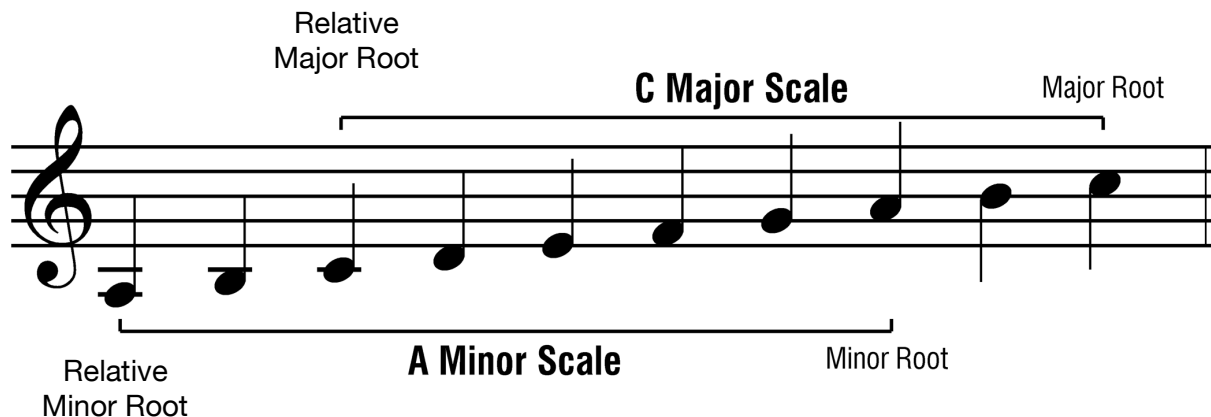
There is a special relationship between the first and sixth steps of the major scale which is called RELATIVE.

The first step of the major scale is called the RELATIVE MAJOR.

The sixth step is called the RELATIVE MINOR.

So, a major scale can be made starting on the 1st step, and a minor scale can be made by using the same set of notes starting on the 6th step.

It's two scales that share the same key signature.

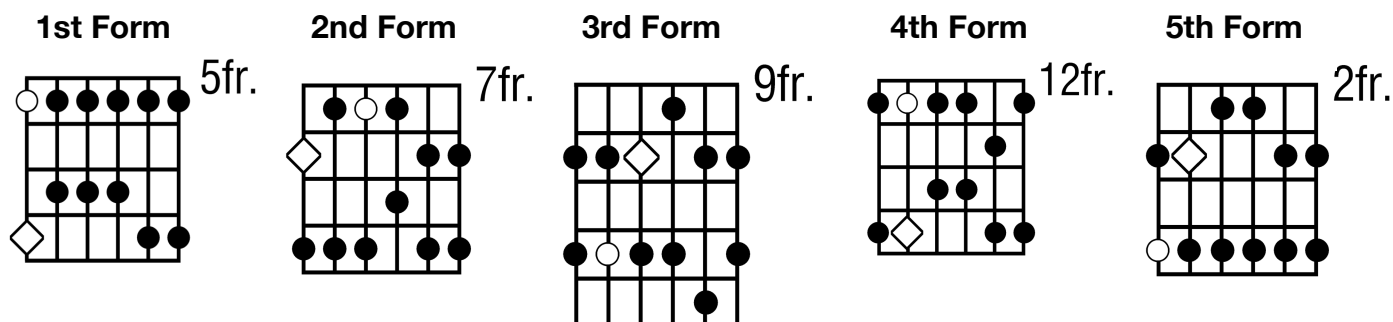


The Five Pentatonic Forms

Since there are five notes in a pentatonic scale, there are five different forms that we can use to play the scale on guitar – each starting on a different note.

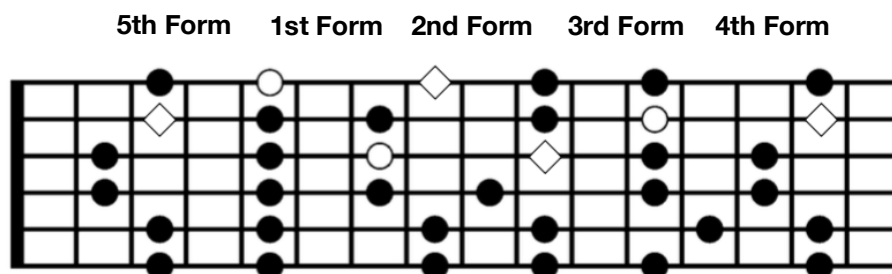
Below are the five forms of a C major pentatonic scale which can also be used to form an A minor pentatonic scale. (The diamond indicates the major root and the circle is the minor root.)

◇ = Major Root ○ = Minor Root



Pentatonic Forms Connect Together

The pentatonic forms connect together on the guitar neck like puzzle pieces – with one side of a form sharing the same side as the next one.




Common Pentatonic Patterns

Here are some common pentatonic patterns played on guitar. These patterns are shown using pentatonic form #1 – but they can be applied to the other forms as well.

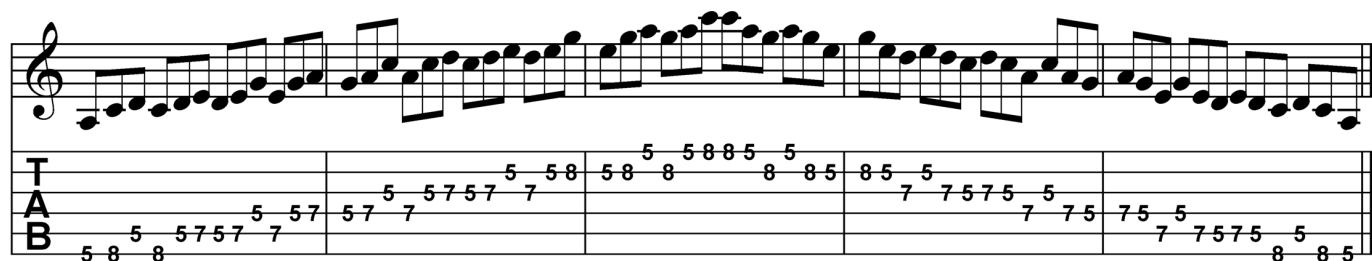
Practice each pattern – slowly at first, then gradually increase your speed. Then, play the patterns in different keys and places on the neck. Finally, apply them to all of the five pentatonic forms.

Pattern #1 (Sets of 4)



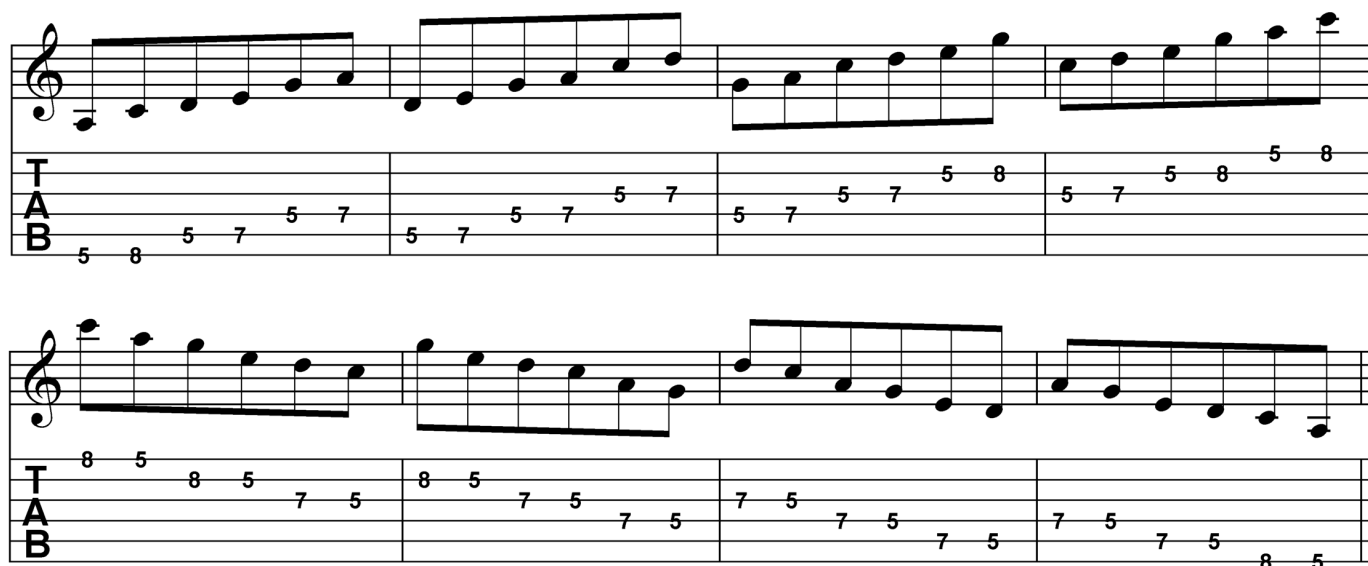
Pattern #1 (Sets of 4) musical notation and tablature. The notation shows two systems of four measures each. The first system starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The second system starts with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The tablature shows fret numbers for each note.

Pattern #2 (Sets of 3)



Pattern #2 (Sets of 3) musical notation and tablature. The notation shows one system of five measures. The system starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The tablature shows fret numbers for each note.

Pattern #3 (3 Pairs)



The image shows two systems of musical notation for Pattern #3 (3 Pairs). Each system consists of a treble clef staff with a melodic line and a three-part tablature staff labeled T, A, and B. The first system shows an ascending and then descending melodic line. The second system shows a descending and then ascending melodic line. The tablature provides fingerings for each note.

Tips for Successful Learning

Learn the Forms First.

Get the five pentatonic forms underneath your fingers first. Learn the finger patterns. A good way to learn these scales is to take one form and play it ascending and then descending. Thenshift up a half step and play it again. Continue working your way up the neck until you run out of neck to play the form, then come back down descending.

Practice that for a few days then take the next pentatonic form and work on it ascending and descending – occasionally working on the first form to keep it in your memory.

Keep doing this until all forms are learned.

Speed Will Only Come After You Know the Forms.

Don't try to play faster until you are confident in playing each form by memory. Speed comes as you develop the muscle memory needed to play the pentatonic patterns confidently.

Solo Using the Notes of the Scale – Not the Scale Itself.

Think of these scales and finger patterns as letters and words that you are going to use to say what you want to say musically. Simply playing through the finger patterns does not make a good solo.

Spend some time being creative with them. Experiment with starting on a note in the middle of the form or try to skip around on the notes. Try to create a melodic idea and develop it. That's what soloing is about.