



Excerpt

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Pentatonic Scales

The pentatonic scale provides a simple approach to soloing. In fact, countless blues and rock players have used this scale as their primary scale. “Penta” means five (like pentagon); so, a pentatonic scale uses only 5 of the 7 notes in the major scale. It is a simplified scale that is the easiest scale to play. Minor pentatonic scales are used for songs like blues songs, songs in a minor key, and rock songs (especially songs that use power chords). The minor pentatonic scale is much more useful and popular than the major pentatonic scale; however, the major pentatonic can still be used for songs in a major key (mainly country).

- ❖ Remember to use a **hand position** throughout the duration of a scale, where *each finger claims a certain fret*. In a typical hand position, the index finger will claim the first fret, the middle will claim the next fret, followed by the other fingers. Each finger should only play only the notes on a the fret to which it is assigned.
- ❖ If you want to play a minor pentatonic scale, the keynote is played with your index finger on the 6th string. If you want a major pentatonic scale, your keynote is played with your pinky on the 6th string.

For instance: For any blues, rock, or minor sounding song (blues in A, or a song starting with Am), use your index finger to find the keynote for the A minor pentatonic scale. When you do, your hand position will be: index finger gets the 5th fret, middle gets the 6th, ring gets the 7th, and pinky get the 8th.

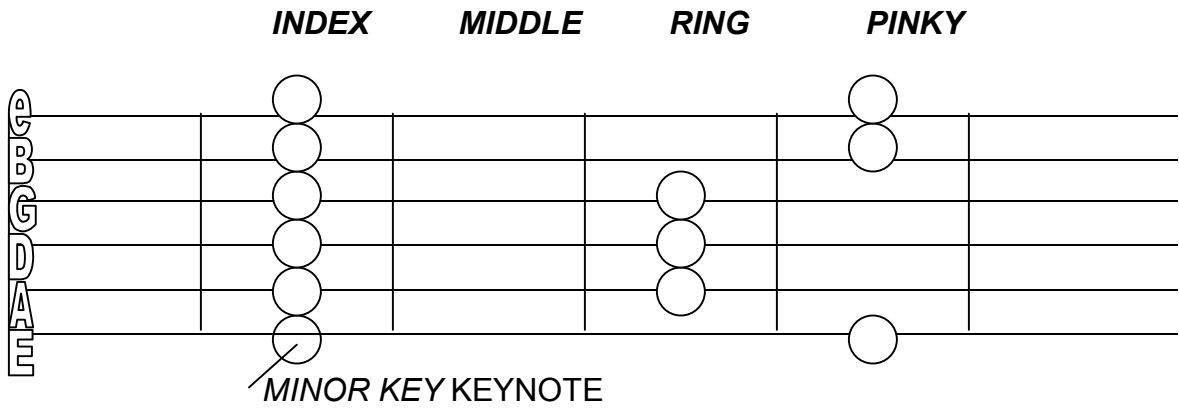
If you are soloing to a song in the key of A (major key), find the A note on the 6th string with your pinky. You’ll find that it is on the 5th fret. Now, you’re in position for playing the scale. Your ring finger gets the 4th fret, middle gets the 3rd and index gets the 2nd. For a different key, just find the keynote on the 6th string. Try identifying different keys using major and minor hand positions.

Technique Tips

Left Hand: As you learn this scale, play each note in order, starting from the appropriate keynote on the 6th string. Also, your ring and pinky fingers will probably need to gain a bit more finger strength as you solo.

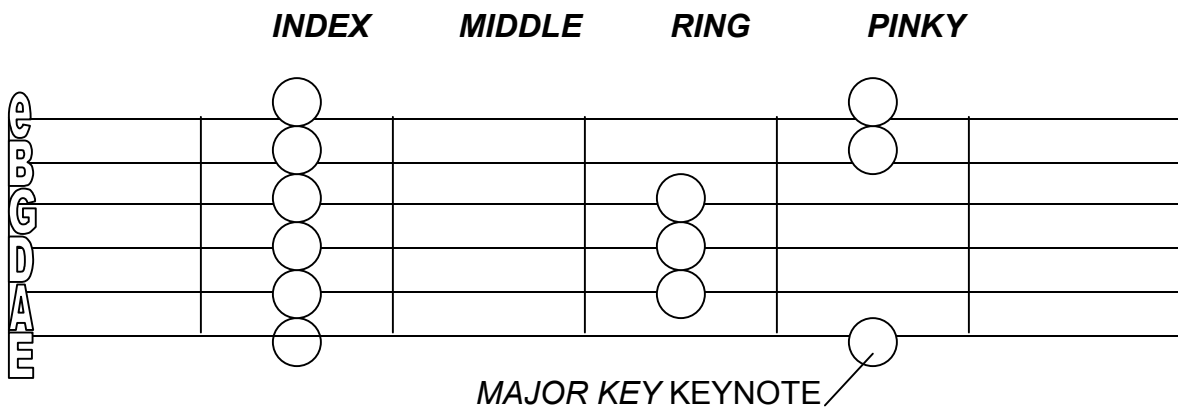
Right Hand: Your right hand so far has only strummed. Soloing, however involves plucking individual strings. This may be done by a subtle flick of the wrist or controlled bend of the joint in your thumb. Make sure you are holding the pick correctly or plucking individual strings will be very difficult. Furthermore, as you play each note, constantly alternate between down plucks and up plucks. Make this movement as second nature as possible. This alternating pattern is the key to speed. It may feel unnatural at first, but it is essential if you want a fast solo.

Minor Pentatonic Scale Position



- Blues
- Rock
- Songs in a minor key
(songs that begin and end with the relative minor, 6m, of a chord family)

Major Pentatonic Scale Position



- Songs in a major key