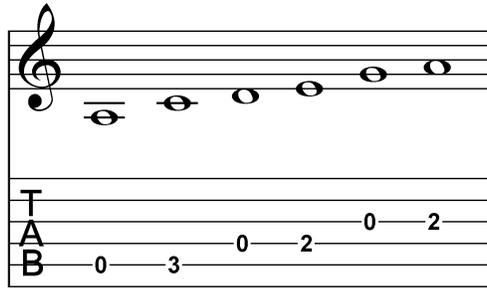


## Chapter One: Minor Pentatonic Scales

To introduce a novice guitar player to the world of rock music requires that he learn a series of scales, which we can call the tools of the trade. The most important of these are both major and minor pentatonic. For this chapter we will be considering minor pentatonic only. The word “pentatonic” implies that there are five notes in these scales, and that is correct. Once learned, the player can immediately start improvising rock guitar. The notes in a pentatonic scale are as follows. Let’s look at an A Minor pentatonic.



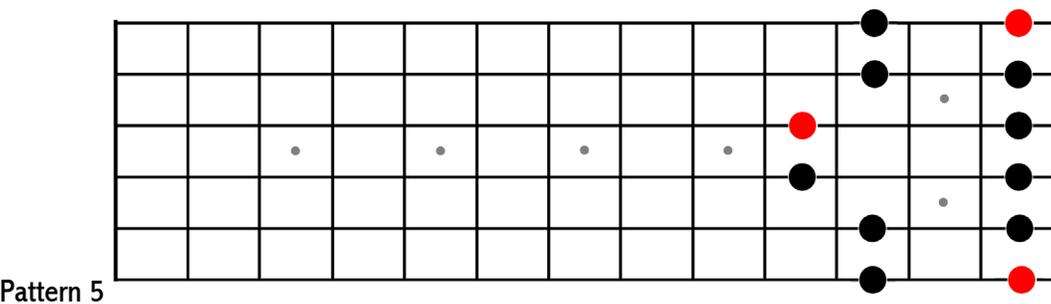
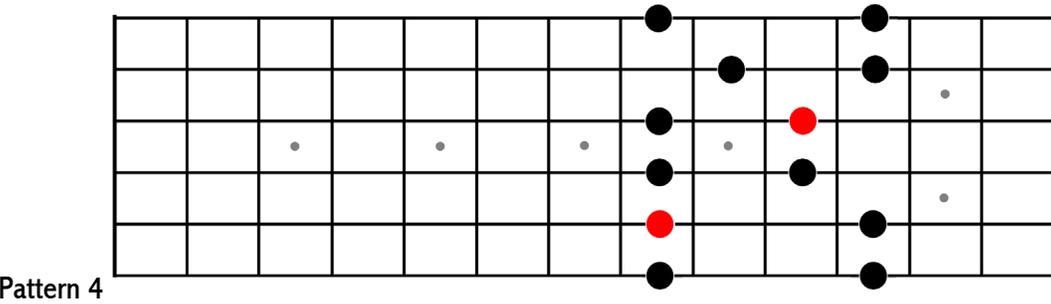
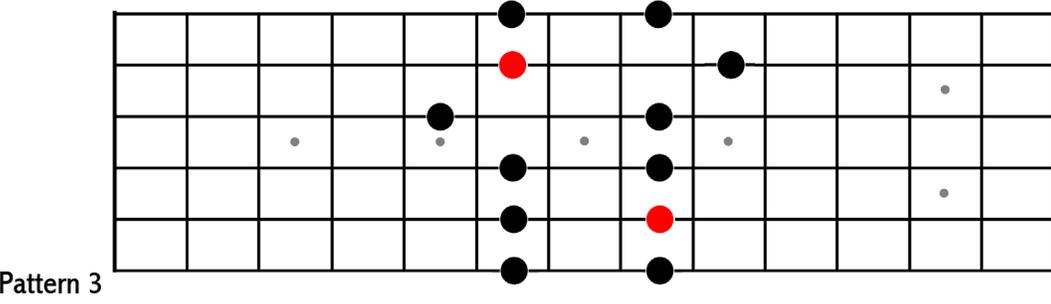
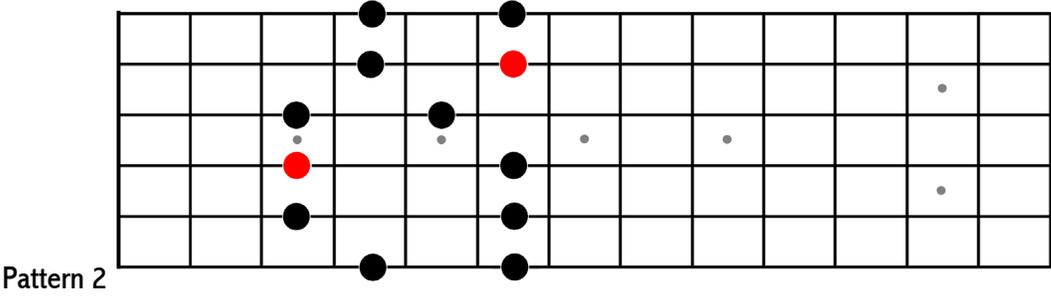
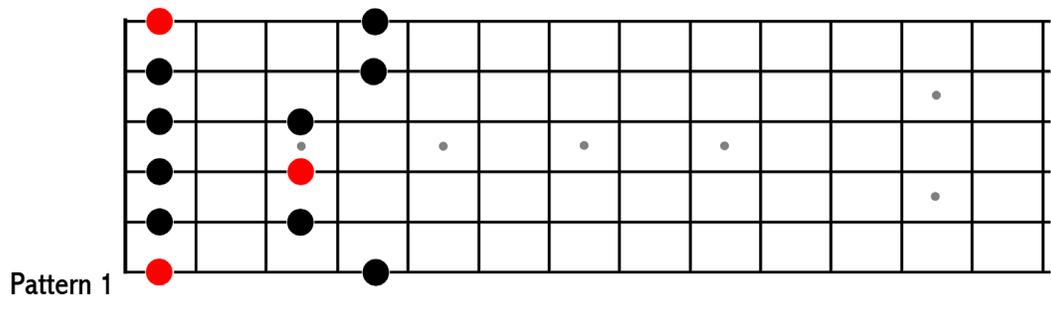
*A Minor Pentatonic*

It is important that if you are going to learn to improvise with this scale that you learn how it sounds. So, let us deconstruct this scale and look at the intervals that make up a minor pentatonic scale.

Note	Interval
A	Root
C	Minor Third
D	Perfect Fourth
E	Perfect Fifth
G	Minor Seventh

As a musician, you should take every opportunity to improve your ears. It is important that that you recognise and can sing back any interval. This is tricky and can take a good deal of practice. It is however the basis of improvisation. If you hear a series of notes in your head, you must be able to translate that onto the guitar. To do this you have to train your ear. Try playing and learning the sound of the Minor Pentatonic scale and then, sing it back to yourself. Practice it until you get it right.

Now we must learn the Minor Pentatonic scale thoroughly, up and down the neck. There are five positions to learn, after which the first pattern repeats an octave higher. If you look at *pattern 1*, you will see that all the notes are spread out over four frets. You should use the fingers on your left hand accordingly, first fret, first finger, second fret, second finger and so on. To play these scales you *must* use all four fingers. Sometimes, as in *pattern 3*, a position shift is required. In this case, on the third string, you must shift down a fret, and then back up on the second. When playing these scales, always start and end on the root note (the red notes, the F in this case). Start on the root, go all the way up, then all the way down and back up and end on the note you started with.



## Playing Techniques

Initially, when learning these scales, pick alternately *down-up-down-up* with your right hand. Always practice with a metronome, increasing the tempo setting as you achieve accuracy and speed. Never move on until you can play each scale accurately, without making any mistakes. Speed will come over time with familiarity.

Once you can play each scale picking alternately, you should the start again, this time however using hammer-ons and pull-offs. In your soloing, it is far more likely that you will use this approach. What follows is a series of examples that use the Minor Pentatonic scale in a classic rock situation with some of the more common techniques, such as string bending.

### Exercise 1

For this exercise we use the pattern 1, however we change the key to A minor. Therefore we move the pattern up four frets so that it starts on the fifth fret. This exercise is a simple phrase that uses hammer-ons & pull-offs. It also features a full bend on the second string from a G, a tone up to an A. It is very important when bending notes to pitch the note accurately, so the bend to the A must hit the pitch precisely. Also bend strings using your third finger supported by your second finger.

The musical notation for Exercise 1 is presented in two staves. The top staff is in treble clef, 4/4 time, and contains four measures of music. The first measure is marked with an Am chord and contains a quarter note G5, an eighth note A5, a quarter note B5, and a quarter note A5. The second measure is marked with a C chord and contains a quarter note C6, an eighth note D6, a quarter note E6, and a quarter note D6. The third measure is marked with a G chord and contains a quarter note G5, an eighth note A5, a quarter note B5, and a quarter note A5. The fourth measure is marked with an Am chord and contains a quarter note A5, a quarter note G5, and a quarter note F5. The bottom staff is guitar tablature for strings T, A, and B. It shows fret numbers 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, 7, 5, 7, 5, 5, 7, 5, 8, 5, 8, 5, 7, 5, 7, 5, 7. A 'full' bend is indicated on the 8th fret of the A string in the second measure.

### Exercise 2

Similarly to exercise one, this piece is also in A minor and features hammer-ons and pull-offs. This time there is a full bend on the G third string at the end of the second bar. The triplets create a shuffle blues feel.

The musical notation for Exercise 2 is presented in two staves. The top staff is in treble clef, 4/4 time, and contains four measures of music. The first measure is marked with an Am chord and contains a triplet of eighth notes G5, A5, B5, followed by a quarter note A5. The second measure is marked with a C chord and contains a triplet of eighth notes C6, D6, E6, followed by a quarter note D6. The third measure is marked with a D chord and contains a triplet of eighth notes D6, E6, F6, followed by a quarter note D6. The fourth measure is marked with an Am chord and contains a quarter note A5, a quarter note G5, and a quarter note F5. The bottom staff is guitar tablature for strings T, A, and B. It shows fret numbers 8, 5, 8, 5, 8, 5, 8, 5, 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, 5, 8. Two 'full' bends are indicated on the 8th fret of the A string in the second and fourth measures.

### Exercise 3

This exercise is in E minor. It is played using pattern 4, which requires that you move the shape down a semi-tone from F to E starting with the root note on the 7<sup>th</sup> fret, fifth string. It is a slightly funky line, more like a riff. It features a release-bend in the second bar. This requires that you strike the string once it has been bent up a full tone, and then release the bend downwards.

Musical notation for Exercise 3, showing a guitar riff in E minor. The notation includes a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The piece is divided into two measures. The first measure is marked with the chord Em and contains a sequence of eighth notes: F#5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F#6, G6, A6, B6, C7, D7, E7, F#7, G7, A7, B7, C8, D8, E8, F#8, G8, A8, B8, C9, D9, E9, F#9, G9, A9, B9, C10, D10, E10, F#10, G10, A10, B10, C11, D11, E11, F#11, G11, A11, B11, C12, D12, E12, F#12, G12, A12, B12, C13, D13, E13, F#13, G13, A13, B13, C14, D14, E14, F#14, G14, A14, B14, C15, D15, E15, F#15, G15, A15, B15, C16, D16, E16, F#16, G16, A16, B16, C17, D17, E17, F#17, G17, A17, B17, C18, D18, E18, F#18, G18, A18, B18, C19, D19, E19, F#19, G19, A19, B19, C20, D20, E20, F#20, G20, A20, B20, C21, D21, E21, F#21, G21, A21, B21, C22, D22, E22, F#22, G22, A22, B22, C23, D23, E23, F#23, G23, A23, B23, C24, D24, E24, F#24, G24, A24, B24, C25, D25, E25, F#25, G25, A25, B25, C26, D26, E26, F#26, G26, A26, B26, C27, D27, E27, F#27, G27, A27, B27, C28, D28, E28, F#28, G28, A28, B28, C29, D29, E29, F#29, G29, A29, B29, C30, D30, E30, F#30, G30, A30, B30, C31, D31, E31, F#31, 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F#321, G321, A321, B321, C322, D322, E322, F#322, G322, A322, B322, C323, D323, E323, F#323, G323, A323, B323, C324, D324, E324, F#324, G324, A324, B324, C325, D325, E325, F#325, G325, A325, B325, C326, D326, E326, F#326, G326, A326, B326, C327, D327, E327, F#327, G327, A327, B327, C328, D328, E328, F#328, G328, A328, B328, C329, D329, E329, F#329, G329, A329, B329, C330, D330, E330, F#330, G330, A330, B330, C331, D331, E331, F#331, G331, A331, B331, C332, D332, E332, F#332, G332, A332, B332, C333, D333, E333, F#333, G333, A333, B333, C334, D334, E334, F#334, G334, A334, B334, C335, D335, E335, F#335, G335, A335, B335, C336, D336, E336, F#336, G336, A336, B336, C337, D337, E337, F#337, G337, A337, B337, C338, D338, E338, F#338, G338, A338, B338, C339, D339, E339, F#339, G339, A339, B339, C340, D340, E340, F#340, G340, A340, B340, C341, D341, E341, F#341, G341, A341, B341, C342, D342, E342, F#342, G342, A342, B342, C343, D343, E343, F#343, G343, A343, B343, C344, D344, E344, F#344, G344, A344, B344, C345, D345, E345, F#345, G345, A345, B345, C346, D346, E346, F#346, G346, A346, B346, C347, D347, E347, F#347, G347, A347, B347, C348, D348, E348, F#348, G348, A348, B348, C349, D349, E349, F#349, G349, A349, B349, C350, D350, E350, F#350, G350, A350, B350, C351, D351, E351, F#351, G351, A351, B351, C352, D352, E352, F#352, G352, A352, B352, C353, D353, E353, F#353, G353, A353, B353, C354, D354, E354, F#354, G354, A354, B354, C355, D355, E355, F#355, G355, A355, B355, C356, D356, E356, F#356, G356, A356, B356, C357, D357, E357, F#357, G357, A357, B357, C358, D358, E358, F#358, G358, A358, B358, C359, D359, E359, F#359, G359, A359, B359, C360, D360, E360, F#

### Exercise 6

This is a riff in E minor that uses notes from patterns 2 and 3. It also uses the low open E string. Be careful to play the slurs in the last two beats of the second bar correctly. These ideas were typical of those used by Jimi Hendrix.

Musical notation for Exercise 6, featuring a riff in E minor. The notation includes a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The piece is in E minor. The first bar is marked with an Em chord. The second bar contains a triplet of eighth notes. The guitar tablature (TAB) is shown below the staff, with fret numbers 0, 5, 7, 7, 7/9, 7, 10, 10, 7, 10, 0, 5, 7, 5, 7, 7, 9, 7, 10, 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, 5, and 0.

### Exercise 7

This exercise is in D minor and features notes from patterns 4 and 5. In this case pattern 4 starts on the fifth fret. Play through the patterns in the correct key before trying the piece.

Musical notation for Exercise 7, featuring a riff in D minor. The notation includes a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and a key signature of two flats (Bb, Fb). The piece is in D minor. The first bar is marked with a Dm chord, and the second bar is marked with a G chord. The guitar tablature (TAB) is shown below the staff, with fret numbers 7, 5, 7, 6, 8, 8, 6, 8, 6, 7, 6, 7, 5, 7, 6, 8, 10, 8, 8, 10, 8, 6, 7, and a full bar.

### Exercise 8

This exercise is in A minor and features slides from one pattern to the next going from fret three all the way up to fret fifteen with a bend up to the highest pitch of the phrase. At one point or other this exercise features all 5 patterns.

Musical notation for Exercise 8, featuring a riff in A minor. The notation includes a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and a key signature of no sharps or flats. The piece is in A minor. The first bar is marked with an Am chord, the second bar with a Dm chord, and the third bar with an Am chord. The guitar tablature (TAB) is shown below the staff, with fret numbers 3, 5, 5, 8, 8, 10, 10, 10, 13, 15, 15, 15, 15, 15, 13, 14, 14, 14, and a full bar.

### Exercise 9

This final piece incorporates many of the ideas discussed in this chapter combined into one piece. It is in A minor and uses four of the minor pentatonic patterns.

The musical score for Exercise 9 is presented in four systems, each with a treble clef staff and a guitar tablature staff. The key signature is A minor and the time signature is 4/4.

- System 1:**
  - Chords: Am, F, Dm
  - Tablature: 7 5 5 7 | 7 5 5 7 7 5 7 | 7 5 5 7 7 5 7 | 8 (trill)
- System 2:**
  - Chords: Am, F, Dm, Am
  - Tablature: 9 8 8 10 | 10 8 10 10 10 8 | 10 10 8 9 7 5 7 | 5 7 7 5
- System 3:**
  - Chords: Am, F, Dm, Dm
  - Tablature: 7 5 7 5 7 5 5 8 5 7 5 7 7 | 7 7 5 7 | 7 7 5 7 | 7 7 5 7 9
- System 4:**
  - Chords: Am, F, Dm, Am
  - Tablature: 12 12 14 12 14 14 | 13 13 15 14 | 15 15 15 15 13 | 15 15 15 15 13 | 15 15 15 15 13 | 15 13 14

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[www.zama.co.uk](http://www.zama.co.uk)

Contact: [caesar@zama.co.uk](mailto:caesar@zama.co.uk)