

How To Use The Pentatonic Scale



By Bob Murnahan

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About **BOB MURNAHAN**

After receiving his first guitar at the age of 8, Bob began his now 42 year quest to learn as much as possible about playing the guitar. He has studied privately and at the collegiate level in the jazz studies program at the Ohio State University.

His career highlights include a tour of Europe with performances at the North Sea Jazz festival and the Montreux Jazz Festival. He has also done a stint in Vegas and played in the pit orchestra for the musicals Grease and Jesus Christ Superstar. Bob is also a veteran of the recording studio on group recordings and doing session work.

He stopped counting the number of students that come to him for private lessons at 1200. He has also toured the country as a clinician for Peavey Guitars. He is currently endorsed by Godin Guitars.

A few of his best selling products include:

Pentatonic Power
The Pentatonic Power Insider
Clapton Torn Down

Bob currently lives in Colorado with his wife Lynn and his 2 teenage sons (twin boys and budding musicians).

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Introduction

Have you ever wondered how players like Page, Clapton and Beck use the pentatonic scale to play lead guitar? How about guitarists like Van Halen and Vai? Or how jazz guitarists like Pat Metheny and George Benson use the pentatonic scale?

If so, then you've come to the right place. In the series of lessons to follow you will be guided through a step by step sequence of instruction to help you play lead guitar.

Take Your Lead Guitar Playing To The Next Level! In The lessons That Follow You Will Learn

- The most commonly used fingerings of the pentatonic scale.
- Guitar licks that you can use as a starting point to develop your own solos.
- Exercises to help you improve your technique.
- How to use passing tones to give your playing that extra spice that sound great.

The goal of these lessons is not just to memorize a bunch of guitar licks, although this is recommended and will help you improve. The goal is to give you a starting point that you can use to learn how to improvise and make up your own solos.

The fun and joy that comes from being able to improvise is worth all the effort and practice that it takes to get there. Be patient and you will improve. Try to set aside a consistent time each day to practice and you will reach your goals.

To your guitar playing success,

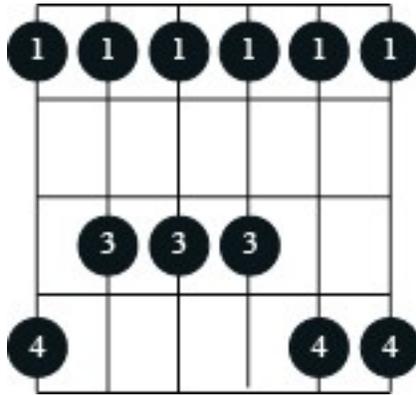
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Lesson 1. How To Play The Pentatonic Scale

Welcome to lesson 1 of the pentatonic scale. In this lesson you will learn how to read scale diagrams and tablature. You will also learn the most commonly used fingering for this scale.

Let's start by looking at a pentatonic scale diagram.



Here is a very important concept. Notice that this diagram of the pentatonic scale has no open strings. This means you can play it anywhere on the guitar. The fret does not matter. Just make sure you keep the spacing between your fingers the same as you move the scale around the neck.

When you move to a different fret, you are changing the key. Don't worry if you don't know what this means, more on this in a later lesson.

When reading this diagram of the pentatonic scale, start on the left hand side of the diagram.

This is the low E string (6th string). Play all of the notes on this string from top to bottom before moving on to the next string. In this example you would play 2 notes on the 6th string. The 1st finger followed by the 4th finger.

On the 5th string you would play 1st finger followed by the 3rd finger. The 4th string would be 1st finger and 3rd finger again. Continue in this manner until you play the entire pentatonic scale.

When you arrive at the end of the scale, turn around and go back down the scale. In reverse, you would start on the 1st string and play 4th finger followed by the 1st finger.

The 2nd string would also be 4th finger, 1st finger. The 3rd string would be 3rd finger, 1st finger.

Here are some other things to keep in mind as you play the scale on your guitar.

1. Most of the scales that you will learn in these lessons cover a span of 4 frets. Follow the recommended fingerings using one finger per fret. If you have to stretch beyond that, it is no big deal to reach back with your 1st finger or stretch out with your 4th finger.
2. To get your fingers in the proper playing position, allow your left hand to hang by your side completely relaxed. Turn your palm forward and without moving the upper arm, raise your forearm until your hand touches the edge of the fret board at the point where your fingers meet your palm.
3. Place the thumb in the center of the neck behind your 1st finger. Arch your fingers over until they press down on the 3rd string. The tips of the fingers should be at a 90 degree angle to the fret board. The string should make a mark in the center of the fingers.
4. As you spread your fingers to cover the 4 fret distance, they should be well separated at their middle joints. Your 1st finger should lean towards the head stock and your little finger will lean towards the bridge.
5. When playing a note with the 1st finger, the string mark should be more on the side of your finger towards your thumb and the mark on your little finger will be out by the side of your hand.
6. The palm of your hand should be parallel to the bottom of the neck.
7. These are general guidelines. This will vary depending on where you are at on the neck as you play. I would recommend that you find a good teacher in your area if you are just starting out. Learning proper technique from the beginning is a great way to avoid headaches later on.

Here's the pentatonic scale in guitar tablature

Example 1

The image shows a musical score for the pentatonic scale in guitar tablature. It consists of three measures. The top staff is a treble clef with a common time signature (C). The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter). The bottom staff is a guitar tablature with three lines labeled T, A, and B. The fret numbers are: Measure 1: 5 8 5 7 5 7 5 7; Measure 2: 5 8 5 8 5 8 5 7; Measure 3: 5 7 5 7 5 8 5.

Your goal for this lesson on the pentatonic scale is simply to memorize the pentatonic scale. As with all things in music, go slowly. Use a metronome when you practice and get plenty of repetitions.

If you were to play the pentatonic scale 20 times a day, 5 days a week for one month, that would be 400 repetitions in a month. It doesn't take a lot of time to do this, and it's this kind of practice that will help you learn guitar in the shortest time possible.

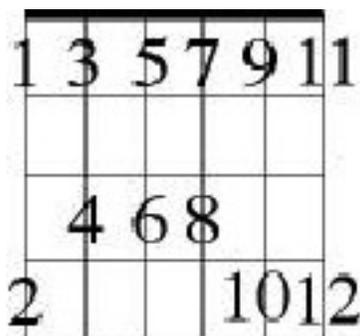
Do the repetitions and I promise it will be worth it. When you start to get command over the tools of music like the pentatonic scale, your enjoyment of playing will increase many times over.

Lesson 2. Pentatonic Scale Patterns

Welcome to lesson 2. In this lesson on the pentatonic scale you will learn about patterns and their importance as you continue on the path to learn guitar.

Pentatonic scale patterns, sometimes referred to as sequences, are one of the best things you can practice to gain more command of the pentatonic scale. In my experience, they are a must if you are even half way serious about learning the guitar. I will be the first to admit that they can be tedious to practice, but the long term rewards are definitely worth it.

What is a pattern? Look at this example using words. Red, green, blue, red, green, blue. What would be the next word in this pattern? Red is the obvious answer. A pattern is simply a sequence that gets repeated over and over. Look at the diagram of the pentatonic scale below as an example.



The scale is shown with each note numbered from 1-12. Now the numbers can be sequenced as follows.

(1 2 3) (2 3 4) (3 4 5) (4 5 6) (5 6 7) (6 7 8) (7 8 9) (8 9 10) (9 10 11) (10 11 12)

To play this sequence of the scale, start on number 1 and play 1, 2, 3. Then go back to number 2 and play 2, 3, 4. Next would be 3, 4, 5. etc. Play this until you go through the entire pattern.

To play it in reverse simply read from right to left. In reverse this pentatonic scale pattern would be 12, 11, 10. Then play 11, 10 , 9, and continue in this manner until you get back to the beginning.

Here is the same pentatonic scale pattern written in tablature.

Example 2

The image displays two systems of musical notation for a pentatonic scale pattern. Each system consists of a treble clef staff and a guitar tablature staff. The first system shows the scale ascending and then descending in three measures. The second system shows the scale ascending and then descending in three measures, with a final measure containing a double bar line and a fermata over the final note. The tablature uses numbers 5, 7, 8, and 10 to indicate fret positions. The first system's tablature is: 5 8 5 8 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 8 5 8 5 8. The second system's tablature is: 8 5 8 5 8 5 8 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 7 5 8 5 8 5.

As always, play each example at a speed that is easy for you to manage. Since this example breaks up the pentatonic scale into 3 note chunks or triplets, keep a steady 1 2 3 count going as you practice this pattern. The use of a metronome is highly recommended.

That's it for lesson 2. Be sure to practice the scale daily. It is the only way to reach your musical goals.

Lesson 3. Typical Pentatonic Blues Licks

Welcome to lesson 3 of the pentatonic scale, pentatonic blues licks. In this lesson you will be learning some ways to use the pentatonic scale in a solo. Several typical pentatonic blues licks will be used as a starting point to develop your knowledge of the pentatonic scale. Grab your guitar and get tuned up and let's go.

Take a look at example 3. This lick will be used as a springboard for all of the licks to follow, so make sure you nail this one.

Example 3.

The musical notation for Example 3 shows a guitar lick on the 3rd string. The notation is in treble clef with a common time signature. The lick consists of two measures. The first measure contains four eighth notes, and the second measure contains four eighth notes. Each note is marked with a '3' above it, indicating a triplet. The notes are G7 (7th fret), A7 (7th fret), B7 (7th fret), and C8 (7th fret). Each note is also marked with 'full' and an upward arrow, indicating a full bend. The fretboard diagram below the staff shows the 3rd string with frets 7 and 5 marked. The notes are G7, A7, B7, and C8. The fretboard diagram is labeled with 'T', 'A', and 'B' on the left side.

The first thing to notice about this lick is a bend at the 7th fret, 3rd string. This type of bend is very common in pentatonic blues licks. If you are not used to bending here are some guidelines for this lick and those to follow.

This bend needs to raise the note one whole step. This is equal to 2 frets on the guitar. A good way to practice bends of this type is to listen to a target note and try to match it. In this case, play the note at the 9th fret on the 3rd string. This is your target note. Really get the sound in your ear.

Now put your 3rd finger on the 7th fret 3rd string and your 2nd finger on the 6th fret 3rd string. Use both fingers to push the string up until it matches the pitch of your target note. You will find that bending is much easier if you use two fingers to bend the note. Your thumb should be over the top of the neck for added stability.

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