

Pentatonic Scale Positions

A Pentatonic Scale is the other most common scale you are likely to hear (other than the Major Scale) in Western music. It's main difference from the Major Scale is that the Pentatonic Scale as the name suggests is a 5 note scale instead of the 7 note scale the Major Scale is. Since there are 5 notes, we have 5 different positions (or you could think of them similar to modes) for this scale.

The intervals that make up the Pentatonic Scale depend on what you classify as the root note of the scale. There are 2 common patterns: the minor pentatonic pattern and the major pentatonic pattern. Both of these interval patterns use the same notes, however for the minor pattern we are considering a different note the root from the note we are considering the root of the major pattern. For this example, we are considering A to be the root of the minor Pentatonic Scale pattern, and C to be the root of the major Pentatonic Scale pattern. The root will be kept a dark circle in the examples.

Minor Pentatonic Intervals are:

Root - minor 3rd - perfect 4th - perfect 5th - minor 7th

A C D E G

Major Pentatonic Intervals are:

Root - major 2nd - major 3rd - perfect 5th - major 6th

C D E G A

You can kind of think about the Pentatonic Scale as being a kind of framework for the full Major Scale or Natural Minor Scale. Another thought I've heard the Pentatonic Scale classified as is a melody scale. This is because so many famous melodies are written using the Pentatonic Scale.

One other variation I'd like to add to this is that people will commonly add a 6th note to the scale to make it what is referred to as: the Blues Scale. This extra note is the flatted 5th interval (or the note between the 4th and 5th) of the minor Pentatonic Scale, or the minor 3rd interval (or the note between the 2nd and 3rd) of the major Pentatonic Scale. This "blue" note is colored blue in the examples and is optional to play.

Also again, just like the major scale patterns, try to assign a finger to each fret to keep your hand as relaxed as possible when playing these positions.

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1. Minor Pentatonic Pattern - root on the 6th string - This is the most common pattern guitarists typically learn, and usually the first scale a lot will learn. It outlines a minor 7th chord arpeggio. This pattern should start on your index finger and use the ring and pinky for the higher notes (no middle finger unless playing the blue note...) *Do NOT stretch the ring finger up to get the higher notes...

Position 1

2. Major Pentatonic Pattern - root on the 6th string - It outlines a major 6th chord arpeggio. This pattern should start on your middle finger.

Position 2

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3. Minor Pentatonic Pattern - Root on the 5th string with ring finger - This pattern is probably the least used pattern out of the five, however it can be very useful as a transition from a lower part of the neck to the higher part.

Position 3

Diagram illustrating the Minor Pentatonic Scale Pattern (Position 3) on the fretboard. The scale is shown across the 5th, 4th, 3rd, 2nd, and 1st strings. The notes are D, E, G, A, C, D, E, G, A, C, D, E. The fretboard diagram shows fingerings: 4, 3, 7, 4, R, 5, 3, 7, 4, R, 5, 3, 7, 4, R, 5.

Musical notation for Position 3:

Treble clef: D4, E4, G4, A4, C5, D5, E5, G5, A5, C6, D6, E6

Tablature: 10 12 10 12 10 12 9 12 10 13 10 12

4. Minor Pentatonic Pattern - Root on the 5th string - again like position 1, it outlines a minor 7th chord arpeggio. This pattern should also again be started with the index finger.

Position 4

Diagram illustrating the Minor Pentatonic Scale Pattern (Position 4) on the fretboard. The scale is shown across the 5th, 4th, 3rd, 2nd, and 1st strings. The notes are E, G, A, C, D, E, G, A, C, D, E, G. The fretboard diagram shows fingerings: 5, 3, 7, 4, R, 5, 3, 7, 4, R, 5, 3, 7, 4, R, 5.

Musical notation for Position 4:

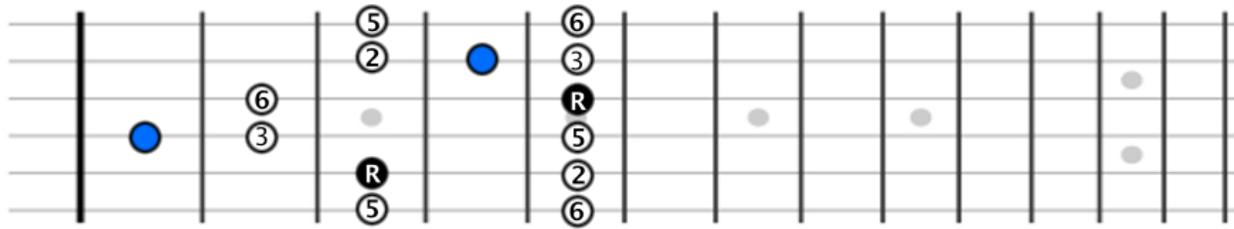
Treble clef: E4, G4, A4, C5, D5, E5, G5, A5, C6, D6, E6, G6

Tablature: 0 3 0 3 0 2 0 2 1 3 0 3

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5. Major Pentatonic Pattern - Root on the 5th string - again this position outlines a major 6th chord arpeggio. This pattern should also again be started with the middle finger.

Position 5



<p>G A C D E G A C D E G A</p>
<p>T</p>
<p>A</p>
<p>B</p>
<p>3 5 3 5 2 5 2 5 3 5 3 5</p>

Just like the Major Scales and Modes of the Major Scale, be sure to play the Pentatonic Scale in every key and become very familiar with it. This is a very easy scale to start to learn how to improvise and make more vocal sounding melodies as well. Try it out!