

## Introducing Minor Pentatonics

### Lesson Objectives

- Introduce *Minor Pentatonics*.
- Understand construction theory.
- Visualise and transfer minor pentatonic shapes.
- Perform minor pentatonic based riffs.
- Understand the relationship between the minor pentatonic, minor triad and minor scale.

### Understanding Minor Pentatonics

As we discussed in lesson 25, a **Pentatonic** scale is a scale containing five notes. The word **Penta**, as you know already means five.

In a minor pentatonic scale five notes are selected from the minor scale.

On the bass guitar it is used to play the five notes of a pentatonic scale separately as an arpeggio.

Pentatonics are extremely useful to a bass player as once you add some rhythm you can create a bass riff.

### Minor Pentatonic theory

The five notes of a minor pentatonic scale are taken from a minor scale. A minor pentatonic scale uses the 1st, *b3rd*, 4th, 5th and *b7th* notes of a major scale. Let's look at an example. In our first Fig, we have a C minor scale.

Fig 1 C Minor Scale

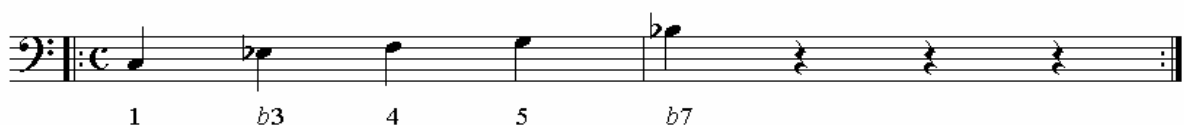


The C minor pentatonic scale is therefore as is shown in our table in **Fig 2** and the notes are shown on the staff in **Fig 3**.

Fig 2 C Minor Pentatonic Scale

1st	<i>b3rd</i>	4th	5th	<i>b7th</i>
C	E $\flat$	F	G	B $\flat$

Fig 3 C Minor Pentatonic Scale



## C minor pentatonic scale


Now play the scale, taking great care to follow the fingering correctly.

Remember to start with the first finger (1) of the left hand. Minor scales, triads and pentatonics are usually played beginning with the first finger.

Use the multimedia files and repeat the exercise around and around to develop fluency and familiarity. Take time to look at the minor pentatonic shape in Fig 4 below.

Fig 4 C Minor Pentatonic Scale

<b>Notes</b>	<b>E<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>C</b>
	<b>G</b>	<b>F</b>
	<b>C</b>	<b>B<sup>b</sup></b>
<b>Fret</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Fingering</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>



Exercise 1  
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## Visualisation

Try to memorise the C minor pentatonic shape on the fingerboard. Look carefully at Fig 4. Notice how it contains the notes of a C minor triad.

C minor triad contains note numbers 1, *b*3 and 5.

C minor pentatonic scale contains note numbers 1, *b*3, 4, 5 and *b*7.

When we use a minor pentatonic we also use the notes of the chord. This is why pentatonics are so successful and so useful. They sound so good that everybody uses them.

In addition to the notes of the triad there are two extra notes (4 and *b*7) in a minor pentatonic. All these note numbers are taken from the minor scale.

## Comparing minor scale, triad and pentatonic

In the minor triad you have only the root, 3rd and 5th. In the minor pentatonic scale you do not use the 2nd or 6th.

It is important to understand the relationship between the minor scale, triad and pentatonic scale. Take a few minutes to compare the shapes on the fingerboard and how they relate to each other.

Fig 5 C Minor Scale

Fret	6	5	3
Fingering	4	3 (2)	1




Fig 6 C Minor Arpeggio

Fret	6	5	3
Fingering	4	3 (2)	1





Fig 7 C Minor Pentatonic Scale

Fret	6	5	3
Fingering	4	3 (2)	1



## Minor scale, pentatonic and triad

Now try and consolidate our understanding by playing an exercise that incorporates each of these patterns.

The C minor scale moves straight into the pentatonic and then into the triad. Play around and around to become completely familiar. Try to remember the shapes as you practise.

### Exercise 2 lesson026.ibsimp.02



1 C minor scale 2 C minor pentatonic scale 3  
4 C minor pentatonic scale 5 C minor triad 6

## Transferability

As has been said through the course, it is easily possible to transfer ideas and shapes. Specifically, this applies to the pentatonic shape, which can be transferred to any note, accordingly making it possible to play any minor pentatonic scale.

Now transfer the minor pentatonic shape to the notes of G, D and A. The next exercise simply gets you to play each of these pentatonic scales one after the other. Use the multimedia files as always.

### Exercise 3 lesson026.ibsimp.03



1 C minor pentatonic scale 2 G minor pentatonic scale 3 4  
5 D minor pentatonic scale 6 A minor pentatonic scale 7 8

## Memorising note numbers

It is essential that you remember the note numbers that you need to use that make up the minor scale. You will recall that we laid these out in the table Fig 1 at the beginning of this lesson.

Accordingly, to practise an exercise to help you learn the note numbers you need to know to be able to play your pentatonic scales. For this exercise you are going to play the A minor pentatonic scale.

Use the multimedia files to check your understanding and practise repeatedly.

**Exercise 4**  
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1 2 3

1 b3 4 5 b7 8 8 b7 5 4 b3 1

### Minor pentatonic riffs

The following exercise has riffs based on the minor pentatonic scale. Play around and around and develop your familiarity of both the scale, note numbers, rhythm and sound.

**Exercise 5**  
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1 2 3

4 5 6

### 12 bar sequence

As we did in lesson 25, this last exercise comprises of a very well known sequence which is called a 12 bar. You play 3 pentatonic scales in the pattern. Four bars of Gm, two bars of Cm, two bars of Gm, one bar of Dm, one bar of Cm and finish with two bars of Gm.

Use the multimedia files and repeat the sequence around and around. I am sure you will find the pattern familiar to your ear.

Exercise 6  
lesson026.ibsimp.06



1 2

3

5 6

7

9

11 12