

Lesson Twenty Eight

Introducing the Blues Scale

Lesson Objectives

- Introduce and understand the **Blues Scale** and its construction.
- Understand the relationship between the blues scale and the minor pentatonic
- Perform blues scale based grooves.

Understanding the Blues Scale

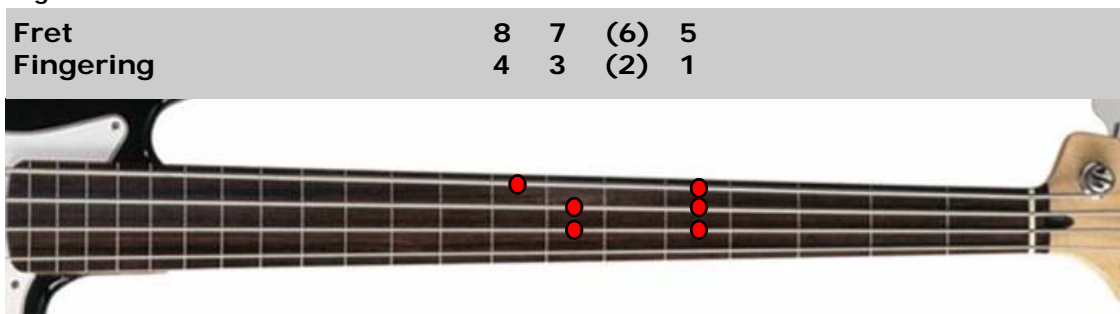
The **Blues Scale** is a six note scale and is similar to the minor pentatonic scale. Because of this similarity it is easier to compare the Blues scale to the minor pentatonic, rather than comparing to the major scale.

As we said the blues scale has six notes, and the minor scale has five notes. Accordingly the blues scale contains the five notes of the minor pentatonic scale plus one other.

Blues scale construction

To understand the blues scale, have a look at the minor pentatonic scale. We will use A minor pentatonic as our example. Look at **Fig 1** to remind you of the A minor pentatonic shape.

Fig 1 A Minor Pentatonic Scale



Take the opportunity to remind yourself of the A minor pentatonic scale. Use exercise 1 to practise too.

Exercise 1

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Now that you have reminded yourself of the A minor pentatonic scale, compare it to the blues scale in **Fig 2** below.

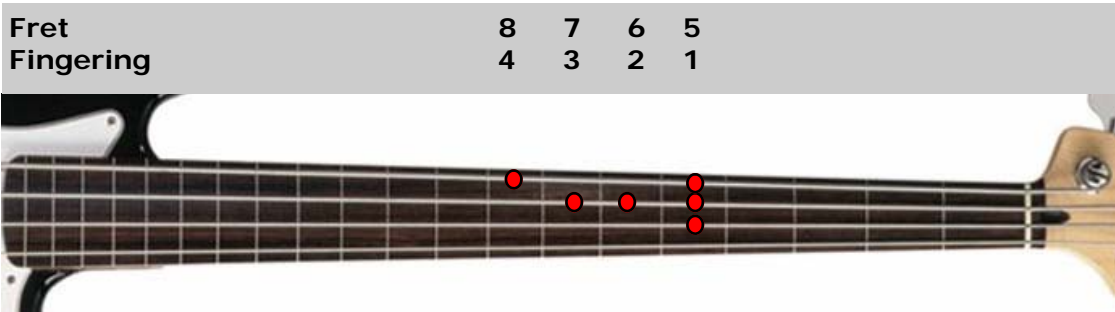
The extra note in the blues scale is a flattened fifth. This note makes a big difference to the sound.

Try to memorise the shape of the blues scale on the fingerboard in **Fig 3** below. Notice that the blues scale has two fifths– a b5 and a 5.

Fig 2 A blues scale



Fig 3 A blues scale



Playing the blues scale

Develop your familiarity and understanding of the effect the blues note has on the scale by practising the next exercise. It is important to memorise the note numbers of the blues scale. Remember that the blues scale has two fifths, it has a flattened fifth and a natural fifth.

Pay attention as always to the fingering and shape of the pattern. Make good use of the multimedia files as always to check your understanding and develop your fluency.

Exercise 2

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Comparing the sound of the minor pentatonic to the blues scale.

To really understand the difference in sound the Blues note creates, now play an exercise that incorporates the minor pentatonic and the Blues scale.

Play the following exercise, paying great attention to the sound, fingering and shapes of the two scales.

Exercise 3

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A Minor Pentatonic

A Blues Scale



Transferability of the blues scale

It is possible to transfer this shape to any note and therefore play any blues scale. To develop this point you will learn to play the blues scale for the notes of G and C.

Remember the shape and simply transfer to the root notes accordingly. Look at **Figs 4 and 5** for the shapes for the G blues and C blues scales respectively.

Fig 4 G Blues Scale

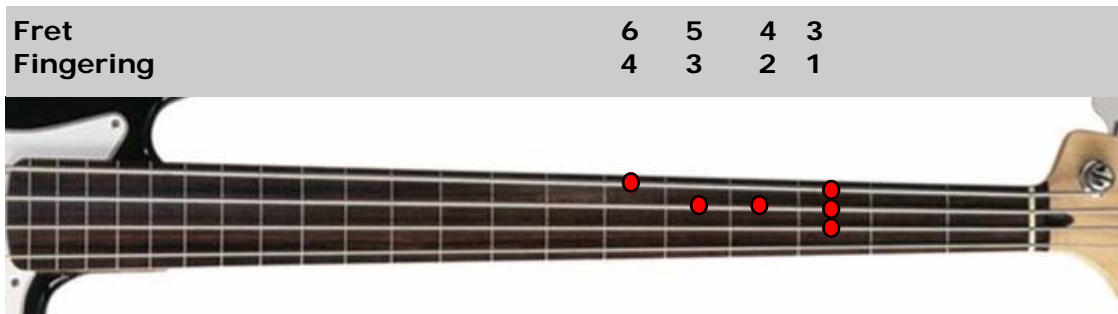
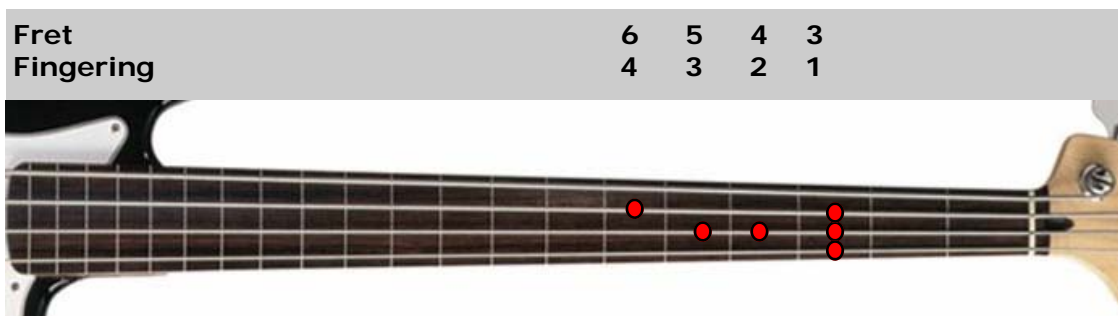


Fig 5 C Blues Scale



Now that you are familiar with these blues scales, play them one after the other using the next exercise. This will develop your understanding of the blues scale shape and your ability to move between each scale smoothly and fluently.

Use the multimedia files as always, using the BassXtractor to play the exercise around and around to gain fluency.

Exercise 4
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G Blues Scale	C Blues Scale
1 b3 4 b5 5 b7 1	1 b3 4 b5 5 b7 1

Blues scale-musical character

The blues scale is used often because it has a very strong, clear musical character. Its sound is interesting and immediately recognisable. To help you to become increasingly familiar with the blues scale try these techniques as you practise.

1. Memorise the sound of the blues scale.
2. Sing the notes to yourself as you play them.
3. Imagine the notes in your head.

Blues riffs

By understanding the construction of the blues scale and the shape of the scale on the fingerboard, you can then create bass riffs based on the blues scale.

We will conclude this lesson by playing a series of blues scale based riffs. Work methodically through each of the next four exercises, establishing the scales, shapes and fluency of playing.

Exercise 5 lesson028.ibsibs.05



Exercise 6 lesson028.ibsibs.06



Exercise 7 lesson028.ibsibs.07



Exercise 8 lesson028.ibsibs.08

