

# *The Pentatonic Major Scale*

The pentatonic major scale is a very popular scale in rock music. This page will tell you what the pentatonic major scale looks like. From there, I will teach you the five modes of the pentatonic major scale. So pick up your guitar and get ready to play some scales!

The pentatonic major scale contains five different pitches (pent=five, tonic=tones). The pentatonic major scale is made up of the following pattern of whole and 1½ steps:



On standard musical notation, the G pentatonic major scale looks like the diagram below. Shown below that is the G pentatonic major scale played on one string. Notice the pattern of whole and 1½ steps while you play this, and notice that there are no half steps:

**T**  
**A**  
**B**

e:  
 B:  
 G: 0 2 4 7 9 12  
 D:  
 A:  
 E:

This pattern of whole and 1½ steps will be important for the rest of the pentatonic major scale lessons. Try to get an understanding of how it sounds and how it feels to your ears. Don't necessarily memorize the pattern; memorizing will not help you learn. Get a feeling of how it sounds and remember it that way. Everything from here on will be in the key of G major, just to provide continuity.

Move on to the [first mode](#) once you understand the pattern.

# *The First Mode*

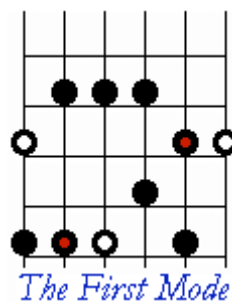
*the first note of the pentatonic major scale*

The first mode is based on the first note of the pentatonic major scale.  
In G, the first mode looks like this (standard notation and one-string tab):

**T  
A  
B**

e:  
B:  
G: 0 2 4 7 9 12  
D:  
A:  
E:

The scale box for the first mode looks like this:



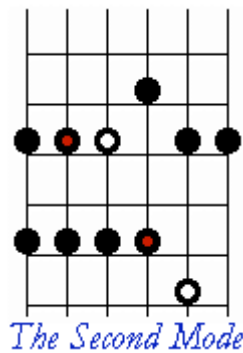
To play this scale in G, play the box with the first note at the third fret. Since this is the first mode of the pentatonic major scale, this is also the pentatonic major scale, played from root to root.

# *The Second Mode*

*the second note of the pentatonic major scale*

The second mode is based on the second note of the pentatonic major scale.  
In G, the second mode looks like this (standard notation and one-string tab):

The scale box for the second mode looks like this:



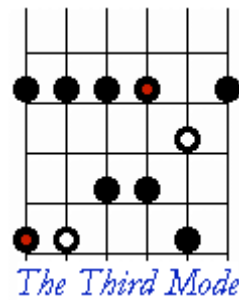
To play this scale in G, play the box with the first note at the fifth fret.

## *The Third Mode*

*the third note of the pentatonic major scale*

The third mode is based on the third note of the pentatonic major scale. In G, the third mode looks like this (standard notation and one-string tab):

The scale box for the third mode looks like this:



To play this scale in G, play the box with the first note at the seventh fret.

## *The Fourth Mode*

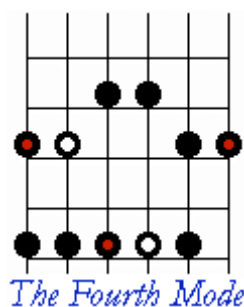
*the fourth note of the pentatonic major scale*

The fourth mode is based on the fourth note of the pentatonic major scale. In G, the fourth mode looks like this (standard notation and one-string tab):

**T  
A  
B**

e:  
B:  
G:  
D: 0 2 5 7 9 12  
A:  
E:

The scale box for the fourth mode looks like this:



To play this scale in G, play the box with the first note at the tenth fret.

## *The Fifth Mode*

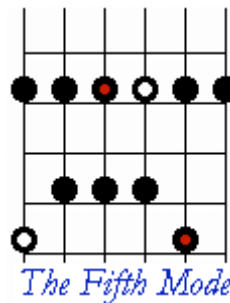
*the fifth note of the pentatonic major scale*

The fifth mode is based on the fifth note of the pentatonic major scale.  
In G, the fifth mode looks like this (standard notation and one-string tab):

**TAB**

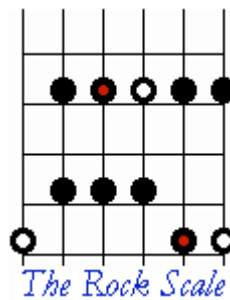
e:  
B:  
G:  
D: 2 5 7 9 12 14  
A:  
E:

The scale box for the fifth mode looks like this:



To play this scale in G, play the box with the first note at the twelfth fret.

The most popular way of playing this scale is shown below:



As you can see, this scale is similar to the one shown above, but it begins and ends on the root. This is a very easy way to play scales fast, but because it is so easy to use, it has been overused in rock music.

# *The Pentatonic Minor Scale*

The pentatonic minor scale is a popular scale in rock and blues music. This page will tell you what the pentatonic minor scale looks like. From there, I will teach you the five modes of the pentatonic minor scale. So pick up your guitar and get ready to play some scales!

The pentatonic minor scale contains five different pitches (pent=five, tonic=tones). The pentatonic minor scale is made up of the following pattern of whole and 1½ steps:



On standard musical notation, the E pentatonic minor scale looks like the diagram below. Shown below that is the E pentatonic minor scale played on one string. Notice the pattern of whole and 1½ steps while you play this, and notice that there are no half steps:

The musical notation shows the E Pentatonic Minor Scale in 3/4 time, starting on E4. The notes are E, G, A, B, D, E. The guitar tablature shows the scale played on the E string with fret numbers 0, 3, 5, 7, 10, and 12.

This pattern of whole and 1½ steps will be important for the rest of the pentatonic minor scale lessons. Try to get an understanding of how it sounds and how it feels to your ears. Don't necessarily memorize the pattern; memorizing will not help you learn. Get a feeling of how it sounds and remember it that way. Everything from here on will be in the key of E minor, just to provide continuity. Move on to the [first mode](#) once you understand the pattern.

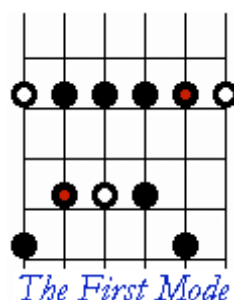
# *The First Mode*

*the first note of the pentatonic minor scale*

The first mode is based on the first note of the pentatonic minor scale.  
In E minor, the first mode looks like this (standard notation and one-string tab):

Standard notation and one-string tab for the first mode of the pentatonic minor scale in E minor. The scale is shown in 3/4 time, starting on E4. The notes are E, G, A, B, C, D. The guitar tab shows the fret positions for the E string: 0, 3, 5, 7, 10, 12.

The scale box for the first mode looks like this:



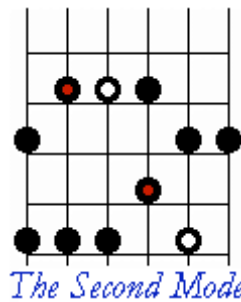
To play this scale in E minor, play the box with the first note at the nut or at the twelfth fret. Since this is the first mode of the pentatonic minor scale, this is also the pentatonic minor scale, played from root to root. This scale box has a pattern identical to the fifth mode of the pentatonic major scale, but the root and fifth appear in different places.

# *The Second Mode*

*the second note of the pentatonic minor scale*

The second mode is based on the second note of the pentatonic minor scale.  
In E minor, the second mode looks like this (standard notation and one-string tab):

The scale box for the second mode looks like this:



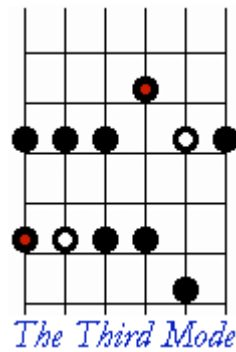
To play this scale in E minor, play the box with the first note at the third fret. This scale box has a pattern identical to the first mode of the pentatonic major scale, but the root and fifth appear in different places.

## *The Third Mode*

*the third note of the pentatonic minor scale*

The third mode is based on the third note of the pentatonic minor scale. In E minor, the third mode looks like this (standard notation and one-string tab):

The scale box for the third mode looks like this:



To play this scale in E minor, play the box with the first note at the fifth fret. This scale box has a pattern identical to the second mode of the pentatonic major scale, but the root and fifth appear in different places.

## *The Fourth Mode*

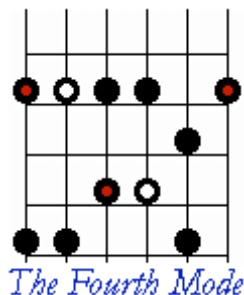
*the fourth note of the pentatonic minor scale*

The fourth mode is based on the fourth note of the pentatonic minor scale. In E minor, the fourth mode looks like this (standard notation and one-string tab):

**T  
A  
B**

e:  
B:  
G:  
D:  
A: 2 5 7 10 12 14  
E:

The scale box for the fourth mode looks like this:



To play this scale in E minor, play the box with the first note at the seventh fret. This

scale box has a pattern identical to the third mode of the pentatonic major scale, but the root and fifth appear in different places.

## *The Fifth Mode*

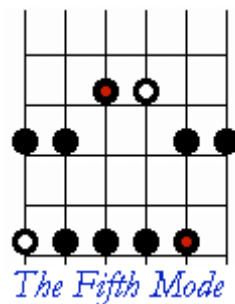
*the fifth note of the pentatonic minor scale*

The fifth mode is based on the fifth note of the pentatonic minor scale. In E minor, the fifth mode looks like this (standard notation and one-string tab):

**T**  
**A**  
**B**

e:  
 B:  
 G:  
 D: 0 2 5 7 9 12  
 A:  
 E:

The scale box for the fifth mode looks like this:



To play this scale in E minor, play the box with the first note at the tenth fret. This scale box has a pattern identical to the fourth mode of the pentatonic major scale, but the root and fifth appear in different places.