

Minor Pentatonic & Blues- The Five Box Shapes

Now we will add one note to the minor pentatonic scale and turn it into the six-note blues scale. Pentatonic & Blues scales are the most commonly used scales in most genres of music.

We can add the flat 5, (b5), or blue note to the pentatonic scale, making it a six-note scale called the Blues Scale. That b5, or blue note, adds a lot of tension and color to the scale. These are “must-know” scales especially for blues and rock so be sure to memorize them and add them to your soloing repertoire.

Most of the time when soloing with minor pentatonic scales you can also use the blues scale. To be safe, at first, use the blue note more in passing for color, don't hang on it too long. Hanging on that flat five too long can sound a bit dissonant. It's a great note though, so experiment with it and let your ear guide you.

The five box shapes illustrated below cover the entire neck. These five positions are the architecture to build licks and runs as well as to connect into longer expanded scales. To work freely across the entire neck you will want to memorize all five positions as well as the two expanded scales illustrated on the next page.

These scale shapes are moveable. The key is determined by the root notes illustrated in black. If you want to solo in G minor pentatonic play box #1 using your first finger starting at the 3rd fret on the low E-string and play the shape from there. Third fret low-E string is a G note. That makes the scale a G minor pentatonic & blues scale consisting of the notes G, Bb, C, Db, D, and F.

Remember that along with memorizing the scale shapes it is also critical to know what notes you are playing. Too often, guitarists memorize only shapes and forget what notes they are actually playing. Don't just learn scale shapes, take the time to also learn the notes.

To avoid getting stuck in one position be sure to learn ALL the positions and practice them in different keys. Use the blue notes in passing, resolve often to the root notes, and land on strong chord tones.

#1 Box

#2 Box

#3 Box

#4 Box

#5 Box

- root notes
- blue notes (b5)
- # fingering to utilize

