

More Blues Riffs

With a foundation of Blues soloing basics established, the next step is to begin to build and develop more of a 'Blues vocabulary' by learning more standard Blues riffs. The next two lessons will introduce a total of eight new riffs, with all examples using the standard Pentatonic Minor box pattern in the Key of 'A' Blues. All riffs will be moveable and can be played in any key.

Doublestops

A *doublestop* is simply playing two strings together simultaneously. When combined with single-note Blues riffs, a doublestops provide a 'thicker' tone that can add more energy to a Blues or Rock solo. For the *'Doublestop riff in A'* (right), keep the first finger flattened across the top two strings and count each section in 'threes' ('1-2-3 - 1-2-3 - 1-2-3'), with the '1' count being the slide (notated with '/') from the fourth to the fifth fret.

Doublestop Riff in 'A'

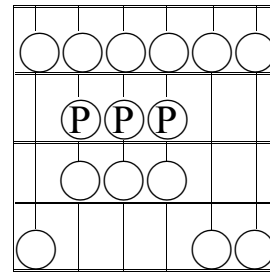
1	4/5 5 5	4/5 5 5	4/5 5 5
2	4/5 5 5	4/5 5 5	4/5 5 5
3			
4			
5			
6			

1/ 1 1 1 1/ 1 1 1 1/ 1 1 1
 1/ 1 1 1 1/ 1 1 1 1/ 1 1 1

Passing Tones

Passing tones are not part of the Pentatonic Minor Scale, but are extra notes added in to create a sort of 'off-balance' effect to a Blues solo. Some famous songs featuring passing tone riffs are 'Sunshine of Your Love' by Cream, 'Black Dog' by Led Zeppelin, and 'Wipeout' by the Surfaris. The box pattern to the right shows the fundamental positions where passing tones can be added within the standard Pentatonic Minor box pattern. In the Key of 'A' Blues, all of the passing tones are added along the sixth fret position and fretted with the second finger. The passing tone on the fifth string is often referred to as the 'Blue Note'.

Box Pattern



Pentatonic Minor Scale

Ⓟ = Passing Tones

Passing Tone Riffs

Below are two *passing tone riffs* in the Key of 'A' Blues. Note the *root note focus* of Riff #2, with the last note played featuring a slide up to the 'A' root note (fourth string/seventh fret). Both riffs can be combined to form one longer, extended riff.

Passing Tone Riff #1

Passing Tone Riff #2

1		
2		
3	5 6 7	7 6 5
4	5 6 7	7 6 5 / 7 -
5	5 6 7	7 6 5
6		

Combining Riffs

There are now a total of six 'standard riff options' to use when jamming along with a backing rhythm. Before learning more riffs, practice 'mixing and matching' all six riff options in various combinations. With six options, there are a total of 720 combinations that can be played.

Six Options/720 Combinations

Play scale up Bend & Release
 Play scale down Doublestop Riff
 The Blues Riff Passing Tones