

The Pentatonic Major Scale



Chuck Berry, Dickey Betts, and Brad Paisley have all used the Pentatonic Major scale for their own styles of playing.

The Pentatonic Major scale can be described as having a ‘country-like’ mood or tone in its overall sound, but it is versatile enough to be heard in various styles of music ranging from Country, to Blues, to Rock. To solo and improvise with the Pentatonic Major, the first step will be to become familiar with playing the scale going across the six strings in a **box pattern** form.

Playing the Scale

(Use a pick) The Tab below shows how to play the Pentatonic Major scale in ascending and descending order. The proper finger numbers to fret each note with are shown below the Tab. The initial focus should be on playing the **correct** notes with **clarity** rather than playing with speed. To get a proper sense of *phrasing*, make sure to let the last note played in each section ring or sustain.

Pentatonic Major - Ascending

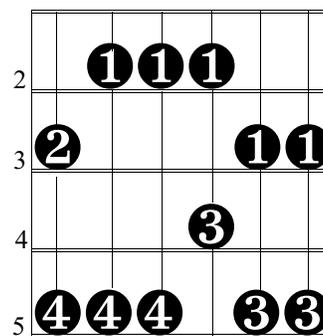
Pentatonic Major - Descending

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

Box Patterns

The diagram to the right shows the Pentatonic Major scale in a **box pattern** form. A **box pattern** is essentially an ‘aerial view’ of a scale going across the six strings, with the sixth ‘bottom’ string being on the far left and the first ‘top’ string being on the far right. The finger numbers to fret with are shown in circles. All of the notes played from the previous section in ascending and descending order will ‘fit’ within this box pattern. There are several box patterns for the Pentatonic Major scale, however this pattern will be referred to here as the **standard Pentatonic Major box pattern**.

Pentatonic Major Pattern



Third Fret Position

Associating Moods With Scales

One advantage to learning the Pentatonic Major box pattern is that the intended ‘Country’ mood of the scale can clearly be heard. Associating moods with scales develops the ability to learn songs and melodies ‘by ear’. In time, by simply recognizing the mood of a guitar solo as being Country-based, a guitarist can associate that mood with the Pentatonic Major scale and immediately begin to ‘jam-along’ or improvise with the track without having to rely on any sort of written notation.

Getting Fretting Fingers in Shape

The primary objective early on is to develop finger strength and flexibility. Not only will playing the Pentatonic Major box pattern be a great exercise for the fingers, the same pattern will actually be used in many classic Country, Blues, and Rock guitar solos.