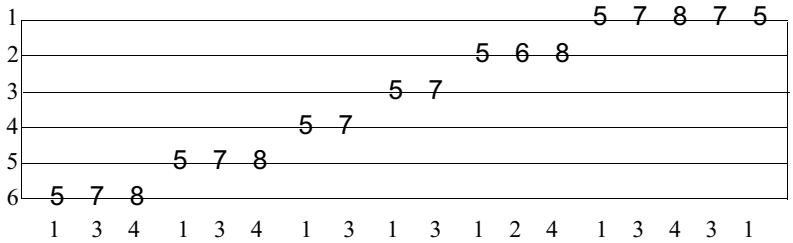
The Natural Minor Scale

The ***Natural Minor scale*** can generally be described as having a sad or serious mood or tone, being used in various styles of music ranging from flamenco, to jazz, to rock. A more academic term for the Natural Minor scale is the ***Aeolian*** (*pronounced ē-olian*) ***scale***, but most musicians simply refer to it as ***'The Minor scale'***. This lesson will focus on playing the Natural Minor scale in a box pattern form.

Playing the Scale

(Use a Pick) The Tab below shows an example of how to play the Natural Minor scale in ascending 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, let the last note played *(first string/fifth fret)* ring or *sustain*.

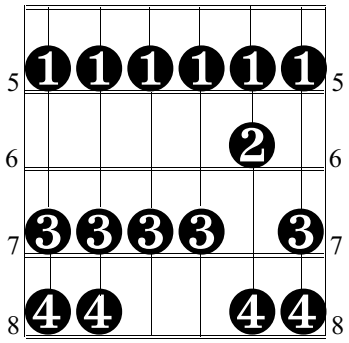
Natural Minor Scale - Ascending



Box Patterns

The diagram to the right shows the Minor 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 notes played from the previous section will 'fit' within this box pattern. Regardless of what scale or style of music is being played, guitarists will usually visualize various box patterns when soloing along the fretboard. There are several box patterns used to play the Minor scale, however this pattern will be referred to here as the ***standard box minor scale box pattern***.

Minor Scale Box Pattern



Fifth fret position

Associating Moods With Scales

One advantage to learning the Minor scale box pattern is that the intended sad or serious 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 either sad or serious, a guitarist can associate that mood with the Minor 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

For beginners, the primary objective early on is to develop finger strength and flexibility. Not only will playing the Minor scale box pattern be a great exercise for the fingers, the same pattern will actually be used in many classic guitar solos. Make sure all fingers are as close to the frets as possible when playing the pattern, especially when fretting with the third and fourth *('pinky')* fingers.