

What are Pentatonic Scales?

Pentatonic scales are 5 note versions of Major or minor scales. Across many cultures, the pentatonic notes are the ones that we naturally choose to sing and play. The Major pentatonic notes might remind you of Far Eastern music, or sea shanties, or folk music. The minor pentatonic notes often sound like blues or gospel music. These examples are one possible shape for the Major and minor pentatonic scales in the key of G. Memorize the shapes, then try them in different starting positions (aka different keys) on the neck.

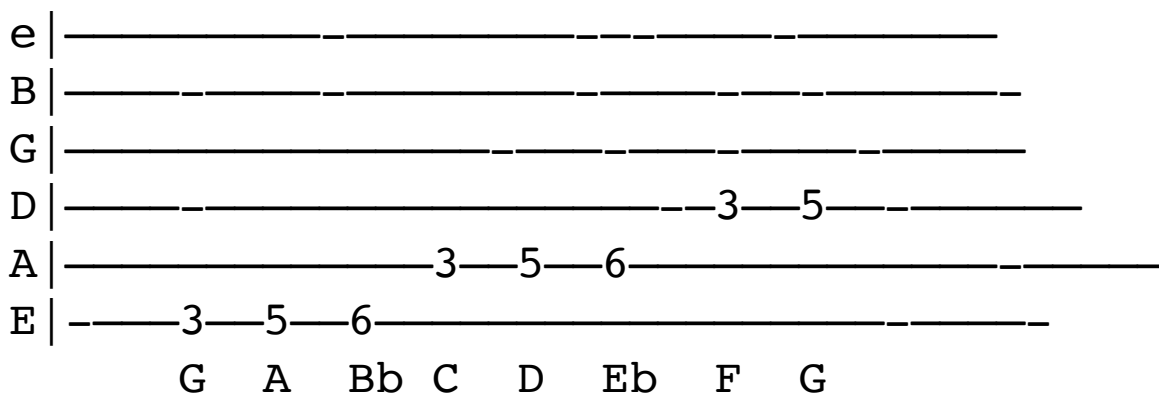
G Major scale (one octave)

A diagram of a guitar fretboard showing the G Major scale. The strings are labeled on the left as e, B, G, D, A, and E from top to bottom. The notes of the scale are indicated by numbers 1-5 on the strings: E (3), G (5), A (2), B (3), C (5), D (2), E (4), F# (5), G (5). The notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F#, G are listed below the strings.

G Major Pentatonic scale (one octave)

A diagram of a guitar fretboard showing the G Major Pentatonic scale. The strings are labeled on the left as e, B, G, D, A, and E from top to bottom. The notes of the scale are indicated by numbers 1-5 on the strings: E (3), G (5), A (2), B (5), D (2), E (5), G (5). The notes G, A, B, D, E, G are listed below the strings.

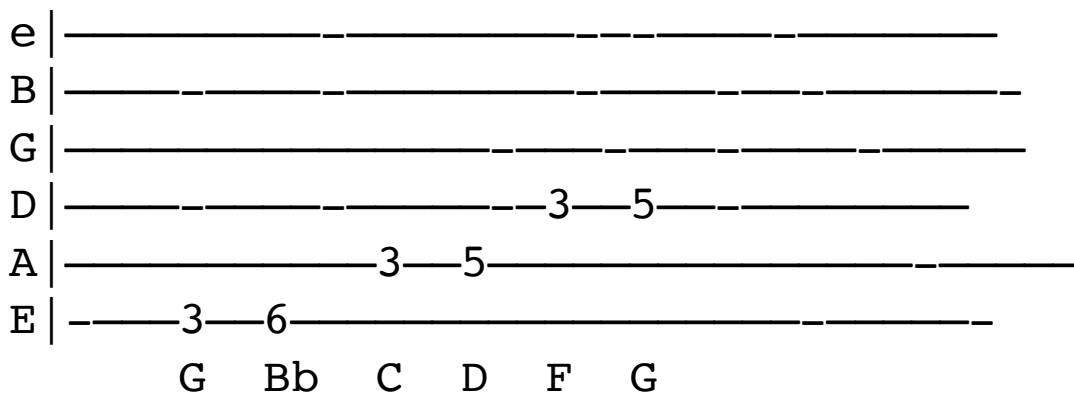
G natural minor scale (one octave)



A musical staff with six lines labeled e, B, G, D, A, E from top to bottom. The notes of the G natural minor scale are written on the staff: G (on the 3rd line of the E line), A (on the 4th space of the A line), Bb (on the 4th space of the A line), C (on the 5th space of the A line), D (on the 1st space of the D line), Eb (on the 1st space of the D line), F (on the 2nd space of the D line), and G (on the 3rd space of the D line). Fingering numbers are placed above the notes: 3 above G, 5 above A, 6 above Bb, 3 above C, 5 above D, 3 above Eb, and 5 above F. The final G is not numbered.

G A Bb C D Eb F G

G minor pentatonic scale (one octave)



A musical staff with six lines labeled e, B, G, D, A, E from top to bottom. The notes of the G minor pentatonic scale are written on the staff: G (on the 3rd line of the E line), Bb (on the 4th space of the A line), C (on the 5th space of the A line), D (on the 1st space of the D line), F (on the 2nd space of the D line), and G (on the 3rd space of the D line). Fingering numbers are placed above the notes: 3 above G, 6 above Bb, 3 above C, 5 above D, 3 above F, and 5 above G.

G Bb C D F G