

Chapter 6: Passing Notes

In this chapter you continue exploring chromatic ornaments added to pentatonic scales.

Here, you learn about passing notes (PN), which is where you connect any two scales notes on one string with chromatic notes up or down.

This creates the essential tension and release sound that jazzers love to use in their solos.

Here's an example of passing notes to study on paper.

The image shows a musical example of passing notes. The top staff is a treble clef in 4/4 time, containing four measures of music. The notes are: Measure 1: G4, A#4, B4; Measure 2: B4, Bb4, A4; Measure 3: G4, A4, B4, A#4; Measure 4: G4, F#4, G4, F4. Below the staff, the letters 'PN' are placed under the notes: 'PN' under the first two notes of the first measure, 'PN' under the first two notes of the second measure, 'PN PN' under the first two notes of the third measure, and 'PN PN' under the first two notes of the fourth measure. Below the staff is a guitar tablature with two lines labeled 'T' (top) and 'B' (bottom). The top line contains the fret numbers: 2-3-4, 4-3-2, 4-5-6-7, 7-6-5-4. The bottom line is empty.

Here's a checklist to use as you work through this chapter. When you can play 3 or more of these items you're ready for Chapter 7.

Chapter 6 Checklist

1. Solo over slow Em7 backing track with 6th-string scale and PN's.
2. Solo over medium Em7 backing track with 5th string scale and PN's.
3. Solo over fast Em7 backing track with both scale positions and PN's.
4. Repeat these steps and mix both scale positions together.
5. Add diatonic patterns from earlier in the course if ready.
6. Add sidestepping to your solos if ready.
7. Add approach notes to your solos if ready.
8. Repeat over Cm7 and Bm7 backing tracks.

Technical Details

1. Backing tracks are Em7, Cm7, and Bm7.
2. Slow backing track is 60 bpm.
3. Medium backing track is 90 bpm.
4. Fast backing tracks is 120 bpm.

Musical Goals

1. Solo with passing notes over both pentatonic shapes.
2. Be able to solo in at least 3 keys, Em-Cm-Bm.
3. Review and keep up the patterns and sidestepping concepts.
4. Review and keep up the approach notes.
5. Keep singing along with your technical and soloing workouts.

Technical Exercises

1. Add passing notes to the 6th-string pentatonic shape.
2. Add passing notes to the 5th-string pentatonic shape.
3. Work with a metronome starting at 40 bpm.
4. Increase the tempo each day for a week by 5 or 10 bpm.
5. Sing along for added benefit.

Soloing Exercises

1. Solo over the slow backing track with 6th-string scale and PN's.
2. Solo over the slow backing track with the 5th-string scale and PN's.
3. Mix both scales with approach notes together over the slow track.
4. Add in the scale patterns from the previous chapter to your solos.
5. Add in sidestepping to your solos.
6. Repeat with the medium backing track.
7. Repeat with the fast backing track.
8. Work in all 3 keys.
9. Sing along as much as possible.

Bonus Exercises – Triplets

Rhythms are essential when developing your voice on the guitar, especially in an improvised setting.

Triplets are 3 notes played in the space of one, in this case 3 8th-notes in the space of one quarter-note.

You count triplets 1-trip-let, 2-trip-let, etc.

Triplets are an excellent rhythm to practice as they're between single time, 8th notes, and double time, 16th notes.

So, you go beyond 2 notes per beat without jumping right to 16th notes, which can be tough to nail right away in your playing.

To get started with triplets, here are exercises to work on, and there are written examples at the end of this PDF.

1. Add triplets to any technical exercise you're working on.
2. Add triplets to your solos with pentatonic scales.
3. Add triplets to your solos with approach notes.
4. Add triplets to your solos with passing notes.
5. Add triplets to your solos with patterns.
6. Add triplets to your solos with sidestepping.

Passing Note Examples

Here are examples of passing notes added to the top-2 strings of both positions of the Bm pentatonic scale.

Audio Example 6.1

Audio Example 6.1 shows a Bm pentatonic scale in 4/4 time, with passing notes added to the top two strings. The notation includes a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and a key signature of one flat (Bm). The scale is played in two positions: the first position (7-9-10) and the second position (7-8-9-10). The passing notes are indicated by the labels PN PN, PN PN, PN PN, and PNPN above the staff. The tablature below the staff shows the fret numbers for the top two strings (T and B) for each measure.

PN PN PN PN PN PN PNPN

T
A
B

7-10 7-9 7-9 7-8-9-10 7-8-9-10 9-8-7 10-9-8-7 9-7 9-7 9-7 10-7

Audio Example 6.2

Audio Example 6.2 shows a Bm pentatonic scale in 4/4 time, with passing notes added to the top two strings. The notation includes a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and a key signature of one flat (Bm). The scale is played in two positions: the first position (2-4-5) and the second position (2-3-4-5-4-3-2). The passing notes are indicated by the labels 2-3-4-5-4-3-2 above the staff. The tablature below the staff shows the fret numbers for the top two strings (T and B) for each measure.

2-3-4-5-4-3-2

T
A
B

2-5 2-4 2-4 3-4 5 5-4-3 4-2 4-2 5 2

Pentatonic Scales With Triplets

Here are examples of the Bm pentatonic with triplets. Remember to count this rhythm as 1-trip-let, 2-trip-let, etc.

Audio Example 6.3

7-10 7-9 7-9 7-10 7-10 7 10-7 9-7 9-7 9-7 10-7-5 7

Audio Example 6.4

2-5 2-4 2-4 3-5 2-5 2-5 3 4-2 4-2 5-2