

Day 1 – The Minor Pentatonic Scale in Jazz

Welcome to Day 1 of your 30 Days to playing better Jazz guitar.

It's great to have you here!

In this first lesson, you'll learn how to take a technique that you've most likely learned previously, either in Rock, Blues, or Pop music, and apply it to Jazz.

When first exploring Jazz guitar, many guitarists make the mistake of thinking that you have to forget everything you've learned and start over in the new genre.

But that's not the case, at all.

In fact, one of the best things that you can do is bring any knowledge, technique, concepts, etc., with you from other genres of music and find ways of applying them to your Jazz guitar playing.

That way, you don't have to start from scratch with Jazz guitar.

Instead, you can build upon your previous guitar studies when beginning your Jazz guitar journey.

So, time to get started by learning how to apply the minor pentatonic scale to Jazz.

What is the Minor Pentatonic Scale?

If you're new to the minor pentatonic scale, need a review, or have learned how to play this scale on guitar but never understood how it was built, then here's the place to start.

The minor pentatonic scale has five notes in its construction, hence the term pentatonic which means "five note."

As well, this scale has both m3rd and m7th intervals, which explains the minor side of the minor pentatonic scale label.

Here 's the interval pattern for any minor pentatonic scale.

Root – m3rd – P4 – P5 – m7 - Root

If you're new to intervals on the guitar, here's a brief explanation of what these terms mean.

- **Root** – This is the tonic note of the scale you're playing, if you're playing D minor pentatonic, it is the note D.
- **m3rd** – This is a minor 3rd interval above the root note, which is 3 frets on the guitar. A m3rd above D would be the note F.
- **P4** – A Perfect 4th interval is the same fret one string higher between strings 6 and 5. For Dm, 10th fret 6th string, the P4 would be G, 10th fret 5th string.
- **P5** – This is a Perfect 5th interval, think power chord for this one. To find a P5, play the root note on the 5th string, and then play a note one string higher and two frets up from that root note. For Dm, the P5 is the note A
- **m7** – The minor 7th interval is located two strings up on the same fret, when playing the root note on the 6th string. For Dm, the b7 would be the note C.

Now that you have an understanding of how the minor pentatonic scale is built, it's time to take it onto the guitar by learning one (stage 1) or two (stage 2) fingerings on the guitar.

Minor Pentatonic Scale Fingerings

If you've learned or read about the minor pentatonic scale before today, you'll have come across the "5 box patterns" that are often associated with this scale.

While these patterns will help you move around the whole fretboard in a Rock or Blues setting, where you're often only playing in one key center, you can focus in on two important shapes when studying Jazz.

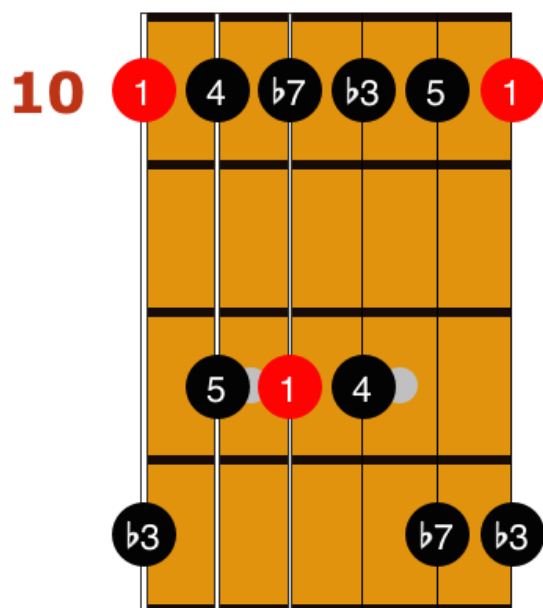
These two shapes, one with the Root on the 6th string and one with the Root on the 5th string, will allow you to play the minor pentatonic scale around the fingerboard, but not get bogged down looking for all 5 shapes in the process.

Because Jazz chords tend to move by quickly, and tunes often have multiple key changes, using only the essential shapes for any scale, or arpeggio, will allow you to quickly apply those shapes to your solos.

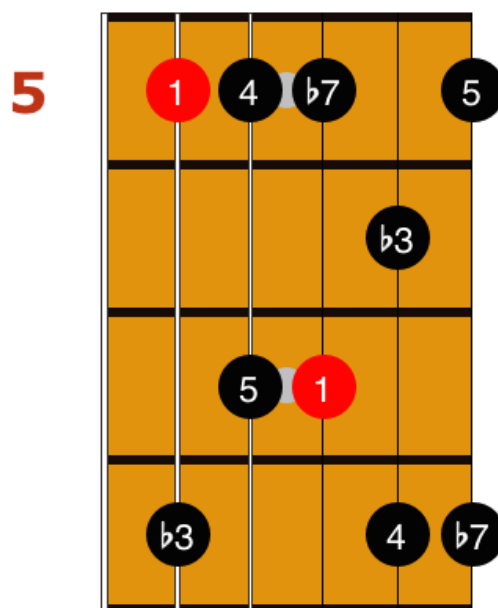
To begin, here are those two shapes to learn on the fretboard in your studies today.

Refer to the instructions below the scales on how to practice these shapes for each stage in your development.

Dm Pentatonic



Dm Pentatonic



If you're new to Jazz guitar, begin by learning how to play the first fingering on the guitar, only from the root note D as shown.

Memorize the shape so that you can play it without looking at the page, this is very important for soloing with this scale.

If you're Stage 2 guitarist, you can learn both shapes, root on 6th and 5th string, in the given key of Dm, memorizing both on the guitar.

For Stage 3 players, you can take these shapes and practice them in 12 keys, from memory, as you begin to move them around the fretboard.

Where to Use the Minor Pentatonic Scale in Jazz

Just as is the case in other styles of music, the minor pentatonic scale is highly versatile when applied to Jazz guitar solos.

You can use this scale to solo over many different chord types, with the most popular being the m7, 7th, and maj7 chord types.

When soloing over m7 chords, you will hit all four chord-tones, plus the P4, with the minor pentatonic scale.

For this reason, it's most directly related to the chord tones of m7, you'll begin your soloing studies by applying the minor pentatonic scale to m7 chords.

From there, when you're comfortable, you can bring the minor pentatonic scale to other chords in your soloing, especially 7th and maj7 chords where it lends a "bluesy" vibe to those changes.

To help you practice the improv exercises below, refer to **Audio Example 1 – Dm7 Backing Track Slow** or **Audio Example 2 – Dm7 Backing Track Fast** in the accompanying audio files.

Stage 1 Exercises

To begin your study of the minor pentatonic scale in Jazz, here are three exercises, and one pointer, to help you get started with soloing over Jazz chords with this scale.

- Learn how to play the 6th-string root Dm pentatonic scale
- Memorize this shape so that you can play it without the grid
- Solo over the Dm7 backing track using only the first scale shape
- Make sure to leave some space in your solos, don't get caught running nonstop notes through the scale

Stage 2 Exercises

If you feel you're ready for stage 2 challenges, or have completed the stage 1 exercises, here are four ways to expand upon the minor pentatonic scale in your studies.

- Learn how to play both Dm pentatonic scale shapes
- Memorize both so that you can play them without the grids
- Solo over the Dm7 backing track using only this scale
- Experiment with different rhythms in your playing, if you have a Rock or Blues background, watch that you don't only play triplets

Stage 3 Exercises

For those players who are more experienced, or have worked through the stage 1 and stage 2 exercises, you can use these exercises to challenge you further in the practice room.

- Learn both minor pentatonic scale shapes in 12 keys
- Memorize these shapes so that you can pick a key and instantly play both scale shapes from memory in that key
- Solo over a m7 backing track in 12 keys using both scale shapes
- Work with backing tracks at various tempos, from ballad to burning, to challenge yourself further with this scale

Day 1 Recap

To finish your introduction to the minor pentatonic scale in Jazz, here's a quick recap of the concepts covered in this lesson, as well as the practice guidelines for each stage in your playing.

- The minor pentatonic scale has the intervals R-m3-P4-P5-m7
- Learn to play it in one position (stage 1) or two positions (stage 2 and 3)
- You can use this scale to solo over m7, 7, and maj7 chords in Jazz
- Begin by soloing over Dm7 with this scale in your studies
- Stage 3 guitarists can take this scale to all 12 keys on the guitar