Pentatonic Scale Patterns

The first set of patterns that you learn are applied to pentatonic scales, the first scales you learn in this eBook.

Each pattern is designed to use diatonic or chromatic notes to add flavor to your pentatonic lines and solos.

As you work on the material in the pentatonic scale chapter below, add one or more of these patterns to any scale shape you learn.

Not only will these patterns level up your pentatonic solos, they also elevate your technique at the same time.

That's a practice room win-win.

Have fun with these patterns, applying them to your technical and improvisational pentatonic scale workout routine.

Note Skipping 1

The first pattern is one I call the "left-left right-right" pattern.

Normally you play two notes on any string for a pentatonic scale, a left note and a right note for right-handed players.

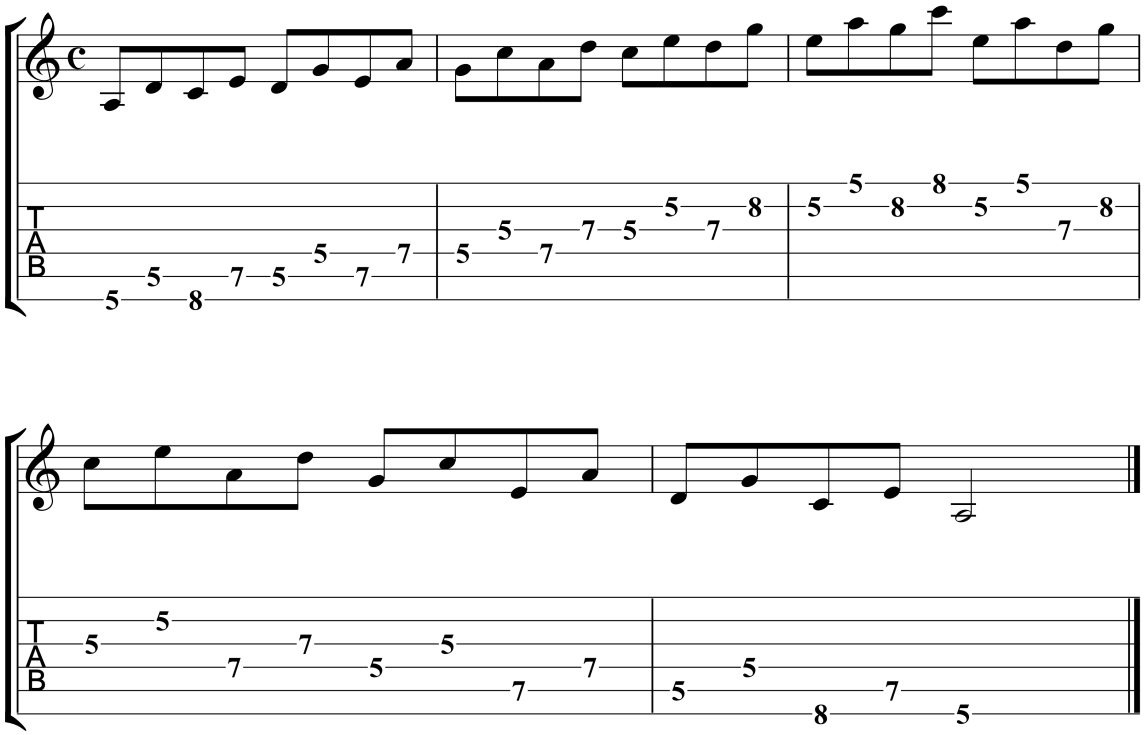
This pattern plays two strings of the left side of the scale followed by two strings on the right side.

Doing so skips a note in your lines, adding more space and larger intervals to your pentatonic workout and solos.

Here's an example of that pattern over an Am pentatonic scale.

Work this example first, then take this pattern to any pentatonic scale you learn in this eBook.

Audio Example 1



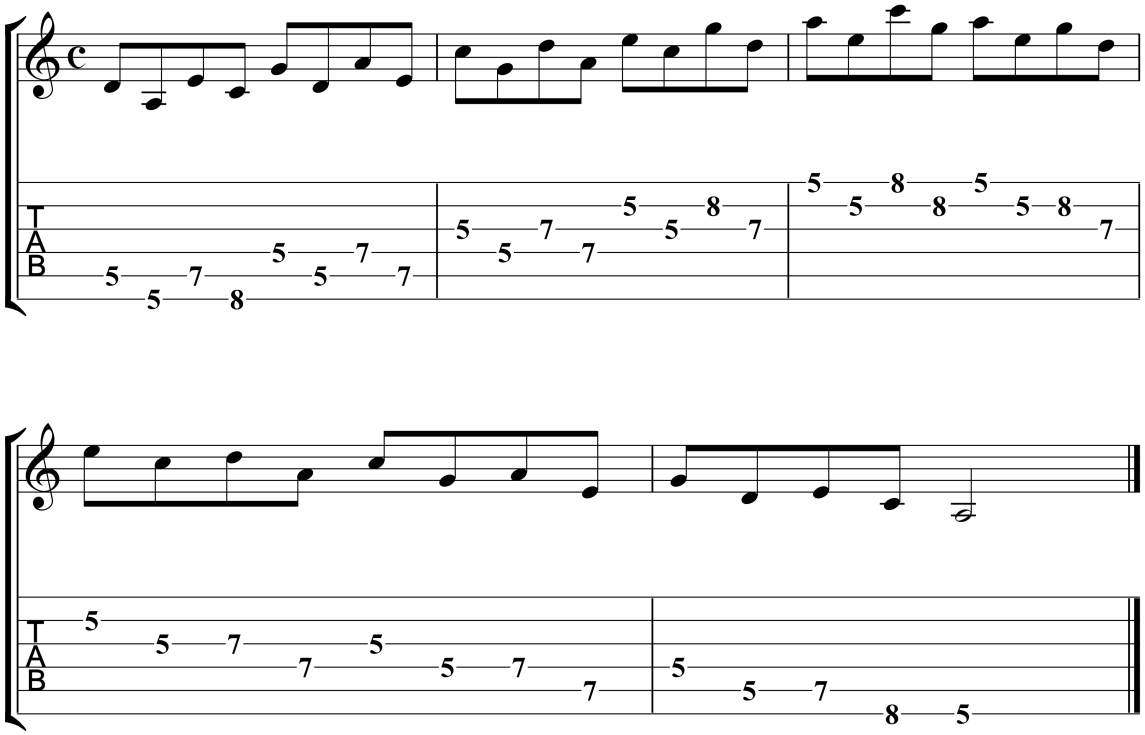
Note Skipping 2

To add a variation to this pattern, you now play down each two-note group as you work up and down any pentatonic scale.

This means using the left-left right-right pattern, but now you play the note towards the floor first, then the note towards the ceiling next.

Have fun exploring this pattern and adding it to your pentatonic scale soloing workout over major ii V I chords.

Audio Example 2



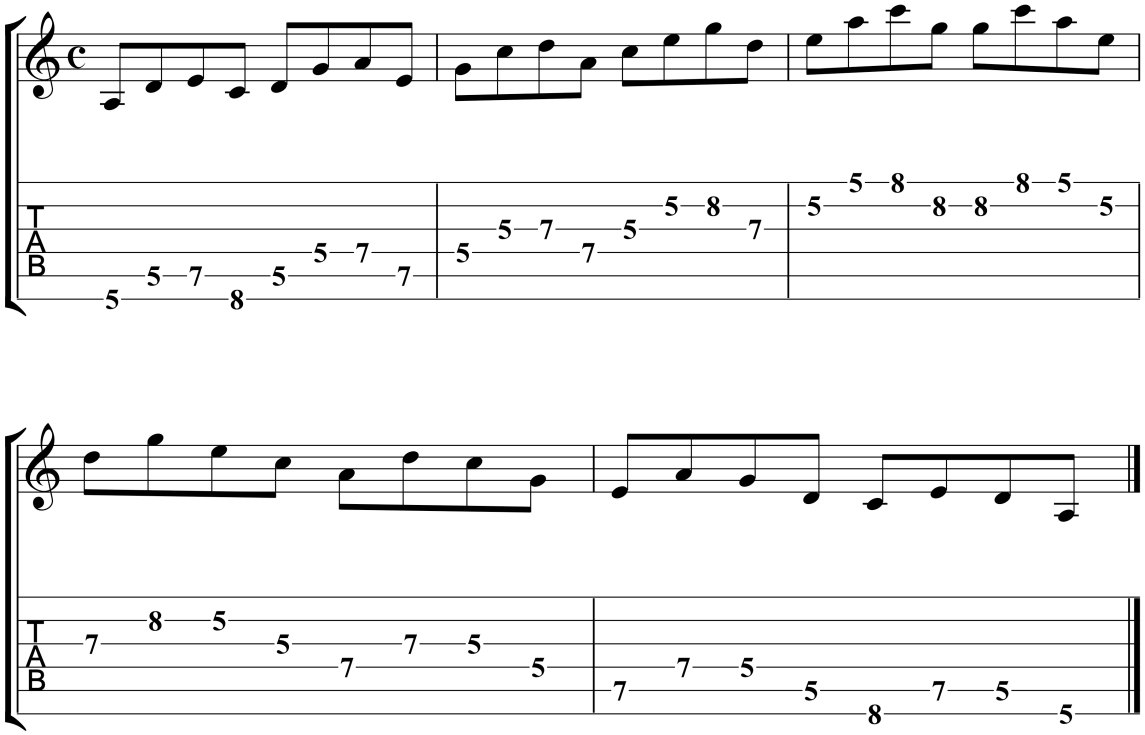
Note Skipping 3

You now work on a combination pattern that goes up the left side of the scale then down the right as you ascend any pentatonic scale fingering.

From there, you play up the right side and down the left on the way down the scale.

This pattern comes from John Coltrane, and while tricky to get down at first, it adds a true jazz flavor to your pentatonic scale lines.

Audio Example 3



Passing Notes

Passing notes are used to connect any two pentatonic scale notes by filling in the gaps on the fretboard between those notes.

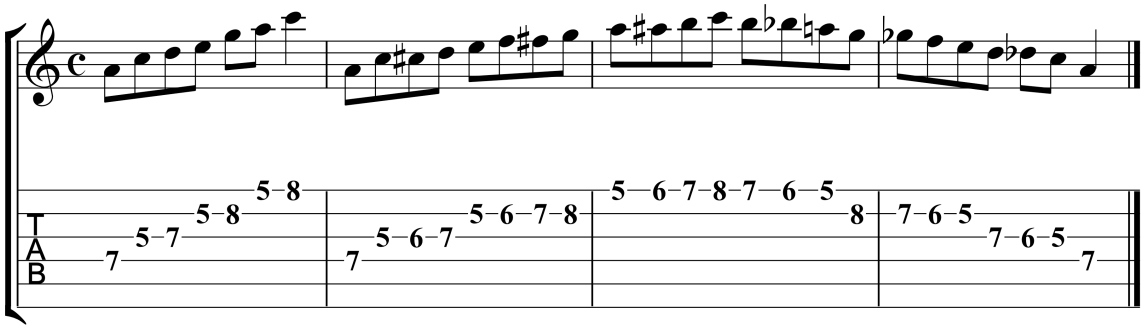
So, if you have notes on frets 5 and 7, you can play 567 or 765, with 6 being the passing note.

You can also use two passing notes with pentatonic scales.

This means that if you have notes on frets 5 and 8, you can play 5678 or 8765, with 67 being passing notes.

Here's an example of passing notes added to an Am pentatonic scale to play before adding passing notes to any pentatonic scale in this eBook.

Audio Example 4

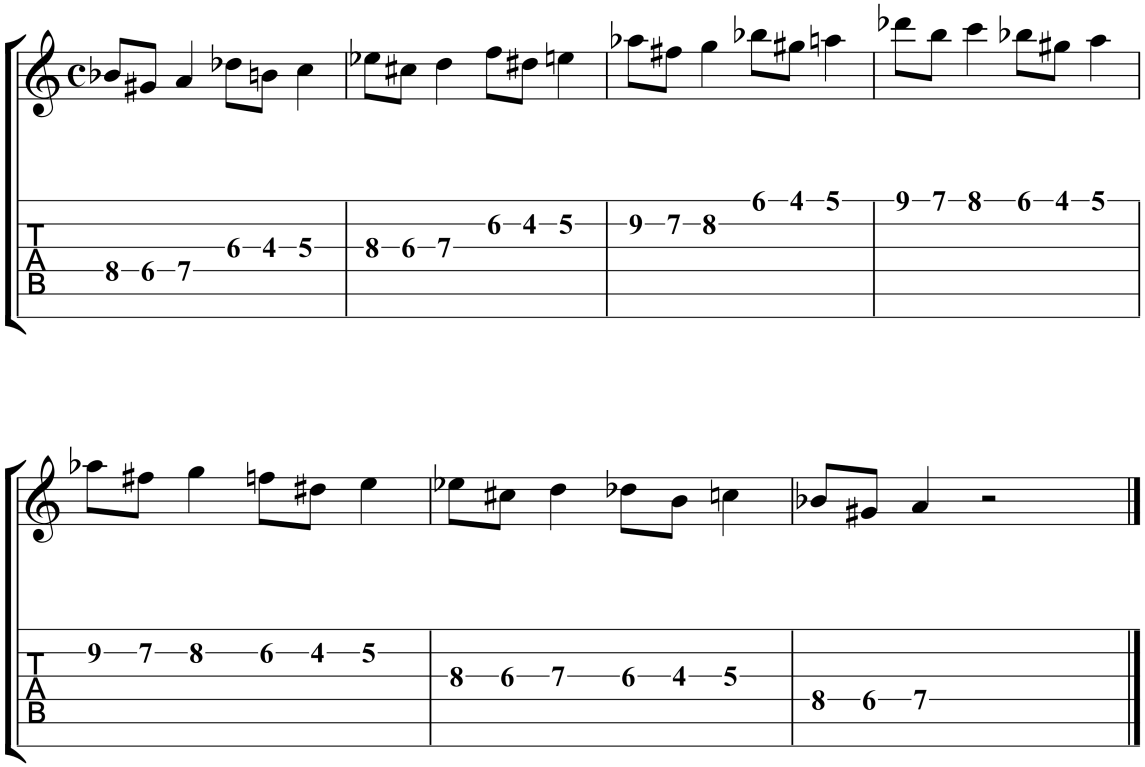


Enclosures

The last pattern is called an enclosure, because you “enclose” the note you’re targeting in the pentatonic scale.

To use an enclosure, you play one fret above, then one fret below, then the scale note you’re targeting.

Here’s an example of this pattern applied to an Am pentatonic scale to try out first.

Then, after you can play this example, add enclosures to any pentatonic scale shape you learn in this eBook.

Audio Example 5