

# Pentatonic Scale #1

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The Pentatonic scale is a five-note scale built on the 1-2-3-5-6 scale degrees of the major scale. Initially, the pentatonic scale is easy to use and understand, but after more research, you'll soon find out that it can also be harmonically complex. You should keep in mind that if you over-use the pentatonic scale, it can become very "pattern" sounding. However, if used together with musical taste and discretion, it can be very strong harmonically.

You can think of the pentatonic scale as the major scale with a missing 4th and 7th scale degree. Or you can remember it by the intervals, which it is built on.

## C-Pentatonic

1 2 3 5 6

whole Step whole Step minor 3rd whole step

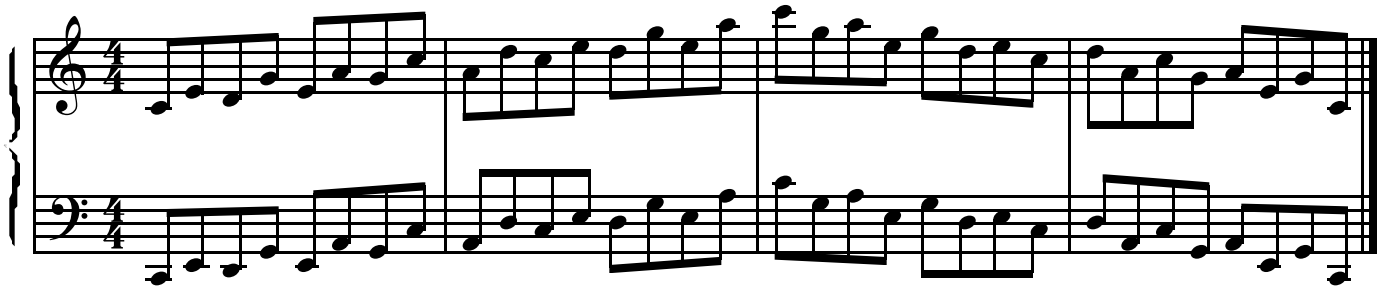
Like any other scale, the pentatonic scale has different modes. The fifth mode starts on the parallel minor scale degree. Therefore it's also called the Minor Pentatonic scale.

1st mode 2nd mode 3rd mode 4th mode 5th mode

A minor Pentatonic

The best way of learning pentatonic scales is to practice the pattern below. This is probably the most common pattern so be careful not to over use it in a playing situation. Make sure you practice in all twelve keys.

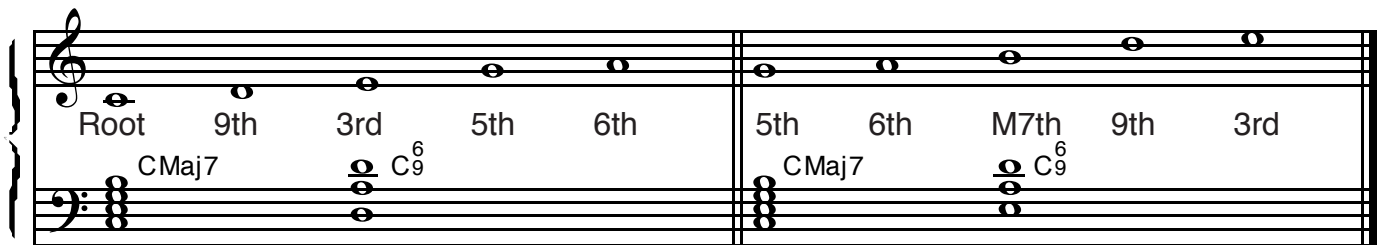
Below is a different pattern, which is based on playing every other note in the scale.



Over a **C Major** chord there are two different pentatonic scales that works well, C pentatonic and G pentatonic. As you can notice, the scales cover important notes such as root, 3rd and 7th.

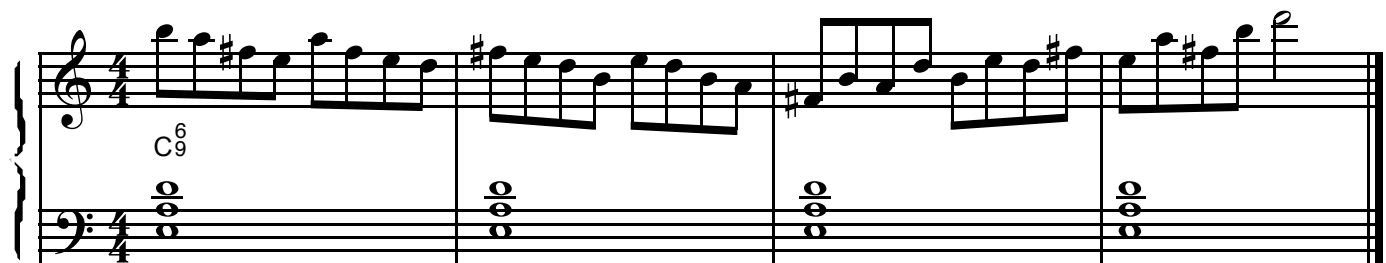
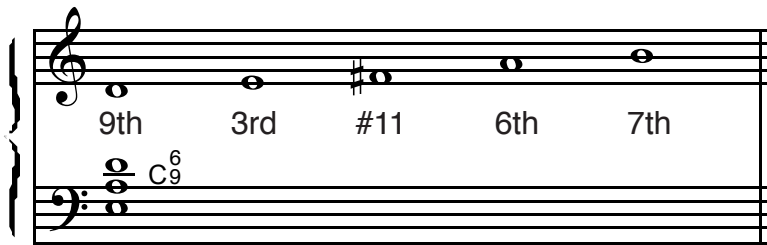
### C Pentatonic

### G Pentatonic



The #11 is often included when a Major 7 chord is played. This is easily done, by selecting an alternate pentatonic scale. In CMaj7, the # 11 is a F#. Therefore the D pentatonic works well over a CMaj7 chord because it covers the 3rd, #11 and also the Maj 7th.

### D Pentatonic



Below is a combination of C, G and D Pentatonic, played over a CMaj7/C6/9 chord. Play it in different speeds and pay attention to how the sound differs.

**C Pentaonic** **G Pentatonic**

This musical example shows two measures in 4/4 time. The first measure features the C Pentatonic scale (C4-D4-E4-F4-G4) over a CMaj7 chord. The second measure features the G Pentatonic scale (G4-A4-B4-C5-D5) over a C6/9 chord. The bass line shows the chord voicings: CMaj7 (C-E-G) and C6/9 (C-E-G-A-B). A double bar line with a repeat sign is at the end of the second measure.

**D Pentaonic** **C Pentatonic**

This musical example shows two measures in 4/4 time. The first measure features the D Pentatonic scale (D4-E4-F#4-G4-A4) over a Dm7 chord. The second measure features the C Pentatonic scale (C4-D4-E4-F4-G4) over a C chord. The bass line shows the chord voicings: Dm7 (D-F-A-C) and C (C-E-G). A double bar line with a repeat sign is at the end of the second measure.

D minor pentatonic and C pentatonic, fits nicely over a **Dm7** chord.

**D minor Pentatonic** **C Pentatonic**

This diagram shows two measures in 4/4 time. The first measure shows the D minor Pentatonic scale (D4-E4-F4-G4-A4) over a Dm7 chord. The notes are labeled as Root, 3rd, 11th, 5th, and 7th. The second measure shows the C Pentatonic scale (C4-D4-E4-F4-G4) over a Dm7 chord. The notes are labeled as 7th, Root, 9th, 11th, and 5th. The bass line shows the Dm7 chord voicing (D-F-A-C) in both measures.

**D minor Pentatonic** **C Pentatonic**

This musical example shows two measures in 4/4 time. The first measure features the D minor Pentatonic scale (D4-E4-F4-G4-A4) over a Dm7 chord. The second measure features the C Pentatonic scale (C4-D4-E4-F4-G4) over a Dm9 chord. The bass line shows the chord voicings: Dm7 (D-F-A-C) and Dm9 (D-F-A-C-B). A double bar line with a repeat sign is at the end of the second measure.

By trial and error you'll soon find out what Pentatonic scales work over which chords. I gets a bit more complicated when exploring altered dominant chords but we'll look at that in the next article. Depending on how outside you want to play, experiment with Pentatonic scales a half step up and down even on the major and minor chords. You'll be surprised by the many different sounds the pentatonic scale can create.

Good Luck

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