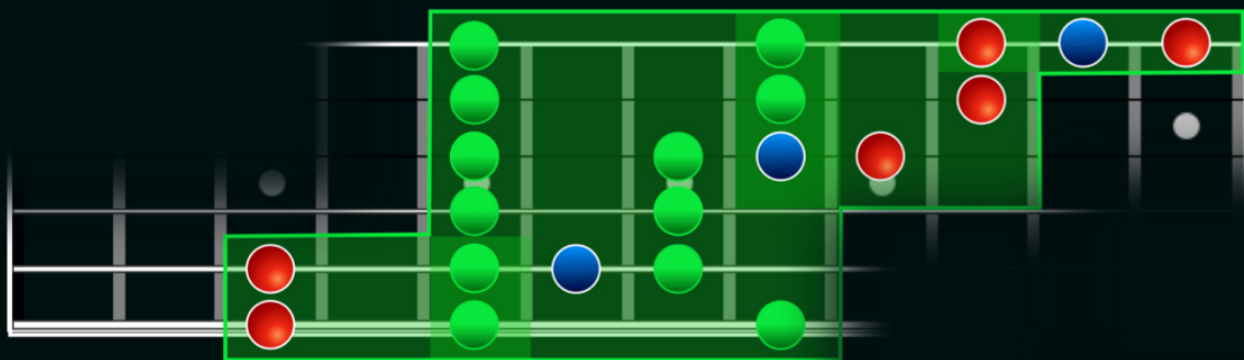


A silhouette of a blues guitarist playing a guitar, set against a dark background with a bright blue circular light source behind them.

THE BLUES SOLO SHORTCUT

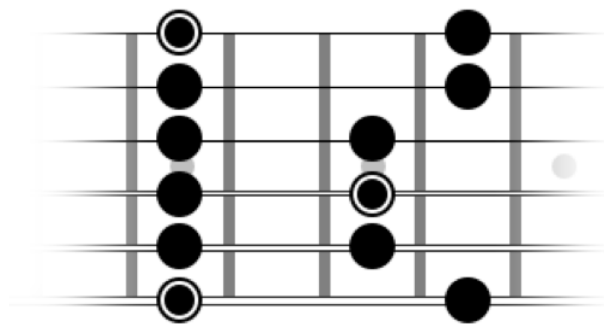
A thick red arrow pointing to the right, positioned below the word 'SHORTCUT'.

*Discover The Hidden Pattern Thousands Of Players Are Using
To Create Awesome Guitar Solos!*

THE BLUES SOLO SHORTCUT

Welcome to the Blues Solo Shortcut! Let's waste no time and dive straight in. Most of the great Blues guitar solos you have ever heard are built from a simple set of notes called **The Minor Pentatonic Scale**.

INTRO : THE MINOR PENTATONIC BOX



Unless you are absolutely brand new to lead guitar, there's a good chance you have at least heard of the Minor Pentatonic scale. Perhaps you know this 'box' pattern already.

Whether this is your first time seeing it or whether it's already familiar, let's get to know the Minor Pentatonic scale a bit better.

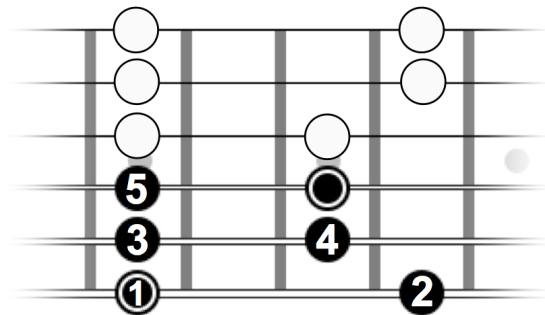
It looks like it contains a lot of notes, but in fact there are only **5 notes** within the Pentatonic scale. This is where the scale gets its name - from *Penta*, meaning five as in Pentagon, and *Tonic*, meaning note, i.e. *five note scale*.

Why does it look like MORE than 5?

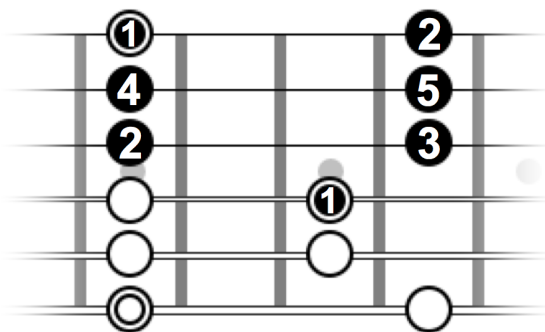
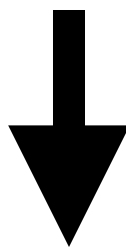
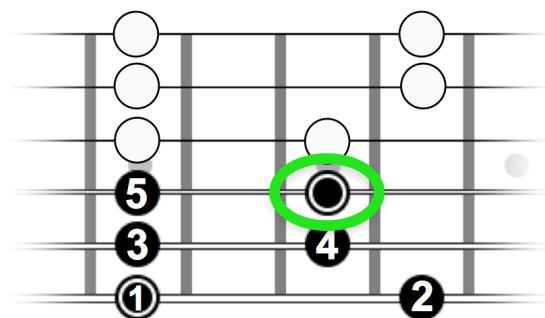
The reason there are far more than five dots on the scale diagram is that the 5 notes are repeated in the **next octave**. All the word 'octave' means is that we have exactly the same notes again, but **repeating at a higher pitch**.

This is easier to see if we label the notes within our diagram:

THE BLUES SOLO SHORTCUT



Once we arrive at the note circled in green, the notes simple start to repeat themselves at a higher pitch:






The Root Note

A very quick but important thing for later:

The most important note in the Minor Pentatonic scale is the note it starts from, which is called the **Root Note**. This is the note labelled **1**, and which will be marked out by a *double outline* in all the diagrams you'll see throughout this guide:

 = Root Note

Knowing where the root note is is what allows us to understand what we're doing, so take note of its position (and remember it will repeat multiple times in different octaves).

Stuck in the box?

This box is the most well-known Minor Pentatonic scale pattern, often known as "Box 1".

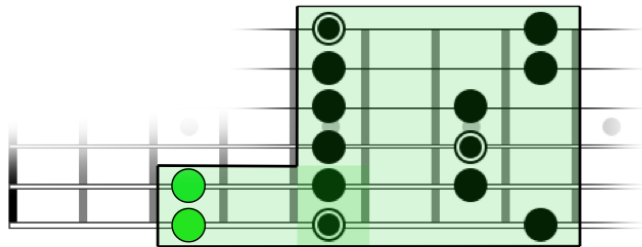
The trouble with seeing a scale in a 'box' is that most people end up *stuck in the box*, limited to playing the same old things up and down, and struggling to play fast.

We're not going to abandon Box 1, because it is a classic shape for good reason... But we are going to add a couple of things to it that will completely transform what you're able to do with it.

In just **3 simple steps**, I'm going to show you how to blow this "box" wide open!

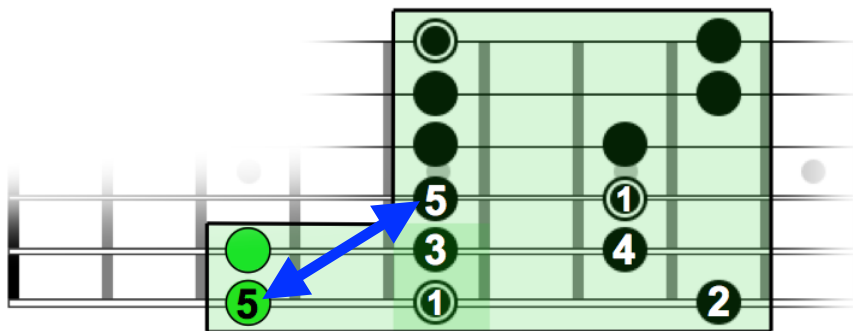
THE BLUES SOLO SHORTCUT

STEP 1 : THE LOWER EXTENSION



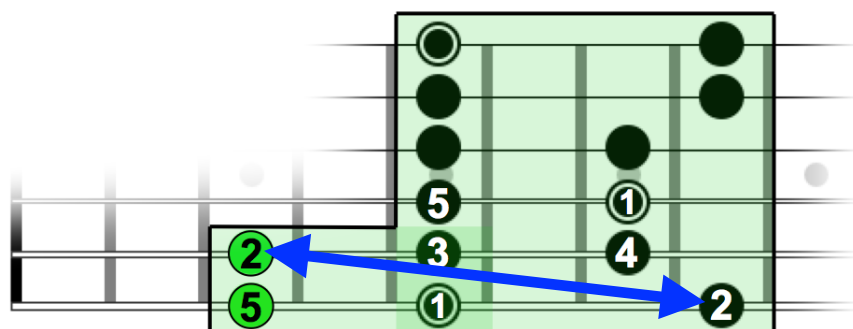
To get started, we're going to add **two notes** to the low end of our Pentatonic scale. Let's check them out.

First we have the lower note found at the 3rd fret of the E string. This is the last note of the Minor Pentatonic, but now it's an octave lower, below the root note:



This extends the overall *range* of our scale pattern, and I'll show you some really cool licks that make use of this lower note a bit later on.

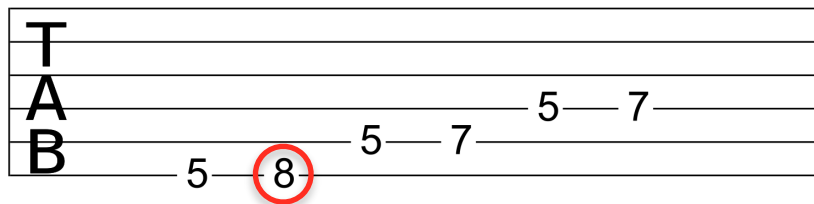
The second note from the lower extension is a direct duplicate of one we already have:



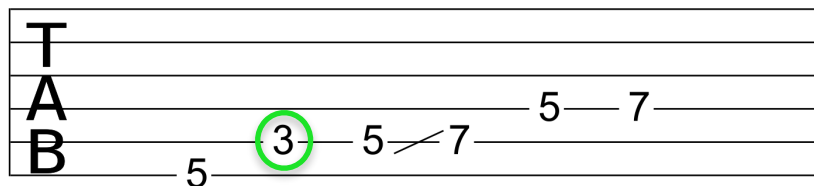
THE BLUES SOLO SHORTCUT

Why would you want to have another place to play exactly the same note? That's a very good question, and I'll show you.

Playing through the first octave of the Minor Pentatonic scale using only Box 1 looks like this:



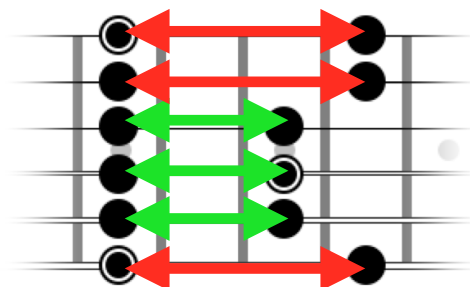
Using the lower extension to move the 2nd note of Minor Pentatonic to the next string lets us play it like this instead:



Now we can use a **slide** to transition between several of the notes. This makes things far more fluid and much easier to play fast.

As well as this, we now have only one finger spacing to contend with instead of two.

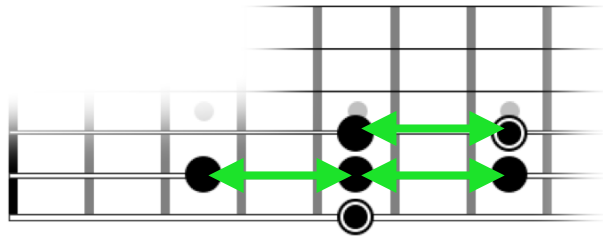
You see, the classic Box 1 is really a mixture of **2-fret** and **3-fret** gaps:



THE BLUES SOLO SHORTCUT

This means we're constantly having to change strings and adjust our fingerings back and forth just to play a few simple notes.

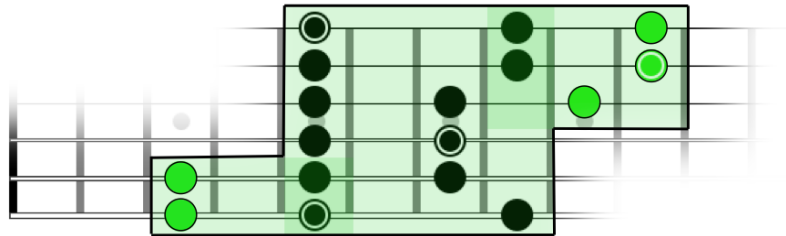
The lower extension turns that mixture of 3-fret and 2-fret gaps into a series of **2-fret gaps**:



Blues players like to make things easy! We're going to develop on this simple yet powerful idea of *extending* the pentatonic scale in the very next step.

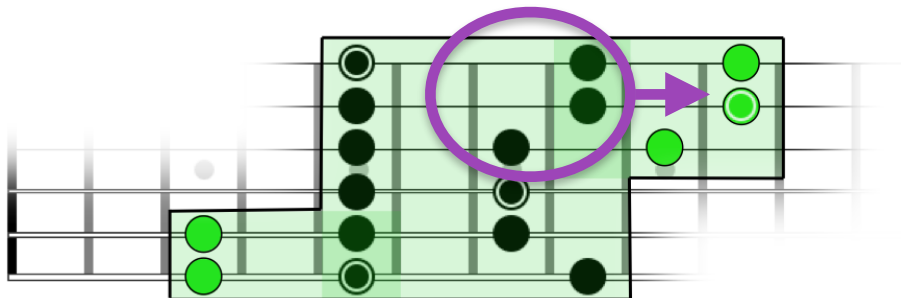
THE BLUES SOLO SHORTCUT

STEP 2 : THE UPPER EXTENSION



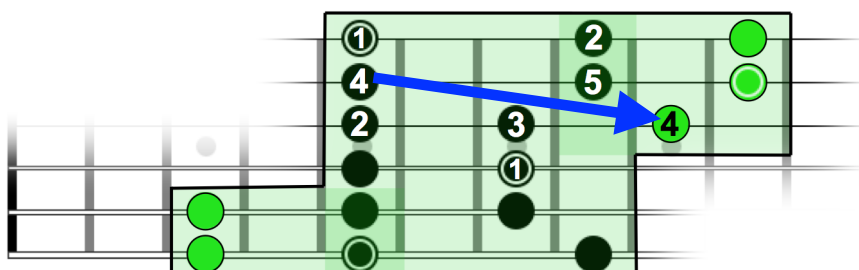
The upper extension is where things really start to get fun. This is the position where you find tonnes of classic blues-based licks, especially from the likes of Stevie Ray Vaughan, Albert King and BB King, so let's get acquainted with it.

A simple way to remember the overall 'shape' of the upper extension is that it's like the right-hand edge of the top three strings of Box 1, copied and moved up two frets:



The upper extension adds **3 notes** to the high end of Box 1 and extends the range of the scale higher.

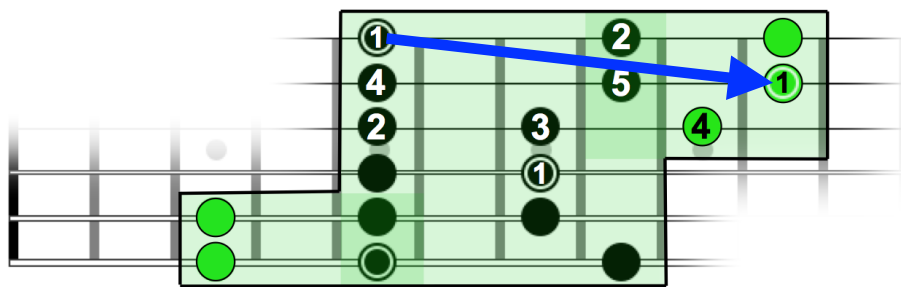
Let's look at each of the notes we're actually adding in turn. First off, the lowest of them is a duplicate of one we already have in Box 1:



THE BLUES SOLO SHORTCUT

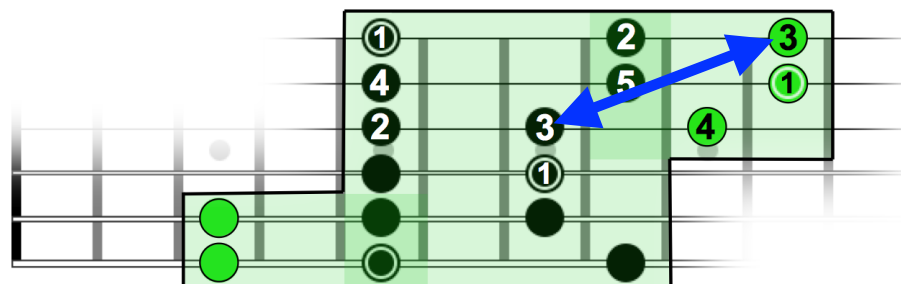
This note is the gateway to the upper extension. It's used all the time in blues and rock to slide in and out and quickly transfer between the higher and lower ends of the Minor Pentatonic scale.

The next note from the upper extension is the same as Box 1's top root note, but re-positioned:



Being able to play it here in addition to/instead of in Box 1 is great for speed and gives you lots of new soloing options for licks. Let's check out the last extended note.

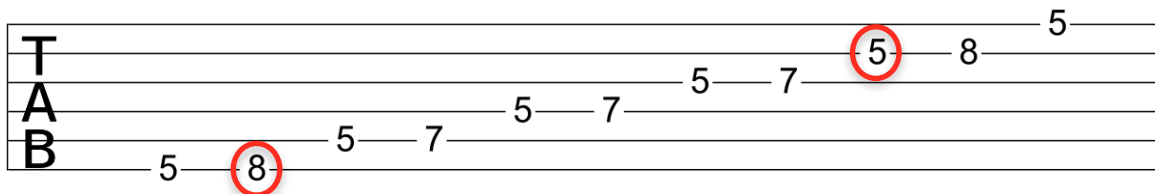
The last note from the upper extension is the third note of the Pentatonic scale, extending into next octave and increasing our pitch range:



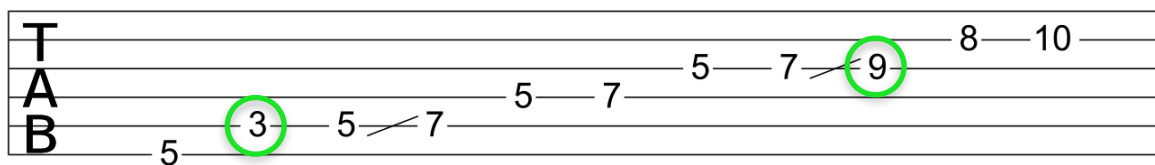
Now that you know both the upper and lower extensions, let me show you why they're so useful.

THE BLUES SOLO SHORTCUT

Playing two octaves of the Minor Pentatonic using Box 1 and stopping at the top root note looks like this:



Playing it using the lower and upper extensions instead looks like this:

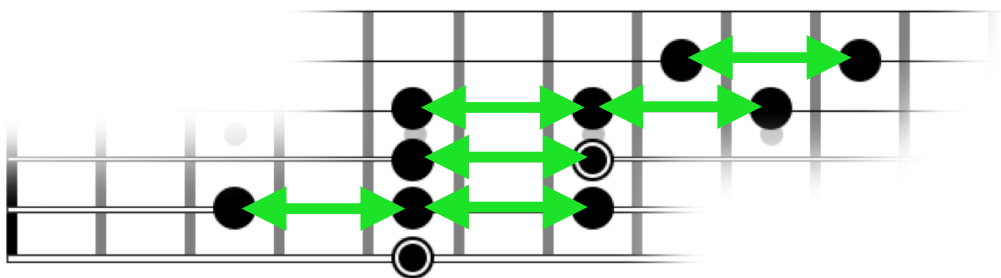


With the box you always need to change strings after every two notes, and this creates more work.

With the full extended pattern there's less string changing, and several notes can be connected smoothly by slides.

You can slide and hammer-on/pull-off between notes that you couldn't reach before, and play all sorts of things much faster.

It also drastically simplifies your left hand fingering, because all the notes are connectable by 2-fret gaps, rather than a mixture of 2 and 3:



THE BLUES SOLO SHORTCUT



Getting around the pentatonic scale is now really efficient, and that's before we even talk about the increased range and new notes we have to play with!

I'm going to show you how to practice these extensions properly in a moment, but first I just want to show you a final simple ingredient you can add that will really set your blues solos off.

STEP 3 : THE BLUE NOTE

I said at the start that most blues solos are built from the Minor Pentatonic scale. This is true, but it was also the short answer.

The bigger picture is that blues guitarists use the Minor Pentatonic AND a few other closely related scales.

However, the cool thing is that most of these scales are so similar that they only require adding *one or two notes* to your existing Pentatonic scale shapes.

The biggest scale you find in blues, after the minor pentatonic, is called - conveniently - the **Blues Scale**!

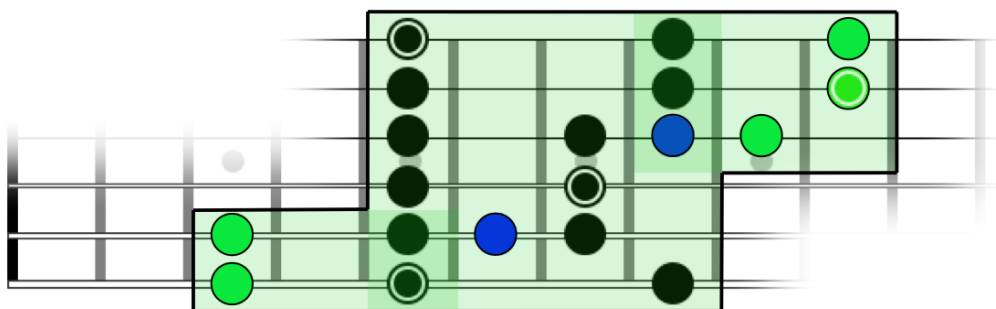
(It's called *Blues*, but we hear this scale everywhere from Blues to Jazz to Country to Rock and Metal).

The main thing to understand about the Blues Scale is that it's not a whole new scale... in fact, we just need to *one more note* to the Minor Pentatonic to create it.

The note that gives the Blues Scale its sound is known as the **Blue Note**. It can also be called the *tritone*, and, in the dark ages of the distant past, was known as *The Devil's Note*.

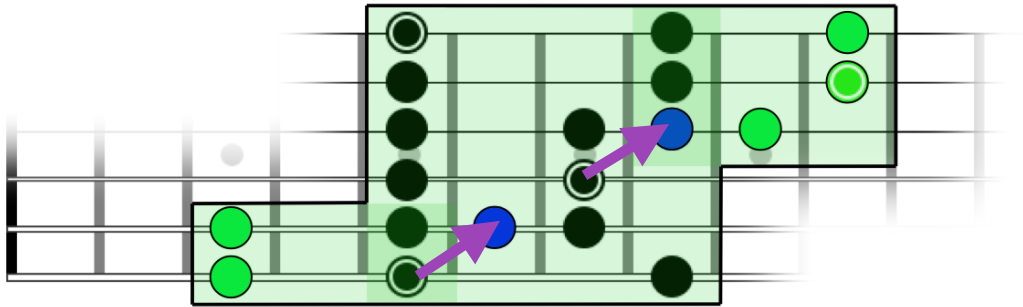
The **Blue Note** is, basically, a *really bluesy* sounding note. It adds so much spice and attitude to the essential minor pentatonic sound!

Here are the blue notes added in blue to our extended pattern:

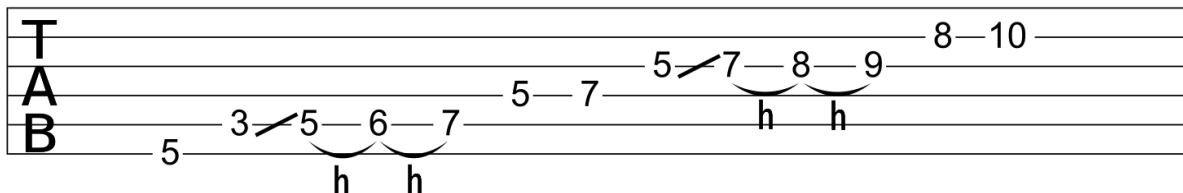


THE BLUES SOLO SHORTCUT

A good way to remember the position of the blue notes is by the **diagonal shape** they make in relation to the root note:



Once again we can use slides to connect the extensions, and some hammer-ons and pull-offs are especially useful once we're including the blue note:



Using the blue note

The blue note is normally used as a *passing tone* in blues.

This means it's not one of our main notes that sounds good to 'land on', but a really nice extra flavour when you pass over it fairly quickly on the way to something more stable (i.e. one of the other Minor Pentatonic notes). It's a bit like having spices in food - it adds flavour in small amounts. Think of it not as a 'destination' note or a note that you would begin or end your licks on, but as a special note you can touch on briefly for effect. This is a great way to start using the blue note.

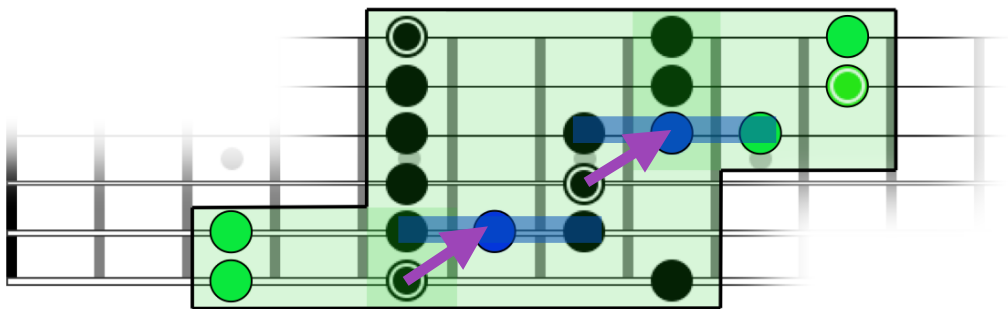
THE BLUES SOLO SHORTCUT

The last blue note and BONUS extension

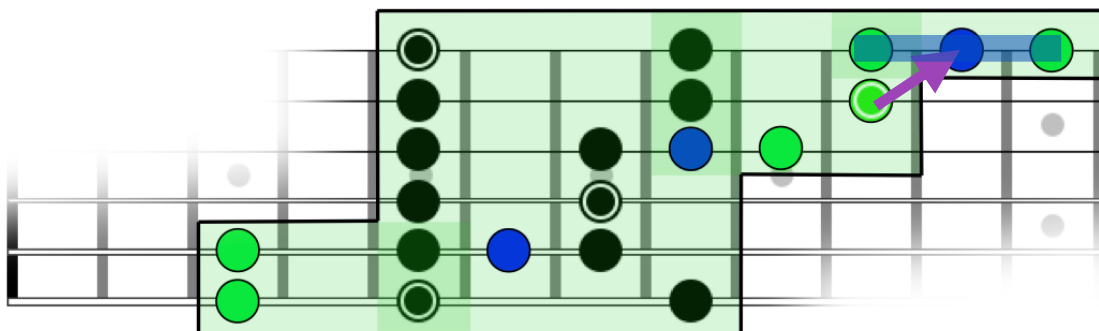
You have now learned the Blues Solo Shortcut pattern that hundreds of players use to improvise solos! You can do so much with the three simple steps we've covered so far, but there is one final thing you can add to it if you really want to max out.

We can squeeze in one final high blue note to the extended pattern, giving us three in total to play with. Here's how it works:

Notice how the blue note always appears sandwiched in the middle of a row of 3 notes, and diagonally opposite the root note?



Well, we can repeat this pattern from the last root note to cap off the extended pattern with one final **super-high extension** that lets us go even higher:



And that's it - your full Blues Solo Shortcut. It's just a few simple extensions from the Minor Pentatonic Box 1, but it blows the box wide open and gives us so many more options.

THE BLUES SOLO SHORTCUT

HOW PROS PRACTICE SCALES

You might be wondering how to practice the Blues Solo Shortcut in order to get the patterns down and memorised quickly so that you can start using them.

Let me give you two solid time-tested tips for practicing scales that will have you picking up the Blues Solo Shortcut scale pattern in no time.

Tip #1 - Root to Root

When you practice a scale pattern (any scale pattern), you really need to get into the habit of playing it **from root note to root note**.

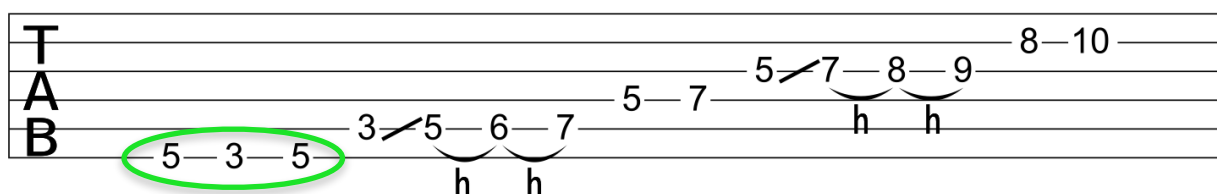
This means, no matter what pattern or scale you're using, you need to start and finish on the root note (as opposed to whatever random note from a scale pattern that just happens to be the lowest).

This is **critical**, first and foremost for your ear to make sense of the scale you're practicing, but also for you to internalise the physical location of the root notes, which are the most important notes in the scale.

At the same time, you also need to practice all the notes that are *accessible* in a position, so that you build a visual map of the entire thing and you can see all your options once you're actually playing.

Not all of the notes in the extensions are neatly contained within root notes, yet we need to do both - cover all the notes, but play from root note to root note. The way to achieve both is to **loop back around** at the top/bottom of the pattern. Here is what I mean, using the example of the Blues Solo Shortcut pattern.

I will start from the root note, then play the lower note, then the root note again, before proceeding on through the pattern. The first part looks like this:

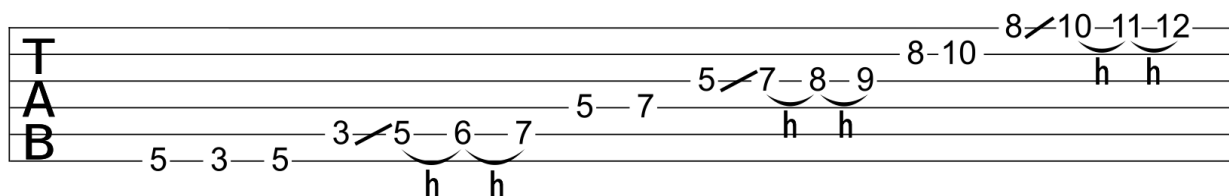


THE BLUES SOLO SHORTCUT

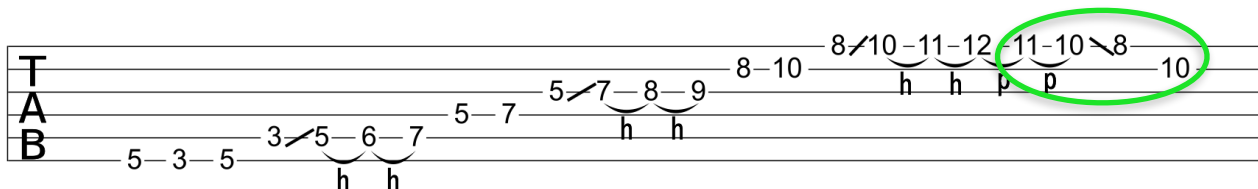
The point of the manoeuvre at the start is so that I practice playing the extended notes (good), but without confusing my ear and ignoring the root by just starting from the lowest available note in the pattern, in this case the 3rd fret (bad).

PS You can also pick all the notes if you like. You don't need to do hammer-ons and pull-offs where I've marked them - they just help with speed and make runs of notes on the same string a bit easier to play.

At the top of the pattern it's the same deal. I'm going to play all the available notes and go beyond the high root note, up as high as the full blues pattern allows:



But I'm not going to stop dead at the 12th fret just because the pattern has run out of notes. No, I loop back around and return back to the nearest root note to finish:



This is what I mean by starting and ending your scale on the root notes, while also playing all the notes in the pattern. This is how to practice a scale properly and get it down so that you can start to using it in your playing.

Practicing from root note to root note might not seem like a big deal right now, but trust me it is. You will pick up the pattern far faster and more thoroughly if you do this. Speaking of learning it thoroughly and really being able to use it, I just want to show you one more scale practice tip on the next page.

THE BLUES SOLO SHORTCUT

Tip #2 - Rehearse In Both Directions

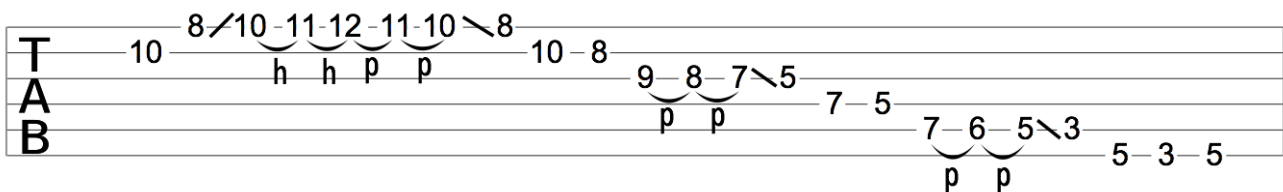
A crucial thing to bear in mind is that you always want to practice your scale patterns in **both directions**. Don't make the mistake of thinking that if you can play a scale from high to low, that you *know it*. Practicing in both directions is vital to really getting a pattern down.

This means you need to practice both starting from the lowest root note and ascending upwards (as the examples so far have been), **AND** starting from the highest root note and *descending* down from there.

This is vital because not only because it encourages your brain and fingers pick up the patterns much faster, but because the licks and solo phrases that you'll encounter and want to play in real life solos will move in both directions.

If you only practice your scales in one direction, then you will find you lose your place easily if and when a lick or sequence goes in the other direction from the one you usually practice. It's very easy to end up with an unbalanced technique that only works in one direction if you don't make a point of practicing scales both up **AND** down!

Building on from the previous tip of practicing from Root Note to Root Note, while covering all the notes, this time I'll descend the pattern by starting from the high root note, playing up through the highest extension, before turning back around and heading down:



As I finish descending through the pattern I hit the lowest note, then return to the root note.

That's how to practice from root note to root note, AND practice in both directions.

Follow these two basic practice principles and you'll have the Blues Solo Shortcut down in no time.

THE BLUES SOLO SHORTCUT

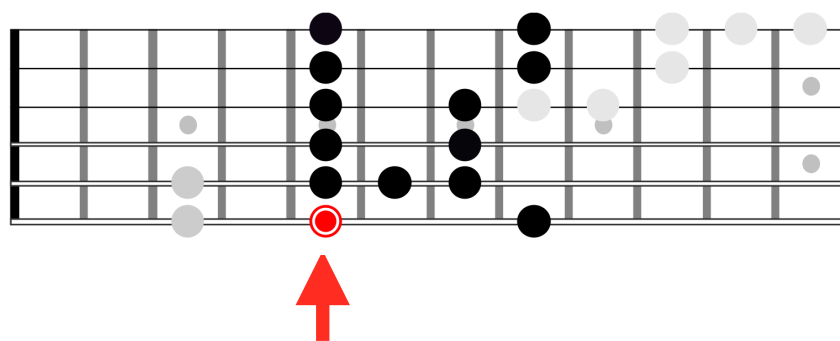
CHANGING KEY

So far in this guide, all the scale diagrams have been in the key of A. However, you can use the The Blues Solo Shortcut to solo in every key. In this chapter, I'll show you how.

(If you don't understand what the *key* of a piece of music means, I explain the concept and how to work them out by ear in my free article <https://www.christybannerman.com/how-to-work-out-the-key-of-a-song-by-ear>. This method works for all styles of music.)

Luckily, Blues is one of the easiest styles of music to tell what key you're in. All you generally need to do is look at the first chord of the progression. The key of your blues is simply the first note of the starting chord. For example, if the first chord is G, then the key is G; If the first chord is Bm then the key is B minor. It's that simple. Occasionally the first chord heard in a blues is not that of the key (*Red House* by Jimi Hendrix is a nice example), but you won't get caught out if you learn my key-finding-by-ear method at the link above.

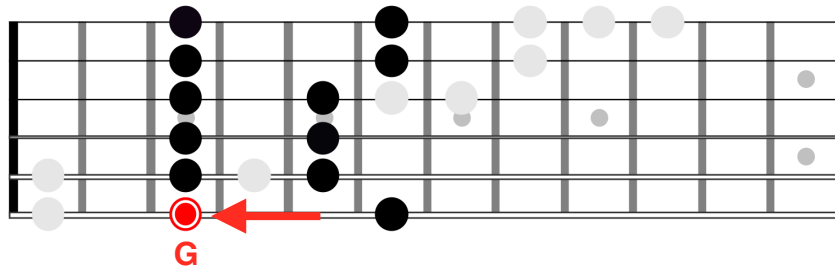
So far, the scale diagrams and tabs in the Blues Solo Shortcut have been shown in the key of A. To solo in a different key, all you need to do is move the Minor Pentatonic 'Box 1' section up or down so that the first note begins from the corresponding note/fret of the thick E string.



Move this to the key note

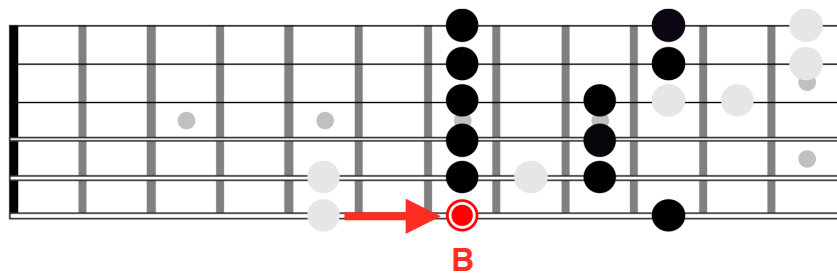
For example, if you have a jam in G, you just need to move everything down two frets so that the Root Note of the scale pattern sits on the 3rd fret of the E string, because that fret is a G note:

THE BLUES SOLO SHORTCUT

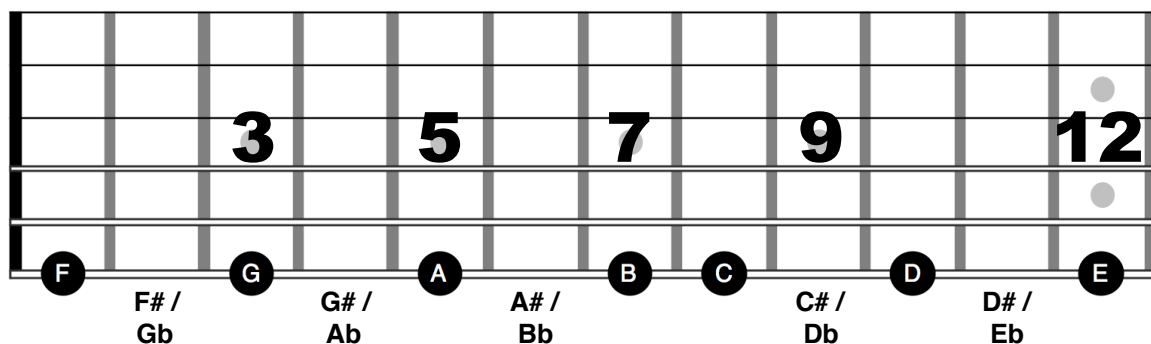


Playing the pattern from the 3rd fret now means you're playing *G Minor Pentatonic*.

Likewise, if you have a jam in B, you just need to move the pattern so that the Root Note begins on a B - in this case, that would be the 7th fret of the E string. Now it becomes *B Minor Pentatonic*:



If you don't know your notes on the E string thoroughly then you may find changing key quite difficult. If you know your notes somewhat but don't have them fully or reliably down, then deliberately jamming in different keys is one of the best ways to get them established permanently. If you are struggling with this, you can use the following diagram and the table on the next page to help out.



THE BLUES SOLO SHORTCUT

If the key is:	Box 1 starts from:
F	1st Fret
F# or Gb	2nd Fret
G	3rd Fret
G# or Ab	4th Fret
A	5th Fret
A# or Bb	6th Fret
B	7th Fret
C	8th Fret
C# or Db	9th Fret
D	10th Fret
D# or Eb	11th Fret
E	12th Fret

Being able to change key so that you can easily jam with people is a good example of why it pays to know things like the notes on the fretboard. If you ever wondered what the point or usefulness of knowing Music Theory is, this would be a prime example. Contrary to popular belief, respected blues and rock guitarists DID know at least basic things like what key they were in and what notes they were playing (otherwise they wouldn't have been able to do what they did!).

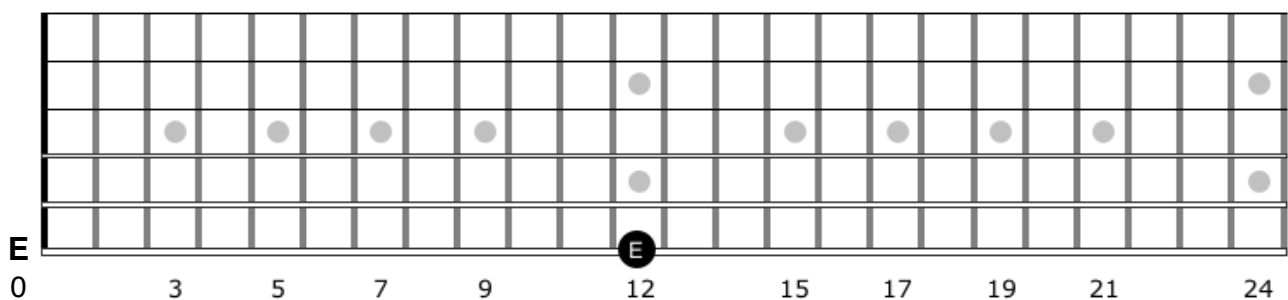
Now you have the information you need to be able practice your pattern and to move it to any key, so that you can use it in any blues jam. In the final chapter, I'll show you how to instantly double your soloing options with the Blues Solo Shortcut using one ridiculously simple trick.

THE BLUES SOLO SHORTCUT

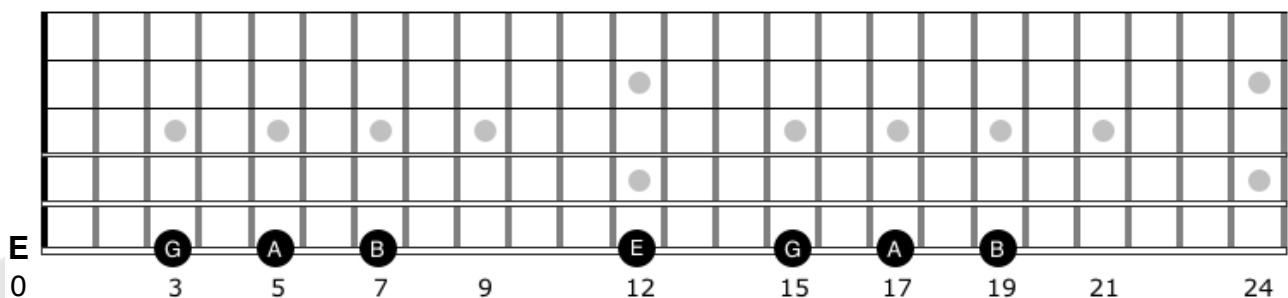
DOUBLE IT UP!

If you recall back to the very start of this guide, one of the first things I said is that the 5 notes in the Minor Pentatonic Scale constantly repeat in higher and lower *octaves*. We can take advantage of this little fact to vastly expand our soloing options without any additional effort. How? By exploiting one simple fact about the guitar fretboard:

Every note on the fretboard repeats itself after 12 frets. For instance, the open E string is an E note. If we go twelve frets higher - to the 12th fret - we find we have another E note, but an octave higher.

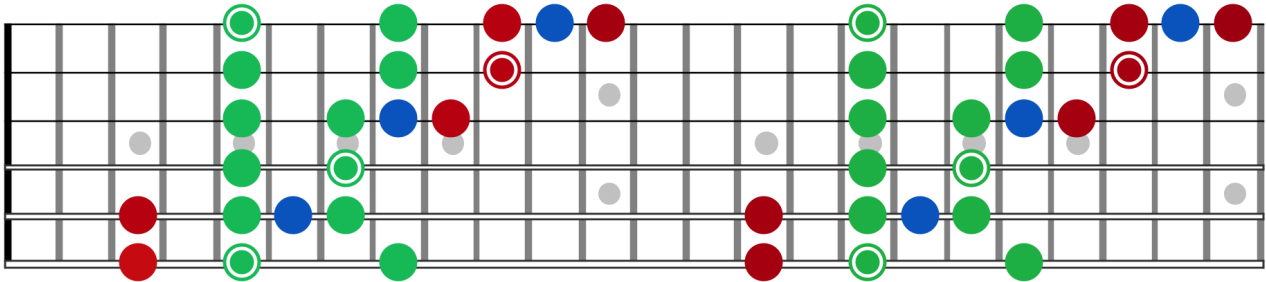


This +12 frets rule works with every note. The 5th fret of the low E string is an A note, and this means the 17th fret will also be an A note (because 5 frets + 12 frets = 17th fret). If the 3rd fret of the low E string is a G note, this means that the 15th fret of the same string will be another G note (likewise, because 3 + 12 = 15). B at the 7th fret repeats at the 19th fret, and so on.



THE BLUES SOLO SHORTCUT

This fact means there will often be **two places** you can use your Blues Solo Shortcut. In whatever key you are in, you can simply move up 12 frets and re-use exactly the same pattern. Here this is demonstrated in the key of A with the full Blues Solo Shortcut pattern:



You can 'double up' like this with the Blues Solo Shortcut in any key. It works particularly well in the common blues keys of A, G and E. In some keys, particularly higher ones like C or D, you may run out of fretboard space to play all the notes, but the same principle always applies. Even if you cannot reach all the extended notes, you can always double up the main Minor Pentatonic Box 1 and then add the higher and lower extension notes where possible.

This octave rule is one of many 'tricks of the trade' that blues players use to get more mileage from their licks and keep things interesting. A simple but very effective way you can immediately start using this idea is to play the first half of your solo down in the lower position, then move up 12 frets for the second half. This creates an instant contrast and builds energy and excitement. You can hear this very concept being used in the epic end solo to Comfortably Numb by Pink Floyd. In blues and rock guitar, a little can go a very long way!

Congratulations on reaching the end of the Blues Solo Shortcut! Armed with these tools, you can dazzle people as you play all over the fretboard like a seasoned pro! Have fun, and if you have any questions you can reach out to me anytime at christy@frets-on-fire.com.

On the final two pages are some optional resources that I recommend checking out if you want to take things to the next level.

NEXT STEPS

Thank you for downloading the Blues Solo Shortcut. Here are some instructional resources you might like to check out to follow on from this guide:

Electric Guitar Vibrato: The Complete Guide

Playing the right notes is a great start, but it's only the beginning of what you can do. To make your Blues solos sound as good as they possibly can, it's not just what notes you play... it's *how* you play them. The best guitarists make their notes and phrases sing using a technique called *vibrato*. The distinctive blues/rock style of vibrato uses a very specific physical technique that normally takes *years* to develop, but I have perfected a training method that makes it easy. *Vibrato: The Complete Guide* will show you how to develop the perfect technique in double quick time, and give you all the ingredients you need to make your vibrato sound every bit as good as the pros.

Electric Guitar Vibrato: The Complete Guide is available now from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) in ebook and paperback format.

Modes For Rock Guitar Players

Many of the greatest guitar solos of all time are based on the Minor Pentatonic or Blues scale, but these aren't the only scales you can use. Blues players frequently use the *Dorian* and *Mixolydian* scales to spice things up, and Rock players dial up the intensity with the *Aeolian* and *Phrygian* scales. These names may sound complicated, and many teachers make them seem hard, but they're not. In *Modes For Rock Guitar* players I show you exactly what these scales are, where you've heard them before in the music you listen to, and how to play them on your guitar. Best of all, the unique approach taken in this book builds straight on from the already familiar Minor Pentatonic scale. This method is ideal for players who already know the Minor Pentatonic, and want to take their first steps into an exciting new world of sound and soloing.

Modes For Rock Guitar Players is available now from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) in ebook and paperback format.

Online Private Lessons

I've had many guitar and music teachers over the years, and there is no comparison to personal time with an expert who is 100% focused on you and your needs and goals. If you are stuck in a rut with your electric guitar playing and looking for a breakthrough, I can help. As an experienced professional player and teacher, I know exactly what to do and what not to do; the fastest ways to get ahead, and all the pitfalls to avoid. I can assess what is holding you back or preventing you from reaching the next level, and make sure you get exactly what you need to move forward. All you need is an internet connection and a webcam, and we can work together no matter where in the world you are. If you're serious about guitar but struggling to get to the level you want to be, get in touch today to discuss how I can help you make big progress and achieve your goals faster. Email christy@frets-on-fire.com for more information.

The Blues Solo Shortcut by Christy Bannerman

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