

LEARN BLUES FINGERPICKING

INTERMEDIATE COURSE

3.2 Riffs in Position 3



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Position Three

We are now going to look at “position three” of the guitar neck. This is the area between the 4th and 8th frets typically.

We will look at:

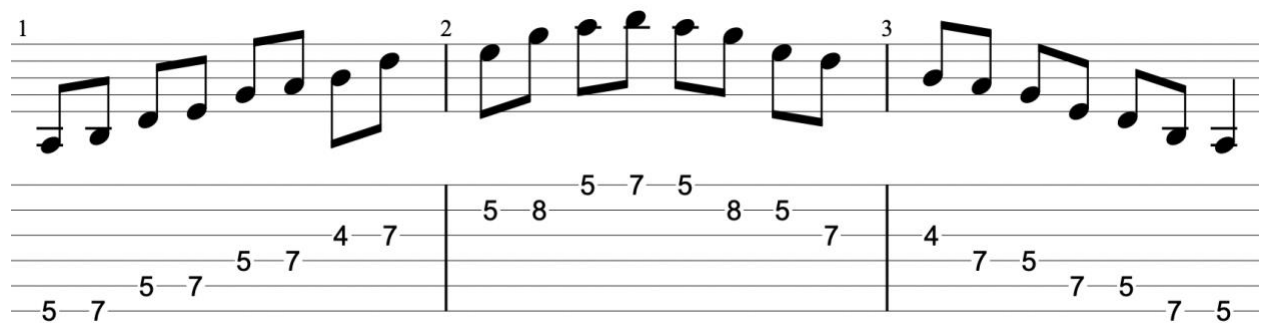
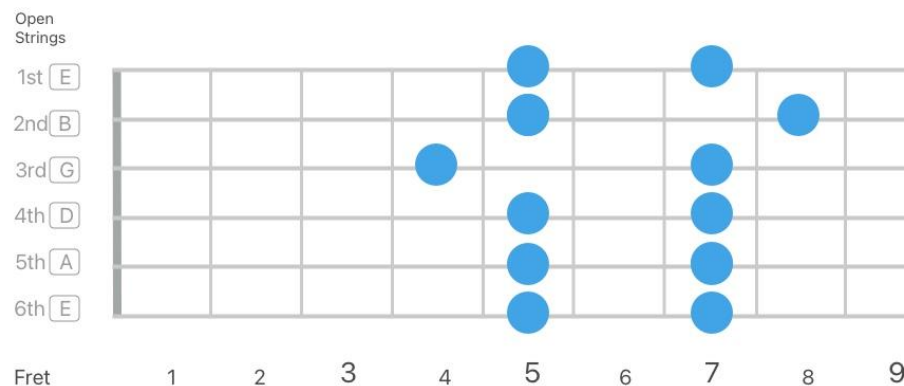
- E minor pentatonic (here in position three)
- E blues scale (here in position three)
- E7 arpeggios (here in position three)

We will then learn four blues riffs in this position.

The first thing to practice is the E minor scale (ascending and descending)

Em Pentatonic Scale

Position 3

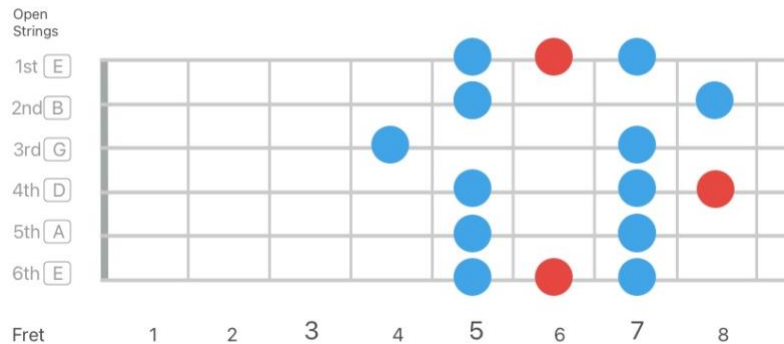


Once you have mastered the E minor pentatonic scale, you can then add one note (Bb in the case of the E minor scale) which gives you the E blues scale.

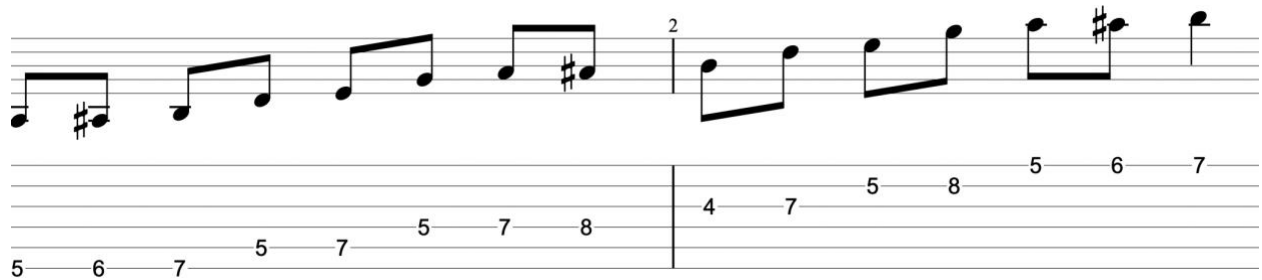
That additional note is shown below in red.

E Blues Scale

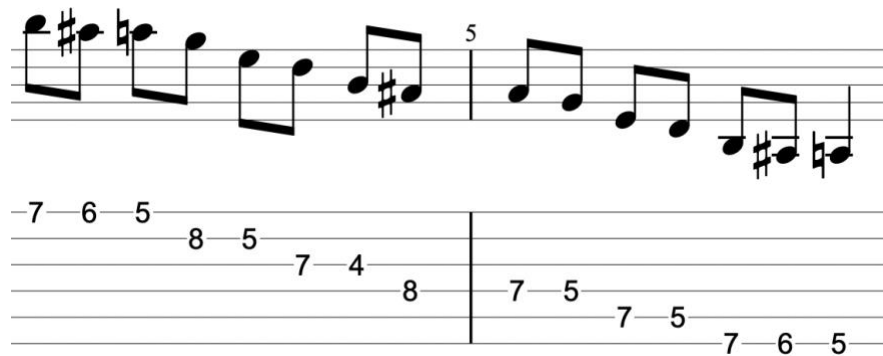
Position 3



The tab for practicing this ascending:



The tab for practicing this descending:



Practicing scales with bass

Try playing the E blues scale – each note with the bass note (the open 6th string) ascending first...

The image shows the ascending E blues scale on a musical staff. The scale consists of the following notes: E2, F#2, G2, A2, B2, C#3, and D3. The first measure is marked with a '1' and the second measure with a '2'. The notes are played in pairs, with the bass note (open 6th string) and the scale note. The dynamic marking *mf* is present. Below the staff, the fret numbers for each note are listed: 5, 7, 8, 4, 7, 5, 8, 5, 6, 7. The fret numbers are grouped into two measures: the first measure contains 5, 7, 8, 4, 7, 5, 8, 5 and the second measure contains 6, 7. The fret numbers are written on a three-line staff.

Then descending

The image shows the descending E blues scale on a musical staff. The scale consists of the following notes: D3, C#3, B2, A2, G2, F#2, and E2. The notes are played in pairs, with the bass note (open 6th string) and the scale note. The dynamic marking *mf* is present. Below the staff, the fret numbers for each note are listed: 7, 6, 5, 8, 5, 7, 4, 8, 7, 5. The fret numbers are grouped into two measures: the first measure contains 7, 6, 5, 8, 5, 7, 4, 8 and the second measure contains 7, 5. The fret numbers are written on a three-line staff.

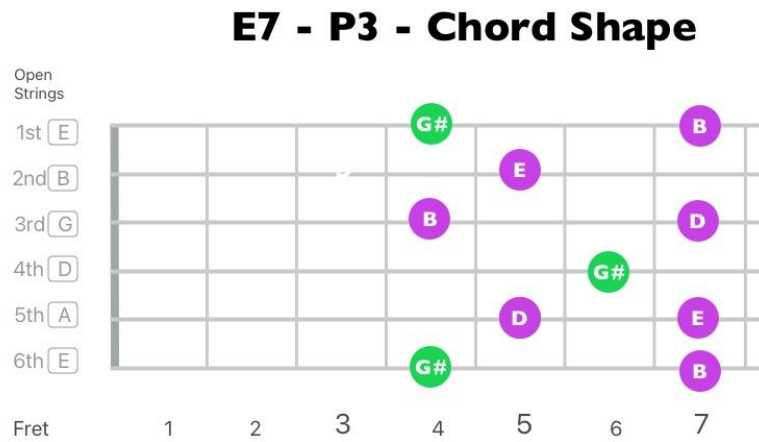
Try that ascending

And then descending...



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And then the E7 arpeggio. I will show you the shape and name of each of the notes in the E7 chord below



Riff A

Here is the first half of Riff A

Note that for most notes of this riff you are playing the low E (6th string).

You do let one note ring at the end (for 2 beats)

First half of Riff A, measures 1 and 2. The notation is in treble clef with a common time signature (C). The melody consists of eighth notes. The first measure contains four eighth notes, and the second measure contains three eighth notes followed by a half note. The dynamic marking *mf* is present. The guitar tablature (TAB) is shown below the staff, with fret numbers 5, 8, 5, 7 for the first measure and 5, 8, 5 for the second measure. The bass line is indicated by zeros (0) on the bottom line of the TAB.

For the second half of Riff A, again we start playing the 6th string with every riff note but then we do let the last note ring (for 4 beats this time)

Second half of Riff A, measures 3 and 4. The notation is in treble clef with a common time signature (C). The melody consists of eighth notes. The third measure contains four eighth notes, and the fourth measure contains three eighth notes followed by a half note. The dynamic marking *mf* is present. The guitar tablature (TAB) is shown below the staff, with fret numbers 5, 8, 5, 7 for the third measure and (5) for the fourth measure. The bass line is indicated by zeros (0) on the bottom line of the TAB.

Riff B

Here is the first half of Riff B

Note here that you now start off **playing two riff notes per bass note** (the low E or open 6th string)

Therefore, this is more than just learning a cool riff – we are now building up independence between our bass and riff.

For this reason, take this riff slowly. If you can master it, it really does represent a huge jump in what you're going to be able to play shortly

First half of Riff B, measures 1 and 2. The notation includes a treble clef, a common time signature (C), and a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic marking. The guitar part (top staff) shows two measures of eighth notes. The first measure contains four eighth notes (G4, A4, B4, C5) and the second measure contains four eighth notes (D5, E5, F5, G5). The bass part (bottom staff) shows two measures of whole notes, both being the low E string (E2). The guitar part is labeled 'T' and the bass part is labeled 'B'.

Here is the second half of Riff B

Second half of Riff B, measures 3 and 4. The notation includes a treble clef and a common time signature (C). The guitar part (top staff) shows two measures of eighth notes. The first measure contains four eighth notes (G4, A4, B4, C5) and the second measure contains four eighth notes (D5, E5, F5, G5). The bass part (bottom staff) shows two measures of whole notes, both being the low E string (E2). The guitar part is labeled 'T' and the bass part is labeled 'B'.

Riff C

In this riff, we introduce the blues note on the 6th fret of the 1st string. This means we are using the E blues scale.

Note that in bar 2, we have 3 notes that are all “off the beat” or “between bass notes”. This gives a lovely feel to the riff.

It might require a little practice. While not technically difficult to play, it’s just a new way of riff notes happening among the bass notes. When you do start to master this bit, see if it is challenging to keep a steady bass playing the first bar then the second bar – with that bass groove and rhythm in perfect time.

The image displays the musical notation for Riff C, consisting of a guitar riff in standard notation and a corresponding guitar tablature (TAB).

Standard Notation:

- The riff is written in treble clef, common time (C), and is in the key of E minor (one flat).
- Bar 1: Four eighth notes (G4, A4, B4, C5) followed by a half note (D5). The notes G4, A4, and B4 are marked with a '1' above them, indicating the first finger.
- Bar 2: Four eighth notes (D5, C5, B4, A4) followed by a half note (G4). The notes D5, C5, and B4 are marked with a '2' above them, indicating the second finger.
- The riff ends with a double bar line and two dots (repeat sign).

Guitar Tablature (TAB):

- The TAB is written on a six-line staff, with the strings numbered 1 to 6 from top to bottom.
- Bar 1: Fret numbers 7, 6, 5, 5, 8, 5 are written above the strings. The first four fret numbers (7, 6, 5, 5) are aligned with the first four eighth notes of the riff. The fret number 8 is aligned with the fifth note (D5), and the fret number 5 is aligned with the sixth note (G4).
- Bar 2: Fret numbers 5, 8, 5 are written above the strings. The fret number 5 is aligned with the first note (D5), the fret number 8 is aligned with the second note (C5), and the fret number 5 is aligned with the third note (B4).
- The TAB ends with a double bar line and two dots (repeat sign).

Dynamic: The dynamic marking *mf* (mezzo-forte) is placed below the first bar of the riff.

You may notice that the end bar here has two dots in front of it. This just means we would play all this twice.

Riff D

For riff D, we really play a lot of the E Pentatonic scale (at 3rd position), ending with a nice bend. You only need to bend this note slightly (what is referred to as a microbend) to get a nice bluesy effect.

Measure 1: Treble clef, C major key signature. Notes: E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter). Bass clef: Notes: 7 (quarter), 5 (quarter), 7 (quarter), 4 (quarter), 7 (quarter), 5 (quarter), 8 (quarter). Measure 2: Treble clef: Notes: E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter). Bass clef: Notes: 8 (quarter), 5 (quarter), 8 (quarter), 5 (quarter), 8 (quarter), 5 (quarter), 8 (quarter). A microbend is indicated on the 8th fret of the 1st string in measure 2.

The second half of the riff is very similar – but ends differently. Here you may recognize that Bb note – the blues note – at the 6th fret of the 1st string. This means we are playing in the E blues scale here

Measure 3: Treble clef: Notes: E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter). Bass clef: Notes: 7 (quarter), 5 (quarter), 7 (quarter), 4 (quarter), 7 (quarter), 5 (quarter), 8 (quarter). Measure 4: Treble clef: Notes: E4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter). Bass clef: Notes: 6 (quarter), 5 (quarter), 8 (quarter), 5 (quarter), 8 (quarter), 5 (quarter), 8 (quarter). A Bb note is indicated on the 6th fret of the 1st string in measure 4.

Assignment

Become familiar with this part of the guitar neck (third position). You should be able to play the following scales (ascending & descending)

- Em Pentatonic
- E Blues scale

And once you can do that, practice them with bass notes (just the open 6th string)

Finally learn all these riffs slowly at first

At this stage, you'll have made some serious progress!