

Variations

Any sequence of notes found within the standard Natural Minor box pattern can be used to create or improvise riffs. For a beginner guitarist, who has only memorized a handful of riffs, it will still take time to develop the ability to suddenly make up riffs on the spot. What can be done to initiate a little more creativity with soloing is to build on the foundation of what has been learned so far by applying *variations* to standard Minor Scale riffs.

Standard Riffs = Foundation = Springboard

The first step in being able to improvise is to learn and copy a collection of *standard riffs*. Once a basic *foundation* or vocabulary of riffs is memorized, the next step will be to use these riffs as a *springboard* for a little more creativity through the application of variations. Before moving on to the following sections, be sure to have reviewed lessons 1-10. All variations below are in 'A' Minor.

The Minor Riff Variation

Once a standard riff is memorized and practiced, adding *variations* to that riff can create more improvisational options. Based from 'The Minor Scale Riff' (*Natural Minor Scale -3*), this variation features a hammer/pull-off combination played on the third string.

Original Riff

1	5 7 8 7 5	
2	5 6 8 6 5	
3	4 5 7 5 4	4 5 6 4 5 4
4	5 / 7	5 5 / 7
5		
6		

1 3 4 3 1 1 2 4 2 1 1 2 4 2 1 / 2 1 2 4 1 2 1 2 / 2

Variation

Hammer-On Riff Variation

This variation of the 'Hammer-On Riff' (*Natural Minor Scale -4*) features a hammer/pull-off variation on the second string, where the string is plucked only once for each triplet. Note the root note focus, with the riff ending on the 'A' root note on fourth string.

Original Riff

1	5 5 5	5
2	5 6 5 6 5 6	5 6 5 6 5 5
3		
4		7
5		
6		

1 2 1 1 2 1 1 2 1 1 2 1 1 2 1 1 2 1 1 3

Variation

Low-Strings Riff Variation

This variation of the 'Low-strings riff' features a faster, repeated hammer-on riff that ascends up the standard Natural Minor box pattern. Note the 'A' root note phrasing on the bottom string/fifth fret. Additional finger strength will be required in order to get clarity from each note played.

Original Riff

1		
2		
3		
4	5 7	5 7
5	5 7 8	5 7 8 5 7 8
6	5 7 8	5 7 8 5 7 8 5

1 3 4 1 3 4 1 3 1 3 4 1 3 4 1 3 1 3 4 1 3 1

Variation

Additional Notes

The ability to add variations to standard riffs will help spark more ideas for creativity and improvisation. When starting to try out original ideas, a general rule to follow is to phrase properly. In other words, play any sequence of notes within the box pattern, but apply phrasing technique by beginning and ending riffs on root notes.