

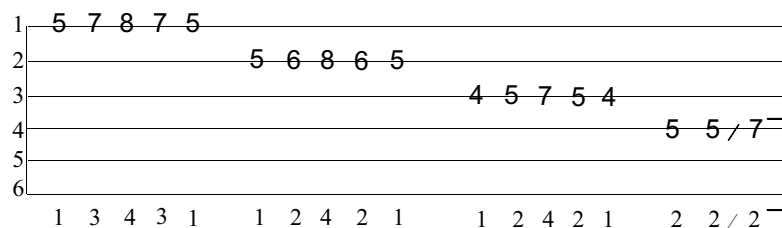
## Minor Scale Riffs

A *riff* can be described as a sort of ‘musical sentence’, and in order to improvise with the Minor scale, a musical vocabulary needs to be developed by copying and memorizing collection of standard Minor scale riffs. There are many riffs that have been passed on from generation to generation of guitarists, and some of these standard Minor scale riffs will be presented in the following sections.

### ‘The Minor Scale Riff’

‘*The Minor Scale Riff*’ is named so specifically for this lesson, but this riff has been around for years and variations of it are heard in many classic songs. The example below is played in the Key of ‘A’ Minor, using notes from the ‘A’ Minor box pattern. ‘*The Minor Scale Riff*’ introduces two new soloing techniques: *sliding* and *vibrato*. The next section will describe how to play this riff with a step-by-step approach.

#### ‘The Minor Scale Riff’



### Step by Step Approach

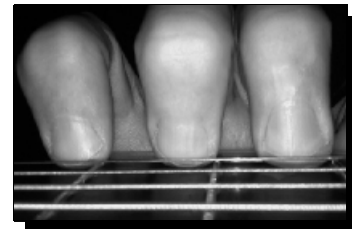
**Five-Note Phrases** The riff starts off with a two five-note phrases that go up and down the first and second strings. Notice how these notes ‘fit’ within the ‘A’ Minor box pattern. For the third string, the same fingers used to fret the notes on the second string simply shift down one fret to repeat the same five-note phrase. For better clarity and tone, keep the fretting fingers arched and try to fret as close as possible to each fret, especially those that require the third and fourth fingers to stretch more.

**Added Note** The fourth fret note played on the third string is not part of the standard ‘A’ Minor scale box pattern along the fifth fret, but is still part of the ‘A’ Minor scale, which can be played over the entire fretboard and will be covered more in later sections. (*see right*)

**Sliding** The last note of *Riff #1* features a *slide* ( / ) up to the seventh fret. Fretting with the correct fingers results with the second finger being aligned along the fourth string/fifth fret to begin the slide up to the seventh fret.

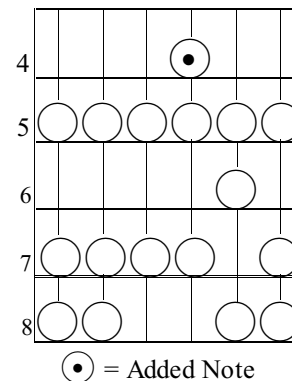
**Vibrato** Notated with a wavy line, *vibrato* is a combination of slightly shaking and sustaining a note. Being able to combine the slide with vibrato will take time while the fretting fingers gradually become stronger. Initially, focus on sustaining the last note played before adding vibrato.

### Arch Fingers



For better clarity and tone, keep the fretting fingers arched and try to fret as close as possible to each fret, especially those that require the third and fourth fingers to stretch more.

### ‘A’ Natural Minor Scale



## More Riffs

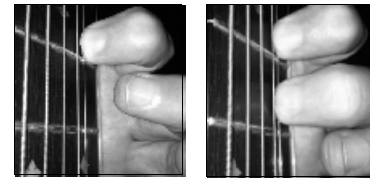
The '**Hammer-On**' riff introduces the '**hammer**' aka '**hammer-on**' technique. A **hammer-on** involves plucking the fifth fret note, and while it is still ringing, an additional higher-pitched note is sounded by tapping or 'hammering' the second finger onto the sixth fret while the first finger remains anchored on the fifth fret (*shown below*). In tab, a hammer is usually notated with a curve (  $\frown$  ) in between the plucked and hammered notes. For this riff, try to flatten the first finger across the top two strings to play each three-note phrase or triplet with more speed. The '**Low-Strings Riff**' simply ascends the Minor Scale box pattern, but ends on the fourth string.

### 'Hammer-On' Riff

1	5	5	5	
2	5 $\frown$ 6	5 $\frown$ 6	5 $\frown$ 6	
3				
4				5 7 $\text{—}$
5				5 7 8
6				5 7 8
	1 $\frown$ 2	1	1 $\frown$ 2	1
	1 $\frown$ 2	1	1 $\frown$ 2	1
				1 3 4
				1 3 4
				1 3 $\text{—}$

### 'Low-Strings' Riff

### 'Hammer' Technique



Keep the first finger 'planted' while the second finger 'hammers' a second note.

## Play The Riffs 'Verbatim'

Try to copy all of the previous riffs '**verbatim**', meaning a note-for-note replication of the tabs and audio/video examples. Copying these standard riffs will develop the ability to learn and to copy other riffs 'by ear' without having to rely on written notation. Most of the legendary guitarists never had the advantage of using videos or even Tab notation to learn riffs. Instead, they would constantly listen to and literally wear out records learning and copying riffs by ear.

## Combining Riffs

Practice **combining riffs** by following one riff with the other, as well as combining going up the Minor scale box pattern (*Natural Minor Scale -1*) along with the riffs. This provides a few options to become familiar with the Minor scale box pattern when practicing.

## The Riffs Are Moveable

The same concept that applies to moveable box patterns will also apply to riffs. All of the previous riffs are **moveable**, and can be played along any fret position or **key**. Try playing the riffs in combination together in different keys. For example, the Key of 'F#' Minor (*along the second fret position*) requires the fretting fingers to stretch more. The Key of 'D' Minor (*along the tenth fret position*) requires more focus in order to get clarity because the frets are positioned closer together, especially when applying sliding and vibrato technique.

## 'Flat' vs. 'Minor' Terms

Is there such a thing as the '*B flat Minor Scale*'? The answer is yes. Many beginners tend to confuse the terms '*flat*' with '*minor*' and '*sharp*' with '*major*'. The terms '**flat**' and '**sharp**' describe **notes**, while the terms '**major**' and '**minor**' are used to describe **scales** and **chords**. The two descriptions sometimes need to be combined together when naming the letter key of a scale, so the 'B' Minor box pattern is played along the seventh fret position, while the 'B $\flat$ ' Minor box pattern is played along the sixth fret position.