

Learning The Blues Scale

A practical approach to learning essential scales using the Blues scale.

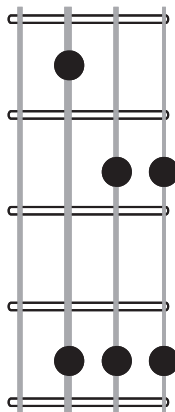
Scales like chords are typically learned as shapes using fingerboard grids, TAB or any number of other methods. They show the fingerboard shape, what strings to play and possibly the fingers that are used to play the scale. But what are the names of the notes? What chords can I use them with? You are usually left to fend for yourself.

The notes could have come from Mars as far as most are concerned. This shape based approach also carries over to TAB where you are told what string and fret to play. Still no real connection to where the notes came from or how to use the scale beyond the initial learned shape. You are pretty much let to fly by ear beyond that.

This **UkuleleLesson** will explore the steps for learning scales and the valuable information that can be used to learn additional essential scales and keys.

Blues or Minor Pentatonic Scales

(2)



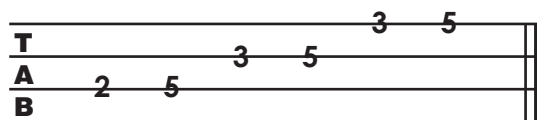
The five note Major Pentatonic and Blues or Minor Pentatonic scales are two of the most common used in contemporary music. This lesson will focus on the blues scale in the common key of D.

Here are the notes of the D Blues or Minor Pentatonic scale. It is these notes that produce the sound, fingerboard shape and TAB.

D Blues (D F G A C D')

Shown here as a graphic fingerboard shape (*to the left*) with the dots ● indicating the notes available in the scale. At fret (2) the notes D F G A C D' are the D Blues or Minor Pentatonic scale.

Here is a TAB representation of the D Blues scale produces.



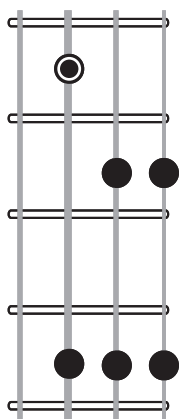
Both the fingerboard shape and the TAB do not require you to know the names of the notes for the scale. This is a real disadvantage further down the road when trying to advance your improvisation skills, remember what chords are used and to learn additional scales and their use.



The one advantage is that it can get you started quickly using a scale, in one position without having to know much more.

Transposing to Additional keys

(?)



Here the root or letter name of the scale is indicated using ●.

Moving each note of the shape up and down the fingerboard by the same number of frets transposes the scale to other keys, with the name of the scale being the name of the note that is located (string and fret) at the ●.

See the **UkuleleLesson Transposing Chords** for information on transposing chords as well as scales.

A simple transposition skill is to memorize the sequence of twelve notes that make up the chromatic scale. The chromatic scale contains all the notes that in one octave and uses all seven letters that are the musical alphabet.

Starting with D on string 3, fret (2) the chromatic scale would be:

Notes	D	D#	E	F	F#	G	G#	A	A#	B	C	C#	D'
Fret	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)

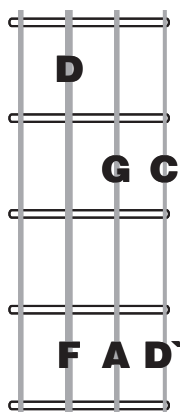
In the case of the example D Blues scale. One fret higher for each note and it is the D# Blues scale. Two frets higher for each note and it is the E Blues scale, etc.

This is a useful transposition skill but does not reveal the chords that a scale works with or the individual notes of the scale. The shape remains the same but TAB would change as well.

Or - learn the notes of the ukulele neck and move the whole shape up or down the fingerboard so the ● is on the root of the new key. Still no chords or names of notes.

Identifying the Names of the Notes

(2)

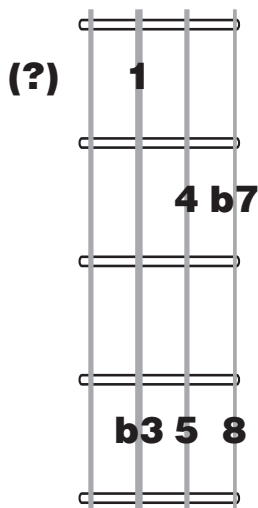


Using a fingerboard chart you can come up with the names of the notes. But where there is a choice between multiple names for any given note on the ukulele fingerboard you would have to guess without any theory to provide hints. This example scale is one of the easier ones to name the notes for but a scale with a G# could be Ab. Only a little theory would reveal the correct names or spelling of the scale.

Every scale has a very specific set of notes. For the D Blues scale they are D F G A C D'.

See the **UkuleleLesson Enharmonic Equivalents** for more information on alternate note names.





Getting More Information

A scale is made up of a series of steps. These steps can be half, whole steps or greater. The blues scale has the step sequence of 1 1/2, W, W, 1 1/2, W.

A scale can be generically thought of by how it relates to a major scale's scale degrees. This turns out to be an easier method.

D Major	D	E	F#	G	A	B	C#	D'
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
D Blues	D		F	G	A		C	D'
	1		b3	4	5		b7	8

Notice the Blues scale does not contain a second or sixth scale degree. With this knowledge choosing the correct name of the individual notes is possible.

The Blues or Minor Pentatonic scale is a sub set of the Natural Minor or Aeolian scale.

Here are the notes of the D Aeolian or Natural Minor scale and how it relates to its parallel major scale.

D Aeolian	D	E	F	G	A	Bb	C	D'
	1	2	b3	4	5	b6	b7	8
D Blues	D		F	G	A		C	D'
	1		b3	4	5		b7	8
D Major	D	E	F#	G	A	B	C#	D'
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

By knowing the major scale other scales can be recalled using simple numeric formulas.

*See the **UkuleleLesson Reference Scales** for information on referring all scale from two reference scales.*





What Are a Scale's Associated Chords?

Each scale has an associated set of chords that are built from the notes or scale degrees of the scale. The Blues scale is a very flexible scale as its associated chords come from more than one scale.

The Blues scale is a minor scale that works great over chords progressions where the chords come from a Minor tonality and as well as a Major tonality.

<i>Minor:</i>	Dm	F	Gm	Am	Bb, Bbmaj7	C
	I *	bIII	IV	V	bVI	bVII
<i>Major:</i>	D, D7	F	G, G7	A, A7	Bb, Bbmaj7	C
	I	bIII	IV	V	bVI	bVII

* These Roman Numerals indicate a chord's function within its scale harmony or tonality.

Chords

D	Dm	D7	I maj, min, 7
G	Gm	G7	IV maj, min, 7
A	Am	A7	V maj, min, 7
F			bIII maj
Bb	Bbmaj7		bVI maj, maj7
C			bVII maj

Blues vs. Minor Pentatonic

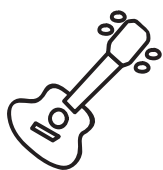
Resolving the debate.

You can open countless music books and see references to a Blues scale and a Minor Pentatonic scale as being two different scales. This is particularly common in books intended for the commercial market.

In scale theory a diatonic scale, where the blues scale comes from can not contain duplicate letters, whether the letter is sharp, flat or natural. An example would be that there can only be one E in a C major scale: C D E F G A B. It is not C D E E# G A B. And it must contain all seven letters and they are used in order.

A **D Blues** scale in most books would be listed as D F G G# A C'. This fails the "no duplicate" letters rule and making it Ab wouldn't help either. The G# or Ab is just a chromatic passing tone and not a real scale degree. So the D Minor Pentatonic scale (D F G A C') and D Blues (D F G A C') can be thought of as the same scale and leave the debate up to the theorists.





Then why the two D letters?

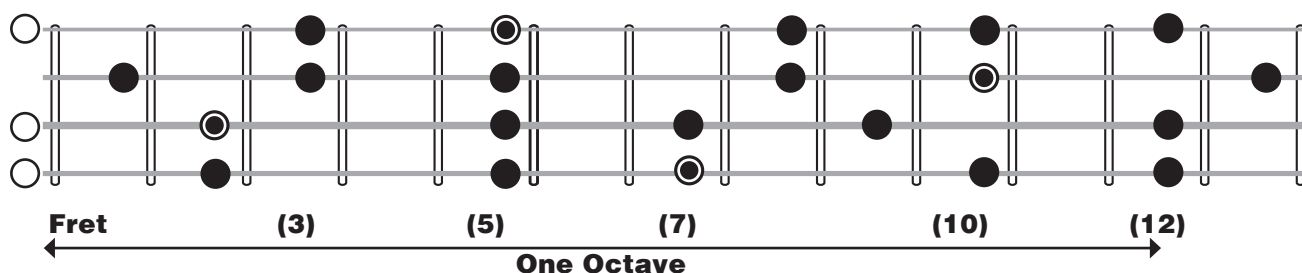
When playing a scale ascending the last note of the scale is typically resolved to the octave (D F G A C D'). This is technically the start of the next octave.

For this **UkuleleLesson** the Blues scale is the same scale as the Minor Pentatonic.

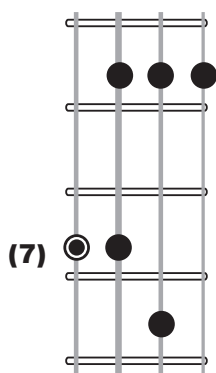
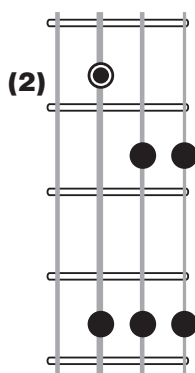
Learning the Blues Scale

By extending the scale below the starting root and above the octave with the scale notes available we can show all available scale notes on the ukulele fingerboard.

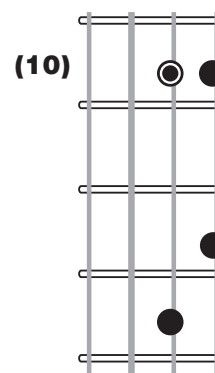
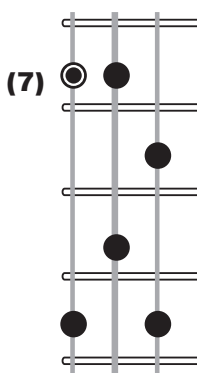
Here are all available notes for the D blues scale ("C" tuning).



Still a little too much information for using the scale. By extracting easy to learn and manage one octave shapes we have these fingerboard shapes.



These two one octave blues scale are only playable when using a low "G" C tuning.

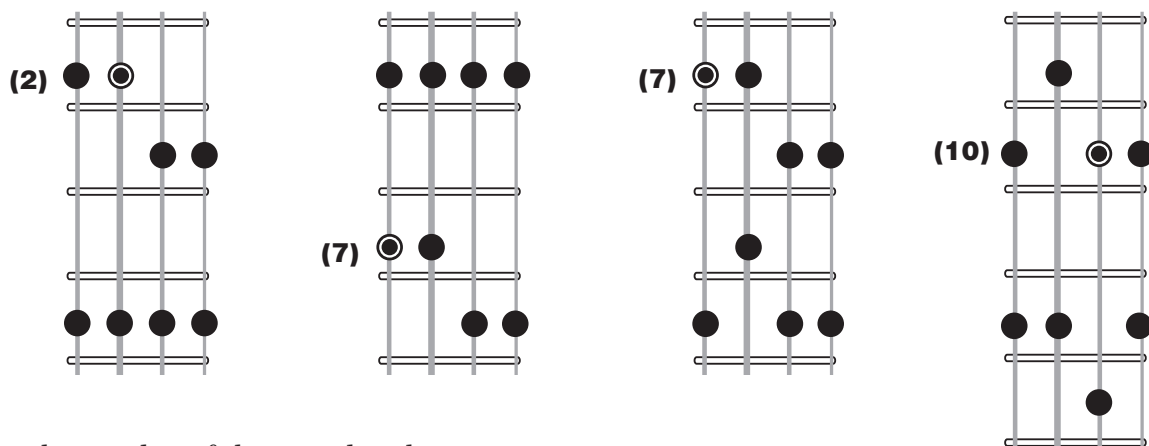


This is a partial D Blues scale:
D F G A.

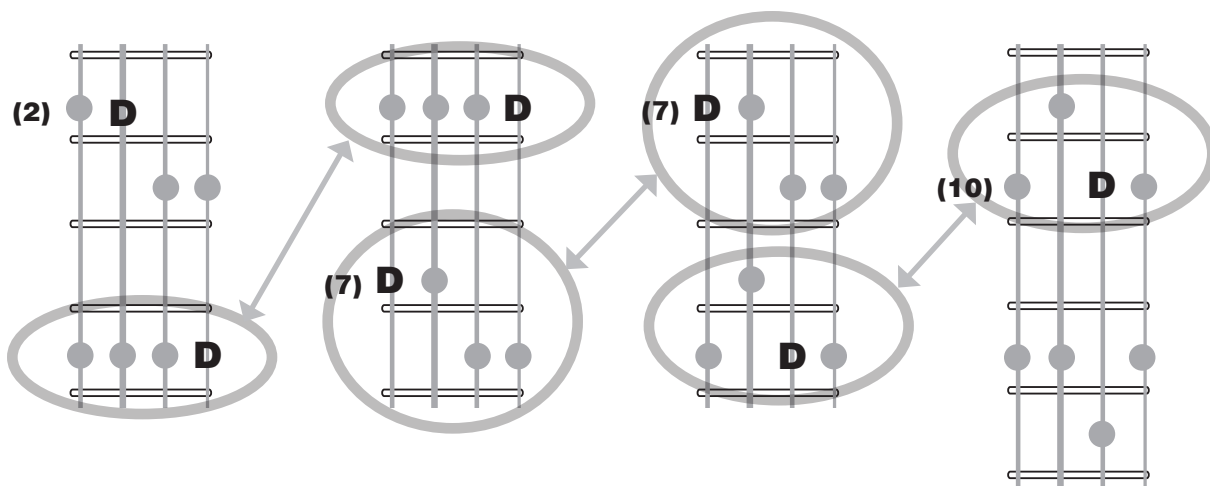




Expanding the one octave scales below the starting note and above the ending note we have these fingerboard shapes.



Notice the overlap of these scales shapes.





Navigating the Fingerboard

Pathways Through The Scale

For a string instrument like the ukulele with the flexibility and ability to play the exact same note on different strings. This flexibility of alternate note locations and the possibility of playing any note with any finger makes moving beyond the set fingerings of initial basic scale shapes difficult for most.

Moving beyond set scale fingerings is a real advantage. This can be achieved by visualizing the ukulele fingerboard as a pianist would visualize the piano keyboard.

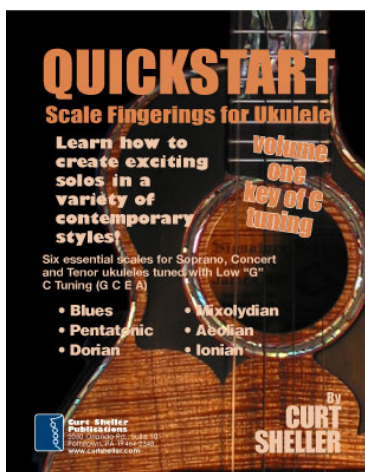
For a pianist a scale like C Major (C D E F G A B C) is only the white keys of the piano. This color coding of a scale and makes it easy to not play a note outside the scale by accident. For piano and most other instruments capable of playing a note in one position only set fingerings are an advantage.

Recommended Reading

The Six Secrets of Guitar Fingering by Chuck Anderson

This book applies to the any stringed instrument like the ukulele as well as the guitar. The fingering principles of navigating the fingerboard in this book will allow you to navigate the ukulele neck with ease.

QUICKSTART Scale Fingerings for Ukulele



Volume I, C Tuning

Six essential scales for ukulele. Covers the Blues, Pentatonic, Dorian, Mixolydian, Aeolian and Ionian scales for a standard "low G" tuned (G C E A) Soprano, Concert and Tenor ukulele.

Scale Fingerings for Ukulele is a highly organized, efficient system of scale fingerings. Each fingering pattern is shown with a fingerboard shape, TAB and standard music notation. Related chords are also explained for each scale.

Master these fingerings and unlock your potential as a ukulele player.

For More Information visit
www.UkuleleChords.net



