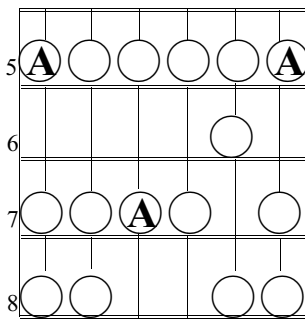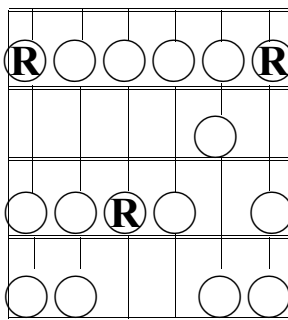# Phrasing/Root Notes

After learning a few standard Minor scale riffs, the next step will be to focus on *phrasing* these riffs. If a riff can be compared to a 'musical sentence', then phrasing is how 'punctuation' can be applied to a guitar solo. Without phrasing, a guitar solo will sound rambling and disorganized in very much the same way as a 'run-on sentence' does with language. This lesson will focus on the foundation of phrasing technique: the *root note*.
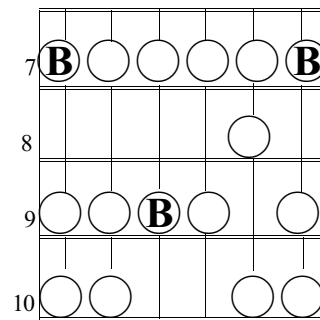
Root Notes/Box Patterns

In the Key of 'A' Minor, 'A' would be considered the *root note* of that key. Within the standard 'A' Minor Scale box pattern, there are three 'A' root notes located on the first, fourth, and sixth strings (*below left*). These fundamental root note positions on the first, fourth, and sixth strings (*below center*) remain the same for any key. In the Key of 'B' Minor for example, the three 'B' root notes would be located in the same root note positions, only two frets higher from the Key of 'A' Minor (*below right*).

'A' Root Notes
(Minor Scale)

Root/Octave Pattern
(Any Fret Position)

'B' Root Notes
(Minor Scale)

Root Note Focus - Standard Riffs

A *root note focus* establishes the mood or tone of a scale. All off the standard riffs learned so far have had a root note focus, with the 'A' root note being the last sustained note played in each riff *(shown below)*. The basic ascending riff using the 'A' Minor box pattern (*Natural Minor Scale -1*) also begins and ends on an 'A' root note. When combining these riffs, sustaining each root note provides more space or 'breathing room' between riffs, which is essential to developing phrasing technique.

'The Minor Scale Riff'   **'Hammer-On Riff'**   **'Low-Strings Riff'**

Root   Root   Root

Summary

So far, the foundation of building a music vocabulary for improvisation has been set by learning some standard riffs (*'musical sentences'*), knowing how to phrase these riffs (*'musical punctuation'*), and then combining these riffs (*'musical paragraphs'*).

Riffs	=	'Sentences'
Root Notes	=	'Punctuation'
Combined Riffs	=	'Paragraphs'