

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