

Theory and Application



Scales 2: Pentatonic Scales

Strictly speaking, any scale with five notes in it could be called a pentatonic scale (*penta* - five, *tonic* - notes). However, in music it is the convention that a set of

particular notes makes up the pentatonic scale. If the D major scale were to be assigned numbers, it would look like the chart below:

	D	E	F#	G	A	B	C#	D'
Musical Staff								
Scale Numbers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1
Mandolin Fingering	0	2	4	5	0	2	4	5

With the pentatonic scale, the 4th and 7th notes of the scale are not used, leaving the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th and 6th notes of the scale,

plus the octave note (which is the same as the first note, but an *octave* higher):

	D	E	F#	A	B	D'
Musical Staff						
Scale Numbers	1	2	3	5	6	1
Mandolin Fingering	0	2	4	0	2	5

We can extend the D pentatonic scale by playing the same five notes in different

octaves, so the extended D pentatonic scale could look like this:

	A, B,	D	E	F#	A	B	D'	E'	F#'	A'	B'	
Musical Staff												
Scale Numbers	5	6	1	2	3	5	6	1	2	3	5	6
Mandolin Fingering	2	4	0	2	4	0	2	5	0	2	5	7

So that's what we mean when we talk about a pentatonic scale, and the formula

- 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 - works for any major scale. For example:

G major:

G	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G
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A major:

A	B	C#	D	E	F#	G#	A
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