

PENTATONIC MAJOR SCALES

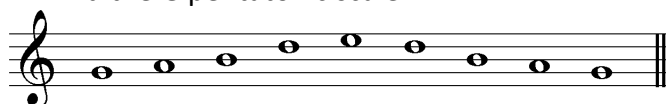
The pentatonic scale might well be one of the earliest scales ever used. Its use can be traced across the globe from the Hebrides, to China, West Africa and indigenous America. Its use endures in modern times, and it is still being reinvented into new songs in popular, jazz and art music cultures alike.

Pentatonic scales consist of five notes per octave. Theoretically, the scale can consist of any five individual pitches, but in practice there are certain groups of notes which are much more commonly heard than others.

The most common pentatonic scale is equivalent to the five black notes that exist within one octave on the piano, i.e. F#-G#-Bb-C#-Eb.

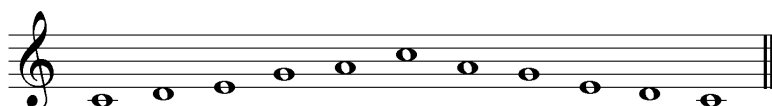


If you move up one semitone from each of these black notes, you will find the G pentatonic scale:



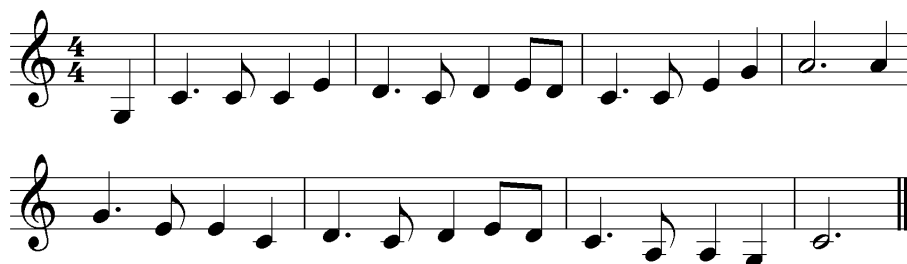
This scale does not contain any semitones, (it is “anahemitonic”). Notice that it contains the same notes as the G major scale, but without a subdominant note (C) or leading note (F#). The 4th and 7th scale degrees don’t occur in the pentatonic scale.

This pattern of notes can of course be transposed to any key, so starting on C we would find C, D, E, G and A, to make the C pentatonic scale. We can make a complete octave by continuing on as far as the tonic (high C in this case):



Because the notes we are using are those that exist in a **major** scale, this pattern is called a “major pentatonic” scale.

There are many pop, rock and folk songs based on the pentatonic scale. One well-known example is the song *Auld Lang Syne*.



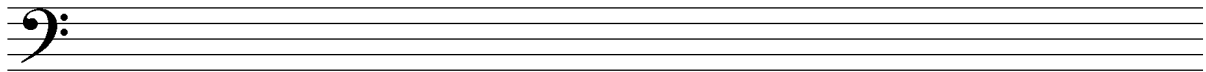
Three composers who are noted for their use of the pentatonic scale in “classical” music are Debussy, Ravel and Bartók.

SCALES EXERCISES

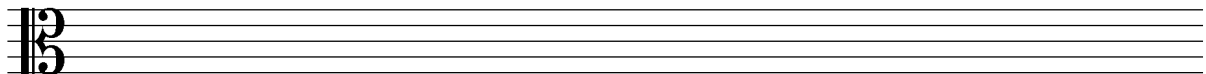
EXERCISE 1

Write out one octave of the following scales in crotchets (quarter notes), using a **key signature** and accidentals where necessary:

a. Db major ascending then descending.



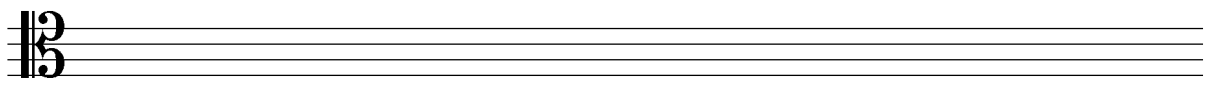
b. G# minor harmonic ascending then descending.



c. Ab major, descending then ascending.



d. Bb minor melodic, ascending then descending.



CHAPTER 11 | COMPOSITION

SETTING WORDS TO A RHYTHM - REVIEW

Word-setting was covered in-depth at grade 4. Here is a quick review of the most important points to remember.

- The **emphasised** syllable in a word should be placed in an **accented** position in the bar, when you set the words to a rhythm.
- Words that are **important** will also need to be put onto the stronger beats of the bar.
- Every individual **syllable** in the text needs to be set to a separate **note** – you cannot write just one note for a two-syllable word, for example.
- **Align** each syllable **under** the note that it is sung to. Words of two or more syllables will need **hyphens** to join the syllables together.
- Any text can be made to fit any time signature, so do experiment with a variety of different time signatures while you're practising.
- Write all the words and bar lines first, before you write any notes. This is to make sure that there is enough space to write the words neatly, as words take up more space than musical notes, and this will also help to make sure each important word goes on the first beat of each bar.
- The last note should be nice and long – at least one beat, and perhaps worth even the entire bar or more. If there is an upbeat (anacrusis) shorten the last bar to take this into account.

Here is an example in 4/4.

Be - yond the lodge the ci - ty lies Be - neath its drift of smoke.