A Minor Scale for Beginners: Lesson 1

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What is the A minor scale?

A scale is a very specific pattern of notes that is used to create the basic building blocks of music: melody and harmony. In order to build a scale from the intervals of the octave we need a formula. The minor scale formula is derived from the major scale and is:

1st note, whole step, 2nd note, half step, 3rd note, whole step, 4th note, whole step, 5th note, half step, 6th note, whole step, 7th note, whole step, 8th note (which is one octave higher than the first note).

Place the root note on the note A, apply the scale formula and we wind up with this pattern of notes:

A - whole step - B - half step - C - whole step - D - whole step - E - half step - F - whole step - G - whole step - A

Notice that the minor scale, just like the major scale, has 5 whole step intervals and 2 half step intervals. The crucial difference is the order of those various intervals. When we "compare and contrast" the minor scale with the major scale these differences become very apparent.

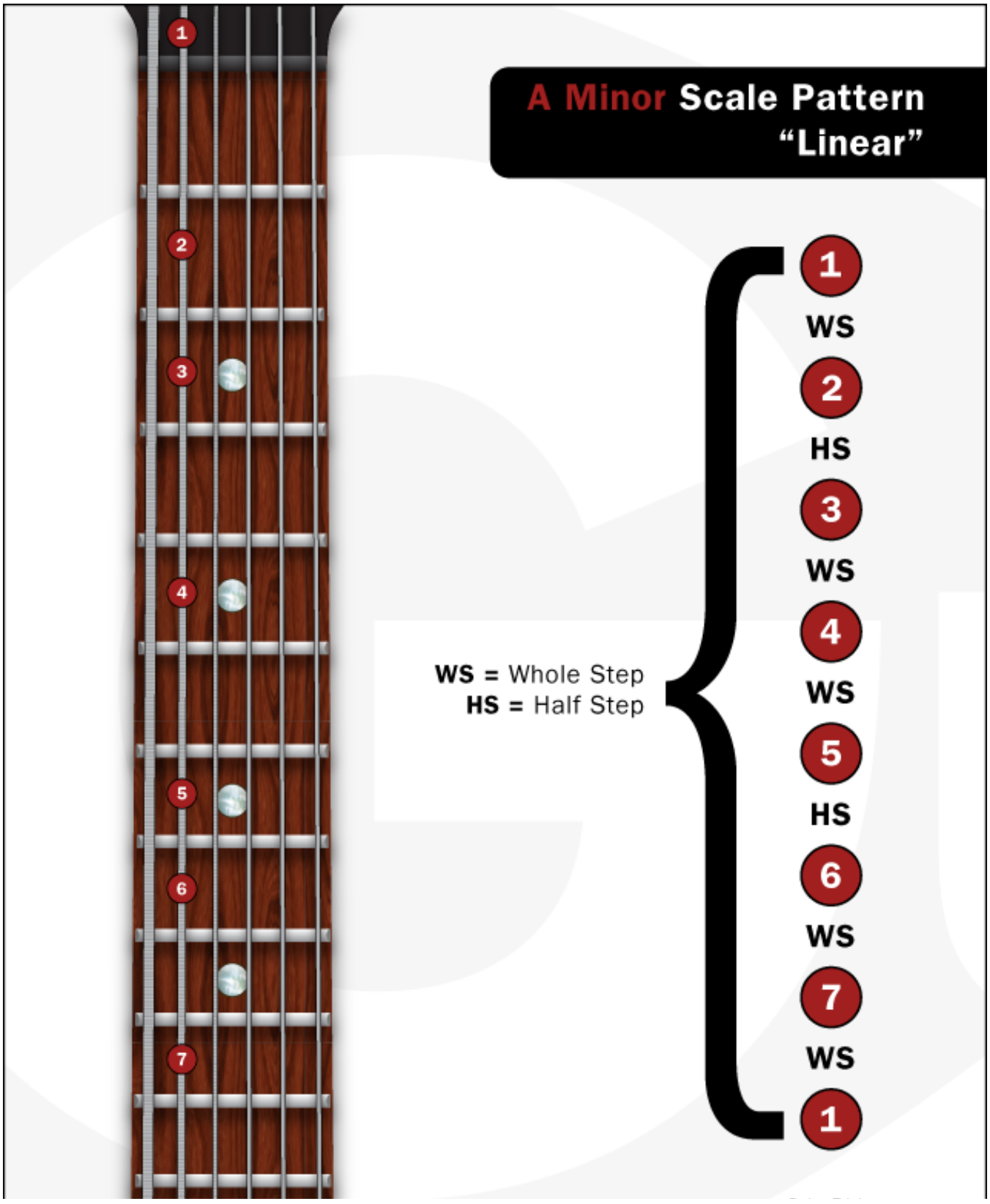
The order for the major scale is:

1 - whole step - 2 - whole step - major 3 - half step - 4 - whole step - 5 - whole step - major 6 - whole step - major 7 - half step - 8

The order for the minor scale was:

1 - whole step - 2 - half step - minor 3 - whole step - 4 - whole step - 5 - half step - minor 6 - whole step - minor 7 - whole step - 8

Notice I have stressed the notes that are different in each scale. The 1, 2, 4, and 5 notes are the same in each scale. The 3, 6, and 7 can be either major or minor depending upon the order (and thus location) of the intervals. This difference results in the scale being Major or Minor.


A Minor Scale Pattern
"Linear"
1
WS
2
HS
3
WS
4
WS
5
HS
6
WS
7
WS
1
WS = Whole Step
HS = Half Step


1
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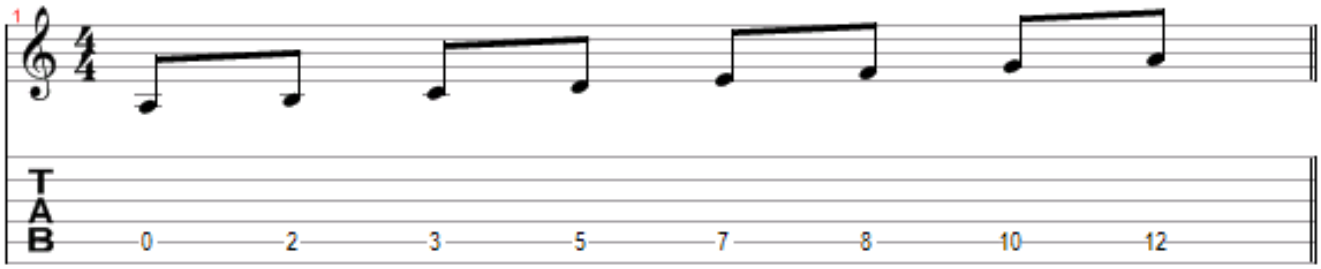
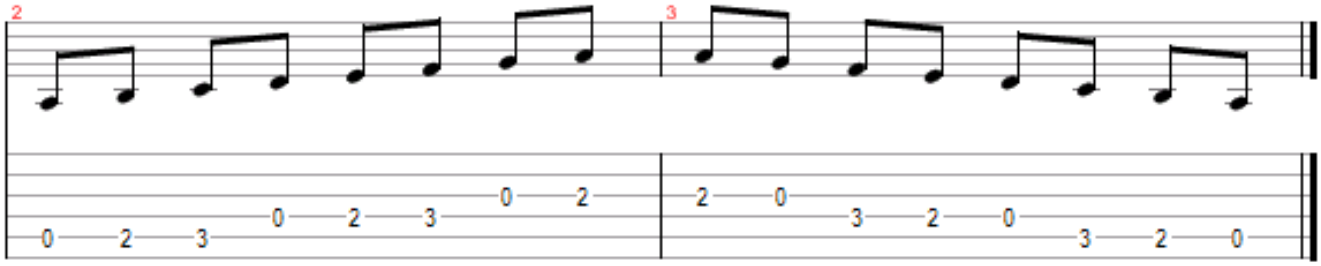
A Minor Scale

Linear Pattern



"Open Position"



A Minor Scale Formula

(1) WS (2) HS (3) WS (4) WS (5) HS (6) WS (7) WS (1)

A Minor Scale Notes

A B C D E F G A