

C Minor Scale for Beginners: Lesson 4

By Christopher Schlegel

Now we have taken the concept "minor scale" and applied it to the guitar in a physical form. We have literally taken an aspect of music theory and put it into practice. Let's take a closer look at the minor scale we can now play. First let's assign all the notes numbers, the term "scale degree" and a unique name:

C = 1 (1st scale degree) - root note
D = 2 (2nd scale degree) - second
E-flat = 3 (3rd scale degree) - minor third
F = 4 (4th scale degree) - fourth
G = 5 (5th scale degree) - fifth
A-flat = 6 (6th scale degree) - minor sixth
B-flat = 7 (7th scale degree) - minor seventh
c = 8 (8th scale degree) - octave of root

We can now see that all these different fretboard patterns are the result of only one scale formula. Eventually, we learn to be able to use whichever one best suits the purpose of the lick, riff, melody or song we are trying to play.

Another valuable thing we can do is compare and contrast the sound of major to minor scales. The different formulas result not only in different notes and fretboard patterns, but also, as a result in very different sounds.

While you are learning to play the different scales, you should also listen carefully to train your ear and mind to learn to recognize how major and minor scales sound different from each other. The easiest way to identify and label the difference is to say:

Major scales sound happy or joyful.
Minor scales sound sad or mournful.

The major and minor scales form the basis of the vast majority of the melodies of songs from Ancient Greece, to the chants of the Middle Ages, to the Baroque, Classical and Romantic Era. To this day in jazz, pop, rock, blues and country, it is the basis of melody and harmony and chord construction. So when you hear a "happy song" or a part of a song that "sound joyful", it is probably in a major key. This means that the melody is probably formed by using notes from a major scale. Also that it's chords are probably rooted in a major scale harmonies. Conversely if a song "sounds sad" or part of a song "sounds sad" it is probably in a minor key. This means that the melody is probably formed by using notes from a minor scale. Also that it's chords are probably rooted in a minor scale harmonies.

For examples, "Twist and Shout" is in a major key, while "House of the Rising Sun" is in a minor key.

Just like major, every minor scale has exactly the same formula. This means that you can use any of the 12 notes of the octave to start a scale: A, A-sharp, B, C, C-sharp, D, D-sharp, E, F, F-sharp, G, G-sharp. Then apply the formula and get a minor scale named by the note you started on. Therefore, for example, the A minor scale starts on A, and the A-sharp major scale starts on A-sharp and so on.

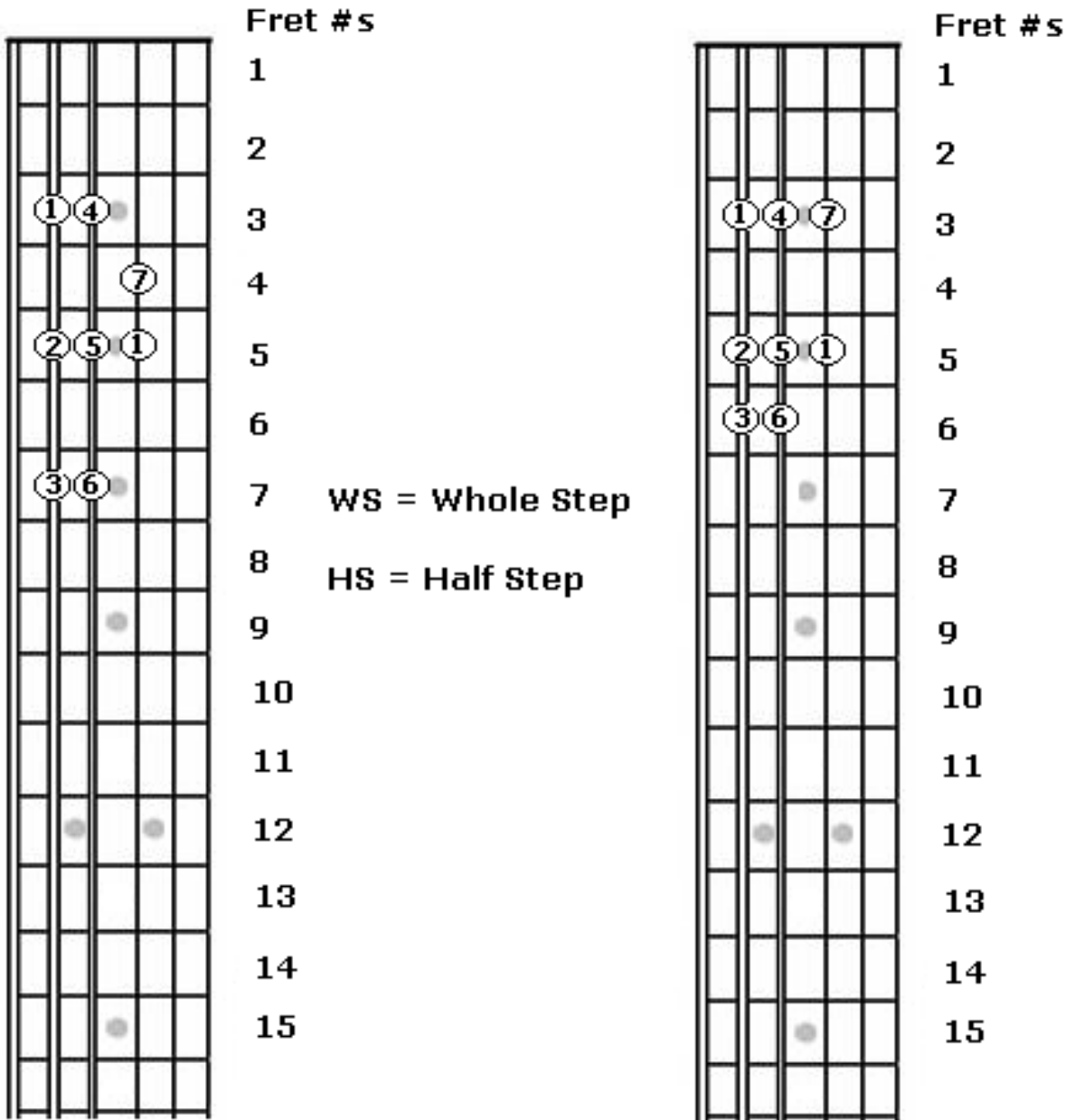
This is why each scale has a different pattern of letters, but a similar sound: they all have the same set of internal intervals between their scale "degrees" or notes.

So, this is how we identify the notes of the minor scale in music theory. Notice that this is how we also identified them when we were first thinking about intervals. But instead of labeling all 12 notes of the octave, we are only interested in the notes that make up the minor scale at this time. The concept of intervals and the 12 half-step intervals of the octave are the foundation of western tonality and music. The major scale and minor are (along with the harmonic possibilities derived from it) the foundation of western music melody conception.

If you take nothing else from these lessons on the C minor scale, remember this: The minor scale is very important; you should learn it, be able to recognize its sound and practice being able to play it anywhere on your guitar. It is only secondary to learning the major scale.

C Major Scale - Pattern 1

C Minor Scale - Pattern 1



C Major Scale Formula

① WS ② WS ③ HS ④ WS ⑤ WS ⑥ WS ⑦ HS ①

C Minor Scale Formula

① WS ② WS ③ WS ④ WS ⑤ HS ⑥ WS ⑦ WS ①

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(1) WS (2) HS (3) WS (4) WS (5) HS (6) WS (7) WS (8)

C Minor Scale

Linear Pattern

Musical notation for the linear C minor scale pattern in 4/4 time. The scale is written on a single staff in treble clef. The notes are: C4 (open), D4 (2), E4 (3), F4 (4), G4 (5), A4 (7), Bb4 (8), C5 (9). The fret numbers are listed below the staff: 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13, 15.

Pattern 1

Musical notation for Pattern 1 of the C minor scale. It consists of two measures. The first measure contains notes: C4 (open), D4 (2), E4 (3), F4 (4), G4 (5), A4 (7), Bb4 (8), C5 (9). The second measure contains notes: C5 (9), Bb4 (8), A4 (7), G4 (5), F4 (4), E4 (3), D4 (2), C4 (open). Fret numbers are listed below the staff: 3, 5, 6, 3, 5, 6, 3, 5 | 5, 3, 6, 5, 3, 6, 5, 3.

Pattern 2

Musical notation for Pattern 2 of the C minor scale. It consists of two measures. The first measure contains notes: C4 (open), D4 (2), E4 (3), F4 (4), G4 (5), A4 (7), Bb4 (8), C5 (9). The second measure contains notes: C5 (9), Bb4 (8), A4 (7), G4 (5), F4 (4), E4 (3), D4 (2), C4 (open). Fret numbers are listed below the staff: 3, 5, 1, 3, 5, 1, 3, 5 | 5, 3, 1, 5, 3, 1, 5, 3.

Pattern 3 - "Open Position"

Musical notation for Pattern 3 of the C minor scale, labeled "Open Position". It consists of two measures. The first measure contains notes: C4 (open), D4 (2), E4 (3), F4 (4), G4 (5), A4 (7), Bb4 (8), C5 (9). The second measure contains notes: C5 (9), Bb4 (8), A4 (7), G4 (5), F4 (4), E4 (3), D4 (2), C4 (open). Fret numbers are listed below the staff: 3, 0, 1, 3, 0, 1, 3, 1 | 1, 3, 1, 0, 3, 1, 0, 3.

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C Minor Scale Formula

① WS ② HS ③ WS ④ WS ⑤ HS ⑥ WS ⑦ WS ①

C Minor Scale Notes

C D E \flat F G A \flat B \flat C