

The Magic Of Improvisation

In this series of videos, we'll be starting from the absolute basics. So, if you're new to improvisation, or for that matter, new to lead guitar, this is the place to start.

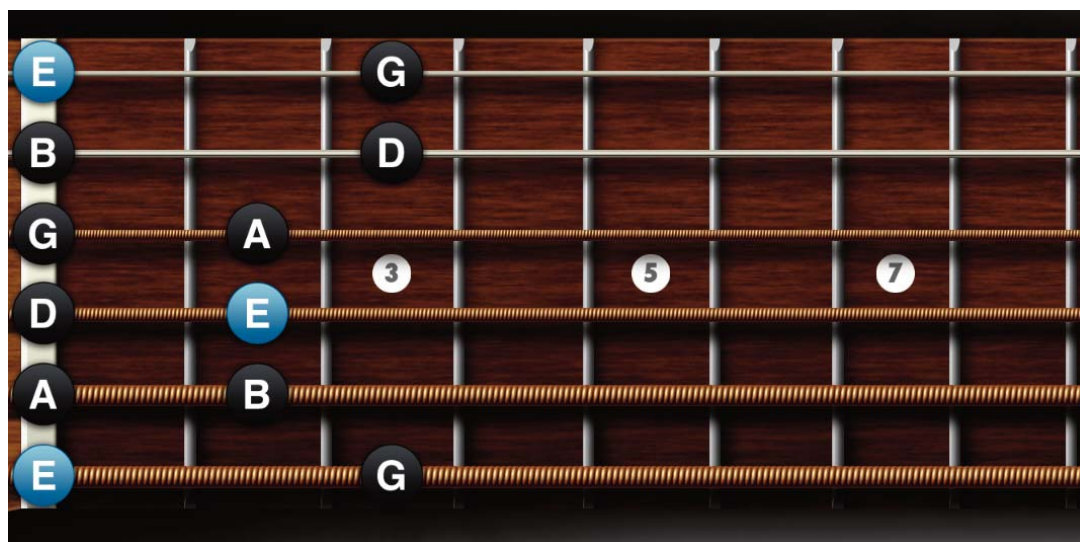
Over the course of these videos, I'll share with you an approach that I use when teaching improvisation to my students.

It all starts with the three core elements; The Ingredients, The Recipe and finally, The Magic!

The art of improvisation can take time, but by learning the most common scale, the E minor pentatonic, with clear and concise guidance this will become reality in no time at all. There are pointers on tips and techniques and 4 backing tracks, all in different styles, to help you on your way.

So where do we start? Essentially the basics; in other words, what notes comprise the E minor pentatonic scale, where are the notes on the fretboard situated, and how do we move from one position on the fretboard to another.

The Scale



The E minor Pentatonic scale in the open position (or position 1). Taken from Guitar Toolkit. To grab your copy of this great App, simply click on the image above.

Position 5.

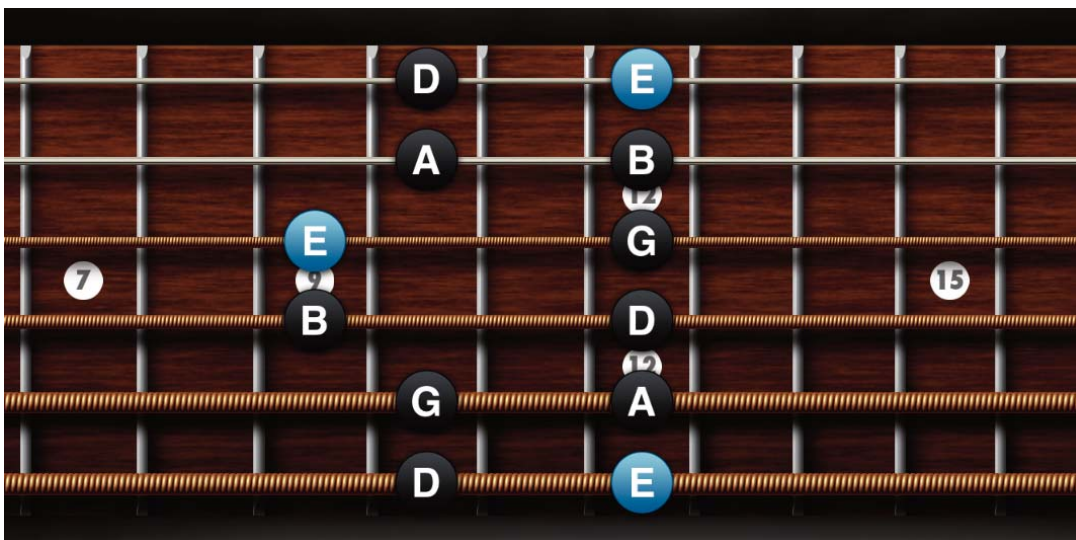
Notes

If you are desperate to be able to move between positions with fluidity (once you have learned all of them) and let's face it, we all do, this is a great place to start.

It is adjacent to position 1 on the octave, which all lead guitarists commit to memory very early on, so your thinking time does not need to be as long when you are improvising. Position 5 is also one of the easier ones to install to your memory bank.

Although not included in our licks, yet again, position 5 gives you a great opportunity to use double stops (especially on the 12th fret). Learn these licks and add in some double stops to start creating your own style.

The Scale



The E minor Pentatonic scale in the 5th position. Image from Guitar Toolkit. To grab your copy of this great App, simply click on the image above.

Position 1, On The Octave

Notes

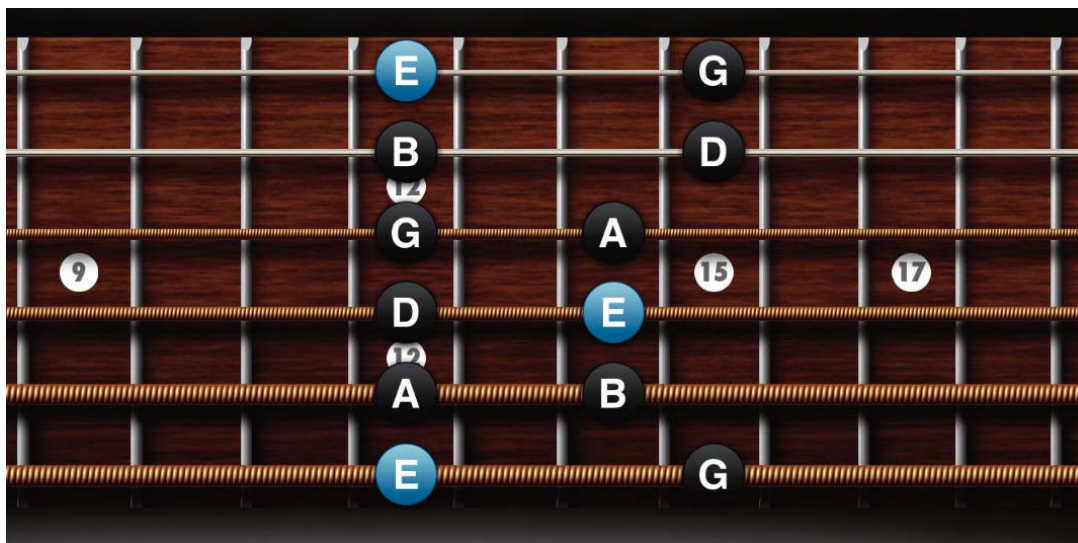
Yes – we're here at last. Along with position 1 using open strings, an octave below, this is the most commonly used, easiest to master and most pleasurable to play as a beginner.

Using this position allows you to start to create “screaming” and “passionate” solos. This is where you will find it easiest to bend and hold notes, start to play a little faster and create some meaningful and satisfying solos. OK it will take time, but I bet you are now thinking “I want more.”

The licks include both double stops and bends and show a couple of ways to move from position 1 to position 5, using slides, pull-offs and hammer-ons. This is where your own ideas and experimentation should take over.

When moving from one position to another, use a pull off or hammer-on instead of a slide, or simply play both notes without any of these. Perhaps employ a pre-bend or bend. Make each move your own and use the licks as an idea – and expand them to suit your own style, or that of the song or people you are jamming with.

The Scale



The E minor Pentatonic scale in the 1st position on the octave. Image from Guitar Toolkit. To grab your copy of this great App, simply click on the image above.

Practice Techniques

Notes

This is really an individualistic thing, because what works for some, may not work for others.

Some things that keep practicing fun are:

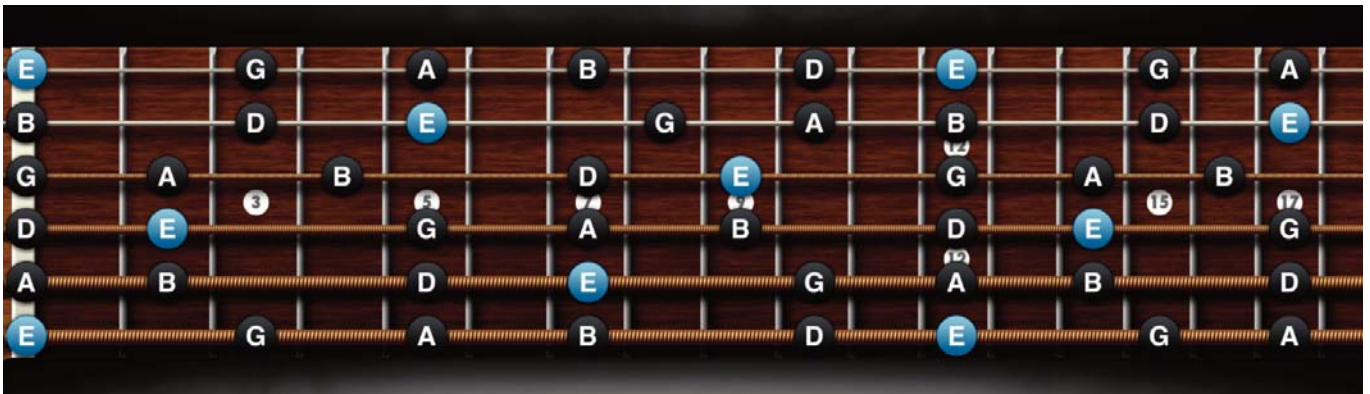
Whenever you finish a riff, lick or solo, play the notes of the scale on the string you finished on, starting with your last note. You will then become familiar with positions on that one string, and this will considerably aid your muscle memory.

Whilst practicing the scale on one string, memorise the notes and the number of frets between each note and play them in a different order, perhaps using the open string in between each other note played.

Give yourself a little test on where the E notes are in each position. Once you have done this, use the first 2 practice tips mentioned above. It is just a variation on a theme, but nevertheless useful and still fun.

Starting at the lowest E (the bottom open E string) work your way up to the E on the 12th fret of the top E string, using parts of all the scale positions. You can also do this in reverse. Perhaps use slides and hammer-ons on the way up and slides and pull-offs on the way down.

The full scale



The E Notes