

Blues music occasionally draws from diatonic harmony, most often in minor keys. A *minor blues* typically follows the 12-bar format, but utilizes minor scale changes (i–iv–v), rather than dominant seventh chords. Minor seventh voicings are often used, and it's not uncommon to include \flat VImaj7, as well as altered V7 chords (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7

MINOR PENTATONIC AND BLUES SCALE

Blues melodies and solos rely heavily on the *minor pentatonic scale*. The minor pentatonic scale is a five-note scale (the word pentatonic has Greek origins: *penta* meaning five, and *tonos* meaning tone) derived from the natural minor scale. (Note: The term *natural minor* scale simply refers to the minor scale, or relative minor scale of the major scale. It is used mainly when being compared to other minor-scale types, which will be discussed later.) Specifically, it is made up of the root, \flat 3rd, 4th, 5th, and \flat 7th scale degrees of the minor scale (minor pentatonic formula: 1– \flat 3–4–5– \flat 7). This essentially omits the “awkward” half-step intervals, which are normally located between the 2nd and the \flat 3rd, and the 5th and \flat 6th scale tones. Fig. 8 depicts this conversion process applied to the A minor scale.

Fig. 8



Removing the half-step intervals creates minor 3rd scale gaps between the root and \flat 3rd, and the 5th and \flat 7th. This actually transfers to finger-friendly, two-note-per-string patterns on the fretboard—small wonder it is so popular among guitarists of all styles, from rock to jazz. Fig. 9 shows six patterns of the A minor pentatonic scale. The sixth pattern is actually the same as the open-position pattern, just an octave up.

Fig. 9

A minor pentatonic