



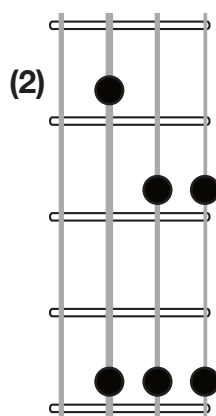
## Learning The Blues Scale

Scales like chords are typically learned as shapes using fingerboard grids, TAB or any number of other methods. They show the fingerboard shape, what strings to play and possibly the fingers that are used to play the scale. But what are the names of the notes? What chords fit the blues scale?

The notes could have come from Mars as far as most are concerned. This shape-based approach also carries over to TAB where you are told what string and fret to play. There's still no real connection to where the notes came from or how to use the scale beyond the initial learned shape. You are pretty much left to fly by ear beyond that.

This lesson explores the steps for learning scales and the valuable information that can be used to learn additional essential scales and keys.

### Blues or Minor Pentatonic Scales

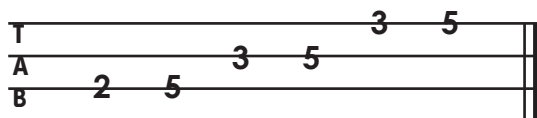


The five note Major Pentatonic and Blues or Minor Pentatonic scales are two of the most common used in contemporary music. This lesson will focus on the blues scale in the common key of D.

Here are the notes of the D Blues or Minor Pentatonic scale. It is these notes that produce the sound, fingerboard shape and TAB.

#### D Blues ( D F G A C D' )

Shown here as a graphic fingerboard shape (*to the left*) with the dots indicating the notes available in the scale. At fret (2), the notes D F G A C D' are the D Blues or Minor Pentatonic scale.



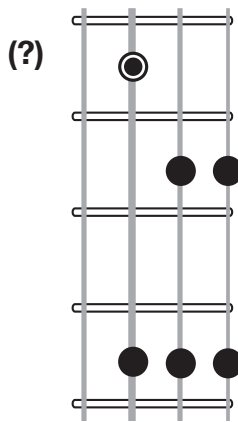
*Here is a TAB representation of the D Blues scale*

Both the fingerboard shape and the TAB do not require that you to know the names of the notes for the scale. This is a real disadvantage further down the road when trying to advance your improvisation skills.

One advantage of TAB is that it can get you started quickly using a scale.

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## Transposing to Additional keys

Here the root or letter name of the scale is indicated using .

Moving each note of the shape up and down the fingerboard by the same number of frets transposes the scale to other keys, with the name of the scale being the name of the note that is located (string and fret) at the .

See the Transposing Chords lesson for information on transposing chords as well as scales.

A simple transposition skill is to memorize the sequence of twelve notes that make up the chromatic scale. The chromatic scale contains all the notes that in one octave and uses all seven letters that are the musical alphabet.

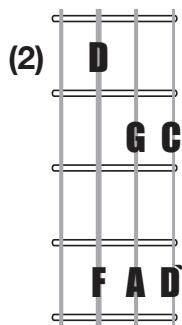
Starting with D on string 3, fret (2) the chromatic scale would be:

| Notes | D   | D#  | E   | F   | F#  | G   | G#  | A   | A#   | B    | C    | C#   | D'   |
|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|------|------|
| Fret  | (2) | (3) | (4) | (5) | (6) | (7) | (8) | (9) | (10) | (11) | (12) | (13) | (14) |

Move shape one fret higher and the scale is the D# Blues scale. Two frets higher is the E Blues scale, etc.

This is a useful transposition skill but does not reveal the chords that a scale works with or the individual notes of the scale. The shape remains the same but the TAB would change.

Or - learn the notes of the ukulele neck and move the whole shape up or down the fingerboard so that the is on the root of the new key. Still no chords or names of notes.



## Identifying the Names of the Notes

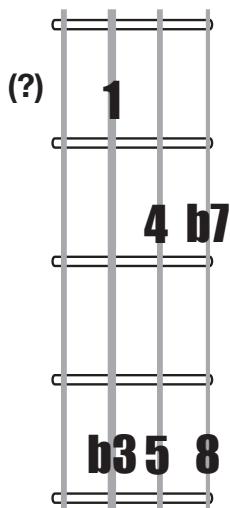
Using a fingerboard chart you can come up with the names of the notes.

Every scale has a very specific set of notes. For the D Blues scale they are D F G A C D'.

See the **UkuleleLesson Enharmonic Equivalents** for more information on alternate note names.

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## Getting More Information

A scale is made up of a series of steps. These steps can be half (**1**), whole steps (**2**) or greater. The blues scale has the step sequence of **3, 2, 2, 3, 2**.

A scale can be generically thought of by how it relates to a major scale's, *scale degrees*. Which turns out to be an easier method.

|          |              |          |          |           |          |          |          |           |           |
|----------|--------------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>D</b> | <b>Major</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>E</b> | <b>F#</b> | <b>G</b> | <b>A</b> | <b>B</b> | <b>C#</b> | <b>D'</b> |
|          |              | 1        | 2        | 3         | 4        | 5        | 6        | 7         | 8         |
| <b>D</b> | <b>Blues</b> | <b>D</b> |          | <b>F</b>  | <b>G</b> | <b>A</b> |          | <b>C</b>  | <b>D'</b> |
|          |              | 1        |          | <b>b3</b> | 4        | 5        |          | <b>b7</b> | 8         |

Notice the Blues scale does not contain a second or sixth scale degree.

The Blues or Minor Pentatonic scale is a sub set of the Natural Minor or Aeolian scale.

Here are the notes of the D Aeolian or Natural Minor scale and how it relates to its parallel major scale.

|          |                |          |          |           |          |          |           |           |           |
|----------|----------------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>D</b> | <b>Aeolian</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>E</b> | <b>F</b>  | <b>G</b> | <b>A</b> | <b>Bb</b> | <b>C</b>  | <b>D'</b> |
|          |                | 1        | 2        | <b>b3</b> | 4        | 5        | <b>b6</b> | <b>b7</b> | 8         |
| <b>D</b> | <b>Blues</b>   | <b>D</b> |          | <b>F</b>  | <b>G</b> | <b>A</b> |           | <b>C</b>  | <b>D'</b> |
|          |                | 1        |          | <b>b3</b> | 4        | 5        |           | <b>b7</b> | 8         |
| <b>D</b> | <b>Major</b>   | <b>D</b> | <b>E</b> | <b>F#</b> | <b>G</b> | <b>A</b> | <b>B</b>  | <b>C#</b> | <b>D'</b> |
|          |                | 1        | 2        | 3         | 4        | 5        | 6         | 7         | 8         |

By knowing the major scale other scales can be recalled using simple numeric formulas.

*See the **UkuleleLesson Reference Scales** for information on referring all scale from two reference scales.*

## What Are a Scale's Associated Chords?

Each scale has an associated set of chords that are built from the notes or scale degrees of the scale. The Blues scale is a very flexible scale as its associated chords come from more than one scale.

The **Blues** scale is a minor scale that works great over chords progressions where the chords come from a Minor tonality and surprisingly, this scale also works over *maj* and *seventh* chords. It's this minor or a major tonality that gives us that *bluesy* feel.

### Chords

|    |        |    |               |
|----|--------|----|---------------|
| D  | Dm     | D7 | I maj, min, 7 |
| G  | Gm     | G7 | I maj, min, 7 |
| A  | Am     | A7 | I maj, min, 7 |
| F  |        |    | bIII maj      |
| Bb | Bbmaj7 | G7 | bVI maj, maj7 |
| C  |        |    | bVII maj, 7   |

*\*NOTE: These Roman Numerals indicate a chord's function within its scale harmony or tonality.*

## Blues vs. Minor Pentatonic

*Resolving the debate.*

You can open countless music books and see references to a Blues scale and a Minor Pentatonic scale as being two different scales. This is particularly common in books intended for the commercial market.

A **D Blues** scale in most books would be listed as D F G G# A C D'. The G# is just a chromatic passing tone and not a real scale degree. So the D Minor Pentatonic scale (D F G A C') and D Blues (D F G A C') can be thought of as the same scale and leave the debate up to the theorists.

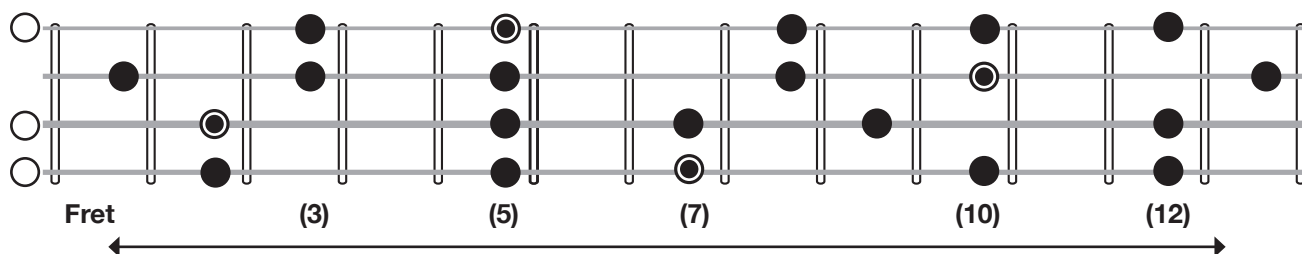
For this less, the Blues scale is considered the same scale as the Minor Pentatonic.

*For this UkuleleLesson The Blues Scale is considered the same scale as the Minor Pentatonic scale. The traditional #4/b5. Chromatic Passing Tone is just one of the additional scale tones or passing tones that can be added.*

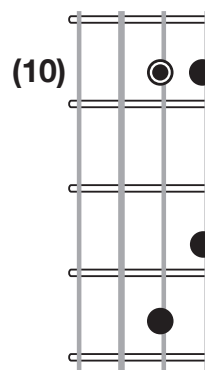
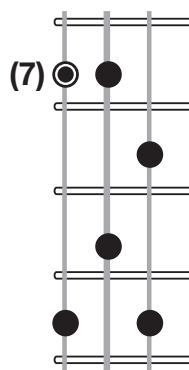
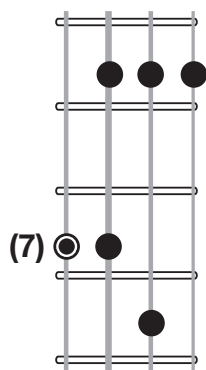
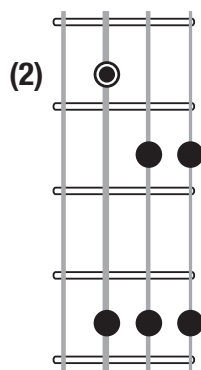
## Learning the Blues Scale

By extending the scale below the starting root and above the octave with available scale notes, we can show all available scale notes on the ukulele fingerboard.

Here are all available notes for the D blues scale ("C" tuning).



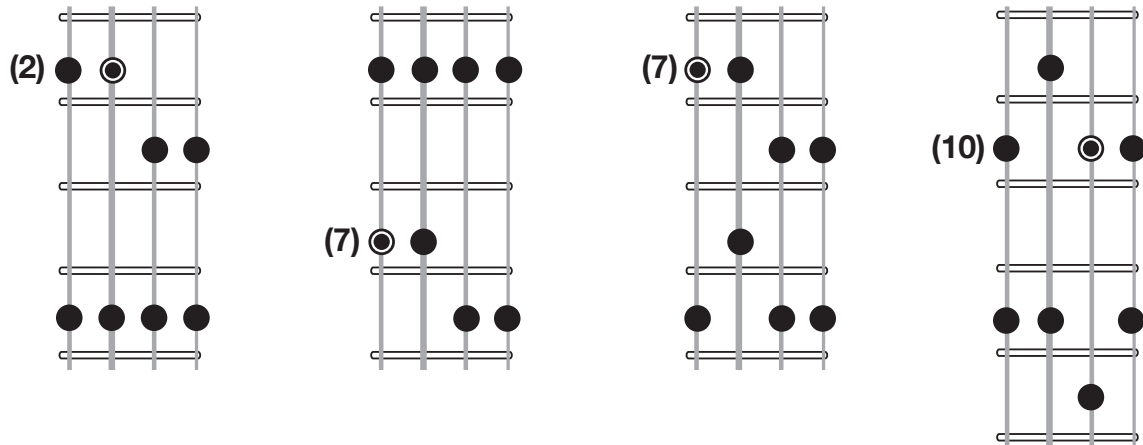
By extracting easy to learn and manage **one octave** shapes we have these fingerboard shapes.



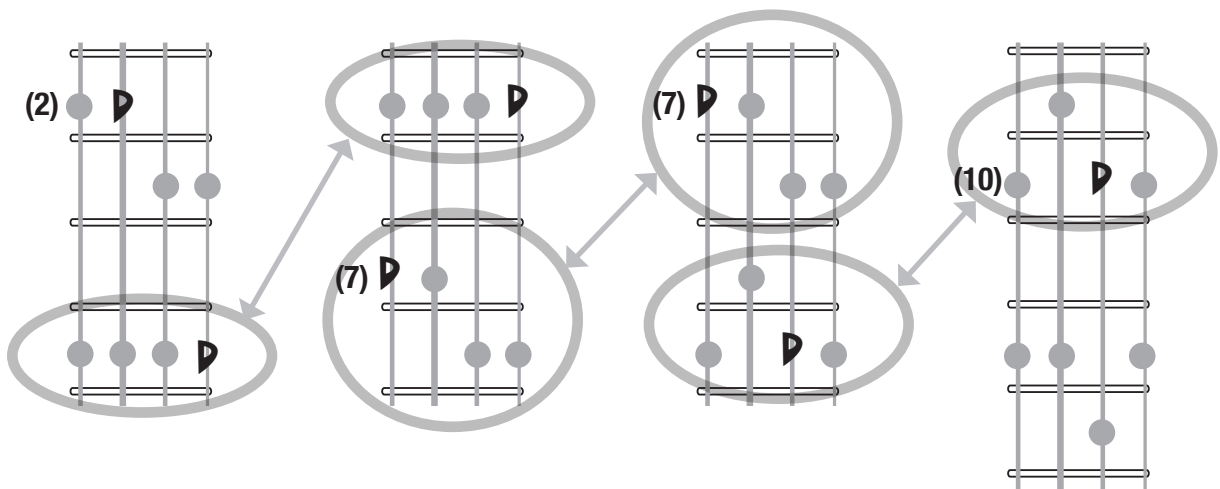
These two one octave blues scale positions are only playable when using a low "G" C tuning.

This is a partial D Blues scale:  
D F G A.

Expanding the one octave scales below the starting note and above the ending note we have these fingerboard shapes.



Notice the overlap of these scales shapes.



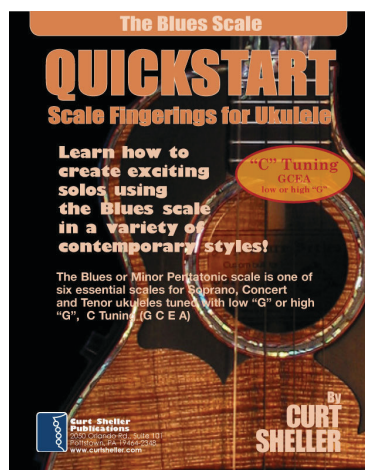
## Navigating the Fingerboard

The ukulele has the flexibility and ability to play the exact same note on different strings. This flexibility of alternate note locations and the possibility of playing any note with any finger makes moving beyond the set fingerings of initial basic scale shapes difficult for most.

Moving beyond fixed scale fingerings is a real advantage. This can be achieved by visualizing the ukulele fingerboard as a pianist would visualize the piano keyboard.

For a pianist, a scale like C Major (C D E F G A B C') is only the white keys of the piano. This color coding of a scale makes it easy to avoid playing notes outside the scale by accident.

### QUICKSTART Scale Fingerings for Ukulele - "C" Tuning



#### The Blues Scale

The Blues scale is one of six essential scales for ukulele. Covers the Blues scale for a standard "low G" or high "G" tuned (G C E A) Soprano, Concert and Tenor ukulele.

Scale Fingerings for Ukulele, the Blues Scale is a highly organized, efficient system of scale fingerings. Each fingering pattern is shown with a fingerboard shape, TAB and standard music notation. Related chords are also explained for each scale.

**Master these fingerings and unlock your potential as a ukulele player.**

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