Scales

- E Minor Scale
- Minor Scale on Guitar: Patterns, Positions & Theory

E Minor Scale

Notes of E Minor Scale

The E Minor Scale contains one sharp, F#. The rest of the notes are all naturals.

E – F# – G – A – B – C – D

Scale Formula

Intervals	Root	Major 2nd	Minor 3rd	Perfect 4th	Perfect 5th	Minor 6th	Minor 7th
Notes	E	F#	G	A	B	C	D

Scale **Structure**

E Minor is a minor scale and follows the minor scale structure of whole and half step intervals:

W H W W H W W

Whole step half step pattern for e minor scale

Scale Positions

The diagrams below outline the 5 CAGED positions for the E Minor scale.

Position 1

E minor scale position 1 diagram

Position 2

E minor scale position 2 diagram

Position 3

E minor scale position 3 diagram

Position 4

E minor scale position 4 diagram

Position 5

E minor scale position 5 diagram

Chords in the Key of E Minor

Degree	i	ii°	III	iv	v	VI	VII
Chord	Em	F#dim	G	Am	Bm	C	D
Chord Notes	E – G – B	F# – A – C	G – B – D	A – C – E	B – D – F#	C – E – G	D – F# – A

Relative and Parallel Scales

Relative Major of E Minor: G major | G – Am – Bm – C – D – Em – F#dim

Parallel Major of E Minor: E major | E – F#m – G#m – A – B – C#m – Ddim

Modes

The following are the modes of E Minor:

- G Ionian (Major)
- A Dorian (Minor)
- B Phrygian (Minor)
- C Lydian (Major)
- D Mixolydian (Major)
- E Aeolian (Minor)
- F# Locrian (Minor)

Backing Track

https://www.youtube.com/embed/1XChG8kl1To

Minor Scale on Guitar: Patterns, Positions & Theory

What is the minor scale? How is it different than the major scale? In this lesson we'll break down the minor scale and its qualities and take a look at how it is applied to the guitar fretboard.

If you're not familiar with the major scale, I would recommend checking out Major Scale: Patterns, Positions, and Theory first and coming back to this lesson. This lesson will make much more sense if you first have an understanding of the major scale.

Minor Scale Formula

Unlike the major scale that is bright and happy, the minor scale has a sad and emotional feel to it. However, like the major scale, it is a diatonic scale consisting of 7 notes and an octave note.

So what makes this scale different?

The difference lies in the 3rd degree of the scale. The major scale contains a major 3rd. That is, the 3rd of the major scale is 2 whole steps away from the root. The minor scale, however, contains a minor, or flattened 3rd degree that is 1 1/2 steps away from the root.

In the table below you see the differences between the G major scale and G minor scale.

Scale Degree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
G Major	G	A	B	C	D	E	F#
G Minor	G	A	B♭	C	D	E♭	F

G natural minor scale intervals

From the diagram above, you can see the natural minor scale formula is as follows:

- Root
- Major 2nd
- Minor 3rd
- Perfect 4th

- Perfect 5th
- Minor 6th
- Minor 7th

Major Minor Scale Interval Comparison

This formula holds true for all natural minor scales, whether it's G minor, B minor, E minor etc.

In comparing the minor scale to the major scale, the minor scale consists of flattened 3rd, 6th, and 7th intervals. Compare the neck diagram of the two scales and notice the position of the 3rd, 6th, and 7th intervals between the two.

Minor Scale Steps

You learned that the major scale follows a pattern of whole and half steps. The minor scale, too, follows a set pattern of whole and half steps as follows:

Whole Step – Half Step – Whole Step – Whole Step – Half Step – Whole Step – Whole Step

- From G to A is a whole step (2 semitones) (G – G# – A)
- From A to B♭ is a half step (1 semitone) (A – B♭)
- From B♭ to C is a whole step (B♭ – B – C)
- From C to D is a whole step (C – C# – D)
- From D to E♭ is a half step (D – E♭)
- From E♭ to F is a whole step (E♭- E – F)
- From F to G is a whole step (F – F# – G)

Minor scale whole step half step pattern on guitar fretboard

You can construct the minor scale in any key by following this formula of whole/half steps. If you moved the root note up two frets to A and followed the same whole-step/half-step structure, you would form the A minor scale.

Minor Scale Patterns and Positions on the Guitar Fretboard

The notes that make up guitar scales exist all over the fretboard. However, they can be grouped together to form distinct patterns or shapes that make them easy to learn.

In the examples below we'll take a look at the five positions of the minor scale based on the CAGED system. Each diagram contains the intervals for the scale position, the recommended fingering for each note in the position, and highlights the root note locations for each position.

It's very important to learn the root note positions for each scale shape. The root note will act as an anchor point for you to become familiar with each scale position and be able to quickly identify and locate any scale position on the neck.

Below each scale diagram is the guitar tab for playing that position and the audio so you can hear how it should sound.

Position 1

Natural minor scale position 1 notes and fingerings

Starting with the G note on the 6th string, play each note ascending and descending across the fretboard. When starting out, begin and end on the lowest root note. This helps develop your ear for how the scale should sound as you progress through it.

The root notes in this position are found on strings 6, 5, and 1. This example happens to be for the G minor scale, but the root notes would be in the same location regardless of which minor scale it is, be it A minor, E minor, etc.

Guitar tab for position 1 of natural minor scale

Position 2

Fretboard diagram of notes and fingerings for position 2 of the minor scale

Position 2 contains two root notes, which are found on strings 4 and 2. When playing this pattern, start with the root note on string 4 and progress through the scale ascending and descending across the fretboard, making sure to play all notes in this position. Use the tab below to guide you.

Guitar tab for position 2 of natural minor scale

Position 3

Fretboard diagram for position 3 of the natural minor scale

Position 3 of the minor scale contains two root notes, found on strings 5 and 2. Start playing this pattern from the root note on string 5 and progress through all notes ascending and descending.

Guitar tab for position 3 of natural minor scale

Position 4

Natural minor scale position 4 fretboard diagram

In position 4, the root notes can be found on strings 5 and 3. Begin playing this position from the root note on the 5th string.

Guitar tab for position 4 of natural minor scale

Position 5

Fretboard diagram for position 5 of the natural minor scale

Position 5 is the only other position to contain three root notes. The root notes in position 5 are found on strings 6, 3, and 1. Begin playing this pattern starting with the root note on string 6 and progress through all the notes.

Guitar tab for position 5 of natural minor scale

Connecting the Minor Scale Shapes

If you were looking closely at each scale position, you may have noticed a relationship between a given position and the position adjacent to it.

The scale positions aren't independent of each other, but rather they are connected by shared notes between each position.

In the diagram below, you can see how each position of the minor scale is connected.

5 minor scale patterns connected

After the 5th position, the scale patterns repeat starting with the first position. Notice how the notes from the 5th position overlap the notes from the 1st position.

These patterns hold true for any minor scale. This is why the diagrams reference intervals rather than actual note names of the scale. The interval relationship is the same regardless of whether it's the E minor scale, B minor scale, etc.

By learning the root note positions and interval relationships for one scale, in this case G minor, you subsequently have learned it for all minor scales. This makes transposing the scale to another key as simple as changing the root note on which a given pattern is based.

Single Octave Minor Scale Shapes

The minor scale positions in the sections above correlate with the CAGED system and span two octaves. However, these shapes can be broken down further into single octave shapes as well with the lowest root notes based on strings 3 through 6.

Root on 6th String

With the root on the 6th string, you can form the following patterns. Note that the pattern in the first and last diagrams are the same, only the first uses open strings.

Single octave minor scale patterns with root on the 6th string

Root on the 5th String

With the root on the 5th string you get the following three scale patterns.

Single octave minor scale patterns with root on the 5th string

Root on the 4th String

With the root on string 4, you can form the following three patterns.

Single octave minor scale patterns with root on the 4th string

Root on the 3rd String

Similar to the patterns found when building from the 6th string, the 3rd string also gives you three distinct patterns and one pattern that incorporates open strings.

Single octave minor scale patterns with root on the 3rd string

Wrap Up

The minor scale produces a tonality that is more dark and sad than that of the major scale. It is created by lowering the 3rd degree of the major scale and follows a whole-step/half-step structure of W-H-W-W-H-W-W. Following this structure, we end up with flattened notes at the 3rd, 6th, and 7th degrees of the scale. Practice each position of the scale in multiple keys to familiarize yourself with the patterns all over the neck. You can also utilize the exercises in the guitar scale exercises lesson to get the patterns under your fingers.

To expand on your knowledge of the minor scale, you can also learn about the 3 notes per string minor scale, which is another way the minor scale notes can be grouped across the fretboard.