

# Mandolin Pentatonic Scales

Lesson "What is a Pentatonic Scale" by Brad Laird

## D Major Scale

## D Major Pentatonic Scale

Numbers indicate scale degree  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1

1 2 3 5 6 1

TAB 4/4 0 2 4 5 0 2 4 5 0 2 4 0 2 5

The image shows two musical staves for the D Major Scale and D Major Pentatonic Scale. The top staff is in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The D Major Scale is shown in two measures: the first measure contains notes D4, E4, F#4, G4, and the second measure contains A4, B4, C#5, D5. The D Major Pentatonic Scale is shown in two measures: the first measure contains notes D4, E4, F#4, G4, and the second measure contains A4, B4. The bottom staff is a guitar-style TAB with a 4/4 time signature. The D Major Scale TAB is 0 2 4 5 0 2 4 5. The D Major Pentatonic Scale TAB is 0 2 4 0 2 5.

## G Major Scale

## G Major Pentatonic Scale

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1

1 2 3 5 6 1

TAB 5 0 2 3 5 0 2 3 5 0 2 5 0 3

The image shows two musical staves for the G Major Scale and G Major Pentatonic Scale. The top staff is in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The G Major Scale is shown in two measures: the first measure contains notes G4, A4, B4, C5, and the second measure contains D5, E5, F#5, G5. The G Major Pentatonic Scale is shown in two measures: the first measure contains notes G4, A4, B4, C5, and the second measure contains D5, E5. The bottom staff is a guitar-style TAB with a 4/4 time signature. The G Major Scale TAB is 5 0 2 3 5 0 2 3. The G Major Pentatonic Scale TAB is 5 0 2 5 0 3.

## BRAD'S TIPS FOR THIS LESSON

Pentatonic scales are the basis for many traditional folk and bluegrass melodies. Try playing simple songs (such as Amazing Grace) and you'll discover how many or all of the notes are pentatonic scale notes. See what other songs you can play with just those 5 notes.

Pentatonic scales are also a useful tool for improvising breaks and solos on the mandolin. For example, a D pentatonic scale (as shown above) can successfully be used over the D major, E minor, F# minor, G major, A major, and B minor chords!

For a more in-depth explanation of this idea and to learn more about using pentatonic scales for improvising on the mandolin explore the lessons:

- Pentatonic Improv Basics
- Pentatonic Improvisation 2
- Pentatonic Improvisation 3