The Pentatonic & Blues Scales

two scales that cannot sound wrong — the improviser's best friends
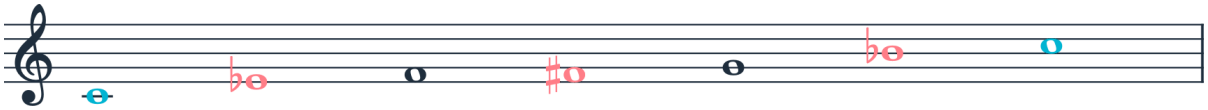
Remove the two "spicy" notes from a major scale (4 and 7 — the half-step makers) and five notes remain: the major pentatonic. With no half steps left, **every note sounds good over everything** — which is why folk tunes worldwide and every campfire guitarist live here. Add three "blue notes" (♭3, ♯4, ♭7) to a different five-note frame and you get the **blues scale** — the sound of the 12-bar blues you already play.

C MAJOR PENTATONIC — C D E G A



Fun fact: the five BLACK keys form a perfect pentatonic scale — your black-key pieces were pentatonic all along!

C BLUES SCALE — C E♭ F F♯ G B♭



The coral notes are the **blue notes** — deliberately "wrong" notes that make the blues blue.

Try it The no-fail test: hold the pedal down, play any black keys in any order — instant beauty (pentatonic). Then loop the 12-bar blues with your left hand and noodle the C blues scale on top with your right: linger on E♭ and B♭, slide F♯ into G, and you are officially improvising. Neither scale has a wrong note — only bolder and shyer ones. Write them: Exercise 81.

LISTEN
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