

# Intervallic Ideas for Improvisation

By Paul Tauterouff

When soloing, people often tend to play the easiest notes to use in the scale, generally the next note in order. A good way to generate interesting sounding licks is to play different intervals, rather than simply playing the notes of a scale sequentially. By skipping notes, you create interesting and less predictable gaps between pitches, which in turn leads to more unique sounding solos. Our first exercises use a common scale, the Minor Pentatonic Scale (in G).

## Pentatonic Exercises:

By staying within the Minor Pentatonic Scale and skipping one note, the majority of intervals in this first exercise are perfect 4ths (5 half steps), except for B<sup>b</sup> to D, which is a major 3<sup>rd</sup> interval (4 half steps).

### Example 1:

Example 1 musical notation and guitar fretboard diagram. The notation shows a treble clef staff with a melody consisting of two phrases. The first phrase starts on G4 and moves through A4, B<sup>b</sup>4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The second phrase starts on G5 and moves through A5, B<sup>b</sup>5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6. The fretboard diagram shows fingerings for the strings T, A, and B.

In Example 2, we skip two notes, creating perfect 5<sup>th</sup> intervals except for D to B<sup>b</sup>, which is a #5 interval.

### Example 2:

Example 2 musical notation and guitar fretboard diagram. The notation shows a treble clef staff with a melody consisting of two phrases. The first phrase starts on G4 and moves through A4, B<sup>b</sup>4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5. The second phrase starts on G5 and moves through A5, B<sup>b</sup>5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6. The fretboard diagram shows fingerings for the strings T, A, and B.

The trick to using this technique in a musical way is to play these intervallic ideas in short phrases. If you continuously use these intervallic techniques in long runs without changing either the interval used, or rhythm, they will sound like mechanical exercises, and that is NOT what we are going for here. We are trying to create interesting, musical phrases!

Here is a third pentatonic idea, which I use quite often. You play a descending two-note lick while ascending, and an ascending two-note lick while descending. It creates an interesting sound, and is simpler to finger than the first two exercises. It is fairly easy to play this phrase fast, especially when utilizing hammers and pulls.

Example 3:

Note: Remember, don't overuse any of these ideas, or all of your lead playing will begin to sound the same. It's by mixing things up that we hold the listener's interest. Variety is the key to creating memorable solos.

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