

Eric Bolvin

For All Instruments  
Treble Clef Edition

# The Big Book of Pentatonics & Fourths

Eric Bolvin Music Studios  
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# The Big Book Of Pentatonics & Fourths

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**Watch the video at [www.BolvinMusic.com](http://www.BolvinMusic.com)**

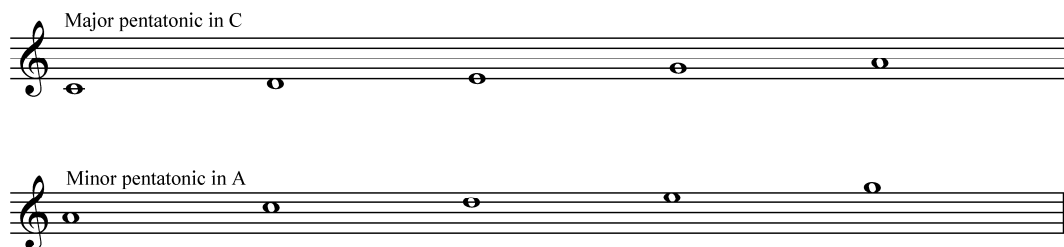
# The Big Book Of Pentatonics & Fourths

## Introduction

### The Pentatonic Scales

A pentatonic scale is any group of five notes that cover the span of an octave. There are literally hundreds of pentatonic scales in Western music, and hundreds more that use alternate tunings.

This book will focus on the most common pentatonic scale, the major pentatonic and its relative minor. In the key of C the notes of the major pentatonic are: C D E G A. If you start on C and go up in perfect 5ths, you will get all the notes of the major pentatonic. The relative minor scale in A minor is A C D E G. If you start on E and go up in perfect 4ths, you will get the minor pentatonic in A.



This symmetry makes this scale very useful to the improviser and to all musicians in desire of highly developed technique.

### Uses in jazz improvisation

The pentatonic scales are commonly used for melodic ideas in jazz, blues and rock music. Take for example, Pattern #2 in the key of C major or A minor. This is most obvious usage of the pentatonic scale.

Here is Pattern #2 with some chord examples showing how it is used in its "home key":



The same pattern can be used over chords from other keys:

F $\Delta$ 7 D-7 B $\flat$  $\Delta$ 7 $\sharp$ 11 G-7 E-7 F $\sharp$  $\not\approx$ 7 G $\Delta$ 7 B $\not\approx$ 7



A musical staff in 2/4 time showing a pentatonic scale pattern over a series of chords. The notes are F, G, A, B, and C. The chords listed above are F $\Delta$ 7, D-7, B $\flat$  $\Delta$ 7 $\sharp$ 11, G-7, E-7, F $\sharp$  $\not\approx$ 7, G $\Delta$ 7, and B $\not\approx$ 7.

And the same pattern can be used over altered dominant chords:

E $\flat$ 7( $\sharp$ 11)<sub>( $\flat$ 9)</sub> F $\sharp$ 7( $\sharp$ 11)<sub>( $\sharp$ 9)</sub> A 7( $\sharp$ 9) E7( $\sharp$ 9)<sub>( $\sharp$ 5)</sub> B7( $\sharp$ 9)<sub>( $\sharp$ 5)</sub>



A musical staff in 2/4 time showing a pentatonic scale pattern over a series of altered dominant chords. The notes are E, F, G, A, and B. The chords listed above are E $\flat$ 7( $\sharp$ 11)<sub>( $\flat$ 9)</sub>, F $\sharp$ 7( $\sharp$ 11)<sub>( $\sharp$ 9)</sub>, A 7( $\sharp$ 9), E7( $\sharp$ 9)<sub>( $\sharp$ 5)</sub>, and B7( $\sharp$ 9)<sub>( $\sharp$ 5)</sub>.

So the possibilities for using pentatonic scales are almost infinite, that's why they are so useful. It is up to you find new and creative uses for them.

## How To Practice

This book is a series of four and six note groups that are developed into chromatic and diatonic lines. The concept of note groups was presented to me by the great pianist Hal Galper at the Jamey Aebersold clinic in 1980. I was young at the time but was hip to pentatonics so his ideas stayed with me and I've expanded on them in my own fashion. **You should watch the video** that goes with this book for more detailed instruction on how to properly practice the exercises. [www.BolvinMusic.com](http://www.BolvinMusic.com)

Each pattern is presented with 11 variations, designated A-K. Here is the suggested method of practice:

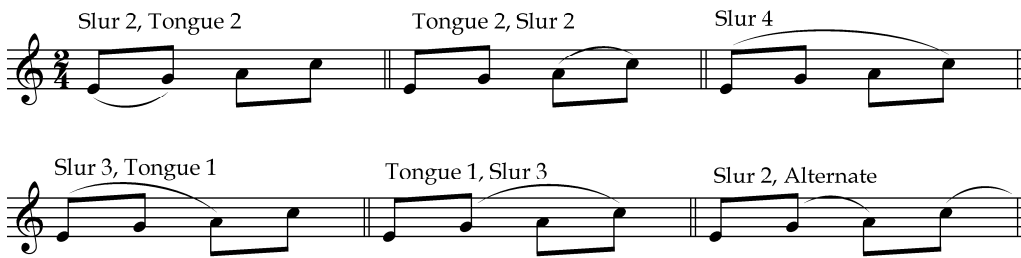
- **Exercise A:**
  - Practice each measure four times or more until it feels natural.
  - Practice straight through without repeating the measures.
  - Practice straight through "in reverse", playing the last measure first and then working towards the top.
- **Exercise B:** The pattern is now inverted:
  - Practice each measure four times or more until it feels natural.
  - Practice straight through without repeating the measures.
  - Practice straight through "in reverse", playing the last measure first and then working towards the top.
- **Exercise A & B:** Practice Exercise A & B in sequence, without repeating measures.
- **Exercises C - D:** The pattern is now presented in  $\frac{1}{2}$  steps. Practice slowly at first, with repeat.

- **Exercises E-H:** The pattern is now presented in whole steps. Practice slowly at first, with repeat.
- **Exercises I-K:** The pattern is now presented in minor thirds. Practice slowly at first, with repeat.

Additional exercises are given at the end of each section. They are presented with a low note of C and should be transposed to all keys. Remember this book is a stepping stone for you to create your own patterns.

## Articulations, Style & Rhythmic Variations

When first starting the exercises, you should play them tongued (without slurring). Once you have a grasp on them, you can add different articulations:



The exercises should be practiced in a “straight” feel at first. Once you have them under control, you can start to swing them.

Rhythmic variations are a good way to add some motion to the exercises.

Here’s Pattern 2 starting an eighth note sooner, giving the exercise a whole new dimension:



You can also repeat or hold notes to create unique rhythmic variations:



The possibilities are really endless and this book is just a starting point for the ambitious musician.

## Double Bars, Range & Harmonic Coincidence

Double bars are used to point out the apex of each pattern. When you reach the double bars in the middle of each exercise, the pattern turns around and is now descending.

Feel free to expand the range of the patterns in either direction. Saxes have a low note of Bb, so most patterns start there, Trumpets are comfortable up to hi C, so most of the patterns extend to there or a little higher. Still, that's over two octaves covered in every pattern, so if you want to extend them it's easy.

Patterns are first presented with a lowest note of Bb. The initial pentatonic key is given as its major key. In exercise 2, Bb pentatonic = Bb major pentatonic or G minor pentatonic.

Often when two pentatonics are in sequence, they will coincide in a major or minor key. For example in Pattern 2E, the first two measures are in Db major. This relationship is only pointed out in its first appearance, but it continues throughout the exercise. Note that measures 2 and 3 of Pattern 2E are in Eb, measures 3 and 4 are in F and so forth. It is important to make note of these relationships as you practice the patterns so you can fully grasp the usefulness of the pentatonic scales.

### The Author

Eric Bolvin is a trumpet player, educator, author and composer living in The San Francisco Bay Area. He is the author of eleven books, including **The Modern Jazz Trumpet Method**, **The Arban Manual** and **The Really Big Student Songbook**, and is the composer of over 20 big band charts and many combo arrangements.

He has five solo cds and the latest "**No Boundaries**" is available on **Innervision Records**. You can watch his instructional videos and contact him through his website:

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