



## Guitargate 2.13 - Improvising 101

For most aspiring guitarists, improvising is the largest source of frustration and intimidation. And, if you think about it, this makes sense. Everything else you can copy! So at Guitargate, improvising is a core focus.

**Improvising, more than anything else, is your true voice.**

Many players just run up and down scales and call it improvising. It isn't. It's mindless and uninteresting. The largest problem with learning to improvise is that players don't focus on context.

**You need to spell out the chord you are playing over. That's why you picked it, right?**

The goal of an improviser is to say something; to elicit an emotion; to describe a feeling. You need to create and resolve tension. There must be movement. You must have changing levels of volume and intensity. You must be simple sometimes and complex other times. You must always have room for silence - to let it breathe.

**And everything must relate to the context - to the chord you are playing over.**

Let's start in the key of A minor, pattern 4. Pattern 4 is your bread and butter for minor pentatonic phrasing. It is very intuitive to the fingers.

**The most important thing to do when improvising is to make sure you play "about" the root. Play "at" the root. Everything you do will be with the root in mind. Every note you play will be performing a function relative to the root.**

A good way to begin thinking like this is to start and end all of your phrases on a root. Tease around the root and come back to it. Play from a lower root to a higher root. Start on a higher root and work back to a lower root. Don't bend the root. For right now, do not break this rule. Keep the root sacred. It is home base. Don't mess with your harmonic center.

Once you have a good feel for pattern 4 minor, expand this concept to the rest of the five shapes. Each one will have its own special feel and range. Explore one shape at a time and really dig into each one.



**After you have a good feel for each of the shapes, begin to combine them.**

Start viewing them as extensions of each other. Begin by combining pattern 4 with pattern 3. Go back and forth between the two. Find the common notes. Continue this process with each of the remaining shapes. Eventually you will see the whole neck as one large shape.

Constantly think in terms of the root. Find the same phrases in different shapes. They are everywhere. Don't get caught up in one or two patterns. Don't get caught up in neck position or fingering too much.

**Focus on the root. Think about the root constantly. Connect patterns in order to access the root in another place. Nothing is arbitrary. I cannot stress this enough.**

After exploring A minor, jump into C major.

As we know, it is the relative major key and has the same notes and scale shapes but with different roots. Accentuating these new roots is the key to sounding "major."

Play the C major jam track and start exploring C major in pattern 3. Really think about your new roots. When you play "about" or "at" your new roots you will find that the same licks and phrases you used in A minor don't really translate.

**All of the notes are the same, but you have to play differently. You have to play "major."**

Expand your exploration to the other four shapes of C major pentatonic the same as you did before with A minor pentatonic. Really try to sound out the chord you are playing over.

**Please make the root your best friend. Love it. Need it. Don't make it jealous.**

It is also important to note that everything we talk about is applicable in any key, but you will find that some keys utilize open strings in ways which create cool and unique phrasing opportunities.



**And lastly, USE YOUR EAR! It won't lie.**

I want you to take it slow and listen to where you want the notes to go.

What do you want them to do? Do you hear them going away from home? Towards home? Higher? Lower? Create general confusion for a while? Listen to your inner ear and try to get it out.

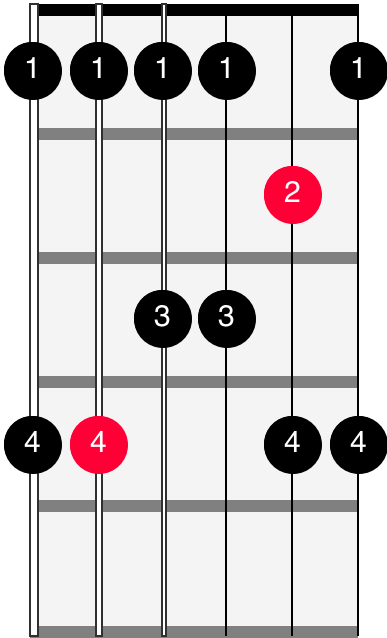
Spend time playing over these jam tracks below and start developing your personal style. Speed will come. Be accurate. Be just as mental as physical.

Jam Tracks:

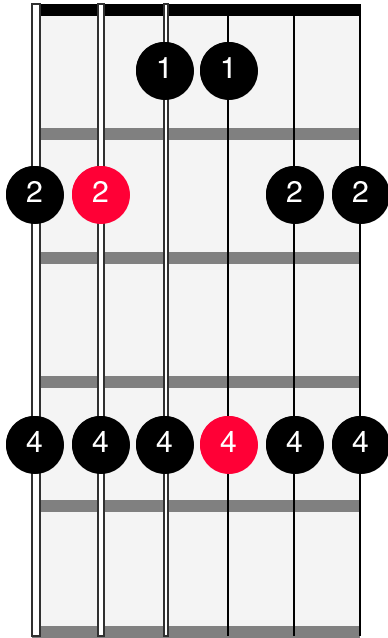
1. C major vamp
2. A minor vamp
3. C major to A minor
4. D major to B minor

# Major Pentatonics

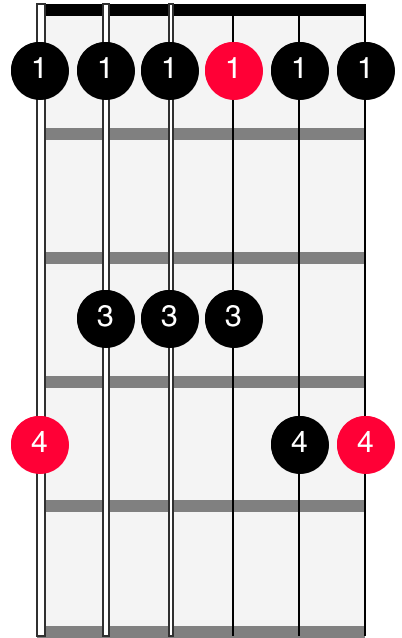
## Pattern 1 major



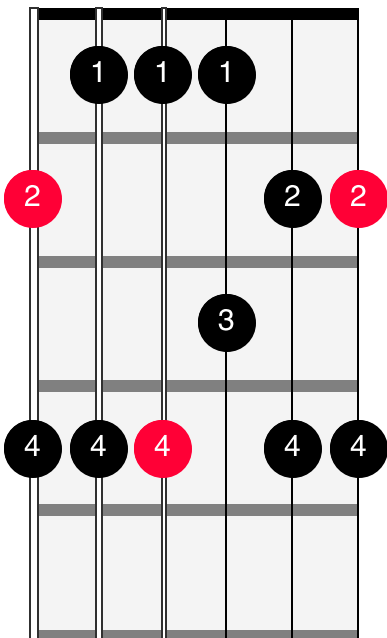
## Pattern 2 major



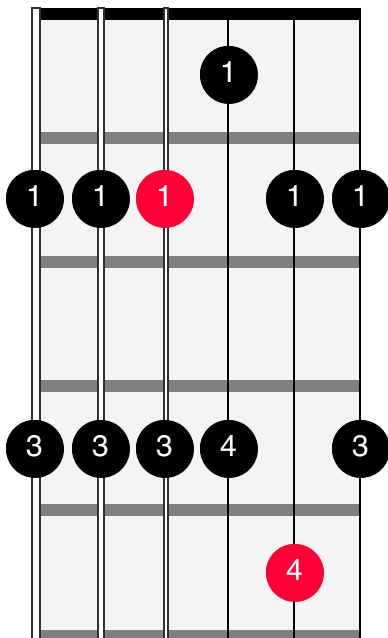
## Pattern 3 major



## Pattern 4 major

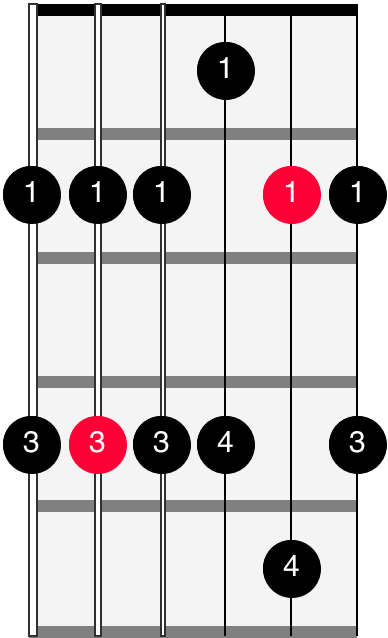


## Pattern 5 major

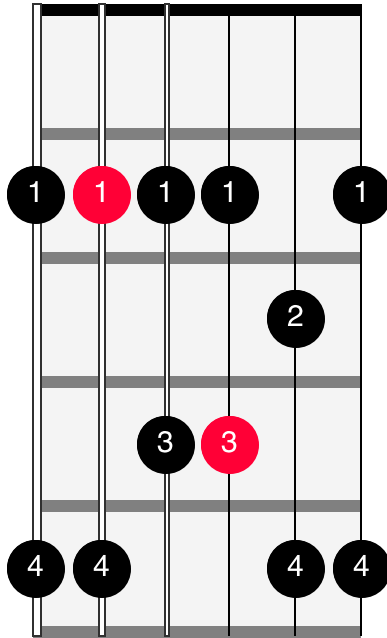


# Minor pentatonics

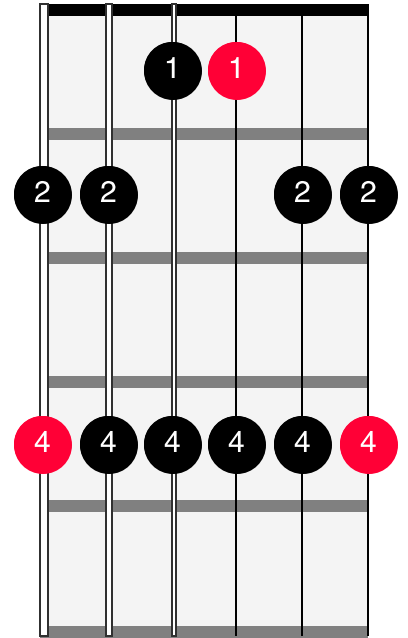
## Pattern 1 minor



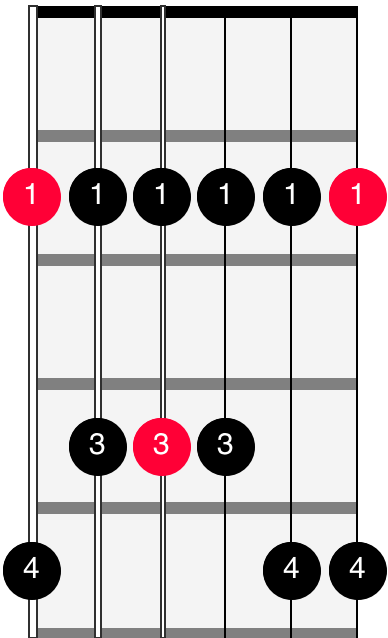
## Pattern 2 minor



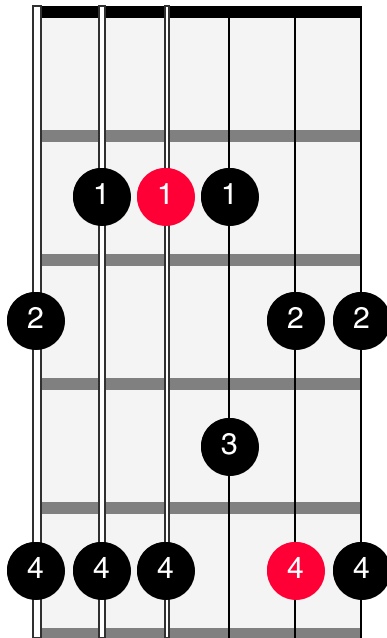
## Pattern 3 minor



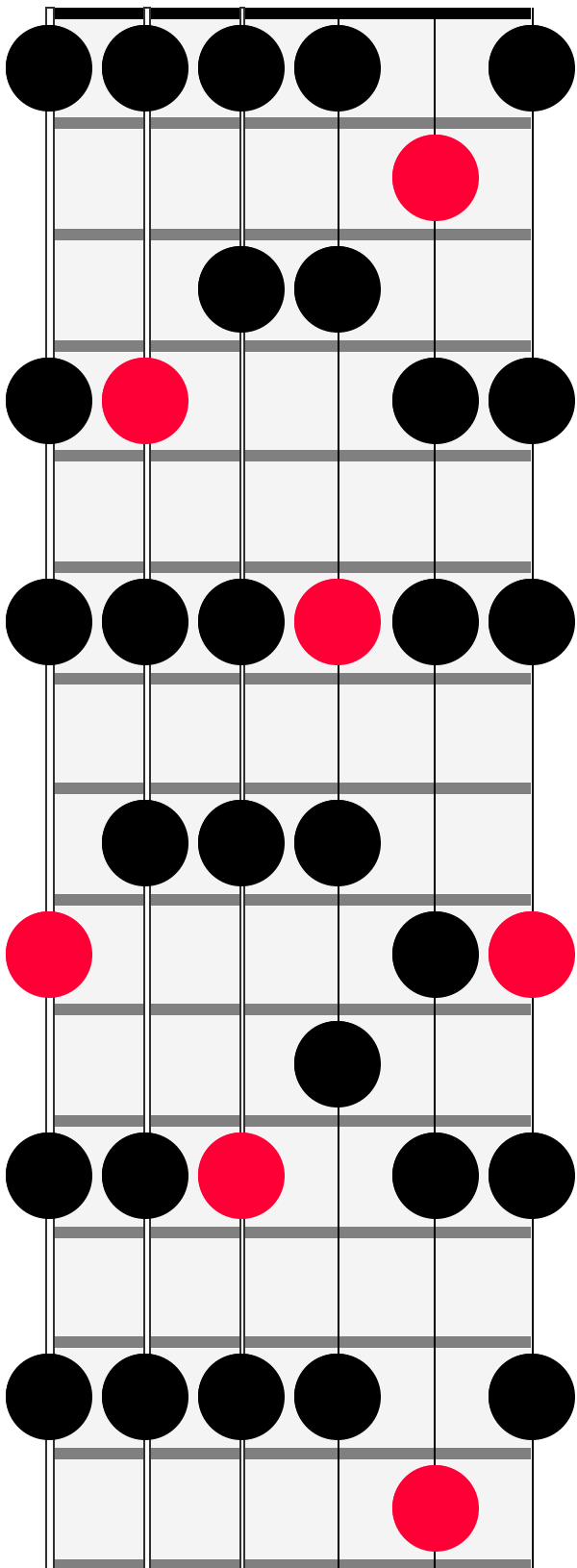
## Pattern 4 minor



## Pattern 5 minor



Major Pentatonics  
combined



Minor Pentatonics  
combined

