

SFS Pentatonics

- Pentatonics Everywhere! -

LESSON 1

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to SFS PENTATONICS - Pentatonics Everywhere!

Using this guitar course, you can learn, quickly and effectively, how to play pentatonics and blues scales, **in all keys, everywhere on the fretboard.**

Instead of just memorizing abstract fingering shapes, an approach which many people find to be mindless and ineffective, we will be using a system called **SFS** (short for **String Fragment System**).

SFS takes you deeper into the construction of a scale and provides a way to effortlessly map fingerings for it, in every possible fretboard position. At the same time, this approach promotes your ability to manipulate the sound of the scale, integrate various melodic devices and embellishments, and ultimately unleash your creativity.

By the end of this course, you will be able to improvise, compose melodies, construct solos, be creative, using these scales with freedom and ease.

Effective Music Practice (EMP) principle:
“Don’t waste your time learning theory that you can’t apply yet”

In this method, theory will be kept at a minimum. As you practically use what you learn, your understanding will grow to be much deeper than that which comes by theoretical teaching.

On the other hand, **SFS** is a very different concept than what you may be used to. Because of that, it’s necessary that I explain a few things first, but I promise to keep it short. So, give me just a few minutes and soon we’ll start playing.

I am certain that you will enjoy this course and have a creative and fulfilling learning experience.

“...effortlessly map fingerings
everywhere on the fretboard”

Prokopis Skordis.

WHAT IS SFS?

When defining a new concept, it is sometimes useful to first identify what it is NOT:

1. SFS is NOT memorizing fingering shapes.

Although you will end up playing all the traditional shapes, this is a learning system that promotes **more understanding and less memorization**.

When many guitar players try to just memorize shapes, their lack of understanding causes them to keep forgetting most of what they learned. Their playing sounds unnatural, and only after a long long time do they start to really “get it”. Because of this, most players end up using only one or two fingerings that they feel comfortable with, and keep repeating the same memorized licks instead of being truly creative.

“...more understanding and less memorization”

With **SFS**, we learn a scale (or any other structure), by understanding its construction and *mapping* it on the fretboard. We build it from the ground up, making sure you understand it deeply. Instead of memorizing, you gain the “language skills” of what you are learning. This approach is extremely fast and effective, and allows you to be creative, and sound good, from the very beginning.

The traditional approach is not bad. In fact, many guitar masters got to where they are by using it. But in my years of learning and teaching, I have realized that, for most learners, plain memorization is just not **effective**. It takes too long and it does not promote musicality. I have seen some smart memorization methods that improve the process, but the general approach is the same.

When I started using **SFS**, I was already a professional player and had already practiced the old way, for years, with good results. But I still felt limited because the process of learning something new took so much time and effort. I saw my students labor so hard and hoped to find some other way, a more modern approach, to help them learn faster. I started looking around, exploring books, articles, teaching videos, the internet, trying to see what’s out there. I gathered and studied all the guitar material I could get my hands on. I got some good ideas out of this, and saw how guitar education is always changing and evolving. So I decided to be a part of this evolution and try to create my own, new approach. After a lot of experimentation, frustration, analysis, prayer, making diagrams, throwing them away, etc, it finally clicked!

“...guitar education is always changing and evolving”

I have been using **SFS** since 2010, for myself and my students. The results have been amazing. The learning process is not only accelerated, but creativity and musicality is boosted as well. I had been teaching for years before that (since 2001), and had never seen my students so excited and motivated when learning scales, as I have with **SFS**.

Since then, I have refined and tested the system, and the result is a series of courses that I teach, including: SFS Pentatonics, SFS Modes, SFS Melodic Minor Modes, SFS Harmonic Minor Modes, SFS Symmetric Scales, SFS Quartal Soloing, and more, covering a broad spectrum of topics.

2. SFS is NOT learning licks.

Learning licks (or complete solos) is not a bad thing. On the contrary, everyone can benefit from it. It's fun, it helps develop musicality and expression, it helps you learn the idioms of a certain musical style, it helps with technique, and many other things. BUT, it is not the most effective way to understand a scale and become creative with it.

If you learn hundreds of solos and licks, there is a good chance that you will eventually start to understand how everything works, but it usually takes too long.

3. SFS is NOT a quick cheat for lazy people.

Although this is a highly effective system that helps you learn in a fraction of the time compared to the traditional approach, it still requires practice and discipline. The difference is that, because of its effectiveness, the system promotes discipline by giving you *immediate results* every time you practice. You will never feel that you don't know why you are doing what you are doing. It eliminates the frustration of meaningless repetition and allows for flowing, enjoyable practice sessions.

If you have discipline issues, I believe that this method can be an opportunity for you to improve in this area, because its design helps to keep you interested and motivated.

WHO IS THIS COURSE FOR?

- **Advanced players** who want to achieve a higher level of creative freedom and a deeper understanding of this subject.
- **Beginning and intermediate improvisers** who want to learn Pentatonics and Blues scales quickly and effectively.
- **Teachers** who are searching for a way to accelerate the learning process for their students.

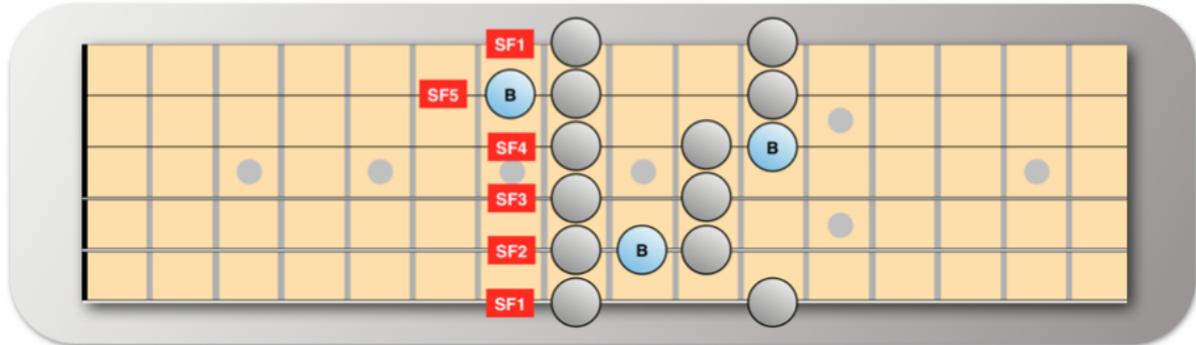
Note: In order to benefit the most from this method, you need to have a basic understanding of pentatonic and blues scales, and also of the logic behind guitar scale fingering systems. The following videos will help you with this:

- "The difference between Pentatonic and Blues scales" <https://youtu.be/ESlyNhOBk9E>
- "2NPS & 3NPS Pentatonic Scales" <https://youtu.be/PzvORltBofM>
- "Where to use Pentatonic Scales" <https://youtu.be/d9A-Jly5j9I>
- "Mixing Modes and Pentatonic Scales" <https://youtu.be/8WKZJQbnbUQ>

HOW SFS WORKS

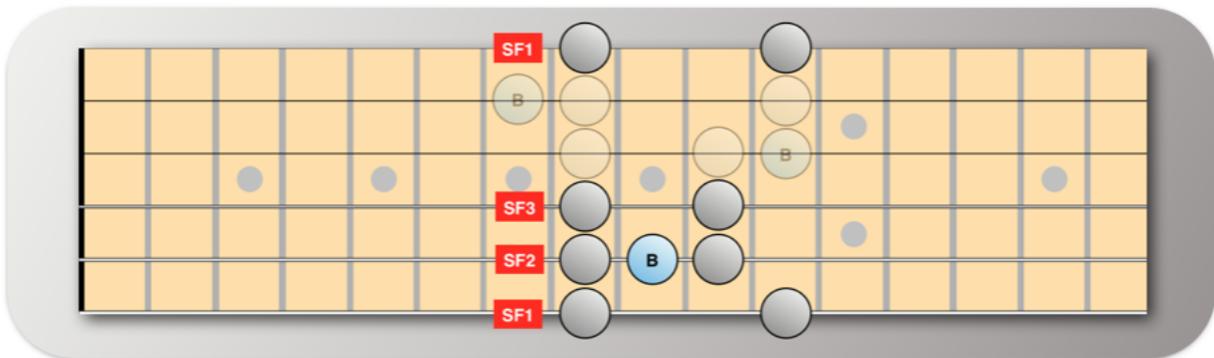
Every structure you can play on a stringed instrument is made up of "String Fragments". A String Fragment is simply all the notes you can play on a single string, without changing positions. A traditional Blues Scale "box" shape, for example, is made of 5 different string fragments.

Look at the following diagram of a C minor Blues Scale (6th string on the bottom, "B" means blue note). This is a very common Blues scale fingering, usually the first one everyone learns. Starting on the low E string we have SF1 (string fragment 1), then SF2 on the 5th string, and so on, for a total of 5 SF's. You will notice that the 6th and 1st strings are exactly the same, so we'll call them both SF1.

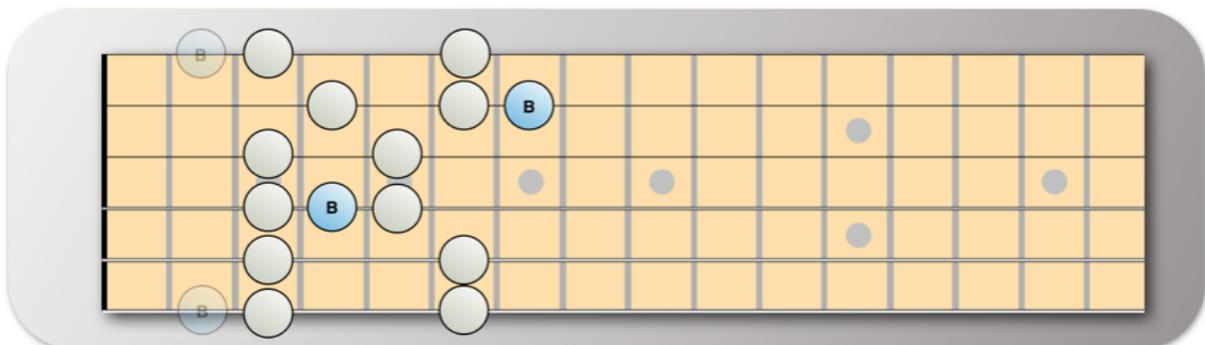


Most players don't usually realize that **these fragments exist in every fingering of the same scale**, just on different strings. This is the secret that will cut down your learning time dramatically! The 5 traditional shapes are actually **only 1 shape** if you learn how to apply this system!

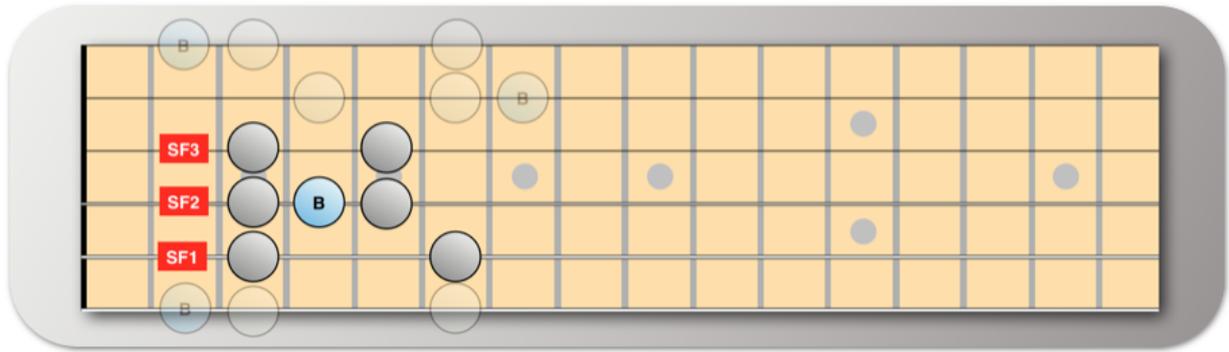
The best way to practice **SFS** is to start with just one SF, and then add the others, one by one. We will do that in the next lesson. But for this introduction, to help you understand how this works, we will skip ahead and identify 3 out of the 5 SF's (get your guitar and play them):



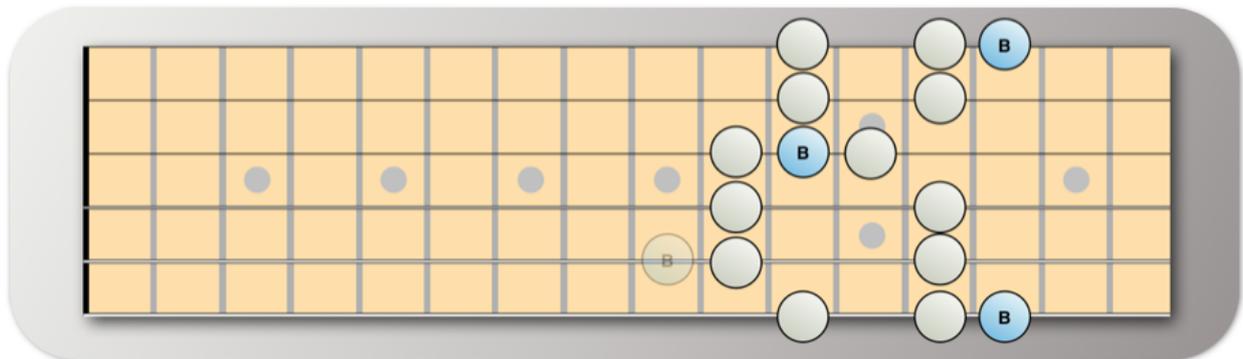
Let's look at another classic fingering for C minor Blues. Can you see the same 3 SF's in it?



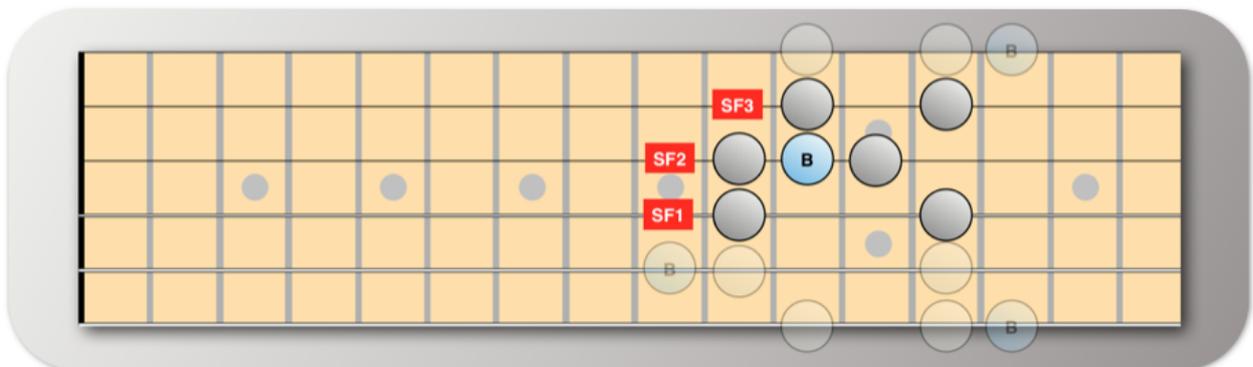
Did you locate them? Here they are. Go ahead and play them:



Here's another classic fingering for the same scale:



And here are the SF's. Play them again:



On this last one you should notice that SF3 is shifted 1 fret to the right. I will explain this later. Did you get the point though? ALL FINGERINGS ARE MADE OF THE SAME SF's. For the sake of simplicity we have located only 3 of them, but trust me: All 5 String Fragments exist in all positions. You just need to learn how to place them. You will end up playing everywhere on the fretboard, **without ever memorizing shapes**. In fact, right now, in the span of just a few minutes, I will show you a way to play in all positions, even if you have never played Pentatonics and Blues scales before. You'll be playing everywhere on the fretboard, and all this from Lesson No1!

All fingerings are made of the same string fragments.

LET'S PLAY!

This is the general idea behind **SFS**: Learn a system of String Fragments, and place it everywhere on the fretboard, based on the Root Note of the scale. In this example, we will play the C Minor Blues scale 3 SF's (from a total of 5) based on the Root note "C":

String Fragments:

Root Note: C

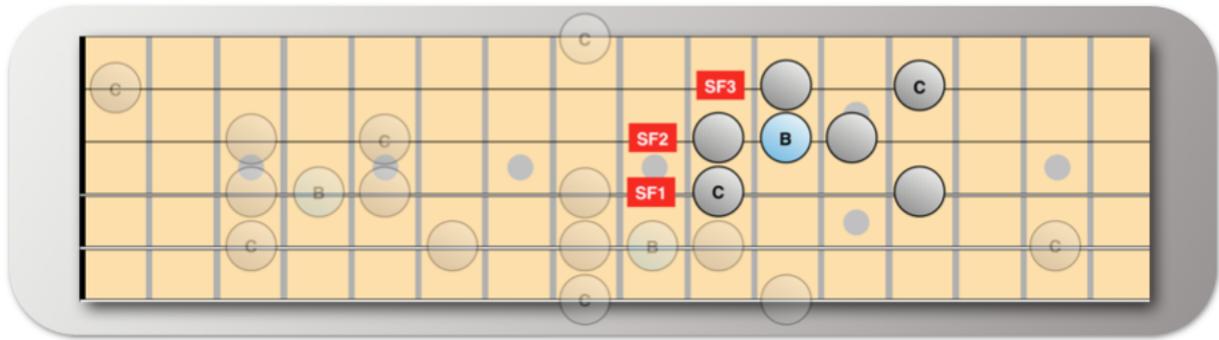
Root Location - C:

String:	Fret:
6	8
5	3 & 15
4	10
3	5 & 17
2	1 & 13
1	8

Go to the C on the 6th string (fret 8) and place your first finger there. That will be the Root of our minor pentatonic / blues scale. That's what the "m" on the above diagram represents. In that position, play through the 3 SF's. You end up with this:

Now let's do the same for the C on the 5th string (fret 3):

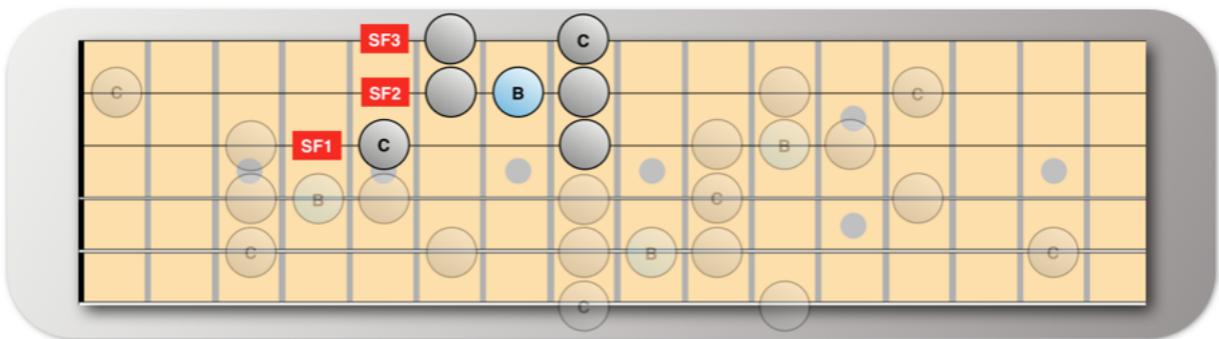
Now let's place our **SFS** on string 4 (fret 10):



In this case, SF3 is shifted to the right. We'll talk more about this in lesson 3. For now, just keep this in mind: *When crossing from string 3 to string 2, the **SFS** shifts up one fret.*

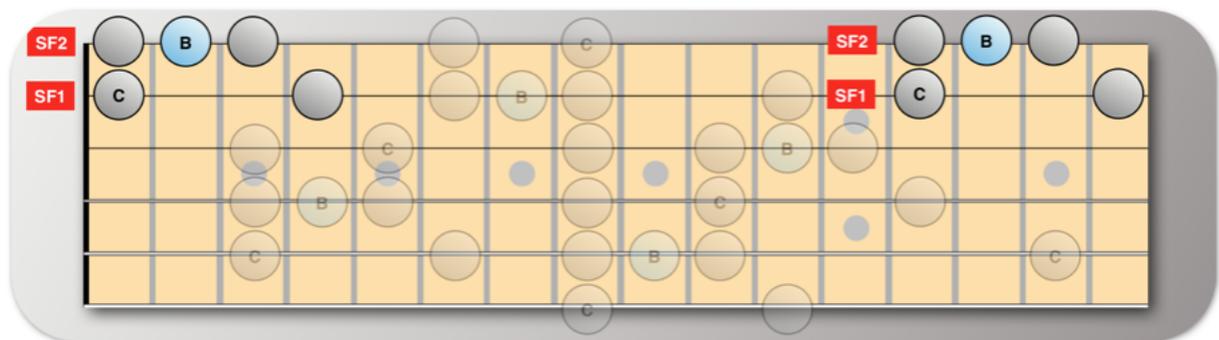
When crossing from string 3 to string 2, the SFS shifts UP one fret.

Now let's place our **SFS** on string 3 (fret 5):



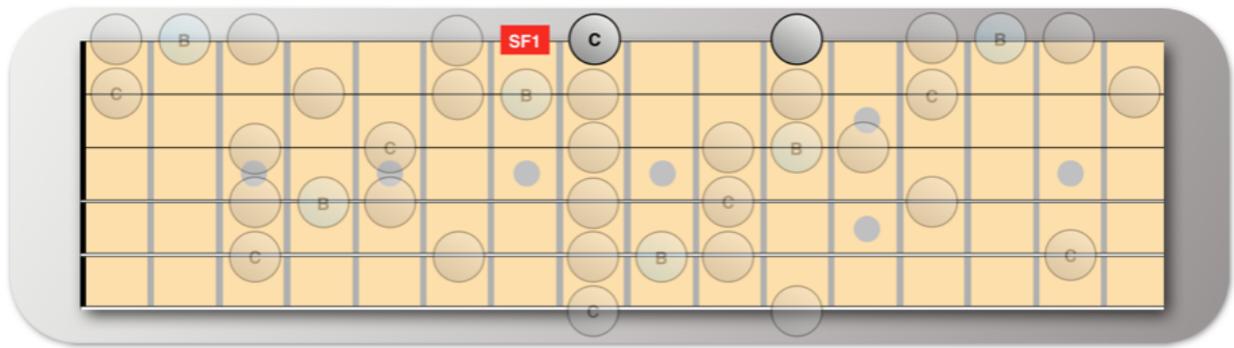
In this case, both SF2 and SF3 are shifted to the right because they both appear after the crossing from string 3 to string 2.

Now let's place our **SFS** on the C on string 2 (fret 1 or 13):



In this case, there is no SF3 (we run out of strings). SF1 and SF2 are normally aligned (no shifting) because they do not cross between strings 3 and 2.

And the last one, on the 1st string (fret 8):



Now look at all the dimmed notes on the diagram above. By using just 3 String Fragments, we have already played in all positions on the fretboard and covered the most part of all the traditional, “box” fingerings, without ever memorizing them. With **SFS**, we are literally thinking “out of the box”.

When you learn all 5 SF's, you will truly be playing “Pentatonics everywhere”! For now, you can go to our website, or to our Youtube Channel (links at the end of the chapter), find the C minor Pentatonic Backing Tracks, and have fun improvising with what I just showed you. You will immediately feel the freedom of **SFS**.

Here are some of the benefits of using this system:

- Instead of memorizing 5 meaningless shapes, you will just learn 5 SF's (you already learned 3 of them) and how to manipulate them. That's less than a fifth of material to memorize.
- Instead of memorizing the location of 5 shapes for every key (for example: C minor, fingering no.4 is in position 3), you will just learn the locations of an actual note (C in the above example). Knowing the notes on the fretboard is essential for many things anyway, and you would have to learn them at some point. As a bonus, you get to learn them in a fun context in this course. Relating notes to arbitrary shapes, or one shape to another that is next to it, has no musical meaning. The sound of each note is affected by its relationship to the Root Note, so visualization should be in line with that!
- More expressive freedom: You will be able to jump to any position quickly and easily, just by locating a root note.
- You will see all fingerings as one consistent structure, and easily transfer musical ideas in different positions.
- The skills you will acquire, will make it much easier to learn other scales and structures (modes of major, modes of melodic minor, harmonic minor, etc), even faster.
- If you choose to go deeper and learn the function of every degree in the scale, with **SFS** you will need to do it just once and apply it to all positions.
- Many other benefits related to playing over chord changes, mixing different structures (ex. arpeggios, modes, etc), being able to play by ear, and more that we will discuss later in this course.

LESSON 1 PRACTICE IDEAS

This Introductory Lesson, and the following assignments, are designed to give you a very general understanding of the **String Fragment System** and its benefits. In later lessons we will go into much greater depth. You will learn to incorporate creative improvisation elements, and to instantly construct the system, and play freely, EVERYWHERE ON THE FRETBOARD. For now:

1. Focus on SFS:

Map this lesson's **SFS** on every available C. Start on every string, first in order, then randomly. In every position, construct the **SFS**, being aware of which SF you are on, and then use it to improvise over backing tracks.

2. Demo Analysis:

Watch this lesson's demo carefully, stopping the video when needed, trying to follow the position changes.

3. Focus on Creativity:

Improvise FREELY, with or without using backing tracks, using what you learned in this lesson. Add anything else you want. Enjoy and be creative!

Backing Tracks for C minor Pentatonic / Blues Scale:

Note: *Minor Pentatonic Scales fit over, and are compatible with, many scales and modes. That is why it is a good idea to practice them over different harmonic contexts, as in the following backing tracks.*

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL2So5opWVlatyfbI4rbbSrbdQVoRwG9JJ>