

Kevin Downing

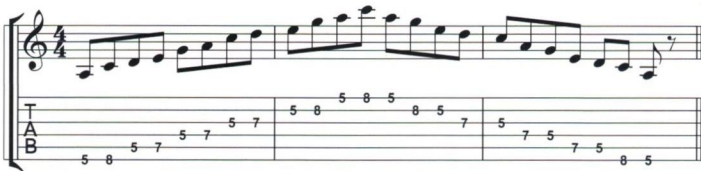
## Using Phrasing In Solos

**M**any beginner and intermediate players coming to us for lessons don't know how to solo like their favourite players, or make up a solo on the spot. They are normally making the #1 beginner mistake trying to play solos using the whole scale, as shown in Exercise 1.

The mistake is simply go up and down the scale as written (maybe with a few variations), then they likely complain the solo sounds like scales.

### Ex 1

### Am Pentatonic Scale



Scales are like the alphabet – there only to help build words. Scales in music are similar in that we use them to build musical words, or licks and phrases, as musicians commonly call them.

Now the concept is simple, but practising it is not easy for many players, so it will take a bit of getting used to. If we only take four notes as in Ex 2 and only play those four, we will have cut the brain power required down to play good solos down quite a bit. That's the simple part. The tricky part is staying within those four notes only, and not wandering over to play some of the others.

### Ex 2

So how do you make a solo sound great with only four notes? You must use non-note musical

elements. Because we only have 12 notes in music, we must think of other ways to make our solos (and rhythm parts) sound great.

Some non-note musical elements can be bending, vibrato, accents, slides, phrasing, and various other ways you can manipulate



the strings on a guitar. So, it is not how many notes you play, or how fast you can play, but what you do with the notes you play that counts.

We will start here with the concept of phrasing, as in Ex 3, which is something I believe can make your solos sound 100% better within minutes. If you listen to any of the best solos by any of the best players, in any genre, you will always hear great phrasing. David Gilmore from Pink Floyd is an expert at phrasing for example.

So, what is phrasing exactly?

Phrasing is like two people talking to each other. One person says something, the other person listens, takes it in,

leaves a few seconds to digest it, then replies. Then it is repeated into a conversation.

Playing solos is the same. You play something, leave a rest or long note and let the listener digest it, then play something else, let the listener digest it again, and so on. That is why there are lots of rests in the solo of Ex 3. They give the listener plenty of time

to digest what you have just played.

Perhaps more importantly it gives the developing player plenty of time to think about what to play next while keeping to four notes, keeping the rhythm simple, and making it melodic and listenable. Something that takes a while to get used to at the beginner/intermediate level.

You can see in Ex 3, that the rests between each lick/phrase are long at the beginning. That is because it pays to exaggerate them a bit to begin with so you get the feel of them. Once you do find that feel, then it's time to start putting this idea into your own playing as soon as possible.

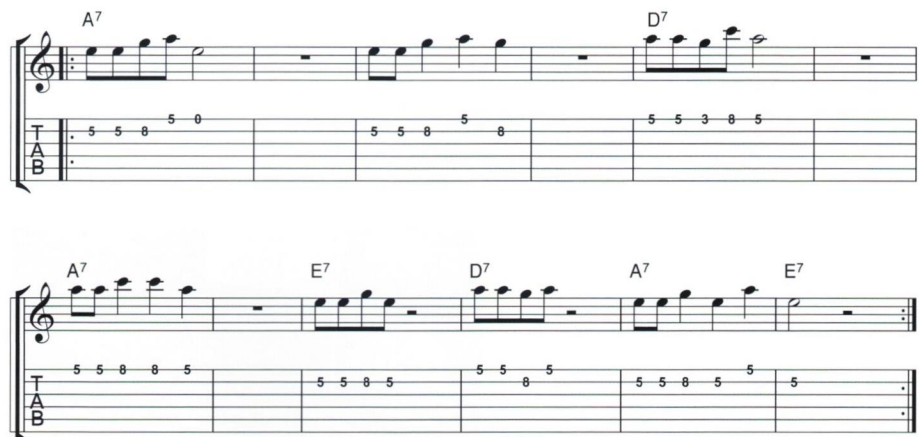
This lesson is simple in concept, but not easy to implement. However if you stick with it and don't give up you will break through and soon be playing some great solos.

If you would like to see a video of me performing this lesson and learn some extra content to what is in this article, then head over to my website at <https://www.guitar.co.nz/free-lessons/>

*Kevin Downing is a professional guitarist and published author.*

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### Ex 3



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