MU 009 (Feurzeig) **The Blues Scale**

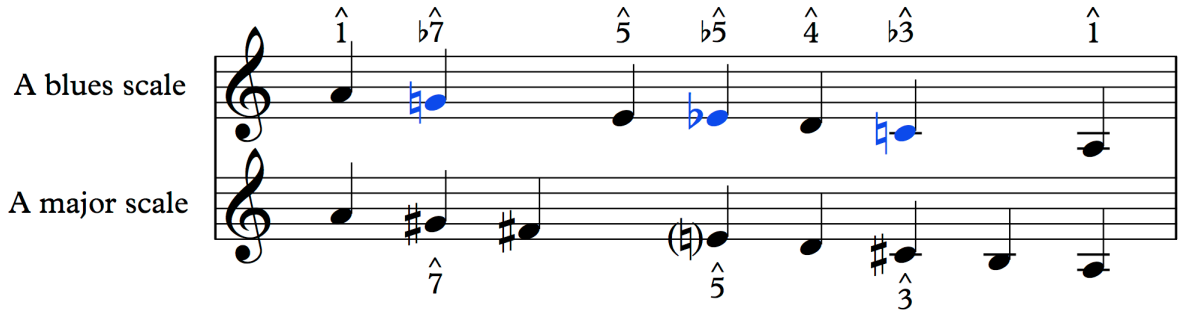
The **blues scale** contains the notes used to form common blues licks and melodies. It consists of a minor pentatonic scale plus an additional chromatic note that fills in the whole step between the 4th and 5th scale degrees.



This added note is typically spelled as a raised 4th degree when it ascends to **so**; when it descends to **fa** it is usually spelled as a lowered 5th degree.

The blues scale should not be taken too literally. Many typical blues licks include other pitches besides these. Furthermore, blues-style melody includes bent pitches and other microtuned notes (i.e. notes that do not correspond precisely to the keys on a piano) that are not easily represented in standard notation. Nonetheless, practicing the blues scale and patterns based on its notes is a great starting point in learning to sound "bluesy".

If we compare the blues scale to its parallel **major** scale, we see that the 3rd, 5th, and 7th degrees are flatted. These three notes are called "blue notes". Actually, any note can become a blue note if it is played with an expressively altered intonation.

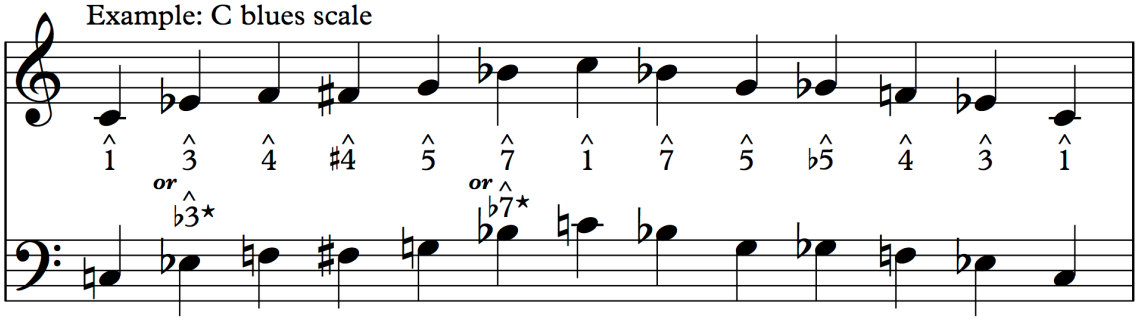


Remember: when speaking of general scale and chord relationships, "flatted" usually means "chromatically lowered". A "flatted" is not necessarily a flat note in staff notation. In the above example, the flat 7th and flat 3rd degrees are G♮ and C♮, respectively.

Assignment

- Write out the blues scale, ascending and descending, on the following tonics: E, A, D, G, C, F, B♭, E♭, and A♭
- Use a grand staff and write each scale in both treble and bass clefs.
- Use individual accidentals, not key signatures.
- When ascending, write the middle note as the raised 4th degree of the scale; when descending, spell it as the lowered 5th degree of the scale.
- Write scale degree numbers for each note.

Example: C blues scale



★ Either is correct here. It is understood that ♭3, ♭6, and ♭7 refer to the natural minor scale degrees **me, le,** and **te**. They are "flat" relative to their major-scale counterparts. On the other hand, if the context implies that we are dealing with a minor scale, degrees 3, 6, and 7 (without the ♭)would likewise be understood as **me, le,** and **te** unless specified as raised.