

A Aeolian mode 6 of the C major scale

A Aeolian is the natural minor scale, the plain dark minor sound that most minor-key rock and pop is built on. It is serious and grounded without being exotic, and its b6 gives it a heavier pull than the cooler minor shades like Dorian.

[Open this scale in the fretboard explorer](#)

THEORY

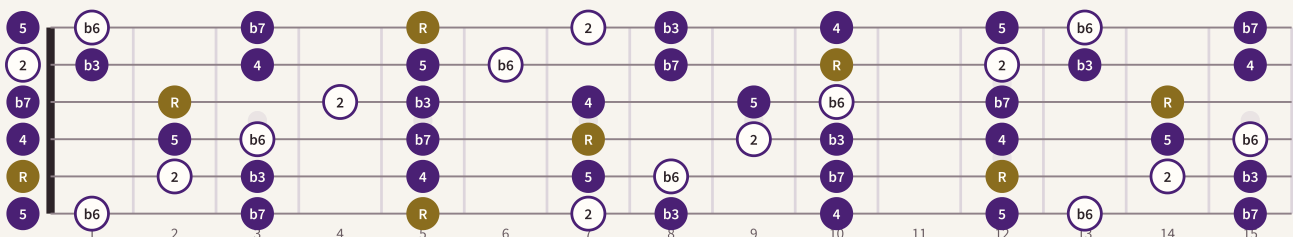
Formula: 1 2 b3 4 5 b6 b7

Degree	1	2	b3	4	5	b6	b7
Note	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
In skeleton	yes		yes	yes	yes		yes

Aeolian is mode 6 of C major: the same seven notes, A B C D E F G, heard with A as home instead of C. Measured against the major scale its formula is 1 2 b3 4 5 b6 b7, and this is exactly the natural minor scale. What defines it inside the minor family is the pair b6 and b7. Dorian raises the 6 (F sharp instead of F) and sounds brighter and jazzier; harmonic minor raises the 7 (G sharp instead of G) for a stronger pull home. Keep F and G natural and you have Aeolian, which is why so many minor-key songs sit here by default. The signature move is F falling to E, b6 resolving to 5: that half step is where the mode's gravity lives, so this etude leans on it constantly.

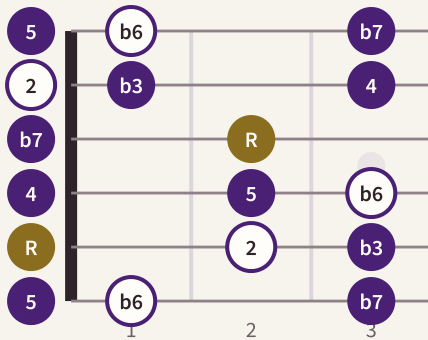
To get the sound in your ear, loop a two chord vamp of Am to F, two bars each. If you want the b7 in the harmony as well, use Am G F. Songs that live in Aeolian include All Along the Watchtower by Bob Dylan (and the famous Jimi Hendrix cover), Zombie by The Cranberries, and Losing My Religion by R.E.M.

WHOLE NECK (FRETS 0 TO 15)

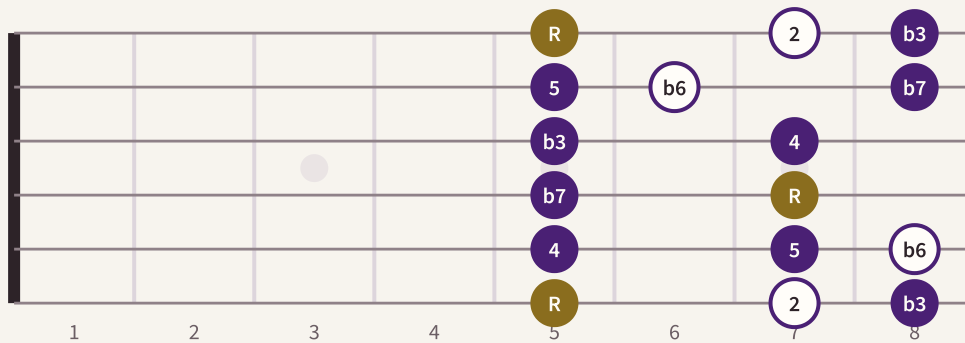


Gold dot = root. **Solid** = A minor pentatonic, the skeleton you already know. Hollow = the color tones this mode adds.

POSITION 1 (FRETS OPEN TO 3)

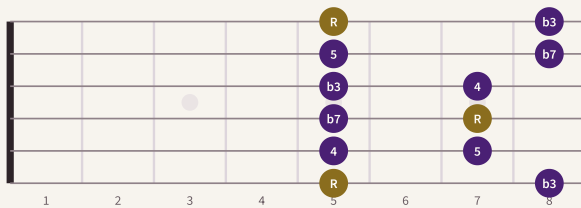


POSITION 2 (FRETS 5 TO 8)

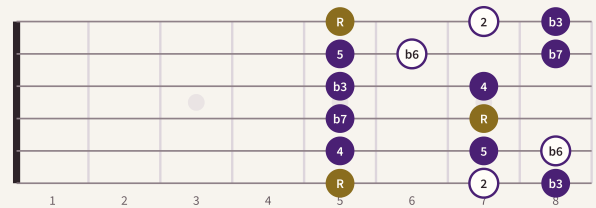


THE PENTATONIC INSIDE

The skeleton inside A Aeolian is A minor pentatonic: A C D E G, the box 1 shape at fret 5 that you already know. The mode adds only two pitches, B (the 2) and F (the b6). In the box 1 area, frets 5 to 8, that means four new notes on top of the pentatonic grid: B at fret 7 on both E strings, F at fret 8 on the A string and at fret 6 on the B string. Play box 1, add those four notes, and you are playing the full mode; leave them out and you are back to plain pentatonic. Of all seven modes this is the most direct pentatonic bridge, so treat the added notes as decorations hung on a shape your fingers already trust.



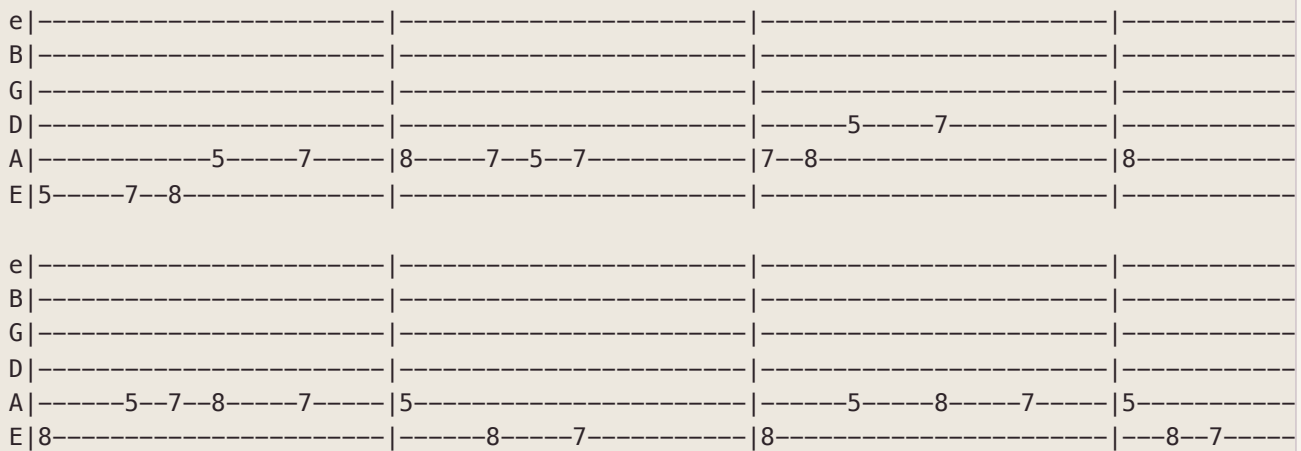
A minor pentatonic alone



A Aeolian: the skeleton plus the color tones

ETUDE (72 BPM)

Also generated as `6-aeolian-etude.gp` : open it in the course player for playback, tempo control, and looping.



PRACTICE PLAN

1. Learn the etude slowly

Set the metronome to 50 bpm and learn the etude two bars at a time, counting the eighth notes out loud. Lean on every F so you can hear the b6 pulling down to E; that pull is the whole point of the piece. Move on when you can play all 8 bars three times in a row cleanly at 60 bpm, then bring it up to the written 72.

2. Memorize the two positions

Play A Aeolian root to root in open position (frets 0 to 3) and in the fret 5 position the etude uses, saying each note name or scale degree aloud as you go. Start with quarter notes at 60 bpm, then eighths at 80. You have a position memorized when you can start on any A in it and walk up and down with your eyes closed.

3. Sequences and speed

Run the fret 5 position in fours (four notes up from each scale step, then the same descending) and in diatonic thirds. Start at 70 bpm in eighth notes and add 4 bpm every time a full pass is clean; if a tempo falls apart twice, stop there for the day. Consider this stage done when both sequences are clean at 100 bpm.

4. Improvise over the vamp

Loop Am to F, two bars each, around 80 bpm, and solo with plain A minor pentatonic for a few minutes to warm up. Then add the color tones with intent: land F on the downbeat when the F chord arrives and resolve it to E, and use B as a passing tone over Am. When your phrases end in places that sound chosen rather than lucky, raise the loop to 90 bpm and keep going.