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Extending The Pentatonic Minor Scale

Now that you have a basic understanding of the musical foundation of your flute and the meaning of the flute's "key", let's start extending our playing range by adding some second octave notes to our pentatonic minor scale.

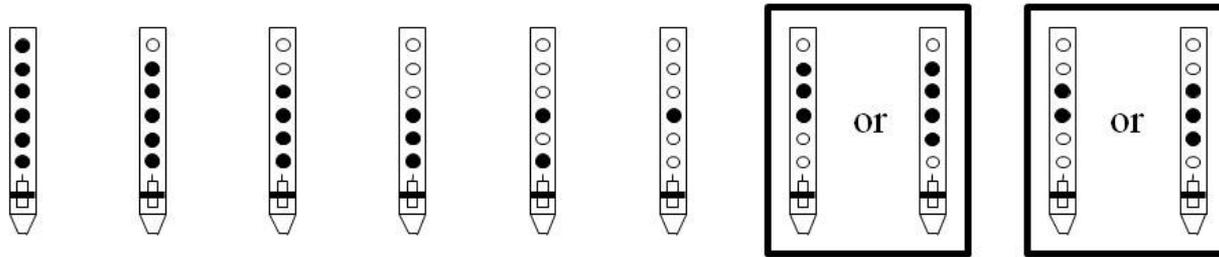


Figure 1 – Adding 2nd Octave Notes to the Pentatonic Minor Scale

In Figure 1, the first six flute symbols represent the basic mode 1 pentatonic minor scale previously introduced and discussed at length in this series. What follows are the two second octave (register) notes that follow going up the scale. As previously noted, not all flutes play these second octave notes at all, or those that do, may not play exactly the same pitch. Few (if any) flute makers actually tune their flutes for the second octave notes. In Figure 1 I suggest two possible fingerings for the second octave notes. The left-most in each box represents the fingering that most players expect (with holes #6, the top hole, and #5 uncovered). However, flutes that do not play this fingering may play using the alternate fingering, with only hole #6 uncovered.

It may be necessary to use extra breath to play the second octave notes, or to tongue the note (as saying "ta" or "da") in order to break into that note. In such cases, it may not be possible to play these notes softly – and therefore may not be suited to some songs.

If your second octave notes are not on the correct pitch, they are likely a little flat (below the desired pitch). If you flute plays second octave notes with both of the fingerings shown in Figure 1, you may notice that there is a slight difference in pitch between them. In these cases, use the fingering that sounds better, which is usually the one that plays a little higher than the other.

Finally, the final note on the extreme right of Figure 1 can be played on very few flutes that I've run across. If it plays, it may actually be the correct pitch that should be associated with the one to its left.

To summarize playing the second octave notes on the NAF, there is no consistency on if or how these notes will play on any individual flute. It will be up to you to experiment with your flutes and realize that, if you play songs that use these notes successfully, you will likely not be able to play those songs on others of your flutes.

That's all for this issue. We're beginning to touch on more advanced topics that you will likely want to eventually get into. The NAF is a wonderful instrument but each one has its own voice and personality. If you recognize and accept that, you will learn to love each flute for what it is capable of. Some will like to play soft music and others will sing with more energy and sound good for more spirited playing. Some will be able to extend into the second octave and others won't, and not all that do will play the same. So find the range and type of music that best suits each of your flutes and enjoy them for how they share their spirit with you.

Happy flutin'...

OGP OZd



(Utsadv Unole – Many Winds)