

# Pentatonic Power Insider

The Guitarists Secret Weapon To Lead Guitar Mastery

*Weekly assignments for a full year to help you step-by-step grow into the guitarist you want to be.*



Lesson # 7

## Position Shifting

By

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## Foreword

I received an e-mail recently from a reader telling me about a recent fire in his neighborhood that destroyed 3 homes right next to his. Fortunately his house was left unharmed along with his family.

He went on to tell me how this inspired him to get out his guitar and compose a blues song...which in turn got me to thinking about inspiration. What is it and where does it come from?

The dictionary defines inspiration as: *Stimulation of the mind or emotions to a high level of feeling or activity.*

I think the fire above certainly qualifies as this type of stimulation. I know that for me personally, there have been many times that external circumstances have driven me to pick up the guitar and just play or compose.

But, the stimulation does not have to come from external circumstances. It can come from within as well. In fact, I think it has to come from within most of the time. There has to be some type of stimulation to drive us to into the practice room.

There are going to be times when you don't want to practice but you know that you have to in order to improve as a guitarist. Do you have some sort of stimulation in place that can get you to take action, even when you don't want to?

What drives Olympic athletes to train hour after hour, day after day? What inspired your favorite guitarists to practice in order to get to the level they are on? I often think about these things. As a teacher, showing someone what to do is easy. Getting them to do it is another story entirely.

Think about what inspires you or what might inspire you if your are lacking inspiration. As I think back, for me it was the end result. I knew how I wanted to sound and that kept me practicing even when I didn't really want.

Seriously, put some thought into this , get inspired and go play your guitar!

## Introduction

What do you think when you see someone flying up and down the guitar? Does it seem like some big mystery or some amazing feat that you will never be able to accomplish? I know it always seemed that way to me.

Of all of the different aspects of guitar playing this is the one thing that I get the most questions about. How do I play up and down the neck or how do I connect the positions? As usual, there is more than one approach to this and I would like to share one of them with you now.

I call it the common finger technique. I'm not sure if I made that up or got it from somewhere but after analyzing how I get around this is what I came up with. And as usual, we are going to break this down into small chunks to make it easy to understand and apply.

But first...why change positions anyhow. There are a few reasons;

1. Shifting up and down the fretboard gives us access to higher and lower notes. It could get pretty dull if we stayed in the same place the whole time.
2. Each fingering has it's own unique characteristic and licks that are available only in certain positions off the fretboard.
3. Certain things are easier to play in the various fingering. A lick in one fingering might be able to be played on two strings while a different fingering might require three strings for the same lick. This make the picking more difficult.
4. The same note in a different spot on the fretboard has a different tonal quality due to the position of the note on the guitar and the thickness of the strings. This is called timbre (pronounced tam-ber).

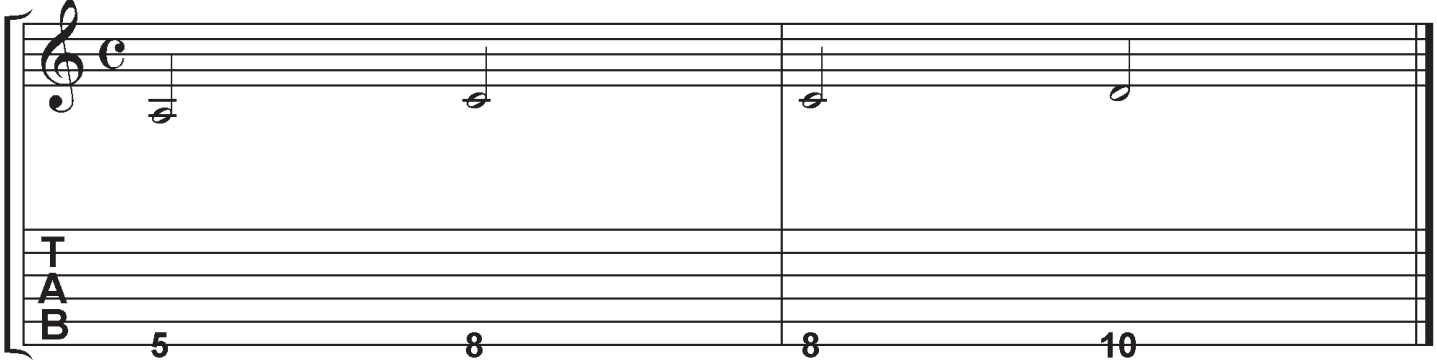
Timbre is the combination of qualities of a sound that distinguishes it from other sounds of the same pitch and volume.

## The Common Finger Technique

What is the common finger technique? Well, it's basically just what it sounds like...using a common finger to shift between fingerings of a scale. In our case, it's the pentatonic scale but it could be any scale.

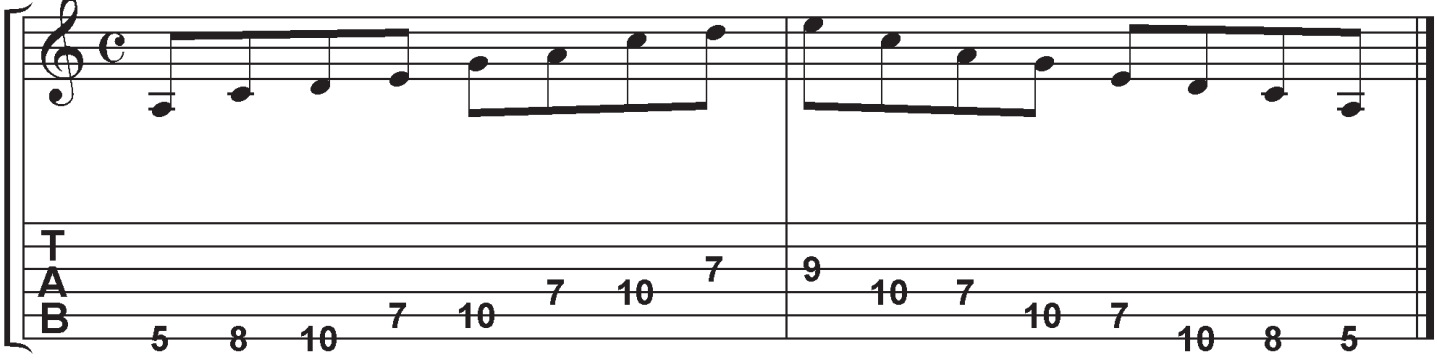
Let's take a look at a few examples from this weeks video.

### Example 1.

	Fingering 1	Fingering 2
		
Finger	1                      4	2                      4

Here are the notes on the sixth string from fingerings one and two of the pentatonic scale. Notice that the common finger between these two is the fourth finger. So, if I want to switch back and forth between fingerings one and two on the sixth string I would use the fourth finger.

### Example 2.

		
Finger	1    4    4    1    4    1    4    1	3    4    1    4    1    4    4    1
	↑ Shift	↑ Shift

Now take a look at position shifting on the 5th string.

**Example 3.**

Fingering 1

Fingering 2

Musical notation for Example 3. The first part shows notes at frets 5 and 7, and the second part shows notes at frets 7 and 10. The guitar staff shows strings T, A, B.

Finger 1 3 1 4

Closer inspection here reveals that the first finger is now the common finger.

**Example 4.**

Here's an example of shifting up on the fifth string and back down on the sixth string.

Musical notation for Example 4. The sequence of notes is on frets 5, 8, 5, 7, 10, 7, 10, 8, and 5. The guitar staff shows strings T, A, B.

Finger 1 4 1 ↑ 1 4 1 4 ↑ 4 1  
Shift Shift

Since the fingering for the fourth string and the fifth string are the same I am going to skip ahead to shifting on the third string.

The third string presents us with two different options for shifting.

**Example 5.**

Fingering 1

Fingering 2

Finger 1 3 1 3

Both fingerings use the first and third fingers so you have a choice...you can use either one.

**Example 6.**

Finger 3 1 ↑ 1 3 2 3 ↑ 3 1 3  
Shift Shift

This example shows the shift up on the first finger and back down on the third finger. Again, the choice is yours. The third finger shift is probably more common here though.

Moving on to the second string we find that the fourth finger is the common finger.

**Example 7.**

Fingering 1

Fingering 2

Musical notation for Example 7. The first staff shows notes on the second line (F), second space (C), and third line (G). The second staff shows fret numbers: 5, 8, 8, 10. The strings are labeled T, A, B.

Finger 1 4 2 4

**Example 8.**

Musical notation for Example 8. The first staff shows notes on the second line (F), second space (C), and third line (G). The second staff shows fret numbers: 5, 8, 10, 8, 10, 8, 10, 8, 5, 7, 5, 5, 7. The strings are labeled T, A, B.

Finger 1 4 ↑ 4 2 4 2 4 ↑ 4 1 3 1 1 3  
Shift Shift

Example 8 shows the fourth finger shift on the second string. Occasionally the fourth finger may be replaced by the third finger depending upon what is coming next musically. You may want to end up on your power fingers in fingering two.

Last but not least is the first string. Just like the second string, we find that the fourth finger is the common finger.

**Example 9.**

Fingering 1

Fingering 2

Musical notation for Example 9. The first staff is a treble clef with a C-clef and a common time signature. The second staff shows fret numbers 5, 8, 8, and 10. The strings are labeled T, A, and B.

Finger 1 4 2 4

**Example 10.**

Musical notation for Example 10. The first staff is a treble clef with a C-clef and a common time signature. The second staff shows fret numbers 5, 8, 10, 8, 10, 8, 9, 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, 5, 8, 5. The strings are labeled T, A, and B.

Finger 1 4 4 2 4 2 3 3 1 3 1 3 1 4 1

Example 10 shows a shift up on the first string followed by a shift down on the third string. As you have seen there are many possible combinations to choose from.

## This Weeks Assignments

1. Continue your work in Pentatonic Power.
2. Watch this weeks videos and apply the material to your own playing.
3. Practice position shifting on all of the different strings. Apply as many combinations as you can. The idea is to have these moves become an automatic response in your playing.

### Coming up Next

Lesson # 8 - "The Eric Johnson Trick"

In the next lesson we will a device employed by Eric Johnson. This simple device does not require you to learn anything new. It takes what you already know and utilizes it in a way to really expand the available colors in your sonic palette.

### Previous Lessons -

Lesson #1...[Click Here](#) to access.

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