The Pentatonic Blues Scale

This is the most popular scale for Blues and Rock and Roll; more runs and licks have been played from these notes than all the other scales combined (at least in a blues or rock setting). So, a working fluency with it is something you want to acquire, at worst just to see what your predecessors have been up to.

This position of the scale has been the most favored by virtually everyone who uses the blues scale in their playing. So get acquainted, if you’re not already. Once you can play it reasonably well, try tapping your foot, setting up a strong groove of one type or another, and *phrasing* the notes in little groups, mixing the notes up in different ways. *Focus* on the top strings first (the skinny ones): take a few notes at a time, gradually adding more.

Example:

Take your time with each diagram—really explore. Try *hammer-ons*, *pull-offs*, *bends*, *slides*, and *accents* to help the *musicality* of it all (also *vibrato*). Also, when playing *adjacent* notes with one finger, you don’t want to *hop*, you want to *roll*. Ask for help if need be.

Now including the fourth string:

And bringing in the fifth string now:

And finally bring in the sixth string little by little. We’ll come back to this position very soon. But first we’re going to deal with another important one.

The second important area for us will be presented without all six strings (don’t worry why for now, just relax and absorb it):

Learn this group of five notes gradually and when you feel comfortable, move on to the following:
Master each diagram before moving to the next. Work in both ascending and descending directions and of course mix the notes up in many orders and in many phrasings (which by the way, are separate concepts).

We’re going to deal with a “two-strings-at-a-time” procedure for a while. Of course, some of this is kind of a review from the last page, but (1) the perspective is different and (2) we’re completing the position we began before (*).

As you may have noticed, the top two (or three) strings in this position can be (and often are) played with two different sets of fingers. Now try the “two-strings-at-a-time” bit with just the new full position. Three strings at a time is also a wonderful practice discipline and can produce some fine results on a good day. Also, please notice, if you haven’t, the parallel in sound, shape, and scale tone logic between:

Now we come to the third important area or position, and we’re going to start with it in a new key. And as before, we’ll deal with a portion rather than the whole at first, for various learning/usage-related reasons:

Take various little groupings within this area as before, maybe two or three notes at a time. You really learn by doing this.
And now combining the new position with our last one:

Don’t forget “spread” fingerings as well as the shifts.

It won’t hurt to try messing around also with the following:

If your ears get bored, lower all this down to the key of E.

And now introducing some new notes in the new position:

Here’s the two-string bit again:

And the complete new position, finally:

Now go back and add this note in whenever practical.

There’s a lot of work on this page, but it can be a lot of fun, too, if you take it slow and easy.
How about hooking all three positions together (maybe you’ve tried already—if so, I hope there’ll be a new idea or two here):

Try all these type of examples backwards, too (kind of “descending” on the neck even though the sound is ascending).

Here’s another example, this time in the key of A:

If we took everything on the preceding line and put the separate boxes together like we did in line 1, it would look like:

If you’re patient and diligent, this stuff can really become your friend and you’ll really be “seeing the neck,” at least in this type of harmonic color. And have fun with it…make it be MUSIC.
The Pentatonic Blues Scale

This is the most popular scale for blues and Rock & Roll - more melodies have been played from these notes than all the other scales combined (at least in a blues or rock setting). So, a working fluency with it is something you want to acquire, at worst just to see what your predecessors have been up to.

This position of the scale has been the most favored by virtually everyone who uses the blues scale in their playing. So get acquainted, if you're not already. Once you can play it reasonably well, try tapping your foot, setting up a steady groove of one type or another, and phrasing the notes in little groups, mixing the notes up in different ways. Focus on the top strings first (the skinny ones): take a few notes at a time, gradually adding more. Ex: Take your time with each diagram - really explore!

Try hammer-ons, pull-offs, bends, slides and vibrato to help the musicality of it all.

Also: When playing adjacent notes with one finger, your don't want to hop; you want to roll. Look for help if you need it.

If your ears start to get bored, move all this to the key of...

Now including the 4th string:

And bringing in the 5th string now:

And finally bringing in the 6th string little by little.

We will come back to this position; you will have to deal with another important one.

Learn this group of 5 notes gradually and when you feel comfortable, move on to the following - Martin each diagram before moving to the next.

Connecting both positions:

Work in both ascending and descending directions and of course, mix the notes up in many orders and in many phrasings (which, by the way, are separate concepts).
THE PENTATONIC BLUES SCALE

We're going to deal with a "2 strings at a time" procedure for awhile. Of course, this is kind of a review from the last page, but the perspective is different and we're completing the position we began before.

Now try the "2 strings at a time" but with just the new fall position. 3 strings at a time is also a wonderful practice discipline and can produce some fine results on a good day. Also, please notice, if you haven't, the parallel in sound, shape and scale tone logic between:

Now we come to the 3rd important area or position and we're going to start with it in a new key. And as before, we'll deal with a portion rather than the whole at first, for various learning/usage-related reasons:

And now combining the new position with our last one:

Don't forget "spread" fingerings as well as the shifts. It won't hurt to try messing around also with the following:

IF YOUR EARS GET BORED, LOWER ALL THIS DOWN TO THE KEY OF E.

Here's the 2 string bit again:

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And the complete matter finally:

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Now go back and add the note in advanced practice.
THE PENTATONIC BLUES SCALE

How about hooking all 3 positions together (maybe you've tried already - yes, I hope there'll be a new idea or two here):

Try all these type of examples backwards too (kind of "descending" on the neck even though the sound is ascending).

Here's another example, this time in the key of A:

STUDY THESE VERY CAREFULLY VISUALLY AS WELL AS PLAYING-WISE

If you're patient and diligent, this stuff can really become your friend and you'll really be "seeing the neck", at least in this type of harmonic color. And have fun with it...... make it be MUSIC.