



# drdavewalkerblog

searching out the best values for musicians

## Learn Bass from the Best Teacher

□ [July 1, 2017](#) □ [drdavewalkerblog](#)



Just a few centuries ago, music was considered an art and a science. The scientific part was theory, of course, and its practical application was where art came in. **Beethoven** studied with **Haydn** to learn how to compose contemporary music; theory was still the way to learn the materials and the proper way to use them, and while a good composer deviated somewhat from them, there were limits set by what was considered good taste. While recognizing his student's undoubted genius, Haydn felt that Beethoven had strayed too far from the standards of good taste, just as Beethoven felt that Haydn had stayed too conservatively bound by societal norms to truly express the strong feelings that imbued Beethoven's music. However, throughout a career that would change the sound of classical music and inspire composers to express their innermost selves, Beethoven stayed much closer to his early training than most composers who followed. Thus began the rift between theory and actual practice that is considered the norm by almost all musicians, composers and performers alike. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries composers tried outdo one another in breaking rules, too often disregarding the taste of their audience (if they had one). All of this was justified as "advancing theory."



Music theory got a bad rap, so that nowadays it takes an extraordinary teacher to bridge that gap and show the relevance of theory to performance and composing (including improvising). Enter **Ariane Cap** (<https://arisbassblog.com/>), a trained teacher whose pedagogical approach to the the bass links the critical elements of theory to playing so that her students are those incredible musicians who know what to play when, and how to blow your socks off with their improvising. She teaches theory as it is used today and in this course, how it applies to brainwork like fingering and improvising with the right notes, as well as building muscle memory and physical stamina to use what you head tells you. This is how Beethoven could improvise an entire sonata at the piano, and how you can improvise a great-sounding solo on the spot. Just one priceless example: a major triad consists of a root, major third and perfect fifth, which means that you will play the low root with your second finger, unlike a minor chord. Maybe you knew one, or even both of those things, but did your teacher link those two up when you first learned about chords? Ms. Cap's point is that theory should strengthen your playing so that brain memory and muscle memory work together, and knowing the theoretical basis so well that your mind is free to concentrate on expressing yourself, just like Beethoven.



o (<https://truefire.com/bass-guitar-lessons/pentatonic-playground/c857>)

## HOW TO BECOME A BETTER BASSIST

1. Remember the name Ariane Cap.
2. Buy her Truefire course "Pentatonic Playground for Bass."
3. Work through the course.

Truefire has so many excellent courses that it's hard to pick just one, but you really need to buy one (per instrument maybe) and put all of your energy into mastering it before moving on. My advice to **all bassists** is that **this is the one you need**.

If you have any objection that this is "just the pentatonic scale" remember that this is the basis of many of the greatest players' style, including *John Entwistle*. **Ariane Cap** gives you the solid foundation to be able to step outside the scale when you need to, or just want to, and how to get back into it seamlessly.

You will have to work, but this is truly a course where the more effort you put into it, the more you will get out of it. You will learn more about the Pentatonic Scale than you thought there could be to know about any scale, never mind a 5-note one. But that's just the start, so don't take the title too literally. If you play along with Ms. Cap you will also learn every note on the neck of the bass, as well as the step of each note in the current scale. This is a theory course in which you always have your bass in your hands and your ears open. Soon you will find yourself hearing the next note before you play it, an amazing experience if you don't already have perfect pitch; some of you may find that you do.

One of the keys here is **focus**. It's very easy for your mind to slide into auto-pilot as you play a scale by shape, but not so easy if you are calling out the notes as you play (and learn) each one, or if you are saying the scale degree. Because it's the pentatonic scale, each one is a major and a minor version of the relative keys (e.g. G major is relative to E minor — they have the same notes but different key notes). This requires even more attention but pays off big when you realize you are learning two scales at once, and reinforcing the notes on the neck. An added bonus is that you will see and hear why so many songs slide into the relative major or minor for a while before returning to the main key. You will find it much easier to learn songs, pick them up by ear, or even fake songs you don't know.

The course is broken into three sections: first you learn the 5 patterns that the scale creates, starting on each of the 5 notes. Each is introduced with an overview of the pattern, then its particular features and special applications, some technical exercises to develop both brain and muscle memory, and finally grooves and fills that use this particular shape. By the end of each pattern, you know it pretty well! Ariane's fills especially show you how versatile this scale can be

The grooves and fills are the real meat and the rewards of this course. If you aren't blown away by these it can only be because you are too busy working in a major studio! Not only are they great to play, but they will inspire you to get the patterns more completely into your mind and fingers so that you can concentrate on making music like this. They range in difficulty, but thanks to the Truefire player even a beginner can slow the tempo enough to get into these grooves, and the musicality of every one is top shelf.

Section Three is the real "playground" part that applies these scales to real music. First come demonstrations of using all 5 patterns in both major and minor so that your playing is freed from "playing out of box shapes." Then come connections of the different patterns, horizontally and diagonally, so that you have the whole neck at your command. Special topics like fills using fourths and fifths, and fingerings for single string playing follow before you learn a master stroke: how to transpose these patterns into all major and minor keys. This is a more intense lesson and one well worth spending enough time to truly master it. Next come the blues, and then soloing with both major and minor pentatonics. You will also learn the relation of the scales to chord qualities as well as how to adapt them to play smoothly under progressions. Finally, Ariane shares the gear that she uses and explains why she chose it.

Ariane Cap has a teaching style that is good-willed but firm; she is not out to become your BFF, but to improve your bass playing. Don't expect to be wheedled into doing the exercises. You are expected to do the work, and once you start seeing results quickly you will realize that this is the way you want to be taught. In fact, this is a good course for other instructors to study to learn how to set up a course and teach it well. It certainly deserves a teaching award of some kind.

Truefire is known for the high-quality of their courses as well as their reasonable pricing. This entire course costs less than one lesson with a teacher of this calibre, and there is enough material here to keep you learning for months or years since you can keep coming back to it to catch things you missed the

first time, try some new variations of the supplied grooves, and work with the jam tracks.

Check out the course for yourself at Truefire (<https://truefire.com/bass-guitar-lessons/pentatonic-playground/c857>) (<https://truefire.com/bass-guitar-lessons/pentatonic-playground/c857>) and Ariane and her further teaching on [her web page \(http://www.arianecap.com/\)](http://www.arianecap.com/). (<http://www.arianecap.com/>)

*This course has my highest recommendation.*

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