Melodic Minor Scales
Dr. Mark Watkins, BYU–Idaho

The following scales are included for reference only. They are not intended as part of the exercise routine. The same applies to the arpeggios. Work begins with the “Five-note Patterns.”

The Melodic Minor scale gets its name from usage in the construction of melodies: single note, sequential, linear. The scale is contrived from tonal harmony, which attracts to a tonic (the root or 1st note of the scale). Both the 6th and 7th degrees are raised ascending, pulling upward to tonic. When descending they are lowered or returned to their natural minor state falling toward the dominant (5th scale degree).

A Melodic Minor

E Melodic Minor

B Melodic Minor

F-sharp Melodic Minor

C-sharp Melodic Minor

G-sharp Melodic Minor

D-sharp Melodic Minor

A-sharp Melodic Minor

D Melodic Minor

G Melodic Minor

C Melodic Minor

F Melodic Minor

B-flat Melodic Minor

E-flat Melodic Minor

A-flat Melodic Minor
Practice Sequence

Do the following in a selected key then move to the next key.
1. 5-note pattern
2. 9-note pattern
3. Full range scale

5-Note Pattern

The decision regarding raised or lowered 6th and/or 7th scale degree depends on the note that follows. When ascending use raised option; when descending use lowered option. For example, in C minor if the note that follows B ascends to C, a B-natural should be played (Ex. 1 below). If the note that follows B descends to an A, a B-flat should be played (Ex. 2 below). Likewise, if the A continues down to G, an A-flat is the choice (Ex. 3).

C Melodic Minor

Example 1: B ascending

Example 2: B descending

Example 3: A descending

Exercise: Start on the lowest note available on the saxophone that is within the key signature and according to the “rule” of the Melodic Minor: C minor key signature/Melodic Minor scale = lowest note B not B-flat.

Example: C Melodic Minor. Each key is not included herein. Students should internalize the concept and play all scale degree patterns and keys from memory.
9-Note Pattern

Follow the same considerations as outlined above.

Example: E Melodic Minor

Full-range Scales

Use a different articulation each time a scale is practiced. Eventually, through work on numerous keys, all the patterns below should be mastered.

Play ranges as in the Major Full-range Scales. Key signatures are the same as Natural Minor. Raise the 6th and 7th scales degrees when ascending; lower the 6th and 7th degrees back to Natural Minor pitches when descending.
Top and bottom pivot points follow the same principle as outlined for 5-note and 9-note exercises. The choice of raised or lowered 6th and/or 7th depends on whether or not the following pitch is above or below the note in question. Examples follow.

Example 1: A Melodic Minor, 6th at top (6th descending=lowered)

Example 2: G Melodic Minor, 7th at top (6th ascending=raised, 7th descending=lowered, 6th descending=lowered)

Example 3: C Melodic Minor, 7th at bottom (7th ascending=raised)

Example 4: D Melodic Minor, 6th at bottom (7th descending=lowered, 6th ascending=raised, 7th ascending=raised)