

Blues Guitar

Blues music uses a 3 Chord Progression - I IV V

Chord numbering example in the key of C:

C = I, D = II, E = III, F = IV, G = V, A = VI, B = VII

Examples of different scales

A D E
B E F
C F G
D G A
E A B
F B C
G C D

Keys Most Commonly Used in Blues

A E D G

12 Bar Blues Pattern (most common Blues pattern)

has 3 melodic phrases of 4 measures (usually 4/4 time)

The 1st and 4th are Basic 12 Bar Blues, others are variations

E E E E
A A E E
B A E B

E A E E
A A E E
B A E B

E A E E
A A E E
B B E E

E E E E
A A E E
B A E E

E E E E7
A A E E
B7 A E B7

E7 E7 E7 E7
A7 A7 E7 E7
B7 A7 E7 E7

Same 12-Bar Blues Patterns With Chord Numbers

I I I I
IV IV I I
V IV I V

I IV I I
IV IV I I
V IV I V

I IV I I
IV IV I I
V V I I

I I I I
IV IV I I
V IV I I

I I I I7
IV IV I I
V7 IV I V7

I7 I7 I7 I7
IV7 IV7 I7 I7
V7 IV7 I7 I7

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8 Bar Blues Pattern

E	B	E	A	I	V	I	IV
E	B	E A	E B	I	V	I IV	I V

Miscellaneous Blues Patterns

12-Bar Blues Variation 1

I	I	I	I7
IV7	IV7	I	I
V7	V7	I	I

12-Bar Blues Variation 2

I	IV7	I	I7
IV7	IVm	I	I7
V7	IV7	I	I

Minor 12-Bar Blues 1

Im7	Im7	Im7	Im7
IVm	IVm	Im	Im7
V7	IVm	Im7	Im7

Minor 12-Bar Blues 2

Im7	IVm - V7	Im7	I7
IVm	IVm - V9	Im7	I7
IVm	bVI7 - V9	Im7	Im7

8-Bar Blues Variation 1

I	I7	IV	I
V7	V7	I - IV7	I

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Techniques used in Blues Guitar

Hammerons

On the same string, have the 1st finger on the lower note, then pick the string. Next tap down (hammer on) the next note with another finger. Don't pick again.

Pulloffs

Place 2 fingers on two notes (one or more frets apart) to be played on the same string. Pick the string and release (pull-off) the finger of the higher note while keeping the lower note fretted. Don't pick again.

Slides

Have finger or fingers on a string or strings on a specified fret. Pick the string or strings and slide up or down the guitar neck to a greater or lesser fret.

Bends

Pick a string or strings and bend string or strings so that the tone is increased one or two frets, or bend the strings first, and then pick and straighten the string or strings to normal tone.

Vibrato

Pick the string as the fret finger or a tremolo bar rapidly rolls back and forth or bends up and down, making the note sound slightly higher and lower.

Trills

This is alternating rapidly between the same 2 notes. Fret the lower note, play it once, then hammer quickly and regularly on and off the 2nd note above it.

Ascending Hammerons

On the same string, have the 1st finger on the lower note, then pick the string. Next tap down (hammer on) the next note with the next finger, and yet another note with the next finger.

Descending Pulloffs

Pull off from your 4th finger to 3rd and to 1st or
Pull off from your 4th finger to 2nd and to 1st or
pull off from your 3rd finger to 2nd and to 1st
These can be 3 descending

Double Stops

Pick 2 notes at the same time.

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Parts of a Blues Song

Intros

This is an instrumental introduction before the song begins. Here usually a riff is done to establish the mood of the song. The blues intro can echo the harmony of the last line of the song.

Basic 2 measure major key Intro:	I	bVI7	V7	
Basic 2 measure minor key Intro:	Im7	IVm	V7	bVI7 V7

Endings

Blues songs can end with a 2-measure chord progression finishing on the I7 chord. Minor chords can be effective in the ending.

Basic 2 measure major key Ending:	I	IV7 bVI7	I	I7
Basic 2 measure minor key Ending:	Im7	IVm V9	Im7	

Fills

A fill is a short instrumental part that is inserted at the end of each phrase (or line) of the blues song.

Turnarounds

A turnaround is a fill that is used at the end of a verse. It helps lead into the next verse.

Basic 2 measure major key TA:	I	I7	IV	IVm	I	bVI7	V7
Basic 2 measure minor key TA:	Im	Im7	IVm	bVI7	V7	bVI7	V7

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Solos

Guitarists usually include a full-verse solo in the song, and some last for several verses. The harmonic pattern of the solo can follow the song itself. A blues solo is made up of different riffs that work well together as a whole. Most blues solos use the pentatonic scales.

You can use a single pentatonic scale to solo over the 12 bar sequence. This is the easiest way to start. It would usually be the minor pentatonic scale of then 'I' chord.

An expanded way of soloing would be to play the related minor pentatonic scale over each chord that is presently playing. For example, while the A chord is playing, use the A minor pentatonic scale, and while the D chord is playing, use the D minor pentatonic scale.

Improvising Riffs for Intros, Endings, Fills, Turnarounds and Solos

Shape blues licks or riffs into phrases. Once you learn a lick, invent a variation by changing the rhythm or pitch of the notes. You can also lengthen a given riff to create an extended version. Improvise different kinds of riffs to complement the melody line of a blues song. This is where you improvise on the vocal lines of the song.

Scales

Blues solos, etc. are usually played in the major and minor pentatonic scales. Additional notes can be added to the minor pentatonic scale to give it more of a bluesy feel.

Blues Scale - The flatted fifth is added to the minor pentatonic scale.

Scale variation 2: Major 3rds from the major chord is added.

Scale variation 3: Add major 2nd and major 6th.

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Rhythm Patterns

Slow Blues Rhythm

In 4/4 time, sound the chord on the 1st beat of the bar, leave it to ring, then play it again on the 2nd beat and damp it or cut it off so an accent is created. The 3rd and 4th beats repeat the 1st and 2nd so that a backbeat results. The pattern can be reversed to produce a sustained chord on the backbeat.

Triplets Rhythm

Each quarter note in a measure gets 3 beats.

Straight Eights Rhythm

1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and etc.

Shuffle Rhythms

Shuffle 1:

1 beat/rest then
continuous 2 beats/rest for the remainder of the song.

Shuffle 2:

Use 8 notes in a measure, and accent every other beat (or note).

Boogie Woogie

A shuffle rhythm (shuffle 2) with a syncopated accent on the last beat of the 2nd bar (3 quick beats) which would be note 15, 16, 17. 17 is actually the 1st beat of the next measure.