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Electric Blues Part 1

UNIT 3 • LESSON 1 << PREVIOUS NEXT >>

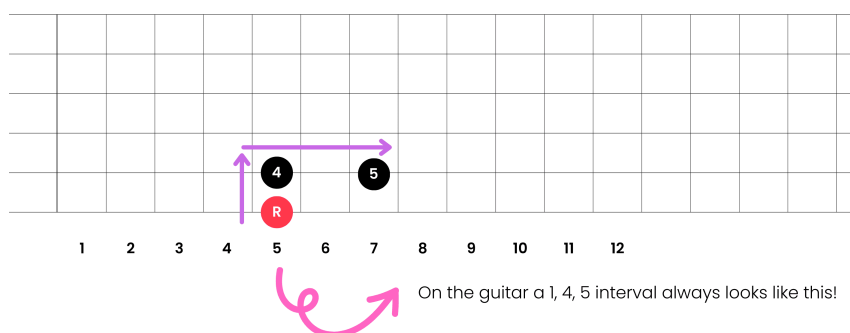
Lesson notes Diagrams

What Is a 12 Bar?

A twelve-bar blues is a standard structure that most blues songs stick to. This structure can vary a little, but generally stays the same! This is why when you see people jump up on stage at blues gigs or jam, they all seem to know how to play every song, even though they may not know the actual song! So, there are two things we need to know:

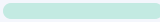
1: the chords to use

You use the 1st, 4th and 5th chords of any key. We won't get into the theory at this point (we'll leave that for a bit later), all we need to do is work it out practically. Check out this simple diagram:



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Part 1

There is nothing more satisfying than playing through a cool blues riff and seeing people move their bodies to the groove you're laying down! This is exactly what we want to achieve on this course, and we kick off with a blues tune and 7th chords.

Lessons:

-  What Is a 12 Bar?
-  Dominant 7th Chords
-  "Travelling Eyes"
-  The Chorus 12 Bar
-  The Verse 12 Bar

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Part 2

Whatever key you build, find your root note on the E string; this gives you your first chord. Let's make an **A powerchord to start with, as an example**. The 4th chord is always the note on the same fret on the next string. Then the 5th chord is 2 frets up from the 4th. So, in the key of A, our 3 chords of the blues are A, D and E. These can be powerchords, major chords, minor chords or dominant chords.

2: the chord changes

The 12 bar blues is called so because it has twelve bars, as you may have guessed! These 12 bars then repeat over and over again. The basic order we will be working with is shown here:

I	I	I	I
IV	IV	I	I
V	IV	Turnaround	Turnaround

The final two bars are often referred to as the turnaround as they turn the 3 chords around quickly before starting the whole 12 bar again; try to learn this sequence. Notice also that we use roman numerals in place of numbers. This means that 'I' is one, 'IV' is four and 'V' is five. If we take the above and apply it to the key of A blues, we end up with:

| A5 | A5 | A5 | A5 |

| D5 | D5 | A5 | A5 |

| E5 | D5 | A5 D5 | A5 E5 |



The turnaround section can take many forms, as you'll discover as we work through this course. This is one possible way of doing it!



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