

Lesson

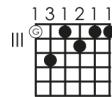
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Learn to play a blues rhythm riff

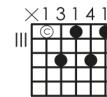
This blues rhythm riff is the most common riff you hear a blues guitarist play. It is very simple but sounds really cool.

It is based on these three barre chords:

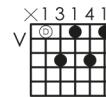
G7



C7



D7



They're more of a visual reference because you aren't actually playing the whole chord. You will only be playing the bottom two strings of the chord and your 4th finger will be in motion.

Here is the riff for G7. Spend some time getting comfortable with it. The C7 and D7 riffs are very similar.

G7

A guitar tablature for the G7 riff. The staff shows six strings (T, A, B) over four measures. Fingerings are indicated above the strings: measure 1 (2, 1), measure 2 (4, 1), measure 3 (2, 1), measure 4 (4, 1). Below the staff, the counting is shown as 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &.

Mute the strings with the side of your right hand near the bridge when you play and it will sound "lighter."

C7

Fretboard diagram for a C7 chord. The strings are labeled T (Top), A, and B (Bottom). Fretting is shown as follows: B string at 3rd fret, A string at 5th fret, and G string at 3rd fret. This is followed by an open A string, an open B string, another open A string, and finally an open B string.

fingering: 2 4 2 4
counting: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

D7

Fretboard diagram for a D7 chord. The strings are labeled T (Top), A, and B (Bottom). Fretting is shown as follows: B string at 5th fret, A string at 7th fret, and G string at 5th fret. This is followed by an open A string, an open B string, another open A string, and finally an open B string.

fingering: 2 4 2 4
counting: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

This chord progression is called a 12-bar blues and it is the foundation for this style of music. Guess what? It's twelve bars long!

Musical score for a 12-bar blues progression. The score consists of three staves, each in common time (indicated by a '4'). The first staff starts with a G7 chord (bar 1), followed by a C7 chord (bar 2), another G7 chord (bar 3), and a final G7 chord (bar 4). The second staff begins with a C7 chord (bar 5) and continues with a C7 chord (bar 6), a G7 chord (bar 7), and a G7 chord (bar 8). The third staff begins with a D7 chord (bar 9) and continues with a C7 chord (bar 10), a G7 chord (bar 11), and a D7 chord (bar 12).

The last two bars of a blues progression, bars 11 and 12, are referred to as the **turnaround**.

Now take each of the riffs, G7, C7 and D7, and put them in the order of the progression.

The image shows three sets of blues scale riffs, each consisting of four measures. The first set is for G7, the second for C7, and the third for D7. Each set includes a staff with note heads and stems, a fingering chart below it, and a count chart below that. The staff starts with a 'T' (Treble) clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a common time signature. The fingering chart uses numbers 1 through 4 above the notes, and the count chart uses '1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &' followed by a bar line.

G7 Riff:

Staff: T, A, B
Fingering: 2 4 1 2 1 4 1
Count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

C7 Riff:

Staff: 5 5 7 7 5 5 7 7
Fingering: 2 4 1 2 1 4 1
Count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

D7 Riff:

Staff: 7 7 9 9 7 7 9 9
Fingering: 2 4 1 2 1 4 1
Count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

The chord symbols say G7, C7 and D7, but you're not really playing a chord, per se—it's more like the dominant 7th sound is *implied*. Dominant 7th chords are what blues music is based on.

Also, listen to the **shuffle** feel I use in the video. This is another important aspect of the blues style. For now, just let your body emulate this rhythm as you play the riff and you can explore the music theory involved later. In actuality, playing blues music is more about the *feel* of the music. Listen to a lot of blues recordings and you will start to hear what I am talking about.