

# BLUES SOLOING BY STEVE STINE BY STEVE STINE

**WEEK 1** 

Culta Zoom

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# **Table Of Contents**

Why Learn the Blues?	3
Tuning	3
The Chromatic Scale and Notes on the 6th String	4
Notes on the 5th String	5
Common Notes Between the 6th and 5th Strings	6
The I-IV-V Chord Progression	6
Chords in Blues	9
Groove: Straight vs. Shuffle/Swing	16
The 12-Bar Blues	17
Chord Fragments	19
Vocal Elements	22
Pentatonic Scales	25



## **Blues Soloing Masterclass - Week 1**

Steve Stine

#### Why Learn the Blues?

- 1. You probably like the Blues. You like listening to it, going to concerts featuring your favorite blues artists, etc. because the Blues is inspiring to listen to and watch people play it.
- 2. It has all the elements you need as a guitar player no matter what style of music you favor playing.
- 3. Blues is a very effective means of communication amongst many musicians. It is very consistent. It does the same things over and over for the most part. It is so predictable that many musicians can play together almost instantly.

These are three reasons why you will want to learn the Blues.

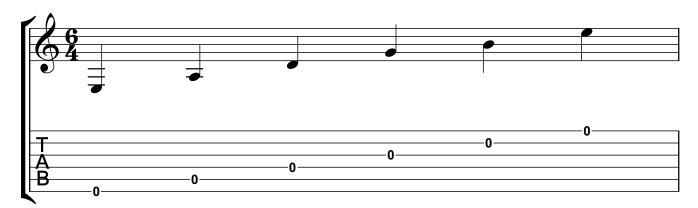
#### **Tuning**

Before playing anything else, it is important to get your guitar tuned. For this course, we will use standard tuning as shown below:

#### **Guitar Tuning:**

- $\bigcirc$  = E2  $\bigcirc$  3 = G3
- $\bigcirc$  = A2  $\bigcirc$  = B3
- $\textcircled{4} = D3 \qquad \textcircled{1} = E4$

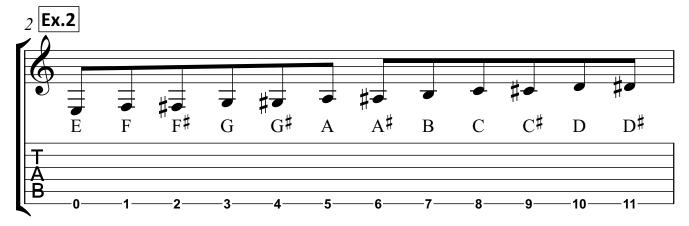
Ex.1

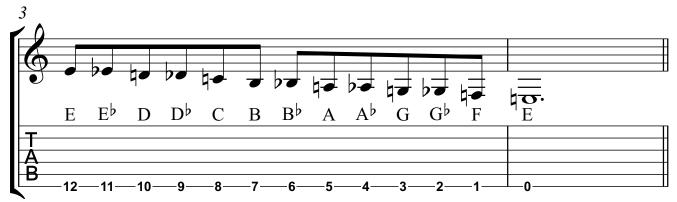




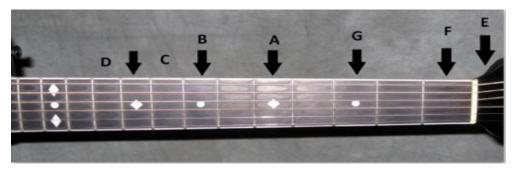
#### The Chromatic Scale and Notes on the 6th String

To understand the guitar fretboard, we need to understand the chromatic scale (all of the 12 possible pitches in music). This is because the guitar fretboard's is divided by fretwires in accordance to it. Each fret is separated from each other by a half step. Playing all the notes on a single string on all frets in succession produces the chromatic scale:





While it would be nice to be able to memorize all the notes per fret, there is an easier and smarter way of going about it. Take note of the image of the fretboard below:



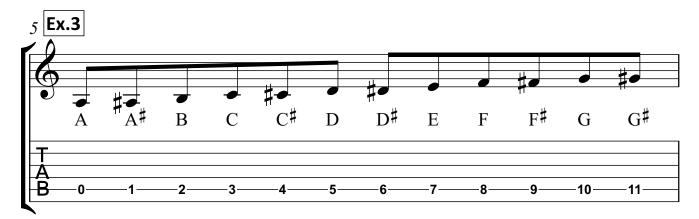
What we see are the notes over the 6th string that we need to memorize. To do so, take note of the following:

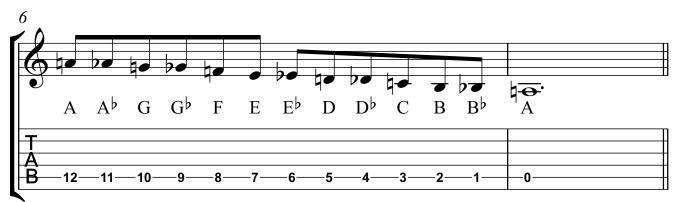
- 1. The open 6th string is E.
- 2. The 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th frets have the notes F, G, A, and B respectively. These typically have fret markers.
- 3. In between the 9th fret are C and D (8th and 10th fret). The 12th fret note is E.
- 4. The rest of the notes (accidentals) can be derived by chromatic scale logic.

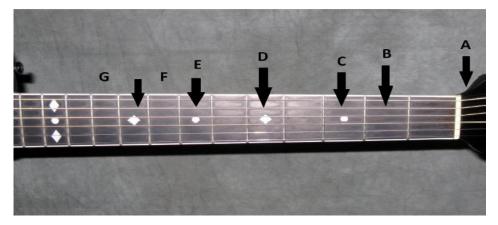


## Notes on the 5th String

In the same manner as the 6th string, we can also derive a chromatic scale from the 5th string starting with A:







Looking at the picture above, the smartest way to memorize the notes of the 5th string is as follows:

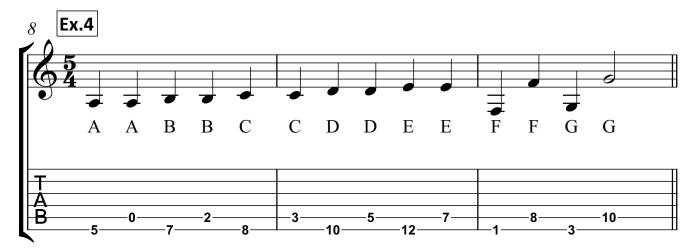
- 1. Know that the open 5th string is A.
- 2. The 2nd, 3rd, 5th, and 7th frets have the notes B, C, D, and E respectively. Except for the 2nd fret, these typically have fret markers.
- 3. In between the 9th fret are F and G (8th and 10th fret). The 12th fret note is A.
- 4. The rest of the notes (accidentals) can be derived by chromatic scale logic.



The question now is why is it especially important to memorize the notes of the 6th and 5th strings? This is very important because it makes it easier to learn scales, chords, and patterns if we know the notes of the 6th and 5th strings. Each note then becomes a landmark for various scale and chord patterns. Once you have mastered the notes over the 6th and 5th strings, you can get even better if you learn the notes of the rest of the strings to become more confident when playing the guitar.

#### **Common Notes Between the 6th and 5th Strings**

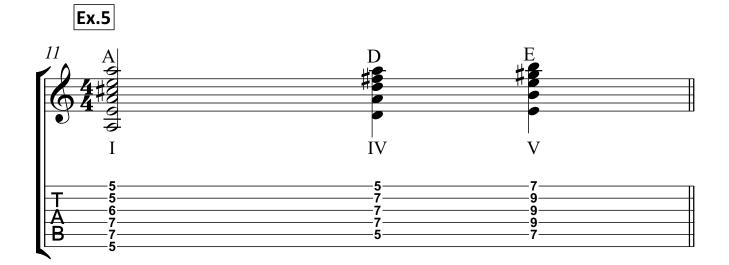
One of the things that can be noticed after learning the notes of the 6th and 5th strings is that you can identify common notes between the two strings. This has the added benefit of being able to navigate the fretboard better and learn patterns more efficiently.



#### The I-IV-V Chord Progression

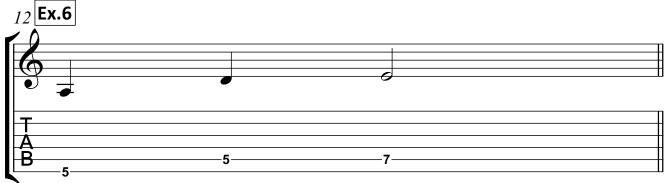
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In Blues, the fundamental chord progression is called the I-IV-V. In the key of A, for example, the I-IV-V is A-D-E. In music theory, each major scale/key signature has seven notes and will therefore have seven chords. We take the first (I), the fourth (IV), and the fifth (V) chord from that key signature and play them in sequence to get the I-IV-V chord progression. Many blues songs follow the I-IV-V. Take note of the pattern below:

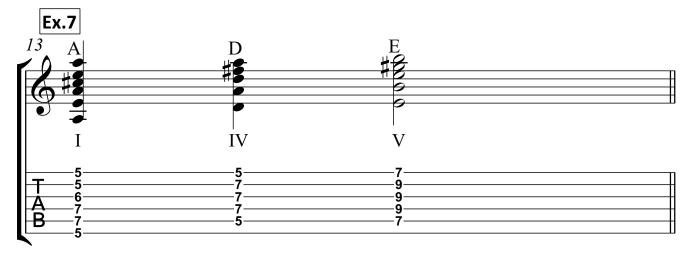




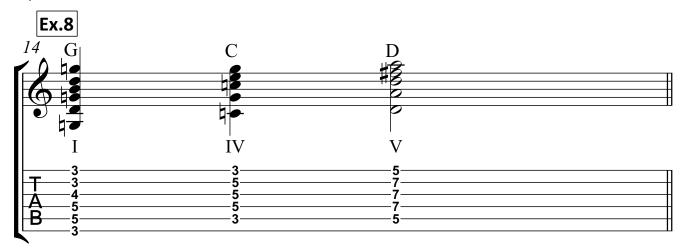
If you look into the previous example closely, the root of the I chord is at the 6th string, the root of the IV chord is just underneath it at the 5th string, and then the V chord's root is at the 5th string two frets away from the IV chord. As for our example in the key of A, the I chord's root is at the 6th string 5th fret, the IV chord's root at the 5th string 5th fret, and the V chord's root at the 5th string 7th fret:



Since we can now find where the root notes of the I-IV-V are, all we have to do is flesh out the chords:

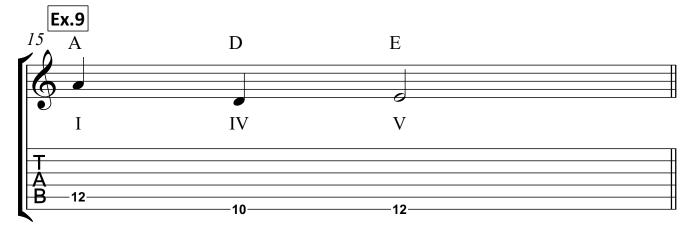


Because this pattern is consistent, we can just move it anywhere on the fretboard to play a I-IV-V chord progression in any key we want. For instance, all it takes to play a I-IV-V in the key of G is to move the pattern to the 3rd fret:

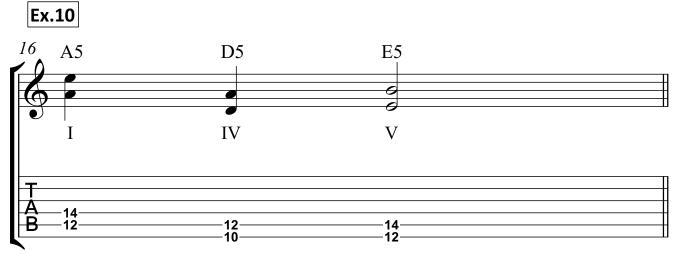




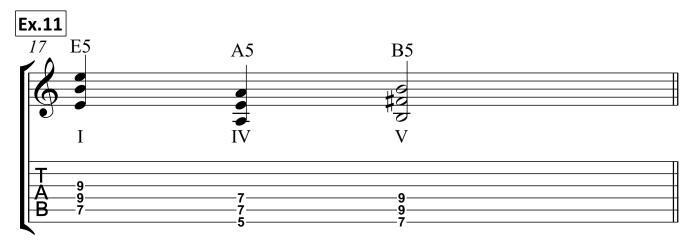
For the next example, let's put the I chord on the 5th string this time. The pattern for our I-IV-V will look like this. We will plot out the root notes first:



You can see that the if the I chord root is at the 5th string, you can find the IV at the 6th string two frets back and the V chord just above it. We can now flesh them out as power chords:



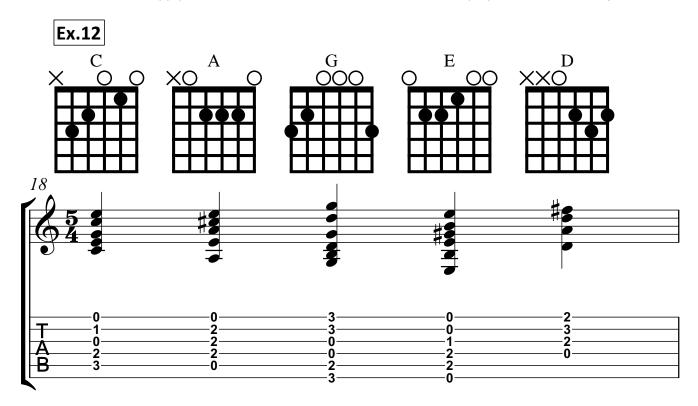
Remember that as long as you know where the root of your I chord is, you can do these patterns all over the fretboard in different locations to play in different keys. Let's apply the 5th string root pattern for the key of E:

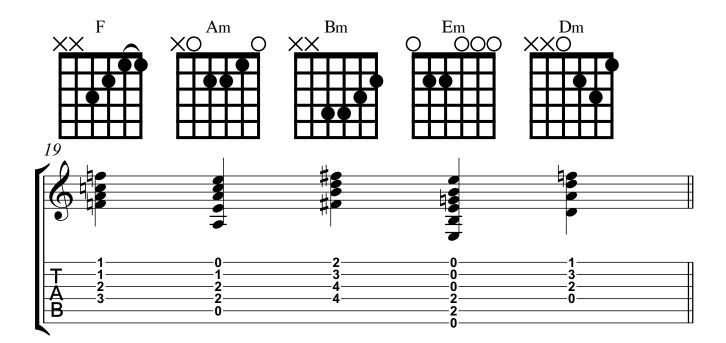




## **Chords in Blues**

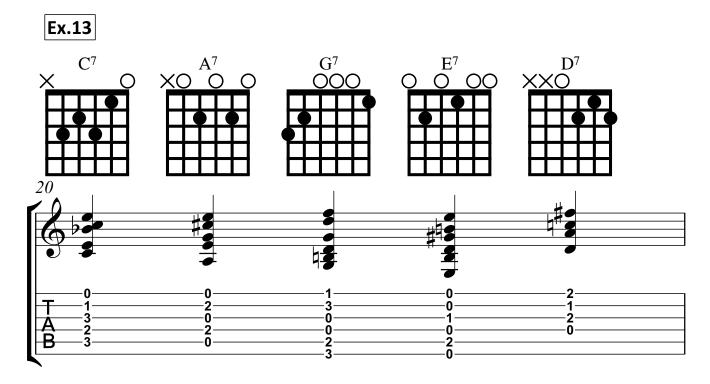
To know how to apply chords in the Blues, we need to know how to play our 10 essential open chords:

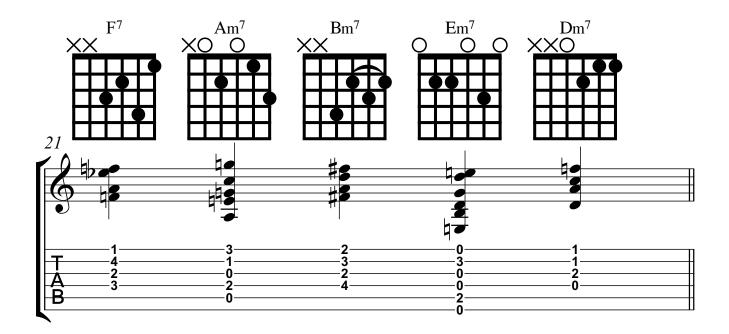






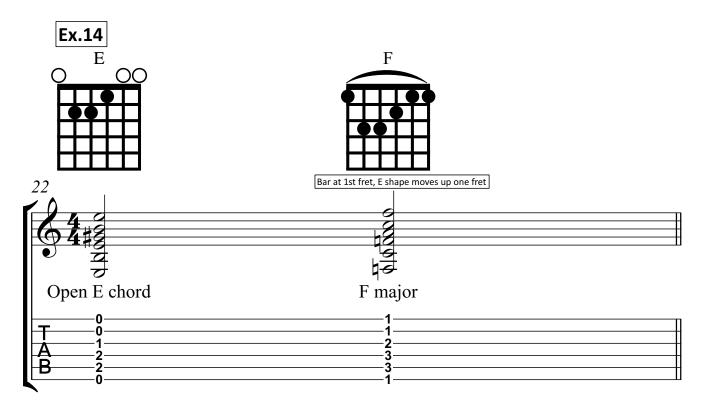
Because the Blues is characterized by the use of **dominant seventh** and **minor seventh chords**, we need to learn how to convert our open chords into these kinds of **seventh chords** by adding a minor seventh to each of them. In some of the chords, we have "rootless" voicings:



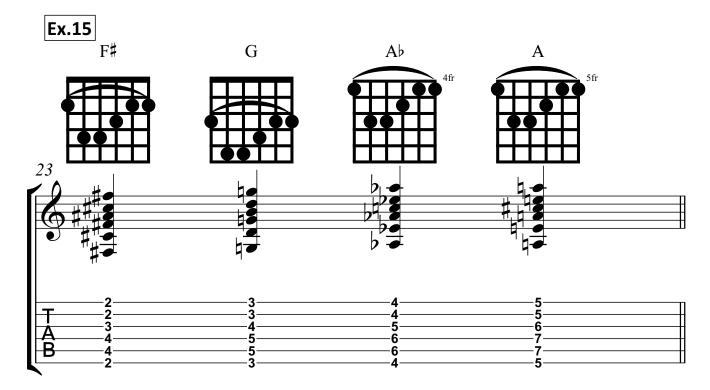




**Barre chords** are nothing more than open chords that have been moved up the guitar, with the first finger being used to bar across a fret to function as the nut. **Sixth string barre chords** have the root at the sixth string (as the name implies) and are based on the open E chord shape:

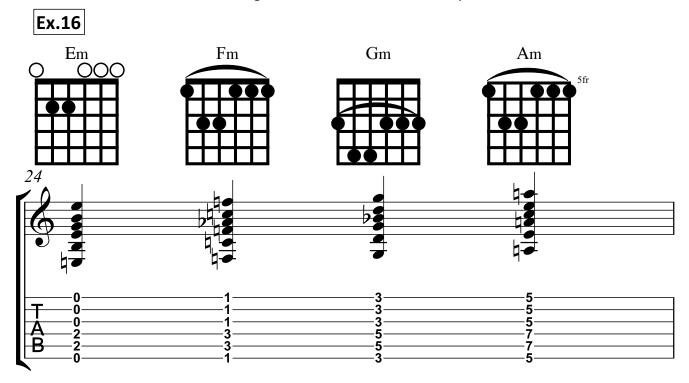


Given that the shape is easily movable, you can play all 12 possible barre chords by simply moving it where you need it to be:

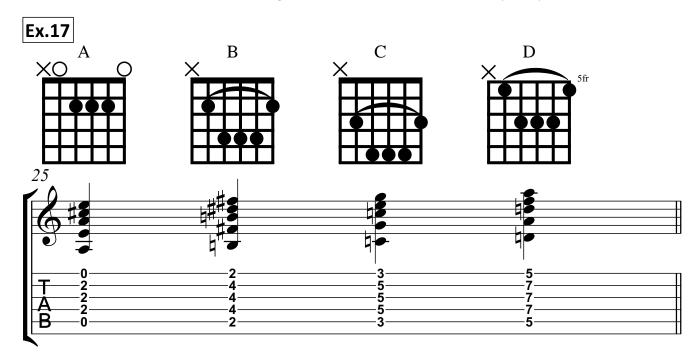




The minor chord verson of the 6th-string barre chord works the same way:

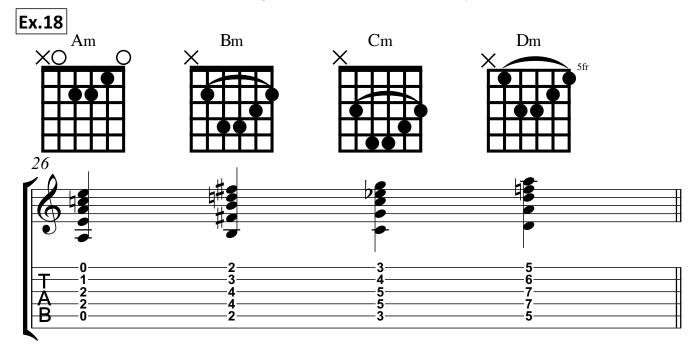


Another kind of barre chord, the **5th-String barre chord**, works in the same way except it is based on the A shape:

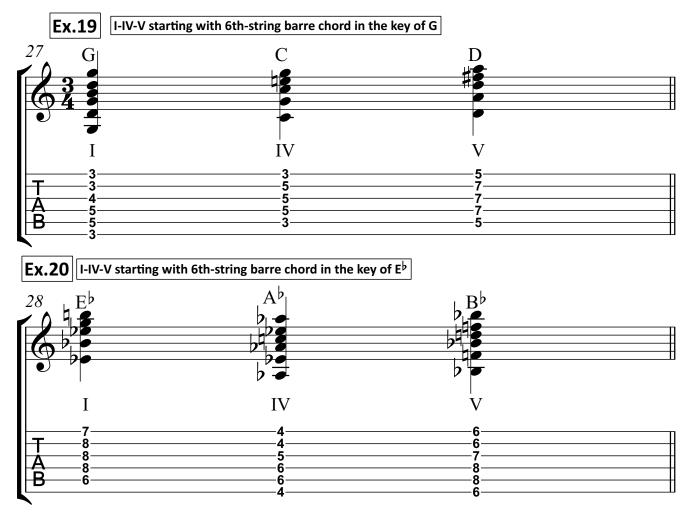




The minor chord verson of the 5th-string barre chord works the same way:



Combined with the knowledge of how to play I-IV-V chord progressions starting from the 6th or 5th string, you can play I-IV-V chord progressions in any key using barre chords:

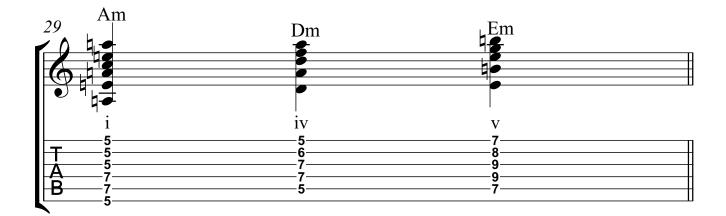


GuitarZoom © 2015

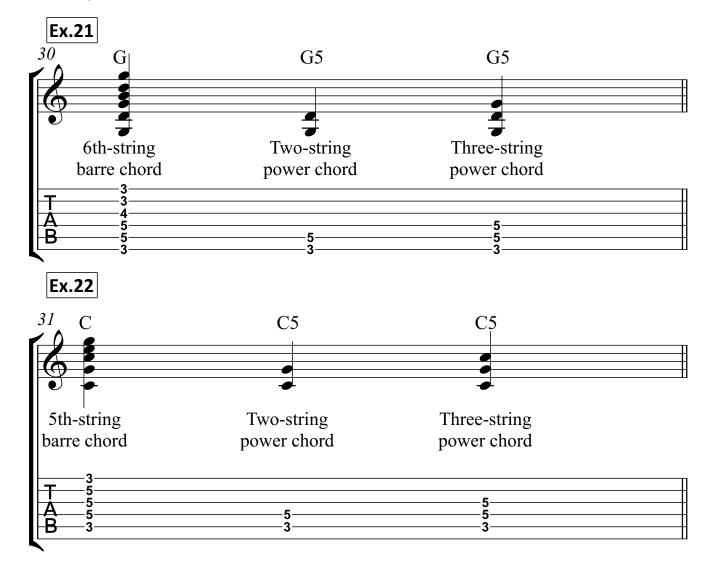
13



You can also play the minor version, i-iv-v, in barre chords, using the same principles. This example is in A minor:

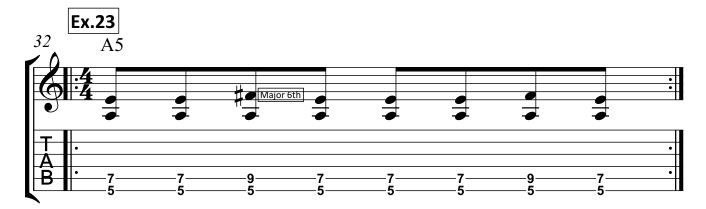


Now that you know your barre chords, **power chords** are just the top two or three strings of any 6th- or 5th-string barre chord:

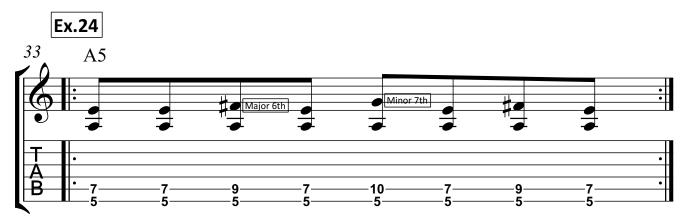




If we change our fifth to a major sixth at beats two and four (by simply extending the fretting finger that plays the fifth two frets away) we get to create a Blues sounding rhythm guitar passage:



We can add another extension, a minor seventh, to our power chord to create the familiar sounding blues riff:



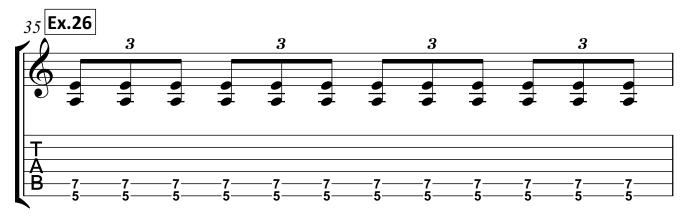


## **Groove: Straight vs. Shuffle/Swing**

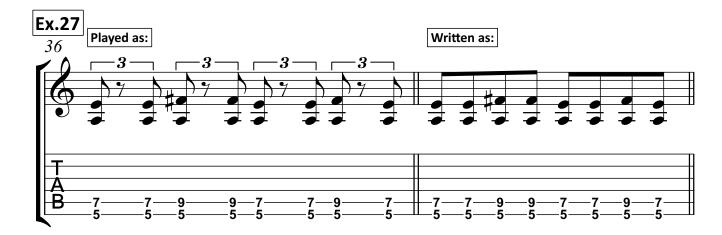
A **straight** groove in blues simply means eighth notes being played in a typical manner i.e. each eighth note is being played with equal length (marching rhythm). Most music in existence has this kind of groove:



A swing/shuffle groove in blues is based on a triplet rhythm as written below:



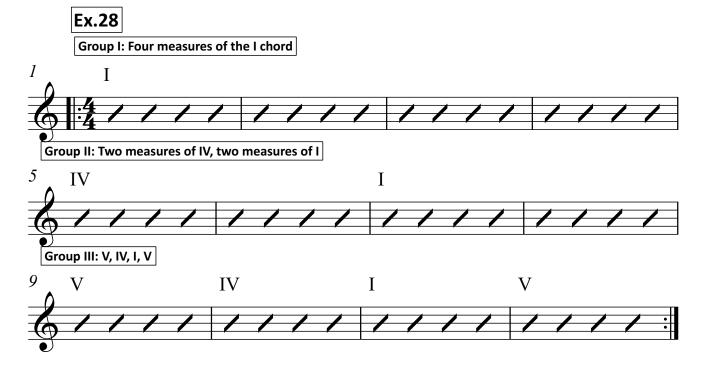
A **swing/shuffle** groove, however, omits the second note of the triplet, giving the rhythm the typical swing or shuffle feel featured in blues that has the impression of a heartbeat:



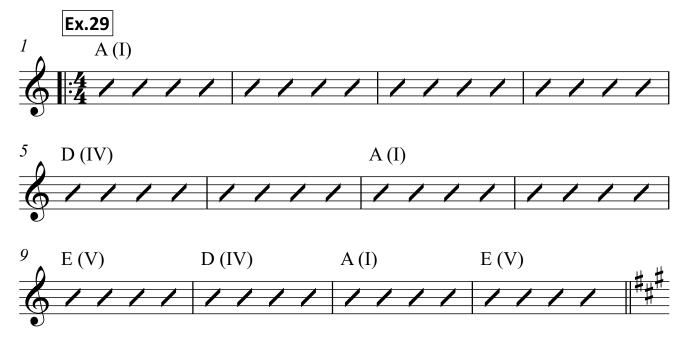


#### The 12-Bar Blues

The 12-bar blues is the fundamental form in blues. It is important to learn all about this form because a majority of blues songs are written with this format in mind such as ZZ Top's "Tush", Robben Ford's "Talk to Your Daughter", etc. What happens in a 12-bar blues is that it lays out the entire cycle where the I-IV-V chord progression happens as written below. We can also identify three distinct four-measure groups or periods as follows:



Here is an example of the 12-bar blues in a particular key signature. This one is in A:





As a practical example of how to play a 12-bar blues pattern, here is a 12-bar blues chorus in A with embellishments as noted to make playing a little more interesting:

#### Ex.30

## 



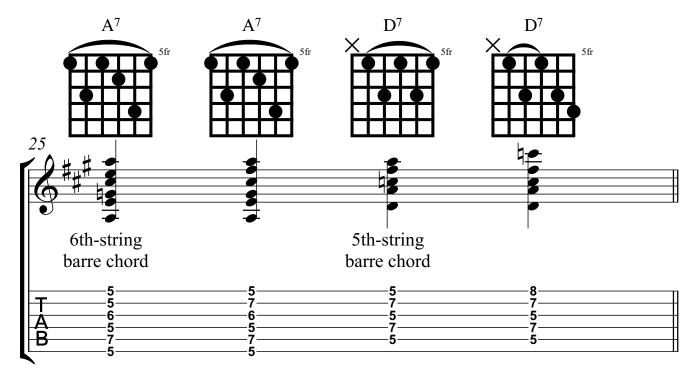


## **Chord Fragments**

In blues, we make use of chord fragments and embellishments...

- 1. ...to make things a bit easier to play.
- 2. ...to make playing a lot more fun.

The first thing we need to do is turn our major 6th- and 5th-string barre chord shapes into dominant seventh chords:

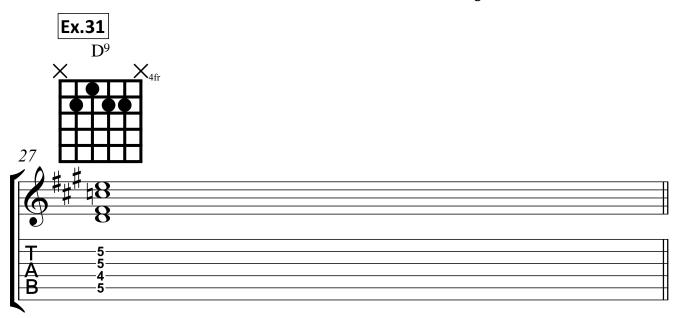


Since we already have our I and IV chords respectively turned into dominant seventh chords in the example above, we can make our V chord a lot more interesting by turning it into a  $7(^{\sharp}9)$  chord. We have an E7( $^{\sharp}9$ ) shown below:

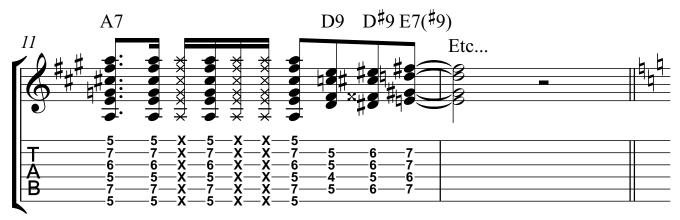




We can also turn our IV chord into a IV9 chord to make it more interesting. We have a D9 chord in this case:

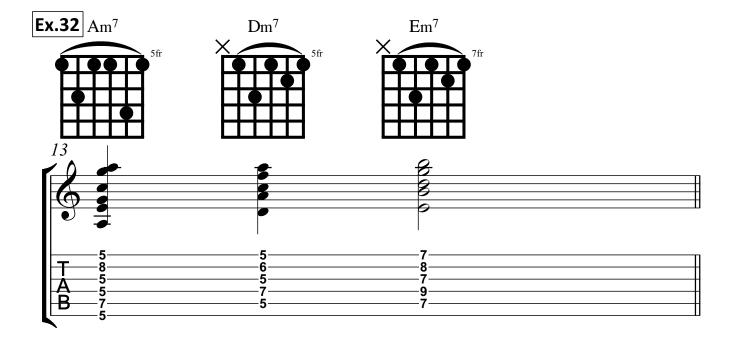


We can also use chromatic movement of our D9 chord going up to the E7( $^{\sharp}$ 9) chord (or any other chromatic movement toward any chord for that matter):





The chord fragment/embellishment concept can also be used to treat minor chords in a similar fashion. The 12-bar blues in minor sounds much more reserved and would tend to be less flamboyant and a lot more subtle. We turn our i-iv-v chords into minor seventh chords first then go ahead and play some 12-bar blues with those chords. You can use a straight or a shuffle rhythmic feel when practicing:





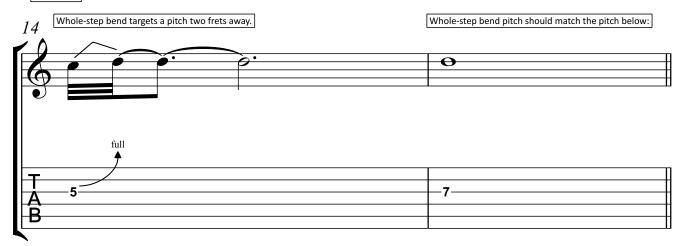
#### **Vocal Elements**

When we talk about vocal elements in blues, these are guitar techniques that attempt to emulate the human voice as closely as possible when playing melodic or lead lines. These techniques are:

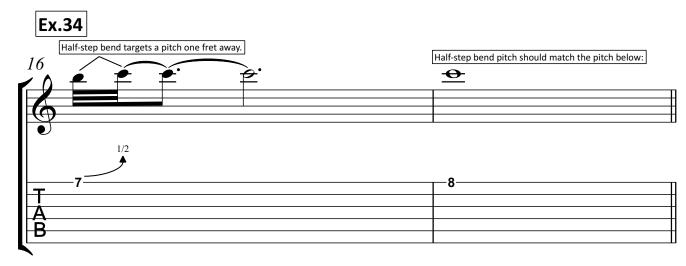
- 1. Bends
- 2. Vibrato
- 3. Hammer-ons, pull-offs, and trills
- 4. Slides

Bending involves pushing the string up or down the surface of the fretboard a split second (or less) after a note is played to produce an audible shift in pitch upwards to another note. The **whole-step bend** moves a note a whole step or two frets up in pitch from its original pitch:



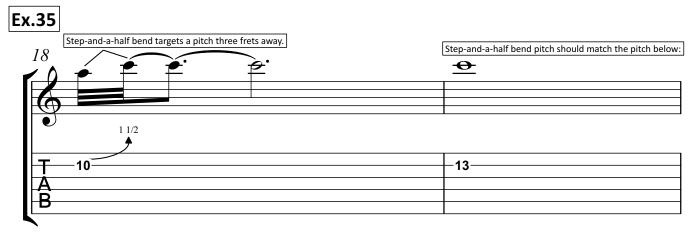


The **half-step bend** should produce a note that sounds one fret up from original pitch:

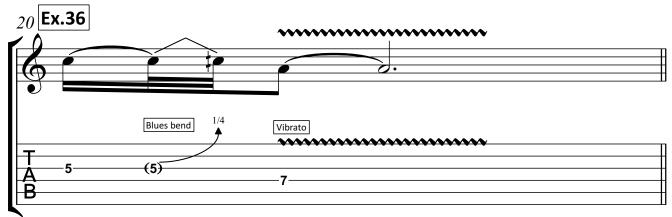




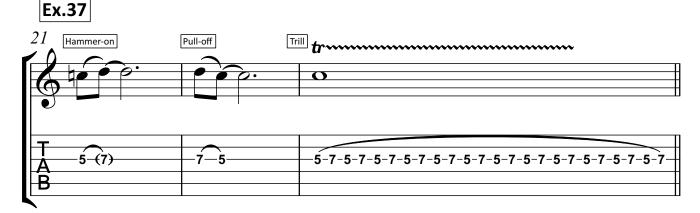
The **step-and-a-half bend** should produce a note that sounds three frets up from original pitch:



A **blues bend** changes the pitch of the original above the original pitch but just less than a half-step bend. It is used as an accent rather than actually moving melodically, and the slightly off pitch it produces is usually resolved to a chord tone or another note in the melody. To play a blues bend properly, you need to make the original pitch audible first and then perform the blues bend just before ending that note. The **vibrato** (represented by a squiggly line above the note) is performed using a small, oscillating bend motion over the fretted note that can range from a subtle repetititve deviation-from-and-return-to pitch to something that sounds wild. It is typically used to accentuate long, held notes:



A **hammer-on** involves playing one pitch fretted by one finger (usually index finger) and then successively hammering another finger to a higher pitch (while keeping on fretting the lower pitch) WITHOUT picking. A **pull-off** is the opposite as it involves playing a higher pitch then plucking off to a lower pitch using the finger that used to fret a higher pitch. A **trill** is a rapid succession of hammer-ons and pull-offs:

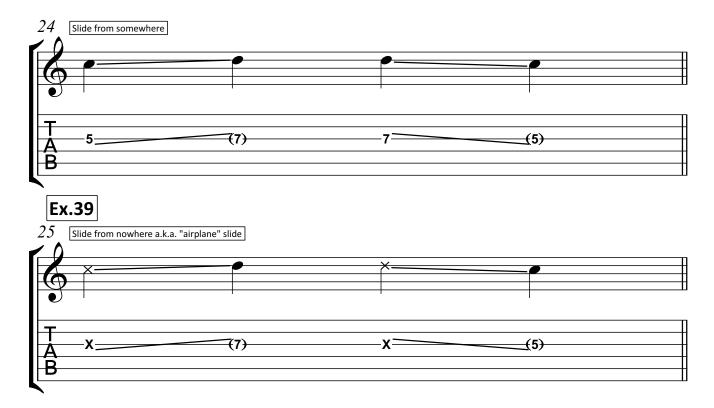




**Slides** involve an audible change in pitch (downwards or upwards) from one note to the next using (as the name implies) a sliding motion across the fretboard. Other than causing a change in pitch, slides are also great for moving across the fretboard.

Although there are many variations, the two basic ones are what's known as a **slide from somewhere** i.e. playing a fretted note definitively then moving to the next pitch using a slide and a **slide from nowhere** a.k.a. "**airplane**" **slide** i.e. playing an indefinite pitch then sliding quickly to a definite pitch:

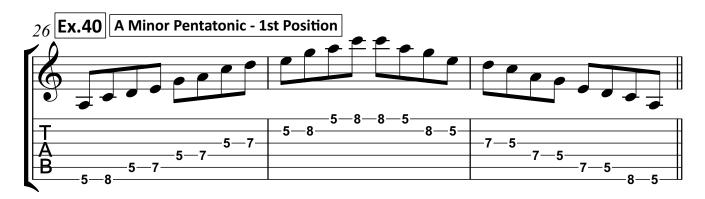
#### Ex.38

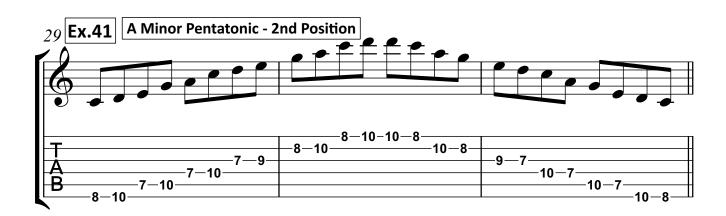


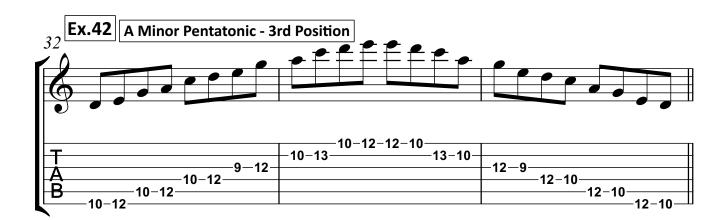


#### **Pentatonic Scales**

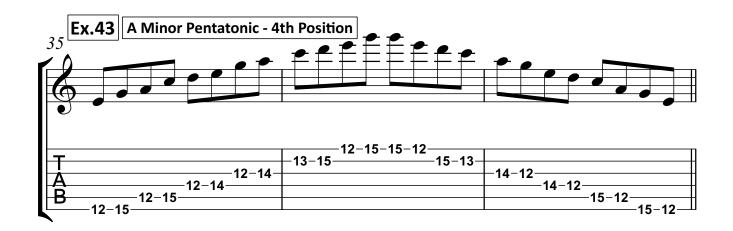
The most basic of scales used in the Blues has always been the pentatonic scale. It is a scale that has five notes in succession. It is the easiest scale to learn and use in all of music just because all of its notes will sound great over any chord progression as long as it is played in the correct key. It has two basic varieties. The first one typically learned is the **minor pentatonic scale** in the pattern shown below. The example shown is the A minor pentatonic scale. The pattern we are studying is what we call the first position (since we are starting at the first note of the scale). The next four positions are charted as well:

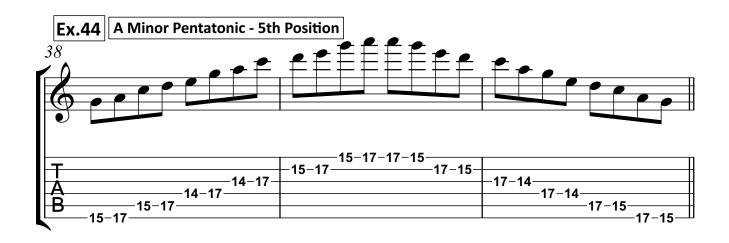


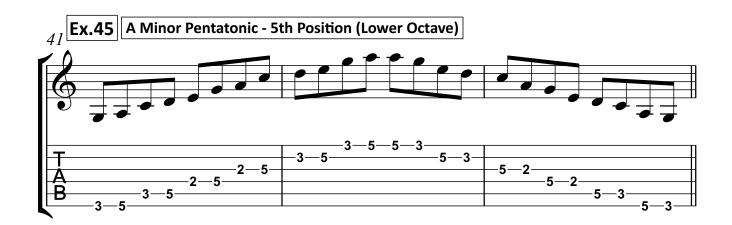






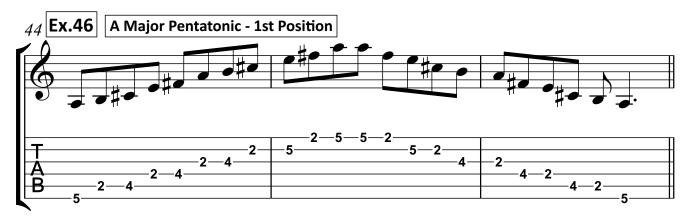


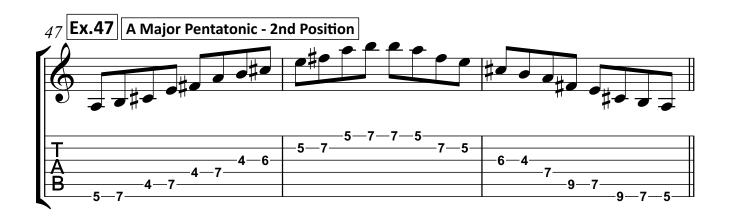


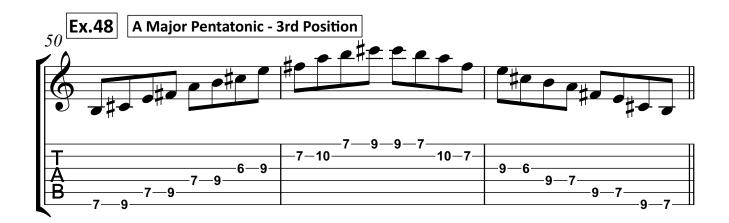




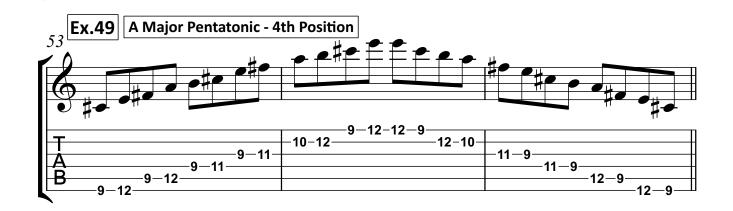
The next example shown below is the parallel **major pentatonic scale**. The example shown below is the A major pentatonic scale. We get the parallel or counterpart major pentatonic scale of a minor pentatonic by moving the entire pattern three frets backward BUT we emphasize the note that is fretted by the pinkie rather than the index finger as seen in minor pentatonic. This is the pattern we will consider as first position. The rest of the patterns are charted as well:

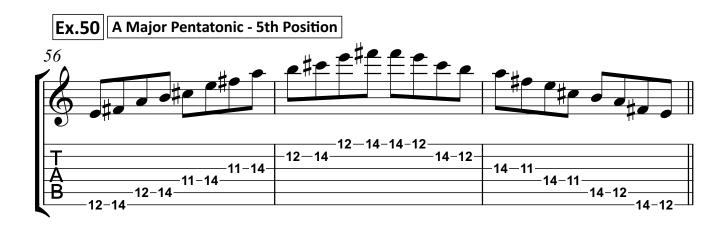














## **Progress Tracker**

Blues Soloing Masterclass - Week 1	Date
Why Learn the Blues?	
Tuning	
The Chromatic Scale and Notes on the 6th String	
Notes on the 5th String	
Common Notes Between the 6th and 5th Strings	
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