

12-Bar Blues in C

(With additional charts in E, A, G)

Related Notes For Module 86 (paid member site)

This PDF has handy-access printable charts to refer to PianoGenius.com/blues video

Full 12-Bar Blues Module Video Listing:

Intro video: Overview + Blues Chart Example

- 1:** Common Chord Progression Options
 - 2:** Default Playing Styles (that's this video at PianoGenius.com/blues)
 - 3:** Default Playing Styles Continued, adding new styles
 - 4:** Default Playing Styles Continued (Adding My Favorite Riff)
 - 5:** Key Bass / Bass Players and how that affects your playing
 - 6:** Adding Riffs / Fills / Licks to your playing
 - 7:** The Blues Scale – How to add this to your accompaniment playing
 - 8:** Slow Blues Jam in C – Example of how I'd play through a full chart
 - 9:** Playing 1-minor chord over 4 Bass – Cool easy way to change up your playing
 - 10:** My "Money Chords" From "Rock Solos" Module (Ooooh, this is great)
 - 11:** 6 Chords, 9 Chords & 1/2 Steps, Oh My! –Getting jazzier and cooler
 - 12:** Ending Riff –How can you end a blues song, here's how. 😊
- Bonus:** Jam Tracks to play along to: 40bpm, 60bpm, 80bpm

Note: These charts and notes are reference materials to the “Play Blues Piano in 7 Minutes” video located here:

PianoGenius.com/blues

If you go to that page you can get access to the rest of the Blues Module as well as the rest of the 1,000+ plus piano training videos.

Hey there it's Tim Gross from PianoGenius.com, ready to guide you through the magical land of the 12-bar blues. The blues has a rich history, and it's a great way to tell a story – It's simple, classic, and packs a punch.

(Note: The printable 12-bar blues charts are a few pages down if you want to skip my “blab la bla” and just print out the charts, heh.) I included charts in the keys of C, E, A, and G, because they're by far the most common keys to play the blues in.

So, what is this 12-bar blues thing, you ask? Well, it's basically the musical equivalent of a perfectly crafted one-liner. You've got 12 bars/measures, of pure, soulful storytelling, divided into three 4-bar sections.

The key to the blues musical structure is the chord progression. It's like a good script - consistent but with just enough room for a twist. In the key of C (because as keyboard players C is always a good place to start), it goes like this:

1. First, we've got our hero, the **1 chord** (C major), strolling in for four bars. It's the main character, setting the scene, letting you know what's up.
2. Then comes the plot twist—the **4 chord** (F major) joins the party for two bars. But just when you think you've got it all figured out, our hero returns with two more bars of the **1 chord**. Classic hero's journey, right?
3. Finally, the climax! The **5 chord** (G major) steps up for a bar, followed by a quick encore from the **4 chord**. But wait! The **1 chord** comes back, wrapping it all up in a nice little bow. Sometimes, just for kicks, we throw in another **5 chord** at the end, just to keep you guessing. The optional 5 chord at the end is called a “turnaround”, because it works as a “reset” before starting the progression again.

A couple of quick things: Traditionally, the **1, 4, 5 chords** are written in Roman Numerals as **I, IV, V**, so in music charts be aware that **I = 1, IV = 4, V = 5**. (I'll be referring to them as the 1, 4, 5.)

(The 1 is also sometimes referred to as the “**tonic**”, the 4 as the “**subdominant**”, and the 5 as a “**dominant**.” I will NOT be calling them that, but I just wanted to mention it in case you come across them online.)

Here are the 1 4 5 chords for all white-note blues keys:

- A (A, D, E)
- B (B, E, F#)
- C (C, F, G)
- D (D, G, A)
- E (E, A, B)
- F (F, Bb, C)
- G (G, C, D)

OK, Now, let's talk rhythm. The 12-bar blues has this groove, this swagger—like you just walked into a room knowing you're the coolest cat there. It's got a shuffle or swing feel, like your favorite pair of comfy, worn-in shoes that always make you feel like a million bucks.

In fact, the “shuffle” or “swing” feel (those words are used interchangeably) is one of the only differences between a lot of 50’s “rock” songs, which use the same chords but have a “straight” feel to them. (Not important for now.)

And the lyrics? They usually follow **an AAB pattern**. Example: you sing a line about your lost love (A), repeat it for dramatic effect (A), and then hit ‘em with a curveball line that sums it all up (B). It’s all about heartache, hope, and a little bit of humor.

There are a lot of blues songs that really pack an emotional impact in the lyrics, I, on the other hand wrote this to sing in my example blues video:

My Lyrics I’m Using In This Module:

Line 1 (A): “I think I’ll write a blues song, they’re all pretty much the same”

Line 2: (A): “Yeah, I think I’ll write a blues song, they’re all pretty much the same”

Line 3: (B): “And if I write it good enough, everybody will know my name”

OK, maybe not the most profound blues lyrics ever written, but hey, you remember the song now, right? And my name is Tim Gross by the way, so... if we can get everybody to listen to that song, everybody will know my name! (Self-fulfilling prophesy, haha.) Anyway...

So, there you have it! The 12-bar blues, a musical gem as timeless as a well-delivered quip. It’s the backbone of so many great tunes, from the sultry sounds of B.B. King to the electrifying energy of Stevie Ray Vaughan. Now go forth, my friends, and play the blues!

On The Next Pages Are Blues Chart Variations in Different Keys

Print them out as a quick-reference guide and to play along to.

Below are multiple variations of “standard blues” charts, from the most basic on up

Chart #1 Blues in C (Most straight ahead version)

$\frac{4}{4}$ { C	C	C	C	
F	F	C	C	
G	G	C	C	} :

Chart #2 Blues in C (Adds the “quick change to 4” move to F in the 2nd bar)

{ C	F	C	C	
F	F	C	C	
G	G	C	C	} :

Chart #3 Blues in C (Adds the F(4) after G(5) in the 3rd line)

{	C		F		C		C		
	F		F		C		C		
	G		F		C		C		}

Chart #4 Blues in C (Adds the G(5) "Turnaround" in the last bar)

-This is the version I mostly used as an example in this Module.

{	C		F		C		C		
	F		F		C		C		
	G		F		C		G		}

Chart #5 Blues in C (Slight change, the G(5) turnaround is only played the second half of the last bar)

$\frac{4}{4}$ C	F	C	C	
F	F	C	C	
G	F	C	C G	} :

Chart #6 Blues in C (Listing the dom7 of the chord doesn't change anything, they're dominant-7 chords anyway. The final turnaround chord is G7#5, what that means is you take the 5 note of the G chord (which is D and turn it into D#. so the chord is: G-B-D#-F)

I didn't actually cover the G7#5 chord in the Module, but there are all kinds of slight chord variations like that that CAN be used in blues, so I'm giving it as an example.

$\frac{4}{4}$ C ₇	F ₇	C ₇		⋄		
F ₇		⋄	C ₇		⋄	
G ₇	F ₇	C ₇	C ₇	G ₇ #5		

Blues Charts in E

Below are multiple variations of “standard blues” charts, from the most basic on up

Chart #1 Blues in E (Most straight ahead version)

4/4 E	E	E	E	
A	A	E	E	
B	B	E	E)

Chart #2 Blues in E (Adds the “quick change to 4” move in the 2nd bar)

(E	A	E	E	
A	A	E	E	
B	B	E	E)

Chart #3 Blues in E (Adds the (4) after (5) in the 3rd line)

{	E		A		E		E		
	A		A		E		E		
	B		A		E		E		}

Chart #4 Blues in E (Adds the 5 "Turnaround" in the last bar)

-This is the version I mostly used as an example in this Module.

{	E		A		E		E		
	A		A		E		E		
	B		A		E		B		}

Blues Charts in A

Below are multiple variations of “standard blues” charts, from the most basic on up

Chart #1 Blues in A (Most straight ahead version)

4 4	{	A		A		A		A		
		D		D		A		A		
		E		E		A		A		}

Chart #2 Blues in A (Adds the “quick change to 4” move in the 2nd bar)

{	A		D		A		A			
		D		D		A		A		
		E		E		A		A		}

Chart #3 Blues in A (Adds the (4) after (5) in the 3rd line)

{	A		D		A		A		
	D		D		A		A		
	E		D		A		A	}	:

Chart #4 Blues in A (Adds the 5 "Turnaround in the last bar)

-This is the version I mostly used as an example in this Module.

{	A		D		A		A		
	D		D		A		A		
	E		D		A		E	}	:

Blues Charts in G

Below are multiple variations of “standard blues” charts, from the most basic on up

Chart #1 Blues in G (Most straight ahead version)

$\frac{4}{4}$ { G	G	G	G	
C	C	G	G	
D	D	G	G	} :

Chart #2 Blues in G (Adds the “quick change to 4” move in the 2nd bar)

{ G	C	G	G	
C	C	G	G	
D	D	G	G	} :

Chart #3 Blues in G (Adds the (4) after (5) in the 3rd line)

{G	C	G	G	
C	C	G	G	
D	C	G	G	}

Chart #4 Blues in G (Adds the 5 "Turnaround in the last bar)

-This is the version I mostly used as an example in this Module.

{G	C	G	G	
C	C	G	G	
D	C	G	D	}



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