

Playing 12-bar blues for complete beginners and exploring rhythmic possibilities Terminology

Bar - A segment of time corresponding to a specific number of beats (in our case four, 1,2,3,4)

Key - A certain scale from which we use notes to create the melody (in our case, the key of G)

Scale - A group of seven different notes that fit together to create a sequence of pitches that make up a key – starting and ending on the same note (the last note being an octave higher than the starting note)

Chord - three or more notes from a scale played together at the same time

Major chord - uses as a minimum of three notes the first, third and fifth note in a scale to create a major chord

Minor chord - A minimum of three notes that uses the first, flattened third and fifth note of a scale to create a minor chord

Flat - means lower than for example B \flat or B flat is one semitone lower in pitch than the note of B

Sharp - higher than, for example C \sharp or C sharp is one semitone higher in pitch than the note of C

12-bar blues progression - 12 bars in a sequence of different chords that make up a typical blues progression and is repeated three or four times.

A typical 12 bar blues has the following cord progression

Bars 1 to 4 is the one chord

Bars 5 and 6 are the four chord

Bars 7 and 8 go back to the one chord

Bar 9 is the five chord

Bar 10 is the four chord

Bar 11 is the one chord

Bar 12 can be a one or five chord, in our case we will be using the one chord

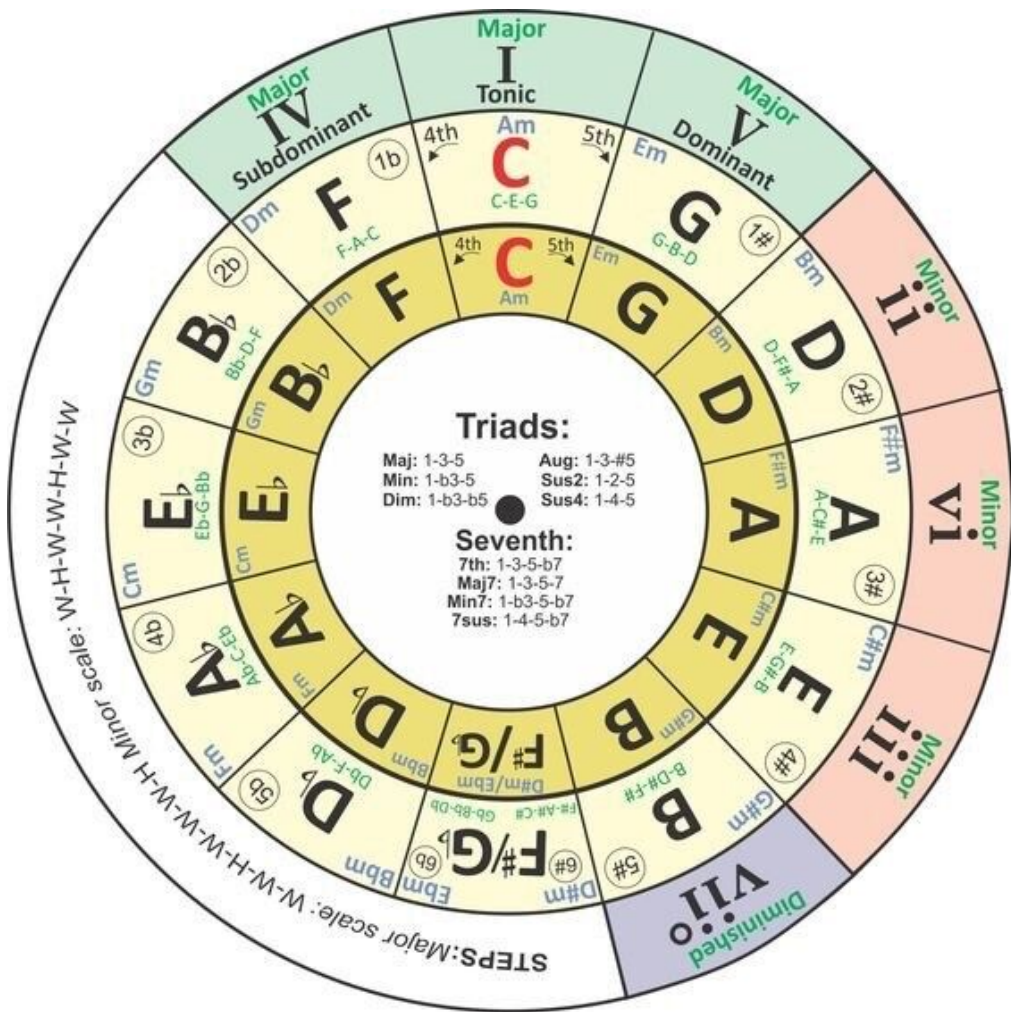
One Chord - The one cord is the same as the key of the tune you are playing, in our case the key we are playing is G so our one chord will be a G chord

Four chord - a chord worked out by examining the original scale and key we are playing in, and counting up four notes, in our case our four chord is C

Five chord - A chord worked out by examining the original key and counting up five notes, in our case our five chord is D

Scales and chords we will be using

G scale - G, A, B, C, D, E, F \sharp



To work out our G chord we take the first, third and fifth note of the above scale and we get G,B,D

C Scale - C, D, E, F, G, A, B

To work out our C chord we take the first, third and fifth note from the above scale and we get C,E,G

D SCALE - D, E, F#, G, A, B, C#

To work out our D chord we take the first, third and fifth note of the above scale and we get D,F #,A

Layout of the C Diatonic Harmonica

Starting with the blow Notes from hole one up to 10 we have the following

1. 1. C 2. E 3. G 4. C 5. E 6. G 7. C 8. E 9. G 10. C
2. And now the draw Notes from 1 to 10
3. 1. D 2. G 3. B 4. D 5. F 6. A 7. B 8. D 9. F 10. A

If you look at the blow Notes you may notice that they repeat, meaning that where ever you blow out on a C harmonica and open your mouth so you are playing three notes at the same time you will always be playing a C chord

For the draw notes, if we breathe in on the first three holes we are playing the notes of D,G,B The same notes that are in a chord of G (it doesn't matter they are not in the same order as we are playing all three at the same time and will get the same result)

If we move up to the middle of the harmonica on the draw Notes and play holes four, five and six we are playing the notes of D,F,A. As you can see these are not quite the same notes as a D cord as we have a F rather than a F #

This means the F is one semitone lower than the F # therefore flattening the note making it a minor chord

This however will work in blues as in the west our ears have become used to hearing minor chords and notes being played over major music.

The rule of thumb is that you can play minor music over a major backing track but you can't play major over a minor backing track

As you can see by simply blowing three notes or drawing three notes and changing our position on the Harmonica we can easily access the three chords needed to create 12-bar blues.