

CONTENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR	4
-------------------------------	---

INTRODUCTION	5
---------------------------	---

CHAPTER 1—GETTING STARTED 6

Lesson 1: Getting to Know Your Tools	6
Lesson 2: The Notes on the Fretboard.....	8
Lesson 3: Reading Tablature (TAB).....	10
<i>Mary Had a Border Collie</i>	10
Lesson 4: Your First Chords—“Easy” G, C, and D7	11
Lesson 5: Strumming a Song.....	12
<i>This Hammer’s Too Heavy</i>	12
Lesson 6: Awesome Tips for Learning and Switching Chords	13
Lesson 7: Full-Size Chords—D, A, and G.....	14
<i>Canadian Campfire Song</i>	15
Lesson 8: Full-Size Chords—E and C.....	15
<i>Rock ’n’ Roll Wonder Dog</i>	15
<i>You Move My Boogie Machine</i>	15

CHAPTER 2—READING MUSIC 16

How to Use This Chapter	16
Why Read Music?.....	16
Lesson 1: The Notes and the Staff.....	16
Lesson 2: Notes on the 1st String	17
Lesson 3: Notes on the 2nd String	18
Lesson 4: Time.....	18
Lesson 5: Notes on the 3rd String	20
<i>Oh! Susanna</i>	20
Lesson 6: Rests	21
<i>When the Saints Go Marching In</i>	21
Lesson 7: Eighth Notes.....	22
Lesson 8: Notes on the 4th String.....	23
<i>Old Joe Clark</i>	23
Lesson 9: Eighth Rests and Dotted Notes.....	24
Lesson 10: Notes on the 5th and 6th Strings.....	25

Lesson 11: Sight-Reading Songs	26
<i>Ode to Joy</i>	26
<i>Cluck Old Hen</i>	26
Lesson 12: Adding Sharps and Flats.....	27
Lesson 13: Reading Key Signatures.....	28
Lesson 14: 1st and 2nd Endings.....	29
<i>Line Dancing on Mars</i>	29

CHAPTER 3—MORE NEW CHORDS 30

Lesson 1: Minor Chords.....	30
<i>Heavy Fog</i>	30
<i>Heavy Fog, It Makes Me Happy</i>	31
Lesson 2: The Bluegrass G Chord and a C Chord to Match	31
<i>The One-Human Garage Band</i>	32
Lesson 3: The Art of Strumming.....	32
<i>Train of Dreams</i>	33
Lesson 4: Country and Bluegrass Strumming.....	34
<i>Boil That Cabbage Down</i>	35
<i>Shady Grove</i>	35
Lesson 5: Country and Bluegrass Flatpicking	36
<i>Sail Away Ladies</i>	37
Lesson 6: Rocking Out with Syncopation	38
Lesson 7: Cadd9.....	39
<i>Strumming Through the Heartland</i>	39
Lesson 8: Waltz Time	40
<i>Amazing Grace</i>	41

CHAPTER 4—BASIC FINGERPICKING 42

Lesson 1: The Right-Hand Position	42
Lesson 2: First Fingerpicking Patterns.....	43
Lesson 3: Alternating Bass Patterns	44
<i>California Flood</i>	45
Lesson 4: Travis Picking and Pinch Patterns.....	46
<i>Thumbing Around</i>	47
Lesson 5: Fingerpicking in Waltz Time	48

CHAPTER 5—IMPROVISATION AND MUSIC THEORY 49

Lesson 1: The Major Scale 50
Lesson 2: The Circle of 5ths 51
Lesson 3: Open-Position Major Scales in C, G, and D.... 52
Lesson 4: Movable Major Scale Fingerings 53
Lesson 5: Intervals Are Your Building Blocks 54
Lesson 6: Interval Fingerings 56
Lesson 7: Harmony and Chords..... 60
Lesson 8: Getting Started with Improvisation..... 62

CHAPTER 6—THE BLUES 64

Lesson 1: The 12-Bar Blues 64
Lesson 2: Memorizing the 12-Bar Blues 65
Lesson 3: Blues Rhythm..... 66
 Shufflin' Through the Blues in A 67
Lesson 4: The Minor Pentatonic Scale 68
Lesson 5: Beginning Blues Improvisation..... 70
Lesson 6: Bending 71
Lesson 7: New Chords—The Dominant 7th..... 72
 7 Chord Blues 72
Lesson 8: More 7th Chords—Blues in E..... 73
 The 12-Bar Blues in E 73
Lesson 9: Minor Blues and Minor 7th Chords..... 74
 A Minor Blues 74
Lesson 10: The Major Pentatonic Scale..... 75

CHAPTER 7—NEW TECHNIQUES 76

Lesson 1: Switching Chords Mid-Measure 76
Lesson 2: Split Strumming..... 77
 I Know How It Feels..... 77
Lesson 3: The Mute Stroke 78
Lesson 4: A New Folk/Country Strum and I–V–vi–IV ... 79
 Rollin' Wheels on Route 1564..... 79
Lesson 5: Transposition..... 80
Lesson 6: Power Chords..... 82
 Rage Against the Gumball Machine..... 82
Lesson 7: Barre Chords 83
 Fall Along the Tower Stairway 84
 Tiki Barre Tender 85
 Barre Chords Got Me on My Knees 86
 Passing the Barre 86
 Can I Barre a Dollar?..... 86
Lesson 8: Thumb Chords..... 87
Lesson 9: Hammer-Ons and Pull-Offs 88
 Blues Noodles on an E Chord..... 89
Lesson 10: Walking the Bass 90
 Free Little Bird 91

APPENDIX 1—MUSICAL EXPRESSION, PHRASING, AND DYNAMICS 92

APPENDIX 2—ACCESSORIES 94

The Wonderful Capo, the Terrible Capo..... 94
To Fingerpick or Not to Fingerpick 94
Buy a Metronome!..... 95
Help with Tuning..... 95

APPENDIX 3—HOW TO PRACTICE 96

Conclusion..... 96

LESSON 4: YOUR FIRST CHORDS—“EASY” G, C, AND D7



This lesson will get you started playing chords you will use for the rest of your guitar-pickin' life. A *chord* is three or more notes sounded simultaneously. Each chord is named for the music-alphabet letter that serves as its *root* (the fundamental note on which a chord or scale is built). The chords in this lesson are known as *open chords* because they use a mixture of open (unfingered) strings and fretted notes. They also occur in the first three or four frets of the fretboard.

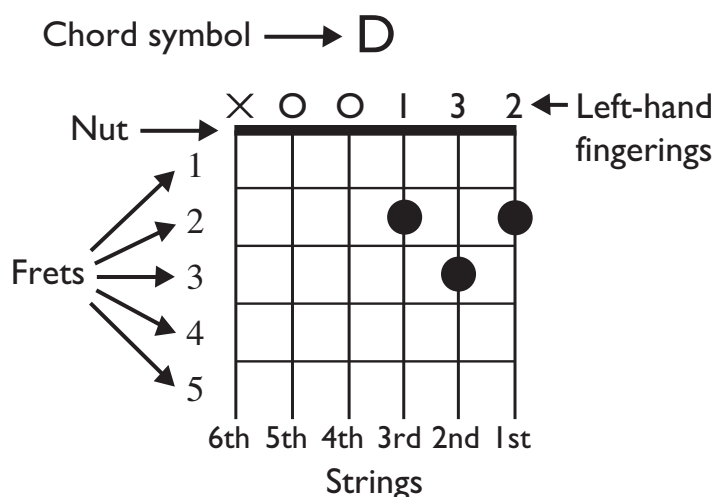
SECRETS OF THE MASTERS

During this phase of your learning, it is more important to practice often than to practice for long periods. (For more on practicing, see page 96.)

You will be building new pathways from your brain to your finger muscles. Like mountain trails, these paths need frequent clearing or they grow over and disappear. If you practice for 15–30 minutes every day, you will see improvement. On the other hand, if you wait several days between sessions, you will be starting at “ground zero” every time. It may take a while before these chords start to feel natural. As you work on them, you may want to begin Chapter 2 to add some variety to your practice.

GUITAR CHORD DIAGRAMS

Guitar chords are most often depicted in *chord diagrams*. A chord diagram is like a picture of the fretboard that shows which strings, fingers, and frets you will use to make your chord. Note that a circle (○) over a string means to strum that string open as part of your chord. An “X” over a string means to omit that string from the strum. Watch carefully for these symbols and make sure to follow them. Check out the following example of a chord diagram.

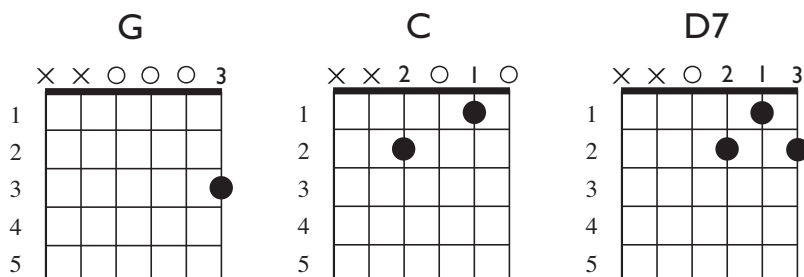


○ = Play open string
X = Do not play this string



THREE EASY CHORDS

Below are three chords to start you off. Each one adds another left-hand finger. All are played on strings 1–4 (don't play strings 5 and 6). You can strum them using a rapid downward motion of your pick, finger, or thumb. Also, practice picking each string individually to make sure your finger position allows each note to ring out clearly.





LESSON 5: BEGINNING BLUES IMPROVISATION

EXPERIMENTING WITH THE SCALE

The first step to improvising a blues solo is learning to get around in the minor pentatonic scale. Try to make up melodies that use the minor pentatonic scale. Go up a few notes, go down a few notes. Play long and short notes. Skip around. Don't worry about whether it's "right" or "wrong"—just try to stick to the notes in the scale. Above all, have fun and aim for clean, clear tones. Let your ear be your guide. With patience, time, and experimentation, you will develop many ideas that you can use in improvising on the blues.

GET IN YOUR LICKS

A *lick* is a small idea or figure that can be used as a building block for a solo. A lick can be repeated, altered, or strung together with other licks. This lesson will show you a few ideas for licks you can incorporate into your improvisations.

EMPHASIZING THE TONAL CENTER

As discussed on page 63, a great way to give a sense of melody and structure to a solo is to emphasize the tonic. This note is also known as the *tonal center*. Blues players like B. B. King and Eric Clapton often play long, rich notes on the tonal center.

Here are some licks to try. They can be used at any point in the blues chord progression.

Swing 8ths

72



3 | 1 3 3 | 1 3 | 1 3 | 1 3

1 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 1

1ST AND 2ND ENDINGS REVIEW

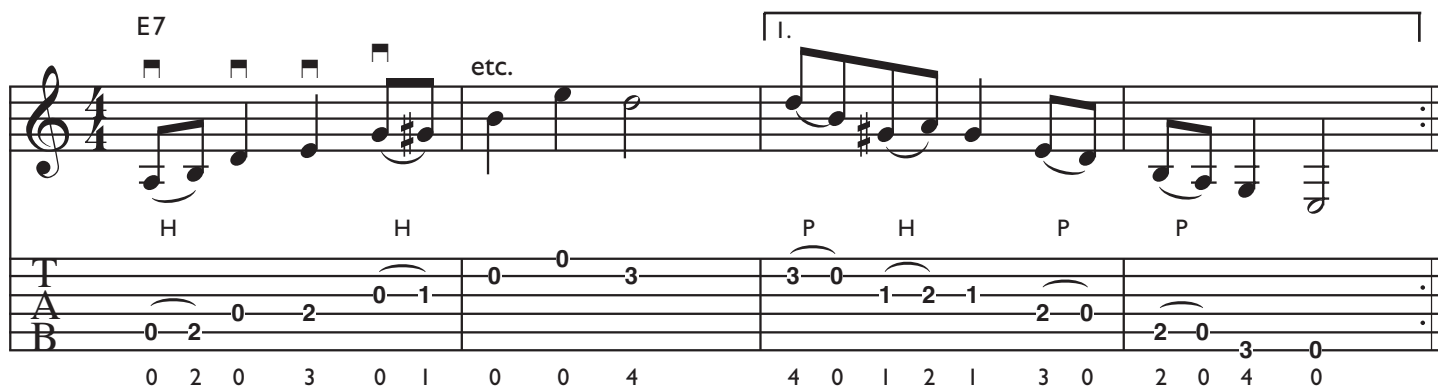
Often, when we repeat a section, we play the last part of it differently. In written music, this is shown with 1st and 2nd endings. 1. 2.

The first time through, play the music under the bracket with a “1” (the 1st ending). The second time, skip the 1st ending and play the music under the bracket marked “2” (the 2nd ending).

“Blue Noodles on an E Chord” uses hammer-ons and pull-offs surrounding the shape of an E chord. Go slowly and aim for clean notes. Try to make the slurred notes sound at the same volume as the picked notes. Also, try to incorporate slurs into your improvisations.

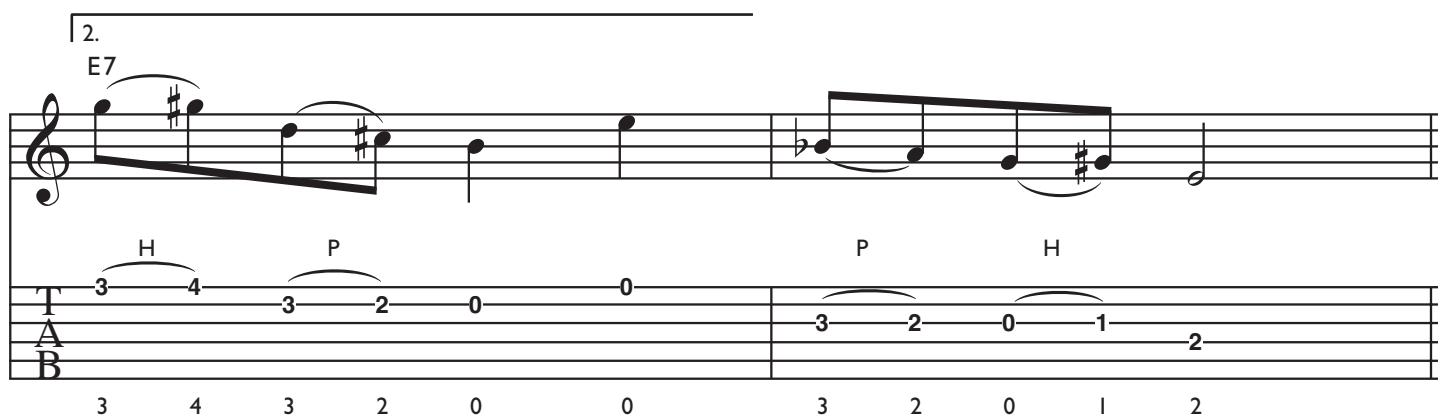
BLUE NOODLES ON AN E CHORD

E7 etc.



0 2 0 3 0 1 0 0 4 4 0 1 2 1 3 0 2 0 4 0

2.



3 4 3 2 0 0 3 2 0 1 2

PHOTO © MOSSBURG79/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS/CC BY 2.0



Corey Harris is a scholar, practitioner, and evolver of the blues. He has recorded albums of traditional acoustic blues, collaborations with African master Ali Farka Touré, and fronts a reggae band. He weaves his own artistic voice as a songwriter with threads of tradition reaching around the world. In 2007, he was awarded a MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship and has been featured in documentaries about blues and African music.