

THE ULTIMATE BEGINNER SERIES®

BLUES GUITAR BASICS

Revised Edition

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A CD-ROM is included with the book to make learning easier and more enjoyable. The mp3 audio tracks are playable on a computer or CD player that can playback mp3's. Put the disc in your Mac or Windows computer to access the Tone-N-Tempo 2 software that lets you adjust the speed and pitch of the audio tracks. Track 1 on the CD is an introduction, and track 2 will help you get your guitar in tune.

Introduction



Track 1

Tuning Notes



Track 2

Keith Wyatt



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TNT² SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

Windows

7, 8, 10
1.8 GHz processor or faster
350 MB hard drive space,
2 GB RAM minimum
Disc drive for installation
Speakers or headphones
Internet access required for updates

Macintosh

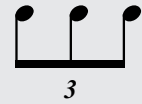
OS 10.4 and higher (Intel only)
460 MB hard drive space,
2 GB RAM minimum
Disc drive for installation
Speakers or headphones
Internet access required for updates

Section Two: Rhythm Guitar

TRIPLETS AND THE EIGHTH-NOTE SHUFFLE

Rhythm is the driving force behind the blues. It may not take many notes to play good blues, but the rhythm must be strongly felt. The ***eighth-note triplet*** is the most common rhythm in blues music. The eighth-note triplet divides a beat (one quarter note) into three equal parts. The ***shuffle rhythm*** uses the first and last notes of the triplet to create a smooth and relaxed feeling.

Eighth-Note Triplet



Three notes in the time of one beat.

EXAMPLE 1

Four quarter notes Divided into eighth notes

Divided into eighth-note triplets Eighth-note shuffle



EXAMPLE 2

Track 2

Accenting (>) the first note of each triplet figure brings out the natural, swinging quality of the shuffle. Let's also add **palm muting** (P.M., lay the pinky side of your picking hand across the strings directly next to the bridge to slightly mute the sound) with the picking hand by deadening the low E string. This makes for a percussive effect. Use only down-strokes.

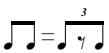
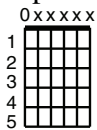


EXAMPLE 3

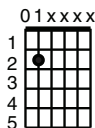
Track 3

Two- and three-note **chords** (notes played together) are made by harmonizing the E-note with notes on the A and D strings. This chord is known as E5 or an E **power chord**. Notice the **barre** symbol \sim in the three-note E5 chord diagram. This means to hold down two or more strings with one finger.

Open E

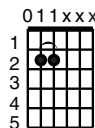


E5



(two-note)

E5



(three-note)

CALL AND RESPONSE PHRASING

Before the proliferation of guitar TAB books and instructional videos, blues musicians taught each other simply by listening and copying what they heard. It still remains the best way to learn music, because it helps you discover how to listen and interpret what you hear.



EXAMPLE 27

Track 27

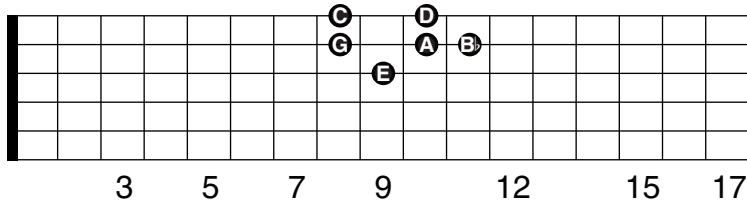
In this example I'll play a two-bar phrase—that is the *call*. Your *response* will be to try to copy what you hear on the spot. Don't get frustrated if you can't pick up each lick perfectly at first. This takes a lot of practice. The most important thing is to get as close to the "vibe" and the general feeling of a particular phrase. Try this with the recording a few times before checking out the transcription below.

The Call -----, Your Response -----

* **Vibrato.** A wavering or fluctuation of pitch, usually rapid, used for an expressive, vocal effect. Covered in detail on page 36.

THE B.B. KING SECRET SCALE PATTERN

Now let's check out an area of the neck that blues great B.B. King has spent so much time with, known affectionately by guitar players as "the B.B. box." This is an ideal pattern for soloing because the sweet notes are arranged comfortably under your fingers, while the blues scale notes are never far from reach. Shown here in the key of G, this box pattern is two frets higher than the high blues scale extension.



EXAMPLE 44 Track 46

In this example, the sweet notes are circled and identified by interval. Pay attention to the fact that these notes are sometimes played as bends, which emphasizes them musically.

EXAMPLE 45 Track 47

The mark of an experienced bluesman is the ability to mix the moods of the blues scale and the sweet notes to a balancing point. Experiment by starting with one and answering with the other. Here is an example beginning with the blues scale at the high extension and answering with the "sweet spot" position, two frets higher.

VIBRATO

Vibrato is another very integral mark of musicianship for singers and players of any instrument, and the slow blues offers many opportunities to put it to use. Vibrato takes more time to develop than many other techniques, but it is well worth the time and effort as it is probably the most personal and identifiable part of a guitar player's sound.

Whichever string it is applied to, vibrato is nothing more than a repetitive slight bend played at varying speeds. The high strings (1st–3rd) are generally “pushed” upward (toward the ceiling) when vibrato is applied. The low strings are “pulled” downward (toward the floor). When playing vibrato on bent notes, the string is allowed to fall back down from the destination pitch towards the fretted note—at varying degrees based on vibrato speed and intensity.

Vibrato techniques are extremely difficult to teach and therefore require your utmost attention and concentration. Listen to the vibrato of your favorite guitarists and, most importantly, listen to your own.

EXAMPLE 46

Track 48

First let's just add vibrato to the note G on the 2nd string, 8th fret. Use your 3rd finger, reinforced by your 1st and 2nd fingers. Pivot your wrist back and forth to repeatedly bend and return the string. The faster you do this, the more like a natural vibrato it will sound. Strive for control of the width and speed of the vibrato.

EXAMPLE 47

Track 49

Adding vibrato to a bent note is more difficult because as you slightly release the bend from its destination pitch, it is essential that you control the return to that pitch accurately—regardless of how wide or fast you choose the vibrato to be.

DYNAMICS

Track 50

Experiment with picking notes as softly as possible—at a whisper level. Also try picking with your fingertips instead of the pick for a rounder tone. Then, without using your volume controls, play as loud as you can. Amplification aside, this is your dynamic range—it's all in your hands. Like with vibrato, strive for dynamic control of your instrument at all times.