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The 12-Bar-Blues

Basic Knowledge

The "normal" 12-Bar-Blues consists of 3 chords, called the I, IV and V-Chord. The I-Chord is always the key note (e.g. when we play a Blues in E, the I-Chord is an E) and we can count out the other two ones from this I-Chord on using the scale.

Here we have the scale: C D E F G A B (when we count further we'd start from the C again). We already know the I-Chord (it's always the note the song is in) and we count out the IV and V chord with our scale.

E.g.: For a Blues in E, the I-Chord is an E, so that the IV and V chords would be an A and a B.

Just count out the I, IV and V chord with the scale. We start to count from the I-Chord, in our example it's the E.

The Scale: CDEFGAB CDEFGAB C....

Start to count on the I-Chord of your 12-Bar-Blues (in the key of E, start at the E)

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. E F G A B

With this method we can always count out the I, IV and V chord with the scale!

Examples of several 12-Bar-Blues songs

Keytone C: I=C IV=F V=G
Keytone D: I=D IV=G V=A
Keytone E: I=E IV=A V=B
Keytone G: I=G IV=C V=D
Keytone A: I=A IV=D V=E



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The 12-Bar-Blues

The normal 12-Bar-Blues has 12 Bars. Here we have an example in the key of E.

| Bars: | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | 6. | 7. | 8. | 9. | 10. | 11. | 12. |
|---------|------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|------------------|------------------|
| Chord: | I | I | I | I | IV | IV | I | I | V | IV | I | I |
| E.a. E: | \boldsymbol{E} | E | E | E | A | A | E | E | В | A | \boldsymbol{E} | \boldsymbol{E} |

You see that we play 4 bars of the I-Chord, 2 bars of the IV-Chord, 2 bars of the I-Chord, then 1 bar of the V-Chord, 1 bar of the IV-Chord and two bars of the I-Chord. This structure is always the same in the "normal" 12-Bar-Blues

But as you see, we play 2 bars of the I-Chord at the end and 4 bars of the I-Chord again at the beginning. This would be 6 bars of the same chord and that'd sound a little bit boring. That's why we have the so-called "Quick-Change-Blues".

The Quick Change Blues

In the Quick-Change-Blues we only change 2 bars, the second and the last, to bring a little bit more colour to our playing.

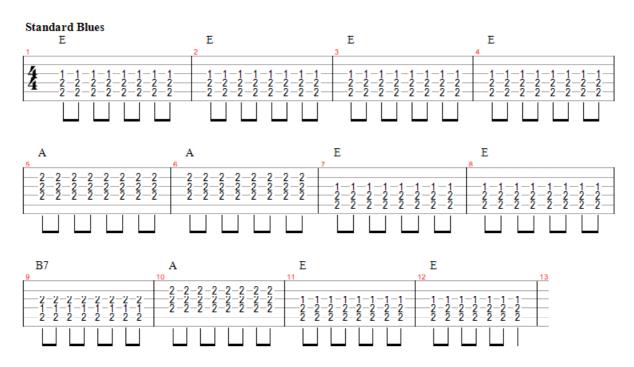
Now we're gonna start playing the 12-Bar-Blues in the key of E. We'll start with the standard Blues first and play the Quick-Change-Blues later.

Please download the mp3 drum loop to bring a good shuffle rhythm to your playing. It makes it more fun to practice and you have a Blues drum rhythm as foundation. Play both variations of the 12-Bar-Blues we've learned before and notice the difference in the sound.



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12-Bar Blues in E



Quick Change Blues in E

