

# How To Play Blues At A Jam Session.



You Are Here

## STOP 1: RHYTHMS & CHORDS

- \* Common Blues Chord Shapes
- \* The 12 Bar Blues Form
- \* Common Blues Rhythm/Strumming Pattern
- \* Blues Intro (to start the song)
- \* Blues Ending (to end the song)

## STOP 2: SOLOING

- \* What Note And Beat To Start Your Solo On
- \* Minor Blues Scale, Box 1
- \* The 4 Note Solo Pattern (Box 2)
- \* Lead Techniques (Bends, Hammer-Ons, Pull-Offs)
- \* Licks!

## STOP 3: PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

- \* Stringing together your Intro, Rhythm, Solo, And Ending
- \* Using Licks Or Single Notes As Fills Between Vocal Lines

You have reached  
your destination!

# How To Play Songs At A Blues Jam – Roadmap (Part 1)

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Most people want to, at some point, either sit in with some friends or a band at a local open blues jam.

But even if that's not your thing, it's a blast just to play along with some good jam tracks and at least pretend you're tearing it up on a bandstand somewhere.

Hopefully by now you've downloaded the Roadmap which will give you a list, in order, of the skills and ideas you need to actually do this.

The first stop on our little "road trip" is the rhythm. About 80% of the tune is rhythm, so this is pretty important!

## You'll need to know these things:

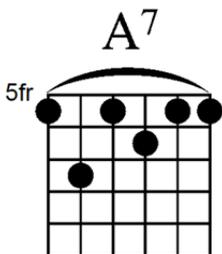
1. Some common blues chord shapes
2. How the 12 bar blues form works
3. How to find the I, IV, and V chords in any key and apply them to the 12 bar form.
4. At least 1 common blues strumming pattern or rhythm. It's not enough just to know which chord to play, you have to know how it should sound. This is often called "comping."
5. How you're going to start your blues song. There are 2 common ways we'll discuss.
6. How you're going to end your blues song. We'll cover one of the main ways, and luckily there are only a handful of options where this is concerned and this one is bar far the most common.

## Blues Chord Shapes...

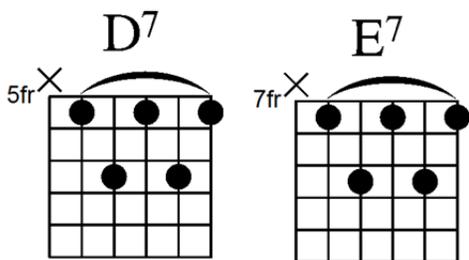
Blues revolves around 7<sup>th</sup> chords. Officially they are called *dominant 7<sup>th</sup>* to distinguish them from major 7<sup>th</sup> or minor 7<sup>th</sup> which are considerably different both in sound and usage.

You want to use *moveable chord shapes* (chords without open strings) whenever you can so that you can change keys by simply moving up or down some number of frets.

The first, and most common, shape is sometimes called an "E" shape because in open position it's an E7. I call it a "root on the 6<sup>th</sup> string" shape as well.



From there, you'll want a "root on the 5<sup>th</sup> string" shape (sometimes called an "A" shape.) So we'll use this one for D7 and E7



As you'll see in the video, *don't worry if you can't play these chords such that all the notes ring out!*

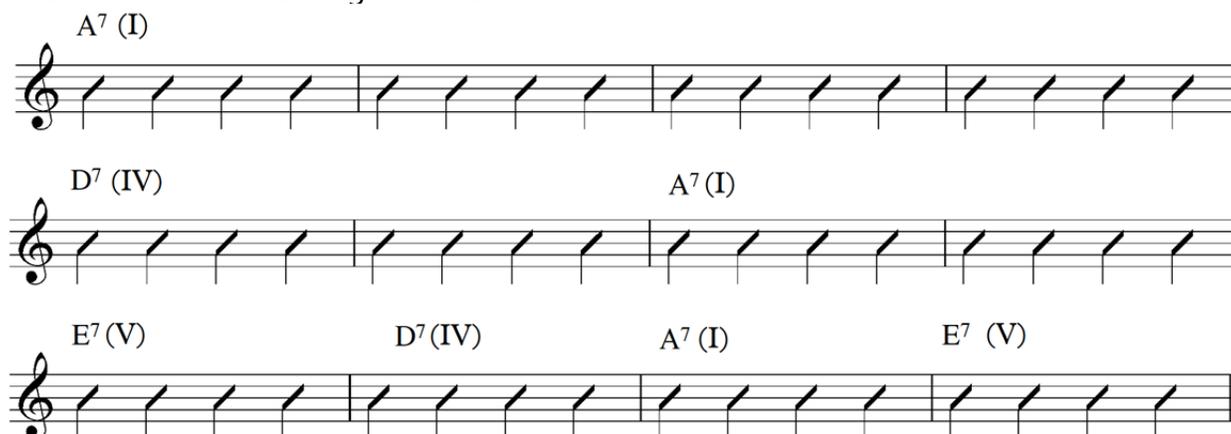
Most of the time we won't use more than 2 or 3 of the notes anyway.

### The 12 Bar Form...

The *form* of a song is the layout of the chords... which chords you play, in relation to the key (like I, IV, and V,) and how long you play them.

Most blues songs just repeat the 12 bar blues form over and over. So that makes it easy to know any blues song that is a 12 bar blues (and that's thousands of songs.)

It looks a little something like this:



### A Common Blues Rhythm...

Obviously you have to strum the chords somehow... you can't just hold it, right?

So here's a really easy rhythm that you can use over all of the chords in the form.



### How To Start The Song...

There are 2 most common ways to start a blues song, "from the top," and "from the V."

Taking it "from the top" just means you start right off at the top of the 12 bar blues form.

Taking it "from the V" means you start on bar 9 of the form at the V chord. Then you go through to the end of the form and continue "from the top."

### How To End The Song...

One of the easiest and most common endings is commonly called a "Basie" Ending (or some people call it an "Ellington" ending but I've always heard the former.)

It comes it at the last 2 bars of the form the last time through and goes a little something like this in the key of A:

A<sup>7</sup>

T  
A  
B

5 4 5 6 | 7 4 6 7

### The Whole Enchilada...

If we put that all together it looks a little something like this:

E<sup>7</sup> D<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup> E<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup>

T 9 9 9 9 7 7 7 7 5 5 5 5 9 9 9 9 5 5 5 5  
 A 7 7 7 7 5 5 5 5 6 6 6 6 7 7 7 7 6 6 6 6  
 B 9 9 9 9 7 7 7 7 5 5 5 5 9 9 9 9 5 5 5 5

D<sup>7</sup>

T 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7  
 A 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5  
 B 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

A<sup>7</sup> E<sup>7</sup> D<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup>

T 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 9 9 9 9 7 7 7 7 5 5 5 5  
 A 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 7 7 7 7 5 5 5 5 6 6 6 6  
 B 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 9 9 9 9 7 7 7 7 5 5 5 5

E<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup>

T 9 9 9 9 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5  
 A 7 7 7 7 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6  
 B 9 9 9 9 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5

D<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup>

T 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5  
 A 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6  
 B 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5 5

E<sup>7</sup> D<sup>7</sup> A<sup>7</sup>

T 9 9 9 9 7 7 7 7 5 7 4 5 6 7 5 5 5 5  
 A 7 7 7 7 5 5 5 5 7 4 5 6 7 5 5 5 5  
 B 9 9 9 9 7 7 7 7 5 4 5 6 7 4 6 7 5 5