Blues Ukulele Workshop
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Four part workshop with songbook

1. Structure and feel of blues songs
2. Turnarounds and dominant 7ths
3. The blues scale
4. Putting it all together

A web-based listening guide is also provided

Accompanying songs for parts:
1. How Long Blues, Baby What You Want Me to Do
2. Red River Blues
3. You Got to Move, Crow Jane
4. See See Rider, Big Boss Man

Review quizzes for parts 1-3

Fingerpicking for uke

Fretboard learning tool

Recommended from ukeeducation.org

Material compiled and arranged by Spencer Gay

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Blues
The blues is a feelin’... a good man feelin’ bad – a woman waitin’ for her man – losin’ your lover. Singing the blues is a good way to lose them
Also, it is the name of a common song format – whether 12 or 8 bar blues

Lyrics often are in an AAB format; the first line is repeated as the second line and the third explains or ties the thought together. Create some new lyrics to see how this works.
A If I feel tomorrow the way I feel today From St. Louis Blues - W.C. Handy
A If I feel tomorrow the way I feel today
B ‘Gonna pack my grip and make my getaway

Relative Chord Naming - Roman Numerals
Chords can be identified relative to the root (the key in which the song is composed.) This is the one chord, shown in roman numerals, I. If the song is in the key of C, then C is the 1 chord. Then, count out D = 2, E = 3, F = 4 and G as the 5 chord. Roman numerals I, IV and V are used, and lower case for minor chords. How can you determine the I, IV and V chords for the key of A? – Just count it out on your fingers – then check yourself on the table below. The chorded scale allows us to see the relationships of major, minor and diminished chords to the major scale. It is also very useful for transposing between keys.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chord</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>iim</td>
<td>iim</td>
<td>IV</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>vim</td>
<td>vii0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C chorded scale</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Dm</td>
<td>Em</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>Am</td>
<td>Bdim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A chorded scale</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Bm</td>
<td>C#m</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>F#m</td>
<td>G#dim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This shows the typical chord structure of a 12 bar blues- the first 4 bars on top row ...

| I | I | I | I | I |
| IV | IV | I | I |
| V | IV | I | V |
| I | I | I | I7 |
| IV | IV | I | I |
| V7 | IV | I | V7 |

7th chords (a.k.a. dominant 7th) are almost always played in a blues progression.

Most blues songs use the 7th chord form to add tension -V7 not V, so feel free to play 7ths, even on the I and IV chords, particularly just before chord changes. The 7th chord is made by adding a flatted 7 note to the major 1 3 5 triad.

C major scale
Notes numbered: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1

Major chord = 1 3 5
C Major chord = C E G
C 7th chord = 1 3 5 b7
C 7th chord = C E G Bb
12 Bar Blues - use one strum for each beat

Let’s play a 12 bar blues in C – C=I chord  F=IV  G7= V7

|:  C /      /      /      /     |C/     /     /     /  | C/      /      /    /  | C7/    /      /      /     /|
|   F/      /      /       /     |F/     /     /      /  | C/      /     /     / | C /      /      /      /     /|
|   G7/     /      /      /    |F/     /     /     /   | C/      /     /     / |G7/    /      /       /    /:|

Now, let’s play it again, thinking of the relative chord in key of C

1                                       2                                 3                                 4
|:  I /      /      /      /      |I /      /     /     / | I/      /      /      / |I7/    /      /      /      / |
|   IV/      /      /      /      |IV/   /     /     /  | I/      /      /      / | I/      /      /      /      / |
|  V7/      /      /      /     |IV/     /     /     /| I/      /      /      / | V7/      /      /     /   / :|

The turnaround is a musical phrase that occurs during the 11th bar to set up the 12th bar and the return to the top for the next verse. At the end of the song, play the I chord after the 12th bar. Now, let’s play the 12 bar blues in the key of A. Count out the I, IV and V chords.

Key of A      A=I chord   D=IV   E7= V7

|:  A/      /      /      /     |A/     /     /      / | A/      /      /      / | A7/    /      /      /      / |
|   D/      /      /      /     |D/      /     /     / | A/      /      /      / | A/      /      /      /      / |
|  E7/      /      /      /     |D/      /     /     / | A/      /      /      / |E7/     /      /      /     / :|

When That Evening Sun Goes Down  - Blues in A

|:  A/      /      /      /     |A/     /     /      / | A/      /      /      / | A7/    /      /      /      / |
|   D/      /      /      /     |D/      /     /     / | A/      /      /      / | A/      /      /      /      / |
|  E7/      /      /      /     |D/      /     /     / | A/      /      /      / |E7/     /      /      /     / :|

In the evening, in the evening, when the sun goes down

Sure gets lonesome when your love is not around, when the sun goes down

Other examples of 12 bar blues songs include these by Robert Johnson:

Kindhearted Woman  Malted Milk  Sweet Home Chicago
8 Bar Blues - Not all blues songs use the 12 bar format -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I /</td>
<td>I7 /</td>
<td>IV /</td>
<td>IV7 /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I /</td>
<td>V7 /</td>
<td>I /</td>
<td>V7 /</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Play an 8 bar blues in the key of A - How Long

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A /</td>
<td>A7 /</td>
<td>D /</td>
<td>D7 /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long,</td>
<td>how long,</td>
<td>has that evenin’</td>
<td>train been gone?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A /</td>
<td>E7 /</td>
<td>A /</td>
<td>E7 /</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how long</td>
<td>how long</td>
<td>how, long?</td>
<td>how, long?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples of 8 bar blues songs include: How Long, Key to the Highway, T’ain’t Nobody’s Business if I Do, Trouble in Mind, Come Back Baby

Shuffle rhythm - listen to some blues to get this – Big Bill Broonzy, Leroy Carr
The blues is sometimes expressed using triplets – 12 beats per measure – we can play it that way or simplify the number of beats by dropping the middle one of each triplet 123 = 1_3

This allows us to “swing it” and gain some interesting rhythms – the shuffle is heard as:
Dah da dah da dah da dad da, or
lum dy lum dy lum dy lum dy

First, strum a C chord once per beat.
Then twice per beat with the shuffle

Strum diagrammed
For simple strum – 1 per beat
1 + shows 2 parts for each beat

For a blues shuffle, divide beat into 4 parts
1 e + a shows 4 parts to each beat

Play this shuffle rhythm using your thumb on the 4th string until you feel comfortable with the rhythm. Then reach over with your long finger left hand to add the A – play that measure till you get it, then use L ring finger to add Bb

G -0-|--0-0--0-0-0--0-0-0| |-0-2--2-0--0-2--2-0-2--2-0--0-2--2-0|--0-2--2-3--3-2--2-0-| You can now feel the “boogie woogie” shuffle – play till you feel comfortable
Right hand technique
Pinch the strings between your thumb and index finger – brush up with finger on strings 1, 2, and 3. Mostly, play 4th string with thumb. Similar to Kimo Hussey style – see this article for more information and inspiration - https://www.theukulelereview.com/2017/08/22/kimo-hussey-styles/

Let’s try a shuffle blues in the key of C, Hold the C note on the foist string with your pinky finger C. Get the first 2 bars. Then reach your long finger to play the A 4th string to get more of a shuffle feel. Once you get that, try adding the Bb on the 3rd fret as shown below.

Blues turnarounds are used between verses at bar 11 or as intro or outro

In the key of C, use turnaround below - a walkdown from the Bb to G on string 4

In the key of A, the first turnaround using an A7  (G7 shape up 2 frets) to another form of A

Let’s build it from a one note run: use the index finger of your left hand to begin on the G in Example 1, add your long finger on string three for Example 2

3. A E7

Then, include the open 1st string with the others to get the 3rd variation

This clip is a great backing track to let you practice playing in A – have fun

John Mayall & Bluesbreakers Baby, What You Want... https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BS8nat56644
Other Turnarounds / Intros in A

We could use the turnaround we learned in C – but we need to move it to fret XII

E7
A -12-12-12-12-12-12-12-|--2-2--2-2--2-2--2-2|
E ----------------------|--0-0--0-0--0-0--0-0|
C ----------------------|--2-2--2-2--2-2--2-2|
G -12----11----10-----9-|--1-1--1-1--1-1--1-1|

Robert Johnson used a similar Intro in Sweet Home Chicago and Malted Milk, but played the E7 chord at 4445, (like D7) instead of 1202

We could also walk down to the A chord found at the IVth fret, then the 4445 E7

A ----------------------|--0-0--0-0--0-0--0-0|
E -9---9--8---8--7---7--6-|--4-4--4-4--4-4--4-4-|
C ----------------------|--2-2--2-2--2-2--2-2|
G -9---9--8---8--7---7--6-|--4-4--4-4--4-4--4-4-|

Other Turnarounds / Intros in C

Let’s move the turnaround we used for A up 3 frets for C

C7             C     G7
A  7-7--6-6--5-5--3---|-5-5--5-5--5-5--5-5-|
E -6-6--5-5--4-4--3---|-3-3--3-3--3-3--3-3-|
C -7-7--6-6--5-5--4---|-5-5--5-5--5-5--5-5-|
G ----------------5---|-4-4--4-4--4-4--4-4-|

The rhythm of these next two is slightly different as a triplet is used 3-3-3
Instead of two notes that have different lengths.

Or let the notes move in opposite directions as in the song “It Hurts Me Too”

A -3-3-3--3-3-3--3-3-3--3-|-2-2--2-2--2-2--2-2-|
E -0-------1-------2-------|-1-1--1-1--1-1--1-1-| Ascending
C ------------0--------0------|-------------------| Descending
G --3-------2-------1-------|-------------------|

Another variant might be to let the sequence ascend

A ---3-------3-------3-------|--2-2--2-2--2-2--2-2-|
E -0---0---1---1---2---2---3-|--1-1--1-1--1-1--1-1-|
C -------------------------|--2-2--2-2--2-2--2-2-|
G--0-------1-------2-------|--3-3--3-3--3-3--3-3-|

To find turnarounds for the key of D, we could simply move the C turnaround up 2 frets:

1. D7             D     A7
A -9-9--8-8--7-7--5---|--7-7--7-7--7-7--7-7-| |---5---5---5---5---5---5---5---5---|
E -8-8--7-7--6-6--5---|--5-5--5-5--5-5--5-5-| |---2---2---2---3---3---4---4---5---|
C -9-9--8-8--7-7--6---|--7-7--7-7--7-7--7-7-| |-------------------|-------------------|
G ----------------7---|--6-6--6-6--6-6--6-6-| or |---2---3---4---5---|

D turnaround chords

To find turnarounds for the key of D, we could simply move the C turnaround up 2 frets:
Dominant 7th chords – the soul of the blues

Review how we create a C7th chord - add that flattened 7th b7 (Bb in a C major scale) to the major chord to have a 7th chord. C7 notes C E G Bb 1 3 5 b7 – Below, the b7 note is made by:

C on the first string is lowered 2 steps to Bb to create the C7

A on the 4th string is down 2 frets to G (b7)

F the 5 note C moved up 3 frets to Eb (b7)

The G7 shape is really the F shape moved up and the root lowered on the 2nd string lowered 2 frets to the b7. The root is found on the 4th string – for G, it’s played open – the note can also be omitted

We have encountered a 4445 – C7 shaped E7 in the Malted Milk intro and one turnaround – the root (E) is found on the 3rd string for this shape – you are already familiar with 2223 D7

The A7 shape has it’s root on the 1st string, so you can readily find it if you have learned the 1st string notes – a really useful thing to know about the ukulele –

The F7 shape is also a movable chord shape that is guided by the root on the 2nd string. G7 at III, A7 is found at the V fret – we just used it in the next to last turnaround — where would we find Bb7? – This shape also gives rise to the G7 shape if the root is played on 4th string or omitted as we did while walking down the turnaround from A7 X434 to G7 X212

Think of the I chord as the “home” chord, the IV as the “away” chord and V as the “tension chord – when you change the I chord to I7, you add tension. Think tension-release.
Other chord shapes and progressions up the neck

Knowing some of these can add interest to a song by moving to a different part of the fretboard to play the same chords. The location is guided by the location of the root. Certain strings are recommended to emphasize the tension in the b7-1.

In the key of **A**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A7</th>
<th>D7</th>
<th>E7</th>
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</thead>
</table>

These chords you know – try others
This form of D7 lacks the D note

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A7</th>
<th>D7</th>
<th>E7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Play strings 1-2 for A7, 1-3 for D7 & E7 to emphasize the tension in the b7-1.

In the key of **C**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C7</th>
<th>F7</th>
<th>G7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

This G7 lets you walk down to F7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C7</th>
<th>F7</th>
<th>G7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

These movable chords cover all 4 strings.

In the key of **D**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D7</th>
<th>G7</th>
<th>A7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Forms at the nut, but using 2223 D

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>D7</th>
<th>G7</th>
<th>A7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Chords used in C but 2 frets higher

In the key of **G** – which way of playing the chord progression works better for your ear?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>G7</th>
<th>C7</th>
<th>D7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>G7</th>
<th>C7</th>
<th>D7</th>
</tr>
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</table>
The Blues Scale – for melody and improvisation

The A major scale:  A  B  C#  D  E  F#  G#  A
Position in major scale:  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  1
Position in major scale:  1  b3  4  b5  5  b7  1
the A blues scale:  A  C  D  D#  E  G  A

Let’s find this scale on the first string – all except Eb are on the fret markers
Play the blues scale in a linear fashion, up the neck – begin at the nut - 1st string A-
The notes are shown by the fret marker dots- the b5 added at the 6th fret. (D#=Eb)

You can also play this scale at the nut in a more compact way, shown below. Note
that the root, A is found on both the 1st and 4th strings. This pattern is sometimes
called a “blues box” – you know these notes – play till you recognize the b7-1 and
b3 4 b5

You can use these notes to play over
blues progressions. Let’s try to use this
pattern in a little blues riff, or phrase.

Play it and think about the notes and the number relationship of those notes
We walk up the blues scale and then back down 1 b3 4 b5 5 b7 5 4 b3 1 1 1 b7 5

However, it is more important to remember the flavor of the note – the b3, b5 &
b7 are blue notes. Hear the 1-b3 interval, then the 4-b5-5 and then the b7-1
Now, let’s look at the **C blues scale**  
**C Eb F Gb G Bb C** - find the scale on the 3rd string C - as with the A blues scale, starts on open C at the nut. See scale positions.

We can play the C blues scale by moving the pattern we just learned for the A scale up 3 frets — Compare it to the A blues scale at the nut. Visualize the “box”. Play this pattern until you can play it with your eyes closed — or open.

With the b3 away from the nut, we can bend this note — play with 1-b3. If we look for the blues notes below the III fret, we find a lower extension of the box that almost mirrors the first pattern. If we look at the position in the scale, the notes look like the figure on the right. Play the upper” box”, then the lower box.

Now, let’s use this pattern to play the same blues riff, now in the key of C.

Listen and think about the position in scale for these notes — walk up the scale:
1 b3 4 b5 5 b7 and back down 5 4 b3 1, and ending with the octave to 1 b7 5

What if we began at the open third string and used the lower part of the pattern

This allows the end of the riff to be played an octave lower - has a stronger sound. Try this blues riff using only the third string – improvise, using the same notes.

Play any of the blues songs in C and find the melody in this scale — try improvising, just stay in the scale. We can play through all chords without any dissonant notes.
Let’s play the bass riff in Muddy Water’s song - Hoochie Coochie Man
This uses C, Eb (D#), and F - the root (1), the flatted 3rd and the 4th.

The blues scale pattern can be used to play blues in any key – moving the root (C in this example) on the 1st string. Move up to the fifth fret and you are in D. Up 2 more frets and you're in E. As long as you play notes in this pattern, you won’t hear any dissonance. You may find yourself bending the b5 up to the 5 note. Make up some small segments - just stay in the pattern and noodle around - have fun.

Let’s try Spoonful by Willie Dixon sung by Howlin’ Wolf. This uses notes form the C blues scale only - “It could be a spoonful of...” Initially, it stays in the higher part of the scale, starting on the 5th -G ( to root 1-C). Listen to the recording.

Then the melody walks down the blues scale and finally it plays the root 1-b3 spoonful C-Eb lick
If you want to play along with the recording, Howlin’ Wolf plays it in E, not C. No problem, just move the pattern from the 3rd to the 7th fret (1st string E) – you can play any licks you want as long as you follow this pattern – try bending some notes by pushing the string to increase pitch – on “blue” notes – b3, b5, and b7. Improvise – then come back to the melody using the blues scale.

Another song that illustrates the blues scale for melody is “You Got to Move” – this begins on the root and moves to b3, 4,5. The end of the verse is found at the b7 to 1 and then repeated. Work to get the blues scale in your “ear”.

The first instrument for improvisation was a diddley bow” – constructed of wire from an old broom, nailed on the barn. A bottle might be wedged beneath it to create tension in the string and notes played using a glass bottleneck slide. This freed the musician to find the note that best fit the feeling or song by having an instrument without frets like a fiddle. This needn’t change with another stringed instrument. The blues scale is available and some notes will sound better over some chords than others. Players may choose to add the 2,3 and 6 to the six note blues scale for more freedom of expression. This also may lead to dissonance. When this happens, resolve to the note in the blues scale. Take “You Got To Move” and improvise different variations of the melody staying in the blues scale. Experiment with the 2,3 and 6 to see how they might be used as a note in passing. Mississippi Fred McDowell https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtlVSedpIRU

Finally, let’s look at playing some blues in G. The best way to see this is just to move the form we used in the key of A down two steps. Play the melody line to Big Road Blues. You will need the 6 note, E, to make it work. You could record yourself and play solo over the chords or ask someone else to accompany you. Or Big Bill Broonzy Key to the Highway https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KN_f0WVsHuW in G

Remember, that you have the G blues scale in a linear fashion on the 4th string. Run the scale up the 4th string and play Big Road blues – bend some notes too.
The Blues Scale – how to find it for any key using a formula for steps moved

We can find the C major scale using 221-2221 for the number of steps moved
C Db D Eb E F Gb G Ab A Bb B C - all of the notes
C 2 D 2 E 1 F 2 G 2 A 2 B 1 C - applying the 221 2221
C D E F G A B C - C major scale is C D E F G A B C
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1 - relative position in scale
A B C# D E F# G# A - A major scale is A B C# D E F# G# A

The major pentatonic (5 tone) scale is CDEGA or the 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 of the scale
The minor pentatonic (5 tone) scale is CEbFGb or the 1, b3, 4, 5 and b7
The blues scale adds a b5 to the minor pentatonic scale

For the blues scale, let’s use a different formula than 221 2221
Use : 3 2 - 1 1 - 3 2 (steps) - Let’s start with the key of C

First, write all possible notes C Db D Eb E F Gb G Ab A Bb B C
use the formula:
C 3 Eb 2 F 1 Gb 1 G 3 Bb 2 C
C blues scale is C Eb F Gb G Bb C
position in major scale: 1 b3 4 b5 5 b7 1
Therefore, the C blues scale is C Eb F Gb G Bb C
This method will work for the blues scale in any key – try it for the A Blues scale

Find the A blues scale: write all of the notes A A# B C C# D D# E F F# G G# A
use the formula for the blues scale 32-11-32 A 3 C 2 D1D# 1E 3 G 2 A
A blues scale is A C D D# E G A
Position in major scale: 1 b3 4 b5 5 b7 1
Therefore, the A blues scale is A C D D# E G A – let’s look for it on the first string.
Listen for the root note in a blues song and find the blue note 1-b3 – then the 4-b5-5 and finally the b7-1. You may want to bend these flatted notes for effect.
Position in major scale: 1 b3 4 b5 5 b7 1

Deriving the scale can also be very useful if you want to
Transpose a song from one key to another – let’s say it is in C and you’d like it in A
C D E F G A B C - C major scale is C D E F G A B C
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1 - relative position in scale
A B C# D E F# G# A - A major scale. Now, it’s like a code, just substitute the corresponding note for note – for chords, you need the chpered scale – see page1
PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER - now that you have the skill set, put together a performance.

Pick a song
Pick a song that resonates with you and that you can sing. It doesn't need to tell your life's story, but a song you could feel comfortable singing. Let’s take for example See See Rider.

Get off book
Play through the song, and feel the chord changes. Learn these so that you don't need the lead sheet to play the song. Then, verse by verse, memorize the lyrics. It may help to create a visual picture to help you remember them. You may need to create one picture or phrase for each verse so that you will get to the next. Remember that you don't have to use all of the verses - write one of your own if you want. Old Crow Medicine Show plays a version that substitutes Hey, hey, hey, hey for the last line of the verse. Recite the words while you are working out or in the car. Fit the words to you, gender wise. Now, you've got a story to tell. What does this song mean to you? Make it your own. Find inspiration in your own life's rough spots. Sing them out. Verse 1 – you made me love you, now your man... Verse 2 - Goin’ away baby...won’t be back. Surely there was a time you felt that your love was not truly appreciated.

Learn the melody
If you aren't clear on the melody, listen to it by several artists until you have it. Then find the melody in the key provided to make sure that you can sing those notes. It would be useful to know the highest note you can comfortably sing. If the key is one that your voice will match, learn the melody on the uke and sing along until you know the melody. If you can't hit some of the notes, you may have to transpose the piece to another key. We learned to do this in the first session – it is shown again on the previous page. See See Rider works for me in C - also, the b3 Eb falls on the 4th string, 3rd fret. It might be better in the key of F – Work out the chords for F using the relative chords I = F, IV = Bb, V7 = C. Then, play through the song with the new chords, and get the melody under your fingers in the new key. Make sure that the melody fits your vocal range.

Develop a Solo
Using the melody line and the blues scale, decide where in the song you want to play a solo, or even if you want to have a solo it adds variety, and allows you to grow as a player. Try it out anyway. Often, the notes of the solo follow the melody line and allows you to have some fun with it - stay in the blues scale while elaborating on the melody. Find the especially the b3, but also the b5 and b7. Try bending these notes as you play them in your solo, particularly if they fall on an emphasized word, like the last word of a line. You don't want to be bending everything, but a little will really put some soul in your solo. You may want to try some non-blues scale notes such as the 6 and 2 of the scale in places. Some songs are well suited to you fingerpicking your way through the chord progression for a solo that adds variety and a lot of sound. Listen to how others have approached this solo – like Freddie King in this nice rendition in the key of C on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IaX2qJ1uhJg. Play along and rock out.
Develop an intro and outro and decide on turnarounds

You could use a turnaround as an intro - perhaps up the neck for variety. You could also just use a straightforward turnaround that you've already mastered. Think about how you'd like to end the song. You could play the final verse turnaround, followed by the V7 chord, then the I chord. You could then play the IV and I chords as an concluding phrase. You could choose to slow down the final turnaround, followed by a single V7 I – or add a IV I at the end to let it resolve. You also need to play through the song and decide if you want to play a turnaround for each verse. That would be traditional, but it's your song. Play what you want.

Strumming/picking pattern

This is something that the song will "tell" you. Try playing it using the pinch blues shuffle, maintaining the beat with your thumb - perhaps adding some syncopation between your thumb and fingers for added interest. Let your thumb pick the downbeat and your fingers the upbeat, then let them come back together. It may be that the song would sound better with fingerpicking - try it out. A bluegrass type "boom chick" strum pattern may also work best for some songs – Folsom Prison Blues, for example. Use the 4th string for the “boom” and the rest of the strings for the “chick”. Strum this with the back of your index fingernail or a pick.

Put it all together

How does it work when it is all together? Play it for others - with others. Record yourself and listen for parts that could be improved. Take 2 - repeat. Once you have a final version, repeat the song multiple times that day until you have all parts happening without written support. Then, repeat this the next day, again in a week and again in 2 weeks. It should be yours. When you play your song with others, trade off playing the solo and turnarounds versus the chords till you can put them together. If you are playing chords behind a solo, you are responsible for the melody, so sing the song silently to yourself while playing the chords so that you give the soloist the correct chord timing. Start with a slow cadence, then find the best

Develop a set

Why stop now? Once you have one song together, use the same process with another until you have three anyway. In this way, you can play these songs at an open mic if the opportunity presents itself. Put something up on YouTube if you want. Playing a song can be different when you are sitting on your couch versus playing the same song with others versus in front of a mic or with an audience. Good to get those experiences too – but best to be ready.

Practice

Plenty of different ways to practice –directed practice with a plan – you are not just playing. You could try this: Play the chord progression for A with intro and turnaround. Then find it at another spot on the neck. Play arpeggios – sequential notes of chords to ensure clarity. Play the blues scale for the key of A in two places – improvise over a melody in A. Then move to C. Practice what you can’t play - Practice until you can’t get it wrong - Practice slow, then faster. Congratulate yourself for your discipline and creativity...and your heartfelt interpretations.
# Listen and Learn

Listening is the best way to get the sound in your “ear” – and rhythm in your foot

Some great examples – explore the net to find others

## Songs in the Book

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artist</th>
<th>Song Title</th>
<th>YouTube Link</th>
<th>Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bob Dylan</td>
<td>Baby Let me Follow You Down</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0-9h1tvjo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0-9h1tvjo</a></td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind Boy Fuller</td>
<td>Baby Let me Lay it on You</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UhlyEzYzN88c">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UhlyEzYzN88c</a></td>
<td>Bb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink Anderson</td>
<td>Baby Please Don't Go</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0-9h1tvjo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i0-9h1tvjo</a></td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightnin' Hopkins</td>
<td>Baby, Please Don't Go</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5l2yi86wlw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5l2yi86wlw</a></td>
<td>F#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jimmy Reed</td>
<td>Baby, What You Want...</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JveYg57Brxe&amp;list=RDveYg57Brxe">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JveYg57Brxe&amp;list=RDveYg57Brxe</a></td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Mayall &amp; Bluesbreakers</td>
<td>Baby, What You Want...</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B58nat56644">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B58nat56644</a></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bessie Smith</td>
<td>Back Water Blues</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gXShOJVJwaM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gXShOJVJwaM</a></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry Garcia</td>
<td>Been All Around This World</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63ePcCmLpY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63ePcCmLpY</a></td>
<td>C</td>
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<td>Big Boss Man</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=61BuUzGQaSY">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=61BuUzGQaSY</a></td>
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<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tommy Johnson</td>
<td>Big Road Blues</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6Le3G3WuA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U6Le3G3WuA</a></td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Kweskin</td>
<td>Blues In The Bottle</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29k9pCg_uk">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29k9pCg_uk</a></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mance Lipscomb</td>
<td>Come Back Baby</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7lHlkrgSw8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7lHlkrgSw8</a></td>
<td>Bb</td>
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<td>Come back baby</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vizipSKjF">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vizipSKjF</a></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind Willie McTell</td>
<td>Come on Down To My House</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVthw5b630">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVthw5b630</a></td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Johnson</td>
<td>Come on In My Kitchen</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I0-9h1tvjo">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I0-9h1tvjo</a></td>
<td>Bb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bob Dylan</td>
<td>Corrina, Corrina</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PfcrYAp_">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PfcrYAp_</a></td>
<td>F#</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonny Terry &amp; Brownie</td>
<td>Crow Jane</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aLkm6WrwQM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aLkm6WrwQM</a></td>
<td>F</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greatful Dead</td>
<td>Deep Elem</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qx1LqnUIJ8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qx1LqnUIJ8</a></td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tommy Emmanuel</td>
<td>Deep River Blues</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q31Ir00JT8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q31Ir00JT8</a></td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bob Dylan</td>
<td>Delis’a Gone</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55_XV28c8o">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=55_XV28c8o</a></td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>Johnny Cash</td>
<td>Folsom Prison Blues</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xyp63Ma5Bs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xyp63Ma5Bs</a></td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Cotten</td>
<td>Freight Train</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43-UJeCa6Jw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=43-UJeCa6Jw</a></td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grateful Dead</td>
<td>Goin’ Down the Road</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICAMsQx3q3M">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICAMsQx3q3M</a></td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big Mama Thornton</td>
<td>Hound Dog</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=woxGvQtjM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=woxGvQtjM</a></td>
<td>Eb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leroy Carr</td>
<td>How Long Blues</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpgOBWBDg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpgOBWBDg</a></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Bruce</td>
<td>How Long Blues</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5B3zZ99">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U5B3zZ99</a></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinetop Perkins</td>
<td>How Long Blues</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xAin3RQ_JoU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xAin3RQ_JoU</a></td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otis Rush</td>
<td>I Can’t Quit You Baby</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uy2TEP31DM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uy2TEP31DM</a></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ray Charles</td>
<td>I Got a Woman</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bbqks4aGOM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bbqks4aGOM</a></td>
<td>Bb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freddie King</td>
<td>I’m Tore Down</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjvpWZeg_NM">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjvpWZeg_NM</a></td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric Clapton</td>
<td>It Hurts Me Too</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1EuyguCg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1EuyguCg</a></td>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>Big Bill Broonzy</td>
<td>Key to the Highway</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KN_f0WWSHuw">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KN_f0WWSHuw</a></td>
<td>G</td>
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<td>Sonny Terry Brownie McGhee</td>
<td>Key to the Highway</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_xNeOhrlpH">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_xNeOhrlpH</a></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Key to the Highway</td>
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<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Johnson</td>
<td>Kind Hearted Woman</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=82yNxf-T4A">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=82yNxf-T4A</a></td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eric Clapton</td>
<td>Kind Hearted Woman</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGPM6cmknOA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XGPM6cmknOA</a></td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi John Hurt</td>
<td>Louis Collins</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmoRtW5qCrQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XmoRtW5qCrQ</a></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerry Garcia &amp; David Grisman</td>
<td>Louis Collins</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YUTuxF5LU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YUTuxF5LU</a></td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Johnson</td>
<td>Love in Vain</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BkPm8IJJlJ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BkPm8IJJlJ</a></td>
<td>Eb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Johnson</td>
<td>Malted Milk</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lu3iMu8R_zg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lu3iMu8R_zg</a></td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi John Hurt</td>
<td>Make Me A Pallet</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39RBm9fCR8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39RBm9fCR8</a></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadbelly</td>
<td>Midnight Special</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cHsAPpfe9M">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cHsAPpfe9M</a></td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grateful Dead</td>
<td>New Minglewood Blues</td>
<td><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iva3NTMMyg">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iva3NTMMyg</a></td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scrapper Blackwell   Nobody Knows You   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=626pNzB8xeX  C
Fred Neil    Other Side of This Life   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T4-vvLF_3de  D
Stevie Ray Vaughan   Pride And Joy   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NU0Mf8pwktg  D
John Jackson   Red River Blues   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OT_aaATfR0  A
W. C. Handy    St. Louis Blues   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkOcO5Hxbk8  G
Doug Duffey   St. James Infirmary   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kY4sqoUBeM  D
Jesse Fuller   San Francisco Bay Blues   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uBME_J0pf3o  C
Eric Clapton   San Francisco Bay Blues   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=agoYM_Jmg40  C
Freddie King   See See Rider   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=laX2qj1uhJg  C
John Mayall & all stars   See See Rider   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pX3mXtpy8c  C
Blind Lemon Jefferson   See That My Grave Is Kept..   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3fls9a7ypl8  E
The Mississippi Sheiks   Sitting on Top of The World   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RgeW7-tmVU4  G
Memphis Jug Band   Stealin’   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jY5j2TA11HA  G
Mance Lipscomb   Sugar Babe   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wb7SLxBxy8  F
All Stars   Sweet Home Chicago   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZEmvBdRLg4k  E
Billie Holiday   T’aint Nobody’s Business   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4FsxtlGi3k  B
B.B King   Thrill is Gone   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BPldso2bkM  Dbm
Richard m. Jones   Trouble in Mind   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jf8HVrt2os  D
Robert Johnson   Walkin’ Blues   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Me5QkthT3Q  B
Roy Rogers   Walkin’ Blues   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NO08RC802MQ  D
Blind Boy Fuller   Weeping Willow   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_MzmRRVB2w  C
Leroy Carr   When the Sun Goes Down   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PYVZ1-tuka8  Eb
Big Bill Broonzy   When the Sun .. http://www.communityguitar.com/students/Songs/In_The_Evening.htm  G
Buddy Guy & Eric Clapton   Worried Life Blues   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KvabIB5Ee4  C
Big Maceo Merriweather   Worried Life Blues   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8cuQFavAQZQI  C
Mississippi Fred McDowell   You Got To Move   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlTVsedlIRU  Eb

Other great stuff

Big Bill Broonzy   3 Songs   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-pShRISHNQ  E
Howlin' Wolf   Spoonful   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ykb4TPILHoOw  E
Sonny Boy Williamson I   Sugar Mama   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=htKDQTPilHw  A
Blues legends   Blues ain’t Nothin’   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HoIjkXoOdY  G
Koko Taylor   Wang Dang Doodle   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EBsrz40ifI0  D
Willie Dixon   Spoonful   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HMaO6fAuz  G
Blind Boy Fuller   Step It Up And Go   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbQa-SsJD0A  G
Howlin' Wolf   Back Door Man   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aVIA1n5ng4Y  G
Muddy Waters   Got My Mojo Workin’   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1gNs-29s-0Q  E
Howlin' Wolf   Smokestack Lightnin'   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HTDJ_DJdJyS  D
Big Mama Thornton   Let's Go Get Stoned   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spkcAtJ-TKU  Bb

I have done my best to get the key played off the YouTube clip. The artist may have tuned down a step or two, or capoed up to get that sound. If I have made any errors, I’d appreciate corrections. Thanks
How Long Blues

1928  Leroy Carr

First note=A

A    A7
How long, baby how long,
D     D7
Has that evening train been gone?
A          E7   A          E7
How long, how how long, baby how long?

A    A7
Went to the station, didn't see no train.
D     D7
Down in my heart, I have an aching pain.
A          E7   A          E7
How long, how, how long, baby how long?

A          A7
I feel disgusted, I feel so bad
D          D7
Thinking 'bout the good times that I once had had.
A          E7   A          E7
How long, how how long, baby how long?

A   A7
You're gonna be sorry you'll feel so blue.
D     D7
When you want me, baby, I declare I want you.
A          E7   A          E7
How long, how how long, baby how long?

Solo

A   A7
Don't have no money for to ride the train.
D     D7
I would ride the rails, baby, to be with you again.
A          E7   A          E7
How long, how how long, baby how long?

Repeat first verse
You've got me runnin'. You've got me hidin'

You've got me run, hide, hide, run, anyway you wanna

Let it roll. Yeah, yeah, yeah

You've got me doin' what you want me

Baby, what you want me to do?

I'm goin' up. I'm goin' down.

I'm goin' up, down, down, up, anyway you want me,

Let it roll, yeah, yeah, yeah

You've got me doin' what you want me

Baby, what you want me to do?

Solo

You've got me peepin'. You've got me hidin'

You've got me peep, hide, hide, peep, anyway you wanna

Let it roll. Yeah, yeah, yeah

You've got me doin' what you want me

Baby, what you want me to do?

Repeat first or any of verses

You got me..
RED RIVER BLUES 1924  

Charles Booker Jr.

C C7 F F7  First note=G

Which way, which way does that blood-red river run?

C G7 C

From my back window to that risin' sun.

C C7 F F7

Lord I left her, yes I left her. She treated me so unkind.

C G7 C

Kept me worryin' 'bout her all the time.

C C7 F F7

Red River, Red River, please tell me what to do.

C G7 C

Ohhhh, ohhhh. I feel so sad and blue.

C C7 F F7

I'm gonna sing these blues, then I ain't gonna sing no more.

C G7 C

The woman I love she drove me from my door.

C C7 F F7

Well, I gave her a nickel. Then she stole my last dime.

C G7 C

Not a day she'd ease my troubled mind.

C C7 F F7

Which way, which way does that blood-red river run?

C G7 C

From my back window to that risin' sun.

Intro:

C G7

Riff for C7- 1st line

Variants for turnaround:

C C G7

I
RED RIVER BLUES

1924

CHARLES BOOKER JR.

First note=G

A A7 D D7
Which way, which way does that blood-red river run?
A E7 A E7
From my back window to that risin' sun.

A A7 D D7
Lord I left her, yes I left her. She treated me so unkind.
A E7 A E7
Kept me worryin' 'bout her all the time.

A A7 D D7
Red River, Red River, please tell me what to do
A E7 A E7
Ohhhh, ohhhh. I feel so sad and blue.

A A7 D D7
I'm gonna sing these blues, then I ain't gonna sing no more.
A E7 A E7
The woman I love she drove me from my door.

A A7 D D7
Well, I gave her a nickel. Then she stole my last dime.
A E7 A E7
Not a day she'd ease my troubled mind.

A A7 D D7
Which way, which way does that blood-red river run?
A E7 A E7
From my back window to that risin' sun.

Intro

A A

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>---0---</td>
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<tr>
<td>---5-7-8-9-5---</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---3-2-1---0---</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---4---</td>
<td>---4-3-2-1-1---</td>
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<tr>
<td>---6-7-8-9-6---</td>
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D7 D

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<td>---0-3-2-3-2-1---</td>
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<tr>
<td>---2-2---2-2---2-</td>
<td>---1---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---2-2---2-2---2-</td>
<td>---2---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Turnaround
You got to move, you got to move
You got to move child, you got to move
Cause when the Lord gets ready, you got to move.

You may be high, you may be low
You may be rich child, you may be poor
Cause when the Lord gets ready, you got to move.

You see that woman, who walks the street
You see that police, upon his beat
Cause when the Lord gets ready, you got to move.

Solo

You got to move, you got to move
You got to move child, you got to move
Cause when the Lord gets ready, you got to move.

Intro- also at end of verse

A -3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-
E -3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-
C -3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-
G -3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-

Solo over melody below

A-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-
E-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-
C-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-
G-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-3-3-3-3-1-
Crow Jane

Chorus:

C  F  G7  C  C7
Crow Jane, Crow Jane, don't hold your head so high,
F  G7  C  C7
Crow Jane, Crow Jane, don't hold your head so high,
G7  F  G7  C  G7
Someday, Baby, you gonna lay down and die.

C  F  G7  C  C7
I'm gonna buy me a pistol, with forty rounds of ball,
F  G7  C  C7
I'm gonna buy me a pistol, with forty rounds of ball,
G7  F  G7  C  G7
Shoot Crow Jane just to see her fall.

Chorus

C  F  G7  C  C7
And I dug her a grave, with a silver spade,
F  G7  C  C7
And I dug her a grave, with a silver spade,
G7  F  G7  C  G7
Ain't nobody going to take my Crow Jane's place.

Solo

C  F  G7  C  C7
You know I dug her grave, eight feet in the ground,
F  G7  C  C7
You know I dug her grave, eight feet in the ground,
G7  F  G7  C
Didn't feel sorry 'til they let her down.

C  F  G7  C  C7
You know I let her down, with a golden chain,
F  G7  C  C7
You know I let her down, with a golden chain
G7  F  G7  C  G7
And every link I would call my Crow Jane's name.

Chorus

Intro  G7  Solo over melody
A  -3-3--3--3--3--3-3--3- | -2-| |---0-|---0---|--|-----------------|--------
E  -0-0--0--0--0-0--0- | -1-| |0-3---|---0-|-----0-2-3-2-0-|----0-2-0-3-0-0-2-0-3-0
C  --------------- -2-| ---0-|---0-2-3-2-0-|---0-2-0-3-2-0-0-2-0-3-0
G  -3-3--2--2-1-1-0- -0-|-------0-2---|---0-1-2-----------|-----
See See Rider 1924 Ma Rainey & Lena Arant

C                 C7
See see rider, see what you have done
F                     C
See see rider, see what you have done
G7                 F                 C    G7
You made me love you, now your man has come

C                 C7
Well, I`m going away, baby, I won`t be back `till fall
F                     C
I`m going away, baby, I won`t be back `till fall
G7                 F                 C    G7
If I find me a good girl, I won`t be back at all

Solo

C                 C7
See see rider, where`d you stay last night?
F                     C
See see rider, where`d you stay last night?
G7                 F                 C    G7
Your shoes ain`t tied and your clothes don`t fit you right

C                 C7
See see rider, the moon is shinin` bright
F                     C
See see rider, the moon is shinin` bright
G7                 F                 C    F    C
Just might find me a good girl an` everything will be alright

First note=E

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intro/ turnaround</th>
<th>Alternate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>G7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Solo – work from melody line

A    E    C    G
---0---0-2-3-2-0-    ---0---3-0-2-0-    ---0---0-2-0-
Big Boss Man 1960 Luther Dixon & Al Smith

A
Big boss man, can't you hear me when I call?

D
Big boss man, can't you hear me when I call?

E7 D7 A E7
You ain't so big, you just tall, that's just about all.

A
You got me working boss man, a-workin' around the clock,

A
I want a little drink of water, you sure won't let me stop.

D
Big boss man, can't you hear me when I call?

E7 D7 A E7
You ain't so big, you just tall, that's just about all.

Solo – harp or use A blues scale at the nut

A
I'm gonna get me a boss man, one gonna treat me right,

A
I work hard in the daytime, sure get drunk at night.

D
Big boss man, can't you hear me when I call?

A E7
You ain't so big, you just tall, that's just about all.

INTRO
A -----4------4------|-----4------4----0-|--0-2-0--|-------------0-|-2-2-2---|
E -------------------|-------------------|-2----0--|-3-3-2-2-1-1-0-|-0-0-0---|
C -2h4---4—-4---4-2--|-2h4---4—-4---4----|------1--|-4-4-3-3-2-2-1-|-2-2-2---|
G -------------------|-------------------|------2--|-------------2-|-1-1-1---|

A shuffle                 D shuffle               E7 lick
A -0-0--0-0--0-0--0-0-| -0-0--2-2--3-3--2-2| -2------------3-0--|
E -0-0--2-2--3-3--2-2-| -2-2--2-2--2-2--2-2| -0-3b4-0--0--2----3-0-0----
C -2-2--1-1--2-2--1-1-| -0-0--0-0--0-0--0-0| -2--2--2-0-----------2-0--
G -1-1--2-2--1-1--2-2-| -2-2--2-2--2-2--2-2| -1----------2--2--2--2--2--

Turnaround                                Alternative turnaround
A -4----0----0-2--0--| -2-2--2-2--2-2--2-2--| -4-------------|-5-|
E -3----2-2--1-1--0-| -0-0--0-0--0-0--0-0| -5--5-7-5-|---5-4-|
C -4----3-3--2-2--1-| -2-2--2-2--2-2--2-2-| -6-7-6-6-5-5-4-|---4-|
G ------------------2-| -1-1--1-1--1-1--1-1-| --------------|---4-4-|
Blues Lesson 1 Review Questions – try without the materials, then use them

1. What is the I, IV, V7 chord progression in the key of A? _____ _____ _____

2. Chord progressions in blues music often use 7 (dominant $7^{th}$) chords for I, IV and V chords  
   T  F

3. What are the notes in a $C7$ chord? _____ _____ _____ _____ C scale is  C D E F G A B C

4. The best way to stay on the beat is to ________________________________

5. The rhythm for many blues songs is called a __________ rhythm?

6. The phrase of music used to end a verse or the song is called the __________________

7. Diagram the strumming pattern for a blues feel – use D, 2 strums per beat (|1e+a| is a beat)

   |1 e + a | 2 e + a |3 e + a |4 e + a |
   |________|________|________|________|

8. What chords would you use to play How Long Blues in the key of C?

   A scale is  A B C# D E F# G# A  
   A Bm C#m D E F#m G#dim A chorded scale (write #’s below)

   C scale is  _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ | _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

   Chorded scale  ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

   Relative chord # I___ ___ ___ ___ ___ I  
   Now, transpose How Long into the Key of C - fill in [ ]

   A [   ]  A7 [   ]

   How long, baby how long, 
   D[   ]  D7 [   ]

   Has that evening train been gone? 
   A [   ]  E7 [   ]  A [   ]  E7 [   ]

   How long, how how long, baby how long?

Here are the two songs we are working on:
Leroy Carr plays How Long in Eb, Pinetop in C and Jim Bruce Blues lesson is in A – play along with it in A and then try it in C with Pinetop. Baby What you .. is played by Jimmy Reed in E – You can play along with John Mayall in A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leroy Carr</td>
<td>How Long Blues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Bruce</td>
<td>How Long Blues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinetop Perkins</td>
<td>How Long Blues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jimmy Reed</td>
<td>Baby, What You Want...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Mayall &amp; Bluesbreakers</td>
<td>Baby, What You Want...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Blues Lesson 2 Review Questions – try without the materials, then use anything you need

1. Name 3 places to use a turnaround ___________ ________________ ________________

2. The numbers of the notes from a major scale in a 7th chord are: ___ ___ ___ ___

3. The root (1 note) for the indicated shaped chord is on what string? C A F (may be >1) ____ ____ ____

4. A chord shape that covers all 4 strings is considered movable T F

5. Identify each chord:

6. Tab out a turnaround in C

C [ ]
A [ ]
E [ ]
C [ ]
G [ ]

7. Transpose See See Rider to the Key of A

Numbered scale  1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1
C major scale is: C D E F G A B C
A major scale is: A B C# D E F# G# A
Chorded Scale in C is: C Dm Em F G Am Bdim C

Chorded Scale in A is: ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

C [   ] C7 [   ]
See see rider, see what you have done

F [   ] C [   ]
See see rider, see what you have done

G7 [   ] F [   ] C [   ] G7 [   ]
You made me love you, now your man has come
Blues Lesson 3 Review Questions –try without the materials, then use anything you need

1. If you play the C blues scale up the neck on the 3rd string, what frets are you using? __ __ __ __ __ __

2. The numbers of the notes of the blues scale are: __ __ __ __ __ __ __

3. Apply the blues scale to the key of C __ __ __ __ __ __ __

4. Apply the blues scale to the key of G __ __ __ __ __ __ __

5. Identify the notes in each chord –

6. Tab out a blues phrase using the C blues scale starting on the open 3rd string – try playing it

   A --------------------|--------------------|
   E --------------------|--------------------|
   C --------------------|--------------------|
   G --------------------|--------------------|

7. Show the numbers of the notes in the C and A blues scales

8. Show the names of the notes in the C and A blues scales