



*The*  
**12 Bar Blues ebook**  
*ebook*

GUITAR•CHORD.ORG  
*ebooks*

*The*  
***12 Bar Blues***  
*ebook*

AN EBOOK FROM GUITAR-CHORD.ORG

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# ***Table of contents***

Introduction

12 bar blues in the key of A

12 bar blues in the key of E

12 bar blues in the key of C

12 bar blues in the key of Gm

# Introduction

## About this ebook

This ebook gives you an overview over the concept of 12 bar structure in blues. There are several examples of chords progressions presented based on 12 bar blues in different keys. Illustrated with chords and sometimes tabs.

## About the 12 bar structure in blues

**The first 4 bars** usually introduce the main subject of the songs, concerning the lyrics, and when makes another statement of it. For example: “I woke up this morning, my baby was gone. / I’m felling blue, because my baby’s gone ...” The rest of the first 4 bars often continue with an instrument part, typically bar 3 and 4.

1	2	3	4

**The 5-8 bars** will often repeat the subject with some variation and adding some tension. For example: “I ain’t got nobody, my house is empty. / I’m so lonely, because my baby’s gone ...” The rest of the 5-8 bars often continue with an instrument part, typically bar 7 and 8.

5	6	7	8

**The last 4 bars** should bring some resolution and final statement both musically and what lyrics is concerned. For example: “Baby please come back, I’m so alone. / I she ain’t return to me, I will be teared apart ...” The rest of the 9-12 bars often continue with an instrument part, typically bar 7 and 8. The two last bars are often instrumental and present a turnaround. A turnaround in its simplest form can be a chord that is repeated, but is can also be a chordal or a melodic sequence, which in both cases often involve a chromatic feature (examples of turnaround are given in conjunction to the 12 bar blues examples).

9	10	11	12

**The lyrics in blues** tend to be repetitious, just as the music, and it would be wrong to say that cliches are rare. Loudon Wainwright did a parody of this in his song “I’m Alright”, which makes fun of the emotional drama that is often noticeable in blues songs by defuse it and turn things in a comical direction:

“Woke up this morning, didn’t have the blues / So I put on my tubesocks, laced up my running shoes / Went down to the reservoir to jog a mile or two” (excerpt from “I’m Alright” by Loudon Wainwright).

The song can be heard at the album *Live at the Cactus Café*.

## Fingerings

The numbers seen below the chord diagrams are suggestions for which fingers to use.

1 = index finger

2 = middle finger

3 = ring finger

4 = little finger

## Fret numbers

Each diagram includes five frets, which is only a slight part of the guitar neck. When a chord shape is beyond the first positions, a number on the left of the diagram marks the fret that is the first in the diagram.

## Strings

Strings that should not be played are marked with an X.

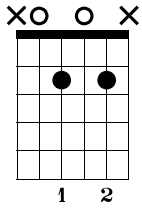
## Chord names

Standard abbreviations are used for chord names and symbols are avoided since they are generally less known. Therefore, “maj” is used for major and not a triangle, “m” is used for minor and so on.

# BASIC 12 BAR BLUES IN A

The 12 Bar Blues ebook

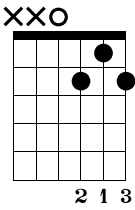
A7



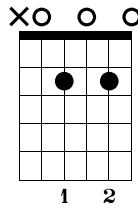
1 2 3 4

Musical staff for bars 1-4. Bar 1: T4, A4, B4 with slash. Bars 2-4: slash.

D7



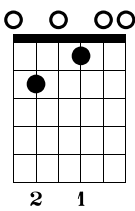
A7



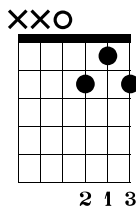
5 6 7 8

Musical staff for bars 5-8. Bar 5: T5, A5, B5 with slash. Bar 6: slash. Bar 7: T5, A5, B5 with slash. Bar 8: slash.

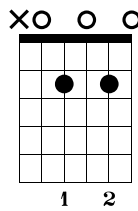
E7



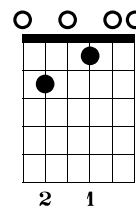
D7



A7



E7



9 10 11 12

Musical staff for bars 9-12. Bars 9, 10, 11, and 12: slash.

Turnaround (last two bars)

13 14

Musical staff for bars 13-14. Bar 13: fret numbers 0, 9, 9, 8, 8, 7, 7. Bar 14: fret numbers 2, 9, 8, 7, 6, 8.

Ending (last two bars)

15 16

Musical staff for bars 15-16. Bar 15: fret numbers 0, 9, 9, 8, 8, 7, 7. Bar 16: fret numbers 2, 3, 3, 2, 2, 0.

# 12 BAR JAZZ-BLUES IN A (with passing chords)

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**A7**      **D7**      **A7**      **Em7**      **A7**

1 2      2 1 3      1 2      1 2 3      1 2

1      2      3      4

**D7**      **D#dim7**      **A7**      **A<sup>b</sup>7**      **G7**      **G<sup>b</sup>7**

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

5      6      7      8

**Bm7**      **E7**      **A7**      **F#**      **Bm7**      **E7**

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

9      10      11      12

# 12 BAR BLUES IN A (with connecting notes)

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**A7** **D7** **A7**

1 2 3 2 1 3 1 2 3

**D7** **A7**

2 1 3 1 2 3

**E7** **D7** **A7** **E7(#9)**

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

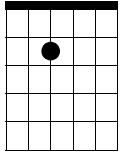


# 12 BAR BLUES IN A (shuffle)

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**A5**

X O XXX

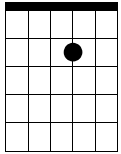


1

1	2	3	4
T			
A $\frac{4}{4}$			
B			
2 2 4 2 2 2 4 2	2 2 4 2 2 2 4 2	2 2 4 2 2 2 4 2	2 2 4 2 2 2 4 2
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

**D5**

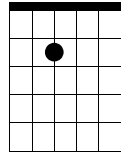
XXO XX



1

**A5**

X O XXX

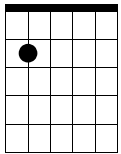


1

5	6	7	8
T			
A			
B			
2 2 4 2 2 2 4 2	2 2 4 2 2 2 4 2	2 2 4 2 2 2 4 2	2 2 4 2 2 2 4 2
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

**E5**

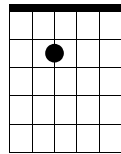
O XXXXX



1

**A5**

X O XXX



1

9	10	11	12
T			
A			
B			
2 2 4 2 2 2 4 2	2 2 4 2 2 2 4 2	2 2 4 2 2 2 4 2	2 2 4 2 2 2 4 2
0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0	0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

# 12 BAR BLUES IN A (fingerpicking with pedal note)

The 12 Bar Blues ebook

1 A

2 3 5 3 | 2 3 5 3 | 2 3 5 3 | 2 3 5 3

T 2 3 5 3 | 2 3 5 3 | 2 3 5 3 | 2 3 5 3

A 0 2 0 4 0 5 0 4 | 0 2 0 4 0 5 0 4 | 0 2 0 4 0 5 0 4 | 0 2 0 4 0 5 0 4

B

5 D A

2 3 5 3 | 2 3 5 3 | 2 3 5 3 | 2 3 5 3

T 2 3 5 3 | 2 3 5 3 | 2 3 5 3 | 2 3 5 3

A 0 2 0 4 0 5 0 4 | 0 2 0 4 0 5 0 4 | 0 2 0 4 0 5 0 4 | 0 2 0 4 0 5 0 4

B

9 E D A

1 2 4 2 | 2 3 5 3 | 5 4 3 | 2 0 2 3 ^

T 1 2 4 2 | 2 3 5 3 | 5 4 3 | 2 0 2 3 ^

A 2 4 5 4 | 0 2 0 4 0 5 0 4 | 0 0 5 0 4 0 3 0 | 2 2 2 ^

B 0 2 0 4 0 5 0 4 | 0 2 0 4 0 5 0 4 | 0 0 5 0 4 0 3 0 | 2 2 2 ^

## Variation

13 A

2 3 3 | 3 5 3 | 3 5 3 | 3 5 3

T 2 3 3 | 3 5 3 | 3 5 3 | 3 5 3

A 0 0 2 4 0 4 0 | 0 0 4 0 5 0 4 0 | 0 0 4 0 5 0 4 0 | 0 0 4 0 5 0 4 0

B

17 D A

3 5 3 | 3 5 3 | 3 5 3 | 3 5 3

T 3 5 3 | 3 5 3 | 3 5 3 | 3 5 3

A 0 0 4 0 5 0 4 0 | 0 0 4 0 5 0 4 0 | 0 0 4 0 5 0 4 0 | 0 0 4 0 5 0 4 0

B

21 E D A

4 5 4 | 3 5 3 | 5 4 3 | 2 0 2 3 ^

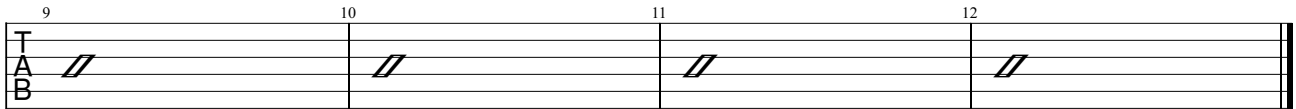
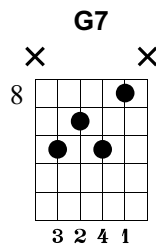
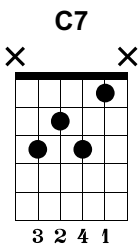
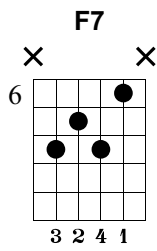
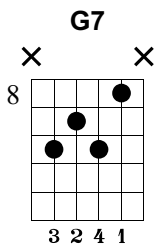
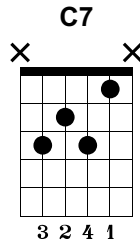
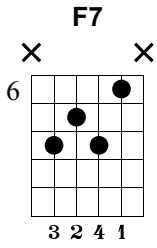
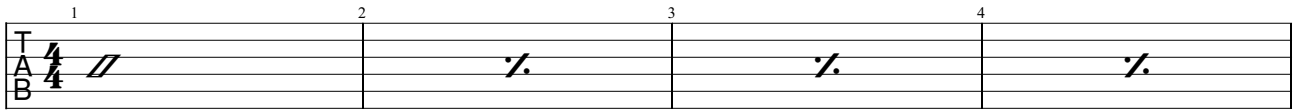
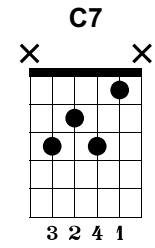
T 4 5 4 | 3 5 3 | 5 4 3 | 2 0 2 3 ^

A 5 5 5 0 | 0 0 4 0 5 0 4 0 | 0 0 5 0 4 0 3 0 | 2 2 2 ^

B 0 0 0 5 0 5 0 0 | 0 0 4 0 5 0 4 0 | 0 0 5 0 4 0 3 0 | 2 2 2 ^

# BASIC 12 BAR BLUES IN C (with movable shape)

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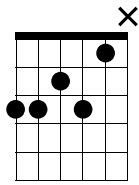


# 12 BAR BLUES IN C (with alternate bass notes)

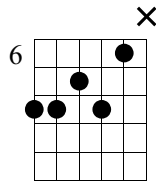
The 12 Bar Blues ebook



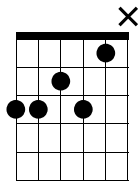
**C7/G**



**F7/C**

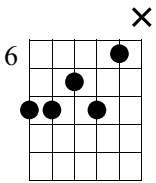


**C7/G**

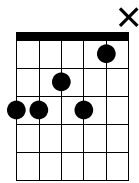


1 2 3 4

**F7/C**

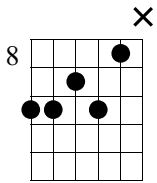


**C7/G**

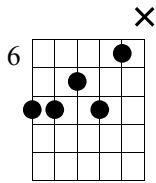


5 6 7 8

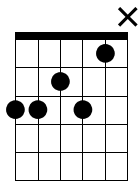
**G7/D**



**F7/C**



**C7/G**



9 10 11 12

# 12 BAR BLUES IN C (with alternate chord)

The 12 Bar Blues ebook

**C7** **F7add13** **C7** **C7(b9)**

1 2 3 4

**F7add13** **C7**

5 6 7 8

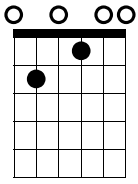
**G7** **F7add13** **C7** **G7**

9 10 11 12

# BASIC 12 BAR BLUES IN E

The 12 Bar Blues ebook

E7



2 1

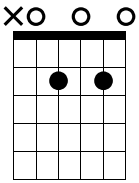
1 2 3 4

T 4 4

A 4 4

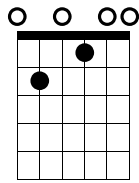
B 4 4

A7



1 2

E7



2 1

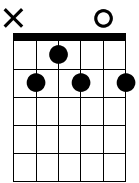
5 6 7 8

T // / /

A // / /

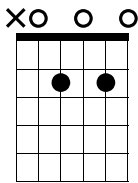
B // / /

B7



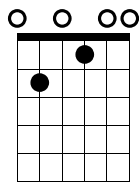
2 1 3 4

A7



1 2

E7



2 1

9 10 11 12

T // // // /

A // // // /

B // // // /

Turnaround (last two bars)

13 14

T 0 9 9 8 8 8 7 7 2 9 8 8

A 0 9 9 8 8 8 7 7 2 8 7 7

B 0 9 9 8 8 8 7 7 2 7 6 7

Ending (last two bars)

15 16

T 5 2 5 4 2 4 3 2 3 2 0 1 2 7

A 0 5 2 5 4 2 4 3 2 3 2 0 1 2 7

B 0 5 2 5 4 2 4 3 2 3 2 0 1 2 7

# 12 BAR BLUES IN E

The 12 Bar Blues ebook (with alternative chords)

**E7** **A7/E** **E7**

1 2 3 4

**A7/E** **E7**

5 6 7 8

**B7/F#** **A7/E** **E7**

9 10 11 12

Turnaround (last two bars)

13 14

Ending (last two bars)

15 16

# 12 BAR BLUES IN E (with passing chords)

The 12 Bar Blues ebook

**E7** **A7** **E7**

1 2 3 4

**A7** **A#dim** **E7**

5 6 7 8

**F#m7** **B7** **E7**

9 10 11 12

## Turnaround (last two bars)

13 14

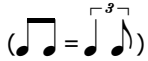
## Ending (last two bars)

15 16

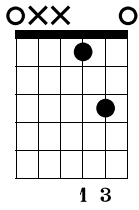


# 12 BAR BLUES IN E (fingerpicking with steady bass)

The 12 Bar Blues ebook



E7



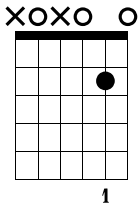
1 3 3 1 3 0 2 3 3 1 3 0 3 3 1 3 0 4 3 3 1 3 0

T 4/4

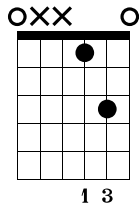
A 4/4

B 0

A7



E7



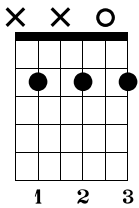
5 2 2 0 2 0 6 2 2 0 2 0 7 3 3 1 3 0 8 3 3 1 3 0

T

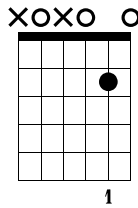
A

B 0

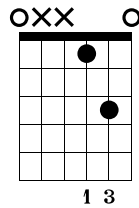
B7(no3)



A7



E7



9 0 0 2 0 2 10 2 2 0 2 0 11 3 3 1 3 0 12 3 3 1 3 0

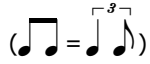
T

A

B 2 2 2 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

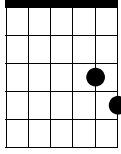
# 12 BAR BLUES IN E (fingerpicking with bend)

The 12 Bar Blues ebook



E7

OXXX

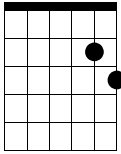


1 2

4/4

A7

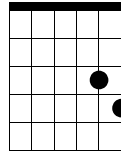
XOXX



1 2

E7

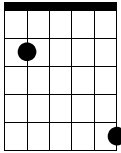
OXXX



1 2

B7(no3)

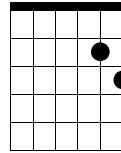
X XXO



1 4

A7

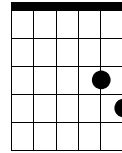
XOXX



1 2

E7

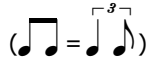
OXXX



1 2

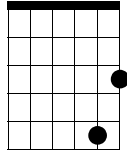
# 12 BAR BLUES IN E MINOR (fingerpicking with steady bass)

The 12 Bar Blues ebook



Em(no5)

OXXX



3 1

1 3-0 5 3 2 3-0 5 3 3 3-0 5 3 4 3-0 5 3

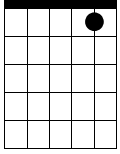
T 4/4

A 4/4

B 0-0 0-0 0-0 0-0 0-0 0-0 0-0 0-0 0-0

Am7

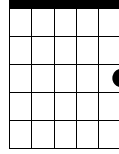
XOXO O



1

Em

OXXOO



1

5 1 0 6 1 0 7 0 3 8 0 3 5

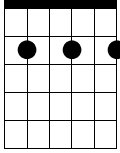
T 1 0 1 1 0 1 0 3 0 5 0 3 0 5

A 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

B 0-0 0-0 0-0 0-0 0-0 0-0 0-0 0-0 0-0

B7(no3)

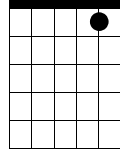
X X O



1 2 3

Am

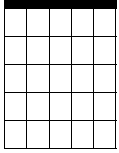
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1

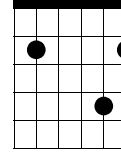
E5

OXXXXOO



B

X XX



1 4 2

9 0 2 0 2 10 1 0 1 0 11 0 0 0 0 12 4 0 2 0

T 0 2 0 2 1 0 1 0 0 0 0 4 0 2 0

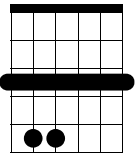
A 2-2 2-2 0-0 0-0 0-0 0-0 2-2 2-2

B 2-2 2-2 0-0 0-0 0-0 0-0 2-2 2-2

# 12 BAR BLUES IN G MINOR

The 12 Bar Blues ebook

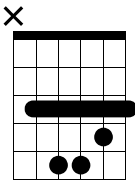
Gm



1 3 4 1 1 1

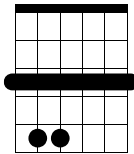
1 2 3 4

Cm



1 3 4 2 1

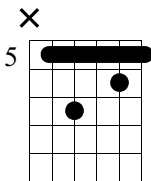
Gm



1 3 4 1 1 1

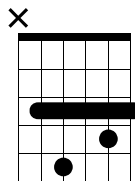
5 6 7 8

Dm7



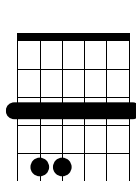
1 3 1 2 1

Cm7



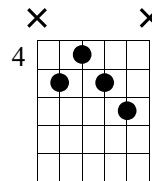
1 3 1 2 1

Gm



1 3 4 1 1 1

D7(#9)



2 1 3 4

9 10 11 12

*For feedback or questions,  
you can reach the creator of this ebook on [info@guitar-chord.org](mailto:info@guitar-chord.org)*

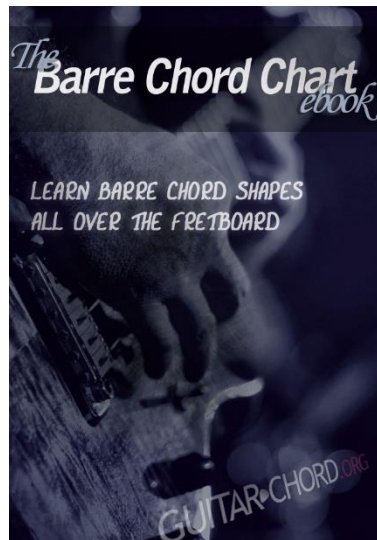
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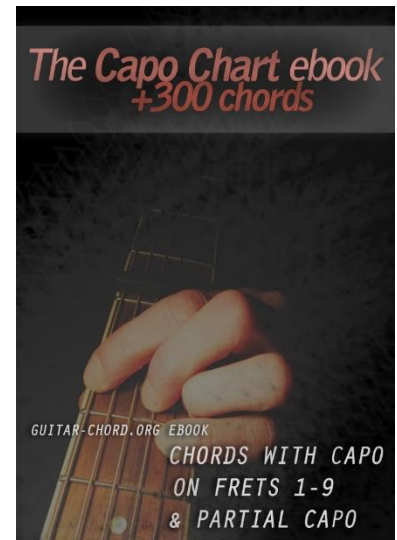
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