

Blues Harmonica Workshop Notes - Week 1

"Ain't but one school straight on down in the Delta. That's where it all started!" *Crossroads* (1986)

Not all notes in the chromatic scale are playable on a diatonic harmonica, so different harps are needed to play songs in different keys. We will use a ten-hole C harp, as they are widely available. This harp is used to play blues and country tunes in the key of G.

Notation

A number means blow; a minus sign before the number means draw.

4 = blow hole 4; -4 = draw hole 4; 34 = blow holes 3&4; -34 means draw holes 3&4

How Blues Harp Positions Work

First Position or Straight Harp

If you blow a C harp, you hear a C major chord. **CEG CEG CEG C**

Examples:

Billy Joel - Piano Man: key of C with a C harp

Neil Young - Heart Of Gold: key of G with a G harp

Second Position or Cross Harp (*What we will be learning*)

If you draw a C harp, you hear a G7 chord, plus other notes. **D GBDF ABDF A**

Examples:

Charlie Musselwhite - Chicago Sunset, Harpin' on a Riff: key of G with a C harp

War - Low Rider: key of G with a C harp

The Doors - Roadhouse Blues: key of E with an A harp

A Basic Twelve-Bar Blues Rhythm Pattern

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RN4hetpX4PE>

Guitar Camp - Straight Groove Blues Backing Track Jam In G

-12 -12 -12 -12 -12 -12 -12 -12 -12 -12 -12 -12
G G G G

12 12 12 12 12 12 -12 -12 -12 -12 -12 -12
C C G G

-1 -1 -1 12 12 12 -12 -12 -12 -1 -1 -1
D C G D

All the golden blues riffs are in the first five holes. :)



Riff 1 - Hole 2 Is Home

-2 2 -2 -2 2 -2 -2 2 -2 -2 2 -2

Riff 2 - Change from Hole 2 to Hole 1 While Drawing

-2 -1 -2 Better exhale! -2 -1 -2 Better exhale!

Riff 3 - Draw and Blow Holes 2 and 1

-2 -1 1 -1 -2 -1 1 -1

Riff 4 - Draw and Blow Holes 3 and 2

-3 -2 2 -2 -3 -2 2 -2

Riff 5 - Draw and Blow Holes 2 and 1 Quick Change

-2 -1 2 -1 -2 -1 2 -1

Riff 6 - Two Ways To Play The All-Important Root Note

-2 3 -2 3

Riff 7 - Riff 1 With Two Techniques

-2 2 -2 3 2 -2 -2 2 -2 3 2 -2

Riff 7 - Riff 4 With Two Techniques

-3 -2 2 -2 -3 3 2 -2