

# GCSE

Step-by-step

# composing

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# THE BLUES

This material can be used in a variety of ways to suit different teaching styles and resources available. The intended outcome of this topic is a student's own composition using the techniques learned. The GCSE composition log sheet may be used to accompany the composition as it progresses. This enables you to check progress from week to week and for the student to log his/her progress and plan time appropriately.

It may be useful to approach this topic in 'bite sizes', especially with weaker pupils.

1. Learn to play basic chords on page 1
2. Learn some of the phrases on page 2
3. Learn some of the phrases on page 3
4. Learn some of the phrases on page 4
5. Begin to make up own phrases using scale and partner plays chords
6. Put a rhythm and bass part into a computer sequencer
7. Add phrases to the computer sequence

The blues uses these 3 chords



Chord of C7  
C E G Bb

Chord of F7  
F A C Eb

Chord of G7  
G B D F

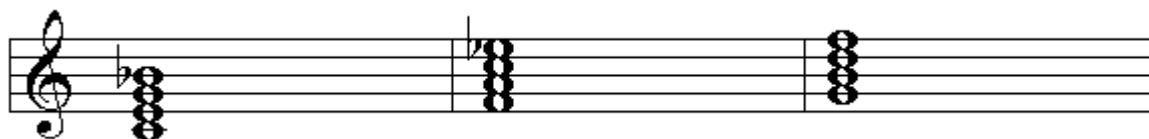
The blues chord sequence has 12 bars, although there are versions with 8 bars. Here is the most common 12 bar blues chord sequence in C. Each bar has 4 beats

C7 / / / | C7 / / / | C7 / / / | C7 / / / |  
 F7 / / / | F7 / / / | C7 / / / | C7 / / / |  
 G7 / / / | F7 / / / | C7 / / / | G7 / / / |

Guitars will find it easier to play it in A

A7 / / / | A7 / / / | A7 / / / | A7 / / / |  
 D7 / / / | D7 / / / | A7 / / / | A7 / / / |  
 E7 / / / | D7 / / / | A7 / / / | A7 / / / |

The blues in C has three chords



Chord of C7  
C E G Bb

Chord of F7  
F A C Eb

Chord of G7  
G B D F

To make up a phrase (short tune), you should use some of the notes of the chord. Here are some examples. Hold down the chord with your left hand, or get a friend to help you. Then play each of these phrases.

1 bar phrases : Chord of C7



2 bar phrases : Chord of C7



1 bar phrases : Chord of F7



The notes are F A C Eb

C G# A F    A C F Eb    G# A F Eb F

F F Ab F Eb    Eb D C A C    C A F Eb F

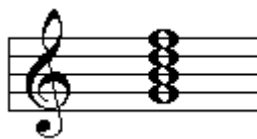
2 bar phrases : Chord of F7

F C    Eb D C

F A F Eb C E F

G#A C    Eb D C

1 bar phrases : Chord of G7



The notes are G B D F

Two staves of musical notation in 4/4 time, each with three measures. The notes and chords are as follows:

Staff 1:  
 Measure 1: D (quarter), A# (quarter), B (quarter), G (half)  
 Measure 2: B (quarter), D (quarter), G (quarter), F (half)  
 Measure 3: A# (quarter), B (quarter), G (quarter), F (half), G (half)

Staff 2:  
 Measure 1: G (quarter), G (quarter), A# (quarter), G (half), F (half)  
 Measure 2: F (quarter), E (quarter), D (quarter), B (quarter), D (half)  
 Measure 3: D (quarter), B (quarter), G (quarter), F (half), G (half)

2 bar phrases : Chord of G7

Three staves of musical notation, each with two measures. The notes and chords are as follows:

Staff 1:  
 Measure 1: G (quarter), D (quarter)  
 Measure 2: F (quarter), E (quarter), D (half)

Staff 2:  
 Measure 1: G (quarter), B (quarter), G (quarter), F (quarter), D (quarter), F (quarter), G (half)  
 Measure 2: (empty)

Staff 3:  
 Measure 1: A# (quarter), B (quarter), D (quarter), F (quarter), E (quarter), D (half)  
 Measure 2: (empty)

## Putting it all together

Here is an example of how the blues phrases all fit together.  
 Notice how it repeats itself in bars 9 & 10 but the notes are moved to fit the chord. This also happens in bars 1 & 5.  
 Silences are important in blues. Here there are 5 silent bars in the tune.

E G C Bb

E C Bb C

C7 chord C7 chord C7 chord C7 chord

same as 1st bar but fits F chord

repeat of bar 3

A C F Eb

E C Bb C

F7 chord F7 chord C7 chord C7 chord

A# B D G F

G# A C F Eb

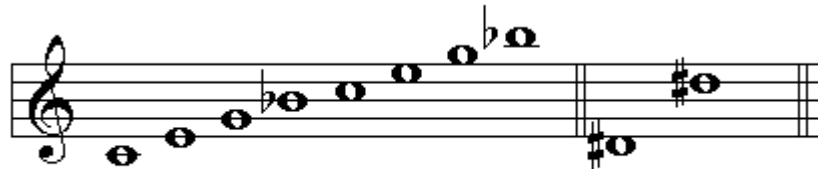
E C Bb C

G7 chord F7 chord C7 chord G7 chord

When making up blues phrases, you can use the notes of the chord and a 'blue' note. Here are the notes and chords you need in the key of C

**Chord of C7**  
C E G Bb

Notes of chord



C E G Bb C E G Bb

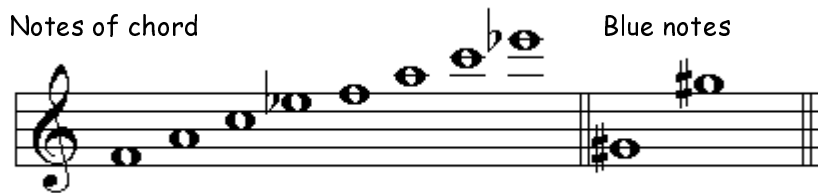
Blue notes



D# D#

**Chord of F7**  
F A C Eb

Notes of chord



F A C Eb F A C Eb

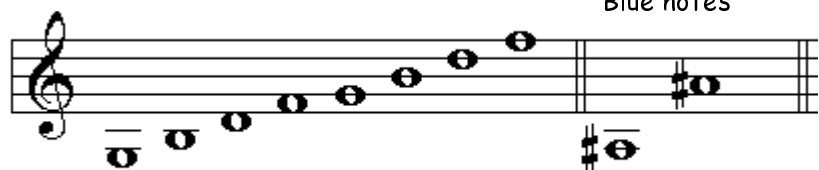
Blue notes



G# G#

**Chord of G7**  
G B D F

Notes of chord



G B D F G B D F

Blue notes



A# A#

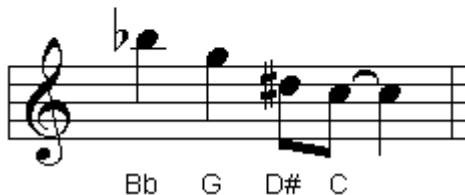
## Using Blue notes

Blue notes can be used to 'lean' into a main note of the chord, like this



G D# E C

Here, the blue note is the D# which leans to the E



Bb G D# C

Here, the blue note is the D# which leans to the C

Now make up your own blues phrases using the notes of the chords and blue notes

Bass lines

Try this bass line. It is sometimes used in *boogie-woogie* music

**G      A**  
**C      C**

This is the boogie-woogie bass line again, but changed slightly

**G      A      Bb**  
**C      C      C**

This type of bass line is sometimes used in Rock n' Roll

**C      E      G      A      G**

This is the Rock n' Roll bass line again, but changed slightly

**C      E      G      A      Bb      A      G      E**

This is the full *Boogie-Woogie* style bass line for the blues

**G A Bb A**  
**C C C C**

**C D Eb D** **G A Bb A**  
**F F F F** **C C C C**

**D E F E C D Eb D** **G A Bb A** **G G G G G G G**  
**G G G G F F F F** **C C C C**

This is the full *Rock n' Roll* style bass line for the blues

**C E G A Bb A G E** **C E G A Bb A G E**

**F A C D Eb D B G** **C E G A Bb A G E**

**G B D B F A C A** **C E G E G G G G**

1. Record a rhythm track lasting for 12 bars. On the 12th bar, try adding a fill-in on the drums. Make sure the drums are in time by quantising them.
2. Copy the rhythm track and put the copy starting at bar 13. You should now have 24 bars of drums.
3. Make up a bass part for your blues. You can use one of the ideas on page 8 and 9 or you can make up your own. After 12 bars stop.
4. You can add another bass part, slightly different for the next 12 bars.
5. Add your blues phrases using a good clear sound on another channel. A guitar, piano or organ sound is suitable.
6. You should now have 24 bars of blues. It's up to you how you continue. You could repeat the first 12 bars, or make up a new 12 bars.
7. Try adding a sustained chord part to one of the repeats.
8. Remember to *SAVE* your work!