5 LEVELS OF BLUES BASS

Resources

[Sheet music and tab for all the songs played in the lesson]
[Simple blues playalong track in E]

Level 1: Blues Survival Basics

12 Bar Blues Variations

This basic version of the 12 bar blues, covered in the lesson vid, is found in tons of tunes.

1	1	1	1
4	4	1	1
5	4	1	1

But there are also some common variations on this form you should be ready to listen for at the blues jam. These two are the most common:

1	4	1	1
4	4	1	1
5	4	1	1

The Quick 4

This variation adds a change to the 4 chord in the second bar, which gives more movement.

1	1	1	1
4	4	1	1
5	4	1	5

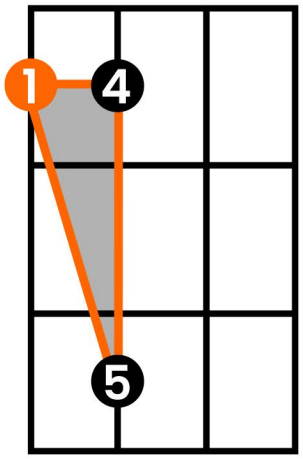
The 5 Turnaround

The "turnaround" is music jargon for the last 4 bars of the 12 bar form, and this variation adds a quick change to the 5 in the last bar to give some momentum leading back into bar 1.

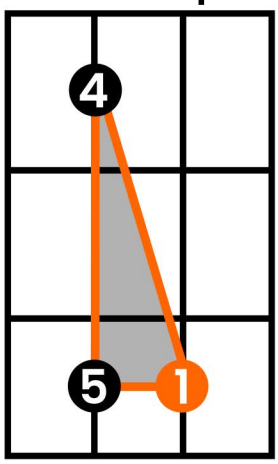
Survival Shapes

Good news - you can play blues just by learning the 12 bar form, and memorizing these two Survival Shapes to find all the chords -

High Shape



Low Shape



Want to understand what all this "one four five" business actually means? It's not that complicated, get the low down in my [full Blues Survival Shapes video.]

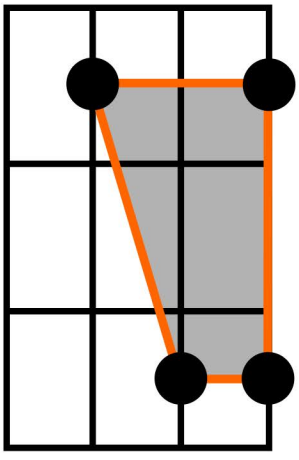
Songs to explore at this level:

- Rock Me Baby - Otis Redding
- Blues Makes Me Feel So Good - Albert Cummings
- Down Home Blues - ZZ Hill

Level 2: Common Blues Patterns

The Blues Box is a stupidly simple shape to use, but there are tons of variations you can test out.

Blues Box



Wanna dig deeper into Blues Box formulas? [This video has you covered.]

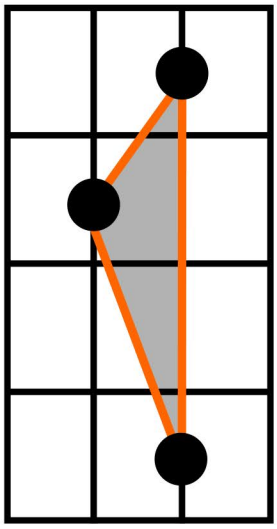
Songs to explore at this level:

- Green Onions - Booker T. and the M.G.'s
- I'm Tore Down - Eric Clapton
- Little by Little - Susan Tedeschi
- Tramp - Otis Redding
- Shake and Fingerpop - Junior Walker
- Leavin' Trunk - Taj Mahal
- The Blues is Alright - Gary Moore
- I Feel Good - James Brown

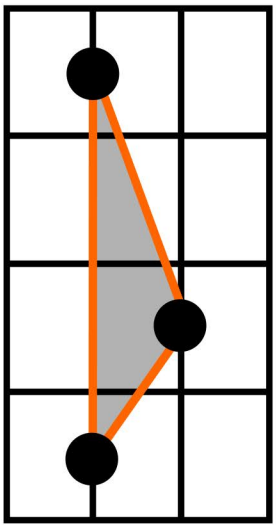
Level 3: Spicier Blues Patterns

This level encompasses any more flavorful blues pattern that draws from the relevant major or minor scale... but the easiest starting point is triads.

Major Triad



Minor Triad



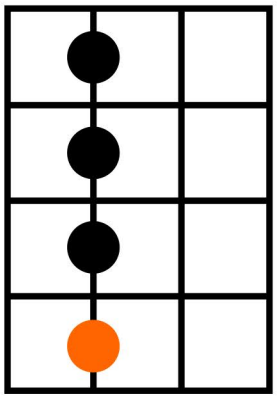
Songs to explore at this level:

- Hound Dog - Elvis Presley
- Good Golly Miss Molly - Little Richard
- Crazy Little Thing Called Love - Queen
- Sweet Home Chicago - Robert Johnson (Blues Brothers)
- Kansas City - Wilbert Harrison

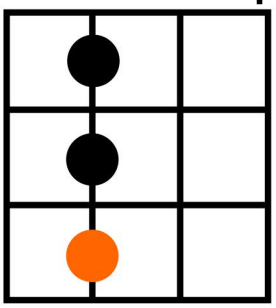
Level 4: Chromaticism

There are two super simple ways to use chromaticism in blues bass playing. With either one you just find your target note, marked below in orange (usually a root, sometimes a fifth), and walk on up to it.

3 Fret Walk Up



2 Fret Walk Up



Songs to explore at this level:

- Pride and Joy - SRV
- Texas Flood - SRV
- Killing Floor - Howlin' Wolf
- Tush - ZZ Top

Level 5: Off-the-Cuff Blues Mastery

Struggle no longer - here are 3 simple steps to get from the info jumble of the previous levels to actually ripping out blues bass lines fluently like the pros -

1. **One at a Time** - get really good at each level individually, exploring different places to find your roots, different orders of notes, and different rhythms. Don't rush this.
2. **Transition on the Transitions** - change your approach on the bar before a chord change happens, like the fourth bar leading into the 4 chord. Example - play shuffle roots the whole 12 bars, but in that transition try a Blues Box idea. Again, don't rush this.
3. **GO NUTSSS!!! ... slowly** - Start fluidly mixing the different levels along with music at a suuuuuper slow speed where you don't get frazzled. If that tempo doesn't exist, go back to Step 2 and spend more time.

Getting overwhelmed?

My step-by-step Beginner to Badass course will take you from blues noob to understanding shuffles, 12 bar blues, scales, and even improvising without stressing out.

Check it out here.

BASSBUZZ