

Mr. Bunce's Recipe for writing a Blues.

1. **Harmony.**

Blues music has a standard sequence of 12-bars:

I	I	I	I
IV	IV	I	I
V	IV	I	I (or V)

You will need to decide on a key for your blues; I would suggest either:

C major,
D major,
G major, or
A major.

When you have decided on a key, write out the scale below.

I **ii** _____ **IV** **V** _____ _____

Next, work out the notes to the following chords in your key:

I =

ii =

IV =

V =

Now write your basic 12-bar blues pattern in the boxes below adding the root note from each chord. The 12th box should contain chord V unless this is the last performance of your Blues sequence. You may find it helpful to refer to the Roman numerals above.

2. Structure.

A decent blues might have five choruses (performances of the 12-bar sequence); each one being different. Variety can be created by having different instruments **soling** over the sequence, different **orchestration**, or **chord substitution**.

Your Blues will probably have at least two instruments that are capable of soloing (Sax and Trumpet for example).

5 choruses might go something like this:

	Instruments	Chords	Other
Intro	Rhythm section	Last 4 bars of sequence	Drum fill at end
Chorus one:	Sax Trumpet	Standard	Call & response between soloists.
Chorus Two:	Sax solo	Simple substitution	Stab chords interjecting with soloist.
Chorus Three	Piano solo	Complex substitution	
Chorus Four	Trumpet solo	Simple substitutions	Stop chorus for part. MODULATES at end
Chorus Five	Sax Trumpet	Complex substitutions	Call & Response With ending.

Substitution Examples

I	I	I	I	IV	IV	I	I	V	IV	I	I
I	IV	I	I7	IV	iv	I	VI	ii	V	I	V
I	IV	I	v7	I	IV	iv	I	I	V	IV	I
										I	IV
										I	VI
										II	V7

Chord progression for the first 12 bars:

C, B^ø, E⁷, Am⁷, E[°], A⁷#⁹, F, E^b7, F⁷

Figured bass notation: I, vii^ø, III⁷, vi⁷, iii[°], VI⁷#⁹, IV, ^bIII⁷, IV⁷

Chord progression for the second 12 bars:

C⁶, A⁷#⁹, Dm, D^b, D^b6, C⁶, A⁷, D⁷, G⁷

Figured bass notation: I⁶, VI⁷#⁹, ii, ^bii, ^bii⁶, I⁶, VI⁷, II⁷, V⁷

Tritone Substitution.

This is where chord V is substituted for its tritone equivalent.

C	C	C	C
F	F7	C	A7
Dm7	G7	C	A7
		D7	Db7



We expect a G7 chord (V7) here but it is substituted for the tritone equivalent.

TASK

- Use the rest of this page to decide upon your structure and different chord pattern for each chorus. You should also discuss your instrumentation and who plays each chorus.

Section	Instrument	Chord sequences	Other info

3. Melody

Blues Scale in C major Blues Scale in D major

Blues Scale in G major Blues Scale in A major

The image shows four musical staves in treble clef, each representing a blues scale. The first staff is labeled 'Blues Scale in C major' and contains the notes C, D, E, F, G, A, Bb, C. The second staff is labeled 'Blues Scale in D major' and contains the notes D, E, F, G, A, B, C#, D. The third staff is labeled 'Blues Scale in G major' and contains the notes G, A, B, C, D, E, F#, G. The fourth staff is labeled 'Blues Scale in A major' and contains the notes A, B, C, D, E, F#, G, A. Each scale is written as a sequence of eighth notes, with a double bar line at the end of each staff.

Practise playing the scale of the same key as your blues.

When two soloists perform a chorus, they usually follow the following call & response pattern:

CALL		RESPONSE	
C	C	C	C
F	F	C	C
G	F	C	G

Composing melodies

- Record yourself playing the chords. If you have a keyboard you could use the memory or if your keyboard does not record, use a tape machine. If you are a guitarist, record yourself onto tape.
- Improvise using the appropriate scale over your chords.
- Try using syncopation and/or a swing rhythm.
- When you are happy with the melody for your first chorus, write it down and show your teacher.
- Compose a different melody for each chorus.

Modulation

To pick up extra marks, you can modulate for your last chorus to create a sense of climax. It is suggested that you modulate to either the key a semitone above your tonic, or a tone:

C major = modulate to Db major, or D major

To do this, in the chorus prior to modulating, replace the 12th chord with the dominant (V) of your new key.

Final Touches

- Consider adding a walking baseline. Here are two types:

