

2021



**INTRO
TO THE
BLUES**

**WOLFMAN'S SCHOOL OF
MUSIC**

INTRO TO THE BLUES



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Blues Guitar for Beginners

I'm going to be talking about blues guitar lessons for beginners. Why beginners? Well, it's like this: if you come here for guitar lessons as a beginner, just starting to play guitar, I'm going to start you off with the blues as opposed to any other style, as opposed to rock or folk or jazz or classical or flamenco. Music evolved during the 20th century, through the twenties, thirties, forties, fifties, sixties, right to the new millennium from the blues. That's the theory part of it--the music theoretical aspect of music, but in terms of playing technique, I want my students to have a very, very strong grounding in fundamental basics.

So, playing technique, that's the sensual physics part of playing the guitar - the sexy, emotional, expressive part of playing the guitar. Technique is the conduit of emotion when you're playing an instrument. How do you blow in the sax mouthpiece? What do you do with the reed with your teeth and your tongue? How do you control the air flow of the trumpet with your lips? How much air? How fast? How tight? With guitar, we'll talk about technique; things like sliding, bending strings, bends and releases. Or just the release itself sounding when the string is pre bent to a desired pitch. Hammer on and pull-offs, vibrato. And then combining all these techniques.

So, you have a choice. You can buy books, you can get DVDs, CD ROMs. You can take lessons with a private teacher, and there's a ton of stuff on the internet. But again, blues guitar lessons for beginners, as opposed to other styles, is my preference. Blues guitar lessons for beginners is definitely the proper place for someone to start, unless you're intent on focusing on one particular style that has nothing to do with the blues or popular Western music.

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BLUES SCALES

We're now going to be talking about what? Scales for blues guitar. The truth is you can use virtually any scale you want. Music is not about absolute rigidity and rules that you have to follow to the letter. If it sounds good, do it. But bottom line, we want to stay within the guidelines of what works well with blues, right? Traditional Blues, especially if you're just starting out.

So, you've got three main scales we use for the blues, the **Minor Pentatonic**. Pentatonic = five tones, 1, b3, 4, 5, and b7 back to root again. That gives us a C, Eb, F, G and Bb, in the key of C. We've also got the **Hexatonic**, which is the "Blues scale". The Minor Pentatonic is not the Blues scale. People erroneously interchange and use those terms all the time. The Hexatonic is C, Eb, F, Gb, G, Bb, C. It contains the 'flatted 5th', which is also known as the "BLUE NOTE"!

So, the Hexatonic Blues Scale is actually six tones, not Pentatonic. There's also the Mixolydian scale, which is the same exact thing as an Ionian major scale, except we flat the 7th degree. That means 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, b7, back to the root, C, D, E, F, G, A, Bb, C.

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BLUES GUITAR TABS

Tabs” is plural for TABLATURE...and is the prefix in the word tablature. Tablature is a form of notation. It's not standard musical notation. Rather, it's representing the six strings of the guitar. Six horizontal lines parallel, equally distant, drawn across the page...just like the five lines of the musical staff, but again, it's not the same thing as standard musical notation. Rather, you have the six lines representing the strings. Numbers that appear on these lines represent the fret number where you place your finger to produce a given note on the guitar. If we were going to show a two-string shuffle in tablature, then we print the number two on the fifth string, zero for the open sixth string, and then the number four on the 5th string. Then I'll place my fingers at those designated frets on the fifth string. Tablature has been around since the 14th century. It was actually created to help people learn how to play the lute, an early predecessor of a guitar. I actually didn't know this till around 10, 11 years ago. When I was growing up. I thought tablature was created in the fifties or sixties for lazy guys like me who didn't want to take the time or effort to learn how to read music. My philosophy is, if you've got to read something anyway, why not learn standard musical notation? It's more accurate, it's more robust, it shows you the rise and fall/the contour of the melody, the shape of the melody on the staff which relates to the pitches that we hear and see on the instrument...and it's more accurate rhythmically. It actually shows you time values. Tablature is weak in both those departments. So, my suggestion is anything that gets you started that can help facilitate playing the guitar is a good thing...so, if you want to do Blues guitar tabs, go for it. But I suggest you start to read music--standard musical notation--as soon as possible ***SEE Lesson #6 from our “10 WEEK COURSE FOR BEGINNERS” (available from our SHOP page at www.wolfmansmusic.com), which teaches in depth and detail how to read standard music notation for guitar.

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BLUES ACOUSTIC GUITAR LESSONS

When I was learning blues in my early teens, I was listening to mostly electric blues players playing solid body electric guitars, Fender Stratocasters, Gibson Les Pauls just to name a few. Okay, that left out a whole other genre of blues guitar, which is the acoustic type of blues guitar, which came from the Mississippi Delta, in the southern part of the United States. It is really rich music, generally played on acoustic guitar. Sometimes strings are missing, on really beat-up old instruments, out of tune, but it's still the real deal. You know, it's the early days of the blues. Clapton did his tribute to Robert Johnson on his "Me and Mr. Johnson" album, and he's strictly playing acoustic guitar.

So, if I'm thinking acoustic blues guitar, I'm thinking a specific era. I'm thinking the early days, I'm not thinking about my electric heroes, like Jimmy Hendrix, Jeff Beck, Eric Clapton with Cream or Mike Bloomfield, who, for my money, is one of the greatest electric blues guitarists to have ever lived. So, if I'm thinking about the early days of the blues, I'm going to be playing acoustic guitar.

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DELTA BLUES

It doesn't get any more basic or simple in this whole genre of music, than Delta Blues. Delta Blues sprang up from the River Delta, Mississippi, Southern United States, and branched out to all of the parts of the country over the next few decades. It is the basis for rock and roll, and a ton of pop music. You can hear it... you can hear the elements of the Delta Blues guitar in so much music, even new stuff that people are writing and recording today.

It's a very rich and very warm form of music. And yet, it's very simple. If I'm teaching someone Delta Blues guitar, I'm showing them a two-string shuffle. The first finger is fretting the 5th string on the second fret (Fifth string for a 2-string shuffle in the key of "E"), and then hammering on and pulling off with your third finger on the 4th fret. Then I place the fourth finger on the 5th fret of the 5th string...and we have the open (E) 6th string as a kind of a drone. Next, I am going to change to the next two higher strings (the 4th and 3rd). Then I've got this big stretch again with the 4th finger on the fifth fret...then a little turn-around lick. You can dress it up any way you want to embellish it. There are no limits when using your imagination.