

Twelve Bar Blues, Changing Key Positions, and Tonality

The Guitar has five moveable fingering “shapes” that can be moved anywhere on the fretboard to play in any one of the twelve possible Major and Minor keys. Each one has its own unique visual shape and feeling under the left hand, and within them, they also contain all the major and minor Arpeggios and Chord Voicings.

I call them Key Positions (**See The Five Basic Key Positions, Key of C**). To see how they transpose to play in different Keys, and their notation, see the column (**Transposing The Key Positions Through All Twelve Keys**). Learning how to use the Five Key Positions in every way possible is the key to unlocking the secrets of how the guitar functions.

Below are the chord changes to a traditional 12 bar Blues in F.

12 Bar Blues in F

The image displays two staves of musical notation for a 12-bar blues in F major. The first staff covers bars 1 through 6, and the second staff covers bars 7 through 12. Each bar contains a series of diagonal slashes representing a guitar strumming pattern. Above the first staff, the chords F⁷, B^{b7}, F⁷, and B^{b7} are indicated above the first, second, third, and fourth bars respectively. Above the second staff, the chords F⁷, C⁷, B^{b7}, F⁷, and C⁷ are indicated above the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth bars respectively. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 4/4 time signature. The first staff ends with a repeat sign, and the second staff ends with a double bar line and repeat dots.

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Key Poss. Four Key Poss. Two Key Poss. Four

One Chord (R5) Four Chord (R6) One Chord (R5)

Fret 5 →

3 6 2 5 3 6 2 5 1 3 6 2 5 3

4 b7 1 4 4 b7 b3 4 4 b7 1 4

3 6 6 3 6

5 (1) 4 (b7) (2) (5) 5 1 4 b7 2 5 5 (1) 4 (b7) (2) (5)

fingering X 2 1 3 — 3 X X 3 1 — 2 X X 2 2 4 3 X

Measure One Measure Two Measures Three & Four

The first step is to play the **(1)** on the 5th string, then **sing** and **match** your voice to the note. This is **The Tonal Center**. Play the entire Blues Progression, as you keep **singing (1)** against the chords. This will teach you how to HEAR what a Tonal Center sounds and feels like within a chord progression. Each one of the other notes gets its individual hearing identity from its relationship to **(1)**, the Tonal Center. When practicing the Key Positions, always begin and end on **(1)**. This way you'll be hearing correctly.

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Key Poss. Two → Key Poss. Four → Key Poss. One

Four Chord (R6) One Chord (R5) Five Chord (R6)

Fret 6 →

fingering

Measures Five and Six → Measurs Seven and Eight → Measure Nine

The **One Chord** is called the One Chord because its Root is (1) the Tonal Center. The **Four Chord** is called the Four Chord because its Root is (4). The **Five Chord** is called the Five Chord because its Root is (5).

Notice also that even though the Key Positions keep changing, (3) changing to (b3), and (b7) changing to (7), are the only note changes taking place. All of the other notes (4, 5, 6, and 1), stay in exactly the same locations in all three Key Positions.

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Key Poss. Two → Key Poss. Four → Key Poss. One

Four Chord (R6) → One Chord (R5) → Five Chord (R6)

Fret 6 → 5 → 5

fingering 1 X 2 4 3 X X 2 1 3 3 1 X 2 4 3 X

Measure Ten → Measur Eleven → Measure Twelve back to Measure One

The object of matching your voice to each note, and singing each one against the chords, is to learn to hear and remember the location of every note. Each individual tone has a different feeling when played or sung against the **One Chord**, the **Four Chord**, or the **Five Chord**. Remember that always hearing and relating to **(1)**, the Tonal Center is what keeps your hearing and sense of direction in focus.

You have to develop a personal feeling for each note against each Chord. How they make you feel against the chords is what you remember them by. And also, how you personally feel about each note is what makes you choose it spontaneously as part of your improvised melody line.

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Key Poss. Two → Key Poss. Four → Key Poss. One

Four Chord (R6) → One Chord (R5) → Five Chord (R6)

The diagrams illustrate the following chord progressions:

- Key Poss. Two (Four Chord R6):** Notes include 6, 2, 5, 4, b7, b3, 1, 4, 5, 6, 1, 4, b7, 2, 5, b3. Fingering: 2, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1. Additional fret numbers: 4, 4, 5.
- Key Poss. Four (One Chord R5):** Notes include 3, 6, 2, 5, 3, 4, b7, 1, 4, 5, 3, 6, 1, 4, b7, 2, 5. Fingering: 1, 2, 2, 1, 2, 1. Additional fret numbers: 4, 4, 5.
- Key Poss. One (Five Chord R6):** Notes include 3, 6, 2, 5, 7, 3, 4, 7, 3, 6, 1, 4, 2, 5, 5, 1, 4, 2, 5. Fingering: 2, 3, 1, 1, 1, 2. Additional fret numbers: 4, 4, 4.

These **Arpeggios** outline the chords of the 12 bar Blues progression within Key Positions Two, Four, and One. The other notes in **Black** are equally valuable melodically, and both can be mixed together in endless ways to make melodies.

EVERYTHING, Modes, Arpeggios, Chord Voicings, Chord Progressions, The ability to make key changes in tunes on guitar, comes back to the Five Basic Key Positions.