

Styles & Genres



American Music: Blues 1: 12-Bar Blues

TWELVE-BAR **BLUES** is a popular form of music, especially with guitarists; it's quite easy to learn, and great fun! It follows a certain formula based on twelve "units" (or bars) and is quite recognisable when heard. A basic form of this formula can be expressed like this:

I is the root note of the key you're in, so if you're playing the blues in "D", the chord is D major.

IV is the fourth note of the scale - 4th note in the D scale is G, so the chord is G major.

V is the fifth note of the scale - A, so the chord played is A. (The V chord is very often played in its "7th" form, so you would play an A7.)

Therefore, applying the formula to the D scale, you would get this:

There are lots of slight variations to the formula, but that's basically it. Try the following sequence playing four strums for each unit:

1	2	3	4
I	I	I	I7
5	6	7	8
IV	IV	I	I
9	10	11	12
V7	IV	I	V7

1	2	3	4
D	D	D	D7
5	6	7	8
G	G	D	D
9	10	11	12
A7	G	D	A7

1 2 3 4

5 6 7 8

9 10 11 12

Twelve-Bar Blues