

LEARN BLUES FINGERPICKING

INTERMEDIATE COURSE

2.1 8-Bar Blues in E



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8-Bar Blues

We have played 12-bar blues in this course so far – as it is the most popular blues format.

Other blues formats exist, including 8-bar blues, 16-bar blues and 32-bar blues.

In this chapter, we will focus on the 8-bar blues.

The 8-Bar Blues Format

The key characteristic for an 8-bar blues is that the form repeats every 8 bars (i.e. it is 8 bars long). Further study will show that there are many variations of the 8-bar blues so we will cover a few of those to introduce you to the topic.

Another common characteristic is that the first chord change is often a I-V chord change (e.g. E7 to B7 are often the first 2 bars of an 8-bar) and this creates a very different feeling – often one associated with a more country and folky sound, but can sound ‘pure blues’ as well.

This is a common 8-bar structure

I ⁷	V ⁷	IV ⁷	IV ⁷
I ⁷	V ⁷	I ⁷	V ⁷

The 8-Bar Blues in E

In the key of E, that would give us the following progression:

first 4 bars → E7 B7 A7 A7

last 4 bars → E7 B7 E7 B7

We can see that obviously this is 8 bars long and that we have the first two chords using the I-V progression of E7 to B7.

Try to play along to the tab strumming each chord 4 times per bar. This is a good way to become familiar with the changes.

The tablature is organized into three systems. The first system covers bars 1-3, the second covers bars 4-6, and the third covers bars 7-8. Each system includes a treble clef staff with a 4/4 time signature and a guitar tablature staff with strings labeled T, A, B from top to bottom. Fingerings are indicated by numbers 1-3 above notes. The progression is as follows:

- Bar 1: E7 (1-2-3-4)
- Bar 2: B7 (2-3-4-5)
- Bar 3: A7 (2-3-4-5)
- Bar 4: A7 (2-3-4-5)
- Bar 5: E7 (1-2-3-4)
- Bar 6: B7 (2-3-4-5)
- Bar 7: E7 (1-2-3-4)
- Bar 8: B7 (2-3-4-5)

Examples of 8-Bar Blues

Derek & the Dominos (featuring Eric Clapton) – [Keys to the Highway](#)

Aretha Franklin – [Trouble in Mind](#)

Elmore James – [It Hurts Me Too](#)