

# LEARN BLUES FINGERPICKING

## INTERMEDIATE COURSE

### 4.2 Riffs in Position 4



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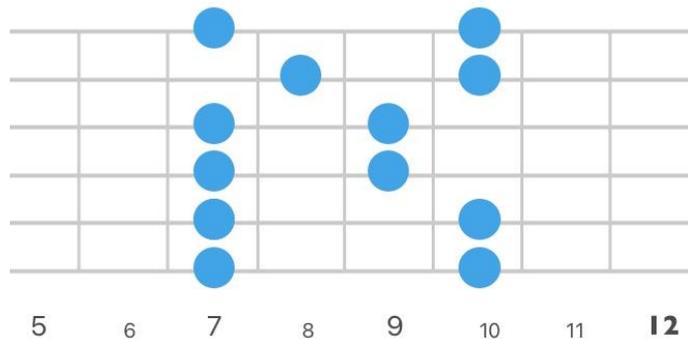
# Intro

Let's study the E blues scale in Position 4 of the guitar neck (the area roughly between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> frets).

Let's start by looking at the Em pentatonic scale (we will use this for Riff A below)

## Em Pentatonic

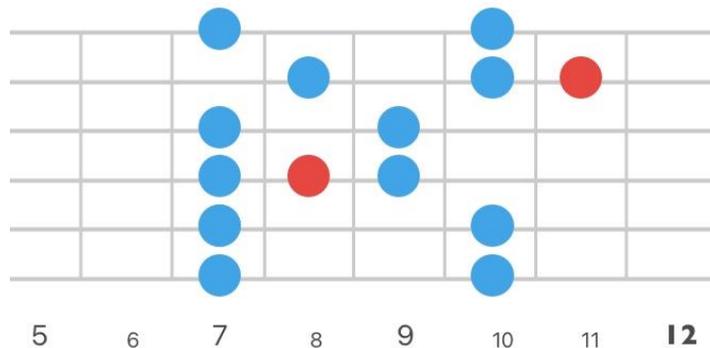
### Position 4



And let's look at the E Blues Scale which we get by adding that blues note (which I will show in red below). We use this scale for Riff B (and others that follow)

## E Blues Scale

### Position 4



## Riff A

The first half of this riff ascends the Em pentatonic scale and then descends.

There is a note on the 2<sup>nd</sup> string at the 8<sup>th</sup> fret that is interesting. Note that it lies in between two bass notes, and it is a bent note. You could choose not to bend it and it would still sound great. If you bend it, a tiny amount of bend will do (a micro-bend we call this!). Experiment and see what sounds good to your ear.

Musical notation for Riff A, first half. The notation is in treble clef, common time (C), and features a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The first measure (labeled '1') contains an ascending pentatonic scale: G2 (open), A2 (open), B2 (open), C3 (open), D3 (open). The second measure (labeled '2') contains a descending pentatonic scale: D3 (open), C3 (open), B2 (open), A2 (open), G2 (open). The final note of the second measure is a bent note on the 2<sup>nd</sup> string at the 8<sup>th</sup> fret, indicated by a bent note symbol and a  $\frac{1}{4}$  bend arrow. Below the staff is a guitar tablature (TAB) with two staves labeled 'T' and 'B'. The top staff shows fret numbers: 9, 8, 10, 7, 10, 8, 9, 7. The bottom staff shows open strings (0) for all six strings.

The second half of this riff is very similar. It just has a simpler ending – letting that final note ring out.

Musical notation for Riff A, second half. The notation is in treble clef, common time (C), and features a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The first measure (labeled '4') contains an ascending pentatonic scale: G2 (open), A2 (open), B2 (open), C3 (open), D3 (open). The second measure (labeled '5') contains a descending pentatonic scale: D3 (open), C3 (open), B2 (open), A2 (open), G2 (open). The final note of the second measure is a sustained note on the 2<sup>nd</sup> string at the 8<sup>th</sup> fret, indicated by a sustained note symbol. Below the staff is a guitar tablature (TAB) with two staves labeled 'T' and 'B'. The top staff shows fret numbers: 9, 8, 10, 7, 10, 8, 9, 7. The bottom staff shows open strings (0) for all six strings.

## Riff B

The first half of this riff starts on that blue note (the 4<sup>th</sup> string at the 8<sup>th</sup> fret). Note that we are typically playing 2 riff notes per bass

Musical notation for the first half of Riff B. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The first measure is marked with a '1' and a dynamic marking of *mf*. The second measure is marked with a '2'. The guitar tablature below shows the fret numbers for the strings T, A, and B. The first measure has fret numbers 8, 9, 7, 9, 8 for strings T, A, B, A, B respectively. The second measure has fret numbers 10, 7, 11, 10, 8 for strings T, A, B, A, B respectively. The bass line (B string) is marked with 0 for all notes.

The second half of this riff again ends differently, and the phrasing here is interesting. The note on the 2<sup>nd</sup> string at the 8<sup>th</sup> fret is play three times in a row on a bass note and then resolves to one last note that we leave ring until the end (that is between bass notes). Worth listening to the effect that this creates.

Musical notation for the second half of Riff B. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The first measure is marked with a '4' and the second measure with a '5'. The guitar tablature below shows the fret numbers for the strings T, A, and B. The first measure has fret numbers 8, 9, 7, 9, 8, 8 for strings T, A, B, A, B, B respectively. The second measure has fret numbers 8, 9 for strings T, A respectively, and 0 for strings B, A, B. The bass line (B string) is marked with 0 for all notes.

## Riff C

This riff is designed to help you hear and feel the difference between regular eighth notes (which would sound like a machine gun da-da-da-da) and that shuffle playing (daaah-da, daaah-da) of eighth notes.

While this might be hard to explain with just words – if you watch and listen to the video you will hopefully at least hear the difference when I play the two back-to-back. That's the first step!

The next step then is for you to be able to play them both (and the final step might be that you can play both and switch between them any time you feel like it – but we'll leave that for another day)

The image shows musical notation for Riff C. It consists of a treble clef, a common time signature (C), and two measures of music. The first measure is marked with a '1' and the second with a '2'. The notation includes a dynamic marking 'mf' and a guitar tablature below the staff. The tablature shows the fret numbers for each string: 8 8 8 8 8 for the first measure and 8 8 8 8 8 for the second measure. The bass line is indicated by '0' on the bottom line of the staff, representing the open 6th string.

It is to our real advantage that we are fingerpicking as we learn this.

We have that constant bass note (the open 6<sup>th</sup> string) and it is against this rhythmic backdrop that we are going to play both regular (machine gun) eighth notes and shuffle eighth notes. We have our own bass note that we lean into when we do both of these.

## Riff D

The first half of this riff

Musical notation for the first half of Riff D. The notation is in treble clef with a common time signature (C). The music is marked *mf*. The first measure is labeled '1' and the second measure is labeled '2'. The melody consists of eighth notes and quarter notes. The guitar tablature below shows fret numbers 8 and 10 for the first two measures, with a 0 for the bass string in each measure.

The second half of this riff is identical except for the “shuffled triplets” notation that appears above the tab (meaning obviously that we shuffle feel on all eighth notes)

Musical notation for the second half of Riff D. The notation is in treble clef with a common time signature (C). The music is marked *mf*. The first measure is labeled '4' and the second measure is labeled '5'. The melody consists of eighth notes and quarter notes. The guitar tablature below shows fret numbers 8 and 10 for the first two measures, with a 0 for the bass string in each measure. A triplet notation is shown above the tab for the first measure of the second half, indicating a shuffle feel on all eighth notes.

## Assignment

Your assignment is to play all these riffs until you have mastered them. In particular, if you can get that shuffle feel and regular feel down, you have made a huge step.