
Advanced Beginner

Month 5 Practice Guide

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Introduction

Last month's goals

- Work on the full blues scale
- Building great sounding solos using AAA, AAB and ABC song forms
- Proper breathing on the harmonica
- Understanding 2nd position and playing in different keys

This month's learning outcomes

- Chugging
- Vamping
- Mixing chugging and single note licks over a 12 bar blues

Technique: Chugging

Up until now you have spent a lot of time concentrating on your clean single notes and that is excellent, but now we are going to look at playing chords as well. This will require you to have a completely different mouthshape.

A chord is when you play 3 or more notes at the same time. In order to do this, your mouth will need to be wider obviously. However, you don't need to actively open more. Just think about relaxing your lips so that your harmonica "falls" into your mouth.

123 draw and blow

Try breathing in and out on holes 123 using 1/4 notes (one breath per beat).

If you find that you are over-inflating and start to run out of breath then here are some tips;

- Play more gently (don't suck or blow hard; breathe naturally)
- Release your lips a little when you blow to dissipate some of the excess air

1/8th notes

Once you are comfortable just breathing in and out, try playing with 1/8th notes and do two draw chords followed by two blow chords. Make sure that you are articulating "da-da da-da".

Chugging

123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123

Shuffle rhythm

When you are comfortable with the 1/8th note rhythm, try doing it with a shuffle rhythm.

Remember that a shuffle rhythm sounds like “Humpty-Dumpty”.

Exercise

Practice chugging and focus on remaining as relaxed as possible. You should be able to keep playing indefinitely.

Technique: Advanced Beginner Month 5 Warm-Up

Metronome 60bpm

Ex. 1 Chugging with shuffle rhythm

Chugging

↓ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↑
123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123

Ex. 2 Blues scale (1/4 notes)

Ex. 1. Blues scale up & down with 1/4 notes

↓ ↓½ ↑ ↓½ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓½ ↑ ↓½ ↓
2 3 4 4 4 5 6 6 5 4 4 4 3 2

Ex. 3 Blues scale (1/8 notes)

Ex. 2. Blues scale up & down with 1/8 notes

↓ ↓½ ↑ ↓½ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓½ ↑ ↓½ ↓
2 3 4 4 4 5 6 6 5 4 4 4 3 2

Ex. 4 Blues scale (1/8 notes shuffled)

Ex. 2. Blues scale up & down with 1/8 notes

↓ 2 ↓^{1/2} 3 ↑ 4 ↓^{1/2} 4 ↓ 4 ↓ 5 ↑ 6 ↑ 6 ↓ 5 ↓ 4 ↓^{1/2} 4 ↑ 4 ↓^{1/2} 3 ↓ 2

Music: Introduction to Vamping

What is vamping?

Vamping is where you play a repeating chordal phrase and add in some licks in between repetitions of it.

It is a lot of fun and really tests your ability to jump between single notes and chords.

6 Vamping Licks

I've put together 6 vamping licks which you can play as a whole sequence.

Vamp **Lick 1**

123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 2 2 3 2

3 **Lick 2**

123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 2 2 3 4

5 **Lick 3**

123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 2 3 4 3

7 **Lick 4**

123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 2 3 4 3 2

9 **Lick 5**

123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 2 3 4 4 4 5 6

11 **Lick 6**

123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 6 5 4 4 4 3 2

Music: Improvising around a vamp

It's a lot of fun to improvise the phrases in between the chord vamp in the same way that we have just done.

All you need to do is start by playing the chugging for one bar and then leave a bar long break. Repeat this a few times to get a feel for it.

When you are ready, you can start to play some simple licks in the gaps in between chord vamps.

Exercise

Practice improvising around the chord vamp for at least 5 minutes at a time - this will force you to be creative while building up your stamina.

Music: Chugging the blues

We can also apply the chugging technique to a 12 bar blues tune.

To demonstrate this I have put together a tune called “Chugging the Blues” which features a mixture of single note licks and chord chugging.

I Lick 1

3
 $\downarrow^{\frac{1}{2}}$ \downarrow \downarrow \downarrow \downarrow \uparrow \downarrow \downarrow
 4 4 5 4 4 3 2

3 Chugging

\downarrow \downarrow \uparrow \uparrow \downarrow \downarrow \uparrow \uparrow \downarrow \downarrow \uparrow \uparrow \downarrow \downarrow \uparrow \uparrow
 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123

IV⁵ Lick 2

$\downarrow^{\frac{1}{2}}$ \uparrow $\downarrow^{\frac{1}{2}}$ \downarrow \uparrow \downarrow
 3 4 3 2 2 1

I⁷

\downarrow \downarrow \uparrow \uparrow \downarrow \downarrow \uparrow \uparrow \downarrow \downarrow \uparrow \uparrow \downarrow \downarrow \uparrow \uparrow
 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123

V⁹ Lick 3 **IV**

3
 $\downarrow^{\frac{1}{2}}$ \downarrow \downarrow \uparrow $\downarrow^{\frac{1}{2}}$ \downarrow \uparrow
 4 4 5 4 3 2 2

11

\downarrow \downarrow \uparrow \uparrow \downarrow \downarrow \uparrow \uparrow \downarrow \downarrow \uparrow \uparrow \downarrow \downarrow \uparrow \uparrow
 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123 123

Advanced Beginner Month 5 Conclusion

Goals

- Chugging
- Vamping
- Mixing chugging and single note licks over a 12 bar blues

*****Challenge*****

Your challenge this month is to post a recording/video of some vamping improvisation.

Exercises to work on this month

- **Warm Up**

Metronome 60bpm

Ex. 1 Chugging with shuffle rhythm

Ex. 2 Blues scale (1/4 notes)

Ex. 3 Blues scale (1/8 notes)

Ex. 4 Blues scale (1/8 notes shuffled)

- **Vamping**

Ex. 1 Learn the 6 vamping licks and practice playing them without pausing in between

Ex. 2 Practice improvising your own licks in between vamps

- **Chugging the Blues**

Practice 'Chugging the Blues' without and then with the backing track

Recommended Listening

[Hooray, Hooray, These Women is Killing Me - Sonny Terry](#) is a great example of chugging in action

Questions

If you are having problems with anything, please post your questions in the Facebook group and I will help out. You can also get live answers at the weekly Q and A session Wednesday at 6pm (GMT) and I will answer it then.

Feedback

Please post audio or video clips of you playing over in the Facebook group so that I can give you feedback and you can track your progress.

Good luck!