

Origins – African slaves brought their musical traditions with them when they were transported to work in the North American colonies. These Work songs were sung rhythmically in time with the task being done. Their songs were passed on orally (word of mouth) and were never usually written down. They used call and response where phrases from a lead singer were followed by the others. Early styles of Blues was known as country blues and was usually a solo singer accompanied on guitar or piano sometimes with added harmonica or drums.

12 Bar Blues – The 12 bar blues is the name of the structure used in blues music. It is split in to 3 sections, which have 4 bars each.

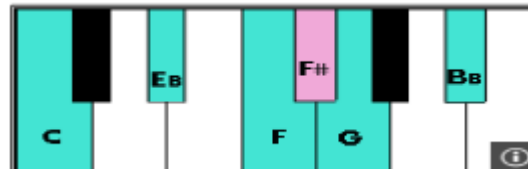
Chords – A chord is 3 notes played together at the same time. A chord is also called a triad. Blues music only uses 3 chords which are played at the start of every bar.

C/// C/// C/// C///
 F/// F/// C/// C///
 G/// F/// C/// C///

Improvisation – Improvisation is where music is performed ‘on the spot’. Music that is improvised isn’t traditionally written down, and the performers will use their musical knowledge to perform something from scratch. In Blues music, the improvisation is usually the notes from the Blues scale.

Lyrics – The lyrics of Blues songs were often about depression, lack of money/employability, loneliness and them missing their family. The lyrics of line 1 & 2 are usually he same, with line 3 being different.

Blues Scale – The blues scale is a certain selection of notes that have been put together to sound ‘bluesy’. The scale is often used to create the improvisation.



Walking Bass – The walking bass is the main part of any Blues song. This is usually played by the bass guitar. The tempo of the bass line should be steady, which is why it is called the “walking” bass.

Walking Bass

Song Structure– Modern Blues songs can sometimes follow modern pop song structure (Verse-Chorus). Older Blues songs usually consist of 3 lines. Lines 1 & 2 are the same, and line 3 is usually different. (This also ties in with the 12 chords).

Keywords/Glossary

12 bar blues	Structure used in Blues music. There are 3 lines and 4 bars.
Blues scale	A sequence of notes where some notes are flattened/sharpened to create 'Blueasy' sound.
Chords	Three or more notes played together.
Improvisation	Making music up on the spot.
Walking bass	Bassline which is moving up and down the scale at a walking pace.
Call and response	Music performed as question and answer.
Swing rhythm	When straight quavers are played like triplets instead.
Syncopation	When the music is distinctive on the weaker beats of the bar.

Instruments used in Blues:



Saxophone, Clarinet, Trumpet, Double Bass, Electric Guitar, Drums and Piano.