



## The Standard 12 Bar Blues

by John Falstrom

Here's the original "analyzation" of The Standard 12 Bar Blues Form:

### The Standard 12 Bar Blues Form

- \* Twelve bars (measures) of music that are repeated throughout on entire song.
- \* Chords used are the I, IV, and V (either as basic major chords or as dominant 7th chords).
- \* Played in 4/4 time (i.e., four beats per measure; quarter note equals one beat).

Here is a chart example of a standard 12 bar blues form:

4/4 time

|                  |           |            |           |           |
|------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Measures:</b> | <b>1</b>  | <b>2</b>   | <b>3</b>  | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Chords:</b>   | <b>I</b>  | <b>I</b>   | <b>I</b>  | <b>I7</b> |
|                  | <b>5</b>  | <b>6</b>   | <b>7</b>  | <b>8</b>  |
|                  | <b>IV</b> | <b>IV</b>  | <b>I</b>  | <b>I</b>  |
|                  | <b>9</b>  | <b>10</b>  | <b>11</b> | <b>12</b> |
|                  | <b>V7</b> | <b>IV7</b> | <b>I</b>  | <b>I</b>  |

**Memorize:** First three measures are the I chord.  
 Fourth measure is the I7 chord.  
 Fifth and sixth measures are the IV chord.  
 Seventh and eighth measures are the I chord.  
 Ninth measure is the V7 chord.  
 Tenth measure is the IV7 chord.  
 Eleventh and twelfth measures are the I chord.



**There are many variations in the placements of the I, IV, and V (either as basic major chords or as dominant 7th chords) within the twelve measures of the standard 12 bar blues form.**

- \* Eight, sixteen, twenty-four, and thirty-two bar blues forms are used on occasion.
- \* The standard 12 bar blues form using the minor i, iv, and v (either as basic minor chords or as minor 7th chords) is also used on occasion.
- \* The standard 12 bar blues form is used for many styles of music, such as: blues, rhythm & blues, rockabilly, and (early) rock-n-roll.

The Standard 12 Bar Blues Form of music is crucial to understand and also crucial to be able to play on the bass guitar. Therefore, everything and anything mentioned above should be (eventually) memorized.

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