

Blues Piano Lessons - A Quick Tutorial

It may surprise you but, few pianists know how to successfully execute a simple blues on the piano. Given the hundreds of different chord variations in a 12-bar blues it's no wonder that many don't know which to choose so they simply avoid the whole process altogether.

Here are a few simple rules to follow when learning to play blues on the piano.

Most music that you hear is based on chord progressions and the blues is no different. So let's start with a basic 12-bar blues chord progression which would look like this in the key of F;

| F7 | | | | Bb7 | | F7 | | C7 | Bb7 | F7 | |

Now, I've already mentioned that there are hundreds of different variations of the blues so let's now show you the most common jazz blues progression. Overall it's the same progression with a few extra chords thrown in to make it sound more interesting;

| F7 | Bb7 | F7 | | Bb7 | Bo7 | F7 | A-7b5 D7b9 | G-7 | C7 | F7 | G-7 C7 |

You will notice a couple of things about this progression. First is the A-7b5 D7b9 in the 8th bar before the G minor seventh chord. This is simple a minor II V put in front of the G minor chord to give it forward movement. Then you will see another II V at the end which takes us back to the top of the piece, again giving it that forward movement.

This jazz blues progression is the most common progression you will see and will serve you well in any music jam situation.

So, once you've mastered this progression it would be nice to learn how to solo over top. That's where things get a bit tricky. If you're just learning, my advice is to learn a simple blues scale which can be played over the entire progression.

A blues scale is made up of only 6 notes and here it is in the key of F;

F Ab Bb B C Eb and back to F.

Now, the fingering for this scale from bottom to top would be 1 3 4 1 2 4 5. And, of course if you kept going up to the next octave you would need to substitute 5th finger with 1.

This scale works so well on a blues progression it can become a bit monotonous. Therefore, I suggest you learn how to play some other types of scales during the II V's such as a dorian and mixolydian.

In terms of how to comp or play chords along with other musicians here's a neat trick. Play the root and the seventh in the left hand and cover the third, fifth and any extensions that you want to in the right hand. You will find that this is very effective in any blues situation.

What's next? Well, you might want to go down to your local music store and get a book on blues riffs. There are standards riffs or rhythms that you can learn to make you playing sound a lot more bluesy.

I hope you enjoyed this quick blues piano lesson. Keep sounding great!

About the Author

Paul Tobey gives online [piano lessons](#) for intermediate to advanced piano students. Download a free [online piano lesson](#) today.

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