

# HOW TO PLAY HARMONICA



**HOHNER**

ENJOY MUSIC

## PLAYING THE HARMONICA

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Welcome to **HOHNER'S** introduction to playing the harmonica! Your instructor will walk you through the following exercises in class. For free audio recordings of these playing examples visit [BluesHarmonica.com/hohner\\_recordings](https://www.bluesharmonica.com/hohner_recordings). You'll also find a link on this page to register for 30 days free access to BluesHarmonica.com to continue your studies (use access code "*hohnerworkshop*").

Enjoy your class!

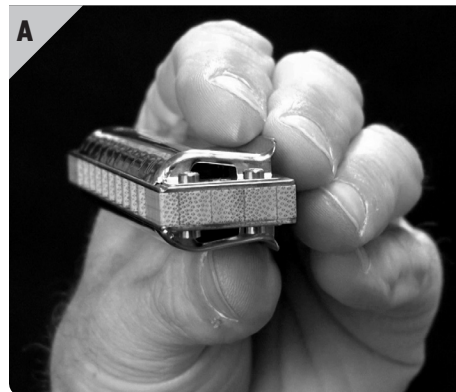
## ABOUT HARMONICA NOTATION

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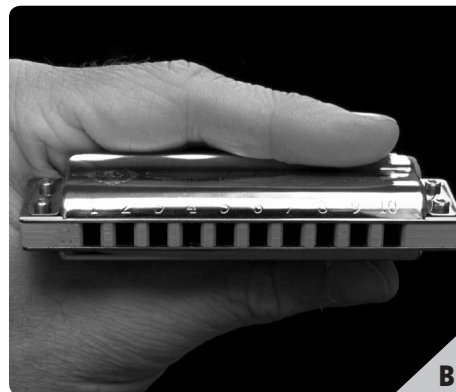
Standard music notation is provided for those that have prior experience reading music. For everyone else you'll focus on reading the provided TAB (tablature), which indicates where to physically play on the harmonica. When a hole number stands by itself you're to inhale (draw). When a hole number is followed by a plus (+) you're to exhale (blow). If you see a stack of hole numbers, it's indicating for you to play multiple holes at the same time.

## HOLDING THE HARMONICA

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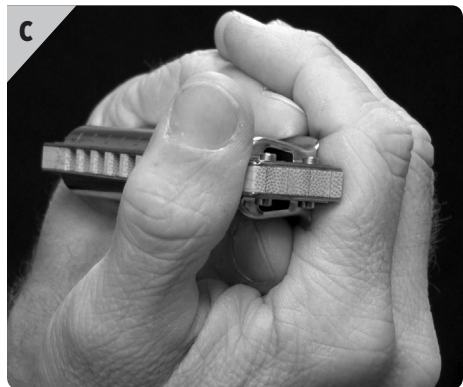


Place the harmonica in your left hand, with your fingers placed as far back on the harmonica as possible. Your thumb and forefinger create the first two contact points of your hold (A). Allow your middle finger to rest behind the harmonica (it will not affect the sound). Your middle finger helps to stop the harmonica from pushing away from you as you play.



If your hands are large, curl your fingers slightly into a C position so that you make room for your right hand to cup the harmonica. The last point of contact is the webbing of your left hand (B). Having the left, back corner of the harmonica nestled into the webbing of your left hand will also help the harmonica to not move away from you as you play.

## HOLDING THE HARMONICA




Place the thumb of your right hand in front of the harmonica (C), somewhere over holes 8, 9 and 10. The thumb will be placed next to your cheek, moving with your cheek to the right as you play towards the upper register of the harmonica and to the left as you play in the lower register. The forefinger of your right hand is placed behind the harmonica, directly behind your thumb.



The cavity created when your hands are closed can be used to create a muted tone (D), a bright tone when open in the back, or what we call a tremolo when the hand is moved rhythmically from the rear, opening and closing the contact between the two hands. Unless you're going for one of these effects, have the back of your hands slightly open all of the time so that the listener can clearly hear what you're playing.

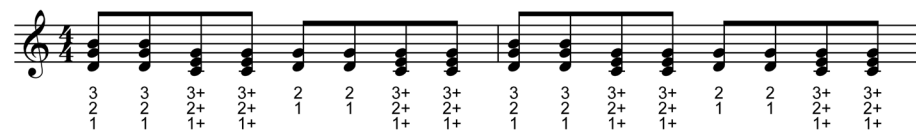
## CHORDING

### Example 1



3 3 4+ 4+ 3 3 4+ 4+ 3 3 4+ 4+ 3 3 4+ 4+  
2 2 3+ 3+ 2 2 3+ 3+ 2 2 3+ 3+ 2 2 3+ 3+  
1 1 2+ 2+ 1 1 2+ 2+ 1 1 2+ 2+ 1 1 2+ 2+

### Example 2



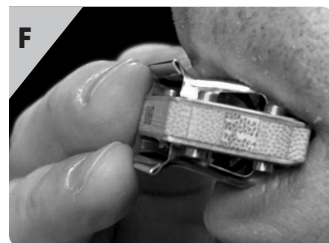
3 3 3+ 3+ 2 2 3+ 3+ 3 3 3+ 3+ 2 2 3+ 3+  
2 2 2+ 2+ 1 1 2+ 2+ 2 2 2+ 2+ 1 1 2+ 2+  
1 1 1+ 1+ 1 1 1+ 1+ 1 1 1+ 1+ 1 1 1+ 1+

### Tips

1. Chording is generally performed on holes 1 through 3, but don't sweat being over the exact notated holes—the rhythm and feel of what you're playing are more important than the notes.
2. Use a light touch with your lips on the face of the harmonica. This insures good tone and that you can move across the range of your harmonica with ease.

## PLAYING A SINGLE NOTE

Place your lips over four holes and angle the face of your harmonica slightly downwards. Open your mouth and present the face of the harmonica to the top of your tongue. Using the top of your tongue, just behind the tip, block the three holes to the left. Your tongue will point slightly to the left in order to block the three holes, but only slightly (angled around 11 o'clock).



### Tips

1. Use a light touch on the face of the harmonica. Any pushing of the lips or tongue will cause soft tissue to squish into adjacent holes, causing airiness, unintentional bending, thin tone and excessive drag as you play the harmonica.
2. Play softly. The goal is to direct warm air (like you're fogging a mirror) through the harmonica, never sucking or blowing.
3. Your mouth cavity is the tone chamber of your harmonica. If you play with an open and relaxed mouth, with the middle and back of your tongue lowered, you're in the position for good tone. A slight yawn approximates this positioning well.
4. If you find yourself having to push the tongue hard onto the face of the harmonica to block the three holes to the left, then use more of the top of your tongue. The more holes you need to block on the harmonica, the more of the top, wider part of your tongue you'll want to use.

## SINGLE NOTE MELODY PLAYING

### Example 3 - Practicing the Single Hole



### Example 4 - Home Sweet Home



### Example 5 - America



We hope you enjoyed this introduction to the harmonica. To continue your studies visit [www.bluesharmonica.com/hohner\\_recordings](http://www.bluesharmonica.com/hohner_recordings) and follow the link to put in the access code "**hohnerworkshop**" for your free month of online lessons.



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