



bluesharmonica.com

# Practice

## Study 5

BluesHarmonica.com Support Material  
Written by David Barrett

### Reminders

- 1) Perspective
  - a) Process, not product... you *will* be able to do it, you just don't know when
- 2) How to Practice
  - a) Listen more, play less (when playing along to the original music you miss details)
  - b) When you use the cycle of "listen once, play once," your mind is practicing in the most efficient manner possible
  - c) When you think you've got it, don't stop listening—you didn't get it all!

### Improvising Practice (Lick Application)

- 1) Chorus Form Work
  - a) AAA (Lick: "Gary's Blues," Bars 2 and 3)
  - b) Af Af At
  - c) A A B
  - d) Af Af B
  - e) A B/A C
    - i) B = Contrast
    - ii) B = Slight Change
    - iii) B = Sequence
  - f) Textures
    - i) Two-note combos, shakes, octaves, slaps, pulls, flutters, wa wa, etc.
  - g) Fragments
  - h) Move up/down an octave

### Other Schedule Items (put it on your calendar)

- 1) Monthly
  - a) Change the key of your pocket harp
  - b) Tip: Change key (custom jam tracks by changing key and speed)
- 2) Bimonthly
  - a) New V-IV-I lick
  - b) New Turnaround
- 3) Every three months
  - a) New ending lick

## Motivation

- 1) LOA
- 2) Concert at home to family
- 3) Rehearsal band (friends, Craigs List, or paid)
- 4) Local jam session (or start your own)
- 5) Throw a party with a band for an especially important milestone

## Performance Preparation Tips

- 1) Play to original recording and then to a jam track
  - a) Bulletproof yourself: Practice to jam tracks of differing feels and tempos (you never know what you're going to get)
- 2) Song Selection
  - a) Songs with common openings, endings, grooves and form (12 Bar Blues)
- 3) Practice like you perform
  - a) Stand
  - b) Play through amp (or at least with a mic in your hand) or in front of mic (or stand-up light without shade)
  - c) Speech
    - i) Groove (listen/learn any important parts)
      - (1) Drums
      - (2) Bass
      - (3) Guitar
    - ii) Key
    - iii) Where in the form the song starts
    - iv) Count in (hear the song in your head BEFORE counting)
  - d) Head nods to soloists
    - i) Stepping forward when your solo starts and stepping back when it's finished is smart
  - e) Turn to band, raise hand, and/or vocal signal
  - f) Raise and lower hand for final note/hit
- 4) When you get lost
  - a) Listen!
    - i) Avoid tunnel vision—be aware of yourself, but not so much so that you close your ears to the band, and you're tracking with them.
  - b) Get back on the turnaround
  - c) Get back on next major chord change
  - d) Look to another musician to solo if you're totally lost

## Recommended Reading

**Mastery** by Robert Greene, Penguin Books (penguin.com), ISBN 978-0143124177 – One of the best books to sum up multiple perspectives (and stories) of what leads one to mastery in a given field.

## Sample Weekly Practice Schedule

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
5m	G Major Pentatonic Scale (Movement Exercises Study 2)	G Major Pentatonic Scale Improv	Repertoire + Acc Jam	G Major Pentatonic Scale (Movement Exercises Study 2)	G Major Pentatonic Scale Improv	Free Day
20m	"My Blues" Bending Study 4	"My Blues" Bending Study 4	+ Music Theory Study 2	"My Blues" Bending Study 4	"My Blues" Bending Study 4	+ Music Theory Study 2
5m	Break	Break		Break	Break	
10m	Solo Harmonica Study 3 (Ex. 2.1, 2.2, or 2.6)	Solo Harmonica Study 3 (Ex. 2.1, 2.2, or 2.6)		Solo Harmonica Study 3 (Ex. 2.1, 2.2, or 2.6)	Solo Harmonica Study 3 (Ex. 2.1, 2.2, or 2.6)	
20m	Chorus Form Work	Accompaniment Study 5		Chorus Form Work	Accompaniment Study 5	

### Additional Helpful Material

- 1) Lessons > [Ear Training Study 2, Figuring out the Position of a Song](#)
- 2) Lessons > [Performance Training Study 1 - Beginnings, Breaks & Endings](#)
- 3) Contributor > [Intermediate Student Ryan Walker](#)