

WHAT TO LEARN ON HARMONICA

(IN ORDER)

Strap in - here's 57 steps that'll take you from hardly a harmonica player, to harmonica boss. I've included the best free resources I can find for every step, so you only have to buy my course as a last resort. 🤪

LEVEL 0 - DUH

✓ Step 1: Buy a Harmonica

- [Which Harmonica to Buy?](#)
 - [Lee Oskar Review](#)
 - [Hohner Special 20 Review](#)
 - Or, if you're strapped for cash: [East Top 008k Review](#)

✓ Step 2: Open the Box 🤪

LEVEL 1 - SUPER NOOB

✓ Step 3: Make it Your Highest Priority to STAY INSPIRED

- I'll give you simple song suggestions below to help with this.

✓ Step 4: Posture

- Stand up or sit up tall, like there's a string pulling up the back of your head.

✓ Step 5: Breathing

- Do it like [this](#): breathe in = belly goes out; breathe out = belly goes in.
- Remember: "Breathe, DON'T Heave." Easy does it. 🙌
- Take a few deep breaths like this before you pick up your harmonica to train your body to RELAX and have fun (which is also the fastest way to mastery!)

✓ Step 6: How to Hold Your Harmonica

- Thoughts on how to hold it [here](#).
- Hole #1 (lowest pitch) on the left.
- Make a "C" shape with your left hand, with your pointer finger extending past your thumb, harmonica snug against webbing. OR just pinch one side.
- For best posture, start with 1-handed method.
- Leave plenty of space at the front of the cover plate for your lips.

☑ Step 7: The Deep Relaxed Mouth Position

- In-depth lesson [here](#).
- Hole #1 (lowest pitch) on the left.
- If you have a Marine Band Deluxe your lip should be covering M. Hohner's nose, and if you have a Lee Oskar your lip should extend into the loop at the top of the cursive "L."

☑ Step 8: Work on Chords (*Not* Single Notes)

- You'll find tons of great songs below that focus on chords (and a bunch more at the end of Level 2 that also don't require single notes. For now, *focus on chords!*)

☑ Step 9: Learn to Play Basic Rhythms - Whole Notes, Half Notes, ¼ Notes, ⅛ Notes

- [Musictheory.net - Note Duration](#)
- [Groove Hack- Learn to Count](#)

☑ Step 10: Read Tabs

- [Tabs 101](#)

PRACTICE SONGS

- [Take a Walk on The Wild Side by Lou Reed Lesson](#) (2nd/3rd video)
- [You Can't Always Get What You Want by the Stones](#)
- Church by Gary Clark Jr.
- [I Want Candy by the StrangeLoves](#)
- [Jamming by Juzzie Smith](#)
- [Doo Wah Diddy by the Manfred Mann Band](#)
- [Dee Dee Who Do He \(Chordal Bluesy Riff\)](#)

LEVEL 2 - HARMONICA HOMEBODY

☑ Step 11: Look Up Slightly

- Reeds choking up? Looking up will help keep saliva running down your throat and not into you harp. Having a glass of water by your side is also a help with this.

☑ Step 12: Develop Your Tone

- For the warmest/darkest tone, whisper "Uh" or "Oo" like "Book", and for the icepick/brightest tone, whisper "Ee". Hear the difference [here](#). Explore this!

✓ Step 13: Learn to Play Double-Stops

- Bring the corners of your mouth slightly closer together in order to play 2 notes instead of 3. There are TONS of songs to learn using double-stops listed below.

✓ Step 14: Equalize Your Lungs

- Lungs overfilling? **Out-gas** - push air out your nose while playing blow notes.
- Running out of air? In-gas - bring air in through your nose while playing draw notes.
- Also, is air escaping without you realizing it? Pinch your nose while playing to confirm.

✓ Step 15: Learn Articulations

- Learn the the harmonica players drumsticks: "Tuh" and "Kuh" as shown [here](#).

✓ Step 16: Practice Rhythms a S***load

- Put on some drums, and do it!

✓ Step 17: Learn the Train

- Learn it [here](#). Practice it daily. Best technique-builder. Period.

✓ Step 18: Learn What Positions Are

- [Keys for Beginners](#)
- [What the heck is a harmonica position?](#)

✓ Step 19: Learn About Time Signatures

- [Musictheory.net - Time Signatures](#)

✓ Step 20: Learn 8th Note Triplets

- [Studybass.com - Eight Note Triplet Explanation](#)
- Learn to count 1-trip-let 2 trip-let 3-trip-let 4-trip-let
- Practice "tuh-kuh-tuh" articulation for playing triplets on harmonica.

✓ Step 21: Learning to Feel Swung 8ths

- [First count triplets, then omit the center.](#)

✓ Step 22: Tremolo & Vibrato

- [My Short Lesson on the 3 Types.](#)
- [Michael Rubin's vid first got me going.](#)

✓ Step 23: Notice Your Progress

- There are no harmonica lessons anywhere telling you to do this, but it's super-important. Record yourself or keep a practice journal so you can look back and see how awesome you've become

PRACTICE SONGS

- [Piano Man by Billy Joel](#)
- [Lean on Me by Bill Withers](#)
- [Mary Had a Little Lamb](#)
- [Mary Janes Last Dance by Tom Petty](#)
- [Hoochie Coochie Man by Muddy Waters](#)
- [Back at the Chicken Shack by Jimmy Smith](#)
- [You Gotta Move by The Rolling Stones](#)
- [Blowin' in the Wind by Bob Dylan](#)
- [Sonny Terry Chording](#)
- [3 Simple Blues Riffs](#)
- [Hallelujah](#)

LEVEL 3 - HARMONICA TRAINEE

✓ Step 24: Learn Single Notes

- [How to Play Single Notes for Beginners](#)

✓ Step 25: Learn to Play the -2 and -3 IN TUNE

- Review [this](#).

✓ Step 26: Learn the 2nd Position "Almost" Blues Scale

- ["Almost" Blues Scale](#)

✓ Step 27: Learn to Play Shakes Through a Blues Form

- [Blues For Beginners](#) will teach you the form and the -45 shake
- Play the -34 shake over the I chord, the 45 over the IV, and -45 over the V
- Note you will need to outgas using the "nose push" when playing over the IV chord

✓ Step 28: Learn the 1st Position Major Scale

- [Major Scale Lesson](#)

✓ Step 29: Learn Intervals

- [Musictheory.net - Generic Intervals](#)
- [Musictheory.net - Specific Intervals](#)
- [Harmonica Scales for Beginners](#)

✓ Step 30: Learn Chords & Arpeggios

- [Chords for Beginners](#)
- [2nd position arpeggios for I, IV, and V](#)

✓ Step 31: Learn the Minor Pentatonic Scale (3rd & 4th Position)

- 3rd Position ascending is -4 -5 6 -6 7 -8, and descending -8 7 -6 6 -5 -4
- 4th Position ascending -6 7 -8 8 9 -10 and descending -10 9 8 -8 7 -6 6 5 -4 4 and back up to where we started -4 5 6 -6

✓ Step 32: Learn Songs that Fit Within Each Scale

- For 1st Position Major scale, [Mr. Tambourine Man](#) is a great one. In my course we do [You Are My Sunshine](#), Stay With Me, Every Breath You Take, [Dirty Old Town](#), [Joy to the World](#), Simple Gifts, La Bamba, and [Hallelujah](#) to name a few.
- For 3rd Position, in my course we do Layla, La Grange, Rolling in the Deep, [Minnie the Moocher](#), I Shot the Sheriff, and Smoke on the Water.
- For 4th Position, in my course we do [Stairway to Heaven](#) and Summertime. Summertime plays great in 4th or 3rd position.

✓ Step 33: Listen to Me Plug My [B2B Course](#).

- Sorry this one was fake. Plug incoming at the end of the pdf.

✓ Step 34: Syncopation - Emphasizing Notes that are Off the Beat

- [Love Me Do](#) is a great example with the offbeat -2's at the end

✓ Step 35: Making Big Skips

- [Happy Birthday](#) is a great one for this.
- [Star Wars](#) is also great.

✓ Step 36: Learn Blues Licks You Can Play Without Bending

- [The First 6 of These.](#)
- [These 3.](#)
- [And this stuff.](#)

PRACTICE SONGS

- [Love Me Do by the Beatles](#)
- [Heart of Gold by Neil Young](#)
- [Take Me Home, Country Roads by John Denver](#)
- [Amazing Grace](#) (12th position)
- [Sweet Virginia by the Rolling Stones](#)
- [10 Songs that Taught Me Harmonica](#)
- [Going Back South by Dr. Ross](#)

LEVEL 4 - HARMONICA BOSS

☒ **Step 37: Learn to Bend Notes**

- [How to Bend Notes on Harmonica](#)

☒ **Step 38: Learn to Play Splits**

- [How to Play Splits.](#)
- [The Tongue Block Trainer](#) can help if you're having a hard time.

☒ **Step 39: Learn Tongue-Blocking**

- [How to Tongue Block](#)

☒ **Step 40: Learn the Fox Chase**

- [Fox Chase Lesson](#)

☒ **Step 41: Practice Tongue Slapping**

- [How to do the Tongue Slap](#)
- [More info on the Tongue Slap](#)

☒ **Step 42: Experiment With the Split Shake**

- Play a Split, then alternate so you alternatively hear the high and low note. Played dirty, this is often called a "shimmer" or a "tongue shake." There don't seem to be any YT videos illustrating this aside from the video you got this pdf from.

☒ **Step 43: Spice it Up With the Shimmer**

- A.k.a "dirty split shake" you'll add style points with [this technique](#).

☑ Step 44: Add Ghost Chording

- [Play 'em quiet.](#)
- [You can also play them without a melody.](#)

☑ Step 45: Use the Metronome Like a Pro.

- [Pro move here.](#)

☑ Step 46: Learn Utility Scales in 2nd Position.

- Minor pentatonic scale -2 -3' 4 -4 -5 6 ascending, and descending 6 -5 -4 4 -3' -2 -2" -1 1, and going back up -1 -2" -2
- Major pentatonic -2 -3" -3 -4 5 6 -6 -7 -8 8 9 -10 10' ascending, and descending 10' -10 9 8 -8 -7 -6 6 5 -4 -3 -3" -2 2 -1 and back up 2 -2
- And the Blues Scale -2 -3' 4 -4' -4 -5 6 ascending, and descending 6 -5 -4 -4' 4 -3' -2 -2" -1 -1' 1 and back up -1' -1 -2" -2. You also have a few notes at the top 9 10" 10 ascending, and descending 10" 9 -9 -8 7 -8 -9 9.

PRACTICE SONGS

- [Roadhouse Blues by the Doors](#)
- Spoonful by Howlin' Wolf
- Smoke on the Water by Deep Purple
- [8 Beatles Songs](#)
- [5 Rolling Stones Songs](#)
- Songs #29-40 in [First 50 Songs on Harmonica.](#)
- [10 Songs that Taught Me Blues](#)

LEVEL 5 - BIG BOSS & BEYOND

☑ Step 47: Practice Good Notation on the 8 Draw Bends & 4 Blow Bends

- You can use the [Bend It Better tool](#) some to help you with this, but ultimately you want to train your EARS, not your EYES. So it's best to use the tool to play the pitches, or just use a piano or piano app.
- Playing along with [a drone tone](#) can also be fun when working on this.

☑ **Step 48: Sonny Terry Whootin'**

- If you think this would be a great "broken string" song, check out Joe Filisko's resource, "Chasin' Lost Sonny." Excellent breathing workout.

☑ **Step 49: Learn How to Play the 4 Overblows and 4 Overdraws.**

- Spend a S***load of money on a Joe Spiers custom harmonica.
- Start with 6 overblow. Play your -6' and then reverse your air direction. Think "a Cu" as in "cucumber."

☑ **Step 50: Learn What Key You Harp for 2nd, 3rd, and 4th, 5th, and 12th.**

- On the Circle of 5ths Chart start with you key harp, move one section clockwise to find key for 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th. For 12th, aka "First Flat Position", move one space to the left from the key harp

☑ **Step 51: Learn How to Play Arpeggios**

- [Start with 3rds, then go do triads.](#)

☑ **Step 52: Explore Alternate-Tuned Harps**

- [Parrott-Tuned harmonica.](#)
- Natural Minor is [good for playing chords.](#)
- [Harmonic Minor](#) is less common, but lots of fun.
- And the so-called [Country-Tuned harp.](#)

☑ **Step 53: Learn the Modes**

- The most important ones for harmonica players are [Dorian](#), [Mixolydian](#), and Aeolian which is more commonly called "Natural Minor", and they correspond most naturally to 3rd, 2nd, and [4th position](#) respectively.

☑ **Step 54: Advanced Ear-Training**

- Two words: [EarMaster Software](#). 5m/Day will change your life.

☑ **Step 55: Advanced Rhythm and Phrasing**

- Grouping 8th notes in 3's
- Grouping triplets in 4's

☑ **Step 56: Get Amplified**

- [Lots of good mics](#) like the Hohner HB-52 or the Bulletini. My favorite is the Jason Ricci.
- Amps is a whole thing. [Start here.](#)
- Questions? Just make a post on the [forum](#).

☑ Step 57: Scale Fluency

- 2nd Position Blues Scale Tabs -2 -3' 4 -4' -4 -5 6 6o -7 -7o -8 -9 9 10" 10 -10o
- 3rd Position Blues Scale Tabs 1 -2" 3 -3'" -3" 4 -4 -5 6 -6' -6 7 -8 -9 9 -9o -10 10
- 1st Position Blues Scale Tabs 1 1o -2" -2' -2 -3' 4 4o -5 5o 6 6o



That is a lot of stuff to learn. You might be able to do it on your own...
but it'll be way easier and more fun if you have the right support.

My [Beginner to Boss](#) course will take you all the way through Level 4,
and you won't have to figure out what to practice or how much to practice -
just keep showing up for your lessons until you become a **Harmonica Boss**.

[CLICK HERE TO CHECK IT OUT](#)