

Blues Form

The basic blues form uses three chords over 12 bars:

E7	E7	E7	E7	A7	A7	E7	E7	B7	A7	E7	B7
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Each bar has four beats: ////

The last four bars are called the Turnaround – many options exist for the Turnaround.

Scales for soloing:

1. Either use the one blues scale over the entire form (in the above key, E blues scale)
2. Use a different mixolydian mode for each chord (in the above key: E mixolydian; A mixolydian; B mixolydian)
3. Use E Blues scale over the E7 and A7 chords and B Blues scale over the B7 chord

There are more advanced concepts for the blues, but they can be viewed as jazz studies.

However, many blues do not conform to the above basic outline, but the principle remains the same: one blues scale or different mixolydian modes.

One common alternative is to use the A7 chord in bar two. This breaks up the monotony of four bars of just E7:

E7	A7	E7	E7	A7	A7	E7	E7	B7	A7	E7	B7
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You should try to play the blues in all keys, but especially the following: E A D G C F Bb

Also mix in arpeggios, e.g. E7 arpeggio (E G# B D) over the E7 chord. Note that it contains the note G# which the E Blues scale does not (E G A A# B D). This clash is known as the blues third, because the third note of the scale could be either major or minor. You can even play both at the same time for a typical blues crunch.