



# CHICAGO BLUES HARMONICA - 1A

LEVEL I - CLASS #1 - 1/11/15

**YOU WILL NEED** – a 10 hole diatonic (4 inch/10mm size) in the key of “C”  
– 2 lips, your tongue, at least one hand and a lung.

**YOU SHOULD HAVE** – an audio recording device and a folder for your handouts.  
– 15 minutes of practicing and/or listening time each day.  
– time set aside each week to show up for class.  
– another harmonica in the key of “G” or “D” to be used later in the session.

**YOU DO NOT NEED** – any previous knowledge or experience with music, blues, or the harmonica.

**YOU WILL GET** – the ability to successfully play some blues in the Big Toned sound of the Chicago Blues tradition. If you can breathe, you can play the harmonica! If you can breathe with rhythm, you can play music on it. If you can inhale with some control you WILL be playing the blues! You are also being well prepared to continue your studies in the level II class should you continue.

## BASIC RULES & GUIDELINES

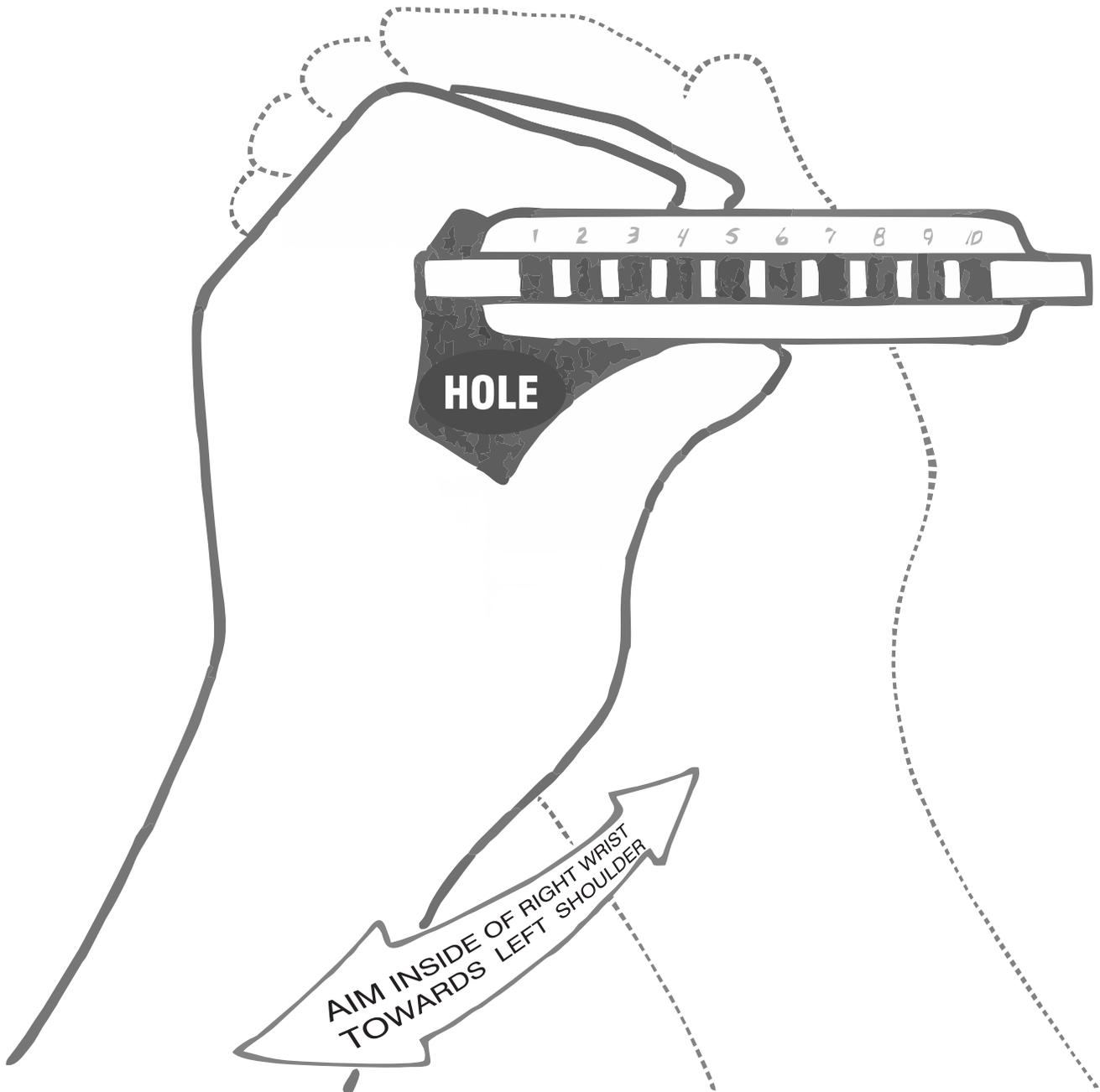
1. Always rinse your mouth out with water before playing if you have recently been eating or drinking.
2. Always try and warm up your harp to body temperature to reduce condensation and moisture buildup.
3. Be mindful of your posture! Do not slouch your head or scrunch up your shoulders. You will need to raise the harp to your mouth and NOT drop your mouth to the harp. Practice in front of a mirror and try and NOT direct your sound downwards! Playing with a proper posture will help you to be more relaxed. Try and imitate the posture that singers use. Singers don't slouch and neither should you!
4. Stay relaxed and breathe through the harp. Think inhaling & exhaling and not sucking and blowing.
5. It is very important that your listening skills develop along with your playing skills. You need to be able to hear the differences in how these exercises can be played. You do not want to spend your valuable practice time playing something incorrectly and become used to hearing it that way in your head. This can very well result in memorizing bad habits that may result in you being farther away from your playing goals. Be sure to listen to your recordings of it done correctly often!
6. Blues rule #1 is restrict yourself to the lower half of the harp, *holes 1-6*. #2 is, When in doubt, Inhale!
7. Always tap your harmonica against your hand or knee after playing to remove loose moisture and wipe it off before returning it to your case. Moisture and dirt are your harmonicas enemies!
8. You can find the most current info and more details in the “Learning Guides” at [FiliskoStore.com](http://FiliskoStore.com).

# CHICAGO BLUES HARMONICA - 1B

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## POSITIONING OF HAND(S)

1. You will be best off holding the harmonica with its numbers facing up in your left hand as shown below. Please note the angle of the index finger and the large hole of space between it and the thumb. This hole allows for the left hand wrist to be held in a more natural position and will minimize the tendency for you to tilt your head to the left. Your playing posture will look and feel more natural and relaxed. Check in a mirror.
2. When using the hand tremolo you will need to bring up the right hand. Wavering the fingers will give you the tremolo effect but you can move the hand at the wrist or the entire arm for maximum effect. It will take some practice bringing the hand together fairly tightly. They are like two halves of a coconut shell. When you are not using the tremolo effect you are better off dropping the right arm enabling you to relax more effectively. Remember that the harmonica is NOT heavy. You DO NOT need both arms to prop it up to your mouth. If you are not using your right hand skillfully, don't use it at all!



# CHICAGO BLUES HARMONICA - 1C

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## TRAIN RHYTHM

The train imitation is the most important exercise that you can do to expedite the advancement of your playing by way of more relaxed and controlled breathing along with developing a bigger tone and more rhythmical accuracy and awareness. The whistle is always inhaling around holes 3, 4 & 5 and precision is not required.

While you are breathing [R], the rhythm on holes 1 & 2 (3), shape your mouth as though you were saying "Huh - Huh - Who - Who", and practice this with the most wide open mouth cavity as possible. It is best to practice this with the side to side "sway" to take maximum advantage of its benefits and minimize any rhythmical glitches and inconsistencies. The goal is to never break the rhythm of the train, especially when adding the whistle in the middle. The Rhythm should rule and be sacred! First gear is a chord for each sideways sway while second gear is two chords per each sway and third gear is 4 chords per sway but always keep the 2 inhale 2 exhale pattern.

