

CHICAGO BLUES HARMONICA - 2A

LEVEL I - CLASS #2 - 1/11/15

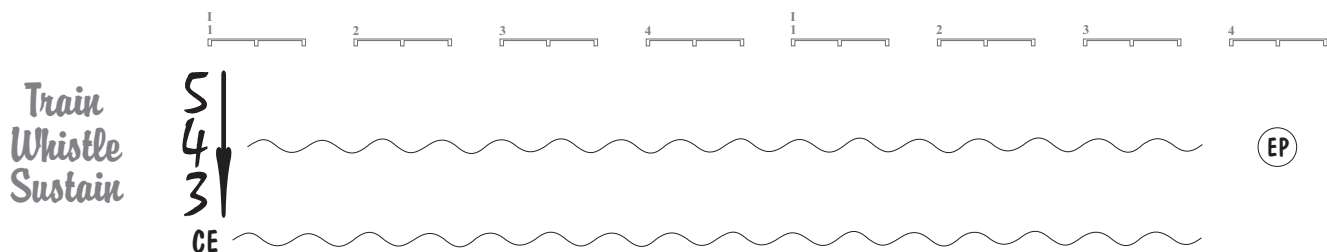
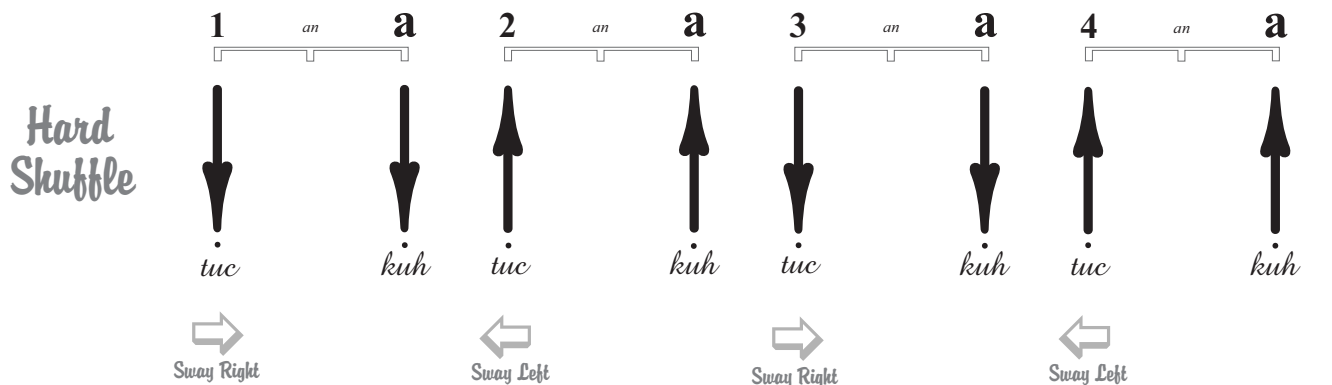
SHUFFLE RHYTHM

The shuffle rhythm is the rhythm of the heartbeat. It is derived from the triplet, 1 an a 2 an a 3 an a 4 an a. The groove will begin to happen when you play the first and last notes only, 1 an **a** 2 an **a** 3 an **a**, etc. Just be sure that the three notes of the triplet are evenly spaced! It is almost exactly like the train rhythm except the first chord sound has more space after it than the second. Articulate “tucka” like this: “tuc - - - kuh, tuc - - - kuh, tuc - - - kuh, in the shuffle rhythm with your tongue while breathing this. This is done on holes 1 & 2 (3) with a crisp attack and NO sustain. This chording is called the Hard Shuffle.

Other guidelines for this are to only exhale on the second and fourth beats of each measure. The first and third beats are inhaling and remember that if you are in doubt, INHALE! Better to only inhale than exhale at the wrong time. This played on a “C” harp will put you in the key of “G” which happens to be the inhaling chord.

Begin to try and incorporate the “sway”. Sway right on the first and third beats and left for the second and fourth. You want to almost be slightly dancing in your seat or on your feet while playing this.

Using the Train Whistle for creating a sustained droning bluesy Chordal Effect (CE) is essential in Chicago Blues. In addition to the “hand tremolo” and “throat tremolo”, now add the “Shake” and “Tongue Shake”. You will also need to count the two bars in your head AND get rid of the air. The act of pushing out that air is called the Exhale Push (EP). Trick is to control the flow of the air coming back in and not suck it in quickly. DO NOT BREATHE IN THROUGH YOUR NOSE! Count out the two bars in your head and push that air on the fourth beat of the second bar. Don’t blow it in the harp! This is the opposite way of breathing used when you sing or play other wind instruments.



< CE = Throat Tremolo, Hand Tremolo, Shake, Tongue Shake >

CHICAGO BLUES HARMONICA - 3A

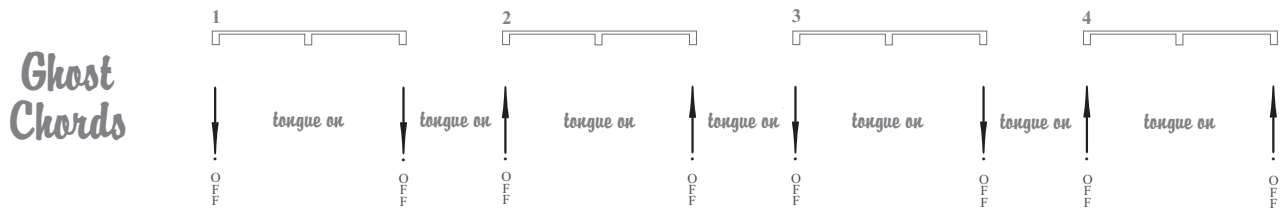
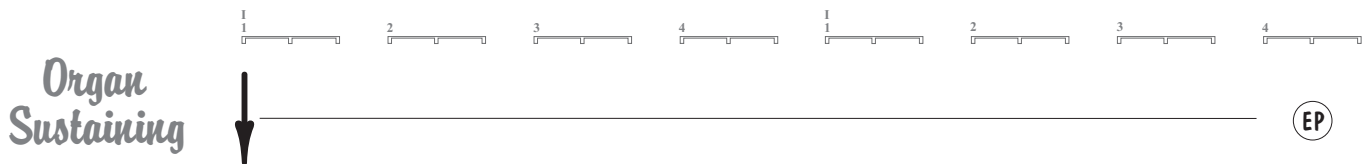
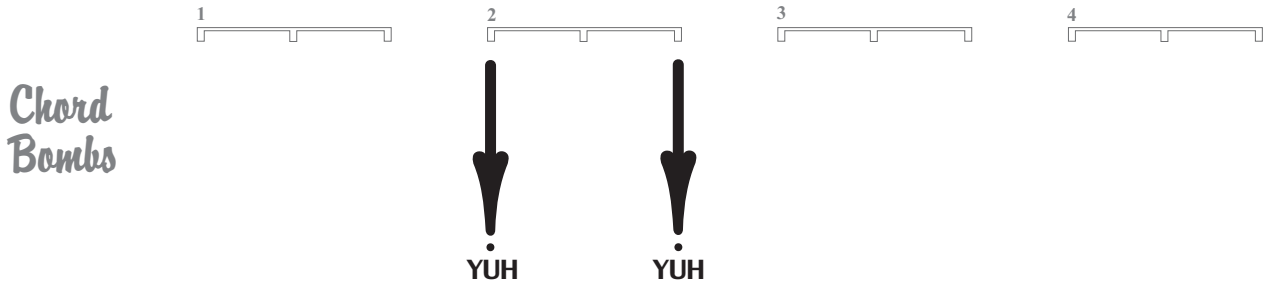
LEVEL I - CLASS #3 - 1/11/15

CHORD BOMBS - ORGAN SUSTAINING - GHOST CHORDS

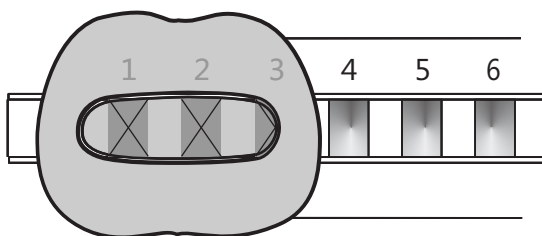
CHORD BOMBS are about the loudest you should be playing. They are like a horn section stabbing out some harmonies. Always play on holes 1 & 2 (3) and be careful to not play the chords out of tune. They sound best in blues when played in the shuffle rhythm on the second beat. Careful to not rush the second chord!

ORGAN SUSTAINING is thinking of the harp as a mouth organ or accordion. Sustaining the low chords with no sharp edges or rhythmical hiccups can be quite tricky. Please use the exhale push (EP).

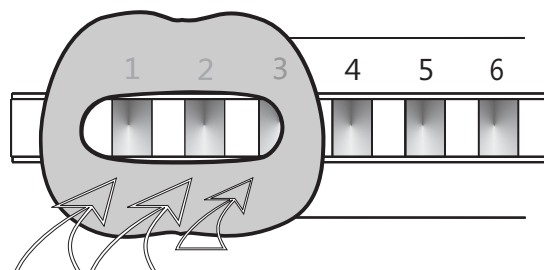
GHOST CHORDING is almost exactly like the Hard Shuffle Chording except you do it with your tongue actually spending most of the time touching the harp comb and thus blocking all the lower holes. The tongue only comes off to let the chord sound. The other difference is that this is done very quietly with a breathy and spitty sound. Your breathe escaping is actually part of the effect. In an ensemble situation this may not be loud enough **BUT** it is an extremely powerful tool to train your tongue for optimum blues shuffle performance. Be careful when committing this to memory. It is easy to play it backwards and not keep your tongue mostly on the harp. Be sure that there is no sustain after hearing the chord. No ringing notes!



FULL BLOCK (no sound)



TONGUE OFF (chord)



CHICAGO BLUES HARMONICA - 4A

LEVEL I - CLASS #4 - 1/31/15

TONGUE BLOCKING - CLEAN SINGLE NOTES

The best way to play single notes in the traditional Chicago blues style is using the tongue blocking method. This is the method that most of the blues masters used most of the time. Blocking will give you the biggest possible and most professional blues sound out of your harmonica and allow you to play to the strengths of the instrument in the easiest possible way. What fingers are to a guitar player and piano player is what the tongue is to the harmonica player. I have found that the single most challenging thing about learning tongue blocking is getting past NOT actually being able to see your tongue. If this technique seems hard to you, please look into making or purchasing a Filisko Tongue Block Trainer, TBT at FiliskoStore.com. I have found it MUCH easier to learn that what is generally thought.

Place the first 3 holes of the harmonica into your mouth and use your tongue to cover holes #1 and #2 leaving hole #3 uncovered to sound. Move up (to the right) to play hole #4 and higher and move down (to the left) to play hole #2. The best way to play hole #1 is to switch your tongue to the other side of your mouth. Try and not move your jaw or move it as little as possible!

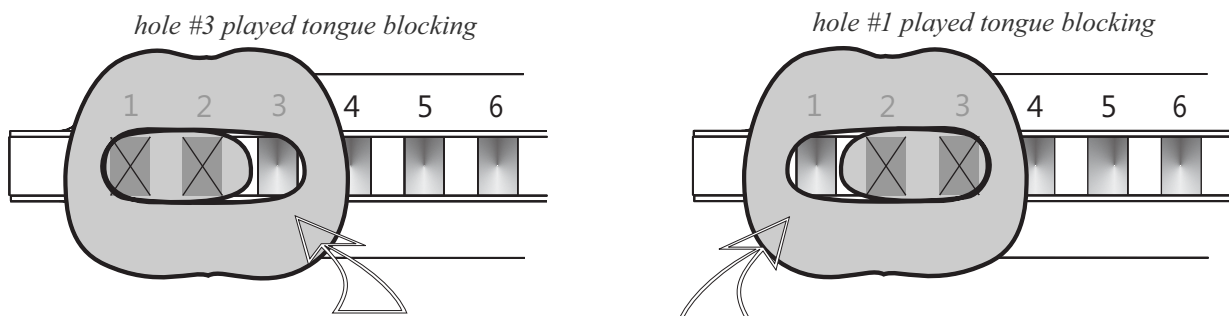
You may find that other surrounding notes are sounding in addition to the hole that you want to hear. This is perfectly all right and is to be expected. It may easily take you a number of weeks to train your tongue to go where it should and to train your ear to let you know if it sounds as clean as it could. Your immediate goal should be to have the note that you are trying to play be the dominant sounding note in the cluster of sound and have the rhythm and groove be as solid as possible.

Becoming comfortable using the blocking method will benefit you immensely in the level II, III & IV classes.

If you happen to find that saliva is building up in your harmonica, you may want to be mindful of your posture and be sure to not slouch. Saliva is not immune to the laws of gravity and will drain into your instrument if you are leaning forward. Another remedy for this is to place your music up higher so that you actually have to slightly lean back to see it when you are playing and practicing.

Please note that blocking is NOT used when you are playing chords. Chords are generally what you hear when you take your tongue off the harmonica and allow all the holes to sound. Chords are generally notated as an arrow with no numbers next to it. Single notes are notated by a arrow with a hole number to side of it. The exception to this is the Train Whistle chord.

Other methods for obtaining single notes are known as lip puckering, lip curling, and tongue curling. While these methods do have value for eventually learning, they do not have as many advantages for playing the big toned traditional Chicago style of blues.



CHICAGO BLUES HARMONICA - 4B

LEVEL I - CLASS #4 - 1/10/15

CLEAN SINGLE NOTE 1 BAR PHRASES

a
JR skuffle

b
BW boogie 1

c
boogie

d
BW boogie 2

e
Box skuffle

f
HC Man

g
JR skuffle