

BLUES IN A: FROM WARM-UP TO IMPROVISATION IN 10 SHEETS

The sequel to the Blues in E pack, in the key of A

A 10-sheet path, entirely in A, to go from warming up to improvising over the 12-bar blues progression (A7, D7, E7).

10 sheets · level 1 to 3 · at your own pace

Layout optimised for 7-inch e-readers (Kobo, Kindle, Boox...), also easy to read on phones and tablets.

WHY THIS PACK

This guide follows the logic of the Blues in E pack, in the key of A: the same 12-bar progression (A7, D7, E7) and the same minor pentatonic scale in position 1, shifted up five frets, at fret 5 instead of the open strings. Staying in a single key from start to finish avoids spreading yourself thin: one progression, one scale, and every sheet builds on them. The move from E to A is instructive too: the three chords A7, D7 and E7 are played in open position, while the scale climbs to fret 5 — the scale follows the key, not the position of the chords. The order is deliberate: we loosen the hand, set up the progression (rhythm, changes, palm), learn the scale and a riff, then finish with an ending lick, arpeggios and improvisation. The classic trap is improvising before the progression is secure: here, it comes first.

THE 10-SHEET PATH

01 Warm-up — chromatic run on the A string

LEVEL 1 · POP

Loosen the fingers on the A string before playing, in the key of the guide.

02 Blues in A (12 bars) — strumming pattern

LEVEL 1 · BLUES

Lay down a steady strum over the 12 bars of the progression, without looking for nuance yet.

03 Blues in A (12 bars) — chord change

LEVEL 2 · BLUES

The real A7, D7, E7 chord changes: fluency before speed.

04 Blues in A (12 bars) — muted strums

LEVEL 2 · BLUES

Move to percussive strumming: the palm mutes, the progression stays the same.

05 A minor pentatonic scale — position 1

LEVEL 3 · ROCK

Position 1 of the A minor pentatonic, at fret 5: the same shape as the E version.

06 A minor pentatonic scale — working the descent

LEVEL 2 · ROCK

Play the scale only on the way down, so you no longer depend on the ascent.

07 Full round trip riff — A minor

LEVEL 3 · BLUES

A complete riff that runs through the whole of position 1, in eighth notes.

08 Ending lick — A minor

LEVEL 2 · BLUES

A short closing phrase that lands twice on the root, A.

09 Blues in A (12 bars) — arpeggios

LEVEL 3 · BLUES

Pick A7, D7, E7 note by note: precision for the picking hand.

10 Improvisation — blues in A

LEVEL 3 · BLUES

Improvise over the progression with the scale you have practised: same root from start to finish.

SUGGESTED PRACTICE PLAN

Week 1 — Warm-up and progression (sheets 1 and 2)

Loosen the fingers on the A string, then lay down a steady strum over the 12 bars, without looking for nuance yet.

Week 2 — Changes and palm (sheets 3 and 4)

The real A7-D7-E7 changes, then the same progression as muted strums: fluency comes before speed.

Week 3 — Scale and riff (sheets 5 to 7)

Position 1 of the A minor pentatonic at fret 5, its descent on its own, then a riff that runs through the whole scale.

Week 4 — Lick, arpeggios, improvisation (sheets 8 to 10)

An ending lick to close a phrase, the progression as arpeggios, then free improvisation over the 12 bars.

01 · WARM-UP — CHROMATIC RUN ON THE A STRING

Level 1

Pop

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/warmup-chromatic-a-string>

ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Loosen the fingers on the A string before playing, in the key of the guide.

GUIDE TIP

Do three minutes of the 1-2-3-4 pattern at a slow tempo: the warm-up is first about settling an even pick stroke, not about speed.

The same 1-2-3-4 chromatic pattern as on the low E string, moved to the A string: a good complement so the fretting hand doesn't get used to a single string.

TIPS

Compare the feel with the low E string: the A string is slightly thinner, you should notice a difference in tension under your fingers.

TABLATURE

e		
B		
G		
D		
A	1 2 3 4 4 3 2 1	1 2 3 4 4 3 2 1
E		

02 · BLUES IN A (12 BARS) — STRUMMING PATTERN

Level 1

Blues

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/a-blues-rhythm>

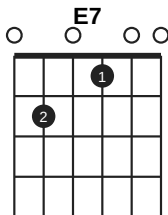
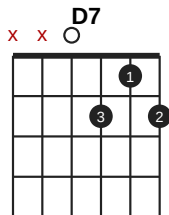
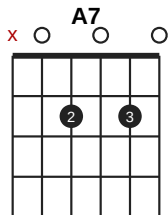
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Lay down a steady strum over the 12 bars of the progression, without looking for nuance yet.

GUIDE TIP

Sing or name the chord (A, D, E) at each change: hearing where you are in the 12 bars beats counting them.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	I	I	I	IV	IV	I	I	V	IV	I	V
A7	A7	A7	A7	D7	D7	A7	A7	E7	D7	A7	E7

A strumming pattern applied to the A7, D7, E7 progression, to build right-hand consistency independently of the chord changes.

TIPS

Isolate the strumming pattern on a single held chord first, before applying it across the full progression.

03 · BLUES IN A (12 BARS) — CHORD CHANGE

Level 2

Blues

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/a-blues-chord-change>

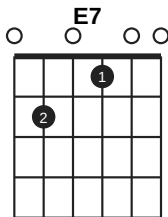
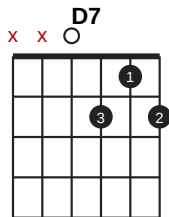
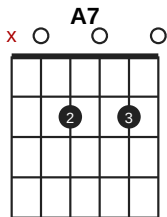
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

The real A7, D7, E7 chord changes: fluency before speed.

GUIDE TIP

Notice that from bar 9 to bar 12 the progression changes every bar: that is where the fretting hand really works.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	I	I	I	IV	IV	I	I	V	IV	I	V
A7	A7	A7	A7	D7	D7	A7	A7	E7	D7	A7	E7

Practice switching between A7, D7, E7 in this Blues progression. Focus on smooth transitions between chords rather than speed.

TIPS

Play each chord for several beats before switching, and only speed up once the transitions feel clean.

04 · BLUES IN A (12 BARS) — MUTED STRUMS

Level 2

Blues

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/a-blues-muted-strums>

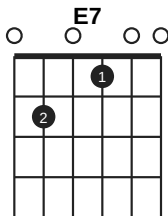
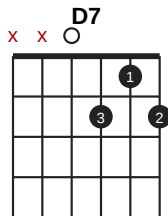
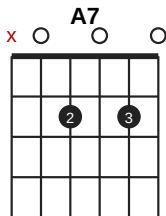
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Move to percussive strumming: the palm mutes, the progression stays the same.

GUIDE TIP

Alternate one muted pass and one fully ringing pass of the progression: the difference in colour teaches you how much palm pressure to use.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	I	I	I	IV	IV	I	I	V	IV	I	V
A7	A7	A7	A7	D7	D7	A7	A7	E7	D7	A7	E7

The A7, D7, E7 progression played with the picking hand's palm resting on the strings right in front of the bridge: a short, percussive sound instead of a chord ringing out fully.

TIPS

Ease off the palm pressure to dial in the muting: press too hard and no pitch comes through at all.

05 · A MINOR PENTATONIC SCALE — POSITION 1

Level 3

Rock

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/a-minor-pentatonic-position-1>

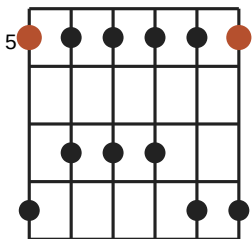
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Position 1 of the A minor pentatonic, at fret 5: the same shape as the E version.

GUIDE TIP

Compare with the E version: what you learned on open strings is found again at fret 5, the fingering does not change.

FRETBOARD POSITION



Pentatonique La mineur — pos. 1

Position 1 of the A minor pentatonic scale, widely used in rock, played around the 5th fret using the same fingering shape as the E minor version (shifted up 5 frets).

TIPS

Once position 1 feels comfortable, try adding a few string bends on the second string for a more expressive sound.

06 · A MINOR PENTATONIC SCALE — WORKING THE DESCENT

Level 2

Rock

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/a-minor-pentatonic-descent>

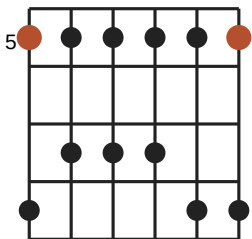
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Play the scale only on the way down, so you no longer depend on the ascent.

GUIDE TIP

Sing a descending phrase, then find it on the neck: the descent becomes a chosen path, not just an automatic return.

FRETBOARD POSITION



Pentatonique La mineur — pos. 1

Same position 1 of the A minor pentatonic scale as the initiation sheet, but worked exclusively in the descending direction.

TIPS

Repeat only the descending direction several times before connecting ascent and descent: the muscle memory for descending builds up separately from ascending.

07 · FULL ROUND TRIP RIFF — A MINOR

Level 3

Blues

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/riff-a-full-round-trip>

ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

A complete riff that runs through the whole of position 1, in eighth notes.

GUIDE TIP

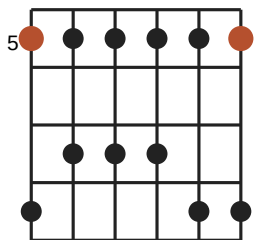
Loop a few bars of A7, then play the riff over it: hearing the scale against its chord puts the root in your ear.

Across position 1 of the A minor pentatonic box, in eighth notes: the first two bars climb up to the octave then come back down, the next two reverse the trip (descend first, then climb back partway).

TIPS

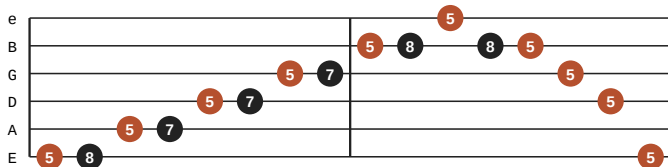
Once the riff feels stable, add a slow metronome and increase it in steps of 5 to 10 BPM, without ever sacrificing steadiness.

FRETBOARD POSITION



Pentatonique La mineur — pos. 1

TABLATURE



08 · ENDING LICK — A MINOR

Level 2

Blues

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/ending-lick-a>

ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

A short closing phrase that lands twice on the root, A.

GUIDE TIP

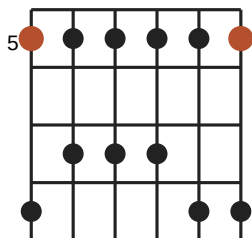
End each pass of the progression from sheets 2 to 4 with this lick: an ending is practised over the chords, not only on its own.

A short, conclusive one-bar phrase that descends from the octave down to landing twice on the A root: built to end a riff or solo, not to be looped.

TIPS

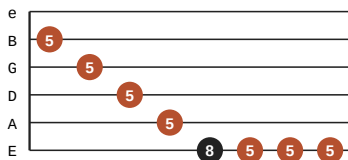
Practice it alone on a loop first until it feels secure, then play it right after an existing riff or improvisation in the same key to hear it as a real closing phrase.

FRETBOARD POSITION



Pentatonique La mineur — pos. 1

TABLATURE



09 · BLUES IN A (12 BARS) — ARPEGGIOS

Level 3

Blues

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/a-blues-arpeggios>

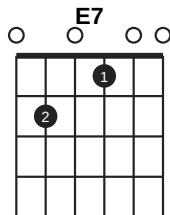
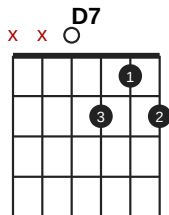
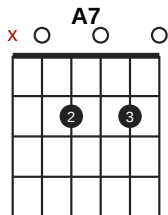
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Pick A7, D7, E7 note by note: precision for the picking hand.

GUIDE TIP

Compare with the strumming of sheet 2: the same chords, but every note is audible, and a muffled string stands out immediately.

CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	I	I	I	IV	IV	I	I	V	IV	I	V
A7	A7	A7	A7	D7	D7	A7	A7	E7	D7	A7	E7

The A7, D7, E7 progression played as arpeggios: each chord is picked note by note instead of strummed, to build picking-hand precision.

TIPS

Slow down until every note rings clearly before increasing the tempo.

10 · IMPROVISATION — BLUES IN A

Level 3

Blues

~85 BPM

Online sheet: <https://guitarshelf.com/en/fiche/improvisation-blues-a>

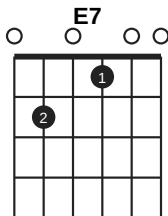
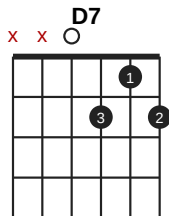
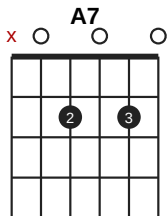
ITS PLACE IN THE PATH

Improvise over the progression with the scale you have practised: same root from start to finish.

GUIDE TIP

Start by playing only the root (A) and one other note, then add one note on each pass of the progression: the constraint gives the improvisation a structure.

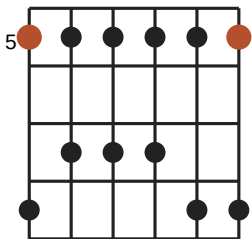
CHORDS



CHORD PROGRESSION

I	I	I	I	IV	IV	I	I	V	IV	I	V
A7	A7	A7	A7	D7	D7	A7	A7	E7	D7	A7	E7

FRETBOARD POSITION



Pentatonique La mineur — pos. 1

The A minor pentatonic scale (position 1) works over this entire A blues grid (A7-D7-E7): the same root throughout, just like the E version.

TIPS

If you've already worked through the E blues improvisation, it's the exact same principle shifted 5 frets: let the A root guide your phrases, especially on the moves to D7 and E7.

HOW TO USE IT

1. Print the sheets in order, or keep them as a PDF on a tablet near your guitar.
2. One sheet per session is enough: better to replay it for several days than run through all ten at once.
3. Note the date and the tempo reached on the back of each sheet: playing is refined by ear, but progress is measured with a metronome.
4. Once you've gone through all the sheets, the same path exists in other keys on the site to transpose what you've learned.

WHAT IS GUITARSHelf

Guitarshelf is a guitar exercise sheet site, free and with no account to create:

- A catalogue of sheets sorted by style, level (1 to 6) and exercise type (grid, riff, scale, technique...).
- A generator that creates a brand-new exercise sheet on demand, based on chosen criteria.
- A glossary and gear guides to understand the vocabulary and upkeep of the instrument.
- A personal songbook: build your own selection of sheets and export it as a PDF, like this one.

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