

# Bass Fundamentals

## Column #12 – Blues Pt. 2

In Part 1 on playing Blues, you were introduced to the basic Blues progression, and a few variations on the construction of the core bass part to play the vaunted I - IV - V. We continue in the key of G, for consistency and simplicity. You are encouraged to move into all 12 keys with this material, so you will be comfortable no matter where you are playing on the fret board.

One of the trickiest aspects of a good Blues progression is the "turnaround". The turnaround can make or break a song, literally. It is also one of the places you can create a "signature" component in your style. A turnaround is simply how you will end the progression and get back to the beginning. And there are many ways to do this. We don't need to repeat what you've already done, what you have already played in Part One. That approach is a kind of "brick wall" approach, where you play the same pattern for all positions.

To keep things simple, we'll use the 12 bar progression structure in Part One.

The first example is basically a "walk up" to the V, with a little quick repeat of the last few notes of the climb to finish the progression and set up returning to the I chord to start the progression again. We start in Measure 11 in the I position and walk up to, in Measure 12, the V position.

The first example shows a bass line in 4/4 time, key of G. It consists of two measures. Measure 11 is labeled 'G' and contains the notes G2, A2, B2, C3, D3, E3, F#3, G3. Measure 12 is labeled 'D' and contains the notes G3, F#3, E3, D3, C3, B2, A2, G2. Below the staff is a fretboard diagram with two strings (T and B) and four frets. The notes for Measure 11 are: T (3), A (3), B (3), 2, 2, 3, 3, 4, 4. The notes for Measure 12 are: 5, 3, 4, 5, 5.

The second example demonstrates "walking down" to the V position from the octave of the I root, with the same little tag as in the first example; again, beginning in the 11th measure.

The second example shows a bass line in 4/4 time, key of G. It consists of two measures. Measure 11 is labeled 'G' and contains the notes G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F#4, G4. Measure 12 is labeled 'D' and contains the notes G4, F#4, E4, D4, C4, B3, A3, G3. Below the staff is a fretboard diagram with two strings (T and B) and four frets. The notes for Measure 11 are: T (5), A (5), B (5), 3, 3, 2, 2, 6, 6. The notes for Measure 12 are: 5, 3, 4, 5, 5.



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The final example is an odd ball because we are extending the progression to 14 measures. This is not as uncommon as you think. A lot of early Blues songs were known for having slightly longer progressions, the most common being a 16 bar, which is also a bit of an odd ball these days. But you should be aware they do exist, and you will run into them from time to time. So, for this example, with a slight Bossa feel, we start in Measure 11 with the **I**, move to the **IV** in Measure 12, and back to the **I** in 13, finally to the **V** in Measure 14.

With these six examples, you begin to get a sense that turnarounds are not just arbitrary endings. They have to be practical and make sense. They have to "point" back to the **I**, the beginning of the progression.

Study a lot of Blues tunes and see what the Old School guys are doing. They'll do some of what we've covered here, but they will also be playing some very different things, too. Make sure you've done your homework and listened to the classic stock of tunes going back 60 and more years!

In future columns, we'll revisit the Blues. There's always more to learn.