

Happy  
BLUESMAN

Week 8  
Blues College  
Practice Plan



# Triad Practice (10 / 15 / 20 mins)

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This week the first section of our routine shifts focus onto triads - the big new concept from this week's lessons - and getting these shapes properly under your fingers.

To start building real fluency with them, I'd like you to map out the new triad shapes and practice them laterally, working along one string set at a time.

Moving along a single string set like this is the fastest way to internalise the shapes and see how the three inversions of each triad connect as you travel up the neck. Once you can see them this way, you'll be able to find a chord tone almost anywhere - which is exactly what we need for both our rhythm playing and for targeting chord tones in our solos.

Here's the process:

- Pick a string set to work on - start with the set built from the low E string, then work your way across the neck
- Choose a minor triad and play through its three shapes (the inversions), moving up the neck along that string set
- Then do the same with a major triad, noticing how the only thing that changes between them is the 3rd
- Say the notes or intervals out loud as you go, so you always know what each note is doing

Once you're comfortable, map out the triads for the i, iv and v chords from "Help the Poor", so you can see them laid out all over the neck.

If you have more time, start drawing the connections back to the CAGED shapes you already know. Find the triads living inside each of the bigger chord shapes in a given position, so you can see how the two systems overlap. This is where things really start to click - the triads give you the small, movable pieces, and the CAGED shapes give you the bigger picture they all fit into.

Add a metronome into the mix and you'll be building your rhythmic accuracy here too!

# Triads & Syncopation (10 / 15 / 20 mins)

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In this section of your routine I'd like you to build your own syncopated rhythm part over "Help the Poor", using the triads we've been working on.

This will help you develop greater confidence with the syncopated feel B.B. King uses on the track, and build your ability to add colour and movement to a minor blues progression using triads rather than just full chords.

If the syncopation is new to you, then take your time with the rhythmic side of things first. Work on placing your accents on the "and" before beat four, rather than the straight two and four feel from last week, until that displaced feel starts to sit naturally under your fingers.

From there, start adding triads through the progression, moving them around the neck to find different voicings and bring some movement into your playing. Begin away from the backing track until you've established your ideas, and then add the track in when you feel ready.

If you feel more confident, start mixing in some licks between the chords - that vocal, call and response approach that's such a big part of this style. Keep it tasteful and leave plenty of space.

In both cases, mix things up once every few days. Try a different set of triad voicings, move to a new area of the neck, or play around with where you place your accents. This will keep your practice fresh and really build your rhythmic skills too!

# The Help The Poor Challenge! (10 / 15 / 20 mins)

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It's performance time!

Bring all of these rhythmic techniques, triads and lead ideas together over "Help the Poor".

Focus on the syncopated rhythm and the expressive chord playing, keeping everything really tight and in the pocket. This is a minor blues, so lean into that more intense, melancholic character as you play.

Then drop into a solo, using the minor pentatonic scale and targeting the chord tones with the triads you've been practicing in the previous part of your routine. This is what will help you outline the changes and add those new flavours that move beyond the pentatonic scale.

As you solo, channel B.B. King's expressive approach - that beautiful vibrato, the space between phrases, and the sense that every single note matters. Don't worry about speed or playing too much. Focus on feel and making each note count.

Continue with the "sandwich" approach we've been focusing on during the programme - playing your rhythm part for a few rounds through the progression, before soloing, and then dropping back into the rhythm part.