

The **1**, **4** and **5 chords**, in any key, are your special friends. A verse in a typical blues song progresses something like this:

- (1) *It starts with the stable-sounding **1 chord**,*
- (2) *moves back and forth once or twice to the **4 chord**,*
- (3) *eventually peaks at the **5 chord** (9th bar) and*
- (4) *then returns to the **1 chord**, possibly by way of the **4 chord**.*

See, the **1 chord** is home base. The **4 chord** serves as a friendly alternative to the **1 chord**, and they switch back and forth easily. Then along comes the **5 chord**. The **5 chord**, also known as the **Dominant chord**, puts out a more urgent feeling than the **4 chord** and comes at the climax of the verse, after which things settle down again with the **1 chord**. And all of that happens during one verse of a Twelve Bar Blues.

We'll look at the particulars of this on the next page, confining our discussion to the **Keys of A and E**. But why just these two keys? Of course, any key is possible. In electric blues, the *flat keys* are favored because the other instruments that play with the guitar (keyboards and horns) seem to prefer them. In the more traditional, solo-oriented acoustic blues, *the Keys of E and A have been the most popular, because you get mainly open-stringed Root Notes for the **1, 4 and 5 chords** in these keys, and you get Power Chords in the bass.*

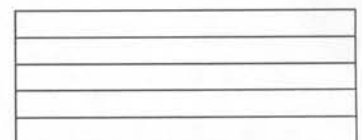
**Twelve Bar Blues** is the most common blues progression you'll hear; it takes twelve **bars**, or **measures**, of music to play through an entire verse. Each measure lasts 4 **counts**, or **beats**, and the first beat of each measure, the number "1" count, gets a little extra emphasis:

**1** - 2 - 3 - 4 - **1** - 2 - 3 - 4.

Each of those counts is said to be worth a **Quarter note**; in other words, it lasts a quarter of a measure. But you know, each quarter note can be further *split in half* to create two **Eighth notes**. So now we can have 8 Eighth notes that take up the same amount of time as 4 Quarter notes, namely, one measure. (Pass the slide rule.)

The first note in each pair of Eighth notes (represented by the *number* of the count, 1, 2, 3 or 4) gets a little more emphasis than the second one (represented by a *plus* sign). So a measure of 8 Eighth notes would be represented this way: **1** + 2 + 3 + 4 +.

Here's how we'll diagram one measure of music in Tablature: If a fret number appears in all 8 "slots" in the diagram, then we have 8 Eighth notes. If any of these slots are left empty, then we have some combination of Quarter notes and Eighth notes, or "**slow**" and "**quick**" notes. (In our first examples below, we'll be filling in *all* the slots, giving us Eighth notes in each measure.)



1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +