

Now that we have an overview of the Twelve Bar Blues, what do we *actually play* in each of these measures? Well, we could just use the full "cowboy chord" versions of the **A**, **D**, **E** and **B** chords, but that's rarely done. The most common thing to do is to strip each chord down to just *two notes* and play what smart people call the **Blues Shuffle**.

A tiny bit of music theory might help here, just a touch of it. We'll take the **Key of A** first and examine, in turn, each of the 3 main chords in that key.

Every Major chord (**A**, **D** or **E**, for example) has a **Major Scale** winding through it. A Major Scale sounds like this (everybody sing!): **Do - Re - Mi - Fa - Sol - La - Ti - Do**. If this doesn't ring any bells for you, get a copy of *The Sound of Music* and get down with Maria and the kids. But instead of the *names* of the notes, we'll swap in *numbers*:

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8. Sing it that way. The numbers are called **Scale Degrees**.

The **1st** and the **8th** Scale Degrees, called **Root Notes**, are really the *same* note found one **octave** (8 scale steps) apart, because the Musical Alphabet only goes up to 7 notes before starting over. So anyway, for the **A** chord, the Root Note is **A**, and you can see the two **A** notes, one octave apart, in the Chord Diagram below and to the right:

The lower **A** note lies on the open 5th string and the higher **A** note is on the 3rd string at the 2nd fret. Play 'em while holding the **A** chord.

Notice how these two notes sound the same...but *different*. They have the same name (because they are, in fact, the same note), but the second one is at a *higher pitch* than the first one. It's magic.

Now I'd like to fill in the rest of the notes in the **A Major Scale** (middle diagram). Play all the notes in numerical order, starting with the lower **A** Root Note. The scale spans across 3 strings.

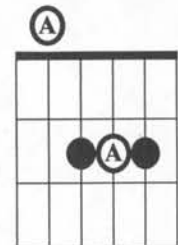
We use the letter **R** to denote the **Root** instead of "1."

At this point, I'm not really interested in naming these notes. That would just detract from our main purpose, which is this:

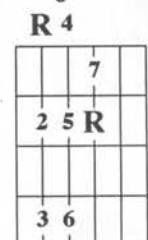
*Take the lower **Root Note** (open 5th string) and the **5th** (4th string, 2nd fret). Play them together, just those two. That's called a **2-note A Power Chord**, and the chord symbol will be **A5** (bottom diagram).*

Don't even bother to hold down the whole **A** chord. All you need is your 1st finger to hold down the 4th string, since you get the open 5th string for free. Play the **A5** chord over and over with short downstrokes of the pick.

The A Chord



A Major Scale



A5

