

Ukulele Yes!

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SNOW SHOVEL BLUES

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Teaching/Learning Notes (C6 Tuning: g, c, e, a)

Focus On:

- Improvisation, Lyric writing, Harmonic Analysis

Key Points:

- Blues in the key of E is wonderfully uke-friendly. Harmonically speaking, every chord in the 12-bar blues progression contains at least one open string (see score). So, while some chord shapes might be new to your students but they should be manageable and rewarding.
- When it comes to improvisation, the blues scale in the key of E is a dream; it sounds great and it's easy to play. Focus on the scale notes that fall on the first, second and third strings. Note that the note **e** is the root of the scale (even though it's not the first note of the scale).

The image shows a musical staff with a treble clef and a 12-bar blues progression. The notes are: d, e, g, a, a#, b. Below the staff are the letter names for each note. To the right is a fretboard diagram for a C6 tuning (g, c, e, a). The fretboard has four strings and four frets. The notes are: e (open), a (open), a# (1st fret), b (1st fret), d (2nd fret), g (3rd fret).

- Start by having students pick improvised rhythms on the note e (strum the 12-bar blues in E while they do this). Then allow them to use the notes **e** and **b**. Expand in this way until they're using the entire scale as shown above. (Note: hold down a G chord and you've got half the scale under your fingertips!)

Suggestions for Extension and Enrichment:

- Offer students a choice of in-class assignment:
 - 1) Alone or with a partner, compose a new melody for *Snow Shovel Blues* using the notes of the E blues scale.
 - 2) Perform, with a partner, an improvisation using the 12-bar blues in E as your harmonic structure.
 - 3) Alone or with a partner, create two new end-lines for *Snow Shovel Blues* (i.e. replace "I'd rather be taking a tropical cruise" with new lyrics).
 - 4) Alone or with a partner, analyse the harmony of the 12-bar blues using Roman numerals I, IV and V. Then determine what the chords would be for 12-bar blues in the key of D.