

Me and the Delta Blues: A Guided Tour of an American Song Form

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Hearing the form of the blues

- Listen to Lightnin' Hopkins perform "Baby, Please Don't Go." https://youtu.be/f4mBTjJ_Yrg
- Listen three more times, one time concentrating on Mr. Hopkins' voice and lyrics and another time concentrating on his guitar.
 - The first time, pay attention to repetition in the lyrics
 - The second time, pay attention to the lowest notes played on the guitar, watch Mr. Hopkins' right hand thumb to aid your listening. If you have a hard time finding his thumb, look for the white thumb-pick he uses to play the bass.
 - Try to sing along with the bass line Mr. Hopkins' plays with his thumb.
 - The third time, pay attention the chords Mr. Hopkins' plays. See if you can hear a pattern.
- Listen to Robert Johnson sing "Sweet Home Chicago." <https://youtu.be/O8hqGu-leFc>
 - Do you hear any similarities with "Baby, Please Don't Go?"
 - Listen again and follow the chart outlining each measure of music, each consisting of four beats, with the name of its chord (**I**, **IV**, or **V**) and the corresponding lyrics from the first verse.

First measure (1-2-3-4) I chord Oh,	Second measure (1-2-3-4) I chord Baby, don't you want	Third measure (1-2-3-4) I chord to go...	Fourth measure (1-2-3-4) I chord
Fifth measure (1-2-3-4) IV chord Oh,	Sixth measure (1-2-3-4) IV chord Baby, don't you want	Seventh measure (1-2-3-4) I chord to go...	Eighth measure (1-2-3-4) I chord
Ninth measure (1-2-3-4) V chord Back to the land of California	Tenth measure (1-2-3-4) IV chord To my sweet home	Eleventh measure (1-2-3-4) I chord Chicago	Twelfth measure (1-2-3-4) I chord

This is an example of a 12-bar blues, meaning it consists of twelve bars or measures. Listen to a few other examples and try to identify the chords (**I**, **IV**, or **V**) as you listen.

- John Lee Hooker – "Dimples" https://youtu.be/OC_IzIOJv94
- Bessie Smith – "Mean Old Bed Bug Blues" <https://youtu.be/Vchl9yUo3Fo>