

Harmonica — Workbook

This workbook turns the Harmonica course into daily reps. It pairs each module with exercises, fill-in worksheets, and checklists you can take to the practice room, plus editable templates for tracking single notes, bends, the blues scale, and your first 12-bar solo. Work through one section per course module and use the action plan to build a sustainable daily routine on a C harp.

Choosing Your Harp and Getting a Clean Single Note

Lock in the right beginner harp, the Richter layout, and a clean single note from both the pucker and tongue-block methods.

Exercise: Single-Note Isolation Test

On hole 4, pucker and hold a single clean C for 4 seconds. If you hear a chord or an airy second note, make the mouth opening smaller and the air gentler rather than blowing harder. Then play single notes up the scale: blow 4, draw 4, blow 5, draw 5, naming each aloud.

- Did a second note ghost under your single note, and did a smaller opening or gentler air fix it?

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- Which was cleaner for you so far: the pucker or the tongue block, and why?

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- How many seconds could you hold a pure single note before it broke up?
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Worksheet: C Harp Note Map

Fill in the blow and draw note for each hole on your C harp from memory, then check it against a chart. Repeat until you can do it with no errors.

Hole 1 blow / draw

Hole 2 blow / draw

Hole 3 blow / draw

Hole 4 blow / draw

Hole 5 blow / draw

Hole 6 blow / draw

Hole 7 blow / draw

Holes 8 to 10 blow / draw

Which holes hold the clean C major scale

Checklist: Gear and Daily Care

- Bought a quality diatonic in C (Hohner Special 20, Lee Oskar, or Suzuki Harpmaster), not a toy harp
- Held the harp with numbers up and hole 1 on the left, with a light grip
- Rinsed my mouth with water and avoided sugary food before playing
- Tapped out moisture holes-down and let the harp dry before casing it
- Practiced 10 minutes of single notes (pucker and tongue block) today

First Tunes, Breath Control, and Clean Movement

Build relaxed breathing, play recognizable tunes in clean single notes, and lock a groove with chugging and hand effects.

Exercise: Relaxed Blow-Draw Breathing Drill

Metronome at 60. On hole 4, draw for 4 beats with soft, steady air, then blow for 4 beats at even volume. Keep the throat open like the start of a yawn and the belly moving, not the shoulders. Repeat on hole 2 (the blues hole) for two minutes.

- Did you feel light-headed at any point, signaling you were over-breathing?

- Could you keep the volume even across both the draw and the blow?

- Where in a phrase did you find a blow note you could use as a built-in breath?

Exercise: First Tune From Tab to Memory

Take Mary Had a Little Lamb (-5 5 4 5 -5 -5 -5) or Oh Susanna. Say the tab aloud, play it at 60 bpm prioritizing clean single notes, isolate any fumbled jump and repeat it ten times, then play it from memory.

- Which two-hole jump or blow-to-draw switch fumbled most, and did isolating it help?

- Were your transitions clean, or was there an audible blip between notes?

- Could you play the full tune from memory with clean single notes?

Worksheet: First Tunes Tracker

Log each starter melody as you learn it, from saying the tab to a clean memorized performance.

Tune name

Date started

Clean single notes at 60 bpm (yes/no)

Transitions blip-free (yes/no)

Top clean tempo reached (bpm)

Played from memory (yes/no)

Checklist: Breath, Rhythm, and Hand Technique

- [] Breathe from the belly with an open throat on both blow and draw
- [] Use the gentlest air that makes the reed speak
- [] Can chug a train rhythm (ta-ka) in time on the low draw and blow chords
- [] Can open and close the right-hand cup to create a wah on a held note
- [] Stayed locked to a backing track or metronome for two full minutes

Bending and the Positions

Bend draw notes in tune starting with draw 4, add blow bends, and understand 1st versus 2nd position.

Exercise: Draw 4 Bend To a Target

Play a clean draw 4 and hold it 4 seconds. Slowly shift the tongue back and down (eee to ooo) until the pitch sags. Using a tuner app (TonalEnergy or Bends), lower draw 4 by a half step in tune, hold the needle steady for 3 seconds, then release smoothly to the clean note. Keep the air gentle.

- Were you bending with mouth and throat shape, or were you pulling harder (the common mistake)?

• Could you hold the bent note steady on the tuner target, or did it drift or choke off?

• Did the release back to the clean note happen smoothly without a gap?

Exercise: Position Listening Comparison

On your C harp, play a simple tune resting on blow 4 (1st position, key of C). Then noodle around draw 2 and the low draw notes, ending phrases on draw 2 (2nd position, key of G). Finally play only draw 2, 4, and 5 over a 12-bar blues in G backing track.

- How did the two positions sound different to you (bright and folky vs. bluesy)?

• Did ending phrases on draw 2 over the G backing track feel resolved and at home?

• Using the fifth rule, what is the 2nd-position key for each harp you own?

Worksheet: Bend Mastery Log

Track every bendable hole from first sag to a controlled, in-tune bend, working from the easy holes to the hard ones.

Draw 4 (half step) — in tune? (Y/N)

Draw 1 (half step) — in tune? (Y/N)

Draw 6 (half step) — in tune? (Y/N)

Draw 2 (half and whole step) — in tune? (Y/N)

Draw 3 (half, whole, step-and-a-half) — in tune? (Y/N)

Blow 8, 9, 10 (blow bends) — in tune? (Y/N)

Hardest bend still to control

Checklist: Bending and Position Confidence

- [] Can bend draw 4 down a half step and hold it in tune
- [] Bend with air-chamber shape, never by forcing harder air
- [] Can release a bend cleanly back to the natural note
- [] Understand 1st position (C) vs. 2nd position (G) on a C harp
- [] Know the fifth rule: 2nd-position key is a fifth above the harp key

The Blues Scale, Soloing, and Expression

Play the 2nd-position blues scale, improvise over a 12-bar blues with phrasing, and add vibrato and a first overblow.

Exercise: Blues Scale Drill in 2nd Position

On a C harp (key of G), play the blues scale: draw 2, draw 3 bent a whole step, blow 4, draw 4 bent a half step, draw 4, draw 5, draw 6. Name the function of each note (root, flat third, and so on). At 60 bpm, run it up and down in steady eighth notes until it is reflex, then play it over a slow G blues track.

- Was your flat third (draw 3 whole-step bend) in tune, or did it sag or overshoot?

• Could you release the bends cleanly while descending the scale?

• Could you land on draw 2 (the root) from anywhere in the scale to resolve?

Exercise: 12-Bar Blues Solo With Space

Loop a slow G blues backing track at 70 to 80 bpm. Chorus 1: play only draw 2 and the bent draw 3 for feel. Chorus 2: add draw 4 and 5 in two-bar call-and-response phrases with space. Then pick one short lick and develop it across a full chorus, varying it slightly.

- Did you leave real space between phrases, or play nonstop?

• Which single 3 to 4 note lick did you develop, and how did you vary it?

• Did the solo breathe and tell a small story, or sound like the scale run up and down?

Worksheet: Expression and Overblow Log

Track your vibrato and your first overblow attempts as a long-term project.

Hand vibrato steady on a held note? (Y/N)

Throat vibrato (huh-huh) attempted? (Y/N)

Overblow hole attempted (e.g., 6)

Did a new overblow pitch speak? (Y/N)

Did the harp seem to need reed-gap setup? (Y/N)

Minutes spent before embouchure fatigue

Checklist: Soloing and Expression Readiness

- [] Can play the 2nd-position blues scale from memory with in-tune bends
- [] Build licks from just 3 or 4 notes and leave space between phrases
- [] Use call and response, resolving on draw 2 or a tense bent note
- [] Can add hand vibrato to long held notes at phrase ends
- [] Started a few minutes of daily overblow attempts on hole 6

Your Action Plan

1. Week 1: Choose a quality C harp, learn the hold and care routine, and isolate clean single notes with the pucker.
2. Week 2: Add the tongue-block method and memorize the full C harp blow-and-draw note map.
3. Week 3: Build relaxed belly breathing and play two starter tunes (Mary Had a Little Lamb, Oh Susanna) from memory.
4. Week 4: Lock a train chug and hand-cup wah in time on a backing track, focusing on rhythm over speed.
5. Weeks 5 to 7: Learn the draw 4 bend in tune, then add draw 1, draw 6, draw 2, and the tricky draw 3 bends with a tuner.
6. Week 6: Add blow bends on holes 8 to 10 and bend every hole to a specific target pitch, logging which land in tune.
7. Week 8: Understand 1st vs. 2nd position and play draw 2, 4, and 5 over a 12-bar blues in G backing track.
8. Week 9: Memorize the 2nd-position blues scale cold, including the flat third and flat seventh blue notes.
9. Week 10: Improvise a 12-bar blues solo with call-and-response, space, and one developed lick over an 80 bpm track.
10. Weeks 11 to 12: Add hand and throat vibrato to held notes and start a few minutes of daily overblow attempts on hole 6.
11. Ongoing: Record one bend exercise and one 12-bar solo weekly, and listen daily to Little Walter, Sonny Boy Williamson II, or Sonny Terry.

