

complete course



IRISH HARMONICA

JOEL ANDERSSON

WELCOME TO MY COURSE

I am happy to introduce you to the world of Irish music. It is a fascinating genre and I am sure you will enjoy playing Irish tunes on the harmonica.

In this course I will guide you step-by-step through the tunes and will show you what makes this music so special for harmonica players. We will go through different techniques that are required to be able to play this genre and I will also provide you with some examples of melodic variations.

You can learn at your own pace either by watching the videos or practicing with the sheet music.

I have prepared separate exercises for every technique. By doing these exercises, you'll soon become familiar with each technique, and later you'll find it easier to combine and use them in your playing. You might want to make them part of your daily routine.

Try it out! And remember to have fun.



You will learn these six tunes

- Little Diamond Polka
- Tommy Peoples Reel
- Scotsman Over the Border Jig
- Clare Slide
- Drowsy Maggie Reel
- Gravels Walks Reel

The playing techniques in this course

- octaves
- drones
- vamping
- tongue switching

For the IRISH HARMONICA course you'll need a harmonica in Low D and G (Standard Richter tuning).

little diamond polka

Playing this tune

This polka is in D major. We play it in 1st position with a harmonica in the key of Low D in Standard Richter tuning.

About this tune

Rick Epping introduced me to this polka in 2011 during a visit to Miltown Malbay. Rick is a fantastic harmonica player who focuses on Irish and traditional American music. Every year, there is a festival in Miltown Malbay called the Willie Clancy Summer School. The festival attracts thousands of people and the beauty of the festival is that Miltown is a small place. There's a main road, a few houses and a lot of pubs. Musicians are playing everywhere day and night during the festival.

Little Diamond is an easy Irish tune that does not have any significant jumps. I add all of the techniques, including octaves, drones, vamping and chords.

Try it out! And remember to have fun!

little diamond polka

the melody

A



B



Adding techniques

with octaves

Playing Little Diamond Polka with octaves is fairly simple in the A part. In the B part, it becomes a little more challenging. There, you will have to cover three holes with your tongue when playing the octaves over holes 5/9 draw, 4/8 draw, and 3/7 draw. A bit tricky is also the change from 3/7 draw to 4/7 blow. But with a little practice, you will manage it.

with vamping

Vamping supports the rhythm of this polka. Try and play it on every second and fourth beat to put extra emphasis on the back beat. Check my tune-specific vamping exercise to practice vamping for polkas.

with drones

In the Little Diamond Polka, we use hole 4 draw or blow as a drone. It gives the tune a very powerful sound.

melodic variations

Irish tunes repeat over and over. It is therefore nice to change the melody from time to time to keep the tune interesting. I've given you some examples in the bars 2, 4, 7, 10, 12 and 16. Soon you will find your own variations.

little diamond polka with octaves

A

6↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↑ 4↑ 5↑ 6↑ 7↑ 6↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 5↑ 4↓
3↑ 3↓ 3↑ 2↑ 1↑ 2↑ 3↑ 4↑ 3↑ 3↓ 3↑ 2↑ 2↓ 2↑ 1↓ 2↑ 1↓

5

4↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↑ 5↓ 4↓ 7↑ 7↑ 8↓
1↑ 1↓ 2↑ 2↓ 3↑ 3↓ 3↓ 4↑ 4↓ 4↑ 3↓ 4↑ 4↓ 3↓ 4↑ 3↑ 2↓ 1↓ 4↑ 4↑ 4↓

B

9

8↑ 7↑ 9↓ 8↓ 8↑ 7↑ 7↓ 6↓ 6↑ 7↑ 7↓ 7↑ 8↑ 8↓ 8↓
5↑ 4↑ 5↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↑ 3↓ 3↓ 3↑ 4↑ 3↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 4↓

13

8↑ 7↑ 9↓ 8↓ 8↑ 7↑ 7↓ 6↓ 6↑ 9↓ 8↓ 7↓ 7↑ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 7↑
5↑ 4↑ 5↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↑ 3↓ 3↓ 3↑ 5↓ 4↓ 3↓ 4↑ 4↑ 4↓ 4↑ 4↑

little diamond polka with vamping

A

6↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↑ 4↑ 5↑ 6↑ 7↑ 6↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 5↑ 4↓

5

4↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↑ 5↓ 4↓ 7↑ 7↑ 8↓

B

9

8↑ 7↑ 9↓ 8↓ 8↑ 7↑ 7↓ 6↓ 6↑ 7↑ 7↓ 7↑ 8↑ 8↓ 8↓

13

8↑ 7↑ 9↓ 8↓ 8↑ 7↑ 7↓ 6↓ 6↑ 9↓ 8↓ 7↓ 7↑ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 7↑

little diamond polka with drones

A



B



little diamond polka

melodic variations

A



little diamond polka

melodic variations

B



8↑ 9↓ 8↑ 7↓ 7↑ 7↓ 6↓ 6↑ 7↑ 7↓ 7↑ 8↑ 8↓ 8↓



8↑ 7↑ 9↓ 8↓ 8↑ 7↑ 7↓ 6↓ 6↑ 9↓ 8↓ 7↓ 7↑ 7↑ 8↓



8↑ 7↑ 9↓ 8↓ 8↑ 7↑ 7↓ 7↑ 6↑ 7↑ 7↓ 7↑ 8↑ 8↓ 8↓



8↑ 7↑ 9↓ 8↓ 8↑ 7↑ 7↓ 6↓ 6↑ 9↓ 8↓ 7↓ 7↑ 1↑

tommy peoples' reel

Playing this tune

This reel is in G major. We play it in 1st position with a harmonica in the key of G in Standard Richter tuning.

The melody can be effectively embellished. You can add playing techniques such as octaves, drones, vamping and chords.

About this tune

Tommy Peoples' Reel is a relatively easy Irish tune that has two jumps to look out for. The first jump is in the 4th bar and you'll have to jump from 4th to the 6th hole. It's not a large jump, but it's important to play it smoothly. The second jump is at the transition from the 4th to the 5th bar.

I got this tune from Henrik Mueller, who is a dear friend of mine, and an excellent English concertina player.

Try it out! And remember
to have fun.

tommy peoples' reel

the melody

A



B



Adding techniques

with octaves

Playing Tommy Peoples' Reel with octaves is fairly easy. In the B part, you will sometimes have to cover more than two holes with your tongue. But with a bit of practice you will easily get through the tune. Listen to how bar 2 sounds. You are right: blowing or drawing holes 1/3 is not an octave. We play these intervals to get extra volume.

with vamping

Vamping supports the rhythm of a tune. So it is most effective to play the vamping of this reel on the eighth notes 3 and 7. Check out my tune-specific vamping exercise to practice vamping for reels.

with drones

There are no big challenges, but note that we play hole 4 as a drone in the B part, yet end with hole one again.

melodic variations

It is nice to add some variations to the melody, i. e. some extra notes or the opposite, with few longer notes instead of many eighths. You can find examples in bar 2 and 8. Also, have a look at bar 4. There, we climb up the scale, leading us into the B part.

tommy peoples' reel with octaves

A

4↑ 5↑ 4↑ 5↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↑ 4↓ 3↑ 3↑ 3↓ 4↑ 4↓ 3↓
1↑ 2↑ 1↑ 2↓ 1↑ 2↑ 1↑ 1↓ 1↑ 1↑ 1↓ 1↑ 1↓ 1↓

3

4↑ 5↑ 4↑ 5↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↑ 4↓ 5↑ 6↑ 5↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↑ 4↓
1↑ 2↑ 1↑ 2↓ 1↑ 2↑ 1↑ 1↓ 2↑ 3↑ 2↓ 1↓ 1↑ 1↑ 1↓

B

5

7↑ 6↑ 7↑ 6↓ 7↑ 6↑ 6↓ 7↑ 8↑ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 7↓
4↑ 3↑ 4↑ 3↓ 4↑ 3↑ 3↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↑ 4↓ 4↑ 3↓ 3↓

7

7↑ 6↑ 7↑ 6↓ 7↑ 6↑ 5↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 5↓ 5↑ 4↑ 4↑
4↑ 3↑ 4↑ 3↓ 4↑ 3↑ 2↑ 2↓ 2↑ 1↓ 2↓ 2↑ 1↑ 1↑

tommy peoples' reel with vamping

A



B



tommy peoples' reel with drones

A

4↑ 1↑ 5↑ 1↑ 4↑ 1↑ 5↓ 1↓ 4↑ 1↑ 5↑ 1↑ 4↑ 1↑ 4↓ 1↓ 3↑ 1↑ 3↑ 1↑ 3↓ 1↓ 4↑ 1↑ 4↓ 1↓ 3↓ 1↓

3

4↑ 1↑ 5↑ 1↑ 4↑ 1↑ 5↓ 1↓ 4↑ 1↑ 5↑ 1↑ 4↑ 1↑ 4↓ 1↓ 5↑ 1↑ 6↑ 1↑ 5↓ 1↓ 4↓ 1↓ 4↑ 1↑ 4↑ 1↑ 4↓ 1↓

B

5

7↑ 4↑ 6↑ 4↑ 7↑ 4↑ 6↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↑ 8↑ 4↑ 7↑ 4↑ 8↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↑ 6↓ 4↓ 7↓ 4↓

7

7↑ 4↑ 6↑ 4↑ 7↑ 4↑ 6↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↑ 6↑ 4↑ 5↑ 1↑ 5↓ 1↓ 5↑ 1↑ 4↓ 1↓ 5↓ 1↓ 5↑ 1↑ 4↑ 1↑ 4↑ 1↑

tommy peoples' reel

melodic variations

A

1



4↑ 5↑ 4↑ 5↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↑ 4↓ 3↑ 3↑ 4↑ 3↑ 3↓ 4↑ 4↓ 3↓

3



4↑ 5↑ 4↑ 5↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↑ 4↓ 5↑ 6↑ 5↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↓

5



4↑ 5↑ 5↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↑ 4↓ 3↑ 3↑ 4↓ 3↑ 3↓ 4↑ 4↓ 3↓

7



4↑ 5↑ 4↑ 5↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↑ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓

tommy peoples' reel

melodic variations

B

1



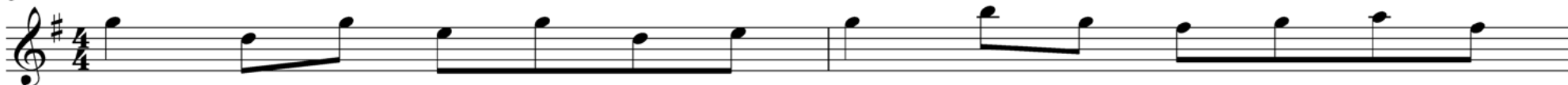
7↑ 6↑ 7↑ 6↓ 7↑ 6↑ 6↓ 7↑ 8↑ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑

3



7↑ 6↑ 7↑ 6↓ 7↑ 6↑ 5↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 5↓ 5↑ 4↑ 4↑

5



7↑ 6↑ 7↑ 6↓ 7↑ 6↑ 6↓ 7↑ 8↑ 7↑ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↓

7



7↑ 6↑ 7↑ 6↓ 7↑ 6↑ 5↑ 5↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↑ 4↓ 3↓ 4↑

**scotsman over the
border jig**

Playing this tune

This jig is in D major. We play in 1st position with a harmonica in the key of Low D in Standard Richter tuning.

Scotsman Over The Border is a lovely Irish jig. The melody is easy and can be effectively embellished, and techniques such as octaves, drones and vamping can be used.

About this tune

This is a lovely Irish tune that I heard Frankie Gavin playing on the 1986 album *Omós Do Joe Cooley*. Frankie is an incredible fiddle player who is joined by Paul Brock on box and Charlie Lennon on piano.

In Scotsman Over The Border, there are two jumps. The first one is in the 5th bar going from the 6th to the 4th hole. It's not a big jump, but it's important to play it smoothly. The next jump is at the transition from A to B section. It is in the transition between the 8th and 9th bar. This is another tune where I add all the different techniques; octaves, drones, chords and vamping!

Try it out! And remember to have fun.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Brock', written in a cursive style.

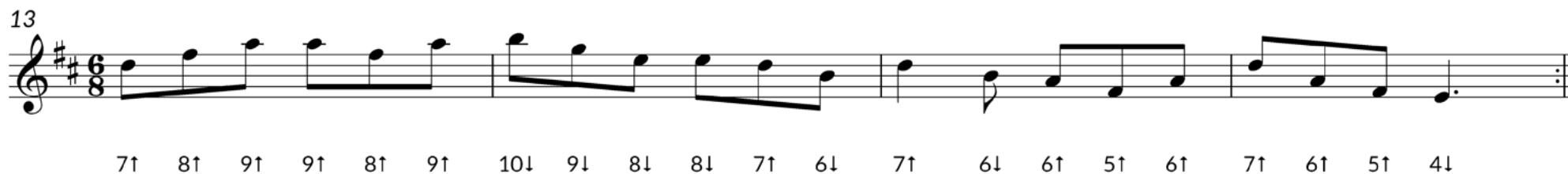
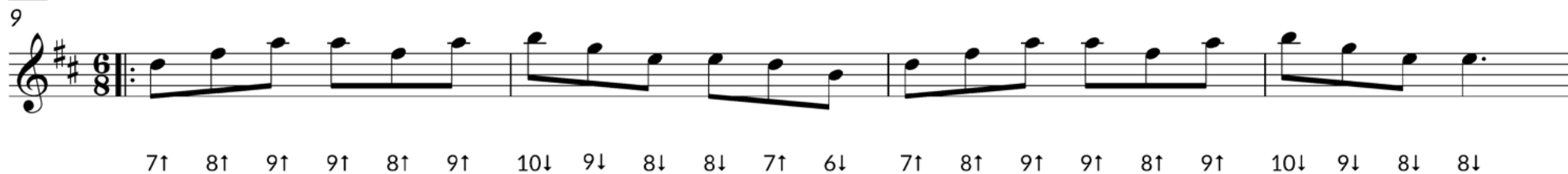
scotsman over the border jig

the melody

A



B



Adding techniques

with octaves

Playing the Scotsman Over The Border Jig with octaves is fun. Several bars contain only blow or only draw notes. So you can fully concentrate on the distances between the octave notes.

with vamping

Emphasize the 3 and the 6 to give a nice lift to the jig. Note that in many of the bars in this jig, you hold the note and slap the tongue without interrupting the airflow for the single note.

with drones

Hole 1 and hole 4 are the drones of this jig. We play drones in the entire A part. In part B, however, we add them only to the last bar.

melodic variations

It is nice to vary a tune's melody a bit. In this tune, I add variations in almost all of the bars. Sometimes I play more shorter notes, sometimes only halves. You can even add a pause – try it out.

scotsman over the border jig with octaves

A

4↑ 1↑ 5↑ 2↑ 4↑ 1↑ 5↑ 2↑ 6↑ 3↑ 5↑ 2↑ 6↑ 3↑ 7↑ 4↑ 7↓ 3↓ 6↓ 3↓ 6↓ 3↓ 6↑ 3↑ 6↓ 3↓ 7↑ 4↑ 8↓ 4↓ 8↑ 5↑ 8↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↑ 6↓ 3↓

5

6↑ 3↑ 4↑ 1↑ 4↑ 1↑ 5↑ 2↑ 4↑ 1↑ 5↑ 2↑ 6↑ 3↑ 5↑ 2↑ 6↑ 3↑ 7↑ 4↑ 7↓ 3↓ 6↓ 3↓ 6↑ 3↑ 5↑ 2↑ 6↑ 3↑ 7↑ 4↑ 6↑ 3↑ 5↑ 2↑ 4↓ 1↓

B

9

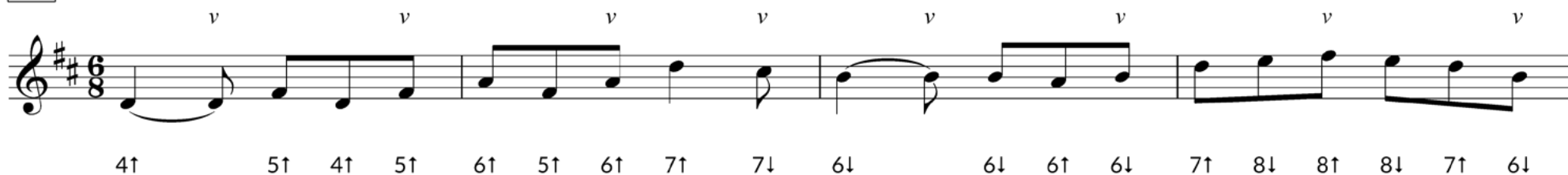
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13

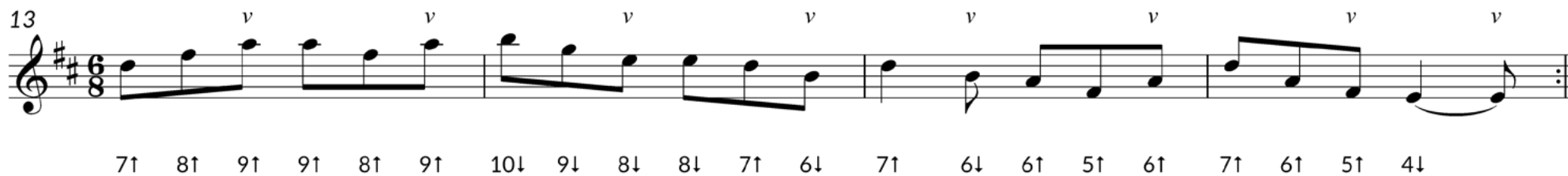
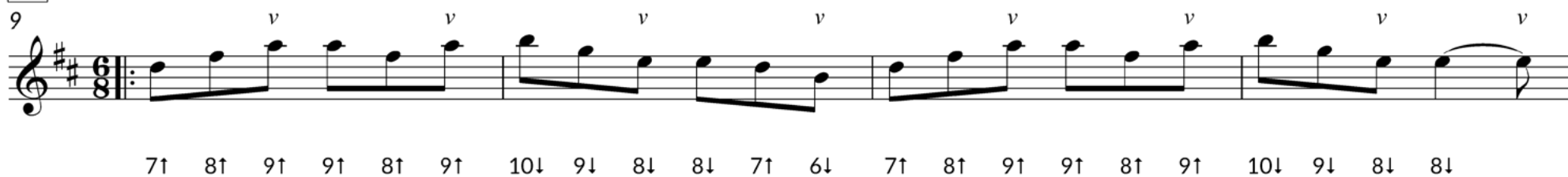
7↑ 4↑ 8↑ 5↑ 9↑ 6↑ 9↑ 6↑ 8↑ 5↑ 9↑ 6↑ 10↓ 6↓ 9↓ 5↓ 8↓ 4↓ 8↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↑ 6↓ 3↓ 7↑ 4↑ 6↓ 3↓ 6↑ 3↑ 5↑ 2↑ 6↑ 3↑ 7↑ 4↑ 6↑ 3↑ 5↑ 2↑ 4↓ 1↓

scotsman over the border jig with vamping

A



B



scotsman over the border jig with drones

A

4↑ 5↑ 4↑ 5↑ 6↑ 5↑ 6↑ 7↑ 7↓ 6↓ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↑ 8↓ 8↑ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓
1↑ 1↑ 1↑ 1↑ 1↑ 1↑ 1↑ 4↑ 4↓ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓

5

6↑ 4↑ 4↑ 5↑ 4↑ 5↑ 6↑ 5↑ 6↑ 7↑ 7↓ 6↓ 6↑ 5↑ 6↑ 7↑ 6↑ 5↑ 4↓
4↑ 1↑ 1↑ 1↑ 1↑ 1↑ 1↑ 1↑ 1↑ 4↑ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 1↓

B

9

7↑ 8↑ 9↑ 9↑ 8↑ 9↑ 10↓ 9↓ 8↓ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 7↑ 8↑ 9↑ 9↑ 8↑ 9↑ 10↓ 9↓ 8↓ 8↓

13

7↑ 8↑ 9↑ 9↑ 8↑ 9↑ 10↓ 9↓ 8↓ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↑ 6↑ 7↑ 6↑ 5↑ 4↓
4↑ 4↓ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 1↓

scotsman over the border jig

melodic variations

A



5



B

9



13



clare slide

Playing this tune

This slide is in D major. We play it in 1st position with a harmonica in the key of Low D in Standard Richter tuning.

Clare Slide is a lovely Irish tune. It is suitable for players that are already familiar with the Irish music genre. The melody is straight forward, but the rhythm and the jumps on the harmonica require a little bit more from the player.

About this tune

This slide appears to be fairly easy at 'first glance, but it has some quirks, which makes it a bit tricky. It starts off with a lot of repetitive blow notes in the 6th hole. It is very important to get the timing and rhythm right with all of these notes. This can be difficult. There are also a few jumps, for example in bar 3, you have to jump from the 7th to the 9th hole.

I first heard Kevin Burke play this slide. He's a great fiddle player, who has recorded numerous albums.

Try it out! And remember to have fun!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Burke', written in a cursive style.

clare slide the melody

A



B



Adding techniques

with octaves

Adding octaves gives this slide a full sound. If you are already familiar with octave playing, you will find it quite easy to play. For beginners, some parts might be a bit tricky, but I am sure that with a little bit of practice you will manage to play it.

with vamping

It is characteristic for the vamping technique to support the rhythm of a tune. In a slide, we therefore add the vamping on the eighth notes 3, 6, 9 and 12.

with drones

In this tune I wouldn't add drones in each bar. But the tune becomes even more interesting if you add drones here and there. I suggest to add them to bars 4, 6 and 8.

melodic variations

Irish tunes repeat over and over. It is nice to change the melody from time to time to keep the tune interesting. Try to exchange eighths against a half note or double the notes to add some variations to the slide.

clare slide with octaves

A

6↑ 6↑ 6↑ 6↑ 6↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 6↑ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↑ 6↑
3↑ 3↑ 3↑ 3↑ 3↑ 3↓ 3↑ 2↑ 1↓ 1↑ 2↑ 3↑ 3↓ 3↑ 3↓ 3↑ 2↑ 3↑

3

7↑ 7↓ 7↑ 9↑ 9↓ 8↑ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 6↑ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↑ 7↑
4↑ 3↓ 4↑ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↑ 3↓ 3↑ 3↓ 3↓ 3↑ 3↓ 3↑ 3↓ 4↑ 4↑

B

5

7↑ 7↓ 7↑ 9↑ 9↓ 8↑ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 6↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↑ 6↑
4↑ 3↓ 4↑ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↑ 3↓ 3↑ 3↓ 3↓ 3↑ 3↓ 3↓ 3↑ 3↓ 3↑ 2↑ 3↑

7

7↑ 7↓ 7↑ 9↑ 9↓ 8↑ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 6↑ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↑ 7↑
4↑ 3↓ 4↑ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↑ 3↓ 3↑ 3↓ 3↓ 3↑ 3↓ 3↓ 3↑ 4↑ 4↑

clare slide with drones

A

6↑ 6↑ 6↑ 6↑ 6↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 6↑ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↑ 6↑

3

7↑ 7↓ 7↑ 9↑ 9↓ 8↑ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 6↑ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↑ 7↑
4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 4↑ 4↑

B

5

7↑ 7↓ 7↑ 9↑ 9↓ 8↑ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 6↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↑ 6↑
4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 4↑ 4↑

7

7↑ 7↓ 7↑ 9↑ 9↓ 8↑ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 6↑ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↑ 7↑
4↑ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 4↑ 4↑

clare slide melodic variations

A



B



drowsy maggie reel

Playing this tune

This reel is in E minor. We play it in 3rd position with a harmonica in the key of Low D in Standard Richter tuning.

About this tune

Drowsy Maggie is one of the first Irish tunes that I learned. It is a very challenging tune because you need to use tongue switching to get a nice flow in the A part. The B part does not contain any tongue switching and therefore is a lot simpler.

I got this tune from Mikael Bäckman. He is a wonderful harmonica player up in the North of Sweden.

In the A part, you need to focus on the tongue switching and playing as smooth as possible. In the B part, you can add octaves, drones, chords and vamping to your liking.

Try it out! And remember to have fun.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mikael Bäckman', written in a cursive style.

drowsy maggie reel

the melody

A



4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 6↑ 5↑ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↑ 5↑ 4↑
L R L R L R L R R L R L R L R L R R



4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 6↑ 5↑ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↑ 5↑ 6↑
L R L R L R L R R L R L R L R L R R

B



7↑ 8↑ 7↑ 7↓ 8↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 8↑ 9↓ 9↑ 8↑ 9↓ 8↓ 7↑ 8↑ 7↑ 7↓ 8↓ 7↓ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↑ 5↑ 6↑
R



7↑ 8↑ 7↑ 7↓ 8↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 8↑ 9↓ 9↑ 8↑ 9↓ 8↓ 9↑ 8↑ 9↓ 8↓ 8↑ 7↑ 8↓ 7↓ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↑ 5↑ 4↑
R

Adding techniques

with octaves

In the A part of the Drowsy Maggie reel we can add octaves only to some of the bars. The reason is that we need the tongue switching technique to be able to play the A part. Octave playing is only possible in those bars where you don't need to switch your tongue. In the B part there is no tongue switching so you can use octaves wherever you like.

with vamping

You can actually combine vamping and tongue switching. I like to refer to this as switch vamp. Means: You apply the regular tongue switching technique, and when there is a vamp coming up, you simply lift your tongue off your harmonica and let a chord sound. Then you put your tongue back again. If you want to exercise vamping and tongue switching, watch the videos with my technique exercises.

with drones

In this tune, I only add drones in the B part. Because of the tongue switching in the A part, it is very hard to play any drones there. But hey, maybe you can do it!?

melodic variations

Let's try something new here. The variation starts in bar 5 where we add two half notes. Here we can either just keep them as one long drone or we can emphasize them with the same rhythm as before. Try it out!

drowsy maggie reel with octaves

A

4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 6↑ 5↑ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↑ 5↑ 4↑
3↑ 2↑ 1↑ 2↑ 3↑ 3↑ 3↓ 3↓ 4↑ 3↑ 2↑ 1↑

L R L R L R L R L L R L L R L R L

5

4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 6↑ 5↑ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↑ 5↑ 6↑
3↑ 2↑ 1↑ 2↑ 3↑ 3↑ 3↓ 3↓ 4↑ 3↑ 2↑ 3↑

L R L R L R L R L L R L L R L R L

B

9

7↑ 8↑ 7↑ 7↓ 8↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 8↑ 9↓ 9↑ 8↑ 9↓ 8↓ 7↑ 8↑ 7↑ 7↓ 8↓ 7↓ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↑ 5↑ 6↑
4↑ 5↑ 4↑ 3↓ 4↓ 3↓ 4↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 6↑ 5↑ 5↓ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↑ 3↓ 4↓ 3↓ 3↓ 3↑ 3↓ 3↓ 4↑ 3↑ 2↑ 3↑

13

7↑ 8↑ 7↑ 7↓ 8↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 8↑ 9↓ 9↑ 8↑ 9↓ 8↓ 9↑ 8↑ 9↓ 8↓ 8↑ 7↑ 8↓ 7↓ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↑ 5↑ 4↑
4↑ 5↑ 4↑ 3↓ 4↓ 3↓ 4↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 6↑ 5↑ 5↓ 4↓ 6↑ 5↑ 5↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↑ 4↓ 3↓ 3↓ 3↑ 3↓ 4↑ 3↑ 2↑ 1↑

drowsy maggie reel with vamping

A

4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 6↑ 5↑ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↑ 5↑ 4↑
L R L R L R L L R L R _____ L R L R L R L R _____

5

4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 6↑ 5↑ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↑ 5↑ 6↑
L R L R L R L _____ R L R _____ L R L R L R L R _____

B

9

7↑ 8↑ 7↑ 7↓ 8↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 8↑ 9↓ 9↑ 8↑ 9↓ 8↓ 7↑ 8↑ 7↑ 7↓ 8↓ 7↓ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↑ 5↑ 6↑
R _____

13

7↑ 8↑ 7↑ 7↓ 8↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 8↑ 9↓ 9↑ 8↑ 9↓ 8↓ 9↑ 8↑ 9↓ 8↓ 8↑ 7↑ 8↓ 7↓ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↑ 5↑ 4↑
R _____

drowsy maggie reel with drones

A

4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 6↑ 5↑ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↑ 5↑ 4↑
L R L R L R L L R L R _____ L R L R L R L R _____

5

4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 6↑ 5↑ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↑ 5↑ 6↑
L R L R L R L _____ R L R _____ L R L R L R L R _____

B

9

7↑ 8↑ 7↑ 7↓ 8↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 8↑ 9↓ 9↑ 8↑ 9↓ 8↓ 7↑ 8↑ 7↑ 7↓ 8↓ 7↓ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↑ 5↑ 6↑
4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↓ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↓ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↓ 4↓ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑
R _____

13

7↑ 8↑ 7↑ 7↓ 8↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 8↑ 9↓ 9↑ 8↑ 9↓ 8↓ 9↑ 8↑ 9↓ 8↓ 8↑ 7↑ 8↓ 7↓ 6↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↑ 5↑ 4↑
4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↓ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↓ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↓ 4↓ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑
R _____

gravel walks reel

About this tune

Gravel Walks is one of the hardest tunes out there. You'll have to master the tongue switching technique, otherwise this tune is impossible to play.

The A part has some easier tongue switching, but the B part is very advanced. You have to jump from the 4th to the 8th hole, then back to the 4th hole. After that, you alternate jumping between the 4th and the 7th hole a few times.

This tune was written for fiddle where jumps like these are much easier to perform.

The C section is straightforward, but in the D section it goes back to tongue switching again. The tongue switching in the D section is not as difficult as in the B section, but the tune transposes to the key of C and then returns to A minor. This can feel a little bit awkward in the beginning.

Practice, practice and practicing more is what it takes to master this tune. I'm sure you will get there. Take your time and practice it slowly part by part.

Best of luck! And remember to have fun.



Playing this tune

This reel is in A minor / C major. We play it in 3rd position / 12th position when we play C major) with a harmonica in the key of G in Standard Richter tuning.

Players need to be comfortable with the tongue switching technique. Gravel Walks is a complex tune and best suited to advanced players. It has 4 parts A, B, C and D.

A

5

B

5

harmonica school berlin

gravel walks reel the melody

9

5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 8↓ 5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 5↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 8↓ 5↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑

L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

13

5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 8↓ 5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 5↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑

L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

Adding techniques

with octaves

In the reel Gravel Walks we can only add octaves in bars without tongue switching. In these bars we cover mostly two holes when playing octaves. But sometimes it is necessary to cover even three holes.

with vamping

In a tune with tongue switching the vamping is a challenge. You not only have to do the tongue switching but also the vamping at the same time. The emphasis is on 2 and 4. Practice Gravel Walks with vamping very slowly and you will soon find yourself playing it faster and faster.

with drones

In tunes like the Gravel Walks Reel we can use drones only when there is no tongue switching. I suggest to add drones in the C part. The only drone is hole 1.

gravel walks reel with octaves

A

4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↑ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
2↑ 1↓ 1↑ 2↑ 2↑ 3↑ 3↓ 3↓ 4↑ 3↓ 3↑ 2↓ 2↑ 1↓ 1↑ 2↑

L R L _____ R L _____ R L L R L

5

4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↑ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
2↑ 1↓ 1↑ 2↑ 2↑ 3↑ 3↓ 3↓ 4↑ 3↓ 3↑ 2↓ 2↑ 1↓ 1↑ 2↑

L R L _____ R L _____ R L L R L

B

4↓ 8↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 7↓ 4↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 8↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 7↓ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
2↑ 1↓ 1↑ 2↑ 2↑ 3↑ 3↓ 3↓ 4↑ 3↓ 3↑ 2↓ 2↑ 1↓ 1↑ 2↑

L R L R L R L _____ R L L R L R L

5

4↓ 8↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 7↓ 4↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
2↑ 1↓ 1↑ 2↑ 1↓ 2↑ 2↓ 3↑ 3↓ 3↓ 4↑ 4↓ 4↑ 3↓ 3↑ 2↓ 2↑ 1↓ 1↑ 2↑

L R L R L R L _____ R L

gravel walks reel with octaves

C

5↓ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 4↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↑ 5↑ 6↑ 5↓ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
2↓ 1↓ 1↓ 1↑ 1↓ 2↑ 2↓ 1↓ 1↓ 2↑ 1↑ 2↑ 3↑ 2↓ 1↓ 1↓ 1↑ 1↓ 3↓ 3↓ 4↑ 3↓ 3↑ 2↓ 2↑ 1↓ 1↑ 2↑

5

5↓ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 4↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↑ 5↑ 6↑ 5↓ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
2↓ 1↓ 1↓ 1↑ 1↓ 2↑ 2↓ 1↓ 1↓ 2↑ 1↑ 2↑ 3↑ 2↓ 1↓ 1↓ 1↑ 1↓ 3↓ 3↓ 4↑ 3↓ 3↑ 2↓ 2↑ 1↓ 1↑ 2↑

D

5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 8↓ 5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 5↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 8↓ 5↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
3↑ 2↓ 2↑ 1↓ 1↑ 2↑ 3↑ 2↓ 2↑ 1↓ 1↑ 2↑ 4↑ 4↓ 4↑ 3↓ 3↑ 2↓ 2↑ 1↓ 1↑ 2↑

L R L R L R L L L R L R L

5

5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 8↓ 5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 5↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
3↑ 2↓ 2↑ 1↓ 1↑ 2↑ 1↓ 2↑ 2↓ 3↑ 3↓ 3↓ 4↑ 4↓ 4↑ 3↓ 3↑ 2↓ 2↑ 1↓ 1↑ 2↑

L R L R L R L L L R L R L

gravel walks reel with octaves

9

5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 8↓ 5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 5↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 8↓ 5↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
 3↑ 2↓ 2↑ 1↓ 1↑ 2↑ 4↑ 4↓ 4↑ 3↓ 3↑ 2↓ 2↑ 1↓ 1↑ 2↑

L R L R L R L L L R L R L

13

5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 8↓ 5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 5↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
 3↑ 2↓ 2↑ 1↓ 1↑ 2↑ 1↓ 2↑ 2↓ 3↑ 3↓ 3↓ 4↑ 4↓ 4↑ 3↓ 3↑ 2↓ 2↑ 1↓ 1↑ 2↑

L R L R L R L L L R L R L

gravel walks reel with vamping

A

4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↑ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
L R L _____ R L _____

5

4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↑ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
L R L _____ R L _____

B

4↓ 8↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 7↓ 4↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 8↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 7↓ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
L R L R L R L _____ R L R _____

5

4↓ 8↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 7↓ 4↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
L R L R L R L L R L R _____ R _____

gravel walks reel with vamping

C



5↓ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 4↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↑ 5↑ 6↑ 5↓ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
R_____



5↓ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 4↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↑ 5↑ 6↑ 5↓ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
R_____

D



5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 8↓ 5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 5↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 8↓ 5↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
L R L R L R L_____ R_____ L R L R L R_____ R_____



5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 8↓ 5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 5↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
L R L R L R L_____ R_____ R_____

gravel walks reel with vamping

9

5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 8↓ 5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 5↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 8↓ 5↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
L R L R L R L R R L R L R L R R

13

5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 8↓ 5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 5↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
L R L R L R L R R R R R R R R R R R

gravel walks reel with drones

A



4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↑ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
L R L _____ R L _____ R L R _____ L R L R _____



4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↑ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
L R L _____ R L _____ R L R _____ L R L R _____

B




4↓ 8↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 7↓ 4↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 8↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 7↓ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
L R L R L R L _____ R L R _____ L R L R L R _____



4↓ 8↓ 4↓ 7↑ 4↓ 7↓ 4↓ 4↓ 6↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
L R L R L R L _____ R L R _____

gravel walks reel with drones

C



5↓ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 4↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↑ 5↑ 6↑ 5↓ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
1↓ 1↓ 1↓ 1↑ 1↓ 1↑ 1↓ 1↓ 1↓ 1↑ 1↑ 1↑ 1↑ 1↓ 1↓ 1↓ 1↑ 1↓ R_____

5



5↓ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 4↓ 4↓ 5↑ 4↑ 5↑ 6↑ 5↓ 4↓ 4↓ 4↑ 4↓ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
1↓ 1↓ 1↓ 1↑ 1↓ 1↑ 1↓ 1↓ 1↓ 1↑ 1↑ 1↑ 1↑ 1↓ 1↓ 1↓ 1↑ 1↓ R_____

D



5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 8↓ 5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 5↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 8↓ 5↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
L R L R L R L_____ R_____ L R L R L R_____

5



5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 8↓ 5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 5↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
L R L R L R L_____ R_____

with drones

9

Musical notation for measures 9-12 in G major, 4/4 time. The melody consists of eighth notes and quarter notes. Measure 9: G4, A4, B4, C5. Measure 10: D5, E5, F#5, G5. Measure 11: G5, F#5, E5, D5. Measure 12: C5, B4, A4, G4.

5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 8↓ 5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 5↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 8↓ 5↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
L R L R L R L _____ R _____ L R L R L R _____

13

Musical notation for measures 13-16 in G major, 4/4 time. The melody continues from measure 12. Measure 13: G4, A4, B4, C5. Measure 14: D5, E5, F#5, G5. Measure 15: G5, F#5, E5, D5. Measure 16: C5, B4, A4, G4.

5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 8↓ 5↓ 7↑ 5↓ 5↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 7↑ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑ 5↑
L R L R L R L _____ R _____ R _____

technique exercises

Playing octaves

Playing octaves is one way to get a little bit more volume out of your harmonica. You will also get a more accordion like sound when playing with octaves.

The harmonica is a great instrument for playing octaves, but there are some octaves that we can't play due to the layout of the instrument. For example hole 2 and 5 draw and 3 and 6 draw don't cover an octave but rather a minor seventh. The sound is different, but we will still play them together anyway, as we want to get more volume. When playing a slightly faster tune you can hardly hear the difference.

With these exercises you will soon get used to octave playing. They are a great warm-up and you can practice them for example every morning or in a break during the day.

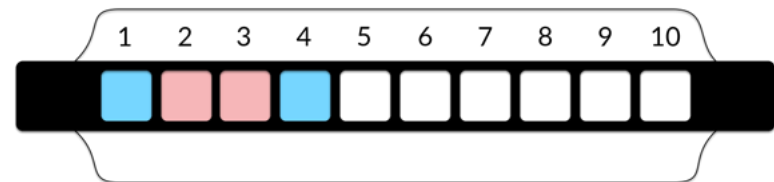
To play octaves, you need to block two or three holes with the tongue (see diagram).

For example:

Play hole 1 and 4 (block 2 and 3)

Play hole 3 and 6 (block 4 and 5)

Play hole 6 and 10 (block 7, 8 and 9)



With a harmonica in the key of D, you will get the D-octave when you block hole 2 and 3 with your tongue (pink) and blow hole 1 (blue) on the left side of your mouth and hole 4 (blue) on the right side of your mouth.

octaves exercises

exercise 1

Exercise 1 is a musical exercise in 4/4 time, consisting of 16 eighth notes. The notes are grouped into four measures of four notes each. The first measure starts on middle C (C4) and ascends to G4. The second measure starts on G4 and ascends to D5. The third measure starts on D5 and descends to G4. The fourth measure starts on G4 and descends to C4. Below the staff, the following octave markings are provided for each note:

4↑	4↓	5↑	5↓	6↑	6↓	7↓	7↑	7↑	7↓	6↓	6↑	5↓	5↑	4↓	4↑
1↑	1↓	2↑	2↓	3↑	3↓	3↓	4↑	4↑	3↓	3↓	3↑	2↓	2↑	1↓	1↑

exercise 2

Exercise 2 is a musical exercise in 4/4 time, consisting of 14 eighth notes and two rests. The notes are grouped into four measures: the first measure has four notes, the second and third measures have two notes each, and the fourth measure has two notes and a whole rest. The first measure starts on middle C (C4) and ascends to G4. The second measure starts on G4 and ascends to D5. The third measure starts on D5 and descends to G4. The fourth measure starts on G4 and descends to C4. Below the staff, the following octave markings are provided for each note:

7↑	8↓	8↑	9↓	9↑	10↓	10↑		10↑	10↓	9↑	9↓	8↑	8↓	7↑	
4↑	4↓	5↑	5↓	6↑	6↓	7↑		7↑	6↓	6↑	5↓	5↑	4↓	4↑	

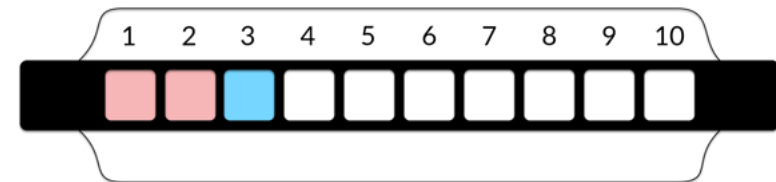
Playing vamping

Vamping is a tonguing technique. It is called vamping because of repeated tongue movements that create a slapping effect alternating between playing a single note and a chord.

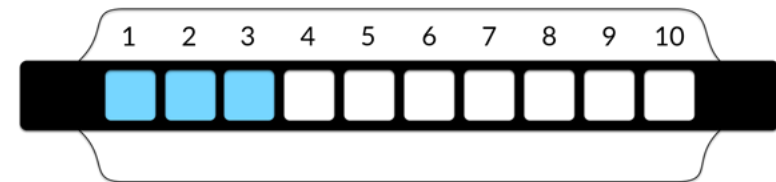
For example, if player's mouth creates a three hole embouchure (1, 2 and 3) and the tongue is blocking hole 1 and hole 2, then it is possible to play the 3rd hole as a single note. By lifting the tongue from covering the holes 1 and 2, a chord is played with the holes 1, 2 and 3.

The vamping effect is achieved by removing your tongue from the harmonica and putting it back again in the exact same place. While your tongue is about to land onto the harmonica again, increase your airflow just a little bit.

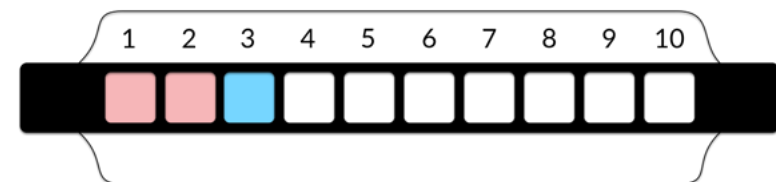
Watch the exercise video for more explanation.



The tongue is covering hole 1 and hole 2 (pink), the air flows through hole 3 (blue).
This means playing hole 3 as single note with tongue blocking.



By lifting the tongue from covering holes 1 and 2, a chord is played with the holes 1, 2 and 3 (blue).



Slap the tongue back on holes 1 and 2 (pink), so you play hole 3 with tongue blocking again.

vamping exercises

exercise 1

4↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 7↑ 7↓ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑

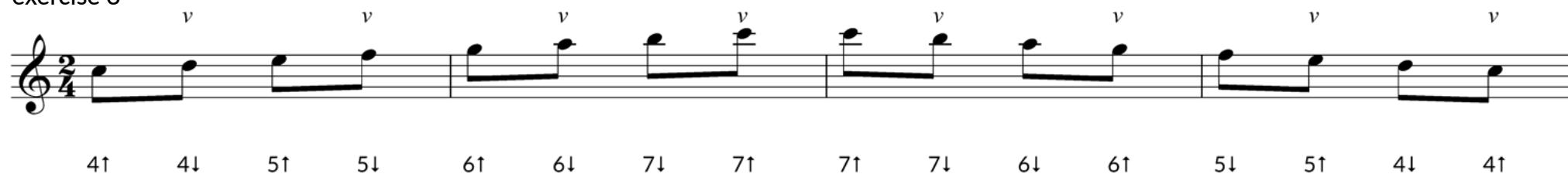
exercise 2

4↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 8↑ 9↓ 9↑ 10↓ 10↑ 10↑ 10↓

9↑ 9↓ 8↑ 8↓ 7↑ 7↓ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑

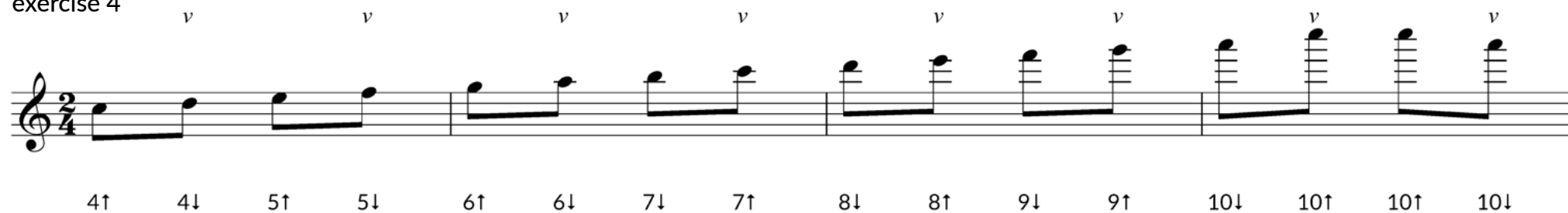
vamping exercises

exercise 3

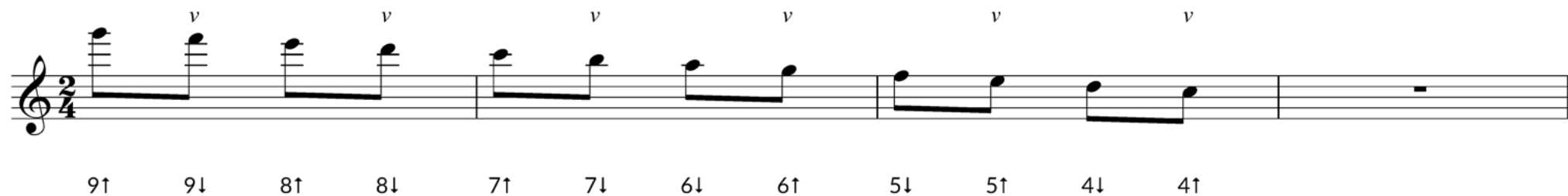


4↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 7↑ 7↓ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑

exercise 4



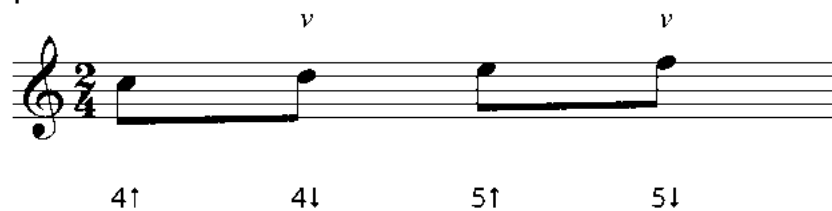
4↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 8↓ 8↑ 9↓ 9↑ 10↓ 10↑ 10↑ 10↓



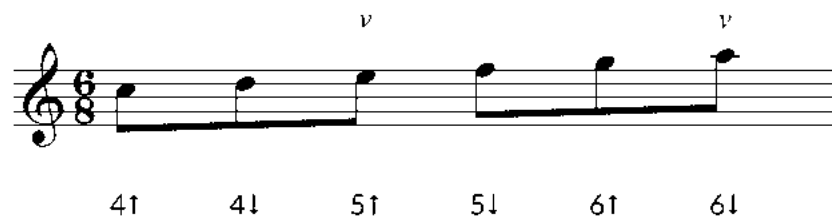
9↑ 9↓ 8↑ 8↓ 7↑ 7↓ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑

tune type vamping exercises

polka



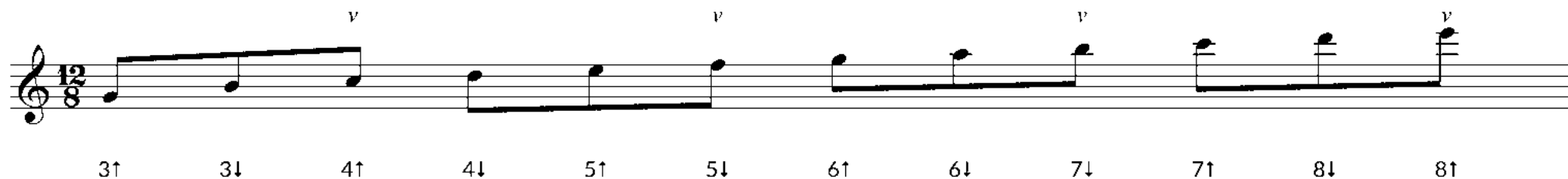
jig



reel



slide



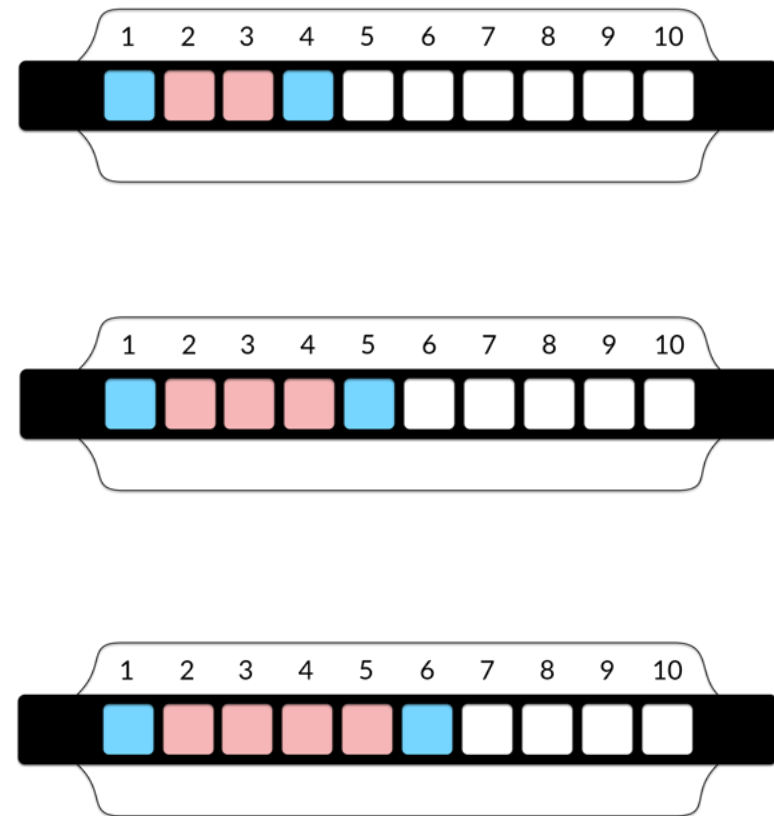
Playing drones

On the harmonica, playing a drone means playing one fixed hole with the left side of the mouth while playing the melody with the right side of the mouth.

For example, playing the 1st hole and blocking the 2nd and 3rd hole while playing the 4th. This would produce an octave, but here is the difference: if a player moves up to the 5th hole on the right side, the left side must continue to play the drone from the 1st hole. This means blocking the holes 2, 3 and 4. If the player then moves to the 6th hole, the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th hole must be blocked.

Drones create a powerful sound and they add another dimension to your playing.

With these exercises you will soon get used to playing with drones. They are also a great warm-up. You can practice them for example every morning or in a break during the day.



Play the drone (blue, left) with the left side of your mouth and the melody (blue, right) with the right side of your mouth.

drones exercises

exercise 1

4↑ 4↓ 5↑ 5↓ 6↑ 6↓ 7↓ 7↑ 7↑ 7↓ 6↓ 6↑ 5↓ 5↑ 4↓ 4↑
1↑ 1↓ 1↑ 1↓ 1↑ 1↓ 1↓ 1↑ 1↑ 1↓ 1↓ 1↑ 1↓ 1↑ 1↓ 1↑

exercise 2

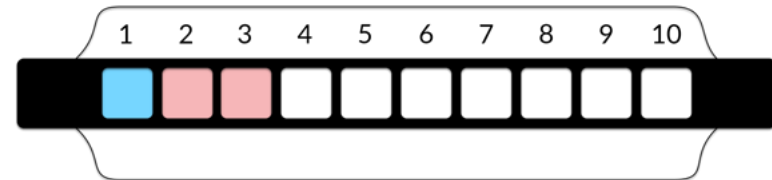
3↑ 4↑ 5↑ 6↑ 6↑ 5↑ 4↑ 3↑ 6↑ 7↑ 8↑ 9↑ 9↑ 8↑ 7↑ 6↑
1↑ 1↑ 1↑ 1↑ 1↑ 1↑ 1↑ 1↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑ 4↑

Playing tongue switching

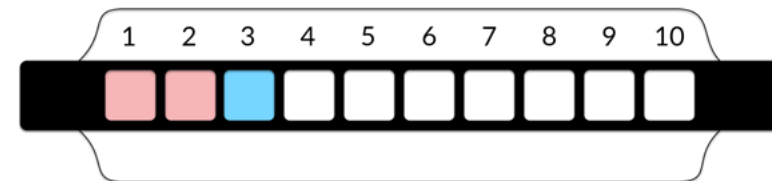
The tongue switching technique is necessary if you want to be able to jump smoothly over holes. Some tunes in Irish music are impossible to play without this technique, such as Drowsy Maggie and Gravel Walks among others.

Tongue switching is an extremely hard technique and it takes time and patience to master it.

The exercises are notated for a harmonica in Low C. Of course, you can practice these patterns on any harmonica.



The tongue is covering hole 2 and hole 3 (pink), the air flows through hole 1 (blue). This means playing hole 1 as a single note with tongue blocking.



By switching the tongue to the other side, the air flows through hole 3 (blue) and the tongue is covering hole 1 and hole 2 (pink).

tongue switching exercises

exercise 1

Exercise 1 is a tongue switching exercise in 2/4 time. It consists of a single line of music with 14 eighth notes. The notes are grouped into four measures of four notes each. The tongue switching instructions are as follows:

Measure	Note 1	Note 2	Note 3	Note 4
1	1↑ L	4↑ R	2↑ L	5↑ R
2	3↑ L	6↑ R	4↑ L	7↑ R
3	5↑ L	8↑ R	6↑ L	9↑ R
4	7↑ L	10↑ R		

exercise 2

Exercise 2 is a tongue switching exercise in 2/4 time. It consists of a single line of music with 14 eighth notes. The notes are grouped into four measures of four notes each. The tongue switching instructions are as follows:

Measure	Note 1	Note 2	Note 3	Note 4
1	10↑ R	7↑ L	9↑ R	6↑ L
2	8↑ R	5↑ L	7↑ R	4↑ L
3	6↑ R	3↑ L	5↑ R	2↑ L
4	4↑ R	1↑ L		

tongue switching exercises

exercise 3

1↑ 3↑ 2↑ 4↑ 3↑ 5↑ 4↑ 6↑ 5↑ 7↑ 6↑ 8↑ 7↑ 9↑ 8↑ 10↑
L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

exercise 4

10↑ 8↑ 9↑ 7↑ 8↑ 6↑ 7↑ 5↑ 6↑ 4↑ 5↑ 3↑ 4↑ 2↑ 3↑ 1↑
R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

tongue switching advanced exercises

exercise 1

1↑ 3↑ 1↑ 3↓ 1↑ 4↑ 1↑ 4↓ 1↑ 5↑ 1↑ 5↓ 1↑ 6↑ 1↑ 6↓ 1↑ 7↓ 1↑ 7↑
L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R

exercise 2

7↑ 1↑ 7↓ 1↑ 6↓ 1↑ 6↑ 1↑ 5↓ 1↑ 5↑ 1↑ 4↓ 1↑ 4↑ 1↑ 3↓ 1↑ 3↑ 1↑
R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L R L

tongue switching advanced exercises

exercise 3

Exercise 3 is a single-measure exercise in 2/4 time, consisting of 20 eighth notes. The notes are grouped into four pairs of eighth notes, each pair separated by a vertical bar line. The tongue switching instructions for each pair are as follows:

Pair	First Note	Second Note
1	4↑ L	6↑ R
2	4↑ L	6↓ R
3	4↑ L	7↓ R
4	4↑ L	7↑ R
5	4↑ L	8↓ R
6	4↑ L	8↑ R
7	4↑ L	9↓ R
8	4↑ L	9↑ R
9	4↑ L	10↓ R
10	4↑ L	10↑ R

exercise 4

Exercise 4 is a single-measure exercise in 2/4 time, consisting of 20 eighth notes. The notes are grouped into four pairs of eighth notes, each pair separated by a vertical bar line. The tongue switching instructions for each pair are as follows:

Pair	First Note	Second Note
1	10↑ R	4↑ L
2	10↓ R	4↑ L
3	9↑ R	4↑ L
4	9↓ R	4↑ L
5	8↑ R	4↑ L
6	8↓ R	4↑ L
7	7↑ R	4↑ L
8	7↓ R	4↑ L
9	6↓ R	4↑ L
10	6↑ R	4↑ L

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published by harmonica school berlin
Layout: harmonica school berlin, Csenge Csog
Photo: harmonica school berlin
Musical arrangements: Joel Andersson