

## First Songs for Harmonica

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### About the Harmonica:

The harmonica is a free reed musical instrument and is in the same family of instruments as the accordion and the concertina. The diatonic, or pocket harmonica, has 10 holes and 20 reeds. Each hole sounds a note when you breathe in, or draw, and another one when you breathe out, or blow.

The instrument was invented in Germany in 1823 and was originally sold by clockmakers there as a sideline. When waves of German immigrants came to America in the 1850s, they brought the harmonica with them. This appealing and affordable instrument was in time adopted by the cowboys of the Old West, black blues players down south, white country musicians, Louisiana Cajuns, the Finnish lumberjacks of the Upper Midwest, and many others. 200 years after its invention it is still a popular instrument, which is why you have one!

### How to read the songs:

We'll be using tablature, or tab, here, which is an easy way to write music for the harmonica. The tab I'm using consists of numbers, Xs, and the letters "b" and "d". The numbers tell you which hole of the harmonica to play. B means blow, or breathe out, and d means draw, or breathe in. For example, 4b would indicate the 4-hole breathing out, which we'll call 4-blow, and

5d would indicate the 5-hole breathing in, which we'll call 5-draw. An X indicates that a note is to be held for an extra beat. In the beginning, it can be tricky to play just one hole, so it's ok to play the hole you see on the page and the one or two holes below it. For example, if you are playing the 4-hole you can play 2-3-4 together. The trick is not to play a higher numbered hole than the tab number.

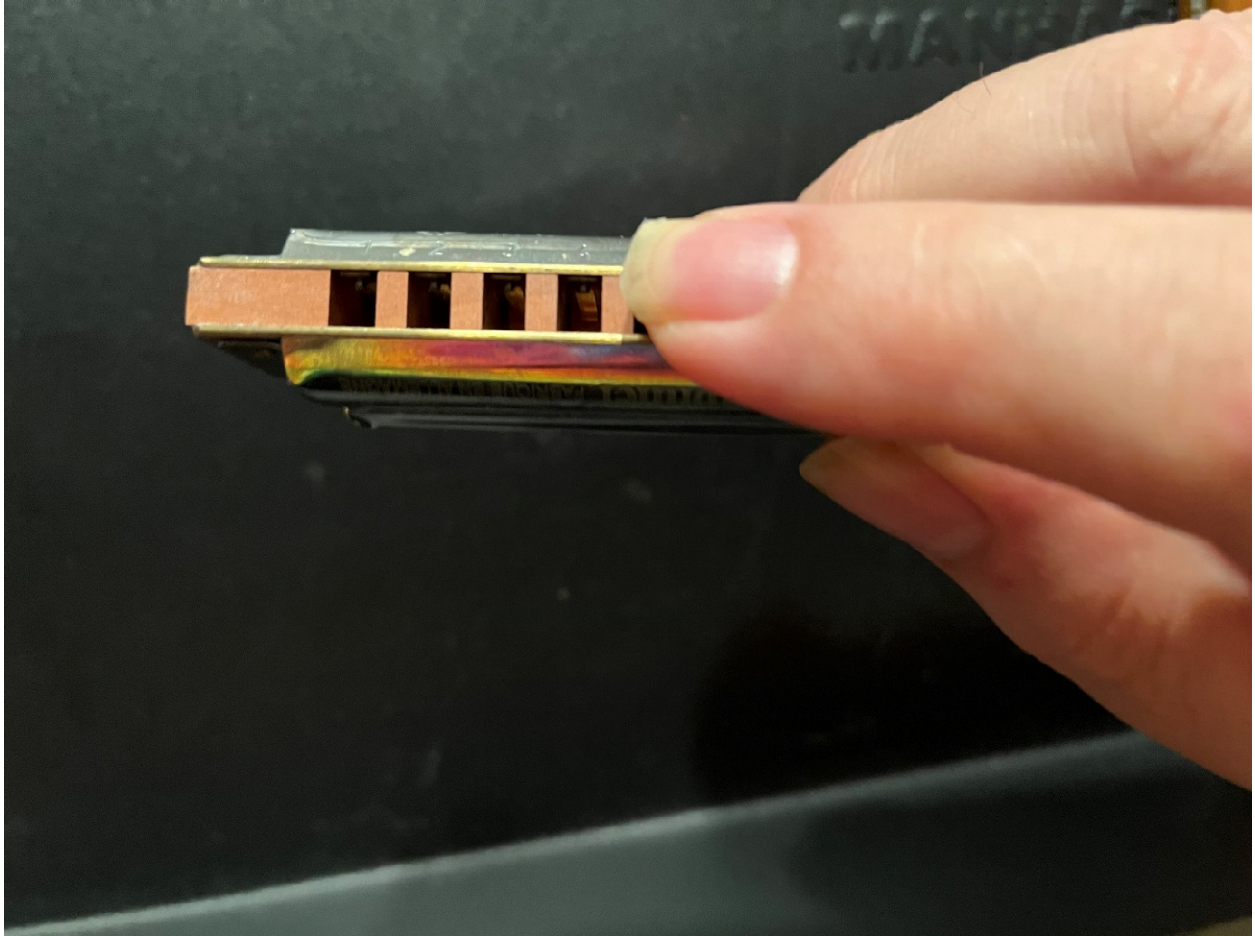
Music is written in groups of beats called measures. The vertical lines you see are called bar lines. They divide the music into measures, just like ruler divides a foot into inches. There will be four beats in each measure of these songs. This is called 4-4 time.

Each note will be held for one beat, or tap of your foot. An X means you will hold a note for 1 extra beat, two Xs means 2 extra beats, three Xs means 3 extra beats. If you can, it's good to tap your foot to keep track of the beats.

A note lasting 4 beats is whole note, a note lasting 2 beats is half note, and a note lasting 1 beat is a quarter note.

How to play the songs:

There is an easy way to learn songs on the harmonica called finger blocking. You do it like this: Let's say you need to play the 4-blow. Take your right index finger and lay it flat over the holes above the 4-hole. Those would be the 5-hole and up. The photo below shows you how to do this-



Then, keep your finger over holes 5 and up and place the harmonica with your fingertip inside your mouth and breathe out. Done correctly, you will hear two or three notes, with 4-blow as the highest sounding note. The high note is the melody note, and the notes below it are harmony notes (this why the instrument is called the harmonica-it can produce harmonies). In order to play the song correctly you must always have the right note on top. This type of playing is called chord-melody.

Repeat this process with the next note, and so on until you have played two measures. Then, remember the notes you

have just played and find them without using the finger. Put the harmonica inside your lips and keep your lips relaxed when you play without the finger. This called the pucker method of playing the harmonica.

By going back and forth in between finger blocking and puckering and playing the song two measures at a time each way, you can learn the whole song. After enough practice, you will be able to play it all the way through using pucker position. You can use your finger for as long as you need to. Later, you can try to play the songs with single notes without your finger. Here are some songs to play-

Easy songs for harmonica-

### 1. Hot Cross Buns

| 5b x 4d x | 4b x x x | 5b x 4d x | 4b x x x |

| 4b 4b 4b 4b | 4d 4d 4d 4d | 5b x 4d x | 4b x x x ||

### 2. Au Claire De La Lune

| 4b 4b 4b 4d | 5b x 4d x | 4b 5b 4d 4d | 4b x x x |

| 4b 4b 4b 4d | 5b x 4d x | 4b 5b 4d 4d | 4b x x x ||

### 3. Merrily We Roll Along

| 5b 4d 4b 4d | 5b 5b 5b x | 4d 4d 4d x | 5b 5b 5b x |  
| 5b 4d 4b 4d | 5b 5b 5b x | 4d 4d 5b 4d | 4b x x x ||

### 4. The Old Gray Goose

| 5b x 5b 4d | 4b x 4b x | 4d x 4d 5d | 5b 4d 4b x |  
| 6b x 6b 5d | 5b x 5b 4b | 4d 4b 4d 5b | 4 x x x ||

### 5. Lightly Row

6b 5b 5b x	5d 4d 4d x	4b 4d 5b 5d	6b 6b 6b x	
6b 5b 5b x	5d 4d 4d x	4b 5b 6b 6b	4b x x x	
4d 4d 4d 4d	4d 5b 5d x	5b 5b 5b 5b	5b 5d 6b x	
6b 5b 5b x	5d 4d 4d x	4b 5b 6b 6b	4b x x x	

For anyone who wishes to learn more, I offer private music lessons via Zoom/Skype/Facetime. Parents may email me at [banjoandguitar100@yahoo.com](mailto:banjoandguitar100@yahoo.com), or call me at 413-455-9215.

## Single Notes on Harmonica with Pucker Technique

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Clear tone:

Place the harp on the inside of the lips. Keep your lips relaxed.

Single notes:

Lower your jaw. Pinch in with the corners of your mouth.

The object is to form a vertical oval with your lips.

Also: Use only the force of your natural breath.

Tilt the back of the harmonica up at 20 degrees.

Exercises-

1. 4b-4d-4b x
2. 4d-4b-4d x
3. 4b-5b-4b x (slur)
4. 4d-5d-4d x (slur)
5. 4b-3b-4b x (slur)
6. 4d-3d-4d x (slur)
7. 4b-5d-4b x
8. 4d-5b-4d x
9. 4b-3d-4b x
10. 4d-3b-4d x
11. 4b-6b-4b x (breath cut)
12. 4d-6d-4d x (breath cut)
13. 4b-2b-4b x (breath cut)
14. 4d-2d-4d x (breath cut)
15. 4b-4b-4b x (ta articulation)
16. 4d-4d-4d x (ta articulation)

(These can also be done in tongue blocking position)

Pucker Techniques-

1. "Ta" articulation- ( ' ) – whisper the syllable "ta". Used on repeated notes or chords.

2. Slur- indicated by a curved line-use same breath on two more adjacent holes of the same breath direction.

3. Breath cut- ( / )- Stop breath short when jumping in between two non-adjacent holes of the same breath direction.

Major Scale

/ 4b 4d 5b 5d / 6b 6d 7d 7b / 7b 7d 6d 6b / 5d 5b 4d 4b //

Broken thirds-harmonica-use slurs

/ 4b 5b / 4d 5d / 5b 6b / 5d 6d / 6b 7b /  
/ 7b 6b / 6d 5d / 6b 5b / 5d 4d / 5b 4b //



# First Songs for Harmonica - 2

Traditional

Arr. G. Weiser

## 5. Lightly Row

6 5 5 ^ ⑤ ④ ④ 4 ④ 5 ⑤ 6 6 6 ^ ^

5

6 5 5 ^ ⑤ ④ ④ 4 5 6 6 4 /

9

④ ④ ④ ④ ④ 5 ⑤ 5 5 5 5 5 ⑤ 6 ^ ^ ^ ^

13

6 5 5 ^ ⑤ ④ ④ 4 5 6 6 4 /

## 17 6. Little Liza Jane

5 4 ④ 4 5 6 6 ^ ⑥ 6 5 6

21

5 4 ④ 4 5 6 6 ^ 5 5 ④ 4 ^

25

7 6 ⑥ 6 ⑥ 6 5 6

29

7 6 ⑥ 6 5 5 ^ ④ 4

# First Songs for Harmonica - 3

Arr. G. Weiser

## 7. Long Long Ago

Musical staff for measures 1-5 of 'Long Long Ago'. The staff is in 4/4 time and treble clef. The notes are quarter notes: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4. Fingerings are: 4, 4, (4), 5, 5, (5), 6, (6), 6, 5, 6, (5), 5. Accents (^) are placed above the notes for the first and second measures.

Musical staff for measures 6-11 of 'Long Long Ago'. The staff is in 4/4 time and treble clef. The notes are: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Fingerings are: (4), (5), 5, (4), 4, (4), 5, (4), 4, 4, (4), 5, (5). The first two measures are marked '1.' and the last two '2.'. A repeat sign is between measures 7 and 8. An accent (^) is placed above the note in measure 10.

Musical staff for measures 12-15 of 'Long Long Ago'. The staff is in 4/4 time and treble clef. The notes are: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Fingerings are: 6, (5), 5, (4), 3, 3, (5), 5, (4), 4, 3, 3. Accents (^) are placed above the notes in measures 13 and 15.

Musical staff for measures 16-19 of 'Long Long Ago'. The staff is in 4/4 time and treble clef. The notes are: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Fingerings are: 6, (5), 5, (4), 3, 5, (4), 4, 3, 2, 3, 4. Slashes (/) are placed above measures 16 and 17.

## 8. Buffalo Gals

Musical staff for measures 20-23 of 'Buffalo Gals'. The staff is in 4/4 time and treble clef. The notes are: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Fingerings are: 4, (4), 5, 6, (6), 6, 5, 6, (5), (4), (6), 6, 5, 6. Slashes (/) are placed above measures 21 and 23.

Musical staff for measures 24-27 of 'Buffalo Gals'. The staff is in 4/4 time and treble clef. The notes are: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Fingerings are: 4, (4), 5, 6, (6), 6, 5, (5), 6, 6, (5), (4), 4, 5, 4. Slashes (/) are placed above measures 24 and 25. An accent (^) is placed above the note in measure 26.

Musical staff for measures 28-31 of 'Buffalo Gals'. The staff is in 4/4 time and treble clef. The notes are: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Fingerings are: 7, (7), (6), 6, (6), 6, 5, 6, (5), (4), (6), 6, 5, 6. Slashes (/) are placed above measures 28 and 30.

Musical staff for measures 32-35 of 'Buffalo Gals'. The staff is in 4/4 time and treble clef. The notes are: C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4, C4. Fingerings are: 7, (7), (6), 6, (6), 6, 5, 7, (7), 6, (5), (4), 4, 5, 4. Slashes (/) are placed above measures 32 and 33.

# First Songs for Harmonica - 4

Traditional

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## 9. Beautiful Brown Eyes

5 5 5 4 ④ 5 ⑤ ⑤ 6 ⑤ 5 5 5 4 ④ 5 ④ 6 ⑤

9

5 5 5 4 ④ 5 ⑤ ⑤ ⑤ ⑤ 6 ④ 5 ⑤ 5 ④ 4 4

## 10. Blow the Man Down

17

5 6 ⑥ 6 5 4 5 6 ⑥ 6 5 6 ⑥ ⑤ 5 ⑤ ④ ④

26

⑤ 6 ⑤ ④ ③ ④ ⑤ 6 ⑤ ④ 6 6 6 6 ⑤ 5 ④ 5 4

## 11. Down in the Valley

34

3 4 ④ 5 4 4 5 ④ 4 ④

41

3 ③ ④ 6 6 ⑤ 5 ④ 4

## 12. On Top of Old Smokey

48

4 4 5 6 7 ⑥ ⑥ ⑤ 6 ⑥ 6 / 4 4 5 6

57

6 ④ 5 ⑤ 5 ④ 4

# First Songs for Harmonica - 5

Traditional

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## 13. Aura Lee

Musical notation for the first system of 'Aura Lee'. The staff shows a treble clef, a common time signature, and a melody with eighth and quarter notes. Fingering numbers are written below the notes. There are two slanted slashes above the second measure and three accents above the eighth, ninth, and tenth measures. A repeat sign is present after the fourth measure.

6 7 ⑦ 7 ⑧ ⑥ ⑧ 7 ⑦ ⑥ ⑦ 7 8 8 8 8 8 8

Musical notation for the second system of 'Aura Lee'. The staff continues the melody. Fingering numbers are written below the notes. There are three accents above the first, fourth, and eighth measures, and two slanted slashes above the sixth and seventh measures.

7 8 ⑧ 7 ⑧ 8 8 8 ⑨ 8 ⑧ ⑥ ⑧ 7 7 ⑦ 8 ⑧ 7

## 14. Red River Valley

Musical notation for the first system of 'Red River Valley'. The staff shows a treble clef, a common time signature, and a melody with quarter and eighth notes. Fingering numbers are written below the notes. An accent is placed above the fourth measure. A repeat sign is present after the eighth measure.

13 6 7 8 8 ⑧ 7 ⑧ 7 ⑥ 7 6 7 8 7 8

Musical notation for the second system of 'Red River Valley'. The staff continues the melody. Fingering numbers are written below the notes. An accent is placed above the eighth measure.

19 9 ⑨ 8 ⑧ 9 ⑨ 8 8 ⑧ 7 ⑧ 8 9 ⑨

Musical notation for the third system of 'Red River Valley'. The staff continues the melody. Fingering numbers are written below the notes. An accent is placed above the second measure.

25 ⑥ ⑥ 6 ⑦ 7 ⑧ 8 ⑧ 7

## 15. Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater

Musical notation for the first system of 'Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater'. The staff shows a treble clef, a common time signature, and a melody with quarter and eighth notes. Fingering numbers are written below the notes. There are two slanted slashes above the eighth and ninth measures, and an accent above the tenth measure.

30 8 7 ⑧ 7 ⑥ 7 6 7 8 7 ⑧ 7 ⑥ ⑧ ⑧

Musical notation for the second system of 'Peter, Peter, Pumpkin Eater'. The staff continues the melody. Fingering numbers are written below the notes. There are two slanted slashes above the sixth and seventh measures, and two accents above the eighth and ninth measures.

34 8 7 ⑧ 7 ⑥ 7 6 7 5 6 ④ 6 4 4 4