

FOLK SONGS FOR BEGINNER HARMONICA PLAYERS



(VERSION 1.0)

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INTRODUCTION

Hi,

Thanks for downloading *Folk Songs for Beginner Harmonica Players* from www.leedsharmonica.uk. There's no tricky techniques or fancy licks here. Just honest-to-goodness melodies you already know.

The selection of tunes is fairly arbitrary, I just picked some of my favourites. Although some are trickier than others, all should be approachable for beginners. There's a recording of each tune too, played on a harmonica in the key of C.

I've tried to put the simpler ones at the beginning to help you out a little, but it's not an exact science. So just dive in and see how you get on.

There is a brief video introduction to these songs on youtube. You can watch it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bn7V4OAEaUA>

These songs are great for playing round the campfire or entertaining friends and family. I hope you have fun!



Kevin Bishop
2020-06-05

Disclaimer:

These tabs are a combination of my own work and referencing other existing sources. I've done my best, however folk tunes are an aural tradition and many of these songs I learned by ear and memory. If some of the tab appears "wrong" to you, that's fine. You can play the songs however you like!

That said, if you'd like to point out inaccuracies, or suggest improvements please email leedsharmonica@gmail.com.

PLAYING THE SONGS

The tabs below are for a regular 10 hole diatonic harmonica. Often called a folk or blues harmonica. If you have another kind of harmonica (for example a chromatic or tremolo) the tabs won't work. Sorry! In that case you may like to try <http://harptabs.com/> where there is a large collection of tabs for all kinds of harmonica.

ABOUT HARMONICA TAB

Harmonica *tab* is a simple method of notating how to play a song. You don't need to be able to read sheet music or know anything about music theory.

Most harmonicas have hole numbers stamped into the top cover plate. Make sure the numbers are facing up and hole 1 is on the left.

A number with a + sign next to it means you should exhale (*blow*) on that hole. A number by itself means you should draw (*inhale*) on that hole.

For example:

4 = draw on hole four

4+ = blow on hole four

6 = draw on hole six

6+ = blow on hole six

...and so on.

(By the way, this will be different from what some people are used to. There is no universal standard for harmonica tab. This is the way I learned it. If you're struggling you could always just write out the tab the way you like it.)

For each song there is a tab and a link to an audio file of the song being played. The songs have been recorded on a harmonica in the key of C.

You can still play the tabs if you have a harmonica in a different key. It just won't match the recordings.

It's a good idea to try different keys anyway, then you can pick your favourite.

For example, you may find songs played on the higher holes (6 and above) sound better on a lower harmonica, such as an A or G. Experiment and have fun!

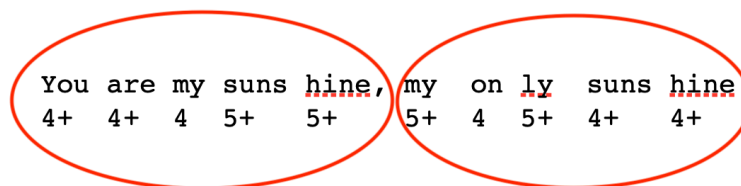
TIPS FOR PRACTICING

Although harmonica tabs are very useful for helping you learn to play a tune, they are really just a starting point. Your goal is to play without the tab eventually. The joy of harmonica is you can carry it with you and play anywhere. That's not so much fun if you're also lugging a folder full of tabs with you!

Here are some practice tips.

Break Lines Up Into More Manageable Chunks

For example here's how you might approach the first line of You Are My Sunshine. Concentrate on getting the first section to sound good before you go on to the second.



Lather, Rinse, Repeat

The best way to memorise something is to do it, do it, and do it again. Listen to the section you are trying to play on the recording twice (at least), play once, repeat. It's laborious, but it's a tried and true method. You will get there!

Go Slowly!

Learning any new physical skill - including playing the harmonica - takes time and attention. You are asking your body to do things it's never done before. You need to start slowly. You can't play fast until you have honed your skills at a slower pace. The recordings linked from this document are played at a slow

tempo. I'd recommend playing even slower to begin with. Most of these tunes sound great played slowly anyway.

Breathe Deep and Relax

Making your harmonica sound good depends on good breath control and reducing any unnecessary tension in muscles in your lips, mouth, throat, neck and shoulders.

We want to sound round, warm and confident, not squeaky, shrill and thin.

Your breath should come all the way from your belly and release gently. It's the *opposite* of what you might do to blow out a candle. Instead, imagine you are trying to fog up a mirror.

Don't Give Up, and Have Fun

Everyone gets frustrated learning to play an instrument. It's hard work! The trick is to enjoy what you're doing. If you are struggling on a particular song or passage, take a break. Things often feel easier when you come back. You should remember to play songs you've already learned, just for your own enjoyment. Not only is it fun and satisfying but it's reminds you how much you've already learned.

Ready? Let's go.

SONGS

1. Goodnight Irene
2. Amazing Grace
3. What Shall We Do With The Drunken Sailor?
4. Red River Valley
5. This Land is Your Land
6. Will The Circle Be Unbroken
7. Joshua Fought The Battle of Jericho
8. You Are My Sunshine
9. Oh! Suzanna
10. Wildwood Flower
11. Oh Danny Boy

1. GOODNIGHT IRENE

Chorus:

Ir ene good night Ir ene good night
4+ 4 4+ 3 4 5+ 4 4+

Good night Ir ene good night Ir ene
4 5+ 5+ 4 4+ 4 4+ 3

I'll see you in my dreams
3 4 4 5+ 4 4+

Verse:

Last Satur day I got marr ied
3+ 4+ 4+ 4 4+ 3 4

Me and my wife settled down
4 4 4 5+ 4 4+

Now me and my wife are part ed
4 5+ 5+ 5+ 4 4+ 4 3

Going to take another stroll down town
4 4 4 5+ 4 4+

I asked your mother for ya
She said that you were too young
I wish to the lord I'd never seen your face
Or heard your lying tongue

Stop your rambling stop your gambling
Stop staying out late at night
Stay home with your wife and your family
Stay in by the fireside bright

I love Irene God knows I do
Love her till the sea runs dry
If Irene turns her back on me
I'll take morphine and die

~ ~ ~

Goodnight Irene example: <https://leedsharmonica.uk/resources/folk-songs/mp3s/Irene-Goodnight.mp3>

2. AMAZING GRACE

Am a zi ng Grace how sweet the sound
6+ 7+ 8+ 7+ 8+ 8 7+ 6 6+

That saved a wretch like me
6+ 7+ 8+ 7+ 8+ 8 9+

I once w a s lost but now a m found
8+ 9+ 8+ 9+ 8+ 7+ 6+ 6 7+ 6 6+

Was blind bu t now I see
6+ 7+ 8+ 7+ 8+ 8 7+

Was Grace that taught my heart to fear
And Grace, my fears relieved
How precious did that Grace appear
The hour I first believed

Through many dangers, toils and snares
We have already come
T'was Grace that brought us safe thus far
And Grace will lead us home

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost but now am found
Was blind, but now I see

~ ~ ~

Amazing Grace Example: <https://leedsharmonica.uk/resources/folk-songs/mp3s/Amazing-Grace.mp3>

3. WHAT SHALL WE DO WITH THE DRUNKEN SAILOR?

What shall we do with the drunk en sail or?

6 6 6 6 6 6 6 4 5 6

What shall we do with the drunk en sail or?

6+ 6+ 6+ 6+ 6+ 6+ 6+ 4+ 5+ 6+

What shall we do with the drunk en sail or?

6 6 6 6 6 6 7 7+ 8

Ear ly in the morn ing?

7+ 6 6+ 5 4 4

Chorus:

Hoo ray and up she ris es!

6 6 6 6 4 5 6

Hoo ray and up she ris es!

6+ 6+ 6+ 6+ 4+ 5+ 6+

Hoo ray and up she ris es!

6 6 6 6 7 7+ 8

Ear ly in the morn ing

7+ 6 6+ 5 4 4

Take him, shake him, try and wake him...

Put him in the guard room 'till he's sober...

Shave his belly with a rusty razor...

Give him a taste of the Bosun's rope-end...

Give him a dose of salt and water...

Put him in the scuppers with a hose pipe on him...

Soak him in oil 'till he sprouts flippers...

Put him in bed with the Captain's daughter...

Turn him over and drive him windward...

That's what we'll do with the drunken sailor...

~ ~ ~

What Shall We Do With The Drunken Sailor example: <https://leedsharmonica.uk/resources/folk-songs/mp3s/Drunken-Sailor.mp3>

4. RED RIVER VALLEY

From this val ley they say you are go ing

4+ 4 5+ 5+ 5+ 5+ 4 5+ 4 4+

We will miss your bright eyes and sweet smile

4+ 4 5+ 4+ 5+ 6+ 5 5+ 4

For they say you are tak ing the suns hine

6+ 5 5+ 5+ 4 4+ 4 5+ 6+ 5

That has brigh tened our path ways a while

5+ 4 4+ 4 5+ 4 5+ 4 4+

Come and sit by my side, if you love me
Do not hasten to bid me adieu
Just remember the Red River Valley
And the cowboy who loved you so true

I've been thinking a long time, my darling
Of the sweet words you never would say
Now, alas, must my fond hopes all vanish
For they say you are gong away

Do you think of the valley you're leaving
O how lonely and how dreary it will be
And do you think of the kind hearts you're breaking
And the pain you are causing to me

They will bury me where you have wandered
Near the hills where the daffodils grow
When you're gone from the Red River Valley
For I can't live without you I know

~ ~ ~

Red River Valley example: <https://leedsharmonica.uk/resources/folk-songs/mp3s/Red-River-Valley.mp3>

5. THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND

This land is your land

4+ 4 5+ 5 5

This land is my land

5 4+ 4 5+ 5+

From Cal i forn ia

3+ 4+ 5+ 4 4

To the New York Is lands

4 4+ 4 5+ 5+

From the red wood for ests

4+ 4+ 4 5+ 5 5

To the gulf stream wa ters

5 5 4+ 4 5+ 5+

This land was made for you and me

4 4 4 3 3+ 3 4 4+

As I was walking that ribbon of highway

I saw above me that endless skyway

I saw below me that golden valley

This land was made for you and me

I've roamed and rambled and I followed my footsteps

To the sparkling sands of her diamond deserts

And all around me a voice was sounding

This land was made for you and me

When the sun came shining, and I was strolling

And the wheat fields waving and the dust clouds rolling

As the fog was lifting a voice was chanting

This land was made for you and me

(Continues on next page)

As I went walking I saw a sign there,
And on the sign it said "No Trespassing"
But on the other side it didn't say nothing
That side was made for you and me

In the shadow of the steeple I saw my people
By the relief office I seen my people
As they stood there hungry I stood there asking
Is this land made for you and me?

Nobody living can ever stop me
As I go walking that freedom highway
Nobody living can ever make me turn back
This land was made for you and me

~ ~ ~

This Land Is Your Land example: <https://leedsharmonica.uk/resources/folk-songs/mp3s/This-Land-Is-Your-Land.mp3>

6. WILL THE CIRCLE BE UNBROKEN

Will the circle be unbroken

4 5+ 6+ 6+ 7 6 6+ 7

Bye and bye lord bye and bye

7 6 6+ 6+ 6+ 5+ 4

There's a better world awaiting

4 5+ 6+ 6+ 7 8 8 7

In the sky lord in the sky

6+ 6 7 7 6 6 6+

I was standing by my window

On one cold and cloudy day

When I saw that hearse come rolling

For to carry my mother away

I said to that undertaker

Undertaker please drive slow

For this lady you are carrying

Lord, I hate to see her go

Oh, I followed close behind her

Tried to hold up and be brave

But I could not hide my sorrow

When they laid her in the grave

I went back home

my home was lonesome

Missed my mother she was gone

All of my brothers, sisters crying

What a home so sad and lone

~ ~ ~

Will The Circle Be Unbroken example: <https://leedsharmonica.uk/resources/folk-songs/mp3s/Will-The-Circle-Be-Unbroken.mp3>

7. JOSHUA FOUGHT THE BATTLE OF JERICHO

Chorus:

Joshua fought the battle of Jericho
6 6 7 7 7+ 7+ 8 8+ 7+ 8+

Jericho, Jericho
8 7 8 8+ 7+ 8+

Joshua fought the battle of Jericho
6 6 7 7 7+ 7+ 8 8+ 7+ 8+

And the walls came tumbling down!
8+ 9 8+ 8 7+ 7+ 7 6

First Verse:

You may talk about your men of Gideon
10 10 10 9+ 8+ 8+ 8+ 8+ 8+

You may talk about your men of Saul
10 10 10 9+ 8+ 8+ 8+ 8+ 8+

But there's none like good old Joshua
10 10 10 8+ 8+ 8+ 8+ 8+ 8+

And the battle of Jericho!
7+ 8 8+ 8+ 8 7+ 7 6

Right up to the walls of Jericho
They marched with spear in hand
"Go blow them ram horns", Joshua cried
"Cause the battle is in my hand"

(Continues on next page)

Then the lamb, ram
Sheep horns began to blow
And the trumpets began to sound
Joshua told the children to shout that morning
And the walls came tumbling down!

~ ~ ~

Joshua Fought The Battle Of Jericho example: <https://leedsharmonica.uk/resources/folk-songs/mp3s/Battle-Of-Jericho.mp3>

8. YOU ARE MY SUNSHINE

Chorus:

You are my suns hine, my on ly suns hine
4+ 4+ 4 5+ 5+ 5+ 4 5+ 4+ 4+

You make me hap py when skies are gray
4+ 4 5+ 5 6 6 6+ 5 5+

You'll nev er know dear, how much I love you
4+ 4 5+ 5 6 6 6+ 5 5+ 4+

Please don't take my sun shine aw ay
4+ 4 5+ 5 4 4 5+ 4+

First Verse:

The oth er night dear, as I lay sleep ing
4+ 4+ 4 5+ 5+ 5+ 4 5+ 4+ 4+

I dreamed I held you in my arms
4+ 4 5+ 5 6 6+ 5 5+

But when I awoke, dear, I was mis ta ken
4+ 4 5+ 5 6 6 6+ 5 5+ 4+

So I hung my head and I cried
4+ 4 5+ 5 4 4 5+ 4+

The other night dear, as I lay sleeping
I dreamed I held you in my arms
But when I awoke, dear, I was mistaken
So I hung my head and I cried

I'll always love you and make you happy
If you will only say the same
But if you leave me and love another
You'll regret it all some day

(Continues on next page)

You told me once, dear, you really loved me
And no one else could come between
But now you've left me and love another
You have shattered all of my dreams

In all my dreams, dear, you seem to leave me
When I awake my poor heart pains
So when you come back and make me happy
I'll forgive you dear, I'll take all the blame

~ ~ ~

You Are My Sunshine example: <https://leedsharmonica.uk/resources/folk-songs/mp3s/You-Are-My-Sunshine.mp3>

9. OH! SUZANNA

Well I came from Al a ba ma
4+ 4 5+ 6+ 6+ 6 6+ 5+

with a ban jo on my knee
4+ 4 5+ 5+ 4 4+ 4

And I'm going to Loui si an a
4+ 4 5+ 5+ 5+ 5 5+ 4+

my true love for to see
4 4+ 4+ 4 4 4+

And it rained all night the day I left
4+ 4 5+ 6+ 6+ 6 6+ 5+ 4+

the weath er it was dry
4 5+ 5+ 4 4+ 4

And The sun so hot I froze to death
4+ 4 5+ 5+ 5+ 5 5+ 4+ 4+

Suz ann a don't you cry
4 5+ 5+ 4 4 4+

Refrain:

Oh! Suz ann a don't you cry for me
5 5 6 6 6+ 6+ 5+ 4+ 4

Well I've come from Al a ba ma with
4+ 4 5+ 6+ 6+ 6 6+ 5+ 4+

A ban jo on my knee
4 5+ 5+ 4 4 4+

(Continues on next page)

I had a dream the other night, when everything was still
I thought I saw Suzanna coming down the hill
The buck-wheat cake was in her mouth the tear was in her eye
Says "I'm coming from the south Susanna, don't you cry"

I soon will be in New Orleans and then I'll look all round
And when I find Susanna I will fall upon the ground
And if I do not find her then I will surely die
And when I'm dead and buried Suzanna, don't you cry

~ ~ ~

Oh! Suzanna example: <https://leedsharmonica.uk/resources/folk-songs/mp3s/Oh-Suzanna.mp3>

10. WILDWOOD FLOWER

I will twine, I will mingle my raven black hair
5+ 5 6+ 6 7+ 5+ 5 5+ 4 5+ 4 4+

With the roses so red and the lilies so fair
5+ 5 6+ 6 7+ 5+ 5 5+ 4 5+ 4 4+

And the myrtle so bright with its emerald hue
6+ 6+ 7+ 7+ 6 6+ 5+ 5+ 5 6+ 6 6+

The pale anemita and the hysop so blue
5+ 5+ 5+ 4 5+ 6+ 6+ 6+ 4 5+ 4 4+

I will dance, I will sing and my laugh shall be gay
I will charm every heart, in his crown I will sway
I woke from my dreaming, my idol was clay
All portions of loving had all flown away

But he taught me to love him and promised to love
And to cherish me over all others above
My poor heart is wondering no misery can tell
He left with no warning, no word of farewell

Well you told me you love me and called me your flower
That was blooming to cheer you through life's dreary hour
I live to see him regret life's dark hour
He's gone and neglected this pale wildwood flower

~ ~ ~

Wildwood Flower example: <https://leadsharmonica.uk/resources/folk-songs/mp3s/Wildwood-Flower.mp3>

11. OH DANNY BOY

Part A

Oh Dan ny boy the pipes the pipes are ca ll ing
7 7+ 8 8+ 8 8+ 10 9+ 8+ 8 7+ 6

From glen to glen and down the moun tain side
7+ 8+ 9 9+ 10 9+ 8+ 7+ 8+ 8

The summ er's gone, and all the ros es fa ll ing
7 8+ 8 8+ 8 8+ 10 9+ 8+ 8 7+ 6

tis you tis you must go and I must bide
7 7+ 8 8+ 9 8+ 8 7+ 6 7+

Part B

But come you back when sum mers in the me a dow
6+ 6 7 7+ 7 7 6 6+ 6 6+ 5+ 4+

Or when the val leys hushed and white with snow
6+ 6 7 7+ 7 7 6 6+ 5+ 4

tis I'll be here in sun shine or in sh a dow
6+ 6+ 6+ 8+ 8 8 7+ 6 7+ 6+ 5+ 4+

Oh Dan ny boy oh Dan ny boy I love you so
3 4+ 4 5+ 6 6+ 5+ 4 7+ 6 7 7+

And if you come, when all the flowers are dying
If I am dead, as dead I well may be
You'll come and find the place where I am lying
And kneel and say an "Ave" there for me.

And I shall hear, tho' soft you tread above me
And all my grave will warmer, sweeter be
For you will bend and tell me that you love me
I shall sleep in peace until you come to me.

~ ~ ~

Oh Danny Boy example: <https://leedsharmonica.uk/resources/folk-songs/mp3s/Oh-Danny-Boy.mp3>

REVISION HISTORY

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