

tremolo tab guide  
Tremolo Harmonica Tab

This article was created using size 14 bold Consolas type. The diagrams my appear better if viewed using the same. 24, 21, 20, and 16 note tremolo harmonicas will be covered. Key of C is assumed but the method will work for any key.

Tab is short for tablature. It uses numbers to indicate where notes should be played on a musical instrument. Tablature has been used for centuries with various musical instruments.

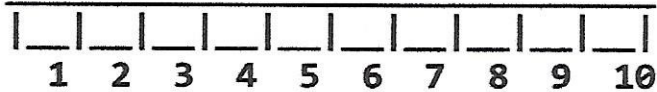
The most basic type of harmonica tab indicates a hole on the harmonica and the breath direction (blow or draw). This basic tab does not indicate timing so the player needs to know the tune well enough to hum or sing it. This article will explain a basic tab for the tremolo harp.

Tremolo harmonicas come in different sizes. If each size had a unique tab then it would be very hard to share tab among tremolo players. Therefore the following method is proposed which uses 10 hole diatonic harmonica tab as a starting point. This will make all tremolo tab uniform and also enable the use of the vast number of diatonic tabs available. The author has used this method with success for several years. There is also historical precedence for this method. Hohner has marked some of their

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Echo Harps with the same numbering system as used on a diatonic, specifically the models 2409 and 2309 and perhaps others.

The typical 10 hole diatonic harmonica:



Each hole contains 2 notes. One sounds on blow and one sounds on draw. Tab is then the hole number and some indication of the breath direction. + is common for blow and - is common for draw, but sometimes arrows or circles or the letters B or D are used. For this article + is blow and - is draw.

Blow will be assumed so the + will not be used. This makes cleaner tab.

3 means blow into hole 3 and -7 means draw (inhale) at hole 7.

We will start with blow notes and then cover draw notes later. Draw notes on the tremolo will be notated in relation to a blow note, just as it is done on a 10 hole diatonic. Blow and draw notes together will provide a complete major scale.

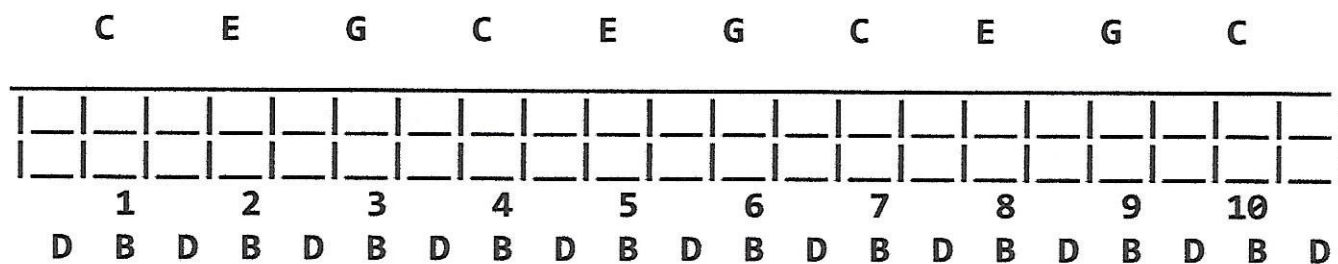
The blow notes on a 10 hole diatonic in C are:

C	E	G	C	E	G	C	E	G	C
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

The blow notes on a 21 note tremolo harmonica in C are the same. So 4 would be the fourth blow note on either harmonica which would be a C

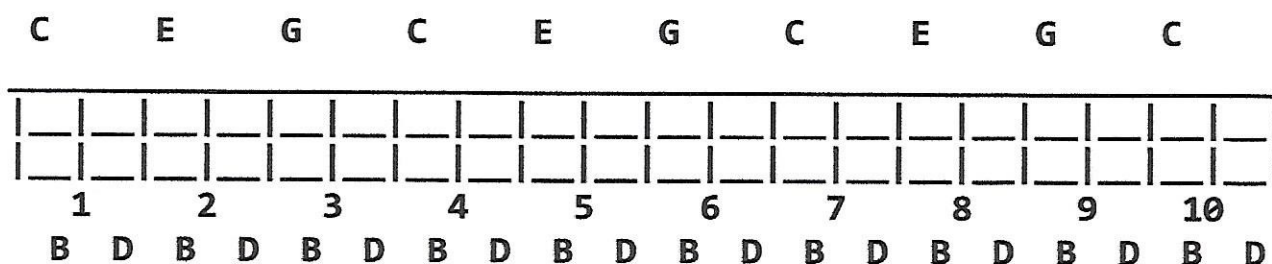
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note. On the diatonic this would be the fourth hole counting from the left. On the tremolo the blow and draw notes alternate so the fourth blow note is not the fourth hole.



In this diagram B is blow and D is draw. This is a typical 21 note tremolo harmonica made in Asia, key of C. Only blow notes are listed for now.

Here is the arrangement of the blow notes on a 20 note, 40 reed Hohner Echo Harp model 2409:

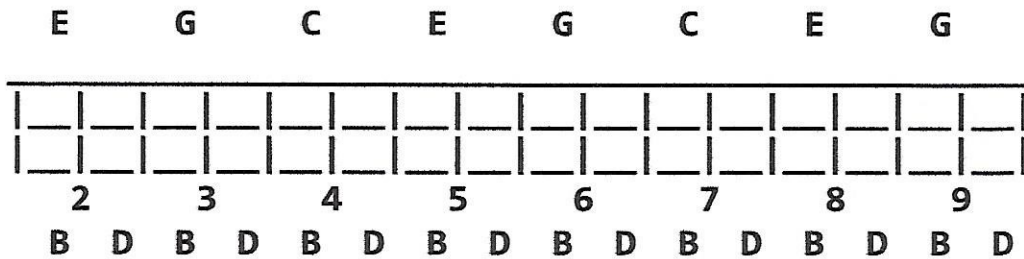


The numbering and sequence of blow notes is identical to the previous harps. However, on this diagram the numbers have been placed at the division between the blow and draw reeds. Hohner intends for this number to be used for both notes, just as it is with the 10 hole diatonic. Hohner

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has stamped  
these numbers in these locations on the top  
cover of some of the model 2409 Echo Harp.

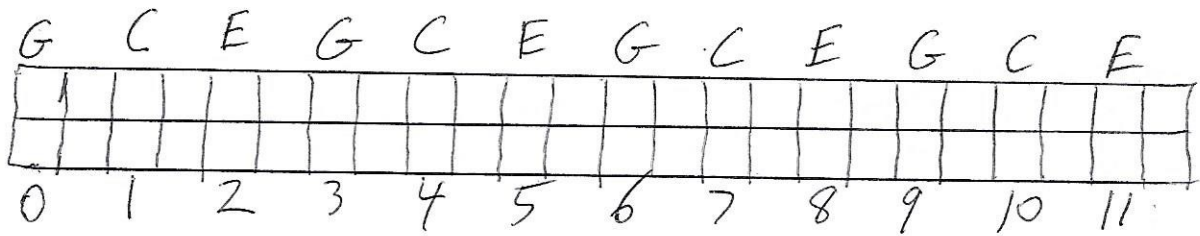
Hohner also makes a 16 note version called the 2309:



The 2309 is similar to the 2409 but with four fewer notes. Two notes, one blow and one draw, are removed from each end.

Hohner marks the 2309 from 2 to 9 so the numbers and notes will match with the numbers and notes on the 2409 and on the diatonic. Hohner also makes a 16 note version of their Weekender tremolo. Suzuki makes a 16 note version of their Winner tremolo harp. Tombo makes a 16 note model 2116 and a model 3116 (the difference is the lowest draw note). As can be seen on this diagram the note marked blow 4 would be a C, the same as in the previous diagrams.

The 24 note tremolo harmonica that is made in Asia is the same as the 21 note harmonica but with 3 more notes. One is added to the low end and the other 2 are added to the high end.



24 Note Asian tremolo harmonica

Marked notes are blow.

Unmarked notes are draw.

D B D

With the Hohner 2309 the numbering stayed the same for each note even though it meant leaving out 1 and instead making 2 the first blow note.

In this diagram it is proposed to number the first blow note 0. Then the rest of the blow notes will be numbered the same as on all the previous harmonica diagrams. Blow 4 is still the same C note as in the other examples above.

Positive numbers 1 to 10 now represent the same notes on all of these harmonicas, including the standard 10 hole "Richter blues" diatonic.

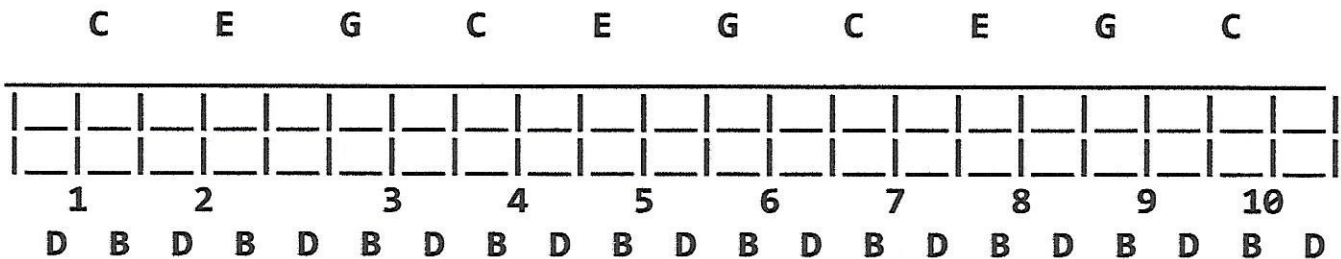
The pattern CEG is a C major chord. On a G major harmonica the pattern would be GBD, a G major chord. On a D it would be DF#A. The draw notes will complete the major scale.

The Draw Notes

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In this diagram the hole numbers are moved so they are between a blow and a draw note. This is the same as the Hohner Echo Harp diagram above. This is the 21 note Asian tremolo. The numbers for the blow notes still follow the same numbering as before, which matches the numbering on the 10 hole diatonic. 4 blow is still the same C note.



Numbers 3 to 10 have been moved slightly to the right so they cover both a blow and a draw note. Blow on the left and draw on the right. Numbers 1 and 2 were moved to the left. They also cover the same blow note that they did before. They now also cover a draw note, except the blow is on the right and draw is on the left. The Asian note system provides a complete major scale in the first octave. The 10 hole diatonic does not. To make room for the notes that are missing from the 10 hole diatonic the Asian note arrangement adds two more draw notes. Room is made for one more note by starting on a draw note instead of a blow note. The other new note is the draw note between 2 and 3. It is an A note. On the Richter harp it is a G note, the same as blow 3.

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Each number 3 to 10 now represents a "blow/draw pair" that has the same two notes as on a 10 hole Richter diatonic. The notes will match on either harmonica. -6 will be the same note. 8 will be the same note. The difference is blow and draw are in the same hole on the 10 hole diatonic, for example 5 and -5, but on the tremolo blow is on the left and draw is on the right.

In the next diagram the draw notes are listed.

C	E	G	C	E	G	C	E	G	C	
1	2	-3L	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
D	F	A	B	D	F	A	B	D	F	A
D	B	D	B	D	B	D	B	D	B	D

4 is C. -4 is D. 5 is E. -5 is F. 6 is G. -6 is A. -7 is B. 7 is C.

That makes a C major scale on either this tremolo or on the diatonic harp.

The exact same tab can be used on holes, or "blow/draw pairs" 3 to 10.

Tab notes 3 to 10, both positive and negative, are the same on either the tremolo harp or the 10 hole Richter diatonic. Blow 1 and 2 are also the same. That leaves just three draw notes on the low end of the harp. If you are playing a Richter tuned tremolo, for example a Hohner Echo



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Harp or a Seydel Sailor Steel Reed or a Hering then the Richter tab matches already. You are done here. If you have an Asian note arrangement, which this last diagram shows, then read on. Either way you are now prepared to use the majority of 10 hole Richter tab that is written for first position. (More on first versus second position later.) (The Hohner Echo Celeste is Asian tuned. It is not the same as an Echo Harp.)

Blow 1 and draw 1 are the same on the tremolo or the 10 hole. The notes are C and D, blow and draw. On the 10 hole they are in the same hole. On the tremolo the draw note D is to the left of the blow note C. Remember the pattern from 3 to 10 is the blow note is on the left and the draw note is on the right for each blow/draw pair. On hole 1 the pattern is reversed. That is to make room for the extra notes in the Asian system.

This leaves just 2 notes to find tab for. Draw 2 on the tremolo is an F note. On the 10 hole diatonic it is a G note (Richter tuning). To get the F note the draw 2 must be bent down. If your 10 hole Richter harp tab indicates a bent draw 2 then play the draw 2 on the tremolo which is the draw note just to the left of the blow 2. A bent draw 2 can be indicated like this -2" or like this -2b ( b means flat in music notation). These two are the most common, but there are other systems. For tremolo

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tab I do not bother adding the flat indication. Just -2. Bending is rarely done on the tremolo harp. If you are reading 10 hole diatonic harp tab and see -2 all by itself remember that -2 and 3 are the same note in Richter tuning. You will have to play blow 3 on the Asian tremolo if the Richter tab indicates draw 2 or blow 3.

Finally, the last note. Remember 3 and -3 are the third blow note and the draw note just to the right of the third blow note. They are a blow/draw pair and are the same as the two notes, blow and draw, in hole three of a 10 hole diatonic. What about the draw note to the left of blow 3? It is the only note we have not yet covered. That note on the tremolo is not found on a 10 hole Richter diatonic. To play it on the 10 hole diatonic you must bend draw 3. If the Richter tab says -3" or -3b then you want to play the draw note that is to the left of the third blow note. No need to bend it. Since there is already a -3 that is just to the right of 3 we can't simply call this draw note on the left -3 also. I am in the habit of indicating it as -3L. However, if you find -3" or -3b works better for you then use those. An equal sign can be used to indicate two dashes so =3 could be the draw note to the left of 3 and -3 would be the draw note to the right of 3. This takes less space and less key

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strokes.

-3L or =3 or -3b, however you indicate it, is an A note on a C harmonica.

If you have a 24 and use 0 for the first blow note it will then allow

the rest of the numbers to line up the same as on the other harps.

There is no draw note associated with 0. There is no -0.

Other symbols: > means slide up. < means slide down.

\*8 means blow into hole 8 and the holes to the left of 8 and slap the tongue down on the other notes to leave only 8 playing.

8\* means blow into hole 8 tongue blocked and lift the tongue to play a chord. 8 \* \*\* means give a da dada rhythm to the chord.

If a draw note then the draw sign precedes both the \* and the number.

For example -\*8 or -8\*. A chord without a slap or lift is indicated

by (234) for blow and -(234) for draw.

Richter tab that is for playing in first position is best for the tremolo.

First position means you are playing in the key the harp is in.

You are

playing a C harp in C or a G harp in G. This allows for chords or harmony

notes to be added, which is one of the charms and strengths of the tremolo.

Most first position tab will keep the melody on holes 3 to 10, which play

the same on either system. Richter tab designed for second position will

often, but not always, use the notes below hole 4. Here the Richter harp

player will quite often be bending notes. Sometimes second position tab

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can be played on a tremolo, but even when it can it is rare that any chords can be added. If you see a lot of bends in the tab it is probably second position. If you are just learning the tremolo harp try to find first position tabs.

Learning to read standard sheet music in C is another option. It is as easy as tab after you have practiced it awhile.

There have been tremolo harmonicas made that are solo tuned. This is the same system as a chromatic harmonica. Blow 4 and blow 5 will both be C notes. Hohner made a double sided tremolo called the Soloist that was solo tuned. It had a wood comb with a blue sealant. The old Seydel Sailor with brass reeds was solo tuned. The Seydel Fanfare is solo tuned. Huang used to make a solo tuned tremolo in C and C#. If you have one of these then this tab system will not work. You will be able to use tab that was written for chromatic harmonica.

Sometimes certain notes are marked on the tremolo. These are the key notes. There may be a different color hole on the comb or a small circle printed on the cover above the comb. This will be blow 4 and blow 7, where the major scale with start and end in the middle of the harp. On a C harp blow 4 and blow 7 are C notes. On a G they are G notes. Sometimes

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blow

1,4,7, and 10 are all four marked. Again, they are the key notes.

I hope some will find this useful. If you use other systems please do not think I am presenting this method as superior to what you are using. This is what worked for me. I came up with it on my own and later found Hohner had used it, at least on some Richter tuned tremolo harps. I played 10 hole diatonic harps before tremolo so I was already familiar with that tab system. Please enjoy making music on your tremolo harmonica in any way that works for you!

21 note tremolo harmonica

1 first blow note

2 second blow note

3 third blow note

4 fourth blow note

5 fifth blow note

6 sixth blow note

7 seventh blow note

8 eighth blow note

9 ninth blow note

10 tenth blow note

-1 draw note left of first blow note

-2 draw note left of second blow note

=3 or -3L draw note left of third blow note

-3 draw note right of third blow note

-4 draw note right of fourth blow note

-5 draw note right of fifth blow note

-6 draw note right of sixth blow note

-7 draw note right of seventh blow note

-8 draw note right of eighth blow note

-9 draw note right of ninth blow note

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-10 draw note right of tenth blow note

\*4 tongue slap chord to single note, -\*4 if draw note

4\* tongue lift single note to chord

\*8\* vamp and chord

3\* \*\* chord pattern

(456) chord, no tongue slap or lift