An essential part of the repertoire of every Blues guitarist is a collection of turnaround licks. What is a turnaround? Well, it’s the last two bars in a verse of twelve-bar blues. Let’s look at a twelve-bar blues in the key of E. In the chord chart below, I’ve highlighted the turnaround section in red.

That’s a pretty boring turnaround on its own, just a few chords, but I’m going to show you how we can make it much more interesting. A good turnaround can be one of the most memorable features of a Blues song.

The job of the turnaround in a Blues is usually to get from chord I to chord V. So in the key of E, that’s from E, or E7 (chord I) to B, or B7 (chord V). A 12-bar Blues verse should always end on chord V, because it sets up the first bar of the next verse, which goes back to chord I.

Here’s the very first turnaround I was taught how to play, way back, almost before the dawn of recorded time! All you need is a few chords.
There’s another way to play this kind of turnaround, which needs you to pick the notes on the top two strings, emphasising the descending melody, like this.

Next, here’s the turnaround in the key of A that Buddy Holly played at the beginning of his 1957 classic “That’ll Be The Day”. This is one of many songs that proves the old saying “The Blues had a baby, and they called it Rock’n’Roll”.

![Music notation diagram]
Another of my favourites, and a very popular turnaround, is this one that uses sixth intervals on the 1\textsuperscript{st} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} strings. We’re back in the key of E.

Sixth intervals also work well on the bass strings. This one uses the 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 5\textsuperscript{th} strings.
While we’re talking about the bass strings, how about this one.[PLAY]. Here it is again. Notice the hammer-ons, and the slightly bent G on the bottom E string.

Next, another variation.

These last two turnarounds have a kind of country blues flavour, and were very popular with players like Muddy Waters, John Lee Hooker and Sam “Lightning” Hopkins.
I mentioned earlier that the job of the turnaround is to go from chord I to chord V. You can either go up to chord V, or down to chord V. The next example almost does both at the same time.

![Musical notation image]

Notice that the final chord is a B augmented 5\(^{th}\), often written as B+. A good substitute chord for B7, our chord V in the key of E.

Unless your Blues song fades out, you want the final verse to end on chord I instead of chord V. If you end on chord V, the song won’t sound finished, but if you end of chord I, it will. All you have to do is make a slight change to the final chord in your turnaround.

All of these turnarounds can of course be played not just in E or A but in any key that you like. Some of them use open strings. If so, you can either use a capo, or just adapt the fingering to use fretted strings. Make sure you raise each note by the same number of semitones.