

smartmusic lesson plans

Playing in Tune



Grade Level: Intermediate & Advanced Class: Band and Strings

Author: Dan Massoth

**Teacher
Instructions**

Overview

Learning to play in tune involves both perception and performance skills. Students must first be able to recognize what it sounds like to be flat, sharp, and in tune and then possess the skills to adjust their own pitch to match with others. This lesson plan will provide a sequential approach to develop this all-important skill that can be done at home or at school. Best of all, you won't need to spend as much time working on intonation skills in rehearsal.

Objectives

Students will:

1. Understand how to adjust the pitch of their instrument.
2. Perform each note of a Bb concert scale in tune at a 90% or higher level.

National Music Content Standards addressed:

2. Performing on instruments alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.

Assignment Suggestions

This lesson is appropriate for students who have developed a clear, characteristic sound on their instrument. Consider using the Concert Bb scale as a first assignment. The student assignment sheet includes a form that makes it easy to provide assessment and feedback. After explaining the fundamentals of intonation (elementary physics of sound) and how to play in tune (instrument length, temperature, embouchure, reed strength, quality of instrument, etc...), demonstrate for students how to use the tuner and reference note function. Next, guide students through a four-step process: First, play the Concert Bb scale slowly while looking at the tuner (reference note should be off) and tune each note until the tuner turns green. Second, play the scale again with the reference note on and notice what it sounds like when notes are played in tune. Third, play each note without looking at the tuner, using your ear to tune to the reference note. When you are confident of your tuning, check the display to see if you are correct. Fourth, play the entire scale while listening to the reference





note and not looking at the screen – have a peer or teacher assess your performance. See the Assessment section for ideas of how to evaluate the assignment.

Teacher Instructions

Teacher Procedures

1. Explain the fundamentals of intonation.
2. Demonstrate SmartMusic’s tuner and reference note feature.
3. Explain the four steps of the assignment: (these are also printed on the student assignment sheet)
 - ✓ First, play the Concert Bb scale slowly while looking at the tuner (reference note should be off) and tune each note until the tuner turns green.
 - ✓ Second, play the scale again with the reference note on and notice what it sounds like when notes are played in tune.
 - ✓ Third, play each note without looking at the tuner, using your ear to tune to the reference note. When you are confident of your tuning, check the display to see if you are correct.
 - ✓ Fourth, play the entire scale while listening to the reference note and not looking at the screen, and have a peer or teacher assess your performance.

Assessment

Students can submit their work in several different ways:

- Performance of test for a music educator.
- Video tape of student performing test at school in a practice room or other rehearsal space.
- A pre-test done for a peer with written comments/feedback.

It is important that students understand the criteria for what qualifies as “in tune.” Using a tempo of 80 and the note value of a whole note for each pitch, you could require that students “make the triangle turn green” for at least one beat. It goes without saying that scooping or bending through a pitch will not be accepted. The student instruction sheet has space available to provide scoring and feedback.

Teacher Suggestions

Carefully selected students can demonstrate this assignment for the class. This may help everyone to better understand the task and spur interest and questions. Taking time to explain the intonation idiosyncrasies of each instrument is time consuming, but important, so students can understand why specific notes are more out of tune than others. This lesson usually requires that most students spend a minimum of 15 minutes using the tuner; some students will require more time. As mentioned in the Assessment section above, you may wish to videotape your students completing this assignment. A camera set up in the corner of a



practice room facing the computer screen works well if the student is sitting to the left or right of the image of the tuner. The student would face the camera and use only the reference note to complete the assignment. Be sure to show students how to change the instrument setting and adjust the microphone level before they start the test.

Teacher Instructions

Lesson Extensions

1. Use a chromatic scale for the assessment.
2. Require 100% accuracy.
3. Have students chart the intonation tendencies for the entire range of their instrument.



Name: _____ Instrument: _____
Class/Hour: _____ Date Due: _____
Grade: _____

Student
Assignment

Directions

1. Open SmartMusic and set your microphone and speaker levels.
2. Select “Tuner” from the main screen. Set the instrument selector to your instrument. The “Play Reference Note” button should be turned off to start.



3. Complete each one of these steps:
 - ✓ First, play the Concert Bb scale slowly while looking at the tuner (reference note should be turned off) and tune each note until the tuner turns green.
 - ✓ Second, play the scale again with the reference note on and notice what it sounds like when notes are played in tune.
 - ✓ Third, play each note without looking at the tuner, using your ear to tune to the reference note. When you are confident of your tuning, check the display to see if you are correct.
 - ✓ Fourth, play the entire scale while listening to the reference note and not looking at the screen. Have a peer or teacher assess your performance.

Student Checklist

- Filled in the information at top of this page.
- Read and followed all directions.
- Practiced assigned material several times.

Need Help with SmartMusic?

Call toll-free 1-866-240-4041
(Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Central Time)



Tuning Test

Name _____

Instrument _____

Class/Hour _____ Grade _____ Date Due: _____

The musical score consists of eight staves, each representing a different instrument. The instruments listed on the left are: Flute/Oboe, Clarinet in B♭/Bass Clarinet, Alto Sax./Bari Sax., Tenor Sax., Trumpet in B♭, Horn in F, Trombone/Baritone/Bassoon, and Tuba. Each staff contains a series of notes in a specific key signature and time signature, designed for a tuning exercise. The notes are: Flute/Oboe (C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5), Clarinet in B♭/Bass Clarinet (B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4), Alto Sax./Bari Sax. (C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5), Tenor Sax. (B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4), Trumpet in B♭ (B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4), Horn in F (B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4), Trombone/Baritone/Bassoon (B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3), and Tuba (B2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, B3). The notes are placed on the staff lines to indicate their pitch relative to the instrument's range.

Test Key:
Arrow pointing up - you played sharp
Arrow pointing down - you played flat
Circle around note - in tune!

Score _____ / 24 (3 points per note)

Score of 21 needed to pass