

smartmusic lesson plans

Using Improvisation



Grade Level: All Levels **Class:** Band, Strings, Choral

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**Teacher
Instructions**

Overview

Improvisation is an often-neglected standard in music classrooms today. Use SmartMusic's pentatonic scale exercises and jazz chord progressions to introduce students to improvisation techniques.

Objectives

Students will:

1. Define musical terms such as blues, fusion, shuffle, and pentatonic.
2. Develop ensemble and listening skills by experimenting with improvisation.
3. Perform pentatonic scales in major keys found in suggested accompaniments.
4. Demonstrate familiarity with rhythmic analysis and melodic development while playing.
5. Develop skills associated with emotional communication.
6. Transcribe basic rhythm patterns associated with selected SmartMusic accompaniments.

National Music Content Standards addressed:

2. Performing on instruments alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
3. Improvising melodies, harmonies, and accompaniments.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.

Assignment Suggestions

Using SmartMusic's pentatonic scales, have students identify common rhythmic patterns and then notate them on the assignment sheet. Students can perform short improvisations based on rhythmic patterns using a SmartMusic jazz accompaniment. Use the chart on page 2 as a starting place for selecting scales and accompaniments.



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**Teacher
Instructions**

Beginner	- Exercises: Scales, Pentatonic #640 (first 3 notes) in concert Bb - Jazz Accompaniments: Alfred, Alfred Master Tracks, Fusion, Blues Shuffle, Practice Loop bars 1-8 (Transposed up a fourth)
Intermediate	- Exercises: Scales, Pentatonic #640 in concert Bb - Jazz Accompaniments: Alfred, Alfred Master Tracks, Fusion, Blues Shuffle, Practice Loop bars 1-8 (Transposed up a fourth)
Intermediate/ Advanced	- Exercises: Scales, Pentatonic #640 in concert Bb, Eb, and F - Jazz Accompaniments: Alfred, Alfred Master Tracks, Fusion, Blues Shuffle, Practice Loop bars 1-12 (Transposed up a fourth)
Advanced	- Exercises: Scales, Pentatonic #680 in concert Bb, Eb, and F - Jazz Accompaniments: Alfred, Alfred Master Tracks, Fusion, Blues Shuffle, Practice Loop bars 1-12 (Transposed up a fourth)

Teacher Procedures

1. Provide students with a printed copy of pentatonic scale #640 or #680 (based on level above) in concert Bb, Eb, and F for reference. Review for understanding.
2. Demonstrate how to change the octave of notes by using the “Octave Up” setting in the Options menu of SmartMusic. Have a student demonstrate the process to the class.
3. Show students how to click on a note to show its fingering.
4. Complete an example with students to help with rhythmic figure analysis. Have students follow along on their own chart or show it to a friend.

Assessment

This lesson can be assessed in multiple ways. Ask the students to play various pentatonic scales. They could be asked to identify the intervals between the notes of the scale and construct the same scale in related keys.

Teacher Suggestions

There are multiple ways improvisation can be used in a concert band setting. You might consider using some of the “Play by Ear” exercises as well as the “Learn Chord Changes” feature included with all Jazz repertoire to explore these possibilities. Finale’s Exercise Wizard can easily print out the pentatonic scales listed above.



Lesson Extensions

Teacher Instructions

1. Perform a musical composition that includes pentatonic scale patterns. This could be done individually or with a partner.
2. Perform rhythmic improvisations using pentatonic scales with any of songs in the jazz accompaniments folder.
3. While the accompaniment is playing, you or your students can demonstrate short four-count melodic patterns to be echoed by entire class.
4. Diagram the form of the entire accompaniment by mapping the chords for each measure. Analyze the chord structure and develop melodic patterns to fit each chord.
5. Students could be asked to write an original melody to be performed with the accompaniment



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

**Student
Assignment**

Directions

1. Using pentatonic scale #640 or #680, play the notes outlined by your teacher. To locate this scale, choose “Open a SmartMusic Exercise” from the Setup Wizard or click on the Exercises button on the main screen. Select “Scales”, then “Pentatonic” and then choose exercise #640 or #680. From the Options menu, check “Octave Up” if needed.
2. Next, from File menu choose “Open SmartMusic Accompaniment” and open the “Jazz ” folder. Select, “Alfred,” then “Alfred Master Tracks, Fusion,,” then open “Blues Shuffle”. Change “Published Key” to “Up a Perfect 4th.” Set up a practice loop for the measures outlined by your teacher.
3. Use the blank staff on page 2 to transcribe the rhythmic figures or melodic ideas that you hear.
4. Turn in the assignment sheet with your completed rhythmic and/or melodic sketches.



Student Checklist

- Filled in the information at the top of this page.
- Read the directions and transcribed rhythmic and melodic sketches on page 2.
- Turned in assignment (Or submitted results as your teacher instructed).

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Rhythmic Sketches

**Student
Assignment**

Four horizontal lines for rhythmic sketches, each divided into four equal segments by vertical tick marks.

Melodic Sketches

Four musical staves for melodic sketches, each consisting of five horizontal lines and divided into four equal segments by vertical tick marks.