



**Texas Bandmasters Association
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**Kickstarting Your Jazz Band - How to get
Your Band Swingin' and
Playin' the Blues**

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Kickstarting your Jazz Band

How Do I Start the year?

- Recommend not starting on a full jazz chart.
- Use the Blues, things they know, as your framework for learning.
- Provide staff paper. That's it!

What they know:

- Basic Rhythms
- Concert F.
- Scales.
- Remington

Getting Started

- Start them out with concert F on four connected quarter notes followed by a whole rest and repeat multiple times. Add accents on two and four.
- Your drummer can stay on the bass drum (four to the floor) during the rest. When they do well with that, the drummer adds the high hat on 2 & 4.
- This will take time. Be Patient. Have students doing it well demonstrate. Rotate around the room like you would with regular concert F.

Adding Swing

- Next you'll add a triplet on beat 2 & 4. (Show rhythm on the board)
- Practice singing, "Doo, Doo-oo-**Dah**, Doo, Doo-oo **Dah**, Doo" before playing.
- Play it! You play, they play...Drummer doesn't stop playing. Ask for volunteers and go around the room.
- Drummer add to ride when ready
- Keep it smooth always
- Take out the middle triplet when ready, so just regular swing 8ths on 2 & 4.
- Kids can rotate a full triplet to just swing eighths.
- Have student demonstrators.
- Transfer the 'swing' to simple melodies. EX: Mary Had a little lamb. Also, scales & remington when ready.

Adding more rhythmic vocabulary and singing:

- Doo-long notes on the beat
- Dah-long notes off the beat
- Dit-staccato notes
- unDit-Use this for staccato note off the beat if preceded by a rest so they feel the downbeat first
- Daht-Rooftop
- unDaht-Rooftop off the beat preceded by a rest
- See the end of this hand out for the Jazz Rhythm sheet I wrote and use.

Learning the Blues Changes

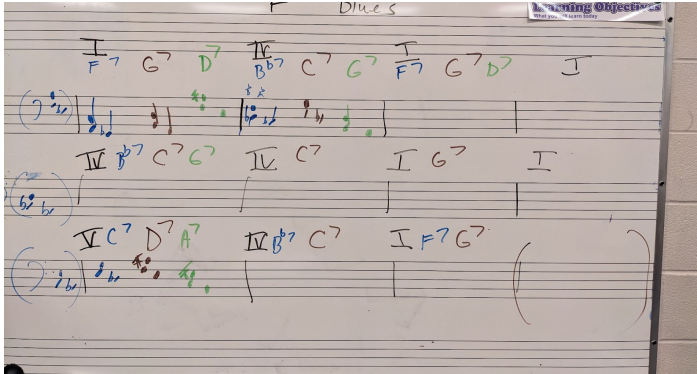
- Pass out staff Paper
- Students write out 3 lines four measures each.
- Start with the key of Bb, C, or F (Depending on the first tune you want to teach them)
- Have them put the Roman Numerals over the right measures.
- Sing I, IV, V at the right time. (use a youtube Bb Blues playalong to sing to)

12 Bar Blues

The image shows three staves of musical notation for a 12-bar blues progression in 4/4 time. Each staff contains four measures, with Roman numerals indicating the chords for each measure. The first staff has four measures, each with a 'I' chord. The second staff starts with a measure 5 and has four measures with chords IV, IV, I, and I. The third staff starts with a measure 9 and has four measures with chords V, IV, I, and V. The notation consists of a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and a single horizontal line with a bar line in each measure, representing a whole note chord.

Adding Notes to the Chords:

- Have them write in the root/chord name for each roman numeral.
 - Use different color markers for each transposing instrument.



- Play in whole notes. Stop on Ms 5 etc.
- Add fun rhythms. Put a simple rhythm on the board to use.
- Be patient! This will take time and repetition. Don't sacrifice style or timing.
- Use call and response. Have them make up their own 'riff' or pattern.
- Use the rhythm sheet for ideas to add to chord tones.
 - For each new class period/week, add the next chord tone.
 - Add the 7th, but below the root. (they write this down themselves!)
 - Add the 3rd.
 - Show them how 3rd moves to 7th in the next chord for smooth voice leading.
 - Add the 5th last.

Learning a Melody that aligns with the Blues Progression.

- Incorporate this after they know the roots of the chord.
- Learn by ear.
- Should have historical significance.
- Tunes you have good recordings of.
- Keep it Simple!
- Sing the melody first
- 2 or 4 measures at a time.

Melody Suggestions:

- C Jam Blues. (Yes learn in C. They can do it!)
- Blues by 5
- Tenor Madness
- Now's the Time
- Straight no Chaser
- Sonnymoon for Two
- Bag's Groove
- Freddie Freeloader/All Blues



When they are ready for a full arrangement:

- Blues progression tunes should be your first pick.
- Easy swing tunes.
- AABA with simple chord progressions.
- Historically significant/American Songbook.
- KISS (Keep it Simple Silly)
- Rhythm Section thoughts
 - Include the whole class in discussion on learning voicings.
 - Chord changes need to be attainable.
 - In AABA for, only learn the A parts of the tune first.

Resources and Charts

- Read my Article for more additional information:
<https://banddirectorstalkshop.com/build-itthey-will-swing/>
- Sher Real Easy Book, Tunes for Beginning Improvisers

- Youtube play along tracks.
- Jazz Academy videos on youtube.
- 8notes.com
- Preservation Hall Foundation

Arrangers I like for Middle School

- Paul Baker
- Roy Phillippe
- Paul Murtha
- Mark Taylor
- Mike Sweeney
- Ralph Ford
- Rick Stitzel
- Marsalis & Goines

[Jazz Rhythm Handout](#)

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