
The Jazz Year, Week by Week

October to July. The language of jazz, one step a week. Every link in concert pitch, so the whole band plays the same sounding scale.

Thomas Hornig · Henri Selmer Paris Artist · The Whole Horn

One link a week. The whole band, one sound.

Watch the video · 21 s

The problem

In a jazz class every horn reads in a different key. 'Play the C blues' means A blues on alto, D blues on tenor and trumpet, and C blues on trombone.

The solution

Each week below is one link in concert pitch. Paste it into Google Classroom, WhatsApp or email; every student opens it written for their own instrument, and the band sounds as one. Anything you assign opens free for your students — up to two octaves; the full range is the Full Studio. No student accounts.

The year at a glance

FALL • 16 WEEKS

Weeks 1–4 introduction to jazz standards and foundational improvisation · 5–8 technical development: scales, arpeggios, piano voicings · 9–12 ensemble collaboration across jazz and crossover genres · 13–16 mid-term assessments. MID-TERM early March.

SPRING • 16 WEEKS

1–4 advanced improvisation and transcription · 5–8 composition and arranging · 9–12 collaborative rehearsals and performance preparation · 13–16 final assessments. FINAL early July.

Running through the year, one step a week, in Tom's order of importance: the 12 major scales straight up and down (one octave, then the full range), diatonic 3rds, the chromatic scale and chromatic minor 3rds, pentatonics straight and broken, the blues and rhythm changes, diatonic triads and 7th chords in all 12 major keys, whole-tone and diminished scales, then more chromatic shapes. Transcription through the spring.

1a · the 12 major scales, all 12 keys · one octave · eighths · ♩ =80 · swing · concert pitch

[Open in the app](#)

1b · the 12 major scales, all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =80 · swing · concert pitch · full range · Full Studio; two octaves on the free app

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The year at a glance

2 · diatonic 3rds, all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =80 · swing · concert pitch

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3 · the chromatic scale (♩ =88) and chromatic minor 3rds (♩ =80) · eighths · swing · concert pitch

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4a · major and minor pentatonics, straight, all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =88 · swing · concert pitch

Open in the app

4b · major and minor pentatonics, broken, all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =88 · swing · concert pitch

Open in the app

5 · the blues bass line in F (♩ =92) and rhythm changes in B ♭: B ♭ major + the arpeggios of B ♭, G, C, F (♩ =80) · swing · concert pitch

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The year at a glance

6 · diatonic triads and 7th chords, all 12 major keys · eighths · ♩ =88 · swing · concert pitch

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7a · whole-tone scales, all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing · concert pitch

[Open in the app](#)

7b · diminished scales, half-whole and whole-half, all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing · concert pitch

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Weeks, not dates.

October

Weeks 1–4 · Fall · Introduction to jazz standards; foundational improvisation exercises.

The first weeks

“In the beginning, ... starting [in] October, it’s gonna be an assessment of what [the] students’ abilities are, [how] they’re playing, and an attempt to try to organize sessions [where] we have a [bass] player, and we have horns, we have a ... drummer, and we have a pianist, and then we can start to have small ... classes. We can teach various concepts, and we can also bring in arrangements that I have, and [ask] the students to write their own arrangements [and] compositions for that ensemble.”

Watch the video · 19 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-year/

Watch the video

1

Major scales straight up and down: F and B $\flat$, one octave
eighths · every note tongued · $\text{♩} = 80$ · swing
+ Standard: Autumn Leaves, E minor (Real Book, 6th ed.) · Listen & discover: find out what YOU love, and find a mentor, a great artist whose sound you want to emulate

Open in the app

October

Weeks 1–4 · Fall · Introduction to jazz standards; foundational improvisation exercises.

2

Major scales straight up and down: E $\flat$ and A $\flat$, one octave
eighths · every note tongued · ♩ = 80 · swing
+ Standard: Blue Bossa, C minor · D $\flat$ major bridge

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3

Major scales straight up and down: D $\flat$ and F $\sharp$, one octave
eighths · every note tongued · ♩ = 80 · swing
+ Standard: C–Jam Blues, C blues · Blues bass line in F, from memory

Open in the app

4

Major scales straight up and down: B and E, one octave
eighths · every note tongued · ♩ = 80 · swing
+ Standard: Summertime, A minor · Blues bass line in F, from memory

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November

Weeks 5–8 · Fall · Technical development: scales, arpeggios, and piano voicings.

November

“So the first step is a lot of rudiments, and then we go into effectively a kind of performance class situation in November.”

5

Major scales straight up and down: A and D, one octave
eighths · every note tongued · ♩ =80 · swing
+ Shell voicings — ii–V–I in all 12 keys. 3rd & 7th in one hand, root in the other · Blues bass line in F, from memory

Open in the app

6

Major scales straight up and down: G and C, one octave
eighths · every note tongued · ♩ =80 · swing
+ Shell voicings — ii–V–I in all 12 keys. 3rd & 7th in one hand, root in the other · Blues bass line in F, from memory

Open in the app

7

Major scales straight up and down, all 12 keys · the full range
all 12 keys · eighths · the free app plays up to two octaves · every note tongued · ♩ =80 · swing
+ Play the 12-bar blues form. One hand and/or both hands · Blues bass line in F, from memory

Open in the app

8

Diatonic 3rds, all 12 keys · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =80 · swing
+ 12-bar blues — root (LH) + minor pentatonic · Blues bass line in F, from memory

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December

Weeks 9–11 · Fall · Ensemble collaboration across jazz and crossover genres.

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Watch the video

9

Diatonic 3rds, all 12 keys · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =88 · swing
+ Standard: Take the A Train, C major · D7 #11 · Blues bass line in F, from memory

Open in the app

10

The chromatic scale
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =88 · swing
+ Standard: All of Me, C major · E7, A7, D7 · Blues bass line in F, from memory

Open in the app

11

Chromatic minor 3rds · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =80 · swing
+ Standard: Satin Doll, C major · ii–V chains · Blues bass line in F, from memory

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January

Weeks 12–14 · Fall · Ensemble collaboration across jazz and crossover genres → Mid-term assessments: individual and ensemble recordings.

Watch the video · 21 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-year/

Watch the video

12

Chromatic minor 3rds · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =88 · swing
+ Standard: Fly Me to the Moon, A minor / C major · Blues bass line in F, from memory

Open in the app

13

Pentatonics straight up and down, major and minor
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =88 · swing
+ Record: melody plus one improvised chorus of a standard, with the play-along (video) · Blues bass line in F, from memory

Open in the app

14

Broken-scale pentatonics, major and minor
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =88 · swing
+ Record: melody plus one improvised chorus of a standard, with the play-along (video) · Blues bass line in F, from memory

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February

Weeks 15–16 · Fall · Mid-term assessments: individual and ensemble recordings.

Watch the video · 25 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-year/

Watch the video

15

The 12-bar blues in F: the blues bass line from memory
F, 12 bars · ♩ =92 · swing
+ Ensemble recording for the mid-term: your part, with the play-along

Open in the app

16

Rhythm changes: I Got Rhythm, in B ♭
B ♭ · eighths · ♩ =80 · swing
+ Standard: I Got Rhythm, B ♭ major · rhythm changes · Ensemble recording for the mid-term: your part, with the play-along

Open in the app

March

Weeks 17–18 · Spring · Advanced improvisation techniques; transcription projects.

17

Diatonic triads, all 12 major keys · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =88 · swing · Echo ear training, level 1
+ Transcribe a 12-bar blues: two or three choruses from your favorite artist

Open in the app

18

Diatonic triads, all 12 major keys · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing · Echo ear training, level 2
+ Transcribe rhythm changes: two or three choruses from your favorite artist

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Mid-term · early March

Mid-term assessments: individual and ensemble recordings.
Live or video-taped performance featuring the entire class. Short solos for all participants.

Ear training this month — Listen, Sing, Play.

March · Echo ear training, levels 1 and 2

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April

Weeks 19–22 · Spring · Advanced improvisation techniques; transcription projects → Composition and arranging workshops for ensembles.

Watch the video · 17 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-year/

Watch the video

19

Diatonic 7th chords, all 12 major keys · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =88 · swing · Echo ear training, level 3
+ Transcribe excerpts from a really important album, like Miles Davis, Kind of Blue

Open in the app

20

Diatonic 7th chords, all 12 major keys · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing · Echo ear training, level 4
+ Find recordings of jazz standards and transcribe bits and pieces you like

Open in the app

21

Whole-tone scales
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing · Echo ear training, level 5
+ Standard: Impressions, D Dorian · E ♭ Dorian bridge · Arrange a standard for the class: a lead sheet (melody + chords) in MuseScore

Open in the app

April

Weeks 19–22 · Spring · Advanced improvisation techniques; transcription projects → Composition and arranging workshops for ensembles.

22

Diminished scales · half–whole
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing · Echo ear training, level 6
+ Standard: So What, D Dorian · E ♭ Dorian bridge · Arrange a standard for the class: a lead sheet (melody + chords) in
MuseScore

Open in the app

Ear training this month — Listen, Sing, Play.

April · Echo ear training, levels 3 to 6

Open in the app

May

Weeks 23–26 · Spring · Composition and arranging workshops for ensembles → Collaborative rehearsals and performance preparation.

May

“... In May there should be hopefully [a] performance where the students will get up and play ... standards, and hopefully arrangement[s] we may have written, and composition[s] ...”

23

Diminished scales · whole–half
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing
+ Standard: Straight, No Chaser, F blues · Arrange a standard for the class: a lead sheet (melody + chords) in MuseScore

[Open in the app](#)

24

Chromatic major 3rds · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing
+ Standard: Watermelon Man, F · Arrange a standard for the class: a lead sheet (melody + chords) in MuseScore

[Open in the app](#)

25

Chromatic perfect 4ths and double 4ths · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing
+ Standard: Perdido, B ♭ major

[Open in the app](#)

26

Chromatic major and minor triads · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing
+ Standard: Billie's Bounce, F blues

[Open in the app](#)

June

Weeks 27–30 · Spring · Collaborative rehearsals and performance preparation → Final assessments: collaborative performances and project submissions.

Watch the video · 17 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-year/

Watch the video

27

Chromatic diminished and augmented triads · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing
+ Standard: Now's the Time, F blues

Open in the app

28

Chromatic major 7th and dominant 7th chords · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing
+ Standard: Tenor Madness, B ♭ blues

Open in the app

29

Chromatic minor 7th chords · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =96 · swing
+ Final: perform 2–3 jazz standards — melody, chords, improvisation. Recorded submissions (video/audio)

Open in the app

30

Final review: the 12 major scales, the full range
all 12 keys · eighths · the free app plays up to two octaves · every note tongued · ♩ =100 · swing
+ Final: perform 2–3 jazz standards — melody, chords, improvisation. Recorded submissions (video/audio)

Open in the app

July

Weeks 31–32 · Spring · Final assessments: collaborative performances and project submissions.

Watch the video · 20 s
thewholehorn.com/curriculum/jazz-year/

Watch the video

31

Final review: diatonic 3rds, all 12 keys · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =100 · swing
+ Final: perform 2–3 jazz standards — melody, chords, improvisation. Recorded submissions (video/audio)

Open in the app

32

Final review: chromatic minor 3rds · ABCD method
all 12 keys · eighths · ♩ =100 · swing
+ Final: perform 2–3 jazz standards — melody, chords, improvisation. Recorded submissions (video/audio)

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Final · early July

Final assessments: collaborative performances and project submissions.
Live or video-taped performance featuring the entire class. Short solos for all participants.

The standards • 1 of 2

Tom's beginner list, in his order. Pick from it through the year — at least ten standards; two or three for each exam. Each link carries the scales that fit the tune, in concert pitch.

Autumn Leaves

E minor (Real Book, 6th ed.) · concert pitch

[Open](#)

Blue Bossa

C minor · D $\flat$ major bridge · concert pitch

[Open](#)

C-Jam Blues

C blues · concert pitch

[Open](#)

Summertime

A minor · concert pitch

[Open](#)

Take the A Train

C major · D7 $\sharp$ 11 · concert pitch

[Open](#)

All of Me

C major · E7, A7, D7 · concert pitch

[Open](#)

The standards • 1 of 2

Tom's beginner list, in his order. Pick from it through the year — at least ten standards; two or three for each exam. Each link carries the scales that fit the tune, in concert pitch.

Satin Doll

C major · ii–V chains · concert pitch

[Open](#)

Fly Me to the Moon

A minor / C major · concert pitch

[Open](#)

The standards • 2 of 2

Tom's beginner list, in his order. Pick from it through the year — at least ten standards; two or three for each exam. Each link carries the scales that fit the tune, in concert pitch.

Impressions

D Dorian · E ♭ Dorian bridge · concert pitch

[Open](#)

So What

D Dorian · E ♭ Dorian bridge · concert pitch

[Open](#)

Straight, No Chaser

F blues · concert pitch

[Open](#)

Watermelon Man

F · concert pitch

[Open](#)

Perdido

B ♭ major · concert pitch

[Open](#)

Billie's Bounce

F blues · concert pitch

[Open](#)

The standards • 2 of 2

Tom's beginner list, in his order. Pick from it through the year — at least ten standards; two or three for each exam. Each link carries the scales that fit the tune, in concert pitch.

Now's the Time

F blues · concert pitch

[Open](#)

Tenor Madness

B $\flat$ blues · concert pitch

[Open](#)

Grading

Watch the video · 18 s

40 points

Video Submissions of Jazz Standards

present at least ten jazz standards as individual performances; accompaniment: metronome or Aebersold Play-Along recordings; format: melody plus one improvised chorus minimum.

30 points

Arrangements and Compositions

video submission of ensemble performances organized and produced in collaboration with classmates.

30 points

Mid-Term and Final Exams

live or video-taped performance featuring the entire class; short solos for all participants.

Part of the grade will also be based on regular attendance and engagement; and if there are opportunities for group performance, in class or in public, that will be part of the grade as well.

Listen, Sing, Play

'Listen, Sing, Play. This is the mantra. Listen to the small chunk of music over and over again until it is burned into your memory. Sing the phrase back. If you can't sing it, you haven't really heard it. Play the phrase on your [instrument]. Hunt for the notes until you find them.'

Echo ear training, level 1 · hear the notes, sing them back — Listen, Sing, Play

[Open in the app](#)

'Choose a Simple Melody. Do not start with a complex John Coltrane solo. Start with something simple and slow.'

Make it yours

Every week here is a starting point. To change one, open For Teachers in The Whole Horn, set the key, tempo, groove or hours, add your own sentence, make the link, and paste it over ours.

Jazz is all about individual accountability.

thewholehorn.com