



Placement Evaluation Instructions for Beginning Improvisers

These evaluations are easy and fun, and they give our faculty a chance to get to know students and their level of musical experience. These instructions can be used for beginning improvisers who're registered for our Jazz Camp Online program. Our placement instructions for all instrumentalists encourages students to submit two recordings – but if you're completely new to playing jazz, we should be able to get a grasp of your musicianship if you submit just one recording. Below are detailed instructions on how to create and submit your video or audio for evaluation.

Step #1 – Download our materials!

Sheet music excerpts and play-along recordings (mp3s) are provided online at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/d9wwbpcbh4mor2/AADacBbDYuaeGkl7A5EhFzcpa?dl=0>

* You might've already received these sheet music excerpts / play-alongs in a .zip file from our registration team

If you visit our Dropbox link, click on the instrument you're registered for. Once you've downloaded that folder or the .zip file from our registration team, you'll find materials for "Dorian's Lament" and "Mr. Stan Ford Funk." These are SJW original compositions specifically written for middle school students and beginning improvisers. Versions of the mp3 play-along tracks are available for rhythm section instruments as well as horns and strings in each folder. If you're confused by which files to download, get in touch with Steven Lugerner, Camp Director – slugerner@stanfordjazz.org and he'll help you out.

Step #2 - Preparation

Listen to the mp3 play-along recordings while looking at the music to decide which one you'd like to use for your placement evaluation recording. If you have time to work on both "Dorian's Lament" and "Mr. Stan Ford Funk," we'd love to hear both selections – but only one submission is required! When you've decided which selection(s) you would like to play, practice the written melody until you feel comfortable playing it. Please remember that these recordings will help us place you in the right classes and ensembles for your level of experience, so don't worry if some of the material is difficult for you or outside of your comfort zone. If the written melody goes higher or lower than you can play on your instrument, you can play it in whatever octave is comfortable.

After the written melody, you'll have a chance to improvise a jazz solo. If you've never improvised or don't have much improvisation experience, don't worry! Improvisation is a big part of what makes playing jazz so much fun, and everybody is a beginner at first. Learning to improvise will let you express yourself musically and communicate with your fellow musicians in the moment.

A good way to start learning how to improvise is to try creating melodies and rhythms using the notes of a given scale. To help you with this, we've included some suggested scales on the sheet music excerpts. Even if you've never improvised before, we encourage you to give it a try on your placement evaluation recording. Don't worry if this is new to you - you'll have plenty of opportunities at Stanford Jazz Workshop to learn more about improvisation and to practice and experiment with other musicians who are beginning their study of improvisation just like you!

In order to place you in the most appropriate ensembles and classes at camp, please avoid working on this material with a private instructor. Our goal with these recordings is to mimic an audition – we're hoping to get the best understanding of how you play without someone telling you "how it goes."

Step #3 – Make a (audio/video) recording!

When you're ready to make the recording please record yourself playing with the mp3 play-along tracks we provide. You can make your recording using a computer, smartphone, digital recorder, or any other type of recording device. Begin by playing the written melody, and then improvise over the chord progression to the best of your ability. Remember that your recording doesn't have to be perfect - we just want a general sense of your skills on your instrument and your level of experience with improvisation so that our faculty can help you learn what you need to take your jazz playing to the next level.

Guidelines for horn players (including strings):

- Both "Dorian's Lament" and "Mr. Stan Ford Funk" are 16 bar cycles. Each play-along recording goes through the cycle (aka "form") a total of four times.
- Play the melody during the first time through the form
- Improvise a jazz solo (to the best of your ability) over the next two times through the form (32 bars total)
- Play the melody again for the last time through the form (16 bars)

Guidelines for piano and guitar players:

- Both "Dorian's Lament" and "Mr. Stan Ford Funk" are 16 bar cycles. Each play-along recording goes through the cycle (aka "form") a total of four times.
- Play the melody during the first time through the form. Piano players can play the melody in the right hand and chords in the left hand if you're able to.
- Improvise a jazz solo (to the best of your ability) over the next two times through the form (32 bars total)
- Play just the chords for the last time through the form - pretending there is another soloist and you are accompanying them (16 bars)

Guidelines for bass players:

- Both "Dorian's Lament" and "Mr. Stan Ford Funk" are both 16 bar cycles. Each play-along recording goes through the cycle (aka "form") a total of four times.
- Walk a bass line ("Dorian's Lament") or play a bass groove ("Mr. Stan Ford Funk") for the first two times through the form (32 bars)
- Improvise a jazz solo (to the best of your ability) over the next time through the form (16 bars total)
- If possible, play the melody during the last time through the form (16 bars). If that's too hard, so back to either walking or grooving on your original bass line.

Guidelines for drummers:

- Both "Dorian's Lament" and "Mr. Stan Ford Funk" are 16 bar cycles. Each play-along recording goes through the cycle (aka "form") a total of four times.
- Play a swing beat feel (for "Dorian's Lament") or funk groove (for "Mr. Stan Ford Funk") over the first two times through the form (32 bars total), use the melody/sheet music to help you determine where to fill in the spaces and keep your place.
- Improvise a jazz solo (to the best of your ability) over the next time through the form (16 bars total)
- For the last time through the form, trade 4 bar solos with the play along recording. For example: play time for the first 4 bars, take a 4 bar solo - then do the same thing again, play time for 4 bars, then take another 4 bar solo until the end of the recording!

Additional Recording & Submitting Instructions

Recordings must clearly feature your playing. While recordings must be audible, the overall recording quality does not affect an applicant's audition. **Please use the provided play-along tracks, and make sure that both the accompaniment and your instrument or voice can be heard in the recording.**

You can make your recording using a computer, smartphone, digital recorder, or any other type of recording device. There are many apps and programs that can make audio recordings, so you are welcome to use whatever software you're familiar with. If you are looking for free software to make these recordings, we suggest the "Voice Memos" app, which is available for iOS and Android devices, or **the audio recording and editing program Audacity, which is available for Windows, Mac, and Linux computers by clicking here.**

SJW can accept audio and video files directly from smartphones and tablets. If you're using another device, like a computer or stand-alone audio recorder, please make sure your recordings are one of the following file types: MP3, MPEG, MPEG-4, AAC or WAV format before submitting them. **If you're confused about file types, just send us whatever you've got and we'll contact you if the files don't work with our registration system.**

Deadline for placement recordings

Once you register, we will start sending you task notifications regarding your placement recording. Please submit placement recordings as soon as possible after registering for Jazz Camp Online. For the most accurate placement in classes, please submit your placement recordings by Wednesday, July 1st.

How to submit your placement recordings

To submit your Placement Evaluation Recordings you will need to create an account (if you don't have one already from last year) at www.stanfordjazz.org and register for your chosen program. You will then receive an email with instructions on how to upload your recordings to your account.

Music theory evaluation

All students registered for the **full-day** SJW Jazz Camp Online are required to submit a music theory evaluation for placement in theory classes during the program. **[Click here to take the evaluation online.](#)**

Participants in the **half-day** Jazz Camp Online **DO NOT** have to submit this theory evaluations.

If your questions aren't answered here, please don't hesitate to contact Steven Lugerner, our Camp Director / Faculty Director at 650-736-0324 x309 or by e-mail at slugerner@stanfordjazz.org