Placement Evaluation Instructions for Giant Steps Jazz Online

All students registered for Giant Steps Jazz Online must submit placement recordings and a theory evaluation. Our faculty will use these materials to assess your level and place you into classes that will be perfect to help you improve quickly.

How to make your placement recording

Your placement evaluation consists of you making a recording of yourself playing jazz! How cool is that? It's really easy, too. We give a selection of songs to play along with, plus sheet music for the melodies, and even scales that you can use to help choose your notes.

First, download the play-along tracks and sheet music, by clicking on this link, and then download the folder that has the name of your instrument on it:

[Click here to download your play-along tracks and sheet music.](#)

You'll see the following songs in your folder:

- **"Dorian's Lament" / "Mr. Stan Ford Funk":** These two songs are great if you have little or no improvisation experience.
    i. "Dorian's Lament"- An easy swing tune using the concert Bb scale, dorian mode
    ii. "Mr. Stan Ford Funk" – A funk tune using the concert F scale, mixolydian mode

- **12-bar blues:** Use one of these if you have experience playing the 12-bar blues.
    iii. "Blues of the Day"- Key of concert Bb, easy swing tempo
    iv. "Tranquil Blues" – Key of concert F, medium swing, slightly more challenging

- **"So What":** If you've done a fair amount of jazz improvisation before, try this. This song includes relatively simple chord changes and a written excerpt.

- **"Blue Bossa":** If you've learned several jazz tunes and you're comfortable improvising in different keys, try this one.

Next, listen to the mp3 play-along recordings while looking at the music for each song to decide which one you'd like to use for your placement evaluation recording. When you've decided which selection(s) you would like to play, practice the written melody until you feel comfortable playing it. This recording will help us place you in the right classes for your level of experience, so don't worry if anything seems too difficult for you. 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 you've played the written melody along with the mp3 track, you'll have a chance to improvise a jazz solo. If you've never improvised before or don't have much improvisation experience, don't worry! Use the notes of one of the suggested scales you see on the sheet music, and just make up your own melody. Even if you've never improvised before, give it a try on your placement evaluation recording. Don't worry if this is new to you — you'll have plenty of opportunities in your class to learn more about improvisation. You'll also have lots of chances to practice and experiment with other musicians who are beginning their study of improvisation just like you are! 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.

Note: "So What" and "Blue Bossa" feature written excerpts based on famous jazz solos. If you choose either of these selections, we recommend you listen to the original recordings — information on how to do that is on the sheet music. Do your best when it comes to your execution of all written excerpt; pay close attention to the notes, rhythms, and articulations. If there is a portion of the excerpt that is out of your range, simply play those notes or phrase up or down an octave.

Additional guidelines for brass, woodwinds, and strings

- Both "Dorian's Lament" and "Mr. Stan Ford Funk" are 16 bar forms. Each play-along recording goes through the 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)

If you choose "Blues of the Day," "Tranquil Blues," "So What," or "Blue Bossa," play the written melody once, improvise a two-chorus solo, and then play the melody again one last time. A "chorus" equals one time through the song's form.

Additional guidelines for piano and guitar

- Both "Dorian's Lament" and "Mr. Stan Ford Funk" are 16 bar forms. Each play-along recording goes through the 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 able.
- 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 and "comp", pretending there is another soloist and you are accompanying them (16 bars)

If you choose "Blues of the Day," "Tranquil Blues," "So What," or "Blue Bossa," play the written melody once, improvise a two-chorus solo, and then comp the chords for the last chorus as if you were accompanying a soloist. A "chorus" equals one time through the song's form.

Additional guidelines for bass

- Both "Dorian's Lament" and "Mr. Stan Ford Funk" are both 16 bar forms. Each play-along re- cording goes through the 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.

If you choose "Blues of the Day," "Tranquil Blues," "So What," or "Blue Bossa," play the written melody once, then walk a bass line (or play a stylistically appropriate bass line if the tune doesn't have a swing feel) for two choruses. Improvise a solo for your last chorus on each selection. A "chorus" equals one time through the song's form.

Additional guidelines for drums

Both "Dorian's Lament" and "Mr. Stan Ford Funk" are 16 bar forms. Each play-along recording goes through the form a total of four times.

- Both "Dorian's Lament" and "Mr. Stan Ford Funk" are 16 bar forms. Each play-along recording goes through the 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), read the melody on the sheet music to help you determine where to fill in the spaces and to help 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 exam- ple: 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!

If you choose "Blues of the Day," "Tranquil Blues," use the written excerpt (with specific drum hits) do your best to frame and set up the melody that's being played by the saxophone on the provided play-along audio tracks. "Play the melody" for the first chorus, then play time for the following two choruses. On your last chorus, take a solo! A "chorus" equals one time through the song's form.

If you choose "So What," or "Blue Bossa," use the written excerpt (marked as "piano/vibraphone" charts) for any of the selections listed above. Use this written melody as a reference, and do your best to frame and set up the melody that's being played by the saxophone on the provided play-along audio tracks. "Play the melody" for the first chorus, then play time for the second chorus. On your third chorus, play as if you were trading with other musicians – i.e., alternate between improvising and playing the groove in four-bar phrases (or whatever division works with the song you choose). On your last chorus, take a full on solo! A "chorus" equals one time through the song's form.

How to prepare your placement recordings

Recordings must clearly feature your playing and the play-along accompaniment. The overall recording quality does not affect your placement. **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. 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 or 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 need anything else.**

Deadline for placement recordings: August 28

Late registrations can be accepted, but only as long as space in the program is still available.

How to submit your placement recordings

To submit your Placement Evaluation Recordings, log in to your Giant Steps Jazz Online account, or create a new one if you have not already. You will then receive an email with instructions on how to upload your recordings to your account.

Music theory evaluation: deadline August 28

All students registered Giant Steps Jazz Online are required to submit a music theory for best placement results into classes. If you've recently attended Jazz Camp Online, you do NOT need to re-submit a theory evaluation.

Click here to take the theory placement evaluation.

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