



Placement Evaluation Instructions for Beginning Improvisers

These play-along evaluations are easy and fun, and they give our faculty a chance to get to know you and your level of musical experience.

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>

When you visit our Dropbox folder from the link above, click on the folder of 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," two songs that are great for 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 have any questions about 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. Only one song submission is required, but if you have time to work on both "Dorian's Lament" and "Mr. Stan Ford Funk," we'd love to hear both selections! When you've decided which selection(s) you would like to play, practice the written melody until you feel comfortable playing it. Don't worry if the melody seems too difficult, just do your best, as your recording will help us place you in the right classes for your level of experience. 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 classes 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.

In order to place you in the most appropriate classes, just do your best, on your own. We want to know what you know, without a private teacher telling you how to play it.

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. 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 and string instrument players

- 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)

Guidelines for piano and guitar players:

- 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)

Guidelines for bass players:

- Both “Dorian’s Lament” and “Mr. Stan Ford Funk” are both 16-bar forms. Each play-along recording 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.

Guidelines for drummers:

- 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 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!

Step 4: Additional Recording & Submission 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 Audacity, an **audio recording and editing program available for Windows, Mac, and Linux computers by clicking here.**

SJW can accept audio and video files sent 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 will be emailed to you once you register

Once you register, we will send you task notifications regarding your placement recording. Please submit placement recordings as soon as possible after registering.

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 before) 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 for Jazz Camp Online, Combo Camp and Evening Combos only

Participants in the programs listed above are also required to submit a music theory evaluation for placement. [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