

Requirements for Improvisation

- **Is the song melody understood?** The song melody can help us understand an improvisational approach to the song. Even in big band charts, it's essential that you know the vibe/spirit of the melody.
 - *Is the melody lyrical?*
 - *Is the melody Blues based?*
 - *Is the melody in the Bebop style?*
 - *What is the contour of the melody? (shape)*
 - *What is the melodic range?*
 - *How can the melody be described? (simple, complex, happy, aggressive, sad, smooth, dark etc..)*
 - *Does the melody sound diatonic or dissonant?*
 - *Is there a motive or theme from the melody that we can use?*
- **Is the solo form understood?** Understanding the song form will help us keep track of where we are at in the chord changes. It will also define 4-8 bars phrases.
 - *Is the form short? 12-16 bars*
 - *Is the form longer? 32-36 bars*
 - *Does the solo form have standard phrase lengths? (4-8 bar sections)*
 - *Are there sections of the solo form where the harmony is repeated?*
- **Is the harmony understood?** Improvisation cannot be fully expressed unless the harmony of the song is understood, and the progression can be heard by listening chord motion. Many students are guilty of improvising with their eyes and not truly learning to hear the chord motion.
 - *Is every chord in the solo form understood?*
 - *Is the harmony simple or complex? Few chords or many chords?*
 - *Can the 3rd or 7th of the chord be played? (In time)*
 - *Can the arpeggio of every chord be played? (In time)*
 - *Can every scale of every chord be played? (In time)*
 - *Are there ii-V-I progressions in the solo form? If so, they should be highlighted.*
 - *Are there chords that are sequential? Similar chord types that move in half steps, whole steps, circle of 4ths etc... (D7, C#7, C7, B7)*

The information on this sheet details things that can be considered when learning how to improvise. This is the information goes beyond learning you chords and scales. None of these concepts can be achieved without first knowing your fundamentals. (scales, chord arpeggio's, etc..)

Pacing – Music has a sound/silence relationship. Space or rest should be considered an important feature.

- a. Play/rest combinations to practice
 - i. Play 1 bar/rest 1 bars
 - ii. Play 2 bars/rest 2 bars
 - iii. Play 2 bars/rest 1 bar

Gmi⁷ C7(^{b9}/_{b13}) Fma⁷

Syncopation – Syncopation enhances the feel of the music, producing the sensation of forward motion.

Dmi⁷ G⁷ Cma⁷ A⁷

Rhythmic density – Refers to the degree of activity (melodic and/or rhythmic) found in music.

- b. High rhythmic density means the activity sounds busy or complex (many notes)
- c. Low/medium density mean the activity sounds un-busy and simple (fewer notes)

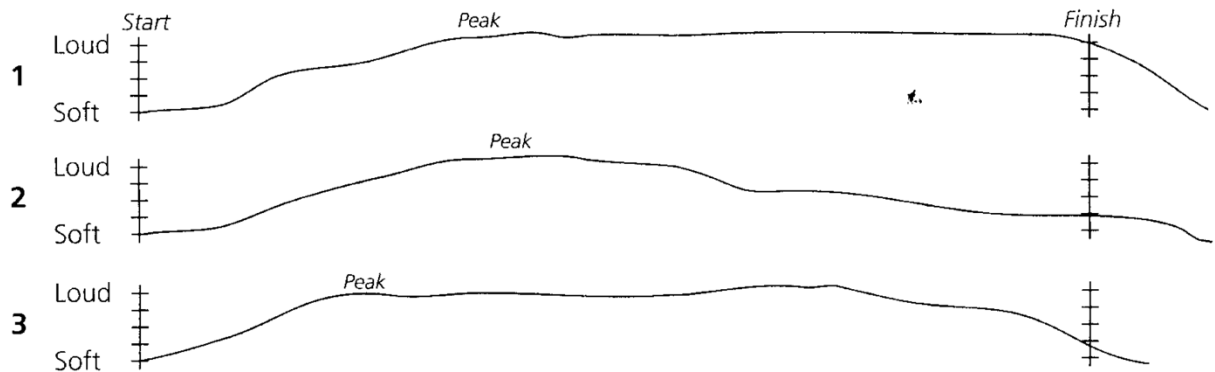
High Density

Two staves of musical notation in treble clef, 4/4 time. The first staff starts at measure 29 and the second at measure 33. Chords are indicated above the staves: Cma⁷, A⁷, Dmi⁷, and G⁷. The melody is dense with many eighth and sixteenth notes. Trills are marked with a '3' over the notes in measures 33 and 37. The notation includes various accidentals and rests.

Low Density

Two staves of musical notation in treble clef, 4/4 time. The first staff starts at measure 37 and the second at measure 41. Chords are indicated above the staves: Cma⁷, A⁷, Dmi⁷, and G⁷. The melody is sparse with mostly quarter and half notes. Trills are marked with a '3' over the notes in measures 41 and 45. The notation includes various accidentals and rests.

Dynamics – Dynamics can create powerful and dramatic effects in an improvised solo, provided they change enough to be noticed.



Articulation – Changing and exaggerating the articulation during a melodic phrase gives the music character.

A single staff of musical notation in treble clef, 4/4 time. The chord is indicated as C⁷. The melody features various articulation marks, including accents (^) and slurs. Trills are marked with a '3' over the notes in measures 17 and 19. The notation includes various accidentals and rests.

Guide Tones – Guide tones are the chord tones that are responsible for creating a chord's essential harmonic (vertical) quality. (Chord tones 1-3-5-7)

Ami⁷ D⁷ Gma⁷ Cma⁷

F#mi⁷(b5) B⁷(b9) Emi⁷ E⁷

Dmi⁷ G⁷ Cma⁷ A⁷

Simple guide-tone line

Dmi⁷ G⁷ Cma⁷ A⁷

Embellished guide-tone line

Motive – A small, thematic unit of melody, roughly between 2 and 8 notes, consisting of a single or musical thought, similar to a short sentence in language.

- d. **Motif soloing** – Playing short, simple ideas which lend themselves well or easily to melodic development. These musical elements involve melody and rhythm
- e. **Developable ideas** – must have a strong rhythmic and/or melodic characteristic which can be easily recognized and used as building material for motive developments in a solo.

Dmi⁷ Melodic motive (2 notes moving up by step) with the same rhythm

Same rhythm, different notes (rhythmic motive)

Scale Patterns – scale patterns are groups of several scale notes in a certain order which can be practiced on chords and eventually used in an improvised solo.

Following are examples of scale patterns in 4-note groups, incorporating the tonic triad of the scale plus one additional note.

Scale patterns using the tonic triad (1,3,5) plus the 2nd of the scale:

1 2 3 5	3 2 1 5
1 5 2 3	3 5 2 1
1 5 3 2	3 5 1 2
2 1 5 3	5 3 2 1
2 3 1 5	5 3 1 2
2 5 3 1	5 1 2 3

Scale patterns using the tonic triad (1,3,5) plus the 4th of the scale:

1 3 4 5	4 5 3 1
1 5 4 3	4 1 3 5
1 4 3 5	4 3 1 5
3 4 5 1	5 4 3 1
3 1 4 5	5 1 4 3
3 5 1 4	5 1 3 4

Scale patterns using the tonic triad (1,3,5) plus the 6th of the scale:

1 3 5 6	5 3 1 6
1 6 5 3	5 6 1 3
1 5 3 6	5 1 3 6
3 6 5 1	6 5 3 1
3 1 6 5	6 1 3 5
3 5 1 6	6 5 1 3

Scale patterns using the tonic triad (1,3,5) plus the 7th of the scale:

1 3 5 7	5 3 1 7
1 5 3 7	5 1 3 7
1 7 5 3	5 7 1 3
3 5 7 1	7 5 3 1
3 7 5 1	7 1 3 5
3 1 7 5	7 3 5 1

The image shows two staves of musical notation in treble clef, illustrating scale patterns for four different chords: Cma⁷, A⁷, Dmi⁷, and G⁷.

Staff 1 (labeled 53): Shows the scale patterns for the 2nd degree of the scale (F) for each chord. The patterns are: Cma⁷ (5321), A⁷ (3215), Dmi⁷ (3512), and G⁷ (5321).

Staff 2 (labeled 57): Shows the scale patterns for the 4th degree of the scale (E) for each chord. The patterns are: Cma⁷ (1523), A⁷ (3514), Dmi⁷ (5134), and G⁷ (5134).