



## Just For Beginners - Jazz Improvisation for Beginners: Part One

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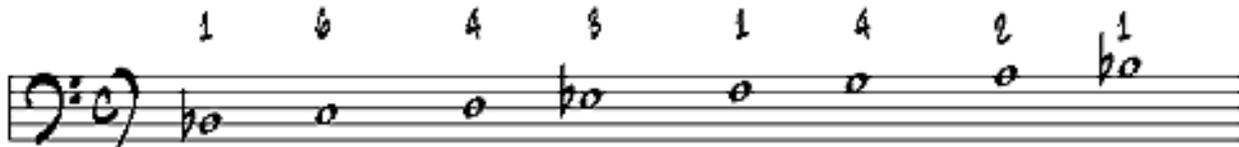
Articles

So you want to learn how to improvise jazz. "Where do I begin?" you might ask. You have worked hard to learn to read music, now how do you make it up on the spot?

It's easier than you think. The trick is to start simple. Most people, when they first improvise, become overwhelmed by all the choices. What note should you play? Should you play it loud or soft? How long should you hold the note?

Instead of worrying about all those choices, let's make some of those choices for you (temporarily) so you only think about one choice. With a little practice, you will be able to think about more than one thing, and will be on your way to becoming a jazz trombonist.

Before you start improvising, you need to learn the Bb major scale. If you already know your Bb major scale by heart, you can skip to the next lesson, if you like. If you don't know your Bb scale, this is a good time to learn! The scale is just below.



Play the scale slowly, at your own pace. Remember to take a deep breath, relax, and play with a good sound. Once you feel comfortable with this scale we can move on to the next step - playing with a rhythm section!

Download both of these:

(Windows users: right-click on the links to download and store the files on your hard drive. Macintosh users: click and hold, or option-click, the link to download the files to your hard drive.)

- [Bb Major Rhythm Section MIDI File](#)
- [Bb Major Scale Patterns PDF](#)

Start by playing through the Bb Scale Patterns sheet. It begins simply, but gets more difficult by the end, so if you can't play it all take some time to practice it before going on. The rhythm section will wait for you. :)

When you are ready, start playing the MIDI file. You will hear a series of clicks counting you into the beginning. If you want, just let it play for a while and listen to what the "rhythm section" is doing. Then try playing some of the scale patterns long with the MIDI file. If you get lost, don't worry, just start on any

measure, as long as you are on a downbeat. As you play, listen carefully to how you sound. Are you playing with a good tone? Do the notes sound in tune to you? How does that Bb major scale sound against the rhythm section?

Is the Bb major scale too easy for you? If so, you can download the following files and practice the scale exercise in other keys below.

- [Eb major](#)
- [G major](#)
- [C major](#)
- [F major](#)
- [D major](#)

These scales were not written out on purpose. Practice transposing the scales yourself. If you need to, go ahead and write them out, but you should memorize the scales as soon as you can. Remember, the point of improvising is playing without reading music.

Once you can play the Bb major scale and have played some of the other scales as well, comfortably and by memory, move on to the next lesson, where you'll jump in and start improvising your own solo!

**Part One - [Part Two](#) - [Part Three](#)**

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David Wilken received a Bachelor of Music from Illinois Wesleyan University, a Master of Music from DePaul University, and a Doctor of Arts from Ball State University. He is currently Assistant Professor of Jazz, Brass, and Music Literature at Adams State College, located in Alamosa, Colorado. His performing credits include a wide variety of groups from the Indianapolis Jazz Orchestra, the Muncie Symphony Orchestra, and the Temptations. His professional web site, which includes many brass, jazz, and general music resources, can be accessed at <http://faculty.adams.edu/~dmwilken>.

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