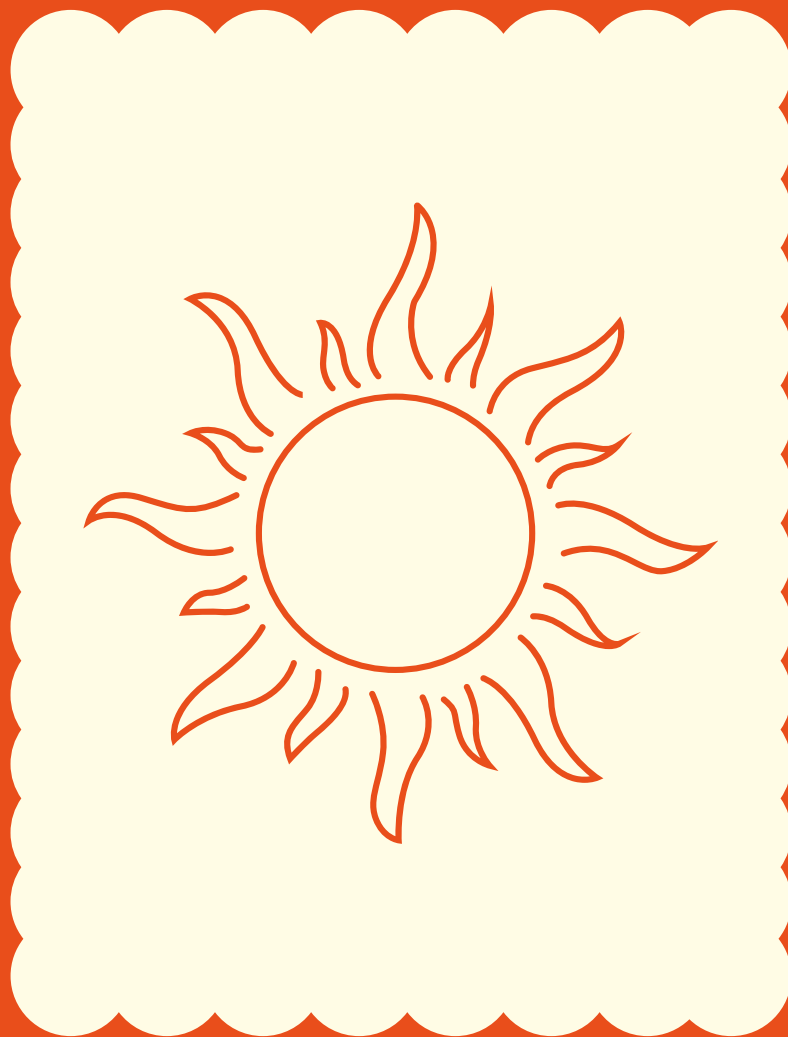


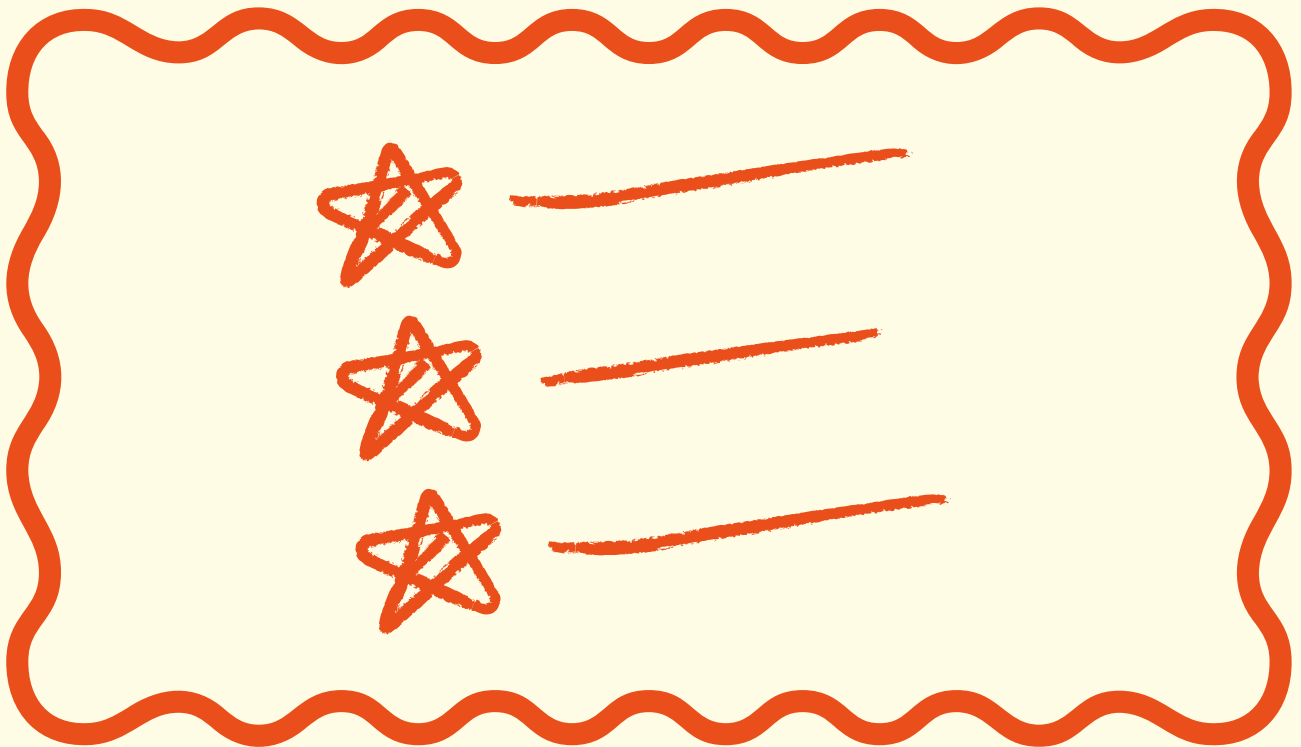
NYJO

Warm-up Games



CREATED BY FEE BUCKTON

Learning Objectives

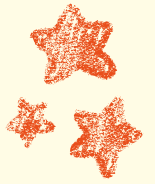
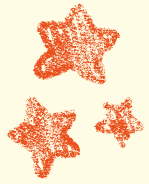


For you students to become comfortable playing their instrument in front of others, and to break through that first barrier of performance nerves.

For your students to begin to gather an understanding of some of the basics of jazz, such as improvisation, and the blues scale.

For your students to understand that everybody has their own unique voice, both musically and in a general sense, and it's important to listen to everybody.

For your students to let go of the fear of improvisation, and turn it from something potentially intimidating, into something exciting.



Skills that the Young People Should Take Away...

To use their ear to blend in, within the context of both activities.

The importance of listening to the other musicians around them when playing jazz, and an understanding that helping each other, and working together, creates the best sound.

The idea that music enables you to connect with others, and get to know new people without necessarily using words.

So to begin with, this is about warming up the young people to a room full of new people, new sounds, a new space, and the sound of their own instrument in this space. These activities are designed to put any feelings of nerves/awkwardness at ease, and to get them feeling comfortable and ready to engage in the workshop/class without feeling inhibited. It's important to stress to the young people the impact that warming up can have on their practice session or rehearsal, particularly for those with very physical instruments.

It would also be beneficial to explain to them that getting to know people and creating good friendship foundations is essential for having a fun and productive rehearsal session. They should begin to understand that as a professional musician, the relationships you build with those you're working with can greatly impact the quality of the music you're making, and opportunities you get given.

Further on the topic of rehearsals, it can be helpful to warm up as a group, as it forces you to consider more than just your own sound, and you learn to blend into the group sound, as well as noticing other people's way of playing, and trying to compliment it.

I have devised two activities to complete. Both include instruments, and introduce the concepts of listening, improvisation, jazz theory, and the skill of using your ears.

Activity 1

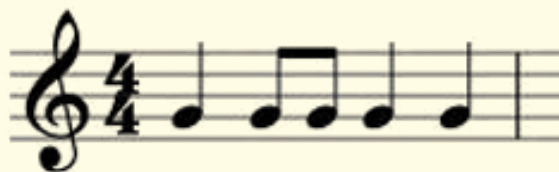
Activity one involves getting the young people to play a note together. They will then individually copy some rhythms, and those who would like to, can have a go at improvising. This activity can be done even before going round and learning everybody's names, to demonstrate the learning objective of connecting purely through music. Give the young people a brief explanation of the activity, and explain to them what conduction is, as you will be doing this throughout, as well as playing your own instrument.

So to begin with, ask them to sit in a circle, then instruct them all to play a note (For example concert C), at the same time. They will keep this going as a long continuous pedal note throughout the activity, taking breaths or breaks when needed.

Once they have settled into this note, and are creating a nice sound, use conduction symbols to direct them to play louder or softer, with swells and sudden drops or lifts in dynamics. You can also instruct some instruments to drop in and out at different times, to demonstrate the change in texture that this creates. This will keep them engaged, and teach them to follow whoever is leading whichever project they are involved in.



Then one by one, play a simple, easy rhythm on one note, for each person, for example like this:

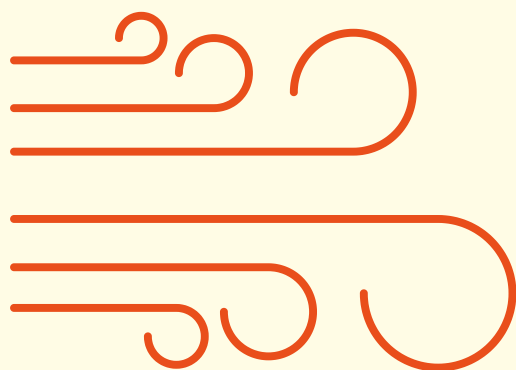


And then encourage them to play this rhythm back to you. Explain to them beforehand that it does not matter if they get the note wrong, the rhythm and the confidence to try it is more important.

If they enjoy this, they can then take turns to play a rhythm for the person next to them to copy, or one person can go round the room and create rhythms for others to copy.

At the end you can offer the opportunity for anyone who would like to, to have a go at improvising over the pedal note.

This should take around 20 minutes/half an hour, which is a good amount of time to dedicate to warming up. After the activity is complete, take some time to explain to the wind players/singers the importance of breathing properly when playing long notes, to keep a clear consistent tone with their instruments. It is worth noting that even for those without wind instruments, proper breathing technique can help them to feel more calm and confident, and therefore play and perform better.



It is crucial to be aware that many young people can lack any confidence at all when it comes to playing their instrument in front of a room full of people, especially if they have not done it before. These young people should be gently encouraged, but at no point forced to play on their own, or do something they are not comfortable doing, as this will just put them off coming to more sessions.

If they are not confident in copying back the rhythm, suggest they try it on a percussion instrument first, and when they can do this easily, encourage them to try it on their own instrument. They should feel that this is a safe space for them to experiment with new sounds, and explore new ideas, without judgement.



My top tips for delivering this activity are:



Keep the atmosphere relaxed and chill. Don't make the young people play anything that they don't want to, and remind them that they are here to have fun.

Play your ideas on your own instrument first to get the young people inspired to try their best, and learn how to do that themselves.

Explain how the activity will be carried out beforehand, so that the young people don't feel as if they are being put on the spot at any point, or feel as if they are not understanding or keeping up.

Don't forget to ask if the young people have any questions
Carry out the activity for long enough that the young people are sufficiently warmed up, but not so long that they get bored.

Activity 2

Activity 2 involves teaching the young people the Minor Blues scale, getting them used to the sound of it, then assigning each of them a note, and asking them to put themselves in the right order. Before beginning the activity, they will announce their name and their note as an introductory exercise. This activity should be explained in detail before beginning, and ensure the young people know that it's ok if they struggle with it, as it may be challenging for some.

Begin by playing the C Minor Blues scale on the keyboard. Play it a few times, and say the notes as you play them.

Then go around the circle and ask each young person to say their name, as well as assigning them one random note from the scale. Ask them to go around the circle again, and state their name, as well as stating the note they were assigned, and then play this note on their instrument.

Direct the young people to stand up and now order themselves in the notes of the scale, ascending. This will require them to keep playing their notes, and to ask others to play their notes, to work out where each person slots in. Assign yourself as the root note, to help them get started.

They may get confused if some of their instruments are in different keys, but remind them that this exercise is about relying on your ears, so they should focus on their note, and how it sounds next to the notes around them.

If there are drummers, give them a piece of pitched percussion in order to participate. If there are keys players, they will have to arrange themselves around the piano.

When assigning notes, be aware of octave limitations, but also use this to your advantage in that more than one person can have the same note, but in different octaves. Also, if there are lots of young people, or some of them in particular are struggling, pair them with another person with the same note, which they can play at the same time.

Once they have successfully ordered themselves, get them to play up and down the scale, by playing one note at a time. Ask if anyone is able to identify which people/notes make up a Dominant chord, and play this a few times too.

Help the young people to understand the importance of repetition when learning something new, and explain how listening and repetition are some of the skills needed to start transcribing solos, language and phrases.

You can then hand out a worksheet that has the blues scale, and a blues chord written out in notation:



Optional Extension

To extend this activity, you can explain to the young people how the blues is the basis for a lot of jazz tunes, and you can even play them some blues tunes they may have heard of, as well as finding a famous solo that uses a lot of jazz language.

You can discuss with them how sharing the notes of the scale out like this is similar to players sharing a melody when performing, and point out how effective it can be to utilise different timbres.

You can help them realise that a lot of other genres use blues notes too, and show them songs that demonstrate this. You can also introduce them to the dominant chord, and play this chord whilst playing a blues scale on top, to demonstrate how it fits.

If you would like, you can then develop this scale into some improvisation, to show them how you can use scales to improvise using patterns and intervals etc.

A huge learning point for this activity is to introduce new jazz sounds and concepts to those who may not have ever heard them before. It will open up a whole new world for them to explore beyond this session. They should walk away knowing the notes of the Minor Blues scale, but more importantly be able to identify the sound of the blues when listening to music in future.

This activity will also allow them to learn how to listen and communicate with new people, and to work as a team to achieve their goal. It should help them to understand that you can't always progress as a musician by yourself, and sometimes you need to learn from others.



My top tips for this activity are:



Keep playing the scale over and over throughout the activity, and play it on different instruments. Also occasionally play a dominant chord, or even other chords that work, so subconsciously the young people start to get used to this sound, and understand how their individual note fits over it.

Help them if they ask, or if they are really struggling, but try to allow space for them to complete it themselves, so they can have a greater sense of pride once it is complete. Remember to praise the young people, but take a step back if they are doing well, to encourage independence. Don't rush them!

Encourage them to listen to more music and identify the scale and sounds they've heard today. Hearing musicians they like play with these ideas will inspire them to try it themselves.

Include yourself in the activity so that they don't feel intimidated by you watching them, and feel as if you are on their team.



Mini Quiz



1. WHY IS WARMING UP IMPORTANT?

ANSWER: It prepares your body, your mind, and your instrument, in order to be able to play to the best of your ability.

2. WE CAN MAKE A NOTE MORE INTERESTING BY USING ARTICULATION AND ...

ANSWER: Dynamics

3. CONDUCTION IS ...

ANSWER: Directing musicians using visual cues.

4. TEXTURE MEANS THE AMOUNT OF NOTES USED IN A PIECE, TRUE OR FALSE?

ANSWER: False. Texture is the way that different layers in a piece of music interact.

5. WHAT NOTES ARE IN THE C MINOR BLUES SCALE?

ANSWER: C, Eb, F, Gb, G, Bb, C

6. YOU CAN LEARN NEW PHRASES BY ... OTHER MUSICIANS

ANSWER: Transcribing

7. ... IS THE KEY TO MEMORIZATION

ANSWER: Repetition

8. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO BREATHE PROPERLY WHEN WARMING UP?

ANSWER: To maintain a good tone, as well as keeping your body and mind relaxed.

9. YOU SHOULD ALWAYS START BY PRACTISING FAST, AND THEN SLOW DOWN, TRUE OR FALSE?

ANSWER: False



Key Words



Improvisation: Creating music on the spot

The Blues Scale: A 6 note scale built on the major pentatonic scale

Transposition: Listening to a piece of music and memorising/writing it down note for note

Dynamics: How loud or soft something is played

Timbre: The quality of a sound, or how a musical note sounds

The Blues: A musical genre/form originated amongst African Americans in the South

Pitch: How high or low a note is in music

Instrumentation: The combination of instruments or voices used in a composition

Pedal note: A sustained note that occurs while other harmonies change

Octave: The interval between two notes that have the same name but different pitches



If you have any questions about the content within this worksheet, please contact us on projects@nyjo.org.uk.

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