

Intonation

Tune the bass

- Tune one string (usually the A) using a tuner then use harmonics to tune the others
 - To do this, place your first finger on the D on the A string, and your fourth finger on the A on the D string (third position)
— **See Glossary page** for how to find that). Do not press down, just rest lightly, making sure no other part of your hand is touching either string. Bow each string separately with a solid focused tone. Tune the D string so that the harmonics are the same exact pitch.
See Figure 1
 - Continue this on the other strings, making sure to turn the pegs of the strings you have not yet tuned. The other finger placements are:
 - 1 on G on D string, 4 D on G string
 - 1 on A on E string, 4 E on A string
- Allow for time on each string, don't feel rushed. The string is most in tune when bowed with consistent pressure and speed



Hand position

- Pretend that you're holding an apple in your left hand. While standing with the bass, move the "apple" through the neck of the bass so that your C-shaped hand is around the neck. The curved fingers and thumb that you see should be maintained, no matter how much pressure you apply to the bass. **See Figure 2**
- The thumb has a tendency to flatten out. Yes, this is ok but should **not** add any tension through the inside of your hand or wrist, particularly in the big muscle below your thumb in the palm of your hand. If your thumb is flattening out, try moving it laterally across the back of the neck of the bass to see if there's a better placement for it.



- As your fingers move from string to string, your thumb will move laterally along the back of the neck, because your whole hand and wrist is rotating, still holding that “apple”
- Your left elbow should be, at its highest point, at shoulder level, and as your hand moves up the neck (towards the bridge), your elbow will follow as needed. Do not let the elbow sink below the level of your hand, as that will add an extra angle in your wrist which makes it difficult to maintain the apple hand position.
See Figure 3 for A too low elbow angle.
- Don’t be afraid to make marks on the fingerboard with pencil or tape in order to instill good shifting/intonation habits
 - Make sure your strings are in tune before you make any marks
 - Use open strings to test that your closed notes are in tune
 - Ex: If making a mark at the D on the G string, play the higher D and then the open D string. Listen to see if the higher octave is in tune before marking
 - Pencil marks fade, and that’s ok! Keep adding them if they help.
 - Add a small piece of colored tape (electrical tape is good) to the back of the neck or the side of the neck closest to you for a visual aid
- Don’t forget that the angle of your finger can change the pitch of the note slightly. By repeatedly changing how your finger is connected to the string is how we get vibrato.
See Figures 4 and 5



"Vomits" exercise

- This exercise works on your ear and your muscle memory
- Step 1: put on a drone (let's say Ab AKA A-flat)
 - Drones can be found on Youtube, in phone apps, and in physical metronomes
- Step 2: place your first finger on the Ab on the G string (in half position)
 - Make sure that the Ab you are playing is the exact pitch AKA in tune with the drone
- Step 3: gliss up to Bb with your first finger, try to make it in tune (this interval is tough!)
- Step 4: gliss back down to Ab, make it in tune.
 - **Note:** It's ok if you over- or under-shoot these shifts. The goal is to shift slowly enough at first that you can hear the pitch change and stop when you arrive at the correct pitch. If you notice you're consistently over- or under-shooting a shift, make a mental note and consciously think the opposite when you make that shift again. I.e. if you're always sharp when you shift up to a D, then think "lower D"
- Step 5: gliss up to C, make it in tune. Then gliss back down to Ab.
- Step 6: continue this up and down glissing from the root through your scale of choice. Ab major, for example.

Tone

- Bow
 - To get a sound using the bow, we have three variables:
 - Bow placement (vertically, between the end of the fingerboard and the bridge)
 - Bow weight (how much of your arm weight is being put into the bow)
 - Bow speed (how quickly the bow moves across the string)
 - If we change any of these variables, the tone quality of the note will change. Generally, the lower the position (closer to being open the strings are), the closer to the end of the fingerboard we want to keep the bow. Vice versa, the higher we are up the string, the closer to the bridge we want to be.
 - Experiment with different placements, weights, and speeds of the bow on all of the strings, both open and closed.

What sound do you want?

- Pizzicato
 - For jazz pizz, we anchor our right thumb behind the fingerboard, close to the end of the fingerboard, and use our pointer and middle fingers to pluck.
 - Use the weight of your arm and wrist to pull the string, not just

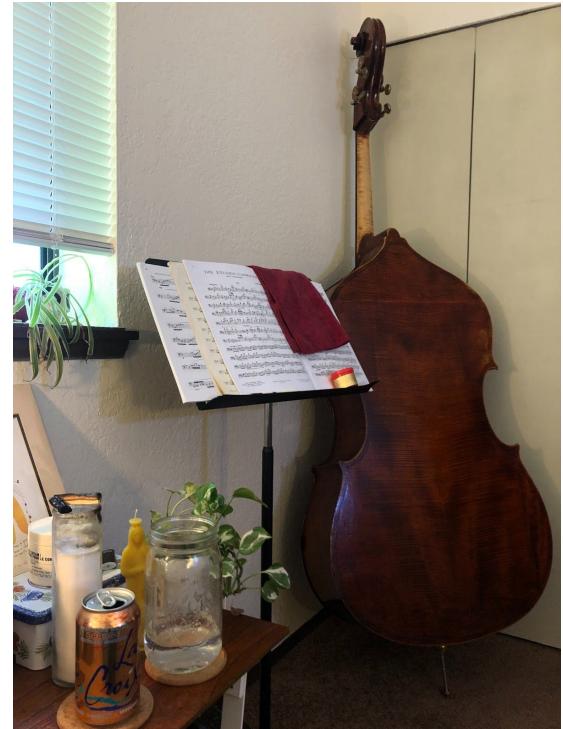


your fingers, because your arm has a lot more power than just your finger! See **Figure 6 (above)**

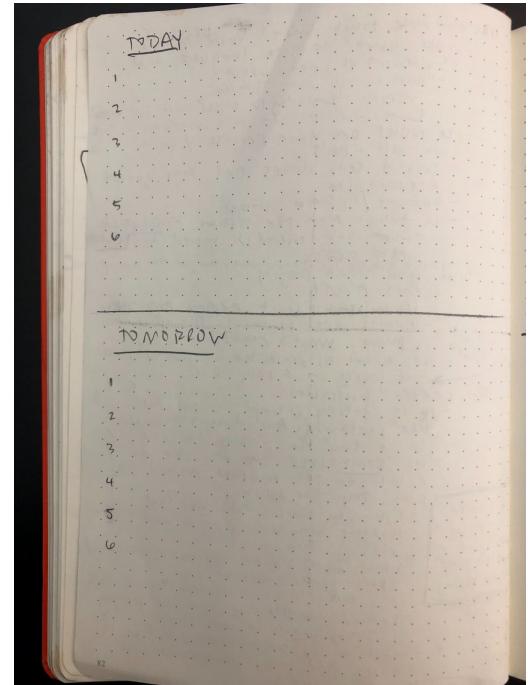
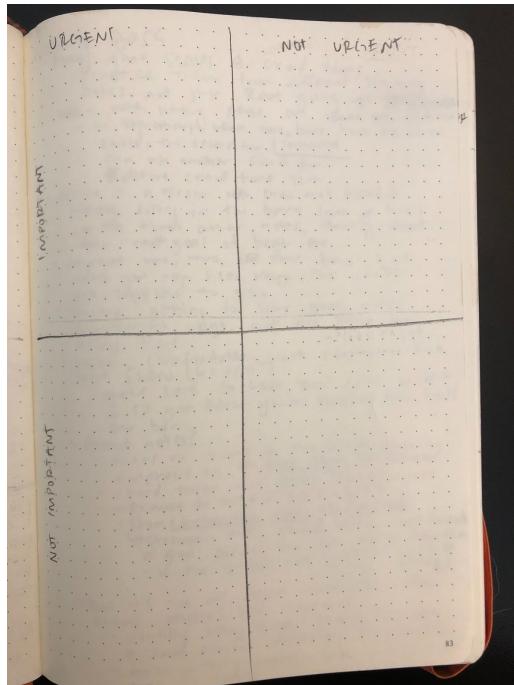
- While the bass is a string instrument, in jazz it is very percussive, almost always being plucked. Therefore, we must be very conscious of how and when we connect with and release the string, because as soon as we make a sound, we don't have much control over it apart from muting it altogether.
 - Time is incredibly important (possibly the most important part of the role of the bassist in jazz) and for us, time is determined by the beginning of each note we play. Therefore, having control of your right hand is **crucial** to being a good jazz bassist.

Practice Routine

- Set up your area
 - You're more likely to practice if you have few, if any, impediments to you getting set up to play. This means:
 - Have your bass out and ready to play if possible. They are giant creatures and are basically furniture, so may as well lean into it!
 - Have a music stand with your music out and easily accessible
 - Have a pencil on your stand
 - Have rosin, a rag, anything else you may need ready and waiting!
 - Having the concept of practicing associated with "good" or "fun" things is always good. For me, I like my fancy pencil, a cup of coffee, tea, or bubbly water and perhaps a non-messy morsel like a piece of chocolate. Set yourself up for success with a good head space **and** physical space. See **Figure 7**
- Make goals
 - We need both long term and short term goals in order to be successful with anything.
 - Long term goals
 - These goals should look forward in time about a month or two but shouldn't be too broad, which makes it less likely that you'll actually make progress toward a real goal. These goals could be:
 - Learn a new tune or concerto



- Write a song
 - Have quantifiably better facility in a new position on the neck
- Short term goals
 - The goals are achievable today or tomorrow with practice. These are things like:
 - Memorize a new scale and be able to play it at X bpm
 - Work on/memorize four bars of a new tune
 - Make a big shift in tune
- When making goals, make sure to use language that is definitive, ideally quantifiable, and not vague
 - “In tune” instead of “better”
 - “Increase tempo by 10 clicks” instead of just “faster”
- Take notes
 - Write down your goals, both long and short term
 - Set dates, keep yourself accountable
 - Make and Urgent/Important graph (or something like it) to see what you should work on right now. **See Figure 8**
 - Daily practice notes



- Make a list of 6 definitive things that you want to practice today **See Figure 9 (above)**
 - If you don't get to everything today, move everything you didn't get to today to your list of things to do tomorrow. This will make sure you don't ignore things that are perhaps less fun every day.
- I make a table that includes: **See Figure 10 (below)**

- What I want to practice
 - How long I want to spend on it
 - How long I actually spent on it
 - Notes on how it went, including achievements and difficulties, how much I increased the tempo, etc.

TIME TU DP	PIAN	ACTUAL	NOTES
90 Long tones	10	10	
Wandy Etude	15	15	
Bruch	15	25	Timing, intonation on high E A
Lateef - fast gal	20	15	goal $\text{d}=70$ Actual $\text{d}=60$
Diatonic chords Ex	15	20	work on lower strings more

- Have an extra notepad or a section in your notes for things that pop up in your head while you're practicing that may not be music related. I find that I inevitably remember that I was supposed to send an email or run an errand today. Don't do it now, just write it down so you remember it for later.

When you start practicing

- Rule #1: Devices away! And if you use yours for a metronome/drone, make sure it is in Airplane mode AND Do Not Disturb. You don't have to practice for long, but you do have to be focused when you're doing it!
 - If you're predetermining how long you want to spend on certain things during your practice session, set timers. But if they go off and you're on a roll, keep going and see what you can get done. (hence the Actual time spent column on my practice log)
 - Don't forget to take **breaks!!** If you're practicing for longer than 30 minutes, add in a few 5 or 10 minute breaks so that you don't get depleted.
 - Also, don't forget to check in with your body when you're playing. It's not all about the notes! Check in with your
 - Left wrist
 - Left elbow
 - Back

- Breath

What if you don't feel like practicing today?

- It is totally normal to not feel like practicing all of the time. And there's something to be said for taking the day off...**sometimes**. But we can do a lot to get ourselves excited to play. Try the following:
 - Listen to music that you love for a few minutes
 - Imagine yourself playing and having fun
 - Watch a bit of an inspiring documentary/performance/interview
 - Just be careful not to fall into a youtube hole!
 - Remind yourself that you love playing music
 - Try saying it out loud
- If this all fails, set a timer for 5 or 10 minutes and just start playing (note: not practicing). May you'll get into it!
- A note: you're more likely to get more done if you're thinking positively about practicing. [Here's a link](#) to a paper I wrote and conducted a study for last year.
 - TL;dr If you can change your mindset at the beginning of a practice session, you can get a lot done. If you have a negative attitude about practicing, you aren't very likely to feel good about what you accomplished at the end of the session.

Walking Bass — Where to start

- Step 1: know the scales and chord tones of the song that you want to walk over
 - Practice them from different starting notes, not just root going up.
- Step 2: start by playing roots on beat one of every bar.
 - If you are a visual person, write in these roots on a blank chart. **See PDF “Bb Blues & Scales_Example Goal Notes”**
 - Remember you can use any octave!
 - In situations where two consecutive bars have the same chord, the second bar can use another chord tone
- Step 3: use the roots on beat one of every bar to guide you, generally by steps (not big leaps) from one bar to the next. Fill in the bars with three other notes, thinking about your next goal of beat one.
 - Practice this by playing out of time, keeping track of how many beats you play per bar (it should be four)
- Step 4: repeat one, two, or four bars many times until you can hear the chord progression more or less in your head
 - Practice getting to your goal notes on beat one in different ways, not the same way/pattern every time
- Step 5: when comfortable, start playing in time but SLOW (maybe 60 bpm)
 - Make sure to have a different pitch click on beat one so that you know that you're play four beats per bar

- Good notes?
 - Focus on notes in the scale
 - Chord tones are most stable/consonant
 - In more to least stable: 1, 5, 3, 6, 2 or 7, 4
 - Then chromatic notes
 - Chromatic notes should ideally lead towards a goal, pulling the ear to the destination
 - If the options are H H W vs W H H, the first example is more ideal. **See Figure 11**
 - H = Half step, W = whole step

The image shows two horizontal musical staves. Both staves are in bass clef and 4/4 time. The top staff begins with a note labeled 'B♭7' above it. It then has a short vertical line with a dot, a short vertical line with a dot, a long vertical line with a dot, a short vertical line with a dot, and a long vertical line with a dot. The bottom staff begins with a note labeled 'B♭7' above it. It then has a short vertical line with a dot, a long vertical line with a dot, a short vertical line with a dot, a long vertical line with a dot, and a short vertical line with a dot.

- But it's not all about notes. It's also about phrases and contours
 - Usually every four bars should feel like a solid arrival (probably means playing the root)
 - Make a "hilly" contour, with more steps than big leaps
- The best way to learn how to play cohesive/interesting/good bass lines? **TRANSCRIBE BASS LINES**
 - Transcribe a chorus/entire tune/favorite part of a bass line and then analyze with scale degrees to see if there are any recurring themes that come up. **See Figure 12**

The image shows two horizontal musical staves. Both staves are in bass clef and 4/4 time. The top staff has labels above the notes: '1 B♭7', '2', 'b3', '3', '1 E♭7', '7', '6', '#5 or b6'. The bottom staff has labels above the notes: '1 B♭7', '3', '5', '6', '7 B♭7', '5', '4', '3'. Blue arrows point from these labels to the corresponding notes on the staff.

- Here's a variety of songs to start you off:
 - "Blues By Five" by Miles Davis on *Cookin'*
 - "Solar" by Bill Evans Trio on *Sunday at the Village Vanguard*

- “After hours” by Phineaus newborn on *We Three*
- “But not For Me” by Ahmad Jamal on *Live at the Pershing*
- “Blue Monk” by Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers with Thelonious Monk on *Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers with Thelonious Monk*
- “So What” by Miles Davis on *Kind of Blue*
- “On Green Dolphin Street” by Miles Davis on *Kind of Blue*

Time to Solo — Get out of the Bassist mindset

- We are told to focus on roots to walk and then immediately snap out of it to solo. Not fair!
- Get out of the root mindset by starting to make connections, not based around the root, and instead on nearby notes, building cohesive phrases

Exercises

- “Connect the Dots” **See PDF “Connect the Dots — Autumn Leaves”**
 - Step 1: choose a tune
 - Step 2: starting on any scale degree of the first chord of the tune, move through the scale for (arbitrarily) four notes.
 - Step 3: Now you are in the next chord of the tune. Continue with the closest pitch to where you left off, but in this new scale. Don’t restart from the root of the new scale.
 - Step 4: continue through entire tune.
 - Make sure to start from every scale degree going but up and down, and making sure to use different fingerings/strings. Feel free to spend more or less beats on each chord
- Diatonic chord exercises
 - Get your fingers used to arpeggiating but connecting to neighbor notes **See PDFs “Diatonic Chord Exercises”**
- Phrases
 - AB phrases are one of the most common and easily recognizable phrases in music. Try making a phrase that is made up of an antecedent and a consequent, like you’re speaking in words. Your phrase should have the general flow of the following sentence:
 - “I had to run, because my dog ran away.”
 - This sentence could end with “I had to run.” But that isn’t very interesting. The next phrase of the sentence “...because my dog ran away.” gives more information and makes it a whole idea.
 - Miles Davis’s solo on “So What” is chock-full of perfect examples of these phrases. Transcribe it!
- When soloing, the goal should be making melodies, not a flood of “correct” notes.

Glossary

- Chord tones
 - A note that exists within a certain chord. Most often 1 3 5 7
- Scale degree
 - refers to the position of a particular note on a **scale** relative to the tonic, the first and main note of the **scale** from which each octave is assumed to begin
- Chromatic
 - relating to or using notes not belonging to the diatonic scale of the key in which a passage is written
- Consonant
 - **Consonant** intervals are usually described as pleasant and agreeable.
- Dissonant
 - Dissonant intervals are those that cause tension and desire to be resolved to **consonant** intervals

Open 1/2 Position 1st Position 2nd Position 2 1/2 Position 3rd Position 3 1/2 Position

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4th Position 5th Position 5 1/2 Position 6th Position 6 1/2 Position 7th Position

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