

# Topics of improvisation: soloing and comping

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## Evaluate topics for control and balance

### What to play (content)

1. Phrase lengths: short, medium, long
2. Phrase startings: rhythmic placement
3. Phrase endings: natural, logical, finished, sustained, short
4. Rhythmic values: whole, half, dotted quarter, quarter, eighth, triplet, sixteenth, combined
5. Rhythmic activity: sparse (fewer notes, long durations), dense (many notes, short durations)
6. Rhythmic content: non-syncopated, syncopated
7. Rhythmic pulse: in 4, in 3, in 1, broken, rubato, uniform pulse, non-uniform pulse
8. Melodic definition: rhythm defines meter, alternate meter, metric modulations, polyrhythms, floating
9. Melodic accuracy: guide tones, sweet notes, chord tones, chord scales, non-harmonic notes, voice leading, key-area soloing, tonic on tonic, pitch/beat combinations, lower structure triads
10. Melodic range: lowest to highest note in phrase
11. Melodic curve: stepwise motion, leaps, repeated notes, ascending, descending
12. Vocabulary: traditional shapes, patterns, licks, creative, imaginative, effects
13. Lyricism: singable melody/rhythm, non singable
14. Harmonic color: harmonic and nonharmonic sources, upper structure triads, triad couplings, nonharmonic triads, cells (tri-tonic, tetra-tonic, pentatonic), scales
15. Thematic material: motive, multi-motive, memorable quality, recognizing thematic material
16. Direction: time and changes (rhythm fits time, melody fits changes), imitation (motive development techniques), contrast

### **How to play (execution)**

1. Tempo accuracy (downbeat placement): center, ahead, behind, floating, consistency
2. Rhythmic feel (upbeat placement): even (tension), double-time feel (tension), swing (release)
3. Articulation: legato, staccato, ghost notes
4. Dynamics: soft to loud, per note, per phrase, per section, per chorus

### **When to play (play and rest)**

1. Pacing: frequency (how often rest is used), duration (how long rest lasts)

### **Other topics:**

1. Instrumental technique: sound, intonation, flexibility, control, range, registers, scales, chords
2. Repertoire (melody and chords): jazz standards, styles, tempo, memorization methods
3. Embellishing song melody: displacement, transposition, deletion, replacement, augmentation, diminution, embellishment
4. Transposition (1 song in 12 keys): melody, chord tones, chord scales, phrases from transcriptions
5. Chord progressions: functional, non-functional, key area, modal, modulating, tonic systems
6. Transcriptions: pitches, rhythms, accents, articulations, dynamics
7. Extreme tempos: slow, fast, half time, double time, syncopation, metric modulation, sparse, pacing
8. Odd time signatures: 3/4 , 5/4, 7/4, rhythm motives
9. Ballads: swing feel, even feel, expression, effects, pacing
10. Solo lengths: short, medium, long, strategic planning, beginnings and endings
11. Listening skills: dividing, shifting attention, internal mix, interacting/reacting, leading/following
12. Tension/release: creating tension through repetition, release through change, timing release

13. Unaccompanied playing: with time and changes, imitation, contrast, without rest, with rest
14. Free playing: in or no time, in or no form, imitation, contrast, with rest, no rest
15. Sight reading: melody (separate pitch, rhythm, articulation, accents, dynamics, combine), chord progression (target notes, sweet notes, voice leading, lower and upper structures)
16. Ear training: harmonic, melodic, rhythmic
17. Comping: voicings, voice leading, bass lines, ride patterns, fills, leading/following, strolling, supporting, interacting/interfering, constant structures, single note line style, motive development
18. Practice routine (organization): topic selection, exercise design, musical contexts, self critique