

Musical Improvisation for Beginners

More Ideas and Inspiration

Video 1: Tunes

More ideas

Try playing around with some different patterns to find combinations of notes that you like.

One pattern I like is called 'leapfrog'.

You play 1, skip 2, play 3. Then, go back to 2, skip 3, and play 4.

Try this all the way up the scale like this. It helps me to see them in pairs, so I've put a slash between each group to make it clear.

1-3/2-4/3-5/4-6/5-7/6-8

And backwards:

8-6/7-5/6-4/5-3/4-2/3-1

Inspiration

A slow opening improvisation, gradually adding more notes, is called an alap in North Indian classical music. Listen to how Soumik Datta gradually increases the intensity here as he plays Raag Gorakh Kalyan: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mshi-7hfKJM>

Video 2: Groove

More ideas

You can generate rhythms using any words you like. Some good starter sentences could be:

'It is really hot today' / 'I like bananas' / 'It's a quarter past two'

You could even try the rhythms you have come up with here with patterns from our last video on tunes.

Inspiration

Listen to Steve Reich's Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices and Organ. This piece is a masterclass in using rhythm efficiently; finding a good groove and giving it space to develop. You could even try improvising your own, gradually changing, rhythms over the top:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e9EvbSvaH4g>

Video 3: Images

More ideas

Try imitating sounds other than water. The natural world is a great place to start, so maybe take a walk and listen to the birdsong, leaves in the wind, or look at the shape of plants as they grow. How could you turn these into musical ideas?

Inspiration

The Lost Words: Spell Songs is an album that takes inspiration from the natural world, often incorporating recording of nature in their music:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1zPZXNLvRo>