

*Dick Dunscomb's*  
**JAZZ ZONE**  
**LESSON BRIEFS**  
**PART ONE**

Jazz Zone Author, Dick Dunscomb has assembled these lesson briefs especially for your jazz ensemble.

They will help your jazz band get to the next level of jazz performance.

Working through this series of lessons will prepare you to move directly into his new jazz ensemble method,

**JAZZ ZONE...THE BEGINNING**

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The logo features a circular emblem on the left with horizontal lines and a stylized saxophone. To the right, the text 'Dick Dunscomb's' is written in a red cursive font. Below this, 'JAZZ ZONE' is written in large, bold, red capital letters. Underneath that, 'LESSON BRIEFS' and 'PART ONE' are also written in bold, red capital letters, stacked vertically.

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## **JAZZ ZONE...THE BEGINNING**

Hi, it's Dick Dunscomb. My career in jazz education has covered 40 plus years. That includes hundreds of judging events as well as working with thousands of middle school, high school, university and professional jazz bands. Over that span of time, I have developed methods and techniques that work. It is my pleasure to share some of these with you here. Enjoy this quick and easy guide that provides you many tips to assure your great success in your performances.

### **JAZZ ZONE LESSON BRIEFS**

#### **PART ONE**

1. How we look affects how we sound
2. The charts we play
3. Listen, listen, listen - learn the language of jazz
4. Swing style basics
5. Jazz articulations - suggested articulations and music examples

#### **PART TWO**

6. Improvisation and more
7. Creating a "groove"
8. About the sections of the band
9. Rehearsing the jazz ensemble
10. The path to the performance stage

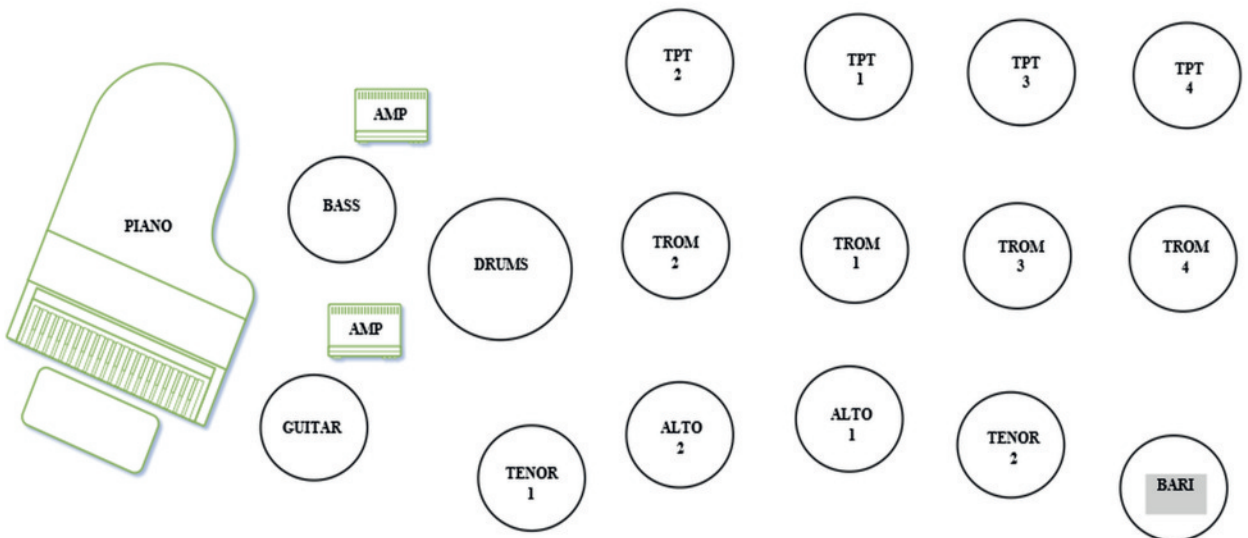
## 1. HOW WE LOOK AFFECTS HOW WE SOUND

How true, a jazz band is that is not visually presented properly very seldom sounds good. The instrumentation makeup of the jazz band contributes to its appealing sound and emotional impact. Positioning the trombones and trumpets on tiered risers behind the saxophones will significantly improve the sound quality.

The rhythm section should be right next to the horns and on the left side as you face them. The drummer should be next to the trombones with the bass player next to the drummer's ride cymbal. The guitarist and pianist should be next to each other. The bass and guitar amps should be placed at least three feet behind the players and positioned so the band can hear them.

A proper set-up is essential, as is the "one on a part" experience. The universally accepted setup chart is shown in Example 1. To solidify how we look many bands have matching shirts or outfits. This is a good idea as it adds to the visual unity of the ensemble. It also adds to a unifying feeling of the band members.

**Example 1: Standard Jazz Ensemble Setup Chart**



## 2. THE CHARTS WE PLAY

Although jazz is only about one hundred years old, we are fortunate to have accumulated an enormous body of standards or classic jazz compositions or arrangements. Taking advantage of using classic ones in selecting music for performances will not only enrich the art form of jazz but will also expand the horizons of our students as well as listeners.

For example, there is certainly much to be learned from the way the Count Basie Orchestra interpreted “Basie Straight Ahead.” The original arrangement is available for advanced students; however, younger students playing a simplified arrangement of the same tune will gain much as well.

Pages 165-183 in “Jazz Pedagogy: The Jazz Educators Handbook and Resource Guide” shows a rich list of charts from Grade 1 through Grade 6 in all styles.

Below is a link to a Florida Bandmasters Association Swing Reference list from FBA Jazz Committee that directors can use as a resource: (List was last updated in 2017)

<https://fba.flmusiced.org/media/1666/fba-jazz-committee-swing-director-resource-list-v12217.pdf>

Here is a suggested list of information that can help you determine the ability level of your group so you will be ready to select appropriate music.

1. Know the practical range of each player in your group, especially the lead trumpet.
2. Who are the weak or strong players and/or sections?
3. What is the endurance of the wind players?
4. Do the rhythm players need written out parts? If so, who?
5. Who are the soloists, what do they need in the music, suggested solos, scales, changes?
6. Match the music to your performance needs.
7. Standard program for festivals – 1 swing tune, 1 ballad, 1 even eighth tune

### 3. LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN – LEARN THE LANGUAGE OF JAZZ

#### Directed Student Listening

Students today have an entire universe of music to listen to on the internet. They seldom spend time on any one tune. Remembering that the entire history of jazz is on the internet we can use that resource to help teach them the jazz language. Therefore, spending time in class listening is necessary. It is critical for you to point out what to listen for, as it will make a huge difference for your young and inexperienced students.

Direct them to listen to the overall sound of the ensemble, the sound of the individual sections and instruments, the articulations, the phrasing and style, the balance, the impact, and so forth. Listening to professional playing will help your students lock into a mental concept of sound and to ultimately imitate that sound.

Repeated listening is essential. Listen to learn the language of jazz. Below is a short list of some professional jazz ensemble recordings that can provide proper examples for your ensemble. These recordings are primarily straight-ahead (swing) jazz in a modern style.

#### Some Suggested Big Band Recordings for Listening

Count Basie, Basie Straight Ahead, April in Paris

Duke Ellington, The London Concerts

Bob Florence, With All the Bells and Whistles

Gordon Goodwin, Swingin' for the Fences

Woody Herman, The Three Herds

Bill Holman, A View from the Side

Thad Jones/Mel Lewis, A Touch of Class

Quincy Jones- Sammy Nestico, Basie and Beyond

Bob Mintzer, Incredible Journey

Bill Watrous, A Time for Love

Patrick Williams, Sinatraland

Clayton-Hamilton, Live at MCG

## 4. SWING-STYLE BASICS

### SWING MUSIC IS SUB-DIVIDED IN TRIPLET FEEL

The slower the tempo the more predominate swing eighth notes become, the faster the tempo, the less predominate.

One of the most important concepts of swing style is the proper interpretation of swing eighth notes. Many people interpret swing eighth's as



this is the closest way to visually describe swing eighth's when the music is written with a strong underlining triplet pulse. In this way learning to sub-divide is essential to defining and performing styles correctly.

### Swing-style Basics

- Listen, repeatedly, to professional jazz recordings to identify and understand jazz styles.
- Identify the jazz sound - the rhythm section is extremely important in this regard.
- Preparing the band for performance.
- Strive for clarity of sound throughout.
- Identify the steady beat or time and know how to make it work.
- Understand the swing eighth note concept.
- Identify characteristic jazz nuances, shapes, and musical language.
- Work on developing a groove.
- Be able to sing confidently with jazz syllables, connecting visual and aural skills.

## 5. JAZZ ARTICULATIONS

The conceptual approach of the jazz rhythm dialect is rooted in the feel of the rhythm of spoken syllables. This approach can help develop a natural feel to swing and help young players understand the concept of swing. The ones we have chosen are but one example. Encourage all students to sing the syllables on the following charts until they are clean, then have them play it. Hear it, Sing it, Play it, Believe me it really works!

**Du** - full value eighth note & quarter notes

**Dot** - short eighth and quarter notes

**Du, Da** - connector eighth notes (Du on beat, Da off beat)

**Dah** - sustained of full value note, sometimes accented

### Duke's Place

The musical notation for 'Duke's Place' is presented in three systems, each on a single staff in 4/4 time. The first system starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are: quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter rest, quarter rest, quarter note G4, quarter note A4, quarter note G4, quarter rest, quarter note G4, eighth note B4, quarter rest, quarter rest, quarter rest, quarter rest. The syllables 'du dot' are placed under the first four notes, and 'du dot' under the last four notes. The second system starts with a measure rest and contains the same sequence of notes and syllables. The third system also starts with a measure rest and contains the same sequence of notes and syllables. The piece ends with a double bar line.

**Lesson Brief #5 continues on next page**

## #5 Jazz Articulations (continued)

### Articulation Exercises - Clinic

dot dot du da du dot      dot dot du da du dot

5      daht daht du da du dot      daht daht du da du dot

9      dah du du dot      dah du du dot

### Jazz Zone - Syllables

da du dot      da du dot      da du da dah da du dot dot

4      da du da dah da du dot dot      dah da du dah dot dot

8      du du dot da du dot      da du dot      da du da dah da du dot dot

12      da du da dah da du dot dot      dah da du dah dot dot

16      du da du dot