

How To Transcribe

Steps for transcribing:

1. Pick out a Solo – Choose a portion of the solo to transcribe!
2. Listen – Listen to the solo as many times as you need to until you have it memorized.
3. Sing – Sing the solo from memory along with the recording.
4. Play – Learn the solo on your instrument, working on it phrase by phrase.
5. Write – Write the solo down on staff paper or in music notation software.
6. Check and Analyze – Check your transcription and analyze the content against the chord changes.
7. Application – Solo in the style of the person that you've transcribed.

For more advanced exploration:

- Learn an entire solo
- Sing solo while playing bass notes (and harmony) on piano
- Apply phrases/cells to different chord progressions
- Solo over entire form using single cell/idea
- Transpose solo to multiple keys

- Resources/Tools -

For Looping & Slowing Down

- [Audacity](#)
- [TunerTranscriber](#)
- Amazing Slow Downer

For Written Transcriptions

- [Shed The Music](#)
- [Jazz Lead Sheets](#)
- [José Menezes | Solo Transcriptions](#)
- [Jazz Bari Sax](#)
- [Nick La Riverie | Trombone Solos](#)

- FAQ -

How long should it take me to learn a solo?

As long as it needs to! When you're transcribing for the first time, it's going to take some time to get familiar with the process and to get comfortable with learn things by ear. Over time, you will improve and transcribe more efficiently and more accurately.

Should I learn the chords by ear?

Ideally, yes. This is a fairly difficult thing to do when learning a solo for the first time. It's okay to look up the changes as you begin to get comfortable with the process of transcribing. Over time, try to identify the roots and qualities of chords in the tunes that you are learning, and you'll eventually become comfortable with catching the changes by ear.

Why should I transcribe?/How does transcribing help my playing?

Transcribing is one of the best ways to internalize jazz language and become familiar with the music. It's how you learn vocabulary, and it's a great way to train your ears, both of which are crucial tools in the jazz idiom.

How do I choose a tune/solo to learn?

First and foremost, choose a tune and solo that you like! After that, consider whether or not the solo is at or above your playing level. If the difficulty of the solo is too much, then there is no shame in saving it for a later time when you have more playing experience. Or, you can go for it! As long as you are willing to take things slowly and put the time in that is needed, there really is no limit to what you can learn. And if the solo is at your level, go for it!

How should I approach step 7?

Take elements of the player that you are learning from and try to implement them into an improvised solo. Such elements include melodic concept, rhythmic concept, phrase length, and melodic shape.

Should I slow down the recording if I need to?

As you first start transcribing, it can be extremely useful to slow down recordings. That being said, if we learn from recordings that have been slowed down, then we learn to hear things at tempos that don't reflect actual performance tempos. It's important to be able to hear things in real time, so, while it may be useful at first, it's best to learn at real time as soon as you are comfortable.

Should I Use A Written Transcription?

Some of the most important aspects of transcribing are vocabulary acquisition, accuracy, memorization, and ear training. Using a written transcription will serve you in a similar way as learning something by ear. However, you will miss out on working on your aural skills (ear training), which is an indispensable tool in this music. Starting with written transcriptions can be a great way to get comfortable with the process. Transitioning to learning solos by ear once you feel ready would then be the most beneficial next step.