

# Bass Pedal Warm-Ups

Bass pedals are a fun and important aspect of Hammond-style organ playing. Unlike classical organists, most jazz organists use only the left foot, assigning the right foot to the expression pedal in order to create dynamic contrast.

For many clonewheel players, the thought of using bass pedals can be intimidating. But it doesn't need to be. After all, the pedals are simply an enlarged keyboard that is played with the feet, and adding them to your setup allows both hands to focus on other duties, including drawbar registration changes, Leslie speed switching, or playing another musical part and sound altogether.

Using the following concepts and techniques, you can incorporate bass pedals into your own playing with a few months of diligent practice.

## The Tap

Before the Internet and YouTube, learning the secret techniques of your favorite musicians proved very difficult. For example, according to all the liner notes I read, the great jazz organist Jimmy Smith played his bass lines with his feet, chords with his left hand, and melodies with his right hand. As a young aspiring organist, I tried to do just that, but the sound wasn't right. My bass lines sounded too heavy and clunky, whereas Smith's bass lines were languid and smooth. The tone was completely different, too.

I eventually learned that Smith played the majority of his bass lines with his left hand and accented those lines with his left foot, a technique known as "tapping." Furthermore, tapping is often done on a single pedal; the Bb in the middle of the pedal board.

In other words, the notes of the bass line are played using the left hand, while the bass pedals are simply used to add an attack to the front of each note, like the pluck from an acoustic bass. Tapping the Bb pedal in a staccato manner, just ever so slightly ahead of the left hand, provides this attack (see Example 1).

Left Hand

Pedals

The image displays two staves of music. The top staff, labeled 'Left Hand', is in bass clef with a 4/4 time signature. It contains a sequence of notes: G2, A2, Bb2, C3, D3, E3, F3, G3, A3, Bb3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, Bb4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, Bb5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, Bb6, C7, D7, E7, F7, G7, A7, Bb7, C8, D8, E8, F8, G8, A8, Bb8, C9, D9, E9, F9, G9, A9, Bb9, C10, D10, E10, F10, G10, A10, Bb10, C11, D11, E11, F11, G11, A11, Bb11, C12, D12, E12, F12, G12, A12, Bb12, C13, D13, E13, F13, G13, A13, Bb13, C14, D14, E14, F14, G14, A14, Bb14, C15, D15, E15, F15, G15, A15, Bb15, C16, D16, E16, F16, G16, A16, Bb16, C17, D17, E17, F17, G17, A17, Bb17, C18, D18, E18, F18, G18, A18, Bb18, C19, D19, E19, F19, G19, A19, Bb19, C20, D20, E20, F20, G20, A20, Bb20, C21, D21, E21, F21, G21, A21, Bb21, C22, D22, E22, F22, G22, A22, Bb22, C23, D23, E23, F23, G23, A23, Bb23, C24, D24, E24, F24, G24, A24, Bb24, C25, D25, E25, F25, G25, A25, Bb25, C26, D26, E26, F26, G26, A26, Bb26, C27, D27, E27, F27, G27, A27, Bb27, C28, D28, E28, F28, G28, A28, Bb28, C29, D29, E29, F29, G29, A29, Bb29, C30, D30, E30, F30, G30, A30, Bb30, C31, D31, E31, F31, G31, A31, Bb31, C32, D32, E32, F32, G32, A32, Bb32, C33, D33, E33, F33, G33, A33, Bb33, C34, D34, E34, F34, G34, A34, Bb34, C35, D35, E35, F35, G35, A35, Bb35, C36, D36, E36, F36, G36, A36, Bb36, C37, D37, E37, F37, G37, A37, Bb37, C38, D38, E38, F38, G38, A38, Bb38, C39, D39, E39, F39, G39, A39, Bb39, C40, D40, E40, F40, G40, A40, Bb40, C41, D41, E41, F41, G41, A41, Bb41, C42, D42, E42, F42, G42, A42, Bb42, C43, D43, E43, F43, G43, A43, Bb43, C44, D44, E44, F44, G44, A44, Bb44, C45, D45, E45, F45, G45, A45, Bb45, C46, D46, E46, F46, G46, A46, Bb46, C47, D47, E47, F47, G47, A47, Bb47, C48, D48, E48, F48, G48, A48, Bb48, C49, D49, E49, F49, G49, A49, Bb49, C50, D50, E50, F50, G50, A50, Bb50, C51, D51, E51, F51, G51, A51, Bb51, C52, D52, E52, F52, G52, A52, Bb52, C53, D53, E53, F53, G53, A53, Bb53, C54, D54, E54, F54, G54, A54, Bb54, C55, D55, E55, F55, G55, A55, Bb55, C56, D56, E56, F56, G56, A56, Bb56, C57, D57, E57, F57, G57, A57, Bb57, C58, D58, E58, F58, G58, A58, Bb58, C59, D59, E59, F59, G59, A59, Bb59, C60, D60, E60, F60, G60, A60, Bb60, C61, D61, E61, F61, G61, A61, Bb61, C62, D62, E62, F62, G62, A62, Bb62, C63, D63, E63, F63, G63, A63, Bb63, C64, D64, E64, F64, G64, A64, Bb64, C65, D65, E65, F65, G65, A65, Bb65, C66, D66, E66, F66, G66, A66, Bb66, C67, D67, E67, F67, G67, A67, Bb67, C68, D68, E68, F68, G68, A68, Bb68, C69, D69, E69, F69, G69, A69, Bb69, C70, D70, E70, F70, G70, A70, Bb70, C71, D71, E71, F71, G71, A71, Bb71, C72, D72, E72, F72, G72, A72, Bb72, C73, D73, E73, F73, G73, A73, Bb73, C74, D74, E74, F74, G74, A74, Bb74, C75, D75, E75, F75, G75, A75, Bb75, C76, D76, E76, F76, G76, A76, Bb76, C77, D77, E77, F77, G77, A77, Bb77, C78, D78, E78, F78, G78, A78, Bb78, C79, D79, E79, F79, G79, A79, Bb79, C80, D80, E80, F80, G80, A80, Bb80, C81, D81, E81, F81, G81, A81, Bb81, C82, D82, E82, F82, G82, A82, Bb82, C83, D83, E83, F83, G83, A83, Bb83, C84, D84, E84, F84, G84, A84, Bb84, C85, D85, E85, F85, G85, A85, Bb85, C86, D86, E86, F86, G86, A86, Bb86, C87, D87, E87, F87, G87, A87, Bb87, C88, D88, E88, F88, G88, A88, Bb88, C89, D89, E89, F89, G89, A89, Bb89, C90, D90, E90, F90, G90, A90, Bb90, C91, D91, E91, F91, G91, A91, Bb91, C92, D92, E92, F92, G92, A92, Bb92, C93, D93, E93, F93, G93, A93, Bb93, C94, D94, E94, F94, G94, A94, Bb94, C95, D95, E95, F95, G95, A95, Bb95, C96, D96, E96, F96, G96, A96, Bb96, C97, D97, E97, F97, G97, A97, Bb97, C98, D98, E98, F98, G98, A98, Bb98, C99, D99, E99, F99, G99, A99, Bb99, C100, D100, E100, F100, G100, A100, Bb100, C101, D101, E101, F101, G101, A101, Bb101, C102, D102, E102, F102, G102, A102, Bb102, C103, D103, E103, F103, G103, A103, Bb103, C104, D104, E104, F104, G104, A104, Bb104, C105, D105, E105, F105, G105, A105, Bb105, C106, D106, E106, F106, G106, A106, Bb106, C107, D107, E107, F107, G107, A107, Bb107, C108, D108, E108, F108, G108, A108, Bb108, C109, D109, E109, F109, G109, A109, Bb109, C110, D110, E110, F110, G110, A110, Bb110, C111, D111, E111, F111, G111, A111, Bb111, C112, D112, E112, F112, G112, A112, Bb112, C113, D113, E113, F113, G113, A113, Bb113, C114, D114, E114, F114, G114, A114, Bb114, C115, D115, E115, F115, G115, A115, Bb115, C116, D116, E116, F116, G116, A116, Bb116, C117, D117, E117, F117, G117, A117, Bb117, C118, D118, E118, F118, G118, A118, Bb118, C119, D119, E119, F119, G119, A119, Bb119, C120, D120, E120, F120, G120, A120, Bb120, C121, D121, E121, F121, G121, A121, Bb121, C122, D122, E122, F122, G122, A122, Bb122, C123, D123, E123, F123, G123, A123, Bb123, C124, D124, E124, F124, G124, A124, Bb124, C125, D125, E125, F125, G125, A125, Bb125, C126, D126, E126, F126, G126, A126, Bb126, C127, D127, E127, F127, G127, A127, Bb127, C128, D128, E128, F128, G128, A128, Bb128, C129, D129, E129, F129, G129, A129, Bb129, C130, D130, E130, F130, G130, A130, Bb130, C131, D131, E131, F131, G131, A131, Bb131, C132, D132, E132, F132, G132, A132, Bb132, C133, D133, E133, F133, G133, A133, Bb133, C134, D134, E134, F134, G134, A134, Bb134, C135, D135, E135, F135, G135, A135, Bb135, C136, D136, E136, F136, G136, A136, Bb136, C137, D137, E137, F137, G137, A137, Bb137, C138, D138, E138, F138, G138, A138, Bb138, C139, D139, E139, F139, G139, A139, Bb139, C140, D140, E140, F140, G140, A140, Bb140, C141, D141, E141, F141, G141, A141, Bb141, C142, D142, E142, F142, G142, A142, Bb142, C143, D143, E143, F143, G143, A143, Bb143, C144, D144, E144, F144, G144, A144, Bb144, C145, D145, E145, F145, G145, A145, Bb145, C146, D146, E146, F146, G146, A146, Bb146, C147, D147, E147, F147, G147, A147, Bb147, C148, D148, E148, F148, G148, A148, Bb148, C149, D149, E149, F149, G149, A149, Bb149, C150, D150, E150, F150, G150, A150, Bb150, C151, D151, E151, F151, G151, A151, Bb151, C152, D152, E152, F152, G152, A152, Bb152, C153, D153, E153, F153, G153, A153, Bb153, C154, D154, E154, F154, G154, A154, Bb154, C155, D155, E155, F155, G155, A155, Bb155, C156, D156, E156, F156, G156, A156, Bb156, C157, D157, E157, F157, G157, A157, Bb157, C158, D158, E158, F158, G158, A158, Bb158, C159, D159, E159, F159, G159, A159, Bb159, C160, D160, E160, F160, G160, A160, Bb160, C161, D161, E161, F161, G161, A161, Bb161, C162, D162, E162, F162, G162, A162, Bb162, C163, D163, E163, F163, G163, A163, Bb163, C164, D164, E164, F164, G164, A164, Bb164, C165, D165, E165, F165, G165, A165, Bb165, C166, D166, E166, F166, G166, A166, Bb166, C167, D167, E167, F167, G167, A167, Bb167, C168, D168, E168, F168, G168, A168, Bb168, C169, D169, E169, F169, G169, A169, Bb169, C170, D170, E170, F170, G170, A170, Bb170, C171, D171, E171, F171, G171, A171, Bb171, C172, D172, E172, F172, G172, A172, Bb172, C173, D173, E173, F173, G173, A173, Bb173, C174, D174, E174, F174, G174, A174, Bb174, C175, D175, E175, F175, G175, A175, Bb175, C176, D176, E176, F176, G176, A176, Bb176, C177, D177, E177, F177, G177, A177, Bb177, C178, D178, E178, F178, G178, A178, Bb178, C179, D179, E179, F179, G179, A179, Bb179, C180, D180, E180, F180, G180, A180, Bb180, C181, D181, E181, F181, G181, A181, Bb181, C182, D182, E182, F182, G182, A182, Bb182, C183, D183, E183, F183, G183, A183, Bb183, C184, D184, E184, F184, G184, A184, Bb184, C185, D185, E185, F185, G185, A185, Bb185, C186, D186, E186, F186, G186, A186, Bb186, C187, D187, E187, F187, G187, A187, Bb187, C188, D188, E188, F188, G188, A188, Bb188, C189, D189, E189, F189, G189, A189, Bb189, C190, D190, E190, F190, G190, A190, Bb190, C191, D191, E191, F191, G191, A191, Bb191, C192, D192, E192, F192, G192, A192, Bb192, C193, D193, E193, F193, G193, A193, Bb193, C194, D194, E194, F194, G194, A194, Bb194, C195, D195, E195, F195, G195, A195, Bb195, C196, D196, E196, F196, G196, A196, Bb196, C197, D197, E197, F197, G197, A197, Bb197, C198, D198, E198, F198, G198, A198, Bb198, C199, D199, E199, F199, G199, A199, Bb199, C200, D200, E200, F200, G200, A200, Bb200, C201, D201, E201, F201, G201, A201, Bb201, C202, D202, E202, F202, G202, A202, Bb202, C203, D203, E203, F203, G203, A203, Bb203, C204, D204, E204, F204, G204, A204, Bb204, C205, D205, E205, F205, G205, A205, Bb205, C206, D206, E206, F206, G206, A206, Bb206, C207, D207, E207, F207, G207, A207, Bb207, C208, D208, E208, F208, G208, A208, Bb208, C209, D209, E209, F209, G209, A209, Bb209, C210, D210, E210, F210, G210, A210, Bb210, C211, D211, E211, F211, G211, A211, Bb211, C212, D212, E212, F212, G212, A212, Bb212, C213, D213, E213, F213, G213, A213, Bb213, C214, D214, E214, F214, G214, A214, Bb214, C215, D215, E215, F215, G215, A215, Bb215, C216, D216, E216, F216, G216, A216, Bb216, C217, D217, E217, F217, G217, A217, Bb217, C218, D218, E218, F218, G218, A218, Bb218, C219, D219, E219, F219, G219, A219, Bb219, C220, D220, E220, F220, G220, A220, Bb220, C221, D221, E221, F221, G221, A221, Bb221, C222, D222, E222, F222, G222, A222, Bb222, C223, D223, E223, F223, G223, A223, Bb223, C224, D224, E224, F224, G224, A224, Bb224, C225, D225, E225, F225, G225, A225, Bb225, C226, D226, E226, F226, G226, A226, Bb226, C227, D227, E227, F227, G227, A227, Bb227, C228, D228, E228, F228, G228, A228, Bb228, C229, D229, E229, F229, G229, A229, Bb229, C230, D230, E230, F230, G230, A230, Bb230, C231, D231, E231, F231, G231, A231, Bb231, C232, D232, E232, F232, G232, A232, Bb232, C233, D233, E233, F233, G233, A233, Bb233, C234, D234, E234, F234, G234, A234, Bb234, C235, D235, E235, F235, G235, A235, Bb235, C236, D236, E236, F236, G236, A236, Bb236, C237, D237, E237, F237, G237, A237, Bb237, C238, D238, E238, F238, G238, A238, Bb238, C239, D239, E239, F239, G239, A239, Bb239, C240, D240, E240, F240, G240, A240, Bb240, C241, D241, E241, F241, G241, A241, Bb241, C242, D242, E242, F242, G242, A242, Bb242, C243, D243, E243, F243, G243, A243, Bb243, C244, D244, E244, F244, G244, A244, Bb244, C245, D245, E245, F245, G245, A245, Bb245, C246, D246, E246, F246, G246, A246, Bb246, C247, D247, E247, F247, G247, A247, Bb247, C248, D248, E248, F248, G248, A248, Bb248, C249, D249, E249, F249, G249, A249, Bb249, C250, D250, E250, F250, G250, A250, Bb250, C251, D251, E251, F251, G251, A251, Bb251, C252, D252, E252, F252, G252, A252, Bb252, C253, D253, E253, F253, G253, A253, Bb253, C254, D254, E254, F254, G254, A254, Bb254, C255, D255, E255, F255, G255, A255, Bb255, C256, D256, E256, F256, G256, A256, Bb256, C257, D257, E257, F257, G257, A257, Bb257, C258, D258, E258, F258, G258, A258, Bb258, C259, D259, E259, F259, G259, A259, Bb259, C260, D260, E260, F260, G260, A260, Bb260, C261, D261, E261, F261, G261, A261, Bb261, C262, D262, E262, F262, G262, A262, Bb262, C263, D263, E263, F263, G263, A263, Bb263, C264, D264, E264, F264, G264, A264, Bb264, C265, D265, E265, F265, G265, A265, Bb265, C266, D266, E266, F266, G266, A266, Bb266, C267, D267, E267, F267, G267, A267, Bb267, C268, D268, E268, F268, G268, A268, Bb268, C269, D269, E269, F269, G269, A269, Bb269, C270, D270, E270, F270, G270, A270, Bb270, C271, D271, E271, F271, G271, A271, Bb271, C272, D272, E272, F272, G272, A272, Bb272, C273, D273, E273, F273, G273, A273, Bb273, C274, D274, E274, F274, G274, A274, Bb274, C275, D275, E275, F275, G275, A275, Bb275, C276, D276, E276, F276, G276, A276, Bb276, C277, D277, E277, F277, G277, A277, Bb277, C278, D278, E278, F278, G278, A278, Bb278, C279, D279, E279, F279, G279, A279, Bb279, C280, D280, E280, F280, G280, A280, Bb280, C281, D281, E281, F281, G281, A281, Bb281, C282, D282, E282, F282, G282, A282, Bb282, C283, D283, E283, F283, G283, A283, Bb283, C284, D284, E284, F284, G284, A284, Bb284, C285, D285, E285, F285, G285, A285, Bb285, C286, D286, E286, F286, G286, A286, Bb286, C287, D287, E287, F287, G287, A287, Bb287, C288, D288, E288, F288, G288, A288, Bb288, C289, D289, E289, F289, G289, A289, Bb289, C290, D290, E290, F290, G290, A290, Bb290, C291, D291, E291, F291, G291, A291, Bb291, C292, D292, E292, F292, G292, A292, Bb292, C293, D293, E293, F293, G293, A293, Bb293, C294, D294, E294, F294, G294, A294, Bb294, C295, D295, E295, F295, G295, A295, Bb295, C296, D296, E296, F296, G296, A296, Bb296, C297, D297, E297, F297, G297, A297, Bb297, C298, D298, E298, F298, G298, A298, Bb298, C299, D299, E299, F299, G299, A299, Bb299, C300, D300, E300, F300, G300, A300, Bb300, C301, D301, E301, F301, G301, A301, Bb301, C302, D302, E302, F302, G302, A302, Bb302, C303, D303, E303, F303, G303, A303, Bb303, C304, D304, E304, F304, G304, A304, Bb304, C305, D305, E305, F305, G305, A305, Bb305, C306, D306, E306, F306, G306, A306, Bb306, C307, D307, E307, F307, G307, A307, Bb307, C308, D308, E308, F308, G308, A308, Bb308, C309, D309, E309, F309, G309, A309, Bb309, C310, D310, E310, F310, G310, A310, Bb310, C311, D311, E311, F311, G311, A311, Bb311, C312, D312, E312, F312, G312, A312, Bb312, C313, D313, E313, F313, G313, A313, Bb313, C314, D314, E314, F314, G314, A314, Bb314, C315, D315, E315, F315, G315, A315, Bb315, C316, D316, E316, F316, G316, A316, Bb316, C317, D317, E317, F317, G317, A317, Bb317, C318, D318, E318, F318, G318, A318, Bb318, C319, D319, E319, F319, G319, A319, Bb319, C320, D320, E320, F320, G320, A320, Bb320, C321, D321, E321, F321, G321, A321, Bb321, C322, D322, E322, F322, G322, A322, Bb322, C323, D323, E323, F323, G323, A323, Bb323, C324, D324, E324, F324, G324, A324, Bb324, C325, D325, E325, F325, G325, A325, Bb325, C326, D326, E326, F326, G326, A326, Bb326, C327, D327, E327, F327, G327, A327, Bb327, C328, D328, E328, F328, G328, A328, Bb328, C329, D329, E329, F329, G329, A329, Bb329, C330, D330, E330, F330, G330, A330, Bb330, C331, D331, E331, F331, G331, A331, Bb331, C332, D332, E332, F332, G332, A332, Bb332, C333, D333, E333, F333, G333, A333, Bb333, C334, D334, E334, F334, G334, A334, Bb334, C335, D335, E335, F335, G335, A335, Bb335, C336, D336, E336, F336, G336, A336, Bb336, C337, D337, E337, F337, G337, A337, Bb337, C338, D338, E338, F338, G338, A338, Bb338, C339, D339, E339, F339, G339, A339, Bb339, C340, D340, E340, F340, G340, A340, Bb340, C341, D341, E341, F341, G341, A341, Bb341, C342, D342, E342, F342, G342, A342, Bb342, C343, D343, E343, F343, G343, A343, Bb343, C344, D344, E344, F344, G344, A344, Bb344, C345, D345, E345, F345, G345, A345,

The reason they do not has to do with the staccato nature of the tapping and the design of a vintage Hammond. The pedal system in those instruments has four separate contacts, two for each drawbar. Consequently, when you play very staccato, all four contacts might not close all the way (or at all). This is similar to the nine busbars in the Hammond manuals and is the reason for the famous key-click that Hammond players know and love. This same electrical contact or key-click happens in the bass pedals, as well.

## Shadowing and Splitting

Shadowing is similar to tapping except that you play the same notes on the pedals as the left hand, still very staccato. This allows you to accent specific notes in the bass line by holding down the appropriate bass pedal longer. Most jazz organists use a combination of tapping and shadowing, depending on the song and the context (Example 2).



An exception to the rule of playing staccato is ballads. Again, referencing the master, Jimmy Smith, the approach is either to play all bass notes on the pedals and chords with the left hand or to shadow the bass pedals but play slightly longer notes so that the bass note is actually voiced fully, while holding down the same note in the left hand for sustain.

Another style is used when playing funky bass lines or straight-eighth feels. Known as “splitting,” the idea is to think of the bass pedals as the lowest string on an electric bass guitar and use the left hand for the upper parts of the line. In essence, you are splitting the bass line between the pedals and the left hand, with beat 1 usually being on the root and played on the pedals (Example 3).



## Warm-Ups

Before a gig or session—even before practicing—I often warm up my left foot using the heel/toe technique; the heel is used mostly for the naturals while the toe is used for the sharps/flats. The heel is also the pivot, allowing the foot to gently turn in anticipation of the next note. I use this technique to run chromatic lines up and down the pedal board at a slow tempo (Example 4). This loosens the ankle muscles while also orienting the foot to the pedal board.



Another warm up I do is tap quarter notes on the Bb at a medium tempo while walking a bass line with the left hand. Again, this loosens up the ankle muscles and helps lock the two limbs together.

Next, I run some intervals, such as the circle of fifths, to practice muscle memory. A common movement in a walking bass line is from the root to the third and then chromatically up to the fifth in quarter notes. Another common movement is from the root down to the dominant seventh and chromatically down to the fifth.

## Feet, Do Your Duty

As you play, let the rhythm of the pedal notes resonant through your body to form an inseparable link. There's no better feeling than when the band is in the groove and your entire body is involved in the music, from head to toe.