



PRACTICE BY EAR — INSTRUCTION GUIDE

How to Train Your Ears Using Jazz Practice Lab Tracks

Welcome to Jazz Practice Lab's **Practice by Ear** system — a simple, step-by-step method designed to help you instantly recognize chords, grooves, and melodies by sound alone.

Use this guide with any **Swing Vault**, **Bossa Nova Vault**, **Smooth Jazz Vault**, or **Key Lab** pack.

1. Start With the Groove

Before you play a note, **listen for 20–30 seconds**.

- ✓ Identify the **style** (Swing, Bossa, Smooth)
- ✓ Clap or tap the **steady time**
- ✓ Hum the **bass line shape** (up, down, repeating, walking, static)

Goal: Lock into feel + tempo before picking up your horn.

2. Find “Home Base” (The Key)

While listening, try to:

1. Hum the note that feels like home
2. Match it on your sax
3. Hold it until it blends smoothly with the track

Tip: If it clashes, move up or down a half step until it locks in.

Goal: Train your ear to recognize the tonal center quickly.

3. Build the Chord Sound in Your Ear

Play the root, then:

- Add the 3rd
- Add the 5th
- Add the 7th (if the track uses 7ths)

You're building the harmony **from the bottom up** entirely by sound.

Goal: Internalize chord color before improvising.

4. Hear the Chord Changes (Without Looking)

Hit play and try to feel when something moves.

Ask yourself:

- Did the bass jump?
- Did the color shift brighter or darker?
- Did tension increase?

You don't need to name the chord — just identify **movement**.

Goal: Predict changes instead of reacting to them.

5. Sing What You Want to Play

This is where the magic happens.

1. Listen to 2-4 bars
2. Pause
3. Sing a short idea
4. Play exactly what you sang on your horn

Goal: Connect your ear → voice → instrument.

6. Imitate the Groove

Improvise simple ideas that:

- Match the rhythm of the drums
- Follow the contour of the bass
- Avoid “scale running”

Start tiny:

2-3 note ideas that land cleanly.

Goal: Develop feel, not theory.

7. Level Up: Identify Tensions

Once comfortable, listen for:

- $\flat 9$, $\sharp 9$
- $\sharp 11$
- 13

And try to hit one tension note per chorus.

Goal: Train your ear to hear color tones in real time.

8. Loop, Repeat, Master

Pick one track (slow, medium, or fast) and loop it for:

- **5 minutes:** Warmup
- **10 minutes:** Ear training
- **10 minutes:** Improvising
- **5 minutes:** Cooldown / Reflection

Goal: Build mastery through repetition — same track, new ideas.

9. Optional: Add a Random Key Challenge

Use any Key Lab or 12-Key Vault track:

1. Don't check the key
2. Listen for 15-20 seconds
3. Identify the tonal center
4. Play the root
5. Build your chord tones by ear

Goal: Become key-agnostic.

10. Track Your Ear Growth

Every week, note:

- 🎵 How fast you find the key
- 🎵 How fast you recognize ii-V-I
- 🎵 How much you rely on your horn vs. your ear
- 🎵 New phrases you discovered

Goal: Turn ear training into measurable progress.

3 Levels of Ear Training

Level 1 — Beginner

- Find the key
- Play roots
- Imitate rhythms
- Create 2-3 note ideas

Level 2 — Intermediate

- Outline chord tones by ear
- Hear ii-V movement
- Add 7ths + basic tensions
- Improvise in longer phrases

Level 3 — Advanced

- Recognize upper extensions by sound
- Hear modulations early
- Solo without thinking about scales
- Create full choruses by ear alone