

## PRACTICE IDEAS

"So how exactly do I use these books?"

I get it, a book series that leaves the reader in charge of inventing their own exercises is a bit of a run usual concept that may be daunting to some.

For that reason I've decided to provide an ongoing list of ways that you can use these books to practice skills such as:

- rhythm comprehension and accuracy
- note-reading in every key
- reading and playing in 6 time signatures
- playing different chord qualities
- chord inversions
- harmonizing every note in a key
- coordination
- transposition
- and more

This is by no means an exhaustive list, such a list wouldn't be possible, but it is a list that I will continue updating as new exercises are brought to by attention.

Some of these exercises are better suited to some instruments than others, that's to be expected. My hope is that this list gives you an idea of the types of exercises that can be created using these books and inspires you to create your own.

If you do discover a new way to use these books that you don't see on the list please **let me know** so that I can add it! Chances are, if your new exercise is beneficial to you it'll be beneficial to others as well.

Exercise Target:	Applicable Books:	Exercise Outline:
Note Reading	Pitch Only Pitch and Rhythm	For this you will be reading the exercises in the Pitch Only or Pitch and Rhythm books as they are written.  Depending on the ability level of the person doing this exercise this can be done in a number of ways.  Beginner: Write note names into the music. This works best with the Pitch Only series but can be done with the Pitch and Rhythm series also.  Intermediate to Advanced: Play the notes on your instrument. A greater challenge can be achieved by playing the exercises with a metronome.
Rhythm Reading and Comprehension	Rhythm Only Pitch and Rhythm	For this you will be reading the exercises in the Rhythm Only or Pitch and Rhythm books as they are written. The Rhythm Only series is the most direct way to target rhythm skills but the Pitch and Rhythm series follows the same rhythmic structure as the Rhythm Only series and can also be used.  The difficulty levels in these books provide a very thoughtful and logical progression from very easy rhythms to quite challenging ones. Simply assess which level best matches your or your student's current ability level and work your way through the book from there.  Beginner: Clap rhythms from the book.  Intermediate to Advanced: Read the rhythms on a single pitch on your instrument (Rhythm Only) or on the given pitches as written (Pitch and Rhythm). Use a metronome for a greater challenge  Any of the exercises listed here that use the Rhythm Only or Pitch and Rhythm books can be customized by choosing a rhythmic difficulty level that is appropriate for the skill level of the person doing the exercise.
Time Signature Comprehension	Rhythm Only Pitch and Rhythm	Both the Rhythm Only and Pitch and Rhythm series contain exercises in 6 time signatures at all of the difficulty levels that are provided in each book series.  Through the use of these books the student will be introduced to the following time signatures: 2/4, 3/4, 4/4, 6/8, 9/8, and 12/8.  Three of these time signatures are simple meters (2/4, 3/4, and 4/4) in which the eighth-notes are grouped in pairs and the quarter-note gets the beat, while the other three (6/8, 9/8, and 12/8) are compound meters in which the eighth-notes are grouped in groups of 3 and the dotted-quarter-note gets the beat.  It's also worth noting that among these 6 time signatures there are 2 duple meter time signatures (2/4 and 6/8) in which each bar contains 2 beats, 2 triple meter time signatures (3/4 and 9/8) in which each bar contains 3 beats, and 2 quadruple meter time signatures (4/4 and 12/8) in which each bar contains 4 beats.  All of these time signatures are available at every difficulty level, ensuring students have thoughtfully-graduated reading material from beginner to advanced in every time signature.  For any exercise listed here that utilizes the Rhythm Only or Pitch and Rhythm series you have the choice to do the exercise in any of these 6 time signatures.
Comfort Reading Tied Rhythms	Rhythm Only	At every difficulty level and for every time signature in the Rhythm Only series books there are exercises with no ties and exercises with ties. This allows the student to gain comfort with tied rhythms from the most basic exercises all the way up to the more challenging exercises.  The ties in the Rhythm Only collection are very carefully placed. At the beginning of each chapter there is a list of the new rhythm groups that are added to that chapter's exercises. Since the difficulty levels are cumulative, each level only contains the rhythmic groupings that have been introduced either in that chapter or in chapters before. The ties at each level are placed so that they will never imply a rhythmic grouping that hasn't already been introduced.  For example: in the simple time exercises at difficulty level 2 we have not yet introduced off-beat eighth-notes, all eighth-notes in these exercises appear in pairs. Therefore you should never encounter a quarter-note tied to the first of a pair of eighth-notes because this would imply an off-beat eighth-note before that rhythmic grouping is introduced. In difficulty level 3, when off-beat eighth-notes are introduced, you will start to see notes tied to the first of a group of 2 eighth-notes.  For all exercises that use the Rhythm Only series you have the choice to use an exercise with ties or one without.
Reading Ledger Lines Playing at the extremes of your range	Pitch Only	The Pitch Only series is organized according to pitch range. Both the treble clef and bass clef books contain notes on the staff as well as notes extending above and below the staff.  The treble clef book contains notes above the staff up to the space above the fifth ledger line and notes below the staff down to the space below the third ledger line.  The bass clef book expands to the space just beyond the fourth ledger line both above and below the staff.  These exercises expand outward one ledger line at a time allowing flexibility to choose the range that best suits your needs at any given time.  All pitch ranges have exercises that are diatonic, with no accidentals, and exercises that are fully chromatic.
Key Signatures Comprehension (Major keys, minor keys, and modes)	Pitch Only Pitch and Rhythm	All of the exercises in both the Pitch Only and Pitch and Rhythm series of books leave space at the beginning of each staff to write in a key signature. This allows you to write in any key signature that you or your students are working on and play the exercise in accordance with that key signature.  Beginner: Use easy keys. Exactly which keys are "easy" will depend on your instrument. For example, A major or D major might be tricky keys for a beginner trumpet student, but they're perfect for a beginner violinist.  Intermediate: Use any key.  Advanced: Write in a new key signature for each system so that the person reading it must change keys as they read.  Other approaches: Keys can be drawn randomly for an additional challenge. The student can draw a key, for example "A Major," from a hat and be held accountable for knowing what the key signature is for that key, or they could draw a key signature and be asked what the major or minor key that uses that key signature is. Then they can play the exercise in the key they chose.  This can also be expanded to the modes. The student can draw a card that says "D Mixolydian" and be responsible for knowing which notes that scale contains. Or the reverse, they draw a key signature and are told to play the mixolydian scale that uses this key signature.  This can also be applied to different forms of the minor scale. For example, the student can play the exercise in the harmonic minor scale, requiring them to raise the seventh scale degree. Similarly, they can play the exercise in the ascending form of the A melodic minor scale.  All of the above exercises can be done in all 15 key signatures from 7 sharps to 7 flats.
Reading articulation marks, dynamics, slurs, etc.	Pitch Only Rhythm Only Pitch and Rhythm	Have a friend or your teacher write in a series of articulations, dynamic markings, slurs, playing positions, fingerings/strickings, or any other indicator that you'd like to practice reading and play the exercise while following those instructions.  This exercise can be combined with virtually any of the other exercises that have been listed here.
Following Complex Forms	Rhythm Only Pitch and Rhythm	Have a friend write in a complex form including: Repeats, first and second endings, D.C. markings, D.S. markings, codas, etc.  Read the exercise while following the written-in form indicators.  This can be combined with many of the other exercises listed here including key signature practice, key changes, improvising over changes, and transposition.
Note Positions on Fingeringboard (guitar, strings)	Pitch Only Pitch and Rhythm	Play the exercise on your instrument in whichever key you like, but limit yourself to one position on your instrument's fingeringboard. For example, play the entire exercise in second position or third position.  The exercises in the Pitch Only series include many different pitch ranges including ledger lines below and above the staff. Because the Pitch Only books provide more flexibility to choose your pitch range, they may be better suited for use with this exercise. However, if the pitch ranges given in the Pitch and Rhythm series work well for this exercise on your instrument then those exercises would be a great choice also.  This is a great exercise for internalizing the different positions of all of the notes across your instrument's range.
Scales in Irregular Rhythms	Rhythm Only	Play any scale in the rhythm given by any of the Rhythm Only exercises.  Beginner: Simple keys and the Difficulty Level 1-2 exercises (using only quarter-notes and eighth-notes) would be the best place to start.  Intermediate/Advanced: The combination of more challenging keys with the wide difficulty range and 6 time signatures provided by the Rhythm Only series allows for hundreds of combinations and the potential for extremely high difficulty in this exercise. Combine this with different types of articulations and different note choices and you have enough material for a new warmup every day for many years.  Combine this with the off-beat metronome games (exercise outlined below) for an extra challenge.
Scale Degrees: Theory	Pitch Only	This exercise uses the diatonic exercises from the Pitch Only series.  Read the exercise in any key. For each note in the exercise state either out loud or mentally which scale degree that particular note represents within the chosen key. For a beginner version of this exercise have your student write in the scale degree of each note without playing it on their instrument.  Every time you change the key of this exercise each note takes on a different scale degree and the entire exercise changes.
Scale Degrees: Ear Training/ Sight Singing Variation	Pitch Only	This exercise is an ear-training and sight-singing variation on the scale degrees exercise mentioned above.  For a sight-singing exercise, sing (or have your students sing) the exercise in solfege. It helps to give a reference pitch to get the student thinking in the proper key.  As an ear-training exercise, play the exercise for your student (after giving a reference pitch) and have them tell you the scale degree of each note.  Just like in the above exercise, every time you change the key of this exercise each note within the exercise takes on a new scale degree relative to the new key and the entire exercise changes.
Chord Qualities Chord Inversions	Pitch Only	This exercise challenges you to develop your understanding of chord qualities and your ability to produce them on your instrument. Both diatonic and chromatic exercises work for this exercise.  Read an exercise from the Pitch Only collection. For each given note play the major chord that uses that note as its root. For example, if the note in the exercise is a C, play a C major chord. You can play this chord below the given note or above, depending on the range of your instrument. If your instrument can only play one note at a time, try playing an arpeggio of the chord.  3 Variations: 1) Play a different chord quality. Instead of a major chord, play a minor chord, diminished chord, augmented chord, dominant seventh chord, half diminished seventh chord, sus2 chord, etc. Any chord quality that you would like to master would be applicable to this exercise. 2) Consider the given note to be a note other than the tonic. For example, consider the given note to be the 3rd of a major chord, or the 5th, or the 7th of a dominant seventh chord, etc. If you play the given note on the bottom of the chord this becomes a great chord inversions exercise. 3) Combine variations 1 and 2 for dozens of different permutations. For example: have the given note represent the 3rd of a major 7th chord, or have it represent the 7th of a half-diminished 7th chord.
Chords within each key Chord Inversions	Pitch Only	This exercise uses the diatonic exercises from the Pitch Only series and is an expansion on the scale degrees exercise listed above.  Read the exercise in any key. For this one, instead of saying the scale degree of the given note, you're going to play the chord built on that scale degree. For example, if you're in C major and the given note is an E, you're going to play an E minor chord because that is the chord that would be built on an E (third scale degree) in a C major scale.  To expand the difficulty of this exercise you can read the given note as if you read the chord you play, but as the 3rd, 5th, or 7th of the chord. For example, if you read the exercise in C major while interpreting each given note as the 3rd of the chord and come across the same E mentioned above, you would instead play a C major chord because the E is the 3rd of a C major chord. If you read each note as the 5th of the chord, the same E would require you to play an A minor chord. If you play the given note as the bass note of the chord this becomes a great chord inversions exercise.
Harmonize Melody with I - IV - V	Pitch Only	Similar to the scale degrees exercise, every time you change the key you change the scale degrees and chord qualities for every note given in each exercise. This exercise uses the diatonic exercises from the Pitch Only series.  Every note in a major or minor scale falls within either the I chord, the IV chord, or the V chord of that scale. Some notes fall into 2 of these chords; the tonic note is in both the tonic triad and the subdominant triad and the dominant note is in both the tonic triad and the dominant triad.  Play the exercise on your instrument in any key. For each note, play an appropriate chord (from either I, IV, or V) as an accompaniment to the written note. For example: if I'm doing the exercise on piano and the given note is the tonic, I would play the written note in one hand and in the other hand I would play either the tonic triad or the subdominant triad since both triads contain the tonic note. If the given note is the supertonic, I would play the dominant triad because that is the only triad of the three that contains the supertonic.  This exercise can be played in all keys. Each time you change keys the entire exercise transforms, not only because you are using a different key signature, but also because each note will take on a different scale degree when shifted into a different key.  When playing in a minor key you might want to use the harmonic form of the minor scale so that your dominant chords are major.  To expand on this exercise feel free to choose other chord combinations within the key that are not the I, IV, and V chords. I recommend choosing three chords that collectively use all of the notes within the scale (for example: I - ii - V, I - IV - vii, ii - V, etc.).
Rhythm Writing/ Composition	Pitch Only	In this exercise the student is to write-in stems and beams on a Pitch Only exercise to create a melodic line with a rhythmic component.  Each line in every exercise contains 16 note heads. For this exercise you can assign a time signature and a number of bars and it is the student's job to make those 16 note heads add up to the given time signature. For example, if you tell your students that you want each line to add up to 2 measures of 9/8 time it is their task to add stems and beams to each note in a combination that equals 2 bars of 9/8 time.  As with many of these exercises, this one can also be done in any key. As an added touch of challenge, allow the students to draw randomly from a hat which time signature they are producing as well as which key they are to read the notes in.  Also consider combining it with the exercise in which articulations, phrase marks, and dynamics are written into the exercise or the exercise in which form indicators such as repeat signs and first and second endings are added.  Of course, when they are done you can then have them play their melodies.  I've done this in a music theory classroom setting and it's always interesting to see how many different musical outcomes can be produced from the same 16 noteheads.
Improvising over Chord Changes	Pitch Only Pitch and Rhythm	Write in chord changes over the exercise. These changes don't necessarily have to align with the music in the exercise. I recommend using either common chord progressions or chord progressions that come from a song you're working on.  Read the exercise while altering the notes in the exercise in accordance with scales that would be appropriate for improvising over each chord. For example, if you have a D minor chord, read the notes in the exercise as if taken from a D minor, Dorian, D phrygian, or any other scale that would be appropriate for a D minor chord in the chosen harmonic context.  This is different from simply reading the notes in the key of the song because certain sets of chord changes will imply movement to different key centres and this will require the notes in the exercise to be altered differently than they would when reading the entire exercise in one key.  It is important to note that the exercises will not necessarily provide you with notes that are melodically ideal. The strength of this exercise lies in the fact that it challenges you to know the status (sharp, flat, or natural) of every note within each scale that you're using in your improvisation by making you play lines that might be a bit unusual. This exercise challenges you to break out of your usual go-to licks and make you think about your improvisation materials in a different way. It's not necessarily going to provide you with melodic ideas that you will use but it instead will strengthen your understanding of what tools are at your disposal.
Transposition	Pitch Only Pitch and Rhythm	This transposition exercise is great for any instrumentalists who are regularly required to transpose by sight. Brass players, woodwind players, jazz musicians, and conductors come to mind but I'm sure other instrumentalists fit this description as well.  Read each exercise in any key while playing it in another key.  Unlike the method of changing keys that I discussed in other exercises, playing this exercise is not simply a matter of playing the written notes with a different key signature; it requires mentally shifting the entire exercise up or down to fit the transposition that you're aiming for. For example, if you're reading the exercise in F major (one flat) and want to play it in E flat major (three flats), it's not enough to simply add two flats, the idea is to mentally shift every written note a whole step lower to preserve the same series of melodic intervals that is written.  Depending on your instrument, certain transpositions will be more common and therefore more useful for you to practice. This would be a valuable exercise to help people who play transposing instruments to get used to reading music that is not transposed for their instrument.
Strengthen Sense of Time Off-Beat Metronome Practice	Rhythm Only Pitch and Rhythm	Any of the rhythm-based exercises are great candidates for off-beat metronome practice.  Play the exercises with the metronome in the following places:  Beginner: -On the beat. In compound meter this means placing the metronome on every dotted quarter-note.  Intermediate: -On every other beat (half-note in simple time, dotted half-note in compound time) -On every offbeat eighth-note. In compound meter you can put the metronome on the second or third eighth-note of the beat.  Advanced: -On offbeat sixteenth-notes. This includes all sixteenth-note placements of the metronome (the 2nd or 4th sixteenth-notes of each beat in simple meters and the 2nd, 4th, or 6th sixteenth-notes of each beat in compound meters). -On the first beat of every bar. This may require a very slow metronome tempo. -On groupings that do not coincide with the way the beats are grouped in the meter that the exercise is in. For example, in simple time place the metronome on the dotted eighth or dotted quarter-note. In compound meter put the metronome on the quarter-note or half-note.  I created an in-depth video in which I discuss and demonstrate all of the above metronome exercises. <a href="#">Watch It Here.</a>
Coordination	Rhythm Only Pitch and Rhythm	The goal with these exercises is to develop coordination between the hands or across all of your limbs. Any of the exercises that have a rhythmic component can be used for this type of practice.  Choose/create a repeating pattern to play in one hand while reading one of the exercises in the other hand. This repeated pattern can be a strictly rhythmic pattern or one with a melodic or harmonic component. Similarly, the exercise you read in the other hand/limb can be either a Rhythm Only exercise or a Pitch and Rhythm exercise.  The difficulty level of this exercise depends entirely on the complexity of the repeated pattern and the complexity of the exercise you're reading. This can range from quite easy to incredibly difficult depending on how you combine these variables. Start simple with a quarter-note or eighth-note repeated pattern and a simple reading exercise and gradually increase the complexity from there.  If you're doing this on a melodic instrument such as piano or mallet percussion this exercise can be done in any key; the repeated pattern that you choose can be in any major or minor key or any mode, and the exercise that you read in the other hand can be played in the same key/mode.  Drummers might recognize this exercise, it's one we use often. When played on drum set feel free to create a repeated pattern that involves up to three limbs while the remaining limb reads a Rhythm Only exercise. For drummers it's useful to use a repeated pattern that resembles a standard drum pattern. For example, use the hi-hat and snare drum patterns from a simple rock groove while reading the exercise on your bass drum. Many drummers use this type of practice to gain comfort improvising in a swing style, however this is a great tool to develop comfort improvising in any style in which coordination presents a particular challenge.
Accent Control For Drummers	Rhythm Only	Play a standard sticking pattern such as single strokes (RLRL), double strokes (RRL) or paradiddles (RLRR LRL).  Play this sticking pattern in a sixteenth-note subdivision while reading a Rhythm Only exercise. For every written rhythmic attack in the exercise, play an accent in your pattern. For every rest, or on any sixteenth-note where there is no rhythmic attack, play a softer, non-accented note.  This is a great exercise for gaining control of accented versus non-accented notes within a variety of sticking patterns and is an excellent coordination exercise.
Scale Accents	Rhythm Only	This exercise is a variation on the <i>Accent Control For Drummers</i> exercise mentioned above.  In this exercise you will play your scales in a sixteenth-note subdivision while reading a Rhythm Only exercise. Every written rhythmic subdivision in the Rhythm Only exercise will indicate that you play an accent in your scale and every rest, or on every sixteenth-note where there is no rhythmic attack, will indicate a softer, non-accented note.  This is a great exercise for gaining control over accents and non-accented notes and is a great coordination exercise.
Polyrhythm Exercise	Rhythm Only Pitch and Rhythm	This exercise is very similar to the coordination exercise listed above. The main difference with this exercise is that while playing the written exercise in one hand you're playing a repeated pattern of a different rhythmic subdivision in the other.  For example: play any simple-time exercise in one hand while playing a constant eighth-note triplet in the other hand.  For a similar exercise in compound meter you can play the written exercise in one hand while playing a repeated pattern in a quadruplet subdivision in the other hand.  Once this is comfortable, increase the complexity of the repeated pattern. Instead of using a constant eighth-note triplet, for example, try playing the first and third eighth-notes of an eighth-note triplet while reading the exercise in the other hand. Maybe try a quarter-note triplet as your repeated pattern.  Also try it with a constant quintuplet in one hand, or a more complex rhythm in a quintuplet subdivision.