

Create a List of Musical Rules for Your Jazz Students

The authors believe that having a consistent approach to interpreting jazz rhythms and articulations is important. Here is the way one of today's leading jazz educators, Jerry Tolson, does it. Professor Tolson is a jazz pianist who teaches at the University of Louisville and at the Jamey Aebersold Summer Workshop.

TOLSON'S JAZZ COMMANDMENTS—THE JAZZER'S DOZEN

Guidelines for Proper Swing Style and Articulation

JAZZ BILL OF RIGHTS: ALL EIGHTH NOTES ARE NOT CREATED EQUAL

1. Any quarter note or eighth note followed by a rest is played (or sung) short. If not followed by a rest, then they are played long unless the following rules apply.
2. Quarter notes that occur on the downbeats of 1 or 3 are usually played long.
3. Quarter notes that occur on the downbeats of 2 and 4 are usually played short.
4. Quarter notes (or the equivalent thereof) that occur on an upbeat between two eighth notes (or rests) are played short.
5. All upbeat entrances after a rest should be anticipated with an accent.
6. A succession (three or more) of quarter notes (or equivalent) on consecutive upbeats is usually played long.
7. Two eighth notes followed by a rest are articulated with the syllables *doo-dot*.
8. In a line of eighth notes, accent the highest note and any wide leap changes of direction, and ghost (swallow) the lowest note.
9. Triplet eighth notes are usually articulated by slurring the first two and tonguing the last one.
10. Any note longer than a dotted quarter note moves dynamically up or down and is played long.
11. Dynamics in a line of eighth notes usually follow the direction of the line.
12. All three notes of a quarter-note triplet are played long.

Be creative! Now that you have all the necessary basic components of the jazz concept, be creative. Not all published jazz charts will be marked as clearly as the ones we have used as examples in this chapter. Many times you will have to add the markings, articulations, and shadings and make decisions about interpretations. Do it! To continue to grow and gain expertise in this area is essential. The way to accomplish this and most other jazz nuances is through continued listening.

DIRECTOR'S CHECKLIST FOR THE JAZZ CONCEPT—SWING

- Be sure you and your band listen to professional jazz recordings.
- Listen repeatedly to understand jazz style and to develop an understanding of individual players' roles in the styles, especially the rhythm section.
- Understand and identify the steady beat or time, and know how to make it work.
- Understand the swing eighth-note concept.
- Identify the jazz nuances, shapes, and musical language.