

How to Pick Your Instrument



created by:
education
through **MUSIC**
ETMonline.org

How to Pick Your Instrument



Lesson Objective

Students will be able to reflect and analyze personality traits to discover which instrument fits them more closely using the [How to Pick Your Instrument App](#), and will collaborate to create a group performance using two or more instruments together.

How to Pick Your Instrument



Vocabulary

guitar, bass, drums, keyboard, piano, ensemble, personality,
characteristics, harmonic, melodic, affinity

How to Pick Your Instrument



Instrument Affinity Quiz

Instrument Explorer
Tools to help you choose your instrument

A rectangular button with three horizontal slots. The top slot contains a box labeled 'A', the middle slot contains a box labeled 'B', and the bottom slot contains a box labeled 'C'. Below the button is the text 'Affinity quiz'.

A rectangular button containing four musical instruments: a keyboard, a drum set, a violin, and a guitar. Below the button is the text 'Explore instruments'.



Reflection Questions

- Does your instrument match your personality? Why or why not?
- Which questions were missing from the quiz that would have helped?
- What are your first impressions of your instrument?

How to Pick Your Instrument



Instrument Listening Examples & Analysis



Guitar

- **Description:** The guitar is a versatile string instrument. It fills the middle frequency range, providing rhythmic chordal backing (strumming) or soaring melodic lines (solos).
- **Prominent Guitarists:** Jimi Hendrix, John Mayer, St. Vincent (Annie Clark)
- **Musical Examples:**
 - Jimi Hendrix - “Purple Haze”
 - John Mayer - “Neon”
 - St. Vincent - “Huey Newton”



Bass

- **Description:** The bass bridges the gap between rhythm and harmony. It plays low-pitched notes that define the chord structure while locking in with the drums to drive the groove.
- **Prominent Bassists:** **Flea (Michael Balzary), Victor Wooten, Jaco Pastorius**
- **Musical Examples:**
 - Red Hot Chili Peppers - [“Bass Solo”](#) (Flea - Michael Balzary)
 - Bela Fleck and the Flecktones - [“Sinister Minister”](#) (Victor Wooten)
 - Jaco Pastorius Big Band - [“Soul Intro/The Chicken”](#) (Jaco Pastorius)
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Keyboard

- **Description:** The keyboard is both harmonic (playing chords) and melodic (playing tunes), allowing a single player to function as a full ensemble.
- **Prominent Keyboardists:** **Stevie Wonder, Jacob Collier, Yuja Wang**
- **Musical Examples:**
 - Stevie Wonder - “Superstition”
 - Jacob Collier - “Tiny Desk (Home) Concert”
 - Yuja Wang - “Turkish March (encore)”



Drums

- **Description:** The drums are the rhythmic heart of the band. They dictate the tempo (speed) and feel, requiring limb independence to coordinate different percussive sounds.
- **Prominent Drummers:** **John Bonham, Travis Barker, Questlove (Ahmir Thompson)**
- **Musical Examples:**
 - Led Zeppelin - [“Moby Dick”](#) (John Bonham)
 - Blink 182 - [Travis Barker's Favorite Rudiments](#) (Travis Barker)
 - The Roots - [“You Got Me”](#) (Questlove - Ahmir Thompson)



Reflection Questions

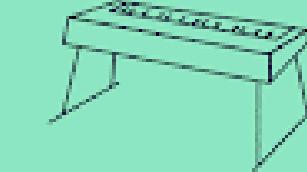
- What makes this instrument sound like itself and not any other instrument?
- How do the different instruments work together in the ensemble?
 - Are they all playing the same things?
- How does the sound quality (timbre) or texture of each instrument affect the overall feel?

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Explore Your Instrument:

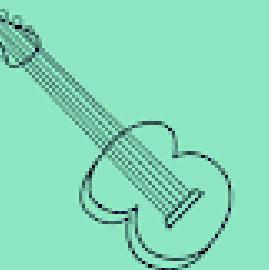


Pick an instrument



Keyboard

The keyboard is both harmonic (playing chords) and melodic (playing tunes), allowing a single player to function as a full ensemble.



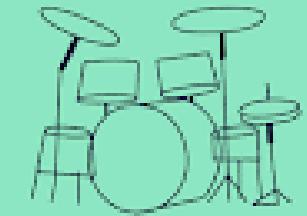
Guitar

The guitar is a versatile instrument, providing rhythmic chordal backing (strumming) or soaring melodic lines (solos).



Bass

The bass bridges the gap between rhythm and harmony. It plays low-pitched notes that define the chord structure while locking in with the drums to drive the groove.



Drums

The drums are the rhythmic heart of the band. They dictate the tempo (speed) and feel, requiring limb independence to coordinate different percussive sounds.

How to Pick Your Instrument



Guitar

Keyboard **Guitar** Bass Drums

Guitar

The guitar is a versatile instrument, providing rhythmic chordal backing (strumming) or soaring melodic lines (solos).



What is a fretboard? [?](#)

Select a mode below to explore the guitar.

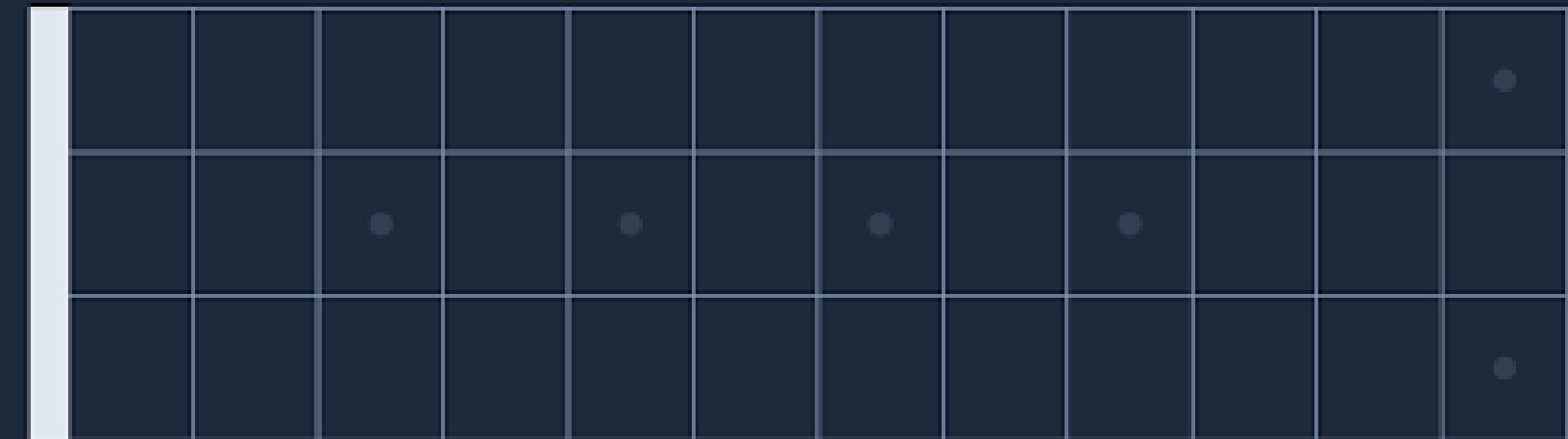
[G chord](#) ► [C chord](#) ► [D chord](#) ► [Melody](#) ►

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Bass

Bass

The bass bridges the gap between rhythm and harmony. It plays low-pitched notes that define the chord structure while locking in with the drums to drive the groove.



What is a fretboard? 

Select a mode below to explore the bass.

Harmonic Foundation 

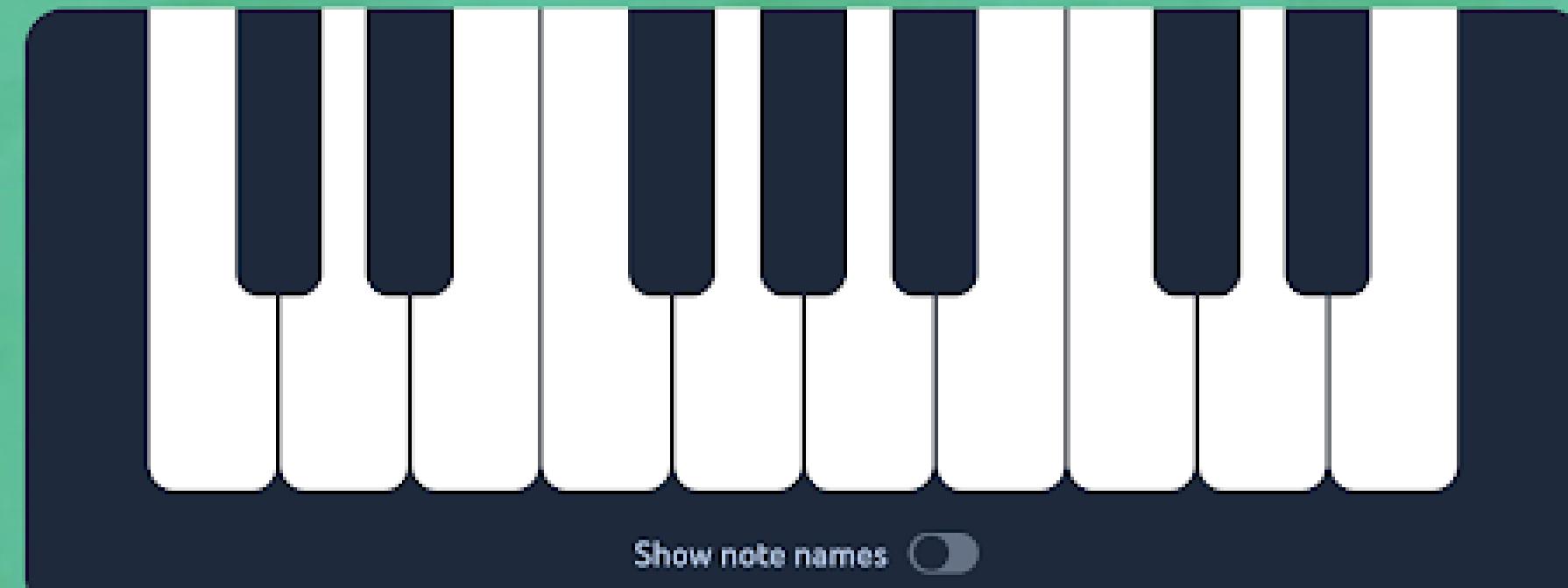
Melodic Groove 

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Keyboard

Keyboard

The keyboard is both harmonic (playing chords) and melodic (playing tunes), allowing a single player to function as a full ensemble.



Select a mode below to explore the keyboard.

Block chords ►

Arpeggiated chords ►

Melody ►

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Drums

Drums

The drums are the rhythmic heart of the band. They dictate the tempo (speed) and feel, requiring limb independence to coordinate different percussive sounds.

Hi Hat

Snare

Kick drum

Drum kit basics 

Select a groove below to hear the beat.

Basic Rock 

R&B 

Dance 

Funk 

How to Pick Your Instrument



Reflection Questions

- Does this feel like an instrument that reflects you? Why or why not?
- What characteristics about your instrument do you like the most? Why?
- Do you want to play more harmonic foundations or melodic foundations? Why?

How to Pick Your Instrument: Lean On Me Performance Project



Project Objective

Whole class or work in small bands to learn, rehearse, and perform “Lean on Me” by Bill Withers. Each student will choose one instrument (guitar, bass, keyboard, or drums) and learn how their part fits into the overall band arrangement. Students may use digital instruments if real instruments aren’t available.

How to Pick Your Instrument: Lean On Me Performance Project



Step 1 – Form Your Band

1. Divide the whole class by the instrument choice from the app or into groups of 3-5 students.
2. Each member uses the instrument they received from the app or chooses their own instrument: Guitar, Bass, Keyboard, or Drums.
3. If needed, use digital instruments (see resources in Lesson Plan).

How to Pick Your Instrument: Lean On Me Performance Project



Step 2 - Learn the Song

1. Look at the “Lean on Me” Leadsheets
2. Work with your groups to write in the notes for the melody
3. Use the Chord Chart to help navigate the chords for the song

LEAN ON ME CHORD CHART:

VERSE:

C F C
Sometimes in our lives we all have pain

 G C F
We all have sorrow But if we are wise

 C |G - C|

We know that there's always tomorrow

CHORUS:

 C F C
Lean on me, when you're not strong And I'll be your friend

 G

I'll help you carry on

 C F C
For it won't be long 'Til I'm gonna need

 |G - C|

Somebody to lean on

Lean on Me

Bill Withers

1 1 2 3 4 4 3 2 1 1 2 3 3 2 2

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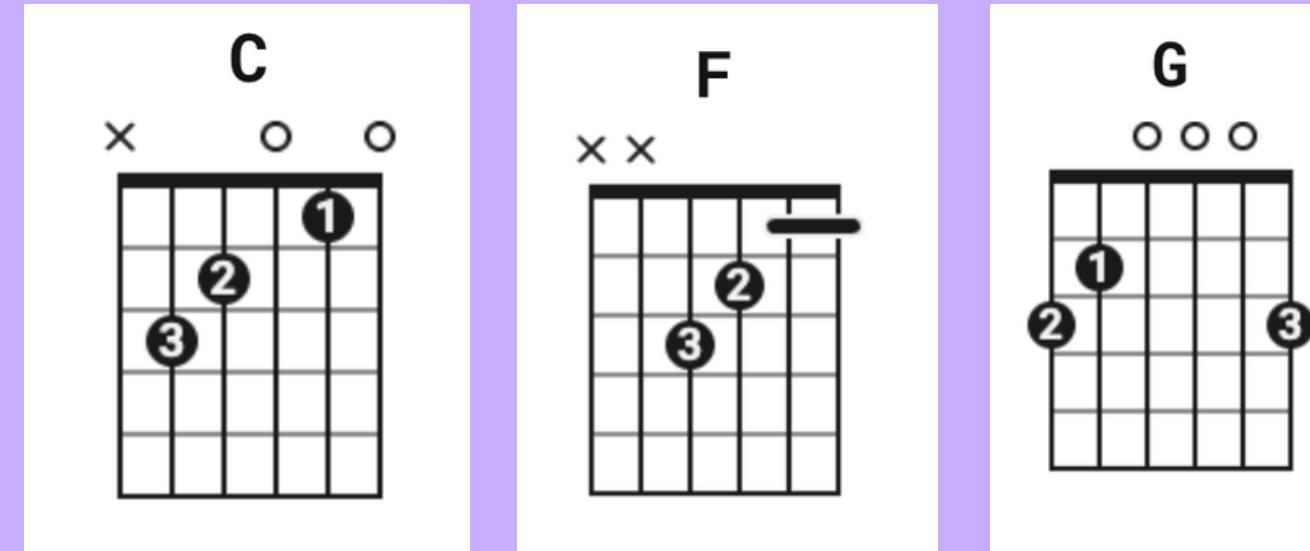


Instrument Guides

How to Pick Your Instrument



Main Chords: C – F – C – F – C – F – G (simplified version works well)



Guitar:

How to Play:

- Strum one downstroke per beat
- Keep a steady, relaxed rhythm
- Switch chords smoothly at the same time each measure

Digital Guitar Options:

<https://www.apronus.com/music/onlineguitar.htm>

<https://www.musicca.com/guitar>

How to Pick Your Instrument



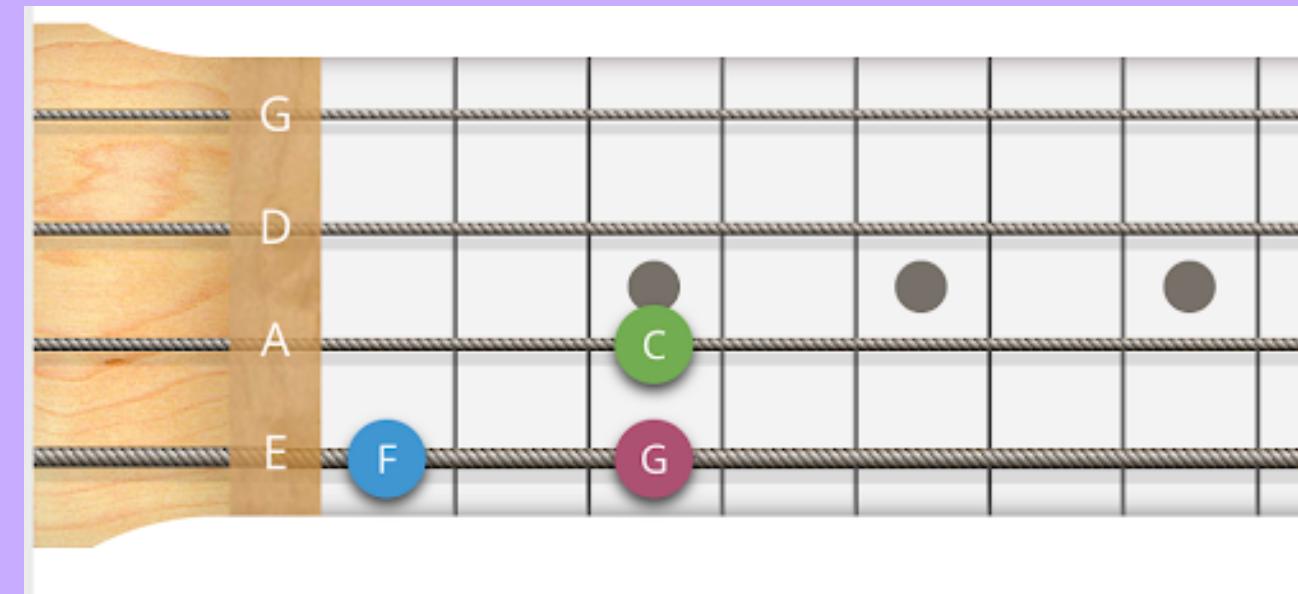
Bass Notes: C – F – C – F – C – F – G (root notes only)

How to Play:

- Play each root note on beat 1 of every measure
- Optional: Add simple rhythm like “beat 1 and beat 3”
- Keep your sound steady so the band can rely on you

Bass:

Follow the Song:



Digital Bass Options:

- <https://muted.io/bass-fretboard/>
- <https://www.musicca.com/bass-guitar>

How to Pick Your Instrument



Chord Shapes (Root Position):

- C major: C-E-G
- F major: F-A-C
- G major: G-B-D

How to Play:

- Play chords once per measure
- Option: Break them into simple patterns (arpeggios or repeated chords)

Follow the Song:

Keyboard:

A digital piano keyboard diagram for the song "Lean On Me" by Bill Withers. The top bar displays the title and artist. The keyboard is divided into measures, each showing the specific chord to be played. The chords shown are C, C, Dmi, Emi, F, C, C, Dmi, Emi, Emi, Dmi, C, C, Dmi, Emi, F, F, Emi, Dmi, and C. The diagram includes vertical bar lines to separate measures and horizontal bar lines to separate individual notes within a measure.

Digital Keyboard Options:

- <https://www.musicca.com/piano>
- <https://musiclab.chromeexperiments.com/Shared-Piano/#CYh-UJZql>

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Simple Drum Patterns:

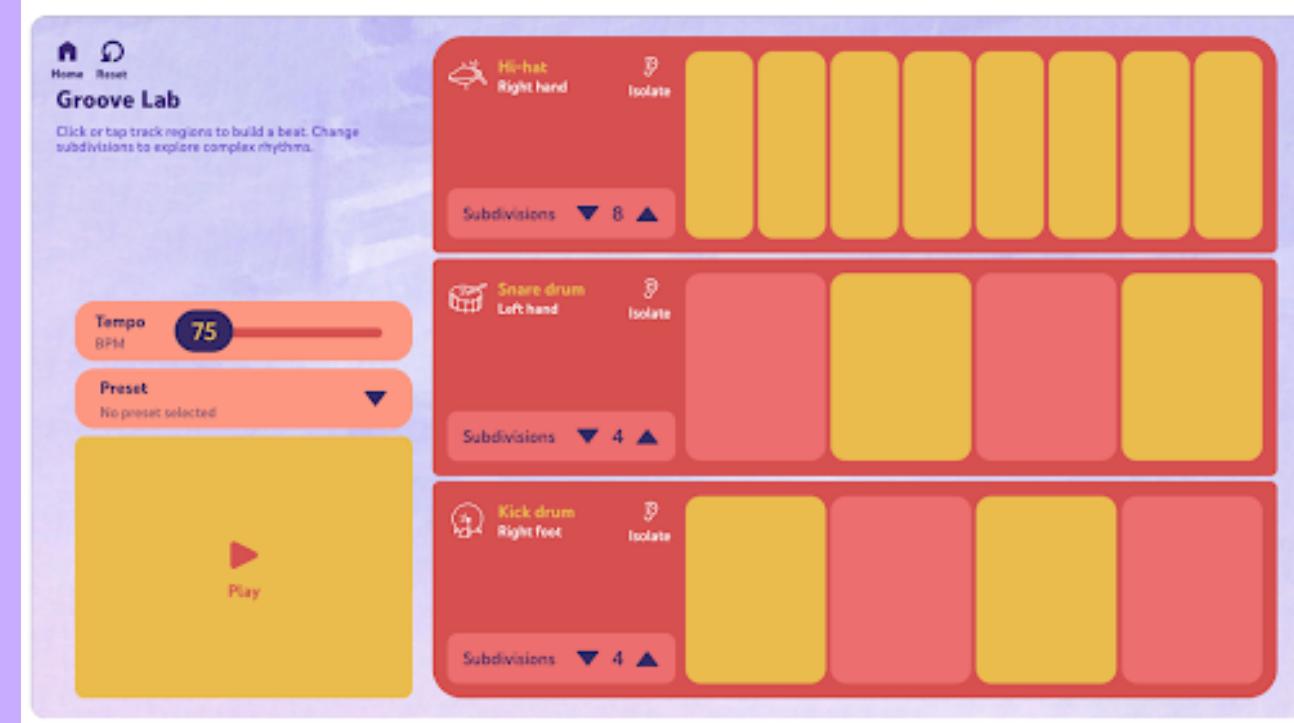
- Kick: beats 1 and 3
- Snare: beats 2 and 4
- Hi-hat: eighth notes or quarter notes

How to Play:

- Keep tempo steady
- Stay soft in verse, louder in chorus
- Lock in with bass player

Follow the Song:

Drums:



Digital Drum Option:

- [YouTube App Drum Playable - ETM created](#)

How to Pick Your Instrument: Rubric



Element	3 – Proficient	2 – Developing	1 – Emerging
Instrument Part: Accuracy & Consistency	I play my entire part clearly and confidently. My rhythm is steady, my notes/chords are correct, and I can play through the full song without stopping.	I can play most of my part with a few mistakes. I stay in the right section and recover when I get off. My pattern sounds mostly steady.	I can play some parts of the song, but I stop often or lose my place. I need help changing chords, finding notes, or keeping the pattern going.
Rhythm & Steady Beat	I keep a steady beat from start to finish. I help the group stay together by listening and adjusting.	I stay on beat most of the time with a few slips. I can correct myself quickly and stay with the group.	I start on the beat but drift off tempo. I need others to help me stay steady.
Collaboration & Ensemble Skills	I blend my sound, follow cues, and respond to the group. I help the band sound unified and balanced.	I listen to the band and match my volume and timing most of the time. I follow cues and help the group stay together.	I focus mostly on my own part. Sometimes I miss cues, rush ahead, or fall behind the group.