

Sing Up Music: Composing with GarageBand

Hip-hop backing track

A catchy groove and a perfect opportunity to learn with Music Technology

What you'll need

- Song Bank resources: track and activity notes
- One or more iPads with the GarageBand app
- A way of showing the iPad on a big screen (eg. by using a VGA adaptor)
- Good speakers
- Headphones and headphone splitters (if working alone/in pairs)

Musical learning > focusing on aspects of singing, playing, improvising, composing and listening

1 Create a groove with drums, bass and guitar

2 Improvise using the minor pentatonic scale

3 Add a chorus and create a lyrical hook

Musical vocabulary

Pitch: pentatonic scale, chord progression, key

Structure: verse, chorus, call and response

Tempo: bar, beats per minute (bpm), downbeat

Texture: thick, thin

Timbre: vibrato, distorted, bright, dark, warm, piercing

Other: sample, effects pedal

Warm-ups and focus-builders

● **Background:** KS2 groups should watch Lupe Fiasco's 2006 song *Kick push* for examples of some common musical and thematic elements of the genre (bit.ly/su-kickpush). Pick out the instruments, strong string lines, repeating chorus and vocal style – is the vocalist rapping or singing, or both? Notice how he begins by introducing himself and makes a dedication before pursuing a clear narrative that follows the development of a young skater. How would the class introduce themselves, and who would they dedicate their song to? Younger pupils may prefer *Gotta be me* by Secret Agent 23 Skidoo (bit.ly/su-gottabeme).

● **Vocal:** Listen to the *Hip-hop backing track*, picking out the off-beat handclaps and bass line (from bar 4). Clap along and sing the bass line to 'bom'. Encourage any spontaneous movement to the groove.

● **Vocal:** Listen to the backing track's chorus from 0:54. Imagine you are a robot that can only move when a string sound is heard. Move the arms and upper body on each string note, freezing in the gaps between. Look around and enjoy this improvised class dance!

Steps to singing

● Create a new song on GarageBand and open the 'Smart Drums'. Drag the snare drum into the playing area and ask students to sing along with the resulting rhythm using the vocable 'cats'. Repeat this with the bass drum ('boots'), hi-hat ('ts') and shaker ('shaka-shak').

● **Extension:** split pupils into small groups, each taking on one drum sound, creating a simple beatbox orchestra. Experiment with combining the different drum sounds to create different textures. Consider how changing the volume affects mood and expression.

● Repeat steps one and two with the 'Smart Strings', choosing appropriate Autoplays (eg. Cinematic Autoplay 1 and 2). This is a great exercise to develop aural skills whilst warming up the voice, and can be enhanced by adding a second group singing long notes underneath each motif.

● The track's accompanying teaching notes provide a method for generating lyrics to add to the track, which you might like to prepare for use later in the project.

Musical development

Get a head start with this tutorial video:
bit.ly/su-gbhiphoptutorial

> Embedding skills, knowledge and understanding through singing, playing, improvising, composing and listening

1 Create a groove with drums, bass and guitar

- As a class, in pairs, or as individuals (depending on resources), open Garageband and create a new song. Open the 'Smart Drums' instrument and, using the settings menu, change the tempo to 94 bpm and the key to E minor. Turn off the metronome.
- Explain and demonstrate the various parameters of the Smart Drums and create and record a drum beat that has a similar feel to the original. Practise clapping along to each downbeat, counting bars.
- Move to the 'Track View' page, press play to hear your drums, and open up the 'Loops' menu. Choose the 'Guitars' instrument and preview three loops: 'House Fever Hot Guitar 04', 'House Heat Up Guitar 02' and 'Jazz Hustle Guitar 02'. Decide which loop should be added, and drag it into the song.
- Open a new instrument, the 'Smart Bass'. Sing the bass line from the original track over your composition, then invite a student to try and play it, as shown below (alternatively, you can use one of the 'Autoplay' samples on an Em chord). Record when ready.
- If you have created lyrics for the verse, try singing along to the new track.



Can children: make and explain their choices about their preferred drum and bass samples?

2 Improvise over the verse using the minor pentatonic scale

- Ask pupils to say and clap their names or a question (eg. 'what is the time?'), along to the track. Point out any natural variations in pitch.
- Open a new instrument: the 'Smart Guitar'. Listen to the four guitar sounds, and experiment with the effects. Discuss which *timbre* is most pleasing and why. Move to the 'Notes' view and change the scale to 'Minor pentatonic'.
- Invite pupils to play, instead of clap, their names/questions on one note of the Smart Guitar. Some students will be able to map their rhythm across several notes, creating an improvised melody.
- Choose two pupils to have a call-and-response musical dialogue over the track, taking turns to improvise for two bars each. Record and invite self-evaluation and feedback.



Can children: play a repeating improvised rhythmic pattern in time to the track?

3 Add a chorus and create a lyrical hook

- Listen again to the chorus of the original track, and explain that the string section outlines a chord progression: Em, G, D, A.
- Add a new section to your piece and loop your drum track across both sections. Zoom to the new section.
- Open your Smart Bass instrument, move to the 'Chords interface', and find the relevant chords. Play the drum track and practise moving through the chord progression above. Record when ready.
- Repeat this process with the 'Smart Strings'.
- The string part should now be firmly stuck in everyone's heads. Can you find a set of words that fit with this melody? You may need to add some passing notes to fit all your words in.
- Add further sections to the song and decide on an arrangement, with a mixture of verses with vocals, verses with soloing, and choruses. Finalise a complete recording and upload to SoundCloud, sharing the link with parents and friends!



Can children: sing along to the chorus with correct timing, pitch and articulation?

Some pupils achieved beyond expectation and can:

- play the original bass line accurately and stylistically
- improvise using a minor pentatonic scale with clear phrasing

Examples:

Pupil used the Smart Bass to record a bass line using a mixture of *staccato* and *legato* articulation

Pupil identified the five notes of the pentatonic scale and played a solo with a clear beginning, climax and end

Pupils' names

Most pupils can:

- create a drum beat using the composite elements of a drum kit, explaining their choices in terms of timbre and texture
- identify the downbeat in a bar and count bars
- work with others to create and sing the lyrics for a chorus
- outline the chords of a chord progression in time

Examples:

Pupil chose and blended four types of percussion, discussing the optimal thickness of texture

Pupil used the Smart Bass instrument to create a simple bass line that followed the chord progression of the chorus

Pupils' names

Some pupils made less progress and can:

- choose between two samples, with a superficial explanation of their preference
- improvise a simple rhythm using one or two notes, broadly in time to the beat
- sing the bass line and chorus and, separately, clap along with the off-beats

Examples:

Pupil chose their favourite of three guitar loops, but was unable to use appropriate vocabulary to explain their decision

Pupil used their name to create a rhythm, and needed visual prompting to begin the rhythm at the beginning of the bar when recording on the iPad

Pupils' names