

# Small Jazz Group Compositional Formatting

## How to Best Set-Up Your Tunes for Easy Navigation

{Joel Gordon - September 16th, 2018 - Truman State University}

### **I. Tune Format (deciding how to best organize your page layout)**

1. Off Book - teach everything by ear/rote
2. Lead Sheet - one page for everyone (sometimes all in C)
3. Horn/Rhythm Part(s) - one part for horns and one part for rhythm section
4. Separate Parts - each player gets their own independent part to specifically read
5. Transposed Score - each player gets a full score of the tune and reads their line

### **II. Before Any Notes... (making sure you have all of the preset information)**

1. Feel (i.e. swing, bossa, nasty rock or "taco" beat)
2. Tempo (what gets the beat and how fast/slow -- bpm)
3. Part Name (i.e. Eb Horn, Alto Saxophone, or Alto I)
4. Tune Title, Composer Name, and Year of Tune
5. Page Numbers (always tape your pages!!!)

### **III. Road Map (how checkpoints will be established and the route presented)**

1. Play the Ink (no repeats or jumping around...but uses up more pages)
2. D.C., D.S. Sign, To Coda, Coda, etc. (takes up less space...but can be confusing)
3. Always Mark Repeats! (2x, 4x, Open, On Cue, etc.)
4. Rehearsal Numbers (these are your best friend for directing, but use with care)
5. Feel Changes (make sure if changing feel, that it is in BIG LETTERS)

### **IV. Questions to Ask (things to know before you start your arrangement)**

1. What is the range of your horn players? (i.e. lead trumpet vs. section trumpet)
2. Can your guitar player read notes? (many can't...)
3. Can your bass player solo over changes? (many won't...)
4. Does the drummer know their Latin Grooves? (Afro Brazilian vs. Afro Cuban)
5. Will there be a rehearsal or will it be sight reading? (may have to simplify parts)

### **V. Places I've Had Success (lessons learned from reworking tunes)**

1. Highlighters and BIG LETTERS
2. Always write chord changes in for bass player, even if there is a written part
3. For D.S. -- put the rehearsal letter you are returning to (i.e. back to letter "B")
4. Use "a la" to reference specific beats/feels from recordings (ex. A la "Birdland")
5. Consider a "double part" score reduction for drums on tunes with a lot of cues