

Playing from memory

Some techniques to aid the process of memorising – associating bits of the tune with words, visual images, actions or other sound patterns to aid recall:

- For beginners when they are playing a basic harmony part, with the teacher or backing track playing the melody: Assign a body part to a note (a form of notation). High notes can be top parts of the body, such as the head, low notes can be part such as knees or feet. Example 'What Shall We Do With a Drunken Sailor' – E = head, D = shoulders: EEEE DDDD EEEE DDEE. Ask pupils to say notes, sing notes, whilst tapping body parts.
- Assign fun names to different phrases.
- Describe melodic features with words such as hills, valleys, tumbling waterfall, which refer to the pitch shape (see Stewart Hardy).
- Compare fragments of the tune to other melodies: e.g. GABG could be Frere Jacques, or to scales and arpeggios as appropriate.
- Particularly for harmony and bass lines use words for rhythms: e.g.
D D D A A A A A A A
Cheese, cheese, cheese (rest), hot potato hot potato –
N.B. it's useful to assign different words to different pitches.