

# Ear Training Essentials



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This book features musical examples to help you learn.

You can listen to these online in two ways:

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Tap the link next to the play button to open the sound in your web browser.

### 2. From the Webpage

Visit <http://eartra.in/eteaud> to access all the sound clips from the book.

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# Introduction

## ***Welcome to this introductory ear training guide!***

Just by opening and reading through this simple and easy to understand guide, you have taken the first important step to developing your ears and eventually getting better at singing or playing music. The ear training methods and principles that you will learn in this book will be useful regardless of what instrument you play, what genre you enjoy, or how well you sing.

So, we strongly suggest that you set aside all distractions, devote some time to reading, and painstakingly digest the contents of this manual. You will find that the musical rewards for doing so are many and varied!

Let's get started. What is ear training, and how can it help you improve musically? Well, for as long as humans have been making music, musicians have been fascinated with this wonderful aspect of the human ear: its ability to help anyone play instruments skillfully, gain a deeper grasp of any kind of music being played, and better appreciate music.

Have you seen people who are so talented that all they need to do is listen to a music track once, and can then instantly play the same tune on the piano? Or how about musicians who can play without any sort of "crutch" like tablatures, musical notations, or chord charts? These people are truly impressive and worth watching whenever they perform.

Do you know what the key to their splendid musical prowess is?

You guessed it: **a well-developed musical ear!**

Ear training, in short, is the ongoing process of developing the musical sensitivity, awareness, and sharpness of your auditory senses. When you develop this “ear for music”, you will see how vital an asset and advantage it is toward reaching a high level of musical proficiency.

Just think about it. The next time you hear a jazz tune on the radio, you will no longer feel inadequate or overwhelmed. You will no longer think *“I can't do those chords,”* or *“I just can't decipher the notes on that one.”* Instead, when you develop your musical ear, you will have more confidence and you'll enjoy music more.

This guide will introduce you to the different aspects of ear training. You will come to understand what ear training is and what it is not. You will learn specific techniques and tactics that professional “ear-based” musicians and singers use. To give you a more complete arsenal of ear training secrets, this book will reveal a number of effective ear-training methods. Plus, you'll gain a detailed overview of recommended drills and ear training activities which will ensure that you develop your musical skills as quickly and enjoyably as possible!

Should you need any additional resources, or if you have any questions regarding the content of this eBook, you can visit our website at [EasyEarTraining.com](http://EasyEarTraining.com) or our full training solution, [Musical U](#). You'll find the latest techniques and tools that will truly boost your ear's capability.

**So if you are now ready to take this awesome journey to becoming a great musician, read on to the next section.**

## **SECTION 1**

# **What is Ear Training?**

**In this section, you will discover what ear training is, what it is not, vital areas in music where you need ear training, and how you can benefit from all this information.**

To better understand what ear training is, you should first understand what it is not. You must realize that ear training is not some sort of magic. Many people believe that only “gifted people” are qualified for ear training, that without some sort of innate auditory ability, one should limit one’s self to only reading written music.

This is a myth, and an inhibiting one at that.

**All people have ears that can grasp music on a deeper level.**

What it takes to develop this facet is to practice on a consistent basis. For example, continuous exposure to a certain kind of music will help a musician expand his or her playing skills in that particular genre.

Ear training should not be mistaken as an antidote for *hearing loss*. Some people wrongfully think that loss of hearing (as a result of aging or auditory impairment) can be reversed by ear training. This is not the case! Ear training is a way to greater musical skill, and does not have anything to do with reversing any damage to the auditory organs. In such a case, you should consult a medical practitioner instead of an ear-training specialist.

In fact, ear training really is not about developing the sense of *hearing* at all! Most ear-training exercises use simple listening to improve the *brain’s* perception of musical patterns. By becoming familiar with musical patterns through constant listening and training, one can improve one’s musicality tremendously.

We just mentioned some things that ear training is NOT. Now, let’s find out what ear training is:

**Ear training is:**

***Doing any exercise or activity that improves  
how an individual hears music.***

**That's it!**

Different people perceive music on different levels. Some enjoy listening to pop songs because of the catchy melodies they have. The majority of people who buy CDs and tapes of record-label artists have no idea how to play music, what a scale means, or what musical intervals are. Their ears are not trained to recognize notes, chords, intervals, and patterns in the music they listen to.

In short, they are able to appreciate music only on a “consumer” level, with little or no musical comprehension!

As an aspiring musician, you want to go beyond that level. **You want to develop a sharper awareness of the music being played.** If you are a bassist, you might want to study standard bass lines and licks by listening to them repeatedly. If you're a pianist, you should carefully hear and “encode” in your brain some chord progressions, note intervals, accidentals, and so forth (e.g. maybe being able to distinguish a major 7th from a major 9th chord would help you a lot). If you are a guitarist, you might want to imitate the lead guitar patterns of your favorite artists.

**In all of the cases mentioned above, there is only one core  
skill — the ability to hear and then play.**

**You can improve this only through ear training!**

One classic example of an individual with a sharp ear for music is the conductor of an orchestra. Often, the members of an orchestra have less concern than the conductor for

the overall structure of the musical piece. They are engrossed and focused only on their own parts. (It may be surprising to you, but most musicians brought up by reading notes and studying formal music theory have lesser ear capabilities than most “self-taught” musicians who learned to play by ear!)

Anyway, in an orchestra, the conductor is often the one with the sharpest ear. You would know this to be true if you’ve ever seen a full-scale orchestra practice. Even when the entire orchestra seems to be playing well, the conductor often stops the entire thing and says something like:

*“I can’t hear the third flute.”*

Or he might say to the violinists, *“I want to hear more crispness on those strings.”*

How is the conductor able to notice such small details? The answer is that he or she has developed the ability to hear music on a much deeper and thorough level than the average person! Reaching that level is possible through dedicated ear training.

Even if you’re not an orchestra conductor or have no plans of becoming one, you can still benefit from having that same level of ear sharpness.

When you train your ears, it is easier to play a song on the piano or guitar after just listening to it a few times. Studying chords and scales will be easier

too, because **you will no longer feel so dependent**

**on music sheets or chord charts.** You will literally be able to recognize notes, chords, and intervals through mere listening! Nice.

*“The truth is, each person already possesses this musical hearing capability in one way or another.”*

The truth is, each person already possesses this musical hearing capability in one way or another. Have you ever noticed how you are able to sing a song many days after you first heard it? That’s your musical ear in action. Ear training is all about recognizing this facet of the hearing process and intentionally taking active steps to improve it.

There are many aspects and areas of ear training and we'll briefly introduce several important ones here. For maximum benefit, you should aim to improve on each of the areas on a continuing basis.

## Playing By Ear

For many musicians “playing by ear” is the #1 reason to do ear training.

What is “playing by ear”? Simply put, it is the ability to bring the music in your head out into the real world using your instrument. This may be a pop song you just heard on the radio, or a jazz standard you know, or a new creation you’ve just imagined in your mind’s ear.



Although playing by ear comes more easily to some musicians than others, it is something which every musician can (and should) learn to do. Playing music by ear instead of from written notation is incredibly liberating and enjoyable. Along with improvisation it is perhaps the purest form of musical expression.

**Playing by ear is not one single ability!** Rather, it is a particular way to express your musicality, which is powered by a number of musical listening skills.

To learn to play by ear takes a combination of focused ear training and practice on your instrument. At the end of the day it boils down to taking the time to try playing by ear, and not getting discouraged when you make mistakes, but there are many tips, techniques and tools you can use to accelerate your progress.

If you want to play music by ear then the best place to start is with the dedicated training module:



[“Start Playing By Ear”](#)

which starts from the basics and explains how *you* can start learning to play by ear today.



## Relative Pitch

By definition, *relative pitch* refers to a musician's ability to identify a particular note, set of notes, musical pattern, or chord progression just by hearing them. For example, when listening to a particular song, a singer or musician may be able to recognize a ii-V-I chord progression even without knowing what key the song is in.



**People with a high degree of relative pitch are able to recognize note and chord intervals, play songs by ear, and even write musical notation from scratch!**

Relative pitch allows you to identify certain patterns in music by ear—but not necessarily by name. For example, while listening to a Michael Jackson song, you may not be able to identify what notes are being played or what key the song is in, but through listening you should still be able to sing those same notes in your brain.

Could you identify these musical elements by ear?



[Example 1](#)



[Example 2](#)



[Example 3](#)

A strong sense of relative pitch can allow a musician to play a song in any key. This musical ability is very important because it gives the musician awareness of intervals, chords, and progressions which music is built from.

 [Explore Interval training modules](#)

 [Explore Chord training modules](#)

 [Explore Chord Progression modules](#)

## Absolute Pitch, or “Perfect Pitch”

This is a skill that even many formally trained musicians plain don't have, and it drives some of them crazy to think that someone with no formal training could have it! Perfect pitch is often seen as a musical gift that one is born with, and it's true that some people seem to naturally have this ability since childhood. This doesn't mean, however, that one cannot work to develop perfect pitch.

### What is perfect pitch?

Simply put, it is the ability to recognize a note, chord, or pitch just by hearing it, and without using any external point of reference! This ability may not be 100% foolproof, so the name “*perfect pitch*” is somewhat misleading. We tend to prefer the term “*absolute pitch*” as the complement of *relative pitch*.

A pianist with perfect pitch can listen to a song, then instantly play it on the piano.

A guitarist with perfect pitch can hear any of Steve Lukather's solo riffs and instantly do the exact same thing on his guitar!

A singer who possesses perfect pitch will be able to listen to any of Mariah Carey's shrieking notes, then outright tell you if it's a D or an A flat—just with their ears.

Absolute pitch is fascinating. If a musician or singer can develop this skill, it will be a tremendous help in many musical situations.

**There is good evidence that any musician, with focused practice, can obtain perfect pitch.**

This is obviously easier said than done, but it is possible through continuous and dedicated training.

Some musicians who do not have innate absolute pitch will use an instrument tuner or tuning fork to memorize e.g. the sound of Middle C or the "A440".



Memorizing the sound of one "reference pitch" like this will help you switch gradually from relative pitch to absolute pitch. When you have your starting note embedded in your brain, you will be able to shortcut the process of hearing and playing. You can then extend this to learning other notes and broadening your sense of absolute pitch.

 [Learn More about Absolute Pitch](#)

## Rhythm

Dedicated ear training can also help you develop a keen sense of rhythm. If you have problems distinguishing a 4/4 from a 3/4 beat, then you need to improve your rhythmic sense by specific ear training exercises. For drummers, playing music is more than simply playing the beat. It's

about getting the groove, bounce, and feel of the song they are playing. A simple way to this goal is to listen carefully to beat loops. In a 4/4 rhythm, it is also helpful to locate the first beat count, and then train your head to repeatedly count "1, 2, 3, 4" in your head as you listen or play music.



**Developing a sense of rhythm is not only helpful for drummers and percussionists, but for singers and other instrument players as well!**

It can be quite difficult to accompany a singer who has trouble with timing and rhythm. Often, the phrasing of lyrics and the successful execution of each song part (verse, chorus, refrain, coda) depends on how well the singer is able to sing the right notes at the right time. If the singer fails to sing on the beat (or off it, if that was the aim), then the entire song could be ruined!

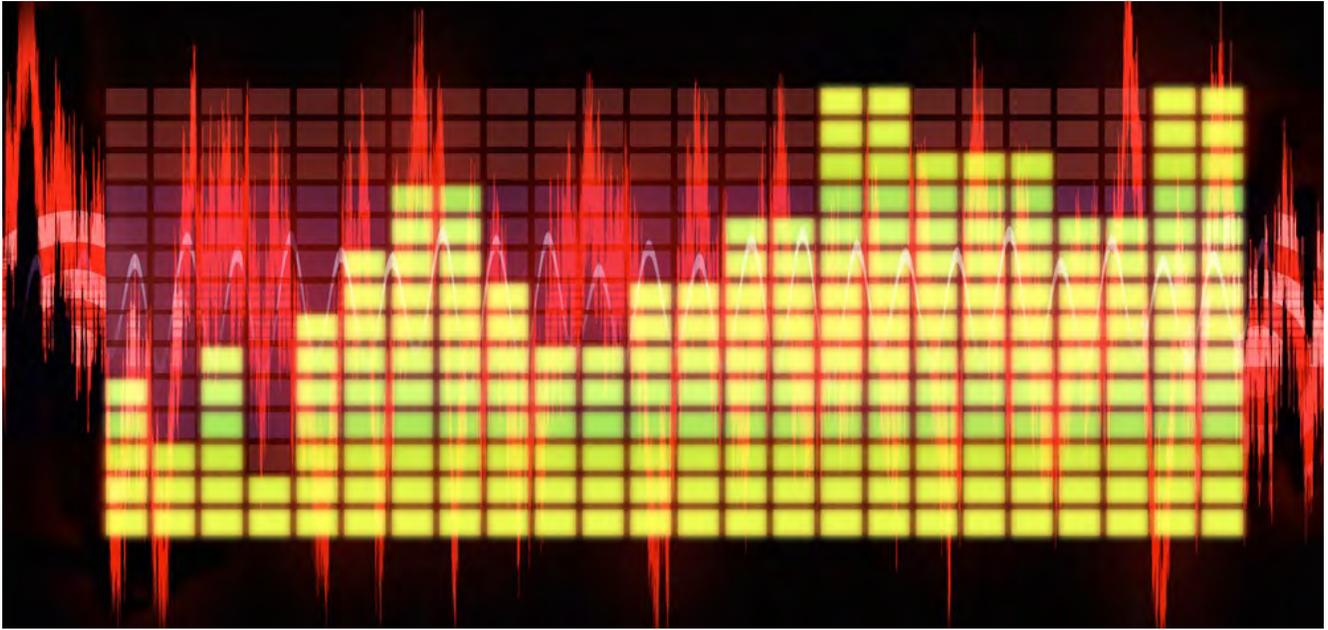
This is the reason why singers should train their ears for rhythmic awareness. Listening to music with basic beats (as well as syncopated ones) will help any singer develop invaluable rhythmic capabilities.

Accurate rhythm is a big factor in making music sound polished and professional rather than amateur. Tightening up your sense of rhythm will help you perform better and impress your listener more.

Closely related to rhythm ear training is the subject of **tempo**: how fast or slow the overall beat of the music is. Learning to recognise different tempos by ear can help you start a performance at the right speed, and more easily communicate with other musicians so when someone says *“Let’s do this one at about 90BPM”* you’ll know what they mean!



[Explore Rhythm training modules](#)



## Audio EQ, Mixing and Mastering

Beautiful music can be useless and unappreciated if the sound quality of the recorded output grates on the listener's ears. For any type of music to be suitable for listening, it has to have the right mix of audio elements.

This is where audio EQ, mixing, and mastering come in. Proficiency here involves getting the right combination of treble, bass, the mid-range, and effects, so that the sound of each instrument harmonizes with the whole. Obviously, we are talking about the technical side of music production—the use of sophisticated mixers, amplifiers, sequencers, microphones, and speakers.

“For any type of music to be suitable for listening, it has to have the right mix of audio elements.”

Many audio producers, DJs, studio engineers, and sound experts cannot play a single instrument, yet they know how to get the mix right and their music comes out beautifully. They know how to tweak the mixer to make the music more suitable to the venue. This high awareness of sound quality can be developed through ear training.

Now, you might think that this skill is only for studio engineers. Not true.

**If you're a musician or singer, you need to have at least a basic knowledge of audio EQ and mixing!**

For example, if you play piano, you should know if your volume is too loud or soft. Is your piano sound buried, or is it overpowering all the other instruments? Could you adjust your instrument's sound to better fit the group you're playing with?

Knowing a little bit of EQ will help you become a better musician. If you train your ears for EQ and mixing, you will know more reliably whether you're sounding great or terrible.

If a skilled audio engineer is not present, you should also be able to tweak the mixer (or at least ask someone to help you tweak it) to adjust the bass, treble, and the EQ knobs to levels to give you the sound you need.

Here's a before and after EQ clip. Can you hear how the frequency adjustments allow each instrument to be heard clearly?



Familiarity with audio effects is a definite advantage for any musician. For example, if you play the guitar, you can learn how to properly use flangers, delays, chorus effects, and reverb to give your music variety and style. The same holds true for keyboards and

synthesizers with their hundreds of sound choices. Without ear training in this area, you would not be able to choose the right sound to suit the song you're playing.

In this modern day when so many musicians start out by recording and releasing their music themselves, developing the core listening skills of audio production is increasingly essential. However talented you may be on your instrument, however moving your songs may be, they will be wasted if you do not have the basic aural understanding of audio frequencies and effects to make your recordings sound professional and appealing.

 [Learn More about Audio EQ](#)

 [Learn More about Audio Effects](#)

## SECTION 2

# Who Needs Ear Training?

**This section explains the applications of ear training for different musical situations and professions.**

## ***“Who benefits most from ear training?”***

There is no fixed rule for who should take ear-training lessons.

The more useful question is:

## ***“Are you interested in taking your music to the next level?”***

If you do want to move your musical talent forward and hone your craft to a finer level, then ***ear training is for you!***

Certain people in specific professions will benefit more than others from ear training exercises. If you are a musician who never went through formal training in music, or if you can't read sheet music, then developing your ear is your only practical option when starting a career in music! There are many musicians, even popular ones, who could not read a single line of musical notation if they tried. But most of these artists and musicians who made it big in the music industry have **used their ears as an invaluable asset** of musical prowess and success.

For professional or aspiring composers, ear training is a must. A composer's ears are among his or her most useful musical assets. **They are on the constant lookout for new sounds, melodic patterns, and rhythmic patterns that**



will help them create the next big billboard hit, or the next great jazz album. Some great composers even listen to the sounds of nature to gather inspiration and insight regarding their composition! So if you are aspiring to become a composer, never ever leave ear training behind.

**Drummers need to have ear training for rhythmic awareness.** Professionals rehearse their ears to recognize the metronome count of a drum beat, and to be constantly conscious of right tempo, not too fast or too slow. Of course these skills are useful to other types of musician also!

**Pianists and singers benefit from developing their senses of relative pitch,** as this helps in choosing the right notes, intervals and scales.

Meanwhile, many **guitarists need training in audio effects,** as they are often the ones who set the feel or atmosphere for a song.

And of course, **studio engineers and sound mixing specialists need to develop their EQ tweaking and mastering skills** by improving their ears.

When it comes to age ranges, there are also no fixed rules. **It is possible for anyone with normal hearing, regardless of age, to develop their ears.** As with most skills, it is best to start ear training as early as you can. Many musical prodigies, and others who went on to become world-class musicians, started some sort of ear training as children! The training may have been passive or unintentional, in the form of constant exposure to music, or the spark may have been curiosity towards a musical instrument at home. If you have children, try to expose them to music early on. If music is really for them, when the right time comes, they might just turn out to be the next popular and celebrated musician or singer.

*“The question to ask is, ‘Am I interested in taking my music to the next level?’*

*If you want to move your musical talent forward and to hone your craft to a finer level, then ear training is for you!”*

And if you are in your 40s, 50s or 60s, don't think for a second that ear training is no longer for you! Nothing is impossible if you have the desire to improve yourself and believe you can do it. When it comes to music and improving yourself for its purpose, age is just an illusion. It's never too late to develop your ears and get better at your craft!

*"It's never too late to develop your ears and get better at your craft!"*

Now, let's discuss the educational background required for ear training:

*Is a degree in music necessary?*

*Is it required to take basic note reading, voice, or piano lessons first?*

*Is there some sort of assessment test you must pass to determine if you can benefit from ear training?*

**The answer to all the questions above is a resounding "no."**

You do not need to be a note-reader or a formally trained musician to develop a sharp ear. **There is no formal training required!** In fact, many of the world's best musicians, singers, and audio specialists did not have a structured musical education.

Somehow, ear training hones a musician's *inner* musical skills, freeing him or her from relying on written notation or other crutches.

World-class music schools and conservatories know this, which is the reason why they all include ear training in their curriculums. Music schools that want to produce well-rounded musicians train their students' ears, as opposed to merely teaching musical theory and memorizing classical pieces.

One example of an academic institution that uses the power of ear training is Boston's [Berklee College Of Music](#). Known as the largest music school in North America to follow a contemporary music approach, Berklee uses ear training as one of their primary teaching tools. Students who enroll at Berklee are given ear training lessons as a supplement to the traditional notation reading approach.

The logo for Berklee College of Music, featuring the word "Berklee" in a large, red, serif font, "college of" in a smaller, red, serif font, and "music" in a red, serif font below it.

In this guide, we do not mean to imply that note reading is not important. In fact, formal training is very important. But not everyone has the opportunity to enroll in a conservatory. What we're saying here is that **a lack of formal training need not be a hindrance to achieving your full musical potential.**

If you are a musician and you can't read a single line of notes, don't think that this prohibits you from becoming a great musician—because it doesn't! This book provides you with the introduction you need to acquire the next best thing to formal music education—and that is practical ear training!

To help you realize just how powerful ear training really is, let's take a look at some famous examples of **musicians who made it big using the sheer power of the ear!**

## John Mayer

John Mayer was extremely popular in pop music circles worldwide in the mid-2000s. He recorded such unforgettable albums as *Any Given Thursday* and *Continuum*.

Many people think that Mayer is an extremely good guitarist because of his short stint at Berklee College of Music. In fact he had been playing the instrument even before he entered music school.



Mayer's motivation to learn guitar started when a friend gave him a cassette featuring Stevie Ray Vaughan (a great blues guitarist). He then listened to the songs repeatedly over a long period of time. In fact, he became so engrossed with listening to the music and playing guitar in his room that his parents started to worry about whether he might have psychiatric problems!

But Mayer was simply slowly developing his ear for music, heightening his familiarity with the blues genre, and gaining mastery over his instrument.

To this day, traces of Mayer's early blues background and ear training can still be heard in his pop songs. He is now one of the most influential contemporary guitarists worldwide. His story is proof of the long-term benefit and strong impact of ear training on an individual's musical ability.

## Stevie Wonder

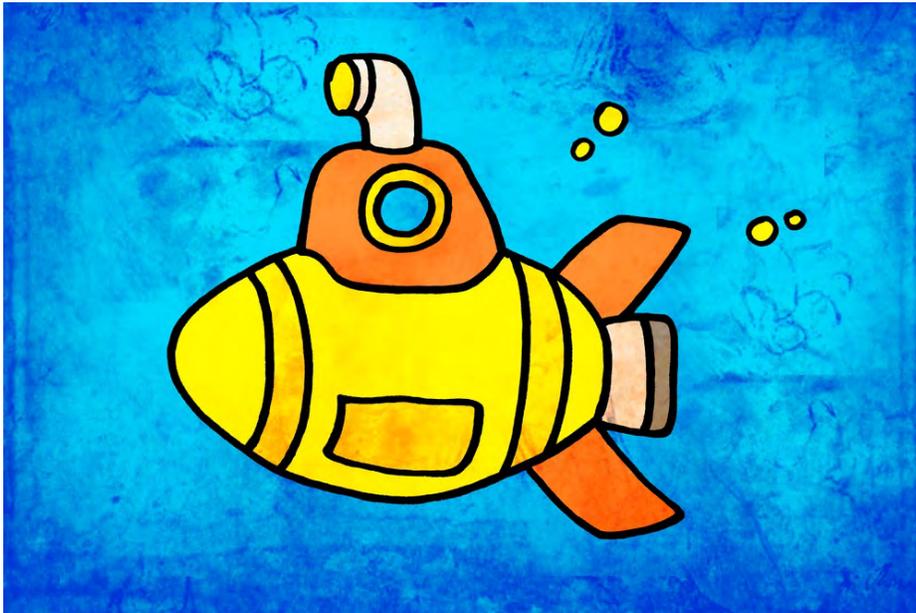
Stevie Wonder is probably one of the best examples of a modern musician who plays solely by ear! And the reason why this is fascinating and inspiring is because he is not



gifted with sight. Though blind, Stevie Wonder became a legendary composer, singer, piano and harmonica player, and music producer. He is a fantastic example of how relying on your ears instead of printed music can be a true asset to a musician, rather than a hindrance.

## The Beatles

The Beatles remain one of the most influential and iconic rock and roll bands ever. Their songs still manage to climb the billboard charts more than 30 years after the band's break-up. Back in a time when mixers and other music-related technology were far more primitive than today's, the Beatles gave the world a kind of music that was larger than life. Even though only half of the band is still alive, their music lives on completely.



When asked what musical influences he had, John Lennon replied: *"Nothing really affected me until I heard Elvis. If there hadn't been Elvis, there would not have been the Beatles"*.

In short, the tremendous career of this iconic group started when they began to listen intently to a certain popular performer. You can imagine John Lennon listening nonstop to Elvis's 45s and albums. In the process of constant listening, John and the other members developed their ears. This later led them to composing the songs that turned the musical world upside down.

There are hundreds of other musicians who went on to successful careers after starting out with some form of passive ear training. In fact, if we listed them all here, we would run out of space!

However, the point here is clear:

## **Do not underestimate the power of your ears!**

If the people mentioned above were able to benefit from passive, unintentional training, how much more can you benefit if you perform ear training exercises actively? There is practically no limit to your growth and success.

For a moment, imagine your musical goals and aspirations.

*Do you want to make it to the big leagues?*

*Do you want to become a pro?*

*Do you want to grow into a better musician?*

*Do you want to become a “natural”?*

As you continue your ear training, keep your mind focused on your goals. Always remember that when the going gets tough or you encounter a challenge to your musical capability, you can stay motivated and energized if you know clearly the reason why you want to play music better.

# The Top 10 Reasons to do Ear Training



## 1. Hear More

You'll discover you become more and more aware of the **rich detail in music**. Discover new dimensions in the music you know and love, as your ears become more musically sensitive.

## 2. Accuracy

As your ears become more sensitive to detail, it will make you a far more accurate player. After all, you can only **play precisely** if you can hear whether your playing is precise or not!

## 3. Enjoyment

You'll rediscover music you thought you knew, hearing it afresh with your newly-enhanced ears. You'll also find yourself enjoying a much broader range of music styles because you can **appreciate new aspects of music**.

## 4. Understanding

Learning to truly *understand* what you're hearing in music is enormously empowering—you'll wonder how you went so long without this **musical intelligence**!

## 5. Creativity

Your broader appreciation and increased musical sensitivity will help you build up your musical vocabulary. Understanding what you hear lets you choose which rules to obey and which to ignore. Together these give you **far greater musical creativity** in improvisation, song-writing and composing.

## 6. Playing By Ear

One of the most fun things you can do in music: play it by ear! With no written aids or reliance on anything but you and your instrument you can **express yourself directly** in music.

## 7. Versatility

Ear training builds your appreciation of different musical elements—from chords, to instruments, to genres, and more—and your ability to instinctively mimic and utilise them on your instrument. This makes you a more well-rounded and versatile musician, welcome in any group, and **capable of playing in any situation**.

## 8. Confidence

One of the greatest benefits for many musicians who pursue ear training: finally escaping that nervousness about musical performance. When you've built up your aural understanding with ear training, you don't need to fear anything in music. You know you can always **trust your ears** and perform with confidence.

## 9. Conversation

A large part of ear training is associating sounds with their corresponding names. Learning this shared terminology for musical elements lets you **talk about music** more easily and intelligently with other musicians. It also lets you have conversations *in music* by closing the gap between musical ideas in your head and expressing them in the real world via your instrument.

## 10. ***Freedom***

If we had to sum up the benefits of ear training in one word, it would be: freedom.

**Musical freedom** means:

✗ Not being scared by uncertainty about your musical abilities.

✓ Instead, performing with confidence.

✗ Not being bound to written scores or limited by strict music theory rules.

✓ Instead, building on these as you want to, to achieve your own musical expression.

✗ Not just repeating other people's music by rote.

✓ Instead, creating something new each time you pick up your instrument or sing a note.

**This is the true sign of a “natural musician”, and it’s something which you too can obtain—through dedicated ear training practice.**

## **SECTION 3**

# **How to Train Your Ears**

**In this section you will learn different methods and approaches to ear training, as well as insights on how to design your own daily training regimen.**

In this section, we will study actual ear-training methods . You will find out that training your ears is not as difficult as most people think it is! In fact, you can do it at home, during your free time, wherever and whenever is convenient for you.

While some people prefer employing the services of a music instructor to train their ears, it is important to note that you can also train on your own.

This aspect of being able to train on your own is extremely beneficial, especially if you're a self-taught musician. With this approach to ear training and developing musical abilities, you can work at your own pace, and you need not impose any limits on the amount or kind of music you should listen to.

**The wonderful thing is, the more you train your ears,  
the more you'll enjoy it!**

As you train actively and passively every day, and the whole thing becomes habitual, you will notice a change in the way you perceive music. Here's the key:

**If you couple keen musical awareness with a systematic study of your chosen musical field or instrument you will become an excellent musician.**

There are basically **two ways** by which you can train your ears. Fortunately, there is no need to choose between them because it is best to take advantage of both.

The two types of ear training are *active* and *passive* training. Let's take a look at each of these training methods in detail.

## Active Ear Training

Active ear training refers to methods that require you to **do something**. It's similar to doing workouts in the gym—it requires a certain amount of work on your part each day.

Most people shy away from active training methods for two reasons:

**First:** to put it bluntly, they are somewhat lazy (but aren't we all to some degree?) They feel that performing ear training exercises is a difficult task.

**Second:** they do not know enough about ear training exercises to design an interesting and varied practice routine.

The solution to both problems is easy. Here's what you should do: Find some ear training exercises that you can do *easily* and *regularly*!

In fact, the exercises and drills that train your ears need not be complicated at all. The point of active training is for you to develop your hearing skills through repetition. Therefore, the exercises you should do must be easy, interesting, and able to be performed routinely and repetitively.

Let's look at some examples of active training.

## Working with Labeled Examples

This ear training method allows you to practice recently learned musical theories and put them in action. The idea is to listen to lots of examples where you already know what the underlying musical concept is.

For example, if you are studying the piano and you just learned (in a theoretical way) about the structure of major 7th chords, a good way to train would be to listen to actual songs and tracks that feature major 7th chords. As you listen to the audio clips, try to identify the exact points in the song where that particular chord form is used. Try to follow along using your own instrument.

The reason why this training regimen is very powerful is because it shortcuts the learning curve by directly embedding the application of musical theory in the brain. Instead of studying scales and written notations in the abstract, you can familiarize your ear with how a major 7th chord truly sounds and also how to translate what you've heard into an actual chord (or arpeggio) that you can play.



You can work with labeled examples in whatever aspect of music you are trying to improve. For example, as a singer, you can practice certain styles and voice ranges by listening to examples of artists who sing in those styles and ranges. Or if you're studying how to apply particular scales (e.g. pentatonic, blues, Dorian, Phrygian, etc.), you can download samples of these and work with them.



## [Example of Labelled Intervals](#)



## [Example of Labelled Chords](#)

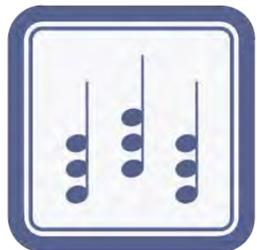
There are many resources inside Musical U that help you actively practice different aspects of music like this. Here are some previews:



### [Preview: Interval Recognition 1](#)



### [Preview: Chord Recognition - Triads](#)



### [Preview: Progressions Recognition 1](#)

## Working with Partners

Partnering with other people who also want to train their ears is a great way to practice your hearing skills. The major advantage of this is that you are less likely to get bored or lazy.

Many people have difficulty performing exercises on their own. If you are that kind of person, finding an ear training partner is a great option. It could be a friend, a fellow band mate, or another music enthusiast like a member of [Musical U](#).



Working with a partner goes something like this: you both listen to a music track, ear training drill, or sound pattern that helps improve a particular aspect of musical ability. For example, if you want to improve your relative pitch, listen to a particular song and then ask your partner to sing the starting pitch. You then work towards discovering the song's key together.

If you want to learn a specific musical instrument, choose an ear training partner who is already skilled in that instrument. This way, you can leverage his already developed ear for your instruction. If you choose a partner who is also a novice, make sure that you have the same objectives for ear training. If your goals match, the ear training exercises you perform will benefit you both.

This type of active ear training is most often done in person, but in the internet age you can certainly also collaborate in this way with other members inside Musical U. Try exchanging mini challenges, or meeting for a short Skype call where you can practice ear training together live.

## Using Ear Training Skills in Practice

You can use ear training skills in a variety of situations when you are practicing your craft. When you do use ear training skills to develop your skill in any musical field, you will find that you are getting more productive during all your practice sessions!

A perfect situation to use and improve your ear training skills is when you are **transcribing** a piece. Transcribing is the process of writing down the music you're hearing. In music, there are a couple of ways to transcribe. First, you can write down the musical approximately, for example just noting the chords of a song; or second, you can transcribe fully, in precise notation. In both cases, you can develop your music hearing skills tremendously through writing what you're hearing!

At first, it may be a bit difficult to write down what you're hearing. But as you sit down with your instrument and CD player (or iPod, etc.), you can start transcribing little by little. Don't worry about getting the chords or notes 100% correct at first. Just write what you feel is the best written representation of what you're hearing. If you happen to encounter a chord or song part which you cannot transcribe at that point, just skip it, leaving a blank on your paper at that point so that you can fill it later.



You can also use ear training to practice your *improvisation* skills. For example, you can play an audio loop (with a bass line, basic chord structure, and beat) and add your own piano or guitar improvisation to the loop as you play along. This will accustom your ear to improvising in a certain groove.

**Improvisational skill does not happen by accident.** The lead guitarists and piano soloists you admire most learned how to improvise over many years of listening to various musical influences and **acting** on what they heard.

**If you make a habit of listening carefully to the kinds of music you want to play, you will increase your stockpile of musical knowledge.**

When the time comes for you to improvise or play an unrehearsed solo part, your influences will come out as you remember what you have in your head from the past.

You can also improve your ear by practicing *mixing* and tweaking *EQ* knobs. If you do not own a sound system and mixer, you can still practice your mixing skills by using free or very inexpensive software such as [Garageband](#), [iTunes](#), [Winamp](#), or [Sonar](#). These programs allow you to play audio tracks on your computer and then mix them on your own terms. This is a great way to experiment with different levels of EQ, as well as different effects and sound themes.

Another easy way to experiment is to see if your MP3 player or iPod has a choice of *EQ settings*. If so, experiment with the preset sound themes such as pop, rock, jazz, lounge, dance, bass boost, treble boost, and so on. Play a song using each sound theme, listening for how each EQ setting affects the sound. If you do this regularly, you will be able to appreciate how EQ can impact each genre of music.

Now let's talk about **passive** ear training and how you can use it to increase your musical sensitivity.

## Passive Ear Training

As you might have guessed, “Passive” ear training is the opposite of active ear training.

When you train passively, you do so **without taking action**. It is more like a “mental encoding” process that allows you to embed different aspects of music in your head.

**Musicians should train their ears with both active as well as passive methods.** In active training, you develop discipline, musical interpretation, and conscious skill. In passive training, you increase your familiarity, sensitivity, and musical awareness.

Note that “passive training” does not mean *effortless!* Although you are not taking any physical action, it is important to pay attention and stay focused. You will only learn and improve if you are truly listening - not just hearing.

A good example of passive training is listening to ear training exercises on an MP3 player. These ear-training exercises do not demand any action on the part of the listener, but increase his or her awareness of certain sounds and musical patterns.

Constantly listening to actual songs is the most basic, and probably one of the most effective, passive ear-training activities. Just like learning a foreign language, continual immersion in the world of music will help you progress faster.

However: ***you must really listen!***

If the music is simply in the background as you do something else, you will not benefit nearly as much as if you pay careful attention.

Somewhat confusingly, this is called “*active listening*” (because you are actively paying attention) but since it doesn’t require you to take any action we include it in the passive ear training category.



[Learn More about Active Listening](#)



# Unravelling Music

One way to develop your musical ear in this passive way is to practice with the *Unravelling Music* modules inside [Musical U](#).

How it works:

1. Listen to real music.
2. Listen to example clips from the track and read brief explanations of the musical concepts they illustrate.
3. Listen to the music again - you'll hear and understand much more than you did before!

This provides an easy way to do really effective passive ear training.

Once you've listened to the example clips and understood them, every time you hear the main music tracks you'll be reinforcing your appreciation and improving your musical ear.



[Introducing Intervals](#)



[Popular Progressions](#)



[Classic Chords](#)

As we mentioned above, the habit of listening intently to the kind of music that you like to sing or play is one of the most powerful ways to sharpen your ear and hone your skill.

For this reason, you need to develop the habit of listening to a **variety of music genres**.

Music is for entertainment, true. But if you want to go beyond average, you have to treat your listening activity as more than just entertainment.

Treat it as a practice session! Set aside a few minutes of your day and devote them to listening intently to the kind of music that you want to be able to play someday. If you develop that habit, you will be surprised at the sensitivity and awareness that you will acquire.

**Listen to a variety of musical styles and genres.**

**If you limit yourself to only one category of music, you deny yourself the advantage of versatility.**

**Start with a few genres that you like, and choose the best songs and artists in each genre.**

As a musician who wants to improve your ear, **do not settle for less**. Avoid filling your head with music that does not enhance your skills and awareness.

There is a lot of noise and rubbish in the music industry today. Your job is to sift through all the noise and rubbish, and find the gems that will help you achieve the success you want.

When pop or mainstream genres fail to give you music that feeds your mind, go back to jazz or classical. Listening to jazz and classical will help you maintain a taste for beautiful music.

Other genres that you should consider adding to your menu are gospel and blues. The gospel genre has lots of underrated, low profile, but extremely gifted musicians. If you haven't listened to any gospel albums, then this might be a good time for you to do so. Many of these albums are great in all aspects of music: voice, piano, bass, guitar, musical arrangement, mixing, you name it!



*The “[Open Your Ears](#)” series on [EasyEarTraining.com](#) will introduce you to a variety of musical styles and genres you might not otherwise encounter, and help stretch your musical ear in new and interesting directions.*

**If you commit yourself to listening to great music daily, consciously maintaining your musical tastes, appreciating a variety of genres, and going beyond the mainstream, you will develop your ear and eventually become a great musician.**

## How to Learn How to Learn

Because ear training requires a degree of commitment, concentration, and effort on your part, you must approach it with the right attitude. We call this ***“learning how to learn”***.

Many people *want* to learn, but they do not know *how* to learn.

The result: they don't learn!

To get maximum results from ear training, you need to have the correct approach towards learning. This involves getting the right materials and tools to help you improve your ear. It also involves finding an environment conducive to learning, an effective schedule, the right resources, and a community of like-minded people!

**If you simply skimmed through that previous paragraph,  
read it again intently.**

**It's that important.**

The traditional, and most common, approach toward musical training (including ear training) is to hire a private instructor or tutor for lessons in a one-on-one setting. The inherent problem with dedicated tutoring is its lack of variety. You can improve only to the level of your tutor, and if he or she happens to be a one-dimensional musician, you are bound to be the same. What if your tutor only plays classical music? Does that mean you can only aspire to be a classical musician who plays operas and concertos?

Overall, getting a structured or formal education in music is no bad thing! But there is great value in having a wider range of musical skills, too.

The first advantage of self teaching is that **you can learn at your own pace**. You are the master of your schedule and you will be able to practice music at the times and places which are most convenient for you. Many popular artists and musicians tell stories of how they began learning to play or sing by listening to their favorite musicians and practicing chord charts on their own.

However, you need a certain attitude if you want to succeed as a self-taught musician. You need to develop an extremely strong love for music and your instrument to have the dedication to practice for hours on end. This might sound extreme, but the majority of **the very best self-taught musicians out there have a certain zeal, an almost obsessive sentiment**, towards their art!



This strong, almost obsessive zeal towards musical mastery is the reason why an eager musician can practice for six hours straight without getting tired or bored. These practice sessions could involve a balance of listening or mental encoding, as well as exercises geared towards improving musical prowess on a certain instrument.

If you have friends who are also musically minded, they can help you learn. Being self-taught doesn't mean that you should lock yourself in your room all the time and be a hermit! It is far better to have buddies who can give you feedback, moral support, and even play along with you. Many great bands started in the garage, where they simply jammed and played daily, enjoying the music and strengthening friendships. So if you have friends who love music, make it a point to partner with them in the learning journey.

**Having a friend or buddy help you learn is extremely beneficial because their ears might perceive things that yours don't.**

For example, if you listen to a jazz instrumental, you may not be able to decipher all its chord progressions. But maybe your friend can perceive some things that you cannot. By picking each other's brains, you can practically leverage each other's skill. **It's like having two pairs of ears!**

The disadvantage of total self-teaching is the lack of structured learning. It's very common for a musician who isolates themselves to start off strong, but then fizzle out when they get bored or stuck in their training. Without a clear path ahead of them or support to help them overcome hurdles, sadly their chances of success are minimal.

This is why even with plenty of determination it's important not to isolate yourself. Instead, surround yourself with fellow musicians and experts who can help you on your journey.

## Using Online Resources

If you want to learn and improve at a fast pace, you should also leverage modern tools, technology, and communication.

**One of the best advantages available to today's musicians is a vast bank of information on the internet.** I cannot begin to tell you how valuable this is!

For example, if you want to hear a certain song, you can simply hop on to [YouTube](#) and view videos of that song. If you're lucky and the song is quite popular, you might be able to see some covers and user versions, perhaps even tutorials on how to perform it on your instrument!

A few years or decades ago, this kind of information would not have been accessible. But today, a vast amount of music information is right at your fingertips! Today we have MP3 stores, podcasts, video blogs, file sharing, and many other tools and resources. There are ear trainers, music apps, and music-related widgets everywhere you go. If your eyes and ears are open, you will find that there are thousands of ways to train your ear using the internet.

One of the best things you can do online is to **participate in forums and communities** that like-minded people frequent—musicians, ear trainers, session players, singers, voice trainers, sound engineers, and music producers. By becoming involved in such communities, you will be able to pick the brains of music experts right from your own laptop or desktop computer! Reading the posts in these communities can provide an everyday dose of useful musical tips and secrets.

A good place to start ear training online is [Musical U](#), the leading site for ear training modules, tips for musical improvement, and insights on musicianship, all built around a friendly supportive community.

Inside the training modules we have various tutorials that walk you through the process of effective ear training. You will not only develop your ears, you will be clued in on what

to do every day so that you can become the musician or singer you have always dreamed of being. The tutorials available take the mystery and voodoo out of ear training and break down concepts and ideas into manageable and enjoyable exercises!

To facilitate systematic learning, there are also interactive quizzes for every module in Musical U. And these are not the type of boring and threatening quizzes you might know from school. These are designed to be fun and sharpen your ears for music at the same time.

Any time you have a question about music, mixing, ear-training exercises, or if you need advice about anything related to music, you can simply hop over to the Discussion Boards. All you have to do is post a question regarding your particular concern to have many like-minded musicians and even experts to give you their take on the topic. Or, if you want, you can simply read what others are sharing. Either way, you are learning stuff big time!

Now here's the ultimate kicker: you also can download the ear training exercises in Musical U to your laptop, iPod, iPhone, or other mobile device. There are also dedicated apps for iOS if you're an iPhone or iPad user. Need to have ear training exercises on the go? Simply choose the tracks which best fit your needs and save the MP3s from our training modules straight to your device.

**Using online resources like these takes the tedium and intimidation away from the traditional music-classroom setting and gives you a more complete, fun, comprehensive and contemporary approach to ear training - and music in general!**



**[Learn More about Musical U](#)**

## Online Ear Training Games

In the 21st Century we are starting to expect that education should be enjoyable, not the hard work endurance people used to take for granted. Luckily, ear training (if you do it right) is always about music, and so you can keep training enjoyable by appreciating the music you listen to and create as you develop your ears.

If you're looking to make things even more fun though—you might want to try **online ear training games**. These are especially great for younger musicians, but are equally effective for game-loving adults!

The best range of games we've found is offered by [Theta Music Trainer](#).



They have fun games for every aspect of ear training, including relative pitch, harmony, rhythm, and even the audio side of things. The games start off with easy beginner difficulty levels and get harder as you improve.

Possibly the only downside of these games is that they work on Mac and PC, but not on mobile devices. So if you want to play on the go, try the other apps suggested in this book or search your app store for “ear training game”.

If you're on the desktop though—give Theta a try! Be sure to [create a \(free\) account](#) to track your progress and keep your training on course.

## **SECTION 4**

# **When to Do Ear Training**

**This section will show you how to establish your own daily ear-training schedule.**

**You will also learn how to maximize the long-term results of ear training.**

**When it comes to ear training, we can't stress enough the importance of:**

**Regular Practice.**

If you want to experience long-term benefits from training, then you should commit yourself to practicing it over the long haul, just as you would a musical instrument.

Musicians should see a similarity between ear training and athletic workouts. If you've heard about the workout and training regimen of great athletes today, such as Kobe Bryant, Manny Pacquiao, and Michael Phelps, you'll have an idea of what it takes to truly achieve success in any chosen field.

**Training for musical excellence takes commitment and regular effort.**

**Just like a professional athlete, you need to practice your ear consistently to become a top-notch musician.**

Now, many aspiring musicians love the idea of developing their ears to play or sing better, but they shy away from the idea of practicing every day. This is what separates the men from the boys, so to speak. The boys aren't committed to constant practice and improvement, while the men take on the task daily.

The goal of this eBook is to give you awareness about the myriad benefits of ear training. Once you have that awareness, we want you to practice your ear-training skills. You can practice passively and actively every day using ear-training exercises, iPhone apps, and all the media and methods covered in the previous sections.

For active training, you can't beat [ear training apps](#). They allow you to tap into the power of modern technology to improve your musicality in an effective and fun way.

You can train practically anywhere and at any time you want – so no more excuses about finding the time!

## Daily is Best, Make It Part of Your Routine

You often hear the advice “*practice regularly!*” but how regular is “regular”?

**With ear training you'll see the best results if you train every day.**

Here are some of the most compelling reasons why you should practice every day:

Your goal for practice is to **embed certain musical habits and patterns in your mind**. For that to happen, there must be consistent encoding of a certain stimulus in your head through listening.

Studies have shown that it takes *two to three weeks* to acquire a habit. Once you embed the habit in your routine, it automatically becomes part of your thinking processes and behavior. This is why you should practice intensely every day for at least three weeks when you start ear training. You are trying acquiring the habit of training your ears.

**Once you form the habit, ear training will not be as much of an effort.** It will be similar to brushing your teeth in the morning, drinking coffee, or reading the newspaper. At this point you'll start truly gaining the long-term benefits of ear training!

“Once you form the habit, ear training will not be as much of an effort.”

You might be wondering “*Should I practice in the morning or at night?*” The answer is, it depends. If you are a morning person and you tend to concentrate better during the few hours before you go to work, you should then do your ear training in the morning.

If you're the lunch-or-afternoon-break type of person, do your ear training during your office breaks. If you're a night owl, do it at night.

**The time of day is not as important as your ability to concentrate and ward off distractions during your practice time.**

**The key thing is daily practice.**

## Combining Instrument Practice with Ear Training



In general, ear training should be allocated time separately from your regular instrument practice. There are times, however, when you should combine the two so you can integrate your ear training with your instrument skills.

For example, after gaining familiarity with various scales by ear, you should then proceed to your piano or guitar and try to play the different scales.

For an instrument player, a key part of ear training is repeating the cycle of hearing and playing and hearing and playing. You might familiarize your ear with different pitches, sounds, and intervals, but the point of all your ear exercises should be to enhance your playing. If you're a singer, you are doing ear-training exercises to improve your vocal range and become familiar with keys and scales that will help you sing better.

**Ear training is the time for mental encoding, while instrument practice is the time for applying what you heard and learned.**

The two should work hand in hand, integrated with each other. Never think of them as two unrelated activities that each take up a chunk of your free time. If you've committed yourself to real long-term improvement, setting aside at least 30 minutes for ear training and 45 minutes for instrument practice each day should not be problem.

But what if you're a studio engineer and not a musician?

How can you combine your ear training time with mixing-session practice?

Simple. Get into your studio and start training your ears to hear the instruments' different frequencies and levels. After your ear-training sessions, choose a music track and try to tweak it, practicing with it using what you have learned in your ear training.

**By combining ear training with daily practice on your instrument, the process becomes “encode and apply”.**

**Through instant application, your musical growth speeds up.**

## Quick Practice Sessions Here and There

Aside from your daily ear training and instrument practice sessions, you should see that you use your free time well. Each time you have a chance, listen and practice briefly in any way. For example, if you're driving to work, why not listen to some ear training exercises? Or, if you just came home, why not sit at the piano and play some triads and chords you learned earlier?

Each quick practice session should take no more than 5 to 10 minutes. The point of this is to rehearse your ear as often as you can, wherever you go and whenever you can. In this way, you integrate ear-training lessons into your everyday life and awaken your ear to the sounds of daily life.

**Are you now seeing the big picture here?**

**Ear training is not just a passing fancy or an overnight thing.**

**It is a lifestyle, a way of life!**

**That may sound a bit too philosophical, but it's true.**

Think of your strong points, the things you're really good at. Aren't your strengths only a reflection of what you love to do on a consistent basis? If you are good at cooking, isn't it because you spend time cooking regularly? The same thing is true for ear training and musicianship. You can be great only if you take it to heart and practice everywhere, anywhere, and each time you have the opportunity.

We're not suggesting that you forget about the rest of your life! Unless you are a full-time musician, you will have other priorities, like your job and other responsibilities. The point here is that you should have real desire to improve musically. When you have that desire, you will find time to practice, no matter how busy you may be with other activities.

Remember to choose your methods of training to suit your own needs, whether it's online tutorials, downloadable audio clips, or ear training apps for your mobile device. Ideally find a trusted provider who can supply you with all of these.

## Planning Your Practice Sessions

**Planning** is key when it comes to training regularly. This is important for making sure your practice sessions will be productive. Nothing can be more frustrating than spending time practicing without making progress! If you practice during your set time but you have no idea what to do or what to listen to, your time will just be wasted.

### Four steps to your perfect ear training plan

1. Know where you're starting from
2. Decide where you're going
3. Design your route
4. Choose your optimal transport

[Learn more here](#)

In order to avoid time wasting, you should plan your training. The first thing you should plan is **when to practice**. You need a time of day when there will be no distractions and when you can concentrate. Don't ignore this part, because it is vital. In many situations, you will need to adjust to the people around you and make some compromises. For example, if you live with a roommate, you should explain to them that you need to train your ear for at least one hour at a certain time of day. This way, you can ensure that there will be no distractions (TV, radio, visitors, etc.) when you practice.

The next thing that you should plan is **what to practice**. If you do not have an agenda for training, you will spend your practice time spinning your wheels, doing nothing. Instead of that, plan which ear training exercises you will do. Determine in advance which songs you will use for passive ear training. Know what skills you want to develop, and give yourself a training schedule week-by-week for your practice sessions to follow.

Another important thing related to planning is **setting goals for yourself**. Set long-term goals like, *"I want to be able to play Herbie Hancock licks on the piano,"* or *"I want to be able to mix professional-sounding tracks."* Those are long-term goals, but don't forget to set short-term ones as well: *"I want to recognize different triads just by listening."* By setting clear goals, you'll avoid losing motivation or lacking direction when you train.

Much of the advice above is directly applicable to instrument practice too. If you already have good, effective habits for learning your instrument or other musical skills, try to apply the same principles to training your ears.

Musical U members can learn all about effective goal-setting and planning with the full [Planning For Success module](#) and use the [Training Planner tool](#) to create a detailed plan for their ear training.

## Where to Train

You might be asking yourself *“Is it really important where I train?”*

The answer is: **it is very important - but you must also stay flexible!**

Generally, you want to do ear-training exercises and activities in a place where you can concentrate and devote your full effort to listening. However, now that we’re living in the 21st century and people have greater mobility and hectic schedules, the idea of consistently training in a single place is not as practical. In these times, you should be a little more flexible when it comes to picking a location for ear training.

### **Nowadays you really can practice everywhere!**

The beauty of modern devices is that you can take them anywhere you’d like. Today we have iPods, iPhones, laptops, portable MP3 players, and downloadable apps. You can stuff as many songs, audio files, and videos in a modern iPod Nano as you could on 500 compact discs! The point here is that **you can save ear training exercises and instructional audio files on your device**. Then you can bring them with you everywhere you go with minimal hassle.

So the trend nowadays is [ear training on the go](#). Because most people are busy and can’t stay at home to practice (or have one-on-one ear-training sessions with a personal trainer), the next best option is to take your training with you to school, work, or wherever you go. This lets you fit your training into your schedule more easily.

While there are advantages to reserving a calm, quiet environment for intense



practice, training on the go can even help you—by developing your ear’s resilience to distractions.

Both approaches will help you improve your aural skills.

Now let’s talk further about how to use your mobile gadgets for ear training.

The most obvious gadget for ear training is, of course, the **MP3 player**. But there are many models available. Should you go for the latest sophisticated version, or choose one of the simpler, cheaper ones? The answer is, it doesn’t matter! What your gadget is doesn’t matter as much as *how you use it*. Even if it’s an old MP3 player, if you use it well, it can help you improve your ear.

We recommend filling your music player with the following:

- 1) Ear training exercises
- 2) Songs and tracks from artists whose playing style you want to emulate
- 3) Cherry-picked songs of various genres to train your ear to different styles, EQ mixes, and musical patterns
- 4) Ear training apps that will help you learn.

Numbers 1, 2, and 3 above can be done using any kind of iPod or MP3 player (if it’s an older model, it’s no big deal). Number 4 can be done only with particular devices, for example an iPod Touch or iPhone.

How about other electronic accessories, such as earphones? Well, this might sound a bit picky, but you need suitable earphones to get the most out of your ear-training activities.

If you're not much of an earphone fan, you might be thinking that earphones aren't that important. But not all earphones are created equal! The issue is not with the price but with the sound quality. Choose one that feels comfortable on or in your ears, and has good (meaning accurate) sound reproduction.

Note that the best earphones are not always the most expensive! You can find reviews online which will rate the sound quality, and it's worth taking the time to read about this and make an informed choice. You can learn more about this with the ["Wired for Sound" series on EasyEarTraining.com](#).

Now let's look at some examples of how mobile apps can help with your ear training.

## Relative Pitch App (iPhone/iPad)

As the name suggests, this app helps you improve your sense of *relative pitch*.

Here's how it works: the app trains you to recognize intervals, from the basic ones to the more advanced. You will also become familiar with fundamental musical patterns, and recognize them just by hearing them. This basic-to-advanced interval training is guaranteed to enhance your relative pitch through regular use.

As well as being one of the most downloaded ear training apps on the App Store, Relative Pitch has already garnered hundreds of positive 5-star reviews from actual musicians who have used it to improve their ear.



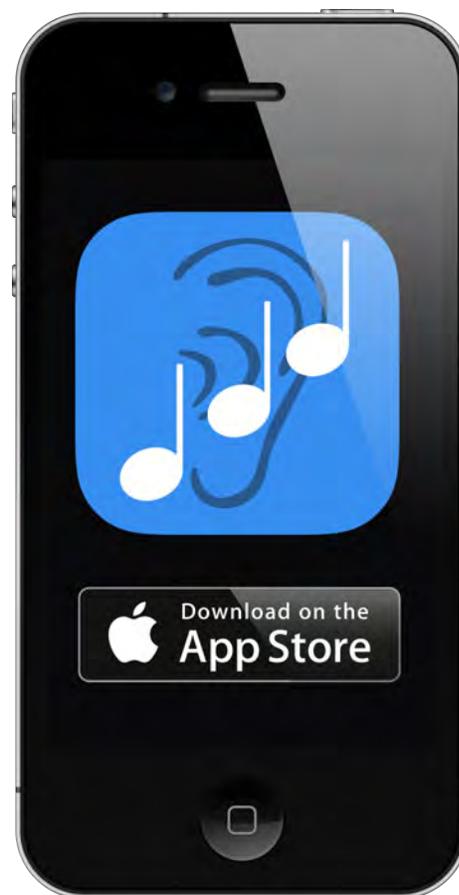
By now, you probably know the key benefits of relative pitch: it helps you recognize the core intervals in music (yes, it's wonderful how just 13 intervals lead to an endless variety of sound). Wouldn't you agree that if you have a thorough familiarity with the sound of these 13 intervals that you also will have greater musical flexibility and sensitivity? The logical answer to that question is, yes! And this flexibility and sensitivity to the sound of each note, as well as the intervals separating them, can be developed immensely using the Relative Pitch app.

 [Try RelativePitch for Free](#)

## Chordelia: Triad Tutor App (iPhone/iPad)

If you play guitar or piano, or another chord-based instrument, you know the importance of different types of chord: major, minor, sevenths, suspended, and so on. If you want to really gain mastery over your chord playing you'll want to learn to recognise the different types of chord by ear. The Chordelia iOS app can help!

It's a lot like the RelativePitch app but it focuses on teaching the 4 essential types of "triad" chord: major, minor, augmented and diminished. This covers a lot of the chords you'll probably be playing on your instrument or hearing in music - plus it gives you a solid basis for learning other more advanced chord types.



If you've ever found yourself wondering "was that chord major or minor?" or want to learn to play songs by ear, the Chordelia app can help you get the understanding you need through your ear training. And once you master this one, there's a special version for advanced chords: "Seventh Heaven".

 [Try Chordelia: Triad Tutor for Free](#)

## SingTrue

If it's your singing voice which you're most intent on developing, the SingTrue app is perfect for you. It starts from the very basics of being able to sing a note in tune, clearly and reliably. A large set of over **FIXME** interactive exercises train your ears, voice and mind for becoming an expert singer.

The app teaches you everything you need to know in an easy and fun way. You'll also start to learn the powerful "solfa" approach to relative pitch, which can let you sight-read music when singing and also play instruments by ear.

Perhaps the best thing about this app is that you can get started totally for free just by downloading it from the App Store:

 [Try SingTrue for Free](#)



## SECTION 5

# Why Train Your Ears?

**This section covers the benefits and positive results that you can expect in your musical life once you develop the habit of consistent ear training.**

**It also includes tips on how to increase your motivation and develop the burning desire to improve your ears.**

As you've heard all about the various ways to spend time training your ears in the previous sections, you may have asked yourself:

***“Why should I spend time training my ears  
when I could spend the time learning an instrument instead?”***

Here's the answer:

**Your skill at any instrument, and even in singing,  
relies heavily on your level of *musicality*.**

This thing we call musicality (or “musicianship”) is not just about playing the guitar or piano skillfully—that's only craftsmanship. Musicality is about having a deeper understanding of music. It involves sensitivity, awareness, and familiarity with musical patterns. Without a high level of musicality, you can never truly master an instrument or become an expert musician.

At this point, some may content themselves with performing solely from written music—and there is nothing wrong with that! Practicing your note reading is still important. If you've been given a traditional music education, then by all means, don't give it up! However, ear training will give you a deeper insight about music. When you learn to play by ear, the music comes directly from your heart and not from a piece of paper. **You'll be able to express yourself through the language of music.**

If we're thinking of music as a language, here's a good analogy to describe what we're talking about:

To learn a language like Chinese, you need to study books about the language, buy a Chinese dictionary, and maybe study how to write Chinese. This will give you a general knowledge of Chinese.

**On the other hand, if you want to start conversing in a language as soon as possible, it's better to focus on hearing and speaking it.**

Listening and talking to Chinese speakers will be vastly more effective than simply reading a book on how to speak Chinese.

Do you see the point here? Reading written music and studying theory is comparable to reading a Chinese dictionary. It may show you the meaning of the words, but it doesn't teach you to converse naturally!



Written music is necessary as a teaching tool. It's good for structured learning, and it's a great way to start learning music.

But if you want to become a fluent conversationalist in Chinese you have to do more than just read the books. You need to hear how Mandarin or Cantonese is spoken in actual conversations. You need more hands-on practical experience with the language!

Likewise, if you want to become a fluent musician you'll need to do more than just read notes from a page. You need to develop your musical ear and go beyond just having a general knowledge of music in the abstract.

**Ear training is the key to developing this natural, instinctive, creative understanding of music which empowers you to become a true musician.**

## Benefits Of Ear Training

Before we wrap up this book, it is important that you have a clear picture of ear training's benefits. We've said again and again that ear training will enhance your musical capabilities. We've described some of the specific ways it does this already, in the sections on different kinds of ear training, but there are a few more to point out. So how else does ear training benefit you as a musician?

A significant benefit of ear training for musicians is **greatly increased confidence**.

The main reason why musicians feel nervous or incapable of playing new songs is that they are **afraid** to venture into unknown territory. And that's human nature. When we venture into the unknown, we lack confidence. Well, ear training breaks down the unknown chunks of music so that you will understand them, even if you've never met them in quite that context before.

Some examples:

- ♪ You will know if the pianist played a major 7th.
- ♪ You will know if the bass sound is too loud.
- ♪ You will become aware of various effects in audio tracks.
- ♪ You will sing with better pitch accuracy and mastery of intervals.
- ♪ You will know how to tune musical instruments by ear.

In short, you'll become more deeply attuned to the wonderful world of music! You may not be able to play the most difficult songs instantly, but you will become less intimidated by them as time goes by.

*"Ear training breaks down the unknown chunks of music so that you will understand them, even if you've never met them in quite that context before."*

What you play, and what you *can* play, is a reflection of the types of music you have heard and studied in the past. It is hard to play something if you haven't heard anything like it before. In common experience, earlier music influences are the major determinants of personal playing style. Ear training allows you to expand your musical horizons and broaden your abilities to tackle less familiar kinds of music.

To make that concrete: a significant benefit of ear training is that **it builds your stockpile of music knowledge!**

Each person has a "stockpile" of music knowledge, which they draw on when performing, improvising and composing. Some players' stockpiles are small, while others' are full of positive music influences. You can judge a particular musician's stockpile by listening to him or her improvise. During improvisation, earlier influences emerge and become obvious in a musician's style.

If a musician sounds like they always play pretty much the same solo, you can bet they haven't spent much time developing their ears with different kinds of music!

So from now on, listen to the very best songs and instrumentals. Watch the best music videos and tutorials. Download albums that help improve your music appreciation. In a future situation when you are actually playing, you'll be surprised at how these earlier influences suddenly come out in your playing.

*"Ear training also does many positive things for your attitude. It frees you from feeling inadequate. By continual ear training, you get more confidence in what you do."*

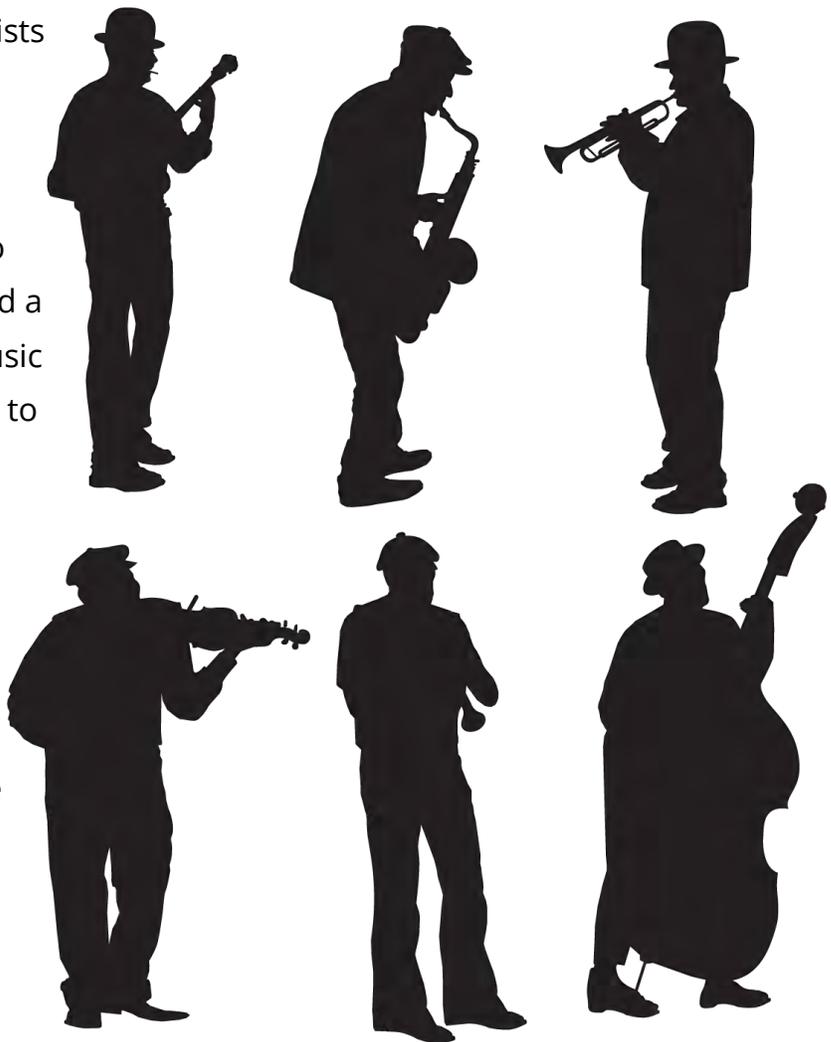
Another benefit of ear training is that you will have **greater sensitivity towards dissonance**. Many musicians keep playing and playing and playing their instrument, without realizing that their chords don't match the song, or the treble frequency is too high, or they are playing in the wrong key! This lack of sensitivity leads to poor performance.

The worst thing anyone can do in music is to sound terrible without even knowing it! But when you train your ear, you will become more sensitive to recognizing what sounds good and what sounds bad, and listening as you play will be a natural part of your performing.

For example, even if you don't know the chord progression of a certain song you want to play, you will still know what *not* to play. You will know immediately if you're playing it wrong. This is huge! You see, one of the first important steps to playing it right is to be sensitive to the wrong ways to play it. When you have this knowledge, you will be able to quickly correct any mistakes. If you're playing in a band, you will have the power to lead the group to a polished performance because you will know whether or not the band is playing well as a group.

Another benefit of ear training is **instrument versatility**. Yes, a well-developed ear can help you learn multiple instruments. Think of it this way: there may be different ways to play each melodic instrument, but they all work using the same principles. For example, the C note on a guitar is the same C note on the piano. Therefore, if you train your ear to recognize notes well, you will be able to transfer that knowledge to any musical instrument you want to play...

This is the reason why some pianists are also great flutists or violinists. And many good bass players are also skilled on the drums. The same rhythmic principles apply to the bass guitar and the drums and a close connection between the music of a bassist and a drummer leads to a tight groove worth listening to again and again. Once a musician reaches true proficiency with one instrument, they can quickly master another because they need only master the *physical* side of playing. They already have all the aural and mental skills required to *play with great musicianship*.



Ear training also does many positive things for your attitude. It frees you from feeling inadequate. Through constant ear training, you develop far more confidence in what you do.

Both active and passive ear training help you **pay attention to the details** that others cannot make sense of. Noticing these small but extremely significant details will help you become more expert in producing or creating music.

If you've ever seen professional recording artists working in the studio, you were probably amazed at how hard they work even on the smallest details of a song track! Some singers spend hours in the studio just getting a single song riff or loop right. Once the raw music is recorded, studio engineers spend more hours mixing, remixing, and mastering the music. This rigid attention to detail leads to high-quality music recordings, and it relies on having an ear that can hear and understand the detail to begin with.

You might be surprised by how much you can **transfer the attitudes and skills you develop through ear training to other parts of your life**. By training yourself to work hard on small but significant details you will become more aware of all the little important things in your everyday relationships you may have been oblivious to before. You will be able to work out small but important details with your partner so that the relationship remains strong. In your job or career, you will show more attention toward small details such as arriving five minutes early, showing consideration towards your officemates, and putting in just a little bit more effort than usual.

**Ear training helps you develop a good attitude that you can use elsewhere in life, be it in your career or personal life.**

***Now that attitude is really worth having!***

## How Soon Will I See Results?

This is a question that ear trainers from all walks of life typically ask. When people train, they usually want to know how long before they start seeing the benefits. The truth is, there is no guaranteed time after which you can expect to see particular results. For example, some people catch on pretty quick and easily acquire the skill of playing by ear, while others need longer effort with ear training exercises to achieve the same level.

What you should try to find out is not how soon you'll see results, but how soon you'll develop ear training habits. Why? Because the long-term benefits of ear training happen only when you've turned it into a habit. For this reason, you really have to practice ear training consistently over time.

Psychologists claim that it takes at least three weeks (or 21 days) to form a new habit and embed it into the subconscious mind. Once you form a particular habit through a series of impactful and highly memorable events, it is hard to break. It becomes part of your personality, your thought process, and your behavior!

**Building the habit of ear training by consistently performing ear drills and exercises for 21 days straight is the fastest route to results.**

After you succeed in establishing the habit of daily ear training, you'll start seeing real results in your musical abilities. We won't make unrealistic claims about how quickly you'll develop particular skills, because this will vary from person to person. The important thing you should consider at this point is first building the habit. The results will follow afterwards.

After 21 days of consistent, planned training in an area you will see clear progress.

## What to Do Next

So far in this book we have given you a detailed overview of ear training, its various methods, benefits, aspects and possibilities. Now it's up to you to begin taking advantage of the many wonderful advantages of developing a sharp ear for music.

Note that we haven't said you can obtain expert ears *overnight*. You have to take the journey toward ear training and improving yourself one day at a time. Do not think of this long-term commitment like a chore or a time of hardship though, because if done right ear training is a wonderful experience in itself! By exploring the various methods and topics we have outlined in this book you should find training your ears to be a truly enjoyable part of your musical development.

Music, the language of the soul, can take you to heights you've never reached before. It will give you insight. It will give you inspiration and motivation. It will lift you up and help you see the world in a different light! Thus, developing your ear and sharpening your musicianship is not a chore at all - it is a privilege that is made available to you today.

While you were reading this book, you may have come across some points and ideas that sparked your interest and desire. If you found at least one thing that sparked that fuel of desire in you, don't let it go! Realize that developing your ear will take you one step closer to the musical goals you have set for yourself.

If you found inspiration to become a fluent and natural keyboardist after reading this book, keep that idea in your head and commit yourself to being the musician that you want to be. If, through reading this book, you found an inspiration to become an awesome sound engineer or music producer, use that inspiration to propel you toward new levels of skill.

**The best thing you could do at this point is to start now.**

**If success is a journey, then it starts somewhere.**

**The same is true for becoming a great musician, singer, or audio engineer.**

**The very best of the best start all over again  
every single day of their lives!**

Through the information and links in this book we have provided you with an arsenal of resources to use when beginning ear training. Some are in this book, and you can download a whole lot more from [our website](#).

Use this information to get started with a daily training regimen right away. If you have no idea what exercises or drills to do for a start, hop into our website and try the ear training [introduction quiz](#).

You might also want to try the apps mentioned earlier, as they will lead you through the process of training. Downloading those apps to your mobile device, and committing to using them every day is a great way to start your ear training.

At first you should explore different areas of training to see what you enjoy, and which areas you wish to improve in. Even before you commit to an area though, start training daily and carefully thinking about what you will train next. That way once you select an area, you'll already be on your way to making swift progress.

Once you have a sense of what you want to focus on, remember the importance of planning your training - this will help you stick with it in the long term.



**[Learn How to Plan Your Training](#)**

And before we conclude this guide to ear training, we want to ask you to do something important:

**Imagine the musician that you would like to be.**

**If you can, close your eyes and envision yourself actually doing the things that a great musician does.**

♪ If you are a keyboardist, picture yourself playing the licks and chords that professionals play.

♪ If you are a guitarist, see yourself actually playing sick effects and edge-of-your-seat improvisations.

♪ If you're a singer, imagine that you are hitting those high notes in front of a huge crowd!

Whatever kind of musician you are—imagine yourself as the kind of musician you *want to be*.

**Do this now.**

Now, you have to realize that the person you envisioned is not just a dream. You are on the way to becoming that person! And the only way it can happen is to start developing your ear for music today.

So do not delay any further, but get started with the amazing journey of ear training today.

*By the way, this visualization exercise can be a terrific activity to add to your daily ear training and instrument practice. Before practicing, start with a few moments of positive visualization. This will help you focus on your musical goals and take your training seriously. It might seem funny to some, but it really works!*

## Keep Learning

As you begin your journey of ear training, please take advantage of all the free resources at [EasyEarTraining.com](http://EasyEarTraining.com). Click a topic name below to explore:



Intervals



Chords



Chord Progressions



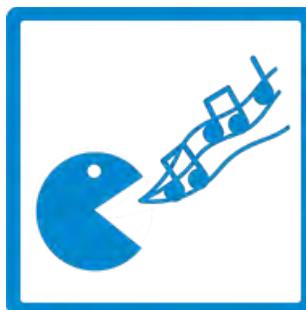
Playing By Ear



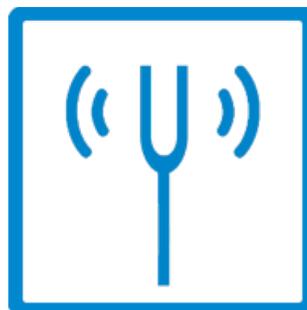
Rhythm



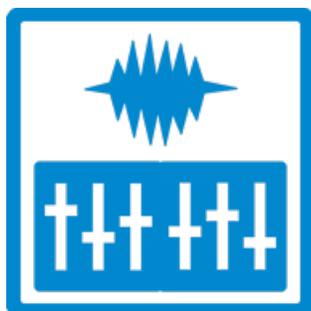
Guitar



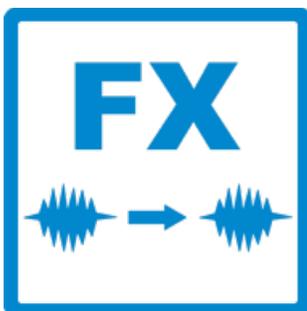
Singing



Perfect Pitch



Audio Frequencies



Audio Effects



Song Writing



Transcription

**Good luck—and *have fun* with ear training!**

*Looking for the next steps to start your ear training journey?*



**Musical U is the all-in-one website which provides everything you need to reach your full musical potential.**

It's a combination of the very best training resources on all the key topics, along with a friendly, supportive community and access to expert help whenever you need it.

If you've read this book then you know the importance of having great ear training exercises to do. You also know the broad range of exciting topics which await you, all of which are covered inside [Musical U](#).

The training modules feature the essential explanations, along with videos, listening examples (which you can load onto your mobile device for ear training on-the-go), interactive exercises, and plenty of further resources to improve your ear.

Not only that, you've come to appreciate that going it alone is a recipe for boredom and frustration. Choose instead to join a vibrant community of musicians just like you who are pursuing the same ear training goals and can help you along your journey.

Musical U is the easiest way to practically guarantee your success in ear training.

**In fact, your success *is* guaranteed.**

Try Musical U for 30 days and if you're not 100% satisfied you can get a full refund.

***Talk about an easy, no-risk way to get started with ear training!***

Don't hesitate. If you're looking for the next step and a great way to start training your ears, join Musical U today:



**[Learn More and Join Musical U](#)**

