

Working with GarageBand for iOS (iPad)  
 Sample Project 1  
 Making a backing track

## Project 1 - Making a backing track

Objective - To create a melody over a backing track.

The topic will be in four parts covering some of the basic elements of music - harmony, bass line, rhythm and structure.



**Step 1** - Explore keyboard sounds and textures

Choose Smart Keyboard from the opening carousel of instruments.



Try the four auto play accompaniment textures. Choose your favourite.

**Step 2** - Experiment with chords

### Teaching Topic 1 – Simple Accompaniments

Though there are eight chords displayed, make up a pattern that has no more than four, one of which should be C. Your composition will last eight bars which may be a four bar sequence repeated - very common in popular songs. Make a note of your eight chords which will change at a rate of one chord per bar.



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**Step 3 - Record your piano chords**

When you record you will hear a regular click (metronome beat). This clicks on each of the four beats that make up one bar. When you make a recording by pressing the red Record button, you will hear a four beat 'count in' before the recording begins.

Try a recording. It doesn't matter if it goes wrong. Just press stop and then press Record again. It automatically goes back to the start and records over your discarded version.

*Playing tip: autoplay patterns are often best played just ahead of the beat to get the change on the new bar.*

Teaching Topic 2 – Chords

**GarageBand for iOS screens**

There are three main screens:  
 Once an instrument has been selected you will be working between the Instrument View and the Tracks View.

GarageBand screens



The Instruments View is divided between the playing area and the controls area. The instrument icon opens to reveal all the available related instruments. Keyboards, for instance, offer a massive 80 alternative instruments and presets.

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The Tracks View shows the recorded regions with the instrument headers in the left hand column showing all the instruments in use. This can be pulled out to reveal a volume slider and mute/solo buttons. Clicking on the instrument region will bring up some editing tools. A playhead moves along the ruler as the recording or playback proceeds. It can be returned to the beginning by pressing:

A total of eight tracks can be displayed. You will learn later on that it is possible to include more than eight tracks. The tracks view shows an eight bar section. This can be adjusted via the + button in the top right corner.

**Step 4 - Adding a bass line**



With one eight bar track laid down it is time to build an arrangement by adding further instruments. Although it is not especially prominent, a bass line gives a piece a solid foundation.

Select Bass via the Instrument or + button.

The default bass instrument is called Liverpool bass (after the Beatles' Paul McCartney's favoured bass sound). Try the four autoplay patterns and select one that works with your piano recording. With the note you made of your original chord sequence try a recording of the bass part. Again, it might take a few attempts to get it right.

Teaching Topic 3 – Bass Lines

**Step 5 - Adding Drums**



Smart drums defaults to a Hiphop drum machine. There might be a better choice of drums with their associated rhythm patterns. Press the icon of the drum machine and a choice of six drums will be revealed. Choose studio kit for our piano based creation. Now press the dice which randomly selects a pattern for you. You can move individual elements around. Just experiment and see which rhythms work with what we have done so far. Leave the pattern playing when you press record. Your pattern may work for the whole eight bars or you might like a change along the way - your decision

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## Teaching Topic 4 – Rhythm Patterns

### **Further ideas**

Well, that's a pretty good start. With no previous knowledge you have managed to make up a chord sequence, play and record it on keyboard, add in bass and drum parts.

In the next project we will extend it by adding a melody line. At this stage we have a viable backing track. Backing tracks are often used in live music. If you do play a musical instrument why not attach your iPad to sound system and play along to your recording.

To hear other backing tracks go to YouTube and choose a song title adding the word karaoke. Standards vary but there are some very professional recordings available. Karaoke is a Japanese word for a form of entertainment using backing tracks.