

Building a Solo

Idea #

Every good solo tells a story. It should have a beginning, build interest toward a climax, and then wind its way back down to the conclusion. The following five-chorus blues solo demonstrates these points. The solo begins in a relaxed manner in the low to middle range of the sax. Starting at an easy volume and with short phrases gives you plenty room to build. Each chorus gets a little busier and more harmonically complex while the notes steadily climb up the horn, reaching a climax in the first two measures of the last chorus.

The solo begins mainly with chord tones, establishing a major tonality. As it progresses, more of the ♭3 and ♭5 blues notes come into play, and the phrases lengthen, giving the listener the sense of digging in. After the solo climaxes, it winds back down using some inventive chord substitutions.

It's important before you begin your solo to have in mind how many choruses you're going to take, so you can pace yourself accordingly. Always try for a strong opening statement. This will get you on solid footing and give you something to build on.



TRACK 18

B = 126

A

D9 A13

D A7 F#7

Bm7 E7 A7 F#7 Bm7 E7

B

A7 D7 A7

D7 A7 F#7

Bm7 E7 A7 F#7 Bm7 E7

Bm7 E7 A7 F#7 Bm7 E7

Sheet music for a saxophone solo featuring five choruses. The key signature is A major (no sharps or flats). The tempo is marked as B = 126. The first section, labeled 'A', consists of four measures. The second section, labeled 'B', consists of five measures. The first measure of 'B' contains a single note. The subsequent four measures of 'B' feature eighth-note patterns. The first measure of 'B' includes harmonic changes indicated by Roman numerals: A7, D7, and A7. The second measure includes Bm7, E7, and A7. The third measure includes F#7. The fourth measure includes Bm7 and E7. The fifth measure includes A7 and F#7. Measures 5 through 9 of the solo follow a similar pattern, each containing four measures. Measure 5 starts with a single note, followed by eighth-note patterns in measures 6 through 9. Measures 6 and 7 include harmonic changes (Bm7, E7, A7, F#7) and measure 8 includes Bm7 and E7. Measure 9 concludes the solo with A7 and F#7.