

Jazz at Lincoln Center
Essentially Ellington scoring rubrics

Below are the judging categories and adjudication rubrics for the *Essentially Ellington* High School Jazz Band Competition & Festival. These provide a detailed narrative to clarify the point scale system used by judges to assess a band's performance. The category "Rhythm Section" has been added to the adjudication form in an effort to recognize its importance as the heart of the band. But please note that the rhythm section is assessed in each of the other categories as well. Some categories used in the past, including "Technique" and "Tone/Intonation," have been combined into a "Basic Musicianship" category -- an attempt to emphasize the other elements of playing jazz, such as "Soloing/Improvisation" and "Interpretation." But since technique is the building block for playing any kind of music, scoring high in any category won't be possible without good technique. Use these descriptions as a general guide, not a list of rigid rules. This is music so some level of subjectivity is inevitable.

Category (General Description)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Needs Improvement
Rating and Score	10-9pts	8-6pts	5-3pts	2-1pts
Soulfulness – Swing, spirit	Elements of swing are clearly uniform and stylistically accurate. Intensity in spirit is almost never lacking.	The main elements of swing are present and mostly uniform in style. Occasionally, lapses in intensity and swing feel take away from the overall unified spirit of the performance.	There is some evidence of an overall understanding of swing. However, too many lapses in intensity make it difficult to maintain an overall driving spirit.	There is little evidence of an understanding of swing. The performance is stylistically incorrect at times and lacks desirable spirit.
Rhythm Section - Groove, balance, pulse, timekeeping, communication with soloists, swing feel	The rhythm section has excellent groove, balance, pulse and swing feel. They communicate well with and make intelligent adjustments to soloists. Each player fully understands their role within the rhythm section and demonstrates outstanding technical execution.	The rhythm section has some lapses in groove, balance and/or technique, but overall a good swing feel. There is some communication with soloists but listening could be improved to allow for a more consistent and connected performance.	The rhythm section shows potential but needs to rehearse to improve timekeeping, listening, rhythmic feel and communication with soloists. Poor technique sometimes gets in the way of swing feel.	The rhythm section mostly does not play in time - adversely impacting all other areas of the performance. Much rehearsal is needed to improve balance and technique, as well as better understanding of the roles of each player, to allow for communication with soloists and a good swing feel.
Soloing/Improvisation - Constructing improvisations through harmonic progressions in the style of the piece	Soloists know how to construct personal and engaging improvisations through harmonic progressions. They reflect a knowledge of the style and know how to invent melodic material that enhances the overall feel of the piece. They communicate consistently with the rhythm section and have a strong grasp of jazz vocabulary.	Soloists know how to construct improvisations through harmonic progressions that have melodic quality, but need to develop a better grasp of jazz vocabulary to construct more personal and engaging solos. At times increased communication with the rhythm section is needed so that the solo fits within the overall structure of the piece.	Soloists are not always playing the correct harmonic progressions and are not melodically and rhythmically locked in to the feel of the piece, and/or the solo is inappropriate for the overall structure of the piece. Communication with the rhythm section is lacking and there is minimal grasp of jazz vocabulary.	Soloists are not playing the correct harmonic progressions, melodies are not present and/or rhythms are not linked to the feel of the piece. Soloists do not communicate with the rhythm section or demonstrate an understanding of jazz vocabulary.

<p>Interpretation – Expression, stylistic choices, maintaining integrity of the original piece, cohesive ensemble sound, beauty</p>	<p>Interpretation of the chart is clear and understood by all members and is communicated eloquently and creatively throughout the performance. The integrity of the original piece is well maintained and any changes to the arrangement are stylistically accurate and enhance the performance. The three sections of the band - rhythm, brass and woodwinds - have a connectedness that allows for a full, cohesive ensemble sound.</p>	<p>Interpretation of the chart is mostly clear and/or understood by most members and is communicated through much of the performance. The integrity of the original piece is maintained and changes to the arrangement do not detract from the performance. The ensemble has a good sound but individual players or sections sometimes stick out and/or the group could develop a more cohesive sound.</p>	<p>Interpretation of the chart is not always clear and does not appear to be understood by some members of the band. The integrity of the original piece is jeopardized at times and/or changes to the arrangements are not within the correct style. The ensemble's sound is not cohesive and/or individual players or sections stick out at times. The band needs to improve the tone of it's sound to allow for better blending, control, projection and clarity.</p>	<p>Interpretation of the chart is not clear and not communicated through the performance. The band does not play in the correct style and/or changes to the arrangements detract from the performance. The band need to rehearse to develop its sound and allow for better blending, control, projection and clarity, allowing for a more cohesive, defined ensemble sound.</p>
<p>Basic Musicianship/ Technique – Articulation, precision, intonation, rhythm, attacks, releases, dynamics, accents, tempo, phrasing, blend, control, projection, clarity, melodic line, tone</p>	<p>Technical performance is virtually flawless and provides for a seamless performance. Intonation, blend and projection are consistent throughout. Dynamics, accents and phrasing are aligned with all sections of the band. Tempo accurately reflects the expression of the piece and tone quality is excellent.</p>	<p>Technical performance is excellent, though a few areas of articulation, precision, rhythm, attacks, and/or releases could be tightened up to provide a more fluid performance. Dynamics, accents and phrasing are generally aligned between all sections of the band. Tempo usually reflects the expression of the piece and tone quality is good.</p>	<p>Technical performance is not consistent. Certain areas of articulation, precision, rhythm, attacks, and/or releases need significant improvement to not get in the way and to allow for a more fluid performance. Dynamics, accents and phrasing usually are not in line between sections of the bands. Tempo does not always reflect clearly the interpretation of the piece and a more beautiful tone quality could be achieved.</p>	<p>Too many instances of poor technique and tone quality. Most areas of articulation, precision, rhythm, attacks, and/or releases need significant rehearsal to allow for an improved performance. Dynamics, accents and phrasing are not performed with any synchronization between sections. Tempo is either too fast or too slow or fluctuates so that time is inconsistent throughout.</p>