

## American Ingenuity

American: People from all over the world, and native people, who live here  
Ingenuity: Originality, creativity, cleverness

The whole world loves American music! A few years ago a composer who lives right here in Wichita (Mr. John Leavitt) suggested that we make a list of all the songs we could think of, and then try to play these songs on our own, adding our own "American Ingenuity" to them. (This is called "improvising" or "arranging.")

Get started:

1. Write down every song you can think of. (There's a starter list below for you.)
2. Play a major chord.
3. Sing the melody you'd like to play.
4. Try each tone in the chord to see where your melody begins: on the bottom, middle, or top note of the chord. (Almost all melodies begin on a chord tone.)  
The root of this chord is also the name of the key you will be playing your song in. If this major chord doesn't seem to fit your song, try a minor one.
5. Sing the melody and use your "ear" to try different intervals until you find the right notes, and can play the song through.
6. Try the melody in both hands. Keep singing along!
7. Tap your foot to decide if your song has 3 beats or 4 beats per measure.
8. Add some simple chords (try your primary I, IV, V chords first) on the beat.
9. Use your chord tones to create a pretty or a rhythmic harmony pattern. When you find some patterns you like, make a list. (Example: Boogie 5<sup>th</sup> patterns: arpeggio pattern of "root—5<sup>th</sup>—octave—step—step")
10. Try some different chords instead of the "regular" ones. Write down the patterns you like. (Example: chords that move around by steps up or down)

Now you've become an American arranger! That's using your American Ingenuity! Be sure to share your music with others, so they can enjoy it, too!

### TYPES OF SONGS: A STARTER-LIST FOR AMERICAN IMPROVISERS/ARRANGERS

#### FOLK

Yankee Doodle  
Dixie  
Home on the Range

#### MOVIE

Star Wars' Theme  
My Heart Will Go On  
Colors of the Wind

#### MUSICALS

Do, Re, Mi  
Favorite Things  
Whistle a Happy Tune

#### JAZZ/POP

I Got Rhythm  
Can't Help Lovin' That Man of Mine  
In the Mood

#### PATRIOTIC

America  
You're a Grand Old Flag  
God Bless America

#### CHURCH

Jesus Loves Me  
Awesome God  
Holy, Holy, Holy