

# Lesson: Assignment #2: The Found Sounds Recording Project

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## OVERVIEW

A computer with the Garage Band© application is used to create an original composition by recording and looping found sounds and arranging the sounds into an original musical composition. This project provides an experience in combining musical sounds to create a musical effect with no use of formal musical notation, but by seeking out and employing sounds that are work well together. The assignment requires students to make aesthetic judgments about alignment of rhythms and varying texture. Student compositions should be the length of a fully developed piece of music that demonstrates variety, unity, and consideration of form.

## LEARNING GOAL

Students will:

1. identify that nontraditional sounds in the environment (either in nature or manmade) can be used for musical purposes.
2. record and combine found sounds with technology (the Garage Band or other recording application) to create a short, cohesive musical composition.

## RESOURCES & MATERIALS

1. Assignment handout.
2. A computer with Garage Band application or another application capable of creating looped recorded sounds.
3. Garage Band tutorial videos, if needed.

## PROCESS

1. Assignment handout is distributed and read together with the students.
2. A rubric is provided to the students so they are aware of grading criteria and standards of quality for their compositions.
3. Students find sounds in their environment that have an interesting rhythm and timbre and record them.
4. Using the recording program, the students edit the recorded sounds into lengths that can be looped.
5. Students map out a general description of the form and details of the piece they intend to create. The teacher may want the students to submit their maps of their pieces to review and provide feedback before they continue on to actual composing the piece.
6. Students layer the found sounds to create a short rhythmic composition.
7. The original musical composition is performed for the class.

8. The piece may be saved as an mp3 file and a screen shot of the Garage Band file may be submitted to the teacher for evaluation.
9. Prior to beginning the project, the students may have to watch online tutorial videos on how to use Garage Band individually or together as a class if they have never used the program before.

## ASSESSMENT

# SAMPLE RUBRIC FOR ASSESSING FOUND SOUNDS RECORDING PROJECTS

### Music - Composition : Found Sounds Recording Project

| CATEGORY                               | 10  | 7   | 5   | R - Redo  |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| <b>General Quality of Found Sounds</b> | Numerous recorded found sounds used in the piece were unique, interesting, and compatible. Appropriate effort was applied to seeking out sounds.      | A moderate number of recorded found sounds used in the piece were somewhat unique, interesting, and compatible. Evidence that some effort seemed to be applied to seeking out sounds.   | A limited number of recorded found sounds were completed and used for the piece, but they were not very unique or interesting. Little effort seemed to be applied to find sounds. | Only a couple of found sounds were used which limited the quality of the musical composition.       |
| <b>Use of Technology</b>               | The program/device was used effectively to record and edit the sounds that were used in the composition. Any looping of sounds was seamless.          | The program/device was mostly effective when used to record and edit the sounds that were used in the composition. Some additional editing of some of the sounds would have improved the composition. Any looping of sounds was mostly seamless with a few awkward connections. | Sounds were recorded, but were not well edited which compromised the quality of the composition. Some looping was poorly done.  | The composition was not completed or very little effort was applied to produce high quality sounds. |
| <b>Musicality</b>                      | The composition was fully developed, with a clear form, and interesting combinations of sounds that demonstrated effective use of texture and timbre. | The composition was fairly well developed, but some adjustments/ editing of form, combinations of sounds or adjustments in the use of texture or timbre would have improved the piece.  | The composition demonstrated a lack of a clear form, incompatible sounds, or cluttered texture. The piece seemed to be assembled in a random rather than deliberate way.          | The piece was not completed or did not follow the criteria of the assignment.                       |
| <b>Components of the Assignment</b>    | A completed recording and a planning map were submitted to the teacher for evaluation.  | A completed recording was submitted to the teacher for evaluation.  |   | The project was not completed.  |

## FOUND SOUNDS RECORDING PROJECT

In the band piece *Rhythm Stand*, composer Jennifer Higdon used the nontraditional sounds of tapping pencils on different parts of music stands to perform rhythmic sounds as an essential part of the piece. The effect added unique and distinctive sounds that were different from what we typically expect to hear in a band piece. Although *Rhythm Stand* combines nontraditional sounds with the typical and expected sounds of band instruments, music can also be created by combining only nontraditional sounds. Here is your chance to be creative and innovative by using exclusively found sounds to compose an original piece of music.

1. Experiment using Garage Band© to familiarize yourself with how the program works.
2. Seek out a variety of interesting sounds that you believe could work well together to construct a piece. Try to find sounds with a variety of volume, relative high and low pitch, texture (thickness of sound) and timbre (tone quality – e.g. rough, smooth, etc.) so that you have plenty of musical material to use in your piece. Record the sounds, each on a different track.
3. Once the found sounds are recorded, edit the length of the tracks to make them more useful for looping and layering.
4. Map out a general plan on how you want your piece to be constructed. What is the form you want to use? Where do you want to have a thicker texture by applying more layers of recorded sounds? Where do you want the texture to be thinner by having fewer sounds occurring at the same time? You can create your map by making notes over a timeline. The purpose of the map is to guide your work, but you may make changes from your original plan as you are creating if you feel the changes will improve the overall musical effect of the piece. Here is a sample of how a map might look:

Wooden spoon stirring in metal bowl | + spurts of blender | - blender out + toaster pop-ups | etc.

5. Referring to your map as guide, compose your piece using Garage Band by looping and layering the tracks you recorded. Use the sounds to create a piece that has unity, variety, and cohesiveness. Think of how the band pieces you are rehearsing are constructed in phrases and contrasting sections. Try to do the same thing, except by using nontraditional sounds rather than traditional band sounds.
6. Once your piece is completed, play it for the class. Can they identify the sounds you used in your piece?
7. Submit an mp3 file, a screen shot of your piece, and your map of your piece to your teacher for evaluation.

