

One of the topics covered in *A Brief Guide* is the practice of preparing walking lines and solo ideas in advance — as a way to negotiate particular, difficult passages or chord progressions, or to prep entire choruses. Or to deal with any weak spots in your technique.

You can also surprise the hell out of your bandmates if you suddenly start driving confidently — and inventively — through a thorny set of changes or a tricky turnaround that until then always sounded unclear, tentative, or lagging.

You build up this “playbook” by working out your own lines, by lifting ideas from other soloists, and by learning the actual bass lines used in recordings or transcriptions.

Your thinking should be that nobody has a monopoly on ideas; other soloists’ ideas will likely be better than your own, or at least push you in new directions and new fingerings ...

The physical act of playing segments of horn or guitar solos will put the muscle memory to work, and as you internalize the moves, their lines — the soloists’ — become your lines.

And when you write out your own ideas, with practice they can be tweaked to be a little bit more advanced for the current level of your technique — or little advances on your technique — which will be offset by the fact that you’ll be reading them or will have memorized them.

Here we illustrate a few ways to develop prefab phrases.

Well You Needn’t — chromaticism is its own reward

Giant Steps — Grand Theft Guitar

Twisted, No Chaser — Turnarounds for fun and profit

A LOOK AT WELL YOU NEEDN'T

For many intermediate bassists, chromatic chord changes qualify as difficult musical passages and can pose problems — hence the strategy of having a “book” of lines prepared in advance. Here’s our notebook for the first six bars, and the bridge, of *Well You Needn’t*: F7 – F#7 (for the latter chord, you could substitute E \flat -6/9). Of course the original bass line was oompah, but if you want to shake things up and keep everyone on their toes, you could aim for a linear, propulsive walking line that allows you to navigate the two half-step-apart chords. We’ll also want to look at the bridge, another tricky chromatic piece of work, after this first set of exercises:

F7 – F#7 3x





You might, for simplicity's sake, want to play the same pattern over and over for the two measures of F7 that finish off each eight-measure phrase, the better to concentrate on the coming measures and/or the bridge. Something like this —



— where you use easy-access open strings and choose the D and E depending on where you want to be for the next measure. If the bridge is next, begin the prefab pattern for *that* by hitting the G (*another* open string!):



Of course by extension there's no crime in repeating a favored two-measure F7 – F#7 line — remember, *anything to serve the pulse*; if you're searching, hunting, reaching for notes, the momentum invariably suffers:

A musical score in bass clef, 4/4 time, consisting of five staves. The first staff begins with a triplet of eighth notes (G2, F2, E2) marked with a '3' and a bracket. The second staff starts at measure 8. The third staff starts at measure 15. The fourth staff starts at measure 23. The fifth staff starts at measure 30 and features three triplets of eighth notes: one in measure 30 (G2, F2, E2), one in measure 31 (D2, C2, B1), and one in measure 32 (A1, G1, F1). The piece concludes with a double bar line at the end of the fifth staff.