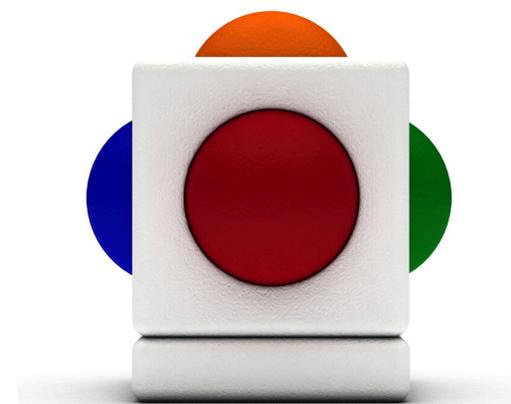# Skoog An Introductory Course

By Lewis Forbes - January 2013

In this course

This is a five-stage introductory course for the Skoog, designed for pupils who have no or little prior experience of using the Skoog. The content is flexible and can be adapted to suit pupils of varying age, abilities and aptitudes. As such, the course may be completed over just five sessions, or over a longer period if required.

- One Skoog

- Another Skoog (optional/preferable)

- Computer with the Skoog Software installed (latest version, available from skoogmusic.com)

- External Speakers (optional)

Stage 1: Getting Started

AIM   Understanding the Skoog; changing and choosing sounds; finding optimum playing position for each pupil.

1. Tell the class that you will be making music using a new musical instrument called the SKOOG. Note: For pupils who use BSL, a typical sign for the Skoog is "S" (pinky fingers linked) followed by "G" (fists on top of each other).

2. Explain that there are five colours, and that each colour plays a different musical note. For younger classes or pupils who may not understand what a 'note' is, you could just say that the colours help us to play music.

3. Demonstrate by playing slowly up and down the scale…

RED	BLUE	YELLOW	GREEN	ORANGE	GREEN	YELLOW	BLUE	RED

4. Ask one member of the class to come and try making a sound.

5. Before another pupil has a shot, tell that class that the sound can change. Change the instrument sound to something very different such as the Vibes, then get another member of the class out to play the different sound. Ask the class what it sounds like now – they may say bells, sparkles, etc.

6. Tell the class that there are other ways you can change the Skoog. On the Notes [e] tab, change the scale of the Skoog to a very different sounding scale - the whole tone scale, in a high octave e.g. C#5 D#5 F5 G5 B5. Then get another pupil out to play the new scale.

7. Play a little bit of improvised music yourself for class to listen to. Ask the pupils about how the [whole tone] music sounded. They may say that it sounded magical, or spooky, or like something from a film. For older pupils, you could talk about how different scales affect the sound of music

8. Put the scale back to C major pentatonic. Let each other pupil have a little shot to play, and change the sound for each pupil to something contrasting e.g. double bass, drum kit, trombone. Talk about how each sound is different (higher/lower etc.) or what instrument it sounds like. You could take suggestions from the class as to what instrument sound to try next. If appropriate, the pupils could choose from the instrument pictures on the Skoog software. More instrument sounds are available using the MIDI tab (remember to click "Mute" on the left hand side or you will get two sounds at the same time).

9. If the class is responding well, you could try switching the Skoog from Novice to Amateur setting, and demonstrate the pitch-bend, sliding sounds you can make (works on woodwind and bowed string instruments).

10. Next, each member of the class is going to get the change to play some improvised music. Tell the class that you are going to make gentle bell sounds, a bit like wind chimes. Change the instrument sound to Vibes. To make a more complex sound, you can also switch on the MIDI, and choose Celesta from the drop-down instrument list. Now when you play, you will get hear the Skoog Vibes sound and the MIDI Celesta sound combined.

11. Give each member of the class a few minutes to improvise some music. To enable this, you need to find the optimum playing position for each individual pupil. There is no standard way to play the Skoog, but for pupils with no physical limitations, try the suggest playing position (see right). Wheelchair users may have the Skoog on their lap, their tray, or a stand. Rather than playing with their hands, pupils with complex needs and very limited movement may play with their forearms (with teacher holding Skoog to their left or right hand side) or with their feet. For such pupils, just making sound will be an achievement. Try moving the Skoog around the pupils different extremities – arms, hands, feet, head – following and working together with the pupil to use of their own voluntary and involuntary movements.

12. While each pupil has their chance to play, you may accompany them on piano or guitar with slow, simple arpeggios e.g. C Maj - F Maj.

13. Tell the class that in the next lesson, they will be using the Skoog to play a well-known tune.

SUGGESTED PLAYING POSITION

This position will work well for pupils who have unlimited use of their arms and hands. Place the Skoog diagonally in front of the player - this gives good access to all sides of the Skoog. If you have a mount/stand or a tray that can be adjusted, then tilt the Skoog towards the player - this enables the player to see the colours of the sides which are facing away from them. It may help to have the Skoog always in the same rotation (e.g. with the red button by their left hand), so that the pupils can become accustomed to the layout of the colour.

TOP VIEW

LH   RH

SIDE VIEW
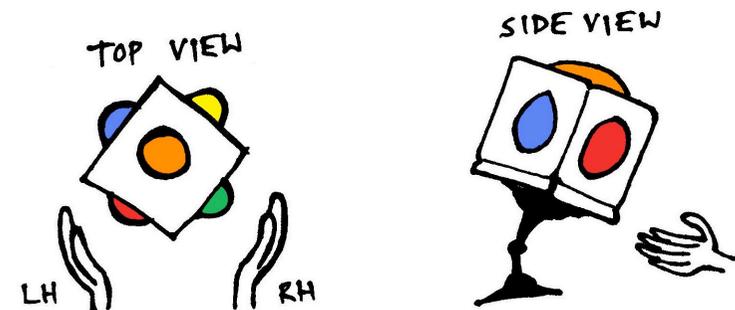
Stage 2: Playing a Tune

AIM   Understanding the Skores notation; playing and recognising a well-known tune; using the Skoog sampler to play sound effects/drums

For younger pupils:

Old Macdonald

Before pupils arrive: Go to Skores tab (● ● ● ● ●) and select "Old MacDonald" from the drop-down menu. Click "Show" and then "Fullscreen".   Leave the instrument sound as the flute.

1. Tell the pupils that you are going to use the Skoog to play a tune which they might recognise

2. Play through "Old MacDonald"

3. Explain the pupils that you are following the Skore on the computer, that you follow the colours and change when the coloured shape "fills in".

4. Get each member of the class to play through the tune following the Skore. Pupils may play slowly or out of time – this is not a problem at this stage. You may accompany their playing on piano or guitar (slowly and hesitatingly if necessary) the chords are as follows…

Eb   Ab   Eb   Bb   Eb   x2
Old Mac-Donald   had a farm, E - I - E - I - O
And on that farm he had a _____

Eb
With a…. etc

Eb   Ab   Eb   Bb   Eb   x2
Old Mac-Donald   had a farm, E - I - E - I - O

5. If pupils find following the Skore too much of a challenge then switch the Skoog to Music Box Mode – this means that pressing any side of the Skoog will still play the right notes for the melody.

6. Tell the children that because Old MacDonald had lots of animals on his farm, you have got some animals in the Skoog. If you have two Skoogs, you should set this up on the second Skoog.

7. Go to the Sampler tab (little microphone pic). Click "Load" and find and select the Sample Set "Farm Animals". Click "Press&Hold".

8. Play each button one by one, and ask the class if they can recognise the animals sounds.

RED is cow	BLUE is duck	YELLOW is horse	GREEN is pig	ORANGE is sheep

9. Get the whole class to play and sing through 5 verses of the song together.   If you are using two Skoog then one Skoog will play the tune and the other can join in with the appropriate animal sound for the "With a baa,baa here… etc". You can swap Skoog players between verses to give everyone in the class a chance to play.

For older pupils:

When the Saints Go Marching In

For classes who may not appreciate a children's song like "Old MacDonald", try "When the Saints Go Marching In".

Follow stages 1-4 as above, using this tune. For accompaniment, the chords are…

Ab

Oh when the saints, go marching in,

Eb7

Oh when the saints go marching in,

Ab Ab7   Db   Dbm

I want to be, in that number,

Ab   Eb7   Ab

Oh when the saints go marching in.

5. Tell the class that this is a tune that would usually be played by a marching band with loud drums to keep time.

6. If you have a second Skoog, set the instrument sound on this Skoog to the Drum Kit. If you have two Skoogs, you should do this on the second Skoog.

7. Switch the Skoog to "Poly" (top left corner).

8. Get each member of the class to try playing drums on the Skoog. Start by playing a 4/4 pulse by dropping the hand onto the top orange button – because of the "Poly" setting you will get a clattering drum sound with the bass, snare and cymbals all sounding.

9. If the pupils can play the 4/4 pulse easily, then they can try to play a simple drum pattern e.g. red-blue-red-blue etc., which will sound like bass-snare-bass-snare etc.

10. Get the class to sing and play the song all together, one person playing the tune, one person playing the Skoog drums (4/4 pulse or simple pattern) with the rest of the class singing. Rotate so that everyone in the class get a chance to try playing the tune and the drums.

OPTIONS   There are lots of other pre-loaded tunes available in the Skoog software – this stage could be adapted to any of them to suit the tastes of the class, or the time of year (e.g. Christmas).   For example, use Jingle Bells and get other members of the class to accompany with a 4/4 pulse or simple rhythmic pattern on sleigh bells or other classroom instruments.

Stage 3: Playing Together

AIM   Playing together in pairs and groups; developing Skoog-playing techniques; understanding how musical parts fit together.

Before the lesson, prepare some coloured circles of paper or foam in the five Skoog colours. Put blue tack or Velcro on the back of each so that they can be stuck to the board.

1. Tell the class that in this lesson they will be using the Skoog(s) to play music together in pairs, and with the whole class. Explain that you will use the coloured circles to show you which colours to play on the Skoog.

2. Change the instrument sound on the Skoog to bass guitar. The scale should be C major pentatonic (default scale). If the sound is too low or inaudible, then go to the notes tab and change "Octave" from 1 to 2.

3. Put the following pattern up on the board…

4. Play through the pattern to demonstrate. Play steadily, with two slow beats for each colour…

RED and   GREEN and   RED and   GREEN and   BLUE and   GREEN and   RED and   GREEN and
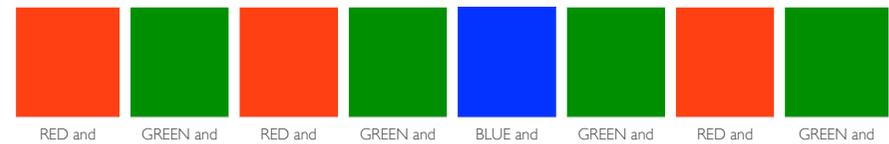
5. This pattern will be a repeated accompaniment (bass line/ostinato). Get each member of the class to try playing the pattern a few times through. You could get the class to sing the pattern at the same time as it is being played – either sing the colour names as above, or "one and two and three and four and"). If you want to develop rhythm/pulse skills, you could do this along to a metronome or simple drum loop.

6. If you have a second Skoog, set it to C major pentatonic with the flute sound and give it to another member of the class. Get the two Skoogs to play together, the first Skoog playing the repeated pattern and the second Skoog improvising freely. Encourage the improvising Skoog player to play longer notes to create a slow moving melody – this will sound very nice over the bass line. If you do not have a second Skoog, then use a C major pentatonic scale on chimes, keyboard (marked with stickers) or any other instrument that can easily play a scale. At this point you could start to join in with chords on piano or guitar… C – C – G – C.

7. Get everyone in the glass to have a shot playing in this pairing, for a few minutes each.   If possible get each pupil to try playing both the repeated part and the improvised part. . If there are members of the class with complex needs, they may be require a lot of support to play the pattern – in this case you can take everything very slowly, not worrying about pulse, and just aiming to get the right colours to sound in the right order. Pupils with complex needs can also play the improvised part on the second Skoog, while another pupil plays the repeated part.

8. If there is time, or if you want to expand this stage over several lessons, you can try the same activity but with different patterns. For example…

[chords C – Am – Dm – G –]

or

[chords C – Dm – Em – Dm –]

The class could also make up their own patterns. This would be a precursor to the composing activity in Stage 5.

9. For the second half of the stage, the members of the class are going to learn how to play chords on the Skoog. If the pupils will not understand what a chord is, then explain it as notes/colours together.

To set up you Skoog to play chords…

1. In the top left corner, click where says 'Mono' to change to 'Poly'. This means that the Skoog can play more than one note at the same time.

2. On the Notes tab, manually set the scale to

   F4   A4   G4   E4   C4

3. Set the instrument sound to Violin.

4. Play with the positioned Skoog diagonally in front of the player (as in the 'Suggested Playing Position' above).

5. Use the right hand to squeeze the GREEN and YELLOW sides together. The ORANGE side will also sound by itself, creating the three-note C major chord.

6. Use the left hand to squeeze the RED and BLUE sides together. The ORANGE side will also sound by itself, creating the three-note F major chord.

7. OPTION   move the ORANGE note (C) up one octave to create a higher inversion of both chords.

8. Get each member of the class to practise making the two chords. Hold each chord down for quite a long time e.g. a stead count to 4. Practise moving between the two chords.

9. Now you can get one pupil to improvise on the second Skoog/chimes/keyboard/other scalic instrument, while another accompanies with the two chords on the first Skoog (moving slowly between the chords e.g. one chord per 4 counts). Other members of the class can join in, perhaps playing a 4/4 pulse or simple rhythmic pattern on classroom percussion instruments.

10. Tell the class that in the next stage of the course, they will be making music in lots of different styles… pop, rock, jazz etc.

Stage 4: Improvising in Styles

AIMS   Improvising in different styles; recognising aspects of different styles; listening to others.

1. Tell the class that you are going to be playing music in lots of different styles.

2. The table below shows how you can play in lots of different styles using just the C major pentatonic scale (Skoog default scale).   Find a beat to fit the style from a keyboard or computer loops library. Accompany the different styles on piano or guitar using the chords given (one chord per bar except for blues).

3. Choose an appropriate instrument sound for each style e.g. electric guitar for rock, trombone or vibes for jazz.

4. Give each member of the class a chance to improvise in one or more styles (they may choose if appropriate).

5. Encourage the other members of the class to listen to each other playing. After each person has played you can discuss their performance – what it sounded like, whether it was fast/slow, loud/soft etc.

6. Other members of the class can join in (improvising also) using either a second Skoog with a different instrument sound or on chimes (notes C,D,E,G,A,C') or classroom percussion.

STYLE	KEY	SKOOG SCALE	BEAT SUGGESTIONS	CHORDS
Classic Pop	C	C maj pentatonic	8-Beat, Pop Ballad	C - Am - F - G
Modern Pop	Amin	C maj pentatonic	Clubdance, Hip Hop	Am - F - C – G
Rock	Amin	C maj pentatonic	Heavy Rock, Rock Ballad	Am – F – G - Am
Celtic Folk Maj	C	C maj pentatonic	Folk pop, Folk rock	C - F - C - Bb
Celtic Folk Min	Dmin	C maj pentatonic	Folk pop, Folk rock	Dm - C - Bb - C
Blues	Amix	C maj pentatonic	Blues Band, Country Fast	A7 - D7 - E7 (12-bar blues)
Funky	Amin	C maj pentatonic	Funk, Hip Hop	Am7 - D7
Swing Jazz	C	C maj pentatonic	Big Band, Swing	Dm7 - G7 - C - Am7
Cool Jazz	C	C maj pentatonic	Jazz trio, Jazz club	Cmaj7 - Am7
Jazz Waltz	C	C maj pentatonic	Jazz Waltz	C6 - Am7 - Dm7 - G7
Classical Waltz	C	C maj pentatonic	Waltz, Vienese Waltz, Musette	C - C - G - G7

Stage 5: Composing and Conducting

AIMS   Practising playing together in harmony; composing a short piece; developing conducting/following skills.

You will need: the coloured circles from Stage 2, a baton/drum stick for conducting.

1. Set the Skoog to a diatonic scale e.g.

C	D	E	F	G

The bowed string sounds will sound nice for this activity.

2. If you have a second Skoog, set the notes to be a diatonic third higher than the notes on the first Skoog e.g.

E	F	G	A	D

If you don't have another Skoog, find these notes on chime bars or a keyboard and put corresponding coloured stickers on

3. Get two members of the class to play the two instruments. Ask them to play the reds together – it will sound like a pleasant chord of C and E. Try the other colours to hear the all the different note combinations you have.

4. Stick any four of the coloured circles to the board. Get two other members of the class to come to the instruments. Explain that you are the conductor and that you will use your baton/stick to point to the colours that they will play together. Try this out with all the pupils in the class.

ONE FINAL STAGE...

1. Arrange a performance so your pupils can show off their new Skoog skills!

For more information

You can find comprehensive information about procedures and concepts in the Skoogmusic User Guide. To access the Skoogmusic User Guide, choose Help menu > User Guide...

To access Skoog related resources on the web, visit
http://www.skoogmusic.com/resources