

# Extra hints and tips for using Groovy

These brief hints will help you make the most out of Groovy, whether you're using Groovy Shapes, Jungle or City.

## Explore Mode tips

- When you're in **Explore**, don't forget to activate the **Teacher Preferences window** by pressing CONTROL+SHIFT+T. In this window, check the box at the top right that says "Manual Explore navigation". That way, you'll see the contents of *all* the music lessons whenever you click on **Explore**.
- If you want to advance manually through any music lesson inside **Explore** (and not have to take all the steps!), CONTROL+SHIFT+click on the alphabetic letters at the bottom right of each lesson screen.

The lesson will advance to that step. You can also use this feature to retrace your steps or go back to the beginning of the topic!



## Hints for working with Songs

- You can always start a new song and specify the musical material. First, click the **Songs** button at the bottom left of the Create Playspace. Three buttons appear:



**Open Song**



**Save Song**



**New Song**

Now hold down ALT (OPTION on Mac) while clicking the **New** button. This opens the **New song settings** window, where you get to choose the musical material, key, time signature and can expand or reduce the number of shapes kids can work with in their songs.

## Adding new shapes to the Groovy library

Follow these steps in any Groovy program if you'd like to create new shapes which can be used in future songs by any of your kids:

- a)** Create a new song, making sure you set the key, meter and scale you wish to use by holding down ALT (OPTION on Mac) as you click the **New song button**.
- b)** Make your own custom shapes by using the **New shapes button** (top right of the Create Playspace) and adding notes. Note: you can also use this feature in Groovy Jungle and City to play your own shape into Groovy from a MIDI keyboard!
- c)** Add the new shapes you just created or edited to the library. Hold down ALT+SHIFT (OPTION+SHIFT on Mac) and drag them one at a time into the libraries at the top of the screen (Rhythms, Melodies, Bass lines, Arpeggios and Chords).
- d)** Save the song on your computer's hard drive somewhere you can find it later (i.e. not the desktop) if you wish to use this as a template.

## Use a custom song as a template

You can use a song and/or its customized library as a starting point for all subsequent songs in Groovy by doing the following:

- a)** Create another new song, by clicking the **Songs button**, and holding down ALT (OPTION on Mac) while clicking the **New Song button**.
- b)** Check the box that says "Use Groovy Song as Template" and select the song you just made with the custom library from the browser window that appears.

For the current user, Groovy will now use the custom library from the song you just selected every time a new song is made.

Using templates this way, you could create some extra shapes (such as famous tunes, nursery rhymes, chords, drum tracks – whatever you like), and have all the children in your class use these new shapes as a starting point to create a new song.

## MIDI Files

### Saving a Groovy song as a MIDI file

When you've finished your song, hold down ALT (OPTION on Mac) and click the **Save button** to export a MIDI file. Note that just clicking on the button saves it as a Groovy file.



MIDI files are highly useful because they can be exported to any other music software (like Sibelius), and kids can also play with MIDI files on any computer.

You can find MIDI files of almost every piece of music ever composed on the internet. Try websites like [www.prs.net](http://www.prs.net) to see how many files you can discover.

### Opening a MIDI file in Groovy

**a)** Download the MIDI files you would like to use in Groovy and store them on your computer's hard drive. The files should have an extension of .mid.

**b)** Go to **Create** mode.

**c)** Click the **Songs button**, and hold down ALT (OPTION on Mac) while clicking the **Open button**.



**d)** Locate the MIDI file on your computer. When you open it, Groovy will try and lay out your MIDI file, but bear in mind that it might not look as you'd expect. Very often you will see a lot of shapes in the very first bar followed by nothing else - the long tracks in the MIDI file need to be split into segments and marked up so that Groovy knows which shapes ready to use in each bar. You can use the **Groovy Music Markup plugin** in Sibelius to do this: see right.



### Sibelius Groovy Music Markup plugin

To make your MIDI files appear with all the correct shapes when you open them in Groovy, follow these steps:

**a)** Open the MIDI file in Sibelius, and make sure it looks good. Remove any unwanted music that you don't need to be sent to Groovy later.

**b)** Inside Sibelius, select the staff or staves you want to get into Groovy, and go to Plug-ins>Other>Groovy Music Markup. This runs a special utility that allows you to label each bar of music so it will open using the correct shapes in Groovy. Follow the steps in the plug-in.

**c)** It is a good idea to select all the rhythmic music first and mark that up, then all the melodies, bass lines, chords and arpeggios, and so on. You might choose to "chop up" some part of the music, such as rhythms, into small segments, making them easier to work with in Groovy.

**d)** When you have finished marking the music up using the plug-in, export the MIDI file out of Sibelius. (File>Export>MIDI file)

**e)** Open the file in Groovy. Now all the bars you marked up in Sibelius will open with the correct shapes! You can do this for any version of Groovy.

Bear in mind that you can find thousands of MIDI files on the internet (like Beethoven's Fifth Symphony), open them in Sibelius first, mark them up and then open them in Groovy! Your kids can then re-compose music using shapes created by famous composers!

### Sibelius is linked with Groovy Music

All the existing shapes in the 3 Groovy programs are already inside Sibelius version 5, in the Ideas window!