

What you ultimately learn when transcribing your instrument is timbre recognition. You will eventually be able to tell the note your instrument is playing by the note's timbre. This will enable you to transcribe faster. As you build a repertoire of patterns, both melodic and harmonic, you will start to recognize these patterns in solos and songs. This allows you to eliminate the necessity of playing to find pitches. The more you transcribe, the better your ability becomes.

Why is this ability so important? It enables you to learn by ear — literally on the stage. For instance, if you play gigs with popular bands, you'll find that they often have little to no music written down. It is, therefore, imperative that you are able to learn melodic and harmonic patterns on stage and in the moment. Another benefit of transcribing is the ability to hear another performer's solo and immediately pick out a lick that you like. In jazz history, a practice evolved between players where, at the beginning of a solo, a player would quote the last lick of the previous soloist. Ear training and transcribing are at the heart of this practice.

I believe that the importance of these skills cannot be overstated. All musicians should develop transcribing skills. Through determination and repetition, it is possible to set and achieve this valuable goal. In transcribing, there should be no such thing as "I can't."