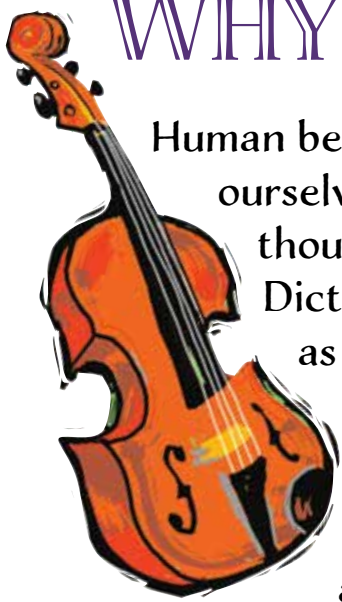


WHY JAM?



Human beings have entertained ourselves with music and songs for thousands of years. The Urban Dictionary defines a music jam as “Two or more musicians making music together, but not an official band.”

Though many people can play an instrument or like to sing, they often choose not to, out of fear that they are not “good enough” to perform in front of others.

Jamming is a fun, free and entertaining activity that can be done anywhere!

The purpose of this pamphlet is to spread the joy of jamming to a wider audience with the hope that these tips and words of encouragement will inspire more people to dust off their instruments and join with their friends in making music.

— KIM ALEXANDER, JAMVANGELIST

This pamphlet is dedicated to Pete & Toshi Seeger and to my parents, Richard & Ann Alexander.



LEARN TO JAM!



Making Music with Friends

ABOUT THIS PAMPHLET: I wrote a letter to Pete Seeger in August 2013 asking for his advice about how to spread the message of making music to more people, and included a printout of my “20 Jam Tips” for making music with friends. To my astonishment, the day after his passing, Pete Seeger’s response came back. His letter was written in the margins of mine. Here’s what he wrote:

Dear Kim – I’ve read this article several times. I think your article on jamming is wonderful and should be printed... and issued as a lovely pamphlet, on good paper, with good drawings on the cover. But I’m now 94 and can’t help much. You stay well, keep on.

94-year-old Pete Seeger

You can see the entire story at kimalex.blogspot.com. Thank you to Sue Webb, Anthony Montanino, and my friends and family for your help and encouragement to make Pete Seeger’s suggestion a reality. — KIM ALEXANDER



FINDING A MUSIC JAM

♪ Search the calendars of local music venues and newspapers for regularly-scheduled jams.

♪ Visit Meetup.com to find local musicians who you can play with at home or out of town.

♪ Ask around at local music stores and check bulletin boards at community spots.

♪ Attend a music festival and pick up flyers for other area music festivals.

♪ Check Craigslist or Google your city name + “jam”.

ORGANIZING A MUSIC JAM

♪ Identify a few friends who would like to play music on a regular basis.

♪ Pick a regularly scheduled night when everyone can get together, such as the third Thursday of every month, or every other week – however often you choose.

♪ One person maintains an email list with everyone’s addresses to post and share information about upcoming jams.

♪ Find a place to hold your jam – it can be in participants’ living

rooms, a park, or a commercial venue such as a bar, coffee shop or art gallery (if you do, people may show up and want to join, so be prepared for the unexpected when you have a jam in a public venue).

♪ Have plenty of chairs (preferably with backs and no arms), drinking water, snacks and good lighting. Set up your chairs so people will sit close enough to hear each other but leave room for an exit path from the circle.

THINGS TO BRING TO A MUSIC JAM



♪ Your instrument(s). Having an extra instrument is great for surprise guests who come without their own, or if you break a string. Small instruments (such as shakers and tambourines) are great to pass out to onlookers who want to join in.

♪ Your own chair – have a lightweight, portable chair with no arms, a comfortable seat and back support.

♪ Beverages – Cold drinks for hot days, warm drinks for cold nights. Stay hydrated!

♪ Snacks – easily sharable snacks like nuts, cookies, crackers and dried fruit are always appreciated!

♪ A capo, tuner, nail file, booklight or headlamp and picks.

♪ Your songbook and extra song-sheets for songs you want to play.

♪ A music stand.

♪ Fingerless gloves, hat and warm clothes for cold weather outdoor jams, sunscreen, shade, bug spray and hat for warm weather.



JAM WORDS

JAMTACULAR: A spectacular moment in a jam.

JAMTASTIC: A fantastic moment in a jam.

JAMIQUETTE: Jam etiquette; essential rules of jamming that help move the jam along and keep participants happy.

JAMBASSADOR: Someone who extends invitations to others to participate in a jam.

JAMVANGELIST: Someone who promotes jamming.

JAMBOOZLE: Pretending to know a song and fake-playing along.

JAMPOSSIBLE: Countering the notion that a song is too difficult for the group at hand.

JAMPRESSIVE: When someone pulls off an especially difficult instrumental or vocal part of a song during a jam.

JAMSPIRED: The joy one experiences when jamming with others.

JAMBUSTER: A song that is difficult to play in a group because it has lots of chords or an oddity such as changing tempo in the middle. A person can also be a jambuster if he/she insists on playing songs or

instruments that don’t work for the jam at hand.

JAMBITION: Suggesting a song that is challenging but the talent in the circle may be able to pull off.

JAMBIDEXTROUS: Being able to adapt to different instruments and jam styles.

JAMBER ALERT: Important notice, by email, text or other means, that a jam is happening.

JAMPATIBLE: When peoples’ instruments and styles work together.

JAMAZON: Someone who is an excellent jammer, knows lots of songs and can lead them.

JAMATHON: Long-running jam.

JAM JONG IL: Someone who tries to control a jam, usually by repeatedly suggesting or starting songs and not giving others a turn.

JAMDURANCE: The ability to play songs until the wee hours.

JAMBUNCTIOUS: Music getting a little out of control.

PAJAMMIN’: Waking up and playing music in your pajamas with friends.

JAM GEM: A great jam song.

JAMMING OR THE

20 TIPS FOR PARTICIPATING IN A MUSIC JAM

want to play them. When it comes time to call them to play, call their name or instrument, or just make eye contact and nod your head or point your finger at them.

Get quiet for the instrumentals. The act of calling out an instrumentalist can be very subtle which is why it's important for all players to pay attention and notice when an instrumental is underway. In an acoustic jam, especially big ones, it can be hard to hear the instrumentalists, so to amplify these players other players will "get quiet" on their instruments.

Watch for the end. It's up to the songleader to decide when a song ends, and he/she will let you know the song is wrapping up by sticking a foot out or calling out "Repeat that last line!" Songleaders may also suggest an "a capella" moment in a song when all instruments are silent. Be sure to watch for those too!

If you are leading a song, play it all the way through. If you forget the words, repeat a verse you already sang, whistle, sing "meow meow" or invite an instrumental or improvise in some other way. You can also bring a song to a premature end and skip verses if it's really not working. If you start out in the wrong key, change it at the beginning.

Avoid using a capo, it makes you hard to follow. If you must use a capo, identify someone else in the group who knows the chords without using one who other players can watch.

You don't have to play every song. If you're having trouble with a song, don't play the wrong chords. Use your instrument instead to keep the beat, or sing along, or sit it out, tune, refresh your drink, take a break.

Ideally, jam songs are three-chord or four-chord songs. Five chords is about the maximum. Don't select songs with too many chords or unusual chords that few people know (unless you have song sheets or several people know the song). Such songs are affectionately known as "jambusters."

Don't record or take pictures without permission. Jamming is not a performance, it's an interactive experience that can be deeply personal and emotional. Taking pictures or recording jammers can be distracting and change the nature of the jam if players feel they must perform for the camera. Many jammers are shy and inexperienced, and often feel they are not "good enough" to play in front of others, so taking pictures or recording is also discouraged for this reason.

If you are sitting in the circle, you are in the jam. If you want to chat with someone, smoke, text or talk on the phone, respect other players and move out of the circle.

1 Always tune. Spend \$20 to get a good electronic tuner to clip on your instrument and use frequently.

2 Identify a few songs you want to play and learn them. Find the chords and lyrics online (Chordie.com is a great resource) and create song sheets. Find YouTube videos of people playing those songs and play along. Memorize the words and chords so you can play them without song sheets.

3 Make a binder of your songs and start building your repertoire. Bring your binder with you to jams. Keep your songs in roughly alphabetical order so you can find them quickly. Plastic sleeves make it easier to shuffle songs around and keep song sheets weatherproof. Some folks use an iPad to store and access song sheets.

4 Many songs played in jams are made up of three chords and usually begin on the chord of the key the song is in. Learn chord sets, the "1-4-5" rule, and practice chord changes, and you will be able to play 90 percent of the songs played in most jams. If you play guitar, learn "cheater" bar chords (playing only the bottom four strings) to be able to transition more quickly between chords. Chord sets: A/D/E, C/F/G, D/G/A, E/A/B, F/Bb/C, G/C/D. A major chord works in place of a 7th chord almost always (i.e. G/G7, C/C7 etc.)

5 If you play guitar and don't know the chords to a song being played, watch the hands of someone who does. If you play another instrument, learn to recognize guitar chords.

6 Let the songleader lead. Even if the song sheet in front of you has different words, let the songleader lead it as he/she wishes, with instrumental breaks, changes in lyrics, etc.

7 Wait your turn. Jamming is a "small d" democratic pastime. Generally everyone sits in a circle and each person takes a turn to suggest a song. In some cases feel free to call out a song when there is a lull. The idea is to avoid monopolizing song suggestions.

8 When it's your turn, it's your choice. Be ready to pick a song when it's your turn. You can lead the song, or suggest a song someone else can lead that you want to hear or play along with.

9 Play appropriate to the jam. Suggest songs that are in the style the jam group is playing (country, 70's rock, bluegrass etc.) and play appropriate instruments (i.e. don't bring electric guitars to an acoustic jam).

10 Say the name of the song, the key and the chords, and demonstrate the "A" and "B" parts before you actually start playing it.

11 Songleading is hard and requires multitasking: singing, playing, keeping the tempo steady, and watching for people who want to do instrumentals. If you are leading a song, take breaks for instrumentals if you have people who

