

ETIQUETTE & JAMMING TIPS

We don't have lot of hard, fast rules. Just please observe Jam Etiquette in general. It's largely just common sense and courtesy.

1. PAY ATTENTION! Remain aware of what everyone else is doing. All the tips below mean nothing if you don't observe this one closely.

2. Don't sing verses along with the primary lead singer.

Unless specifically requested, hold your singing down to joining in vocally on choruses.

Bluegrass songs are typically done exactly that way, and at a jam, it also gets around the problem of song lyrics that can differ greatly due to the age of the songs, etc.

3. Control your dynamics. This is one of the most critical things to observe.

When someone's singing or playing a break, back off your volume, so you don't drown them out.

4. Pay Attention to who's about to solo

Don't deliberately play a break at the same time someone else is soloing. Lead instrument players may want to pre-arrange who will do solos when, or the primary vocalist/instrumentalist may direct it on the fly, by calling out instrument or player names. The best way, if possible is to simply keep good eye-contact and nod heads or otherwise signal who's going to start the next break.

Since this is an open jam, rather than a rehearsed show, double/triple starts WILL happen accidentally. Resign yourself to it, and enjoy it as a normal part of spontaniety of an Open Jam.

If two (or more) lead instruments should start up breaks at once, just pare it down to a single one. Find a way to drop out quickly but gracefully (if possible) and take the break when it comes around again.

There again, you must be paying close attention to things so you can spot when to NOT take break, or spot when more than one person takes off at once.

During someone else's breaks or vocals;

Banjoes & Dobros should pick softly or vamp (softly)

Mandolins should chop quietly, maybe even with some palm-muting, or play accents and soft tremolos.

Rhythm Guitar players should normally use some palm-muting on the strings, to give a percussive chop, rather than blaring out strums.

Lead Guitar players, crosspick, or do whatever else you do, and be a little mindful of your volume. Excess volume isn't normally a problem for lead guitar unless the player starts strumming instead of picking or crosspicking.

Fiddles should do single-note chops, or pizzicato, or be otherwise subdued. Someone else is handling the melody.

Bass should usually play a little softer. Because of the low frequencies involved, bass volume also isn't often a problem, though reduced volume may be necessary, depending on who is singing or soloing.

If the "star" of the moment wants you to sit out on something they'll ask you to do so. Not every instrument or playing-style is appropriate to what someone's trying to do at the moment.

So please don't be offended if you're asked to sit out on a piece, AND don't be afraid to sit in. If you want to sing a song, or do an instrumental, you just say so!