



FAMI Jam Etiquette



WHAT IS A JAM AND WHAT IS JAM ETIQUETTE?

At a jam, like-minded musicians gather together to play. Jam Etiquette is a way to interact within a jam session so that everyone can enjoy themselves.

FIND A JAM THAT SUITS YOU

Be sensitive to whether the level of playing and style of music is suitable for you.

Etiquette can change slightly depending on the style of music. For example, in bluegrass jams you generally play behind the vocalist and wait for a solo break whereas in some old-timey and celtic jams, it is common for several players to play the melody in unison.

So, be aware of the type of jam you are at. If in doubt, watch a while before playing.

FOLLOW THE LEADER

At facilitated jams the facilitator ensures that everyone gets a chance to lead a tune and / or take a solo (also called a “break”). At open or non-facilitated jams, this job is shared and you work around the circle in an orderly fashion so everyone gets their turn to lead.

SO YOU'RE READY TO PLAY?

Think of good music as being like a conversation. You need to listen first and figure out how to contribute positively and constructively. Some simple rules:

- Tune your instrument.
- Play only at a volume where you can hear the vocalist(s) and the soloist(s).
- Focus on contributing to the song and the experience rather than on playing fast or loud.
- Depending on the jam, it is usually okay to fill in between phrases as long as it is done tastefully. Try not to “noodle” or practice within the jam circle or between songs.

LEADING A SONG

When it's your turn to lead a song, announce the song name, the key (or capo position), and any unusual aspects of the song (rhythmic or key changes etc). Try to pick a song that fits into the jam and is not so obscure or so difficult that you end up playing all by yourself.

If you don't want to lead a song, you can pass. There is no requirement to lead a song.

Pick a rhythm and stick to it.

Be sure to call solos and include everyone who is jamming.

When you lead a song, you also end it.

Have Fun! Be kind, considerate, and encouraging to your fellow musicians.

Adapted from the following sources:

- <http://www.victoriabluegrass.ca/jam.htm> (Victoria Bluegrass Association)
- <http://www.s-w-b-a.com/pickerscorner/etiquette.htm>
- <http://www.geocities.com/kazoofolklife/jams.html>