

Guidelines for Jam Leaders Rev 1 12/10/2019

Leading a jam can be such a fun experience, but also a bit scary, too. So, here are a few hints to make your leading experience a good one:

1. Jams are inclusive, that is, everyone is invited to join in regardless of singing or playing ability. As the jam leader, make sure that all feel welcomed.
2. You do not have to be a good singer or uke player in order to be a great leader. Jam leaders are not performers, but facilitators who get the whole group singing, playing and having fun together.
3. Before you start a song, **briefly** go over any “weird” or unfamiliar chords with the group, as well as any tricky parts during the song. If not explicitly noted on the chart, describe how you are going to end your song for example with a tag, or with a ritard or abruptly like we do with Wagon Wheel. If your song is unusual and you know something about it, you might want to give them some of the background for the song or its history. **Please make this short because we all like singing and playing better than talking.**
4. Before you start strumming, sing the song in your head to establish the tempo you want to use. Also, hum the starting note, either out loud or to yourself. (Nothing is worse than to start singing on the wrong note; I know this from many firsthand experiences.) When you start your song, establish the rhythm with your strum and get everyone strumming with you. If there is a bass player, make sure that he/she is with you, too. You can talk while you are doing this, for example “I am rocking back and forth from the G to the C chord”. Or, “I am just strumming on the C chord”, etc. Make sure that you are looking at them and they are looking at you because they will need some kind of a sign that you plan to begin singing. For example, you can count them in (1, 2, 1234) or you can simply raise the head of your uke and then lower it to start.
5. If not explicitly noted on the chart, review with the group the order of the song as you want to play it. For example: “We will play each verse in order with the chorus in between or we will play verse 1 and 2 and then the chorus or we will play all the way through then repeat from the top.” There are lots of variations for what you might want to do, but the group needs to know where you want to go.
6. When you end your song, make sure that you are looking at the group and they are looking at you. If they are not, you can say, “eyes up” or “get ready”. If they are all looking at you, they should be able to follow what you are doing. You can say, “tag it” for the last line and even “tag it again” and they will follow your lead. Or, you can raise the head of your uke and then lower it to mark the end.
7. Have some fun with your songs and practice how you want to start and end them. It is a real hoot when the whole group follows your lead, no matter what you do.
8. And, DON'T STRESS OUT! Jam leading is fun!

Happy Ukin'
Trudy