

There are only two reasons to come to a jam session – to *make music* and to *have fun doing it*.

Jam Sessions are great fun, and music is a social activity (team sport). Jams are why we learn to play an instrument and/or sing. It is a lot more fun to get together with a few friends around a campfire than it is to sit in your living room playing alone.

Tune your instrument before the jam starts or before you join the circle. Clip-on tuners that sense vibration work best in noisy group settings, and are not very expensive. Ask to borrow a tuner if needed.

- Join or leave the circle on a break between songs.
- Be mindful of the volume of your instrument relative to whoever is singing or playing. You don't want to drown out the other instruments.
- If you do not know all the chords it is OK to strum with the Zen chord (strings muted).
- You will be asked to choose a song. You can pass, but, be bold! Avoid jamnesia: Write several tunes you like and know well on a 3X5 card and put it in your uke bag.
- Lead the song you choose. If you are a beginner you will be assisted to start songs the first few times, as needed.

The BUG group has a list of songs “The Nifty Fifty” (see the Music tab) which we play from for the majority of the session. “Off list” songs come in the last half hour.

Our simplified song list makes it easy. Other jams provide greater challenges. There are more tips to improve your experience on the [Intermediate Page](#), [Beyond BUG Jams button](#) on this website.

Jam session tricks for beginners

Let's say you are a complete beginner with maybe four basic chords shakily at your disposal. Hang back and watch for a while, and get the feel of the jam first. Most jam sessions are quite open and will welcome everyone, including beginners (and we were ALL there at one time).

If you don't know a chord or get lost, pause until the song moves on to something you do know. We all get confused sometimes, and it's OK to sit one out, rather than mess up the group. If all you know is a D chord, wait for it to come, strum along like mad, then drop out again once they move on to another chord. If your chord changes are not quite fast enough to keep up, try deliberately playing every other chord, to give yourself more time.

It is also OK to quietly ask the person next to you for clues, like what chords to expect, any tricky chords, etc. Try to find someone who knows the song, and make sure you can see their hand well enough to identify chord shapes. If nothing else, you can see when the chords change, if not exactly what chord they are using.