

Your Jamming Toolbox

From Erin Rogers, February 3rd, 2007

There are many types of *jams*... blackberry *jam*, strawberry *jam*, instrument *jams*! You are probably familiar with dulcimer *jams*, but find yourself in *jam* if you venture outside the safety of dulcimer festivals or clubs. My goal is to give you the tools you need to find sweet success in any kind of *jam* (well at least the musical ones).

Tool #1: Prepare in advance

- Learn chords. Be able to play in multiple keys.
- Know standard chord progressions.
- Learn basic guitar chord shapes.
- Tape-record yourself and play along or practice with a metronome.
- Make a list of tunes you are comfortable leading.

Tool #2: Observe

- Does everyone play lead together or do people take breaks?
- Is there a jam leader or do they just pass things around the circle?
- What style of music are they playing?
- The best spot to sit in a jam is to the right of the jam leader.

Tool #3: Jump In

- Ask if you can join the jam.
- Make sure you are in tune before you start playing.
- Start on the outside of the circle and work your way into the center.
- LISTEN!! LISTEN!! LISTEN!!

Tool #4: Ask Questions

- What key are you in?
- Are there any unusual chords?

Tool #5: When it is your turn to lead

- Name the tune and see if others know it.
- Tell the key and any unusual chords.
- Be prepared to tell the chord progression.
- Follow the format of the jam.

Tool #6: Use every opportunity to learn something new

- Jam with better players than you and watch what they do.
- Take breaks, even if you are not completely sure of yourself.

Tool #7: Enjoy!

- Have fun, no matter what.
- If you mess up, it's okay... keep playing.

*If all else fails, you can always pull the "Oh no! I broke a string!" line! ☺