

The Ten Commandments of Jamming

(original source unknown)

I. Thou **shalt not** ever forsake the beat.

II. Thou **shalt** arrange thyself in a small circle so that thou mayest hear and see the other musicians. Thou shalt listen with thine ears to the songs and attempt to play in accord with the group; also, open thine eyes betimes to look about thee, lest there be some visual sign someone is endeavoring to send thee. Thou shalt play softly when someone lifteth his voice in song, when playing harmony, and when thou knowest not what thou doest.

III. Thou **shalt** play in tune. Tune thine instrument well, and tune it often with thine electric tuner, lest the sounds emanating from thine instrument be unclean.

IV. Thou **shalt** commence and cease playing each tune together as one, so that the noise ye make be a joyful noise, and is not an abomination. Whensoever a musician sticketh forth his foot as though he were afflicted with a cramp in the fatted calf, thou must complete the rest of that verse, and then cease.

V. Thou **shalt** stick out thine own foot or else lift up thy voice crying "This is it!" or "Last time!" if thou hast been the one to begin the song, and it has been played sufficient times over. If the one who began a tune endeth it not by one of these signs, then the tune will just go on and on, like the Old Testament, until the listeners say, "Hark! It all soundeth the same."

VI. Thou **shalt** concentrate and thou shalt not confound the music by mixing up the A part and the B part. Most songs, but not all, proceed according to the ancient law "AABB". But if thou sinneth in this regard, or make any mistake that is unclean, thou may atone not by ceasing to play -- but by reentering the tune in the proper place and playing on.

VII. Thou **shalt** be ever mindful of the key the banjo or accordion is tuned in, and play many tunes in that key. For the banjo is but a lowly instrument, which must needs be retuned each time there is a key change, and the accordion may not be tuned at all except by an expert.

VIII. Thou **shalt not** speed up or slow down accidentally when playing a tune, for it is an abomination. (see commandment I)

IX. Thou **shalt not**, by thine own self, commence noodling-off on a tune the other

musicians know not, unless asked or unless thou art teaching that tune, for it is an abomination, and the other musicians will not hold thee guiltless, and shall take thee off their computer lists, yea, even unto the third and the fourth generation.

Chapter 3, vs 17-18 Book of khanduikus:

X. Thou **shalt not** come to the jam session to impress others with thine amazing talents for this also is an abomination. The song shalt be the center around which all musicians shall rotate, not vice-versa. "Attempts to make thine own star shine shall lead thee into darkness."

Addendum on Bodhrans

On the surface, the bodhran appears to be deceptively simple to play. However, like all other instruments the bodhran is not a simple instrument to play well, or to master. Not understanding this is the source of many sessions discouraging would-be bodhran players. As do the melodic instrument musicians, the bodhran player should understand the basic structure of the music (see Commandment VI), and preferably have a reasonable (or better) knowledge of the actual tunes. Particularly for bodhran players, the player should quickly assess the suitability of any tune to be accompanied by a bodhran and, when suitable, **listen** and adjust ones playing volume to best **blend** with the session, not to overpower it. Not listening carefully, not blending, and not adjusting with the live dynamic of the other musicians creates an underlying stress in the session, and is to be avoided if a good time is to be had by all.

A quote on bodhrans and session etiquette from "[A Pocket History of Irish Traditional Music](#)" by [Gearóid O hAllmhuráin](#): "Bodhran players should use discretion when 'sitting in' to sessions. A 'quiet' peripheral role is always appreciated by experienced musicians. If a second bodhran player is present, it is usually a good idea for one player to take a break, rather than having both bodhrans playing together. A similar practice holds for guitars and other harmony instruments" (Used with permission of the Author).



NEW - Here is another set of 'rules' for [session etiquette from a session in Galway](#) (thanks to [Michael](#))