

HOW TO LEAD A SONG with a large ukulele group

- Watch what experienced group jam leaders do – the way they move their body, the way they count the song in, the way they get the attention of the group. We record all our jams and post them on our BUG website, so you can see how I start songs off: [BUG Jam Videos - Bytown Ukulele Group](#)
- You'll also learn lots from watching less experienced folks leading a song.
- Make sure you have the full attention of the room before trying to start the song.
- You have to know the song really, really well, including what you want to do during the instrumentals, etc. You don't want the group to throw you off once they start playing – because that wall of sound facing you can throw you for a loop. If there is a long instrumental in the song, think about that when you're practising the song at home. Often the group can get lost in long instrumentals if there's no plan. You can plan to hum, kazoo, or ask someone to fill in with a harmonica riff, etc. Or you may decide to drop the instrumental. Just be sure to let the group know before you start the song.
- With a large group especially, it's really good to stand when you lead. It's better for your singing, and you can move your body to give visual cues to the group for example, when you're beginning, showing the rhythm, and when you're ending you can do something like lift your ukulele neck up in the air and drop it down (rock star style), or kick your leg up in the air. Your movement can also add excitement and energy to the song!
- Start singing the chorus to yourself in your head and get your foot tapping. The chorus is usually easier to think of, especially under pressure, and it's usually in the chorus that people tend to get in the groove of the song.
- Let people know how you plan to start the song – a count-in is REALLY important, especially if there is a riff or the song starts with pick-up notes. Try to use the count shown on the BUG songsheet – but if you prefer, you can tell them that you're just going to strum on the first chord of the song for a while to get everyone strumming, but then you will still need to give a count and/or say something in time to the beat like “everybody sing now”.

HOW TO LEAD A SONG with a large ukulele group

- If you start the song and within a few lines the tempo doesn't feel good and you can't get the group changed to the tempo you want ('cause let's face it, they far outnumber you – 90 to 1), or if you've started singing in the wrong key, or whatever the issue is – you can and should absolutely stop the song and start over. No worries! Better than continuing and having a rotten experience leading. We're all together to have fun and be supportive so don't hesitate to make the song work for you. Start over if you need to!
- An excellent songsheet is very important in leading a large group in song - strong easy to understand starts and finishes, good chord placement so there are no “stoppers”, understandable instrumentals, etc. A “stopper” is something that causes people to stop playing because they're confused. A poorly placed chord is an example of a stopper, or instrumentals where there are no bar lines or ghost words, just a bunch of chord names.
- A good songsheet will have a count-in, and the leader will use it to let the group know how many beats are in the bar and what that means (for example, 4 beats, 3 beats). I often explain that to the group at the beginning of our jams, and in the songsheets I do up for our group, I always show the beats in the bar at the beginning of the song, i.e., / 1 2 3 4 / or / 1 2 3 / or / 1 2 / 1 2 / so participants know what they're going to hear for a count-in.

REMEMBER TO SMILE, LOOK UP FROM YOUR MUSIC AND OUT TO THE AUDIENCE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN, AND HAVE FUN!