

The “Ten Commandments” of the Jam Session

There are by no means a published set of rules for jazz musicians to follow at jam sessions. However, there seem to be reasonably agreed upon practices that players share from jam to jam across different scenes.

1. Don't “vibe” other musicians
2. Connect with new people
3. Give verbal affirmation
4. Share the bandstand
5. Take appropriate-length solos
6. Trading phrases is good
7. Be patient with less-experienced players
8. Listen intently to more-experienced players
9. Take home a new tune to practice
10. Thank the host/house band/venue

All in all, jam sessions should be an opportunity for musicians to have fun and try out things that they've been practicing. Sometimes it just takes one guy to step up to the plate and try it first, and others will follow.