



# Performing Together

*Learn how to play and perform together as a band and how to listen to each other and communicate on the fly in the heat of the moment!*

## Video Summary

### Who's going to be in your band?

It's important to choose people that you get along with and are comfortable sharing ideas with. It may be tempting to recruit the most highly skilled musicians that you can, but the most important factor should be choosing people that you are good friends with.

Also, consider the music you want to play—if you want to form a heavy metal band, then it won't be much use finding people who don't like that kind of music!

### What are your skills like on your instrument or voice?

One of the best ways to improve your skills on your instrument or voice is to **play with other people**, so don't worry if you don't know how to play or sing lots of different things yet. Your skills and confidence will definitely improve quickly as you start playing in a group but it'll really help if you can play along to a metronome fairly confidently and have a basic understanding of your instrument or voice.

If you've got good bandmates, you'll be able to support each other in getting the best out of everyone's instrument or voice!

### What are you going to start with?

Learning and playing covers with your band is a really great way to get comfortable playing together. Some good starting covers might include the following:

Thinking Out Loud—Ed Sheeran  
Ain't No Sunshine—Bill Withers  
Eight Days A Week—The Beatles  
Route 66—Chuck Berry

It's best to start off simple so that you all get comfortable. After that, you might have a better idea of what music the band want to play and whether you want to start writing together. Alternatively, improvisation on simple ideas can be a fun way to start jamming together!

### Developing listening skills

Being able to listen to what everyone else is playing whilst you are playing your part is a great musical skill. For example, imagine you're the bass player in the band. Can you listen to the guitar chords whilst you play your part? Can you hear the drum pattern that the drummer is playing? Now, thinking in the moment whilst you're playing—how does your part relate to those parts?

It's easy to get so immersed in your own playing that you can forget about how your playing fits in with other people's parts. Giving each other musical space (not always playing over other people) is the best way to develop your sound as a band (and avoid disagreements!) It is also a great way to develop your own musical discipline.

You should be able to recognise when the song changes sections e.g. from verse to chorus. This will help you with your part if you get lost, too!

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## Communication!

One of the most fundamental skills to develop when rehearsing and especially performing is communication with your bandmates. Whilst you may be able to have a conversation whilst rehearsing, it's unlikely that you're going to have that chance when performing live. Non-verbal communication (eye-contact, body language) is going to be your main (if not only) method of communicating with your bandmates when you're playing.

With your bandmates, you can decide on some non-verbal cues that serve different functions.

For example:

Finger clicks: Count-in

Raised eyebrows: End the song

Making a circle with your finger: Repeat the current section

Raise leg slightly: Move onto next section

Decide on who gives these cues and practice them in rehearsal. Also, decide on who is going to start each song—is it the same person each time? Does every song need a count-in?

These are all really good things to practice in rehearsal. Another important thing to remember is that simple eye contact with your band whilst rehearsing and performing can make you all feel connected. If you feel like it, smiling at your bandmates whilst playing shows you are enjoying the performance and puts them and the audience at ease. Not every non-verbal contact has to serve a musical function!

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## What is your stage presence going to be like?

Everything you do on stage will influence the way your audience perceives you and your music – **no pressure!**

Some things to start thinking about might be:

Where will each of you be on stage?

Will you be sitting or standing?

Who is going to be talking to the audience? (This doesn't always have to be one person)

How are you going to enter and exit the stage? Is there an order?

What are you as a band going to wear? Is there a dress-code? Smart, casual, funky?

Of course, every performance is going to be different and some of these might not apply to your situation. The most important point is to make yourself as comfortable and confident as you can. When you're relaxed, you will often perform better and the audience will be more at ease with your performance. Sometimes we need home comforts on stage—there's nothing wrong with wearing your favourite clothes or having hot tea in a secure mug to drink between songs to make you feel relaxed!

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## Got your setlist?

If you can't remember everything you're going to play and in what order, you're going to need a **set list**. Put simply, it's just a list of all the songs you're going to play and the order they come in. You can write it onto a piece of paper or type it into your phone.

It's best to have your setlist in a format that helps you to read it quickly and easily, whether this be in large writing or a certain kind of paper. You might want to write down on where you're going to talk to the audience in-between songs, too. You can even go further and write down who is introducing each song or what instrument starts the song off first!

Think where you'd like your setlist to be on stage. Is it going to be easy to look at from where you are performing?

## How do I start writing with my band?

A good way to start writing with your band is to play around with a musical idea—this could be a set of chords, a rhythm, some lyrics or a melody. You could even take an existing idea from another song and play around with it. Composing should be about experimenting, discovering and having a good time!

There will be a lot of improvising and the process might take a long time. Not everyone is comfortable writing music material on the spot and it can be very difficult, even for the most experienced musicians. Be patient with each other and be aware that some of your bandmates will need differing amounts of time to come up with ideas.

Sometimes it helps for the band to play a section over and over again for a bandmate who needs more time to come up with an idea that fits the song; and sometimes that bandmate might need to work on an idea in their own time by themselves. There isn't just **one** way to write music!

This is where you might need a device to record your ideas onto. Most smartphones have recording apps that you can use to record the ideas that your band come up with in a rehearsal. This allows you all to have a recording to work on in your own time and to play back next rehearsal to remind you all of what you created last time you met up together.

When writing music as a band, it is perfectly fine if somebody doesn't want to contribute their ideas. With that said, it is very important that any ideas that are suggested should be tried out practically by playing. The aim is to collaborate together and not to let one person's ideas always override others. Always honour and respect other's suggestions.

Trying out everyone's suggestions can lead to really interesting musical results that you may not of thought of before! Even if you don't like the idea, someone else might like it and you may have to compromise your preference. This can be difficult to do but if you can, it means the music you make is truly collaborative. Your bandmates should respect that you've compromised and they should be willing to do the same for you so that your ideas are respected.

There may be occasions where there will be a split in opinion that is difficult to settle. It's perfectly normal and happens in any creative collaborative situation. A good tip is to hold a quick vote between band members, taking into account everyone's points and perspectives to come to a conclusion.

Always remember that even if somebody's idea isn't used in one song, it can easily be used in another! Nothing goes to waste!

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## What if something goes wrong in performance...?

Performing in front of people can be really nerve-wracking, and we don't want to think about what could go wrong. There's too many things that could go wrong, some in our control and some not.

Whilst you shouldn't ever worry about it on stage, you should be ready to deal with something unexpected in the heat of the moment! Being prepared will often make you feel more at ease.

We might forget the words we're singing, a guitar string might break, there might be a power cut, somebody in the band might forget their part or go to the chorus a bar early... yikes!

Problems like these **will** happen at some point and it's normal to panic a little when they do. For most instances where there isn't an immediate danger to you or anyone else—**try and stay calm and if you can, keep on performing.**

This will be difficult and may require some more experiences of things going wrong! If you've forgotten the words or the chords, keep listening to the band and don't panic yourself—sometimes we need to ignore what's happening in our head a bit! Try and stay calm and immersed in the music and you'll find your place eventually.

It's important to remember that it is very unlikely that the audience will realise you've made a mistake! Even if you stop singing or playing, staying calm might even make it look like you've chosen to stop as an artistic decision!

If there's a problem with the venue that you're playing in, for example a powercut, stay calm and follow

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## And finally...

**In your own time, find a video of your favourite band performing live.**

Watch carefully and try to identify the following:

1. Are they using any non-verbal communication? (eye-contact, body language)
  2. Are some band members following each other? For example, is the vocalist following the guitarist?
  3. How do they talk to the audience? Is it the same person each time? Is it casual or formal?
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You can also pair this worksheet with the video provided.