

What beginning dulcimer players need to know

These are some of the basic skills we will develop during the beginners' hour of each gathering. There will also be handouts, helpful web sites, and other resources posted on this site and shared at the gatherings.

Your way around your dulcimer:

What the parts are called and where they are.

How to tune it, with and without a fancy gadget.

How to replace a string. Yes, you will eventually break one. Do you want to wait until you can get it to the shop before you can play again? We didn't think so!

Your way around a piece of music/tab:

Pick-ups, repeat signs, time signatures, and other road signs of a tune. This does not require the ability to read music!

Strategies for playing music beyond your ability to read the tab:

Yes, there are some tricks that can keep you playing along, even when you've never seen the music before and everyone is playing much faster than you can read the tab. Some of these are: playing back-up chords, playing the first note of each measure, and learning how to watch another player to capture a tune. We'll show you how.

How to listen

At home, you can bang away as you like, and welcome to it. However, playing music in a group requires the ability to hear each other in order to blend, harmonize, and create music instead of noise. This includes learning to listen to yourself – am I in tune? Keeping rhythm? as well as listening to others – am I playing too loudly? Too softly? Drowning out the lead? Getting lost behind the rest? This is a skill we will put into practice at every gathering.

How to watch

Who is leading the tune? Who's taking a lead? (and what's the difference?) How many times are we going to play this thing anyway? Learn the traditional ways musicians communicate while playing. When we're all on the same page, magic can happen. Be there!