



The 10 + 1 Commandments Of Open Mic Performance By Corey Stewart www.songwritingzen.com

1. Thou shalt be on time

If an open mic starts at say, 8pm then turn up a little earlier to make sure your name is down on the running sheet.

If you're doing something else beforehand and you need to turn up later that's fine, just don't complain if your time to perform is later than you anticipated.

2. Thou shalt make yourself known to the host

If you want to put your name down on the running sheet, don't expect the host to come to you. Go to the host. Make yourself known and make the hosts job a little easier.

3. Thou shalt be prepared before performance

Knowing where you are on the running sheet is very, very important. Nothing holds up an open mic more than performers who tune up their guitars and prepare their music at the very last minute.

A successful open mic is determined by how short the changeover time between performers is.

Here are some other ways that performer changeover times can be minimized:

- Be ready before you go on
- Be close by when your turn comes around
- Know what songs you're doing beforehand

4. Thou shalt not get drunk before performing

I know it can be very nerve racking waiting to go on stage and having a drink to get the dutch courage going is fair enough but, try not to drink too much. You really don't sound good drunk, no matter what you think.

Trust me on this one 😊

5. Thou shalt not overstay ones welcome on stage

Open Mic's are designed to showcase multiple performers **not just you.**

If the requirement is a maximum of three songs, do your three songs but balance that with the fact that there's other performers wanting a go as well.

Keep unnecessary chat to a minimum and don't do the extended versions of "Stairway To Heaven", "American Pie" and your favourite folk tune with 24 verses in it **all in the same sitting.**

As a host I go by this simple equation: **3 x songs + chat = 15 minutes.**

Any longer than that your overstaying your welcome.

Oh, and BTW. When you finished your songs don't ask the audience whether they want to hear more. **That's my job** (time permitting).

6. Thou shalt invite others to play but only up to a point.

In my own experience I've noticed a tactic that some performers use to overtly maximise their time on stage. Invite another guitarist up and *give them extended solos to stretch out the songs.*

Don't do it. I'm onto you 😊

7. Thou shalt adapt ones performance to the open mic.

Some open mics cater for bands however, (in my experience) most open mics operate in venues with limited stage space and because of this, are designed for solos or duo performers only.

If you play in a band and you want to perform at an open mic that operates in this way, do your homework and learn your songs either solo or with one extra person.

So what if the only way you've done your songs in the past is with a band. **Get over it!**

8. Thou shalt obey host at all times 😊

I think this point is self explanatory. If a host cuts the maximum amount of songs from 3 to 2 halfway through the night and you haven't performed as yet, don't be offended. It's no reflection on you. *They're just trying to fit everyone in on a very busy night.*

Always remember that if the night is quiet an extra song or two may be added to a performers slot without notice, and who gets those? The performers who don't complain when times are busy.

9. Thou shalt be encouraging and supportive of other performers.

For some people the possibility of playing in front of an audience at an open mic is much scarier than death itself. It maybe thier first time ever on a stage.

Therefore, it's so important that the environment created at an open mic is a supporting, inclusive, performer-friendly, positive and encouraging one.

The host, sound engineer and venue staff can only do so much in this department. The main responsibility rests with the other performers. Ways in which this optimum open mic environment can maintained are:

- Clap when a song is completed. At least make some acknowledgement.
- Give credit where credit is due.
- If you have nothing nice to say, don't say anything.
- If you really like the performance, say so
- Stay for as long as you can after you've finished your performance.

10. Thou shalt be courteous to open mic and venue staff

Be nice to the host and *you'll get some breaks.* Be nice to the sound engineer and *your sound won't suck.* Be nice to the venue staff and *you'll be served quicker*

End of story!

11. Thou shalt have FUN!

Leave your troubles at the door and have the time of your life. An open mic is not meant to be a competition so go out and **have fun.**