



Playing Level Guides

Will that workshop be OK for me? Will I be able to keep up?

A dulcimer workshop should challenge and stretch the student! However, life can be very difficult for tutors and fellow class members if some students do not possess the skill-set necessary for getting the most from the workshop. You may also not enjoy the workshop yourself if you are at the wrong level.

These **Playing Level Guides** aim to provide some idea of what a tutor might expect you to know before you embark on a workshop.

Hammered Dulcimer	
1. Absolute Beginner HD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Some familiarity with tuning your dulcimer, possibly with help. * Awareness of basic musical terms and rhythms is helpful. * Desire to learn!
2. Beginner/ Advanced Beginner HD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Familiarity with tuning a dulcimer, basic care & maintenance. * Holding and using hammers comfortably, able to hammer using alternating or other pattern, and crossing the bridges to play. * Reasonable knowledge of HD note positions, especially in common keys (G & D). * Ability to play simple scales and one or two simple tunes at a steady, even rhythm, by ear or from music.
3. Advanced Beginner HD	ALL of 2., starting to learn some of 4.
4. Intermediate HD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Good knowledge of all note patterns, including duplicated notes. * Familiarity with common rhythms (4/4, 3/4, 6/8). * Ability/confidence to play in the common keys (G, D, C & relative minors Am, Em, Bm), play a tune in another octave or key and work out efficient hammering patterns. * Understand simple chord structure, ornamentation, arpeggios, harmonies, and dynamics. * Able to play simple melody and harmony lines together. * Able to follow a workshop at a reasonable pace. * Keenness to perfect techniques and become more adventurous!
5. Intermediate/ Advanced HD	ALL of 2. & 4., plus some of 6.
6. Advanced HD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Able to play with a good degree of fluency, understand the HD layout comfortably, find notes as required, keep a fair rhythm and pace during the workshop. * Able to play tunes by ear or from sheet music, over the whole of the instrument, and in a wider range of keys (e.g. A, F, Dm, Gm) * Good knowledge of musical theory as it applies to the HD. * Can play varied repertoire and enjoy exploring musical aspects such as style, phrasing, dynamics, accents, rhythms, harmony, ornamentation & technique, using hand separation as needed. * Able to make a substantial contribution to sessions etc. with other musicians.

Mountain Dulcimer	
1. Absolute Beginner MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Some familiarity with tuning your dulcimer, possibly with help. * Awareness of basic musical terms, and rhythms is helpful. * Desire to learn!
2. Beginner/ Advanced Beginner MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Familiarity with tuning a mountain dulcimer to at least one tuning. * Knowledge of MD tab, and how to play tunes using it. * Basic care and maintenance, making clear and distinct notes and chord shapes, strumming in rhythm. * Ability to play one or two simple tunes at a steady, even rhythm.
3. Advanced Beginner MD	ALL of 2., starting to learn some of 4.
4. Intermediate MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Ability to play in more than one tuning or mode. * Familiarity with basic playing styles, chording, harmony, strumming and rhythm variations, plus capo use. * Able to follow a workshop at a reasonable pace and play with reasonable speed and dexterity, including dynamics. * Keenness to refine playing techniques and become more adventurous!
5. Intermediate/ Advanced MD	ALL of 2. & 4., plus some of 6.
6. Advanced MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Ability to use more challenging chords, different tunings & modes. * Familiarity with various embellishment and ornamentation techniques, e.g. hammer-ons, pull-offs, slides & harmonics. * Knowledge of alternative finger-picking and/or picking styles. * Good knowledge of appropriate musical theory as it applies to the MD. * Able to make a substantial contribution to sessions etc. with other musicians.