

How NOT to Teach a Song

by David Gershon (w/additions from Noam Katz)

Participants get one of the following role-plays to demonstrate a bad teaching method. The group identifies the problem and then offers a solution. The songleader tries again, showing the how the problem is fixed.

You make no (or almost no) eye contact when teaching a song.

Your guitar/instrument is out of tune.

You don't know the chords.

You don't really know the words. You have to read them while you are teaching, or you just make them up.

You are trying to get everyone quiet while you are talking to someone else at the same time.

Call and response teaching that is WAY too long.

Call and response teaching that is WAY too short.

You are trying to teach a long, wordy song with no words for the group to use.

Your voice is too quiet for the room and you don't have a microphone.

You have no idea what a song means. (For example, you are teaching Hinei Mah Tov and you tell them it is a song about how we should all pray to God every day)

You teach a song that is totally inappropriate for the setting. For example, you welcome everyone to a Havdalah service and tell them first we're going to learn a song and you choose to teach "Modeh Ani" (moderate – wrong time of day) or "Shut up and Dance" (extreme)

You teach a song, singing it WAY faster than you should.

You choose a ridiculously HIGH key for a song to teach.

You make it all about YOU. Example... You intro the song, talking way too much about yourself and how you learned the song, what it means to you, etc. You sing it to the group by yourself before even trying to teach it.

You put the group down for not learning the song fast enough.

You emphasize the shtick (hand motions, vocal extras, etc.) OVER how to sing the song itself.

You begin singing *before* playing the first chord, and are completely off key.

You use distracting body language that does NOT help teach the song.