

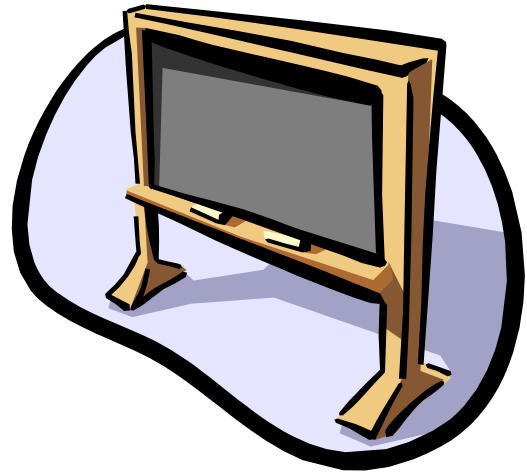
A Songleader's Work Is To...

- Be a Role model and Teacher and Heart-Opener
- Have fun, enthusiastic and positive energy
- Engage the students / campers and staff / congregation
- Bring on the *Kavanah* (heart intention)
- Be Sincere
- Make Meaning
- Help make connections between and to the participants

HOW TO TEACH A SONG IN TEN EASY STEPS*

1. Have the song written out in advance. This may be on a projector, songbook, blackboard, separate sheet, etc. Be sure your spelling is accurate and the writing/type is legible.

Try to include the Hebrew text whenever possible. If you use transliteration, check with a Hebrew-speaker or songleading resource (i.e. *Shireinu*) to make sure the transliteration is accurate.



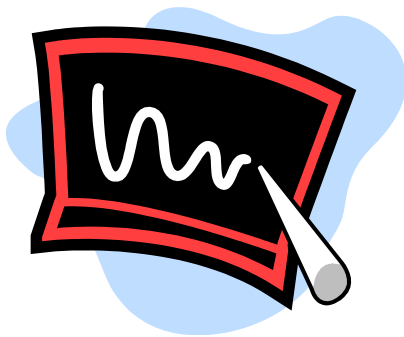
2. Briefly introduce the song by name. (Double check that your name for the song is the real name and not just the first or key words). Also indicate the source of the song, and why you are teaching it. There must be a reason you selected this particular song and why you think it is so special. Communicate that!

3. Sing through the song (or core section of song) once completely alone so that everyone can hear it at least once and know what the intended goal is.

4. If a Hebrew song, translate accurately. Here is another time at which songleaders can be the greatest teachers. Focus not just on the general sense of the song, but look for words in the song that your group is likely to know.

If you're not a Hebrew expert, **don't be afraid to ask for the help—this is one key to being a truly fine songleader.** Double check your Hebrew pronunciation. Once you teach a word or line, people will swear into their old age that their way (i.e. the one you taught them) is correct. If the song is in a language other than Hebrew or English, the need for accurate translation is no less important.

5. Cite the source of the text of the song especially when it is from the Torah or another Jewish text. This is another great teaching opportunity. It isn't necessary to be able to quote the entire work from which the lyric is derived, but context is important and a subtle reminder of identity. The same is true for citing the composers of modern Israeli songs or contemporary Jewish music, from the likes of Debbie Friedman z"l, Jeff Klepper, Dan Nichols, Craig Taubman, et al). This helps create yet another connection to the world of Jewish music.



6. Break the song into short segments (or 'chunks') for teaching. These may be a few words, a melody chain or a verse. It will vary based upon whether or not your group is already familiar with the words, their age and your prior experience.

7. Teach the first segment, which may not necessarily be the first line. You may choose to teach the chorus or another simple line or phrase as a vehicle to get the group singing.

7a. Recite the words first and ask the group to repeat them after you.

7b. Sing the segment and then ask the group to sing it back with you. (RAM – "repeat after me", "Try that!", "Your turn")

7c. Repeat the segment and ask the group to sing it back without your voice (but maintain your accompaniment.)

7d. Teach each segment and connect the previous segments. The number of times you need to repeat lyrics or refresh the melody line for your group will depend on how quickly they are able to grasp the song. If you find that it is taking forever, remember that you don't need to teach the entire song at one time. Every now and then you may need to review a verse for the group by yourself as you are teaching so that they can keep in mind a sense of the musical whole.

7e. Listen carefully to your singers, for what they are not getting. If they are having trouble with the words, repeat them as spoken word. If they are having difficulty with a particular note sequence, review without the guitar. Sometimes the sound of the instrument detracts from clearly understanding a melody line. Make sure your singers learn the song correctly, because once they learn it incorrectly, they are unlikely to ever re-learn the song correctly.

7f. Reinforce and compliment every success. Everyone likes to know that they are doing it right. Your enthusiastic response will encourage your singers to sing with you even more.

8. When you introduce a new song, consider asking those who already know it to let you demonstrate it alone first. Otherwise, new singers may be intimidated, believing that they are the only ones who don't know the song. (Someone might also sing it incorrectly or in a fashion you don't wish to teach at the moment.) Alternatively, you can use knowledgeable singers in the group to help you teach.

9. Teach a song the way it was written. Give the composer and your group the benefit of learning the music as the composer intended it to be. Composers hear groups singing songs with *shtick*—gimmicks, repeats and "customization" of words—and realize that whoever taught the song either didn't care or didn't know. Be very careful that you know how the song was really written and help your participants learn the beauty of the original music. Don't be fooled by gimmicks and don't be trapped into them. "Schtick" has its place, but use it with discretion. NOTE: You may choose to disregard this rule, especially if your group has sung a song in a particular way for many years. Just be mindful of the balance between the composition and local *minhag*.

10. Review the song. As you finish teaching a song, review it and then come back to it near the end of the session or service. If you have the ability to review the song three times in a 24-48 hour period, you've given that much more of an opportunity for the song to successfully enter the group's repertoire.

Teaching is the central core of the songleader's job. If you do it well, with enthusiasm and care, you will have great success.

****When Planning A Song Session think about...**

1) *The Curve/Shape of the Session*

- How does the session flow from beginning to end?
- Pay attention to the tempo as well as the mood of the songs to determine the flow you want to craft.

2) *The Atmosphere of the Group*

- Where are they coming from/ on their way to?
- What kind of mood are they in? Has it been raining all week?
- Are they exhausted from the big canoe trip or the camp plague?
- Are they feeling celebratory?
- Is it the very beginning or the end of the session?

3) *Variety and Technique*

- Are you varying the types of songs that you're singing?
- We've got call and response songs (Hinei Mah Tov), Hebrew (Israeli and/or Jewish), American folk songs, popular contemporary songs, short songs, story songs, hand motions, dance moves, etc. Keep it interesting.

4) *What is the Goal of the Song Session?*

- Teach a song
- Teach a Hebrew word or text
- Create a specific mood

5) *Key and Tempo.*

- Songs that are in the same key, tempo and/or capo setting flow well from one to another.

6) *Physical Layout of the Space / Placement of Words*

- What kind of space will you be singing in?
- Where will you be located in relation to the group?
- What shape or area do you want them to inhabit? (e.g. circle, horse shoe, clump, lines, seated or standing, etc.)
- Does it require electrical amplification of voice or instrument?
- Will lyrics be provided on screen? Songbook? Signs?
- How do you maximize visibility for all participants?

Transitions in Between Songs:

- Leader of the song may hold guitar vertically (Straight Up and Down) for the ENTIRE last chorus or last section of the song until ALL of the other song leaders see this and respond by holding their guitar vertically.
- The Leader of the next song takes this time to switch their capo if necessary and to make their way to the Leader spot in front of the group
- Use Guitar Strumming, Arm Gestures, Call and Response, and/or Rhythmic Clapping to get everyone's attention
- Minimize the amount of lag time between songs. Fill the "dead space" with music or instruction (e.g. call out a page number).
- If there is an interruption or pause, you may require a large physical gesture or loud vocal cue to get everyone back on track.

During the Song Session

- Have a blast!
- Keep checking in with each other, ESPECIALLY in between verses and chorus so that you'll know if the Leader wants to stop, continue, change the song in any way.
- LISTEN to the group singing. Are they getting the melody? The words?
- Take your time to guide when necessary. Remember how many people in the room have never been there and it is your gift to them to help them feel included in the fun.
- Call out the lyrics before they come up to help everyone participate.
- Translate any Hebrew you're using
- Be generous, help them with your eyes, your hands, your whole body
- Don't explain what you're about to do, JUST DO IT!

Plan the unexpected and expect the unplanned. For example, you choose the wrong key, break a string or the sound system goes out, use these as opportunities to celebrate the moment. It is when you are caught off guard and choose to think on your feet that you capture the energy and make the moment. There is nothing bad about things that are wrong. They are just not going the way you had planned. All it takes to make it "right" is a good attitude and knowing the orientation of your group. Be confident to know that you can (and will) make mistakes. (Craig Taubman)

Important Visual and Physical Cues:

- SMIIIIILLE!
- Make eye contact and sing *with* the community
- Hand & Arm Conducting – Be a choir conductor. Let them know when to hold out a long note, when to finish together, etc. Use your whole arms!
- Use “Repeat After Me” Gestures when teaching a song.
- Bounce to the tempo of the song for both the campers as well as the supporting song leaders.

When Leading a Round

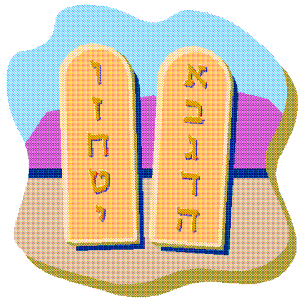
- Position yourselves in front of the section of the group that you’ll be leading during the transition into the song.
- Designate a Lead Point Person who can sing all of the parts and who will direct the supporting songleaders as well as the group.
- Sing through each part first.
- Then break into parts, building (pt 1, then pts 1 + 2, then pts 1 + 2 + 3).

Always In Your Guitar Case

- Guitar picks
- Capo
- Tuner
- Throat Lozenges
- Pen/Pencil
- Tape or Post-its
- Blank paper

A few more things:

- Invite musical participants to join you to sing, play or lead a song w/you
- Remember there’s a lot going on for these kids, their behavior is not generally a reflection of you, so be patient, be generous, make space, and try to find teachable moments
- Learn names quickly
- Give extra support to those who need it
- Act on the values you are teaching
- Give clear instructions
- Make eye contact
- Get off the mic so you can hear them singing
- The connections don’t happen when you’re trying to impress people, they happen when you’re being your best self. Keep ego in check!
- It’s not about the songs you choose, it’s about why you’re doing them and what you do with them. If YOU love the experience, they will too!



10 COMMANDMENTS FOR SONGLEADERS:

BY CANTOR JEFF KLEPPER

1. Know your songs inside out. If they are not in English, know what they mean.
2. Select only songs which are appropriate for the time, place, and ability (age) of the group.
3. Plan the mood(s) you will set at each session.
4. Carefully choose the best key and tempo for each song in each situation.
5. Create the proper physical space *before* you begin to sing or teach.
6. Choose the most efficient way to display the words. (Avoid teaching directly from printed music.)
7. Establish a two-way communication with the group, using praise and humor when appropriate.
8. Let the group (not you) be the star, and respect their beloved melodies.
9. Develop partnerships with your colleagues: fellow songleaders, counselors, advisors, staff, teachers, rabbis, cantors, educators, pianists, organists, etc.
10. **BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF MUSIC!**

The 10 Commandments of Songleading **Dan Nichols and Rosalie Bost**

1. THOU SHALT KNOW YOUR TEXT (Understand not only the meaning of the words but the context in which they appear in sources...can you give a d'var about any song?)
2. THOU SHALT PLAN WITH INTENTION (Give the mood of the session an ARC, plan it out. By the end of a serious song session (more than 15 minutes) the group should be totally transported)
3. THOU SHALT USE YOUR STAFF AS YOUR TEAM (All staff must be participating with intense fervor if they expect others to do the same. Let the CIT's all the way up to the director know that schmoozing in the back of the room is unacceptable)
4. THOU SHALT PLAN KEY AND TEMPO (Carefully choose best key and tempo for each song in each situation that works for the group)
5. THOU SHALT KNOW YOUR PHYSICAL SPACE (Prepare for the physical space that you're given *before* you begin to sing or teach, can it be changed, adjusted, worked with)
6. THOU SHALT LISTEN. INTENTLY. (Establish a 2-way communication with the group, listen to the group, be able to be engaged with THEM by knowing them before hand, and by being able to be connected – take the work and group seriously but not yourself too seriously)
7. THOU SHALT NOT FILL THE ROOM WITH YOUR EGO (Let the group (not you) be the star)
8. THOU SHALT PRACTICE ALL TRANSITIONS COMPLETELY (Most musical and time eating mistakes are made during transitions for one song to the next or from one part of the worship service to the next. Lots of teams spend their time practicing the body of the song over and over and never get on common ground about how to make the transitions)

9. THOU SHALT ACTUALLY ENGAGE (Many song leaders are more focused on the music than they are on evaluating whether the participants are actually engaged by the session. It is very important that leaders become sensitive to this and NEVER JUST GO THROUGH THE MOTIONS)

10. THOU SHALT USE VARIETY (singing all things “up” is not great singing, and all new isn’t good either – respect the tasty treats, and still challenge the group)

know your text

Know the meaning of your text:

What is the source? What is the translation?
What is the context of the song’s authorship?
In what setting is the song appropriate?
What is the intent of singing these words and this melody?
Could you give a *drash* on this song?

Know how to use your text:

What is the melody?
What are the lyrics?
What is the pronunciation?
What is the rhythm?
Enunciate as you sing!
Do you have the song memorized?

plan key and tempo

Know your **own vocal range**.

Know your **group’s vocal range**.

Know in which **key** you’ll start each song. How high or low are you going to be singing? Choose your keys and tempos **wisely**, arrange songs **appropriately** by key and tempo. Don’t rush or drag the tempo. **Remain consistent** as you sing. You can **slow the tempo** during a **teach** (during difficult sections, or the whole teach), but be sure to sing at the correct tempo at least once through. Don’t be afraid to **transpose**, with or without a capo.

(Adapted from 2011 Gindling Hilltop Camp Songleading Binder.)



The 7 Habits of Highly Effective SONGLEADERS

by Noam Katz *

Habit 1: Be Proactive

Take INITIATIVE and RESPONSIBILITY for whatever you can control. Make every effort to PREPARE before you go in front of the group – words, chords, meaning of Hebrew, how you plan to teach a song, etc.

Habit 2: Begin With the End in Mind

Develop a clear picture of what you hope to accomplish in Shira or Tefilah. Set specific and realistic GOALS for yourself and for the group. Devise a plan – including which SKILLS you need to work on – to achieve these goals.

Habit 3: Put First Things First

Identify your PRIORITIES. Try to distinguish between which tasks and repertoire are “urgent” vs. “important”, giving time for the latter. Write out daily / weekly / monthly PLANNERS for your camp, school or synagogue music curriculum.

Habit 4: Think Win-Win

Go into every songleading situation with a POSITIVE attitude (even with a difficult group). COLLABORATE with your co-songleader, don’t compete or compare. Keep your EGO in check. Work with the group to bring out their best. Cheer on the success of others.

Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood

LISTEN with your eyes, ears and heart. Put yourself in the shoes of those you are leading. Consider what they need based on the setting, time of day, previous program, etc. Think like a MIRROR, both reflecting and shaping the group’s energy. Then communicate your message with verbal and non-verbal cues. Give regular feedback and encouragement.

Habit 6: Synergize

Combine previous habits to offer the best Shira or Tefilah you can. Consider various LEARNING STYLES of your group (e.g. visual, auditory, kinesthetic, etc.) Adjust and adapt to new circumstances, always keeping a SMILE on your face. Troubleshoot problems when necessary.

Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw

Continue to learn new music, take risks, experiment. Seek out MENTORS for constructive feedback. Go to PD conferences like Hava Nashira. Have FUN!

- adapted from Stephen Covey’s *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*

SONGLEADING 101 LESSON

Program Title: What's in Your Guitar Case?

Key Text: “Love Adonai your God – with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might.” (*from V'ahavta*)

Essential Question: What are the basic skills and values needed to be an effective songleader?

Objective: Participants will be able to articulate the most critical skills and values they need to develop—as a team *and* individually – in order to become the best version of themselves.

Activity:

- (1) Songleaders will describe what values and skills they would put in their metaphorical “guitar case” as a large group.
- (2) They will each choose 3 of these items they consider most important for their own growth, and from them, write personal goals on a note card.
- (3) Facilitator divides songleaders into *chevruta* partners to share their goals. The two will discuss strategies to address each of the listed goals.
- (4) In a different color, *chevruta* partner will write what they will do to support the other on the back side of the note card.

Songs Taught:

“The Dreamer” by Lorre Wyatt (foundations of Israel);
“Po Bonim” by David Gershon

Possible Topics to Explore (in your SL curriculum):

- How To Teach a [Hebrew] Song
- Keeping my ego in check
- Transitions
- Crafting a Song Session
- Verbal Cues
- Non-verbal Cues & the Kinesthetics of Songleading
- Adapting to the Space & Group
- Working with a co-Songleader or Clergy
- Creating an Atmosphere
- Public Humility Day
- Getting a “Tough” Group to Sing

TITLE OF LESSON: _____

KEY TEXT:

ESSENTIAL QUESTION(S):

OBJECTIVE:

ACTIVITY:

SONGS/ RESOURCES: