



PREFACE

Hello fellow musicians and singers!!! We wrote this book to possibly spare you some of the headaches, heartaches, and challenges that we have encountered in hiring musicians, running rehearsals, and dealing with situations at gigs. This book is for every age group because these situations can crop up no matter how old or young you are. Our intention was to present these situations in a casual and easy to read style. The question/answer format gets right to the point and allows you to readily find the topic and information that you might be looking for.

You can read this book in any order you want to. And yes, every situation has really happened to us! These are real-life experiences!!!

Our email address is in the back of this book if you would like to contact us. You will also find an order form for our original, easy listening CD.

*We wish you the best on your musical
journey throughout life!*

John and Angela Taylor

SECTION 2

Rehearsal and band rules

Topics

Be clear who the leader is – from the get-go	26
You start the band and the other musicians take over	26
Rehearsals: date, time, place, length, and breaks	27
Start the rehearsals on time, or allow some slack time?.....	27
Loudness level at rehearsals	27
Ending rehearsals on time	27
Don't let musicians leave their equipment at your house	28
When a band member wants you to pay them to rehearse	28
Allowing your band members to play in other bands	28
What to do if someone is consistently late for rehearsals	29
Don't let band members cancel rehearsal at the last minute!	29
When a band member keeps missing rehearsals	30
Too much joking/chit-chat and not enough band practice	30
Too much seriousness/perfectionism, not enough fun!!!	31
When someone does not learn their parts for the next rehearsal	31
Musician forgets lyrics/charts/glasses etc. to bring to rehearsal	32
When band members don't get along at rehearsals	32
Rehearse-a-holic band members who never learn their parts, yet want to rehearse all the time	33
Band members who buy expensive equipment to make up for lack of talent	33

Band members who go out and buy new equipment to secure their place in a new band	34
Fill-in band members (subs) who put your band down ...	34
Band meeting (before or after rehearsal) or another day?	35
Band meeting through email?	35
How to tell someone their faults one-on-one	36
How to tell someone their faults in front of the band	36
Don't speak for another band member's opinion	37
How to fire a band member (phone, email, or in person)	37
Should you fire a band member if you have already given him gigs?	38
Should you fire a musician because you came across a better player?	38
Tips on firing	39

Song rules and band name

Topics

Who decides on what songs to choose for the band	39
Don't take someone's word that they can sing well	40
Should you perform a band member's original tunes? ...	40
Playing the song like the record/CD, or improvising a lot?	41
Deciding who sings lead or harmony	41
What if someone who really can't sing, insists on singing?	42
Trying out a new song at a gig	43
Should you have a "main showperson" on stage?	43
Be a duo or trio if certain band members can't make a gig	44
Deciding on a band name	44

SECTION 3

Where the gigs are and how to get them

Topics

Where the gigs are	46
Getting gigs by phone calling	49
Other ways to get gigs	52
Internet band promotions, TV, and radio	54
Books to buy	54
If you want a booking agent to book your band	55
What to put in a flyer or promo pak	56
What to put in a gig/music contract	56

SECTION 4

Before the gig

Topics

Call or email your band members the day before the gig	62
Call the place you are going to play the day before the gig or the day of the gig	64
What if a band member does not dress correctly?	64
Bring extra lyrics, set lists charts, in case they forget theirs	65
Bring extra percussion instruments for the audience to use	65
Bring the gig contract they signed, in case they say they never booked you there	66
Bring an extra blank gig contract	66
Bring a cassette or video recorder to the gig	67
Set up time should be an hour before the gig	67
Should you help band members unload their equipment?	67

Unload the equipment in gig clothes or street clothes?	68
Set out the two tips jars and CDs you want to sell	68
If another band plays before you and won't get off stage	68
You find out that bands are backed up to play due to sound and equipment problems	69
Band members who show up late to set up	69
If band members don't like the gig and leave Who stands "where" on stage	70
Setting up on stage and talking too loud through mics	70
Take band pictures at break if you can	70
No mini-gigs (before the gig or on breaks) unless asked	71
Warm up with songs that have nothing to do with the style of music you are going to play?	71
What if the whole band arrives late because they got the time mixed up?	71
Band member can't make it to the gig and finds a replacement at the last minute	72
Band member canceled your gig, took another gig	72
The gig has smoke and told you there was no smoking...	73
Bring friends who dance to the gig	73
Performing while reading charts/lyrics or have them memorized?	73
Following the set list or not	74
Don't put a song you don't know that well in the first set	74
Make sure your first two sets have many of the good songs in them	75

Situations at the gig

Topics

Lag time between songs	75
Have someone from the audience sing one song with the band	76
Having friends you know "sit in" (meaning they play/sing, too)	76
If someone either plays too loud or too soft	76
If there is a fight on stage between band members	77
If a band member is rude to the audience	77
If the tune is played wrong but the singer sings it right	78
If the tune is played right and the singer sings it wrong	78
Band member walks off stage in middle of performance	78
Band member is drunk on stage and it shows	79
Joking on stage to the audience and it doesn't work	79
Band member is flirting too much offstage and embarrassing the manager and others	79
Finding band members when break time is up and getting them back on stage	80
How to handle requests	80
Should you announce you have a tip jar?	81
Playing an original tune at a cover gig	81
Announcing you have CDs to sell	81

Money Issues and Getting Paid

Topics

If someone asks a band member how much you charge, direct them to the leader of the band	82
Playing unexpected overtime and how much to charge....	82
Split the tips equally	83
Getting paid by whom?	83

If paid in cash, count it!!!	84
If you feel the check is going to bounce, cash it right away	84
Paid in counterfeit money, does it happen?	84
Paying band members before/after the gig, if the gig pays by check	85
Should the musician who booked the gig get paid more?	85
Should the musician who brings the PA system get paid more?	86
What if a certain musician thinks he is worth more and wants more pay?	86
Paying musicians who have been in the band longer more money, should you?	86

After the gig

Topics

Should you help your band members pack up their equipment after a gig?	87
Keep a list of compliments you receive to put in your promo pak	87
If the band gets thrown out	88
If the band gets asked back or someone books you for a new gig somewhere else	88

SECTION 5

How to make a CD from your house	90
--	----

SECTION 6

How to get your songs picked up by a music publisher, cable TV, video CD-ROM companies, and radio stations	94
--	----

SECTION 7

Tips on being a leader

Topics

How to get band members to remember the day/time/places of gigs	98
If you can, rehearse at your house, which gives you more power	99
In extreme cases, dock their pay if they don't follow the rules	99
If another band member books a gig, or all the gigs, remember this	100
The good things about being a leader	100
In our band, here is what we have the ultimate decision on	101
Who pays for the promo pak?	101
If you want to fire someone, tell him. Don't just say the gigs are canceled	102
When pay is concerned, stay true to your word	102
If you don't show leadership skills, the band member who does will take over	103
It's fun to be a leader, and it will empower you!	103

SECTION 8

Writing Charts for the Band:

"To chart or not to chart, that is the question."	106
--	-----

Angela's Poems	110
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Musical Biography of Angela and John Taylor...	111
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Ordering Information	112
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Hiring musicians who are older/younger or your own age

We have found that hiring in our own age range works out the best for us. This is because we all grew up with the same music, have a love for it, and are highly familiar with how each song should be played or sung. Plus, we can discuss matters relevant to our age group. We know bands that have a very diverse age range and everyone seems happy, but it seems that most often, musicians form bands within their own age group. Whatever you do, make sure the musicians can play the music and have a love for it—and that they're not just in your band for some quick money to tide them over until they find a band they really want to be in.

Older players more "emotionally mature" than younger ones?

It would seem that older musicians have learned how to handle their emotions pretty well, since most of them have been through many band/stage circumstances that have taught them how to act appropriately, but this is not always the case. We've had older musicians who resorted to childish revenge, ego trips, temper tantrums and the like. You can't always assume that older musicians have a more stable emotional base than younger ones.

Are older musicians "better players" than younger ones?

If you can play, you can play. It doesn't matter if you are 16 or 60. Someone may have played their guitar for 30 years and not be as good as someone who has only played for five years. Don't look at age as any barometer. You must hear the person and decide for yourself. This goes

for listening to singers, too. Age and experience are no guarantee of performance quality.



"Professionally educated musicians" versus "street musicians"

It doesn't make any difference who you hire as long as they can play what you need. We've had musicians with doctorates in Music who were no better than someone who had learned to play his instrument on his own. It is the result that counts. Recruit someone who delivers what you want, irrespective of formal qualifications.

Hiring rich versus poor musicians

Don't be led astray by anyone's equipment or gig connections. We've always chosen musicianship over someone's social or economic status. No amount of money can make up for bad musicianship. There is no guarantee that the prestige of the performer is related to musicianship. Judge only by results.

Hiring a mix of professionals and amateurs in the same band

Unless the inexperienced musicians are quick learners, it is inadvisable to mix the experienced with the less experienced, unless you are all patient dudes and don't mind this. The inexperienced musicians may never get up to the level of the rest of the band. All you can do is try them out and see how fast they can progress.

Hiring someone who is "only in it for the money"

It is emotionally rewarding when everyone's heart is into the music, plus the audience feels this, as well. You may find a great musician who can play your tunes but you know his heart is not into the music and that he is really only in the band for some gig money. It has been our experience that musicians who don't care about the music will leave and find another band to be in. Sure, there are probably some musicians who just love to gig and don't care what type of music they are playing, as long as they are on stage. These musicians could possibly last a long time in a band.



Hiring someone who likes your style of music but keeps suggesting other styles to play

Let's say you play only 50s music and you hire someone who says they love all eras of music. This is fine. We all like many eras of music. But if you want a strictly 50s band you need to enforce this immediately or you will risk the musician trying to get you to do music from the 60s/70s/80s once he feels comfortable that he has been accepted into the band. He might even be adamant about it. So enforce your era of music from the get-go. We have had this happen many times, that's why we bring it up.

Hiring musicians who live locally or far away

Avoid, if you can, hiring musicians from afar because they eventually will quit in favor of their local bands. Imagine the difficulty and expense of going to distant rehearsals (especially if low on gas money!). Dedicated, loyal, but long-distance musicians are the exception rather than the rule on this matter.

Hiring musicians who were "famous" years ago

These people do not guarantee success. On one hand, the mention of their names may attract an audience. Moreover, their knowledge, experience, and professional connections can be a boon, provided they respect you as a manager. On the other hand, they may become domineering and unmanageable. Their arrogance may result in their absences at rehearsals, for they think they are "beyond that." You need to audition them like everyone else. Don't assume they can still sing or play their instrument up to the level they used to.

Hiring back-up musicians in case the others don't work out

Yes, it is a good idea to have back-ups because your regular musicians can get sick, have to work overtime at jobs, have family crises, or just quit. Always keep a list of musicians' phone numbers that you have auditioned previously.



Rehiring someone you previously fired

We have re-hired two people we'd previously fired. One person really tried hard to do what was required and he worked out well. The other musician just couldn't quite cut it and had to be re-fired.

We all know that no one is perfect. You are going to have to put up with flaws from everyone, just like they have to put up with your flaws. But the flaws cannot be too far-out from what you require.

Some musicians are not that great in playing their instrument but can sing or speak to the audience well. Other musicians may be somewhat arrogant but are great players. You simply have to hire (or re-hire) people who are as close to what you are looking for as possible, and hope they can stay and grow with the band.



Hiring people who used to have their own band together

We've tried this a few times. It was fun, at first, to have a few band members from another band join our band. All of them knew each other and had a good friendship. The only thing you have to watch for is this group trying to make your band, "their" band. That is, they group together and try to get you to change the band to what their band used to be like. If they can all respect you and follow your vision for your band, that is good. The difficult part comes when you have to fire one of them for some reason and his friends get mad at you. You can let them all go at once if you feel you need a total re-haul/clean start. It's all up to you. We are just pointing out what can happen.

Hiring friends and family members

You should know these people well and know what to expect from them musically and emotionally. Make sure they can follow the vision you have set for the band and let them know that breaking the rules is not allowed just because they are friends or family. For example, they shouldn't show up late or not learn their parts because they think you might overlook these faults.

The best ways we have found musicians fast

- Calling up friends/family to ask if they know a guitarist etc.
- Asking around at your job, church, school, college etc.
- Hanging a sign in music stores—Bass Player Wanted etc.
- Putting an ad on the internet at www.musicians.com
- Putting an ad in a free, local newspaper
- Posting an ad at colleges (if you want younger musicians)

Posting an ad in music stores has been where we get most of our responses.



Note: Someone who plays well at rehearsal may freeze on stage. A musician or singer may be fantastic at rehearsals, but put him on stage and he may freeze and do a terrible job, due to stage fright. This is where hiring someone who says they have lots of experience on stage can help. Now, even though they may say they are totally experienced on stage, you won't really know until you are at the gig. Sometimes, people who have never been on stage will have no stage fright at all. So don't discount those people. Again, the gig reveals it all.

What to put in your "Looking for Musician" ad/flyer

WANTED:

**BASS PLAYER FOR 60's BAND
(Urgent – for upcoming Gigs*)
(*put if this is true)**

- BAND PICTURE -

Call John – phone number

When musicians call you, *then* give more details. On the phone, we try to hit on the major things we need most. Once someone comes over for rehearsals, we get into more of the specifics.

What we tell musicians when they call

- Who is in the band now, what instruments they play, and if they sing.
- Rehearsals: when/where/length of time, and breaks.
- Whose PA system to bring to the gigs/rehearsals.
- What types of gigs we do (classy or dives or both).
- What pay range our gigs are usually in (you must get this clear, because a musician can complain later that you are not booking the band for enough money). You must tell them if you do free gigs. Some musicians will not do these.

- Where our gigs are normally located: local or far away. (Make sure they can travel if you have faraway gigs.)
- We tell them we do outdoor gigs in the hot sun and cold weather and ask if they have any objection to playing those.
- We mention that we perform as a duo/trio if the rest of the band isn't available for a certain gig and ask if they would have a problem with that.
- We tell them the songs/artists we cover, plus original tunes we may perform. We let them know that if their originals fit the style of music, they can perform them at the gig, as well.
- We ask if they sing or play more than one instrument.
- We ask if family or jobs will hold them back.
- We tell them we perform like the artists on the CD but that sometimes we do improvise on certain songs.
- We tell them we don't always follow the set list and call songs out at gigs for the musicians to play.
- We mention that some gigs have a dress code and we can't always dress in jeans for gigs.
- We set up an audition for them.



Note: Just do the best you can in hiring musicians. Sometimes, people you never think would work out well actually do work out great, and people you thought would be with you forever are gone. Have a back-up list of people who previously showed interest in your band, so you are not caught off-guard if someone in your band gets sick, quits etc



SECTION 2



Rehearsal and band rules
Song rules and band name

Be clear who the leader is, from the get-go

If you are the leader, you must explain to your band that you have the final say on certain issues. For example, you may want the final say on: choice of songs, how the song is sung or played, who you hire and fire, at what types of gigs you want the band to perform, and more. This doesn't mean you don't listen to the input of the musicians, but someone has to have the final say or the band will never get off the ground, plus there will be constant arguing as to who does what.

We had a musician who helped us re-form our old band and thought he was a co-leader and could never be fired. Although this person was helpful to the band, he seemed to disappear when any of the tough issues came up, such as firing band members, dealing with problems at gigs or rehearsals, etc. He was never a co-leader in our minds, and we never asked him to help us on the tough issues. When it came time to let him go (because he didn't learn his parts), he wouldn't leave the band. He thought it was his band and he had equal say. After much heated debate, he finally left. Don't let this happen to you. Be clear who the leader is and what the duties are.

You start the band and the other musicians take over

You may be the one who started the band, only to find out that the other band members take over and start calling the shots. You must always assert yourself and make decisions, or others will walk all over you. Know your vision for the band in regard to the style of music, what types of gigs you play, who sings what, etc., and enforce these decisions early on. If you wait to enforce your rules, it will be too late and the other band members will have taken over and fired you.

Rehearsals: date, time, place, length, and breaks

You have probably already informed your musicians on these issues when they called to come over, but you may have forgotten to mention you have break-time at rehearsal. Some people need to smoke or whatever and it's good to allow a break time.

Start the rehearsals on time, or allow some slack time?

We usually cut people a ten-minute slack time on showing up for rehearsals, but no more than that. It's great if everyone can show up exactly on time, but we have found this just isn't reality. Anyone who is consistently late more than 15 minutes will be spoken to. It's not fair to the other band members to see a latecomer strolling in, setting up his equipment while everyone else is already set up and ready to practice.

Loudness level at rehearsals

Even if the neighbors allow loud playing, it may be too loud for some band members to tolerate. You should all agree on a loudness level; the leader should bring up the subject and you can all discuss.

Ending rehearsals on time

You need to end the rehearsal when you say you are going to. If you feel everyone wants to stay longer, ask. Make sure you don't assume they want to play longer just because you do. A lot of musicians have jobs and family; if you keep rehearsing without letting them leave on time, you may not find them staying in your band.

Don't let musicians leave their equipment at your house

Even if you have renter's/home insurance, which covers damage and theft, you don't want another's equipment left at your house because if you fire that person, they may take a long time to pick up their equipment. We had someone who left their instruments at our house for two months, hoping we would hire him back. He didn't have any upcoming gigs so he didn't need his instruments. It wasn't until we told him we would have to put his instruments in the garage because they were in the way that he finally came for them. Another reason you don't want equipment left is that if you fire someone, you have to see him again when he comes to pick up his instruments, and that can be awkward.

When a band member wants you to pay them to rehearse

Yes, this really happens, and some band members feel that their time is too valuable to come up to your house and rehearse for free.

Also, there are situations in which a band member is really broke and doesn't have the gasoline to come over, and wants you to pay for it.

It's up to you what you want to do.

Allowing your band members to play in other bands

We allow band members to play in other bands, but if they cancel our gigs to take another band's gigs, this is not right. We understand if a band member gets some huge Vegas