

NGFDA SATELLITE NETWORK GUIDELINES

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# NGFDA SATELLITE NETWORK GUIDELINES

## I. SATELLITE DESCRIPTION

The NGFDA Satellites comprise a unique network of regional membership and geographical connection. Each Satellite functions independently, providing a means of linkage for NGFDA members and potential members in a Georgia and its contiguous states.

Each Satellite requires an NGFDA Board of Directors sanction for start-up and disbandment. Although there are no formal policy stipulations as to Satellite leadership, management, operations or participation, NGFDA guidelines are provided to: 1) assure relative continuity among network Satellites 2) support Satellite leadership, operations, and participants 3) assure that the expectations of NGFDA membership (new and established) are realistic.

These guidelines are not a change in NGFDA Satellite Network operations, but rather a documentation of practice and promotion of best practice for the good of all.

## II. GUIDELINES FOR SATELLITE LEADERSHIP & GENERAL OPERATIONS

### A. STARTING A SATELLITE - PROCEDURE

1. Satellites must reside in Georgia and or contiguous states.
2. Intentions should be to sustain the Satellite as an entity over years, anticipating some membership and leadership turnover.
3. Establish need and interest among a group of preferably 15 geographically coherent individuals who are willing to support and participate in some fashion on a long term basis. The Satellite should be able to sustain at least 15 playing individuals.
3. Contact NGFDA Satellite Liaison Board member and request sanction, in writing. Include the following information:
  - a. Proposed Satellite name
  - b. Geographical area covered (in general)
  - c. Proposed meeting location; date; time
  - d. Designated Satellite Leader; with phone and email contact information
4. NGFDA Board of Directors will formally review the submitted petition at next scheduled Board meeting. The Satellite Leader will be notified of review outcome. (Board sanction is necessary to assure reasonable Satellite geographical distribution, longevity of operation, and responsible individual(s) for leadership.
5. Satellite Liaison and new leadership contact will coordinate announcement of new Satellite in NGFDA newsletter; and listing in Satellite page on [www.ngfda.org](http://www.ngfda.org) and in newsletter.

### B. DISCONTINUING A SATELLITE - PROCEDURE

Satellites are expected to function on a long term basis, with internal rotation of leadership as necessary. However, when it is determined there is no reasonable option to continue a viable playing group; consideration to dissolve should be discussed with the NGFDA Satellite Liaison in lieu of “pretended” existence. After NGFDA Board review, appropriate action to remove Satellite information from publication and contact distribution lists will be taken.

### **C. SATELLITE LEADERSHIP**

Leadership will evolve from within the group as often as deemed appropriate, and may exist in a variety of configurations, e.g. single, co-, or group. Leaders should have some dulcimer playing experience and be comfortable with group communication. Leadership is expected to maintain current NGFDA membership and belong to NGFDA Email List.

### **D. COMMUNICATION TO/FROM SATELLITE**

1. Maintain current information on [www.ngfda.org](http://www.ngfda.org) Satellite Guidelines page
2. Send periodic Satellite updates to NGFDA Newsletter
3. Create and maintain an electronic Satellite membership distribution roster
4. Collaborate with NGFDA Satellite Liaison as appropriate
5. Conduct periodic Satellite poll (internal) for:
  - a. Playing levels represented; Satellite activity interests; improvement opportunities; meeting time/frequency /location.
  - b. Address group focus on social vs. instruction vs. playing learned tunes vs. jamming.

### **E. SATELLITE PERFORMING GROUP**

Satellite groups may evolve to form a playing ensemble/performing group for those who are interested; this may represent the entire Satellite or be comprised of a smaller ensemble group. Either way, the group should be considered to be a sub-group of the general satellite, and therefore should meet in addition to the published Satellite meeting time(s).

What makes an ensemble performing group meeting different from a general Satellite meeting? It is the focused practice of specific pieces with the intent to perform outside the Satellite; the process of developing the ability to play, in arrangement format, as an ensemble; Performing groups should be aware of potential restrictions when playing public domain vs. copy write tunes in public.

### **F. TAB MANAGEMENT, COPYRIGHT and DOMAIN ETIQUETTE**

Domain / Copy write protection and etiquette must always be a consideration when providing/distributing tab among Satellite members. Leadership is obligated to observe and promote appropriate copywrite etiquette for Satellite tab management. Refer to Section III "Tab" below for detail.

### **G. SATELLITE SPONSORED EVENTS**

Satellites who plan to sponsor local dulcimer related educational and/or performance events are asked to collaborate with the NGFDA Board and the [www.ngfda.org](http://www.ngfda.org) event calendar to avoid booking on or near pre-scheduled NGFDA events. Satellites are encouraged to work with the NGFDA Board in production of NGFDA sponsored and sanctioned events.

## **III. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SATELLITE PARTICIPANTS**

### **A. THE ULTIMATE PLAYING SATELLITE RULES**

1. Have fun!
2. Play! Play! Play!

3. Be considerate of others
4. Listen to each other
5. Learn from each other
6. Come often
7. Group participation consensus rules

## **B. PLAYING LEVEL**

1. Just do what you can! It doesn't matter whether you are a beginner, an intermediate, advanced or professional, as long as you love the music and want to play and share with others. Everyone can make a contribution.
2. Playing will be focused on the ability level(s) of the majority of those present at any given gathering.
3. Not everyone can play everything on a Satellite tune list - so don't worry; just keep working on it at your own pace and for your enjoyment.
4. Breakout sessions for beginners can be helpful but are not always managed the same way in all Satellites at all times. Beginners can enjoy participating in the main group with some side guidance and creative guidance from the group.
5. Some participants will make steady progress over time; others will not, but will remain serious about their dedication to the instrument and their playing Satellite. It's ALL OK!

## **C. TAB MANAGEMENT and COPYWRITE ETIQUETTE**

1. Recommended tab source for all Satellite beginners: NGFDA Tablature book.
2. Copywrite protection and etiquette must always be a consideration when providing/distributing tab among Satellite members.
  - a. Obtain permission from a performer, instructor tab author to copy and distribute BEFORE you do it.
  - b. Utilize free tab offered on the INTERNET by various dulcimer artists/instructors and consider purchase of their tab books to support the artists!
  - c. Do not copy tab books. Consider bulk purchase of a tab book from vendor or source. Discount prices can often be negotiated.
3. Keep tab sheets in top loader (non glare) protective sheets in a 3 ring notebook and bring it to every meeting.
4. Tab is a "guide" a kind of "road map" to playing a tune. There is melody line – and the rest is accompaniment. Make the music (the tab) your own. Study it. Learn it if you are beginning. Change it to fit you.
5. Basic Tabs from different sources will vary but can be played together if it's for the same tune, in the same key and time signature! The variations can be complimentary. The differences can often be easily adjusted. Try it before shouting "that note is not on my paper!"
6. Add to the group list by bringing copies of your favorite tab to share.
7. If you have a specific tune you want to learn, ask for it or bring the tab in for distribution
8. You don't have to know, like, or be able to play everything on a playing list. These are tunes that have accumulated - ones that we will keep working on so that they can become familiar fun jam tunes. You may start out air playing a tune, then go to just the melody string, and then add chords, etc. If you get tired of a tune, try working on the harmony or some new embellishments and add them to the group play mix.

## **D. JAMMING**

(Refer to Section IV for detailed JAM ETEQUETTE.)

One of the best and most pleasurable ways of improving your playing is to participate in jam sessions; big ones, little ones, organized, and informal. It is an exercise in sharing, give and take, and cooperation.

The intent of a jam is never to overwhelm a beginner, but it can happen. It is the responsibility of both the leadership, group at large, and the individual feeling overwhelmed to correct or adjust to the situation. It is the responsibility of every player to be familiar with basic jam etiquette.

## **E. OTHER NECESSITIES**

1. Be kind to your volunteer Satellite leaders; contribute to Satellite operations when and where you can. Take your turn if you are able.
2. Maintain NGFDA annual membership.
3. Bring a recording device to Satellite sessions to capture new tunes you intend to work on at home. Ask someone to play the tune (or difficult segments) slowly, moderately, then up to speed.

# **IV. JAM ETIQUETTE GUIDELINES**

## **A. Jamming is:**

1. One of the best and most pleasurable ways of improving your playing
2. Where you find your real limitations, and are free to exceed them
3. A kind of "conversation" between musicians...in a language most people don't really know, yet understand on a variety of levels
4. A group participation and is not meant to impress others with individual talent or noodlings. Not a competition for speed or loudness
5. Jamming is an exercise in sharing, give and take and cooperativeness. Be as ready to give up your turn as you are to take it. You need to have ego enough to join in and take part, but not so much as to think people came just to hear you.
6. Requires some structure and therefore some rules of etiquette. This etiquette will differ from jam to jam and from different types of music groups (Bluegrass, Old Time, etc) Expectations will vary as to what the proper behavior is in a jam session, and you have to be aware of what type of session you are getting into. Ask someone.
7. Common sense and courtesy. Figure out if the session you are thinking of joining is an "open" session at which anyone is welcome or a "closed" session where the participants want to play only with each other.
8. Best arranged in a circle so participants can hear offerings and see visual clues

## **B. General Considerations:**

1. Tune your instrument well before the jam, then check periodically
2. Keep the beat...don't speed up or slow down accidentally
3. Avoid noodling between tunes
4. Play softly "back off" when someone sings or takes an instrumental break. Backup players must take care to not drown-out a solo turn (singer/instrument or group

- specific instruments... (As in “now, let’s hear melody from just the dulcimers”)
5. Look around for visual signals such as a foot raised by the caller to indicate approaching the end of a tune
  6. Don’t try to impose your own arrangement on the group unless you are teaching it
  7. Play a tune multiple times. Repetition gives participants a chance to hear the tune, learn the tune, play variations on the tune, and play back-up and harmonies.
  8. Listen as you play ...interesting things to hear, things to learn
  9. Encourage and be helpful to newer players who are braving the jam.
  10. Make sure it’s an open jam, and, don’t enter in the middle of a song. It's just like butting in on a conversation.
  11. Be aware of who is leading the jam
  12. If it’s an acoustic jam, don’t amplify!
  13. Be sensitive to the volume and tonality of their instrument and how it blends with the group.

### **C. Which Jam?**

1. If the playing is out of your range, (speed or difficulty or tune choice) respect that and learn from it.
2. If you don’t fit in a particular jam, look for another, or start another, or just stay and listen.
3. If you walk into a jam session and there is magic happening, be sensitive to whether or not you can add anything to this magic.
4. Bad jamming etiquette and lack of creativity among participants can drive many new players and/or the more experienced players away because they are not fun to participate in. Self-attitude checks are always in order.

### **D. If you are a new player, you can always:**

1. Mute your strings and practice strumming, or play chords if you don’t know the notes.
2. Record the tune so that you can go home and work on it
3. Play along softly in the background
4. Choose your seat wisely. If there is one circle, sit in it. If there is an inner circle with others around, sit around it
5. Choose to sit next to someone of whom you know you can ask questions.

### **E. Calling a tune:**

1. If it’s your turn to call, you can call, or pass, or request a specific tune for another to start.
2. The caller announces the name, key, and structure (AABB etc.) to be played in, and begins playing. Start with an intro strum or tag to set the rhythm for the group. Others may want to listen for the first time through before joining in, or they may jump right in.
3. If you are calling the tune, always try to play material aimed at the group of people you are jamming with so you don't alienate anyone with obscure or hard to play “jam buster” material. Ask the group.
4. Don't be a jam hog. Share the circle and let everyone have a chance at calling or leading.