

Alaska City Folk Arts Classes & Descriptions

The classes described below are those that are typically (but not always) offered at Alaska City Folk Arts Camp, and are intended to help you fill out the Class Selection part of our Registration form.

Performance Groups

Performance Groups are the heart of Alaska Folk Arts Camp. Learn to make your own music and play with friends. You will perform in at least one of these groups at the End-of-Camp Concert. If you choose a non-musical group (Sound/Stage Managing) you will be helping to run the End-of-Camp Concert and might not perform musically on stage. Contact us if you can't decide on a group, or select: "Not Sure, Choose for Me".

Band

Play in a band! Your teacher will help you and your classmates find your sound, your voice, and guide you through the process of choosing and arranging a piece to perform. The band genre will depend on your stated interests.

Emcee (Master of Ceremonies)

Learn about organizing a show and how to become a Master of Ceremonies. Develop stage presence and keep the audience engaged and the show moving along! Help to organize Open Mic Concerts (after-camp performances). Older students will help out with the Wednesday evening Faculty Concert, and all class members will participate in Friday's End-of-Camp Concert.

Percussion

Explore the possibilities of rhythm, beat, syncopation, and percussive sounds. Bring drums, claves, and shakers, if you have them.

Sound/Stage Managing

For students 14 years and older. Learn about basic audio theory and equipment including microphones, monitors, and soundboards. Receive hands-on experience setting up equipment and operating it for the daily Open Mic Concerts (after camp), dances, and evening events. Expect to be available Wednesday and Thursday evenings, as well as Friday afternoon. Class size is limited.

Voice Ensemble

Your voice is an instrument you take with you wherever you go - tune it up, learn some new songs and how to sing with others. This group's performance is always memorable.

Not Sure, Choose for Me

Our director will place you in a Performance Band based on your interests, instrument and skill level.

Classes

Students have 4 classes each day. At least one will be a Performance Group (see above). Choose others from the [Folk Arts](#), [Sessions & Repertoire](#), and [Instrument Instruction](#) categories found below.

Folk Arts

These classes are related to music, but may not involve playing a musical instrument. They will broaden your idea of "the Arts" and provide variety and movement into your schedule. All new students between the ages of 8 and 11 are required to take our "Folk Arts Sampler" class.

Art ~ Collage

Pictures, scissors, and glue sticks, oh my! Explore the limitless possibilities of collage. Use found images from magazines, cut up your own drawings or photos, press some flowers, you name it! Get ready to experiment. All levels.

Art ~ Watercolor Painting

Delve into a week of watercolor! Students will learn basic color theory, explore a variety of techniques and be exposed to prominent watercolorists throughout history. Experimentation is a must! Expect to use materials such as salt, glue, tape, plastic wrap, sugar, and more. All levels.

Dance ~ Contra, Square Dancing

Learn the basics of square dancing and the ins and outs of contra dancing. Where does the "first couple" begin? What is a "grand right"? Trade off playing in the band. This is a class, as opposed to the daily 9:30 am dance (a before-camp activity).

Dance ~ Dance Calling

Help call dances in the mornings before classes and on Thursday night at the camp dance. Learn some of the secrets to successful and fun dances. You might even get to create your very own dance!

Dance ~ Dance Sampler

Learn a variety of dance styles not covered in our other dance classes. Dance Sampler will cover waltz, two-step, Cajun dancing, clogging, and maybe more!

Dance ~ Swing Dancing

Learn to swing dance with a partner. This is one of our most popular classes, and might even help you with your instrument playing and timing! Ages 8-12, or teen.

Folk Arts Sampler

For all first time students 8-11 years of age. You will be guided through an overview of the folk arts, and of our camp. Each day will be different. For two days you will learn about, hear, see and touch a variety of instruments. On other days you will experience dance and juggling.

Instrument Building

Build an instrument you can really play - all by yourself! Projects vary from year to year.

Juggling

Don't just stand there - learn to juggle! It's fun and will help your coordination and musical timing!

Knitting & Music Appreciation

No experience necessary. Make something while listening to music happening all around you. All levels are welcome - and it's relaxing!

The Science of Music

A hands-on exploration of the physics of sound and music. Great for science fans!

Songwriting

All levels of musicianship are welcome. Learn how to write lyrics and melodies with or without an instrument. Experienced songwriters (you have written numerous songs) who wish to hone their craft should sign up for the Experienced level class.

Tune-writing

For fiddlers, mandolin and guitar players, and other melodic instrument players who want to explore the compositional side of folk music. Dissect fiddle tunes to find out what makes them tick. Explore compositional strategies and see how to use melodic development to turn a small phrase into a fiddle tune! We will work on writing a new tune together.

Voice ~ Vocal Ensemble

Students 8-12 will learn new songs and make beautiful vocal music with fellow campers.

Teens will work on performance techniques, finding harmonies, and arranging pieces that will be performed at the End-of-Camp concert on Friday.

Voice ~ Vocal Harmony Singing

Want to learn to harmonize? Know how to harmonize, but want to learn why harmony sounds so cool? Want to expand your repertoire? This class will cover harmony basics, types of harmony, and harmony theory. All levels.

Sessions & Repertoire

These classes focus on playing music with others. Some styles require specific instruments; other styles or genres are open to all instruments.

Bluegrass Tunes (for fiddle, mandolin, guitar and other lead instruments)

Learn classic bluegrass tunes. Become bluegrass savvy, improve your playing and make your band sound better! The focus will be on lead playing, but expect to learn rhythm, too.

Celtic Session

Beginners ~ play and learn Celtic tunes and session protocol.

Intermediate/Advanced ~ you should be able to play at least five Irish/Scottish tunes from memory.

Instruments: fiddle, guitar, piano, bodhrán, flute, penny whistle, accordion, mandolin, and tenor banjo. Other stringed instruments please inquire.

Celtic Repertoire

Learn reels, jigs, polkas, hornpipes, strathspeys, airs, marches, and other types of tunes from the Celtic tradition. We will cover rhythmic devices and variations including grace notes, ornamentation, rolls, and double stops. The focus will be on *learning* new tunes. (Singers and bodhrán players might prefer the *Celtic Session* class, as the focus there is on *playing* tunes.) Instruments & skill levels identical to *Celtic Session*.

Fiddle Tunes (all styles, all instruments)

We call them "fiddle tunes" because they are easily played on fiddles and usually written for the fiddle, but any instrument can play a fiddle tune - including flute, guitar, and cello! All instruments, styles and abilities.

Folk Arts Session

Jam every day. Learn the protocol and repertoire for bluegrass, old time, Celtic, swing, folk music and more. Learn when to play, sing, take leads, etc. All instruments - just like Folk Arts Saturday Sessions held throughout the year at Mary's music studio!

Improvisation (blues, jazz, swing, bluegrass)

Beginners ~ You have no improvisational experience and you are relatively new to your instrument.

Intermediate ~ Some improvisational experience and some knowledge of chord structure and scales. You are at an intermediate or advanced skill level on your instrument.

Advanced ~ Advanced skills and some improvisation experience outside of the classroom. For Folk Arts Camp veterans who want to go beyond technique and have an understanding of chord theory and multiple scale proficiency. Reading music is helpful, but not required if you have improvisation experience.

Klezmer Tunes

Klezmer is a mix of centuries-old traditional Jewish tunes, influenced by Eastern European folk music, early jazz, and French Café music. It's meant for dancing and celebrating joyous occasions. Instruments include violin, clarinet, trumpet, oboe, flute, accordion, and percussion. Other instruments are adaptable to the Klezmer genre.

Percussion ~ Rhythm and Grooves

Explore the possibilities of rhythm, beat, syncopation, and percussive sounds. Bring your own drums, claves, or shakers, if you can.

Percussion ~ Stomp, Clap, Whoop!

Use your body and everyday items as percussive instruments.

Voice ~ Folk Song Repertoire

Learn as many folk songs as you can in one week!

Instrument Instruction

These classes show students how to play specific instruments.

Accordion

Basic technique, various genres.

Banjo ~ Bluegrass

Three-finger (Scruggs) style playing technique. Basic rolls, chords, rhythm and repertoire.

Banjo ~ Old Time

Learn the frail/clawhammer style of playing the five string banjo. We will cover the chords, scales, tunings, and right-hand essentials needed to get that old time sound!

Bass

Learn chord theory, basic chord patterns, scales, and the role of the bass in an ensemble. We generally teach the upright acoustic bass, rather than the electric bass. If you own a bass, bring it! If you don't own a bass, fear not, we have a few on hand to loan.

The Care and Feeding of Your Instrument

Learn how to string and tune your instrument, as well as how to make minor adjustments to the bridge, action, etc. This class is for all stringed instruments.

Cello

Learn a variety of techniques and explore several genres and styles. You should be an experienced player; beginners should take the *Fiddle & Bowed Instruments from Scratch* class.

Fiddle

Intermediate students have played for a few years, know a number of tunes by heart and want to learn ornamentation and new tunes. Advanced fiddlers will expand their repertoires and improvisational techniques.

Fiddle and Bowed Instruments from Scratch

This is a beginning class, for students with no fiddling experience. Beginning viola and cello players are welcome. We begin with how to hold the instrument and the bow, and take off from there.

Fiddle ~ Bluegrass/Old-Time Fiddling

Intermediate students have played for a few years and know a number of bluegrass and old time tunes by heart. Learn how to take a fiddle break and how to play back up. Advanced fiddlers will learn new tunes, bowing patterns, and improvisational techniques on breaks.

Fiddle ~ Irish/Scottish Fiddling

Intermediate students have played for a few years, know a number of Celtic tunes by heart and want to learn ornamentation and new tunes. Advanced fiddlers will expand their repertoires, learn new bowing patterns, ornamentations, and techniques.

Fiddle ~ Twin Fiddling

Intermediate students have played for a few years, know a number of tunes by heart and want to learn to play tunes with another fiddler. Advanced fiddlers will expand their repertoires and techniques for making that sweet twin fiddle sound.

Fiddle ~ Violin Techniques for Fiddlers

A chance for fiddlers to learn classical technique tips. Get a cleaner more confident sound, and improve your intonation! Upper positions, vibrato exercises, and bow control may also be covered.

Flute

This wind instrument has a place in folk, Irish, jazz music, and more! Plan to learn multiple genres. For experienced flute players.

Guitar

Beginner ~ No experience necessary. Learn basic open chords, traditional folk style strums, beginning chord theory, and how to play with your own vocal accompaniment, or with other folk instruments.

Intermediate ~ You must be proficient in all open chords, and be able to play in different rhythms. Learn flat-picking and uses for barre chords.

Advanced ~ If you have the skills for Intermediate Guitar and are ready for more challenges, Advanced Guitar is the class for you!

Mandolin

Beginner ~ Guitar or fiddle experience is helpful, but not required. Learn to hold and tune a mandolin. Work on basic chords, scales, melodies, open string, and double-stop techniques. Learn a few basic tunes. Please let us know if you have experience with other instruments, or if this is your first instrument.

Intermediate ~ You must have experience with the mandolin and understand how to create chords, and play at least some solos. You will further your knowledge of the mandolin.

Advanced ~ You will pick up where the Intermediate Mandolin class left off. Contact us if you are unsure of your skill level.

Penny Whistle

This little instrument adds a lot to Celtic and other genres of folk music - and it's easy to take along wherever you go. Bring a "D" whistle and learn some tunes!

Beginner ~ No experience necessary. Learn scales and easy, familiar tunes.

Experienced ~ You have been playing penny whistle for several years and are looking for challenges and ways to embellish tunes.

Piano ~ Playing for Vocalists

You need at least two years of piano instruction. Learn to accompany vocalists. Approach the piano from a chords perspective rather than from note reading. Learn how to support the singer and the song!

Piano ~ Playing with Bands

You need at least two years of piano instruction. Play with a band, approaching the piano from a chords perspective rather than from note reading. Learn techniques for carrying the melody and supplying rhythm and percussion.

Ukulele:

In recent years this small, four-stringed Hawaiian instrument has found its way into many musical genres and repertoires. It has a sweet sound AND it's portable!