

HOW TO RUN YOUR UKELELE BUILDING WORKSHOP



Layout:

The ideal tables are the standard melamine-topped office tables, 1x3 meters that will seat 3 per long side and one at each end. Don't exceed this seating as everyone needs elbow room. Leave enough space around and between tables to allow for good visibility and quick access for the patrolling animator(s). Children or families and single adults are not a good mix, we dedicate separate tables for each. You also need an area for boxed parts and a table set up as a stringing station. Plywood topped tables are fine as long as there are no raised edges or mouldings. If the wood is not varnished then some wax paper can be put under the instrument at the neck joint to prevent the glue from sticking to the table. Given this, the minimum number of tables you will need is three, with 6 plus 6 plus 4 chairs. Make sure you have lots of room around everything and are in a no through-traffic area, the curious will wander in and be very distractive.

Glue

Glue pots are in the geometric centre, one per table. Goopy sticks can be laid on a yogurt lid. Keep the pots covered when not in use. A common mistake is to apply too much glue, especially with adults. This will slow the drying time (5 minutes per step) and facilitate the tendency for the part to skid out of alignment while being held. Especially important for the first step, aligning and gluing the neck. Mis-aligned parts can be pried apart with a kitchen knife, as if opening an oyster, up to an hour after assembly. Scrape the joint clean and reapply a thin continuous line of glue and repeat the operation. **IT IS CRITICAL THAT THE INSTRUMENT IS NOT PICKED UP DURING THE GLUING PROCESS.** The temptation will be great. The strings should not be brought up to full tension for a couple of hours after installation. Any yellow cabinet-grade wood glue will be suitable – no white or craft glues; they do not set hard, neither contact cement or catalytic glues, epoxy, etc. The "slip" factor in wood glue is very important to allow for proper part alignment.

Assembly Sequence

Take care not to mix parts of various instrument types – keep them separated in well marked boxes. Only give out the parts as they are required otherwise they can get mixed up or lost. The yogurt lids are for glue sticks and to put screws in. Follow the assembly sequence religiously, you will need visual contact with a time-piece, 5 minutes of total still clamping time per operation. The girls tend to be better at this than the boys. The first step, neck alignment, is the most important, and needs to be demonstrated to the builder, preferably also supervised. Check the alignment during the clamping period to make sure it has not shifted. If necessary, pry the neck off the top and repeat the operation, it's much easier to remedy it now than later on. Show how the sides fit in, frequently they are glued in with the angled end backwards (figure 2). Make sure they run parallel to the edge of the top. Glue only needs to be put on the inside face (E) and bottom edge, not on the upper end, it will make a mess. Glue in the sides one at a time. Make sure there is glue on the end of the sides (as well as a bottom edge) when the bottom is glued on. The bottom/side corner joint can be rounded with a file after the