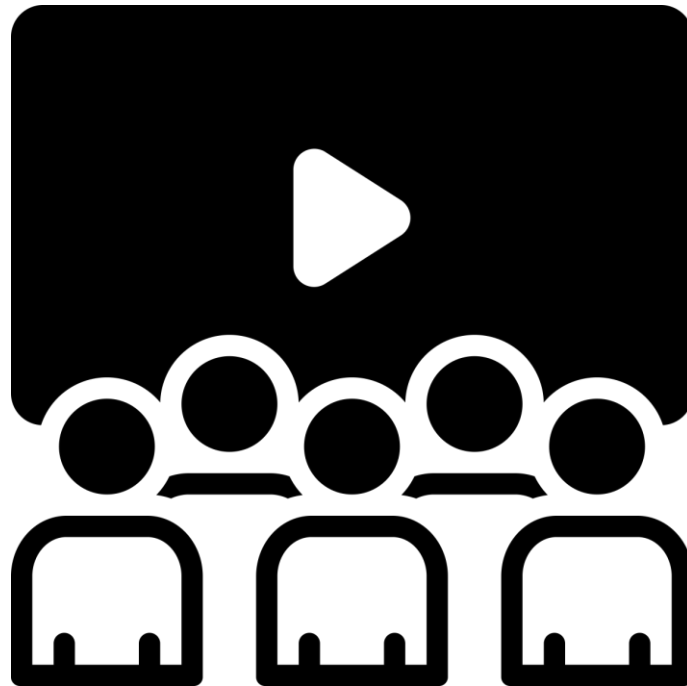# Exploring Open Mic: Guidelines & Template

Introduction & Context

On World Creativity Day in April 2022, the first #creativeHE open mic took place to encourage the community to perform and share their original work. The event was hosted by Tom Burns and Pip McDonald and was organised by Tom Burns, Norman Jackson, Chrissi Nerantzi and Pip McDonald. A recording of the event can be accessed [here](#) (Creative Academic, 2022). A reflective blog post exploring the experience of performing can be found [here](#) (Paltaglou, 2022).

The open mic event was explored as part of an action learning project for the #CreativeHE and Lifewide UNESCO Futures of Education initiative looking at the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) created by the United Nations (UN). The inquiry took place from March-July 2022 and was led by Norman Jackson. The open mic model was used for the conference at the end of this project. A recording of the open mic conference can be found [here](#) (Creative Academic, 2022).

In September 2022, the first Association for Learning Technology (ALT) open mic event took place as part of the social programme of the annual conference organised and hosted by Pip McDonald.

A range of open mic guides are available for example [here](#) (Daniel, n.d.). The guidelines and template in this document are an outcome of the reflections and experience of organising and hosting the two open mic events. The purpose of the guidelines and template is to support others to create their own open mic events in their own context successfully.

Part 1 - Open Mic Guidelines

It can be helpful to attend or perform at other open mic events to get an idea of how the events can run, such as Paper Tiger at the Tea House Theatre (Paper Tiger Poetry, 2022). Another popular open mic event in London is New Poetry Shack at Candid Arts Trust (Candid Arts Trust, 2022).

Open Mic Title: for example, *The New Poet Open Mic Night* or *The Spoken Word Salon*.
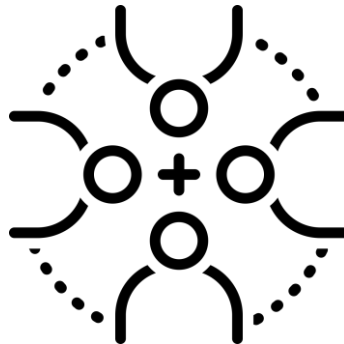

Event Theme: an example: the theme of the open mic is nature or mental health. Not all events have a theme. Some open mic events are attached to other events such as a conference or community. It can be a good idea to explain this and the purpose of the organisation or event.

Event Focus: some open mic events focus on music and others focus on spoken word or poetry. Other open mics combine both music and spoken word. Some open mics encourage all forms of creative output including song writing, poetry, storytelling, comedy and music. If you would like to offer music, explain equipment available for example, microphone and amplifier. It can be a good idea to take some photographs of the venue to give performers an idea of space and to prepare.
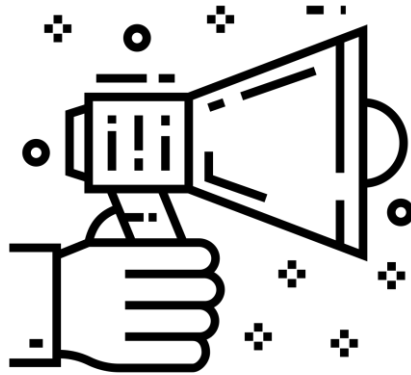
Location: if the event is online, explain what platform for example Zoom and provide joining instructions and a guide to using the tool. If you are using Zoom, it can be a good idea to include a waiting room and passcode for security purposes. Explain what technical equipment will be required for example reliable internet connection and Zoom (software or on browser). It can be a good idea to test before the live event for example if you are sharing a poem on screen in a document or playing sound.

If you are using Zoom, as a host it may be useful to assign an alternate host with a Zoom Pro Account or a co-host to provide support during the live event for example responding to chat messages and sharing screen. Creating a meeting with both a waiting room and passcode can help you to keep your performers and audience safe during the live event by preventing zoombombing. When a performer is performing, it can be a good idea to see the 'spotlight for everyone' feature.
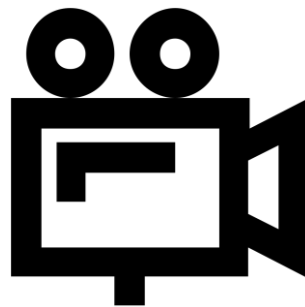
Accessibility: In order to create an online open mic event which is accessible in a digitally accessible capacity, switch on live transcription. Live captions are limited in terms of accuracy (Zoom Video Communications Inc, 2022) and there are other ways to create captions. It is possible to access a live transcript and a document after the event. It might be helpful to provide a link to a guide to using Zoom (Zoom, 2021). It may also be helpful to explain how to join a Zoom meeting here (Zoom Video Communications Inc, 2022). Some performers perform their work with British Sign Language (BSL). Find out more about the British Sign Language Dictionary here (British Sign Language Dictionary, 2022).

If the open mic event is in an in-person capacity, you can include any COVID measures. Work with the venue to find out accessibility arrangements and share with performers and the audience before the event. Provide the full address of the event and any helpful instructions such as the nearest train station, a map or alternative routes (train, bus, car and walking). It is also possible for some open mic events to take place in a hybrid capacity.

Promotion: some open mic events have a logo and a social media presence for example a Twitter account or Facebook page. This can provide a platform to build a community around the open mic event, promote the event and share photographs and video recordings of the performances. It is a good idea to ask permission of both the performers and audience to confirm if they are comfortable having their photograph taken or video recordings before the event.

Event Recording: It might be helpful to share with performers and the audience if the event will be recorded or broadcast on a livestream for example on Facebook or YouTube. Not all participants will be comfortable with being recorded or broadcast live streamed, so it is a good idea to offer those performers an opportunity to communicate this with you and how the host can pause the recording or livestream feed. If the event is recorded, it is a good idea to share where the recording will be stored and accessed for example YouTube.

Different Types of Acts: often open mic events have a guest or invited performers of headline act who performs for longer than the open mic slots. These acts often perform at the end of the event.

Competitive Components: some open mic events are called 'slams'. The audience can decide the winner or a panel or both. Some performers prefer this approach whilst others prefer a non-competitive environment. Think about what the prize(s) will be, for example with a headline act at the next event or a meal and drink at the bar.

Time & Date of Open Mic event: the benefit of online open mic events is that performers can participate without location being a barrier. However, it is helpful to be aware of time differences for example by using a time zone calculator. As a host, if you have performers who are joining an online open mic event, it is good to offer those performers an earlier slot on the setlist. Check what other open mic events are taking place at the same time and it can be a good idea to avoid selecting a date and time when other open mic events are taking place to maximise opportunities for performers to take part.

Event Frequency: some open mic events take place every month and others are one-off events. Eventbrite allows you to create an event on multiple dates.

Signing Up Process: lots of open mic events use [Eventbrite](#) as a tool to enable performers to sign up. Other approaches use a Google document. Open mic events are also promoted on social media. Ensure that you explain that you will only contact those who sign up for the purposes of open mic. Provide a contact email address to enable performers to get in touch if they have a question. Some open mic events have two levels of signing up for example for performers and another for the audience. Some open mic events charge for the event for example if they have to pay for venue hire and others are free. It may be possible to encourage performers and the audience to buy a drink at the bar or obtain a discount on a meal. Building up a positive relationship with the venue staff can be important.
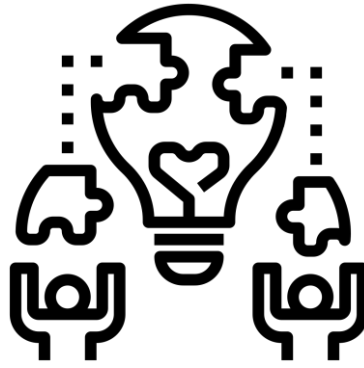
Rules: it is a good idea to be clear about how long performers have available to perform, how time limits will be communicated and what happens when a performer goes over their time slot. Some open mic events encourage performers to stay for the whole event if possible. However, this may not always be possible. it is important to create an inclusive and accessible event. Be clear about expected behaviour for example by encouraging everyone to be supportive, no hate speech, racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia. Be respectful! Explain what will happen if rules are broken.

Performer Expectations: explain how long each performer will have for example a 5-minute slot, how time limits will be communicated to performers such as a 1-minute warning, and what will happen if they go over their allotted time. You can encourage performers to join the event early to see who is present to organise the set list. Some hosts prefer performers to read from memory and others are not prescriptive. It is a good idea to communicate expectations before the event. Some hosts invite performers to sign up on a Google document prior to the event and performers can provide a short biography and information about their performance. It is a good idea to be aware of sharing settings in order that people can edit the document.

Host Expectations: usually an open mic has a host or multiple hosts to ensure that the event can run smoothly. One of the core roles of the host is to welcome everyone, introduce the acts, explain the structure and plan of the event and ensure the event is running on time. In an online capacity on Zoom, hosts can create co-host or an alternate host. There may be a need to monitor the chat and share screen. It is a good idea to provide contact details of the host and organiser for anyone who might have a question about the open mic event, for example a telephone number and email address.

Pedagogic Benefits: an open mic is an opportunity for everyone to have a voice. It is an inclusive, accessible and interdisciplinary methodology that can be customised according to the learning context. It provides a way to cultivate a dialogic space in an online, face-to-face or hybrid capacity. Students can take part in a meaningful collaborative learning opportunity with different roles for example host. An article was published in the Creative Academic exploring the open mic model here (McDonald, 2022). Perhaps the open mic model could be seen as an opportunity to develop a "community of practice" (Lave and Wenger, 1991: p30).

After the Open Mic Event: it is possible to ask for feedback in order to improve the event, this could take the form of an online questionnaire such as Google Forms. Some open mics use their social media presence to share photographs and recordings of the event. Some performers like to blog about their poems and performances, for example here (Nadan, 2022).

Part 2 - Basic Open Mic Template

Open Mic Title	
Event Theme	
Event Focus	
Location	
Accessibility	
Promotion	
Event Recording	
Open mic/Headline/Invited Acts	
Competitive Components	
Date & Time	
Event Frequency	

Example sign-up table:

Time	Name	Short Bio, social media handle	Email Address (we will use this email to communicate with you about the event and provide Zoom joining instructions only)	Title of Performance	Type (e.g. poetry, music)
17:00					
Headline Act					

Rules	
Performer Expectations	
Host Information	
Benefits of Participation (optional)	
Contact Information	
After the event & Feedback (optional)	

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Logo Name	Creator	URL
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Themes	Rflor	https://thenounproject.com/icon/themes-200559/
Theatre	Adrien Coquet	https://thenounproject.com/icon/theatre-3677437/
Everyone	WEBTECHOPS LLP	https://thenounproject.com/icon/everyone-1996757/
Promotion	ProSymbols	https://thenounproject.com/icon/promotion-2183753/
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Singer	Luis Prado	https://thenounproject.com/icon/singer-1566300/
When	Creative Mahira	https://thenounproject.com/icon/when-4968702/
Sign Up	Arslan Shahid	https://thenounproject.com/icon/sign-up-52477/
Rules	Arthur Shlain	https://thenounproject.com/icon/rules-550432/
Stand Up	Adrien Coquet	https://thenounproject.com/icon/stand-up-4160115/
Host	Ade Nur Hidayat	https://thenounproject.com/icon/host-3955647/
Learning	Nithinan Tatah	https://thenounproject.com/icon/learning-2484518/
Feedback	PenSmasher	https://thenounproject.com/icon/feedback-3308579/