

Accessories

Earbud headphones

To practice with. A lot of phones have amp-simulator apps for guitarists now, or you might just need to listen to the chorus that you simply can't get in your head.

Earplugs

Get a good quality set of earplugs. Your ears are your best asset as a musician, look after them!

Extension power leads (cords)

I prefer to use reels as they are easy to transport. Where possible, ensure the lead is black—a white lead sticks out like a sore thumb on a dark stage.

Instrument stand

Don't leave your pride and joy to slip down the amplifier while you're having a pint in the break.

Microphone

Even if you don't sing regularly, if you have one, bring it to gigs. You never know when the lead mic will go out. If you're a singer, you absolutely need to carry a spare microphone with you, with spare XLR cables (cords), even if (especially if!) you normally go wireless.

MP3 Player with a playlist already set up

When you've finished playing the set, having the option of a bit of background music playing is great to offer pubs, and almost essential for a wedding. Remember to remove set list songs!

Power leads (cords) for gadgets

Using a tablet, laptop or MP3 player in the gig? Make sure you can charge it.

Tuner

Guitarists, bassists: this isn't an option, it's a necessity. You may have one built into your amp or pedal, which is fine, but there's no excuse for being out of tune!

Spares

Power leads (cords)

If your amp has a detachable power lead (called IEC leads or Kettle Leads), bring a spare.

Spare batteries

If you use batteries in anything, take a spare or two.

Spare leads (Jack, XLR, Amplifier/Speaker)

Always carry spares of these if you use them. My rule of thumb is: carry at least one spare for each lead you use, plus one extra (just in case). Make sure you've got a mixture of lengths with you, too. If you're a vocalist, I recommend carrying 3 x 20-foot leads with you as a minimum. If you use an amplifier and it needs speaker leads, bring a spare. Please note, these are not the same as guitar leads, so don't confuse the two.

Spare strings

Don't be the person that needs to take a twenty-mile round trip to get a spare string five minutes before the local music shop closes. Just...Don't. Bass players, this includes you. Although it happens less regularly than it does for guitarists, bass strings can (and do) snap.

Tools

Adjustable spanner (wrench)

If you have anything that has a nut on it (jack input, strap-locks), bring an adjustable spanner. Because finger-tightening is never enough!

Pocket torch (flashlight)

To look behind amps, inside guitar bodies and to use as a pretend lightsabre in the dusty backstage area before the show.

Scissors

Trust me, you never know when you'll need them!

Tools (continued)

Screwdriver

Do yourself a favour and get a multi-bit screwdriver, and make sure you have heads to fit anything you need to unscrew or tighten—scratch-plate (pickguard), microphone stand, battery compartments, strap-locks, etc.

Soldering iron & solder

If you can solder, a battery-operated soldering iron can get you out of a jam if you have a broken lead. Not strictly necessary if you have enough spares.

String winders

For electric and acoustic guitars—if you don't have one already, this will save you a lot of time in a string change.

Utility knife

Just like scissors, you never know when you'll need one.

Wire-cutters

For changing strings.

Consumables

Cable ties (reusable)

Fantastic for quick fixes when someone has used all your gaffer tape or, you know...for keeping cables tidy! I prefer the Velcro ones as they're easy to use and reuse, but I usually have a couple of plastic spares too.

Electrical tape

For 'tagging' your gear. Also great for quick fixes with cable insulation or creating comedy 'high definition' eyebrows.

Gaffer tape

The king of tape. If it moves and it shouldn't, use gaffer tape. Great for reducing trip hazards.

Masking Tape

For writing who's in what PA channel or attaching your pick to the microphone stand.

Basic Necessities

Food and water

Unless you categorically know you can get food and drink at a reasonable price, always, always pack a couple of bottles of water and a sandwich to tide you over.

Marker pens

For set-lists, directions home, phone numbers of cute bar men/maids. Try to stick to black, since it's easy to see under most light colours.

Painkillers/aspirin

Playing your set with a thumping headache is not a great idea (probably you just need to drink more water!).

Paper

For use with the pens and making origami in the break.

Phone Charger

Sitting for two hours backstage can lead to a quick battery drain while playing Candy Crush

Plasters (Band-Aids)

It might not look glamorous, but it's a damn sight better than bleeding over everything.

Small Towel

Humans sweat. If you're jumping round on stage, bring a small towel (not a bath towel!) to wipe your brow if you need it, rather than squinting at the audience through a waterfall of sweat. You'll actually find a small towel, like a beer towel, is invaluable for quickly cleaning things too if need be.