

Wernick Method Teacher Information

To Prospective Jam Class Teachers

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Overview

Pete Wernick has created a format for teaching bluegrass, having formalized his methods of bluegrass jamming instruction **and certifying teachers to offer weekly bluegrass jam classes**. **The Wernick Method office in North Carolina supports the certified teachers' classes** with a smooth-running organization responsible for administration, guidance, evaluation, and a healthy measure of promotion. For this group of services, the **Wernick Method generally takes 15% of a class's total tuition income**. With smaller classes, the cut is either one full tuition or 25% of income, whichever is less.

Certified teachers receive written and video training in the Wernick Method with **personalized support, publicity** through the popular LetsPick.org (a.k.a. DrBanjo.com) website, email, and the **customized flyer and publicity materials**. While scheduling and pricing are left to the individual teachers, The Wernick Method handles:

- **registration**
- **payments and inquiries**
- **student orientation**
- **study materials**
- **rosters**
- **collecting and summarizing student evaluations**

SINCE 2010...

More than 100 teachers nationwide, in Australia, Canada, and Europe have received Wernick Method certification. Over 900 classes have been completed, with over 10,000 students registered. Publicity for the Wernick Method is ongoing, with our active Facebook page, web ads on multiple bluegrass-related sites, and in a variety of bluegrass-related publications including *Bluegrass Unlimited*, *Fiddler*, and *Banjo Newsletter*. Our online class pages are viewed typically at least 150 times each, sometimes many more thanks to websites of festival class venues or social media work by the teacher. Roughly half of our students first heard of the class directly from our publicity (website, emails, ads).

Student Satisfaction

Student satisfaction, as measured in detailed anonymous evaluation forms, is very high, with figures from our first 870 classes (through Fall 2019) showing:

	5	4	3	2	1
<i>Fun</i>	4612	1246	186	32	10
<i>Good learning experience</i>	4414	1434	226	46	24
<i>Worth the Money</i>	4453	1173	267	71	36

Wernick Method students say:

“This is the method I’ve been looking for, learning to jam with others without using books and training my ear!”

“Your method is most fun and rewarding. This is the way music should be taught!”

“This class exceeded my expectations in a huge way!”

“I am impressed that you improve the quality of the course with surveys and feedback.”

“I really love the approach to music theory. Never tried to learn by ear before—so much fun.”

“I learned a lot more than I ever thought I would. It was great value and I will be spreading the word.”

How Do I Get Certified?

The Wernick Method is eager to certify qualified teachers. Currently there is no fee to apply for certification, or to be certified. Nor is there a charge for the training materials, and no fee is taken until the beginning of the teacher’s first class.

To qualify, a teacher should have a **multi-year involvement with bluegrass music**, preferably as either a performer or teacher. There is no need to be a multi-instrumentalist, but all teachers are expected to be able to **play rudimentary bluegrass guitar, carry a tune vocally, be able to play passable lead breaks on an instrument**, and to understand and be able to communicate the roles of the different bluegrass instruments and voices. **A Wernick Method teacher must be familiar as a participant in bluegrass jamming.** Group teaching experience is valuable but not required.

To learn more about certification and being a Wernick Method teacher, request our introductory folder with a hard copy of this document (how we work with teachers), the Essentials of the Wernick Method, our student prep materials, and sample flyer.

Take special note of the document **Wernick Method Essentials**, which outlines the Wernick Method sequence and philosophy. Once you’ve had a chance to review all the materials, we will invite you to arrange a one-to-two-hour phone call with Pete Wernick to discuss your bluegrass experience, the Wernick Method, and to answer any questions.

You may be asked to provide a **recorded sample** of your playing, preferably as part of a group, to show your competence as a player who can play rhythm and lead on a bluegrass instrument, and sing reasonably in-pitch.

If Pete feels satisfied that you are qualified to try a provisionally-certified first Wernick Method class, by the end of the call he will grant provisional certification, pending the receipt by the Wernick Method Office of the signed Wernick Method Essentials document, with your signature agreeing that you will teach these skills and this philosophy whenever you are advertised as a Wernick Method teacher. This is our only required signed document.

What comes with certification?

Once the signed “Essentials” document is received, you will be mailed a **“Provisional Wernick Method Teaching Certificate”** to allow you to start teaching Wernick Method classes. The certification is subject to termination if a teacher allows a year to go by without offering a class, or if student comments indicate significant problems with the teaching that aren’t being properly addressed.

Upon provisional certification by Pete Wernick, teachers receive by mail (not-to-be-copied) teacher training materials:

- Teachers Guide: lesson plans for weekly classes
- Jam coaching guide
- Transcribed excerpts from Pete’s teaching videos
- Teacher training DVD and CD
- Email guidance for class planning, organizing, and marketing
- Weekly emailed Newsletter specifically for Wernick Method teachers (incl. weekly stats for each class’s signup and web pageviews, plus latest teaching and marketing ideas)
- Consultations with Pete re teaching, class planning, etc are available by email and phone.
- The Wernick Method Office (office@letspick.org) is at your service regarding administrative matters.

Summarizing the benefits the Wernick Method gives teachers:

- Full teacher training, in text, CD, and DVD
- Customized class flyer for each class
- Class page on LetsPick.org for each class
- Administration: registration, roster, handling payments, inquiries
- Customized promo blasts to our email list
- Guidance for class planning, organizing, and local marketing
- Student materials, emailed and hard copy including JAM Songbook (free to students and also provided to teachers for resale)
- Access to exclusive online Wernick Method Teachers Library and Reference Archive
- Subscription to weekly Wernick Method Teachers Newsletter
- Consult with Pete as needed
- Anonymous student evaluations & summary

Wernick Method Teachers Say

- *“You guys have been a great support for me the whole way. You’ve done everything you said you would, and I appreciate your clear, common sense communication.”* (Gilbert Nelson, NC)
- *“Thank you very much for all you do. I could not do this without Pete’s great lead and the Wernick Method Office’s help. Lots of encouragement, and good ideas.”* (Patsy Kline, PA)
- *“This method really works!”* (Ira Gitlin, DC)
- *“Good ideas to put into practical use. All the publicity is really encouraging people to sign up!”* (Heidi Olsen, NJ)
- *“I’m feeling pretty confident, especially with Pete’s helpful instructor materials. Pete was also very helpful in a phone conversation after my first class.”* (Lynn Young, WY)
- *“A very valuable and effective program that fills a real need for players. The reports help my teaching. I used the feedback from my last sessions to modify what I did, and will continue to do.”* (Bob Altschuler, NY)

How a Wernick Method teacher gets started

Upon certification, a teacher is expected to start planning their first class. Typically and preferably, the class starts within 6 months of certification. (If no class is scheduled in that time by the teacher, certification may be reviewed and withdrawn.)

The teacher **selects and arranges for a class venue** that meets basic criteria provided. The venue needs both an **adequate-for-12 main teaching room and at least one other room** adequate for a second simultaneous smaller jam.

To publicize his/her class, **the teacher must promptly provide the Wernick Method Office:**

1. A color “head shot” (photo of their face in a friendly expression) with instrument visible
2. No fewer than 4 short student quotes indicating satisfaction with the teacher’s way of teaching, with some emphasis preferred on how they make novices comfortable
3. Short bio (under 200 words, will be edited to 100 or less) including their main band associations, teaching experience, and honors such as contest wins.

The teacher **sets the tuition, time and place of the classes, number of sessions, class start and end dates and times. Recommended class session length** is 2.5 - 4 hours, with 20 hours total the recommended standard. **Suggested pricing** is typically \$10-12 per teaching hour, or roughly \$25-30 per typical 2.5 weeknight session. So an 8-session class might cost \$195- \$225. A weekend afternoon class of five 4-hour sessions might cost the same. Some experienced teachers have tried higher pricing with good results (consistent with students giving their classes high scores on “well worth the money”).

A standard early discount is offered (optional -- can be removed at teacher’s request), usually \$10 off before a deadline of a month pre-class. Other discounts can be added at the teacher’s request.

(If class size is over 9, an assistant/coach is needed for the 2nd half of the first few class sessions, coached small group jam time. **If attendance exceeds 16, a third room and a second assistant will be needed,** at least for the small-group jamming part of the first 2-3 class sessions.)

How the Wernick Method facilitates the class

Upon receipt of the above content, and with a venue chosen, and dates and pricing determined, **the Wernick Method Office promptly creates the class’s web page and flyer**, for approval by Pete and the teacher. With that approval, the class is officially scheduled and listed on LetsPick.org to take payments and registrations, and a PDF file of the flyer is sent to the teacher for printing and distribution.

Promotion includes emails by the Wernick Method Office (at least one as part of a 5x/year email to our full list, advertising all upcoming classes with links to each class’s page; also a customized followup email for each class to our list in its region, 2-3 weeks out). Weekly classes are advertised to a circle within 70 miles of the venue. Camps (teaching on consecutive full days) and classes at festivals are advertised to a larger region, a 250-mile radius. Teachers may request customized print and web ads and radio announcements, created at no charge by the Wernick Method Office (allow 2 weeks’ lead time pre-publication deadline).

Students register through the LetsPick.org website, though if a class is to be offered through a music store, music camp, or other sponsoring organization, other arrangements are possible. Teachers typically collect payment balances and may also collect deposits or full payments, with all included in the accounting.

The Wernick Method Office **registers students, collects deposits** and promptly **emails the students their class materials**. In time for the first class session, the Office **emails to the teacher the student roster and an accounting of deposits and registrations received**. Once the class has started and the accounting is approved by the teacher, the Office **mails the teacher a check for collected deposits (less the Wernick Method fee and any other amounts owed to the Office)** as well as an updated roster for printing and distributing to students.

For each class, the Wernick Method generally takes 15% of a class's total tuition income. An exception: With smaller classes, the cut is either one full tuition or 25% of income, whichever is less. The other exception: The WM cut for overseas classes is 10%.

Evaluation / Continued Certification

The evaluation process is a critical part of the Wernick Method system.

Two sessions into a teacher's first class, students are invited by email to take a short survey about the class, no name required. Within days, a summary report is tabulated and sent to both the teacher and Pete, who reviews with the teacher any concerns raised from the report.

Immediately following that class and every subsequent class, students are invited to take a larger survey. Response rate is 60-90% and typically the students highly approve of the teaching. The surveys may also raise problems and suggestions which call for discussion (generally by email) with Pete.

If serious problems are indicated, a "probationary" situation may be called for, where continued certification depends on the teacher's concern and improvement based on Pete's mentoring. Certification is rarely revoked but is possible if the teacher is not successful at improving their performance or if Pete deems them uncooperative.

The key factor in continued certification is the student evaluations viewed as a whole. While perfection is never expected, closely following the Wernick Method Essentials and student reports and overall satisfaction are the main determinants of continued certification.

FAQs

What are the qualifications for a Wernick Method teacher?

For Pete to certify someone as a Wernick Method teacher, he looks for the following:

- ability to play passable bluegrass, with ability to sing and play melody-based solos on an instrument as part of bluegrass jamming. Performing experience is not needed, but bluegrass jamming experience is necessary.
- rudimentary rhythm guitar skill, to accompany basic singing (or someone you'll work with to provide that at all classes)
- some teaching experience -- group teaching is best, music teaching is best... but neither is required, and people who have never taught will still be considered
- no age requirement
- interest in teaching the Wernick Method, including an understanding of what the Wernick Method is
- promise to conduct oneself appropriately with everyone involved in Wernick Method classes
- active interest in starting to teach Wernick Method classes in the near future

Pete says: "None of the above requirements are what I consider 'stiff' The Wernick Method is mostly common knowledge and plain common sense for a person who knows bluegrass. If someone's friendly and knows how to explain things, that is typically enough, as long as the teaching goes from our training materials (50 printed pages including Teachers Guide, plus DVD and audio CD).

The students are our 'eyes and ears' about how the teacher is doing. We request all students answer detailed online (and anonymous) surveys and we and the teacher see all the responses and a summary. So I keep an eye on how the teachers are doing in that way."

Is there a minimum number for a class?

That is at the teacher's discretion. Our method of getting paid covers our minimum. If a class is canceled, all deposits are promptly returned.

Is there a maximum number for a class?

We can play this by ear but it depends on the available space, the skills and comfort level of the teacher, and the quality of the assistance available for small group jam coaching. Generally Pete has limited his camp class size to 33 or 35.

What are the exact requirements for the class venue?

One room in the venue will be used for all-class teaching, and must accommodate at least 12 students. At least one other room must be available for a second jam group, and must accommodate at least 5 people. The place should be reasonably comfortable with adequate chairs for all to sit if desired... and for guitar players especially, chairs without arms are necessary. The venue must be reasonably accessible by car with nearby parking, and with running water and bathrooms available. In outdoor locations in warm weather, generally only shade and shelter from rain are required. For indoor venues, climate control is necessary.

Am I required to teach to the letter strictly according to the Wernick Method, or may I include my own methodology?

This has to be considered case by case. The Wernick Method is spelled out clearly in the Teacher Guide each certified teacher is provided, and the single-page summary **Wernick Method Essentials** can be found in the Teachers section of LetsPick.org.

If you have different methods or ideas you intend to use, Pete will want to know what they are, and he'll let you know his recommendation. The specifics of his method can be flexible, but need to be consistent with the essential philosophy. Teachers are always welcome to consult with Pete about teaching methods. It's possible that a teacher consultation will result in an expansion of the Wernick Method!

What exactly does it mean to be Wernick-certified?

It means you are eligible to run a Wernick Method Bluegrass Jam Class. When you are ready to offer a class, the venue and schedule must be OK'ed and the class is then scheduled and advertised.

Wernick certification is given provisionally at first, and continued according to the trust that the teacher is doing a good job teaching the Wernick Method, as seen by his/her students.

What makes a Wernick Method jam class different from ones that others may be doing?

The Wernick Method provides:

- Time-tested and field-tested full lesson plans based on Pete's experience hosting over 100 jam camps and overseeing all Wernick Method classes and camps since 2010, always guided by detailed student evaluation forms
- An extensive guide for jam coaching
- Student materials emailed directly to students, and supplied to teachers in hard copy at no cost, to distribute at the first class session, with name tags and other optional supplies available at cost to teachers
- Online registration and receiving deposits, accounting and payment to teachers at time of the first class session
- Customized advertising materials, a full page announcement and listing on LetsPick.org, as well as email publicity locally and listings in online and national publication print advertising
- Class evaluation by students with all (anonymous) comments and full summaries

What if a student can only make it to some of the class sessions, or is relatively advanced and doesn't need the elementary first sessions?

In general, we prefer the class not be fragmented by inconsistent attendance, but exceptions may be made at the teacher's discretion. Advanced players can be given the useful challenge of playing at slow speeds (with extra-challenging assignments given that can be addressed in the context of a slow jam), so there can be many benefits of the first jam sessions even with novices present. Players willing to lead slow and easy songs are given those opportunities and receive valuable experience. With sufficient numbers of experienced jammers, the teacher may elect for those students to opt out of the teaching of the basics and jam in a separate room, coached by an assistant.

What is the policy re setting tuition?

We leave that completely to the individual teacher, according to what he/she thinks fits the market. Suggested rates are based on about \$10-12 per teaching hour.

Who pays for the production of flyers, or the cost of advertising?

The teacher or a sponsor (working with the teacher) pays. The Wernick Method office provides at no charge customized pdf files for the printing of flyers, or print or web ads as needed.

How much lead time is needed for advertising a class?

Optimally, two or more months' lead time maximizes attendance. However, the ideal lead time can vary according to the local situation: With optimal and timely exposure, publicity might only need to appear starting a few weeks ahead of the class.

What is the procedure regarding hiring, overseeing, and paying of assistants?

The first two or three class sessions involving more than one small-group jam must have each jam attended at all times by either the teacher or an assistant. Assistants are hired at the discretion of the Wernick Method teacher, with attention to their qualifications and ability to coach small group jamming. After the small-group jams are determined by the teacher to be able to go on without important difficulties (insufficient material, "train wrecks", etc.), it's not necessary for all jams to be always attended by a teacher or assistant. The teacher may rotate between groups while leaving one or more unattended, at his/her discretion.

When student registration reaches 9, plan on two groups for small-group jam time. The teacher is then expected to arrange for an assistant to be there for at least the small-group jam time for the first two or three class sessions. Or the teacher may arrange for the assistant to be there during the entire class, for as many class sessions as the teacher chooses.

Any pay arrangement for the assistant is worked out between the teacher and the assistant, and not overseen by the Wernick Method Office.

The name and mailing address of the assistant must be emailed to the Wernick Method Office as soon as the assistant is arranged for, so that the Office may send him/her by mail a (not-to-be-copied) copy of the Jam Coaching Guide. The assistant is expected to study the guide and to abide by it during coaching sessions. The teacher is expected to stay in touch with the assistant after each class session, to make sure the assistant is aware of and working well with the Wernick Method principles spelled out in the Coaching Guide. If student comments reflect that the assistants are not doing their job according to Wernick Method principles, the teacher will be asked to do a better supervisory job.

If a class needs to be canceled or rescheduled, what is the procedure?

If a class looks as though it might be canceled due to low signups, the teacher is expected to contact any students who did sign up, to let them know the class may be canceled. The final call is made by the teacher 24 hours ahead of the scheduled class, and the cancellation is announced directly by the teacher to the signed up students, who are given options for how to receive their refund. The options are outlined in an email sent to the teacher.

If a teacher cancels a class, he/she is subject to a cancellation fee of \$50, deducted from their pay from the next class they offer. The fee may be waived if Pete determines that the teacher made a conscientious effort to publicize the class.

Postponements are dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Individual sessions that need to be rescheduled before the class starts are shown as soon as possible on the online class page. For any student already signed up, the rescheduled sessions must be acceptable or they are entitled to a full refund. If one or more sessions are rescheduled during the duration of the class, the teacher is responsible for informing all the students and the Wernick Method office, to allow for adjusting the timing of post-class automated emails. If a student is unable to attend a rescheduled session, the teacher should offer a refund pro-rated for each session the student is unable to attend.

What about the Wernick Method classes at bluegrass festivals?

Wernick Method teachers offer classes at many festivals coast to coast and overseas, since festivals are where so many of our “target audience” can be found. The classes are typically 2 hours per day, for 3 days. We have a guide for teachers wanting to do this kind of class, covering everything from how to arrange it and publicize it, to how to teach it. We recommend festival classes for all teachers -- but only once they have experience teaching weekly classes, due to the extra challenges of teaching compressed classes in “festival mode”.

Are Wernick Method classes taught at music camps?

Music camps with a Wernick Method teacher on their staffs work with us to provide their students a hands-on jam instruction program within the camp. The teacher can coordinate other staff teachers in coaching student jams, using the Wernick Method Jam Coaching Guide. The Wernick Method charges the camp a nominal fee, for promotional and other services to the camp. We advertise our “class within a camp” on our website just like other classes and permit the use of our logo on the camp’s promotional materials. Jam Coaching Guides are provided to camp faculty serving as jam coaches.

Are there any limitations on the overlaps of classes in a given region?

Yes. We try to detect when teachers are planning classes in close proximity in a given region, and have them communicate to minimize the overlap through scheduling in different time periods or different days of the week.

What if I prefer not to offer weekly classes, in favor of weekend camps that can draw students from further away and provide a “full-immersion” learning experience?

We prefer in most cases that a teacher offer their first class as a weekly class, to allow for a spread-out introduction to teaching the Wernick Method syllabus. Exceptions are made in relatively low-population areas, where weekly classes are less practical than weekend camps.