



Ukulele for Beginners

Everything you need to start playing the ukulele, except for a ukulele!

- A Brief History of the Ukulele
- Basic Information about the Ukulele
- How to Tune a Ukulele
- 13 Chords
- 12 Pages of Skill Drills
- 21 Different Songs

YouTube Playlist for all Drills & Songs:

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8_PsjHwo54SxMtz_OyyYoiLNI24i5kn4

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Just a Note:

This lesson book has been created for use at the **Silver Creek International Ukulele Festival**, an annual ukulele festival held in August in Two Harbors, Minnesota. The materials for the first five chords come from a YouTube series that I created during COVID lockdown to help beginners have a firm foundation on the ukulele before moving to other resources on YouTube and elsewhere. That original material has been modified for this lesson book, and *many* more chords and songs have been added. Most of the songs are in the public domain, though some may not be. I have tried to stay away from licensed materials, and to use commonly known folk songs but do want it to be known that this complete work is being given away and is not being sold. If you want to play more songs with chords you know, visit the searchable index at ukeability.org.

If you want to support the work that I do on the ukulele, you can always watch my videos at [YouTube.com/ukestuff](https://www.youtube.com/ukestuff) (each view generates less than 1/3 of 1¢), or buy me a cup of coffee (or a few!) at <https://www.buymeacoffee.com/ukestuff>

My ukulele play along channel, [YouTube.com/ukeplayalongs](https://www.youtube.com/ukeplayalongs) doesn't earn revenue, and my website, all free, is at ukestuff.info

Christopher J. Russell, July 2023

History of the Ukulele

The ukulele is a fretted string instrument with four strings and is a part of the lute family. As such it is related to the guitar, but is not a “small guitar.” In Hawaiian, it is spelled ‘ukulele and is pronounced “oo-koo-ley-ley.” Ukuleles are made out of a number of combinations of plastic, laminate wood, and solid wood, and generally are available in four main sizes: soprano, concert, tenor, and baritone.

In the late 1800s, Hawaii brought in foreign workers to work in the sugar fields, and several wood workers from the Autonomous Region of Madeira came to take advantage of the opportunity. Manuel Nunes, Jose do Espirito Santo, and Augusto Dias are credited as the first ukulele makers, arriving in Hawaii in 1879 on the ship Ravenscrag. The ukulele is a combination of two instruments from Madiera: the tuning of the rajão and its body from the cavaquinho/machete/braguinha. The oldest known ukulele was made by Jose do Espirito Santo in 1879. Hawaii’s King David Kalākaua loved the instrument, and as a result, it became very popular and a permanent part of Hawaiian culture.

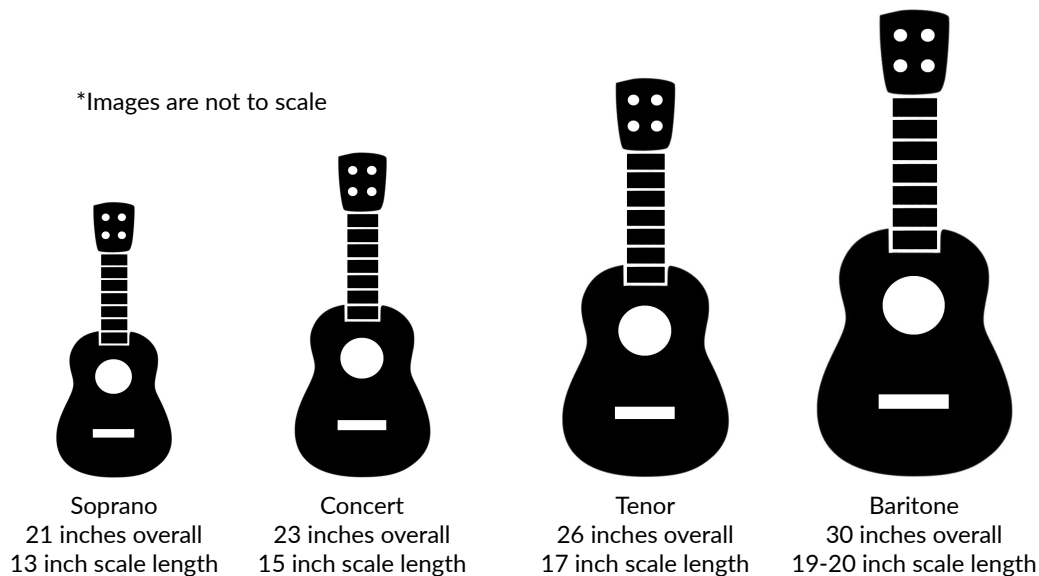
The ukulele came to the attention of the mainland United States in an exhibit about Hawaii at the 1915 Pan American Exposition. People heard and saw the ukulele and wanted to play it. As a result, many ukuleles were sold, and sheet music was commonly sold in music stores with ukulele chords, much like sheet music is usually sold with guitar chords today.

The second wave of popularity of the ukulele began in the 1950s as a result of the Arthur Godfrey Show. Arthur Godfrey played the Baritone ukulele, but also advertised a plastic ukulele made by Maccaferri—and over nine million of them were sold!

The third wave of popularity of the ukulele started between 2006 and 2010, thanks in part to the many books by Jim Beloff, a viral video made by ukulele virtuoso Jake Shimabukuro, and eventually the popularity of IZ’s *Over the Rainbow*.

The ukulele has become an instrument that is used around the world in pop music and popular culture, and people love the affordability, portability, and approachability of the instrument. The ukulele is an amazing instrument that allows people to play and sing their music, whatever kind of music that is!

Sizes of the Ukulele



Ukulele sizes can be confusing for new players. We classify ukuleles by their scale length--the distance between the nut and the saddle of a ukulele. Ultimately, larger scale instruments offer more space between frets than smaller scale instruments. You can play any size of ukulele, but you may develop a preference for a particular size. Players with large hands may find larger scales easier to play; players smaller hands may find smaller scales easier to play. While there are other sizes, the four primary sizes of the ukulele are soprano, concert, tenor, and baritone.

The smallest of these four sizes is the soprano, which was the original size of the ukulele. The scale length of a soprano is around thirteen inches. Sopranos are known to be punchy and bright, and are exceptionally good for providing harmonic and rhythmic support. Most sopranos are tuned GCEA, but there are many alternative tunings including ADF#B. Some people think the soprano is too small to play and is a toy—but that is untrue. The soprano is a legitimate instrument, and it is the size of ukulele that started it all.

Increasing in size, the next ukulele is the concert ukulele. Some experts think that the Martin taropatch, created in the 1910s, was the inspiration for the concert ukulele. A taropatch has eight strings, and is slightly larger than a soprano ukulele. If you remove four of the eight strings on a taropatch, you end up with a concert ukulele. Some sources suggest that “concert” is used because the instrument shares the same tuning and pitch range as a soprano ukulele; others think it filled a concert hall better than a soprano ukulele. If the ukulele were named “alto,” it would usually indicate that a concert ukulele has a lower range than a soprano ukulele, which is not true. The scale length of a concert ukulele is around fifteen inches. Concert ukuleles are often popular with beginning adult players as they offer more space on the fretboard and have a slightly fuller sound than a soprano ukulele.

Sizes of the Ukulele (continued)

The tenor ukulele was a natural progression for the instrument—if you’re going to make a concert ukulele, why not make it a little bigger? The first tenor ukuleles were introduced in the mid 1920s. While the tenor ukulele is larger than soprano and concert ukuleles, it is tuned the same and shares the same range. The tenor body creates a sound that tends to be louder and more complex than smaller ukuleles. The name “tenor” may not refer to the vocal range comparison (as the tuning is the same as a soprano) but instead the original price of the instrument (“Ten or so dollars.”). The scale length of a tenor ukulele is around seventeen inches, and string tension will be noticeably higher on a tenor than on a concert or a soprano. There is a myth that professionals only play tenor ukuleles—but many professionals do play tenor because of its sound quality and volume, and because the highest frets are easier to play with slightly more space.

Baritone ukuleles were introduced in the 1940s, much later than any of the other scale lengths. The baritone, due to its size, has a much deeper and fuller tone than other scales of the ukulele. In general, baritones have a scale length of nineteen to twenty inches. The baritone also uses different tuning than other ukuleles—DGBE—exactly like the top four strings of a guitar. This makes the baritone easier for guitarists to play, but the different tuning can be a real challenge for ukulele players who are used to ukuleles that are tuned GCEA. With its different tuning and larger size, the baritone ukulele has had a mixed reception in the ukulele world. There are fewer overall resources for the baritone, but on the bright side, baritones have become increasingly popular and there are more models available than ever before!

There are also a number of other ukulele sizes, including nano, sopranissimo, sopranino, long neck soprano, long neck concerts, long neck tenors, and bass; as well as ukuleles with different numbers of strings (four to eight).

In the long run, it doesn’t matter what scale you play, as long as you are happy playing it!

Buying a Ukulele

Here are my rules for buying a ukulele.

- 1) Don't buy the cheapest ukulele.
- 2) Don't buy the most expensive ukulele.
- 3) Buy a ukulele that is set up well.
- 4) Buy an instrument that is appealing to you, so you will be encouraged to practice.

There are a lot of good ukuleles on the market, some at entry level pricing. The most important factors for your first instrument are that it is set-up correctly (we'll come back to this in a moment) and that you like it.

A set-up involves three things. First, it makes sure that the action...the string height...is set low enough to allow for easier playing without being so low as to create buzzing. Second, it involves making sure that the frets are level, to avoid buzzing. Finally, it makes sure that there are no sharp fret ends sticking out of the ukulele that will hurt you.

There are dealers who set-up every ukulele they sell, such as Mim's Ukes (VA), The Uke Republic (GA), The Ukulele Site (HI), Elderly Music (MI), Aloha City (IL), and the Southern Ukulele Store (UK).

If you have already bought a ukulele, and it has high action (bottom of string to top of fret) of more than 0.5mm at the 1st fret and 2.75mm at the 12th fret, or sharp fret edges, or buzzing, you will want to learn how to set up your own ukulele or take it to a luthier to get set-up, which can be a \$75 charge (or more).

Things to Buy with a Ukulele

- Clip-On Tuner
- String Winder with Clipper
- Extra Strings (I like Martin M600 for soprano & concert, and Martin M620 for tenor)
- Music Nomad Octopus Tool
- Music Nomad F-One Fretboard Oil
- String Action Ruler
- Gig bag (if your ukulele did not ship with one)
- Strap
- Capo?

Key Parts of the Ukulele

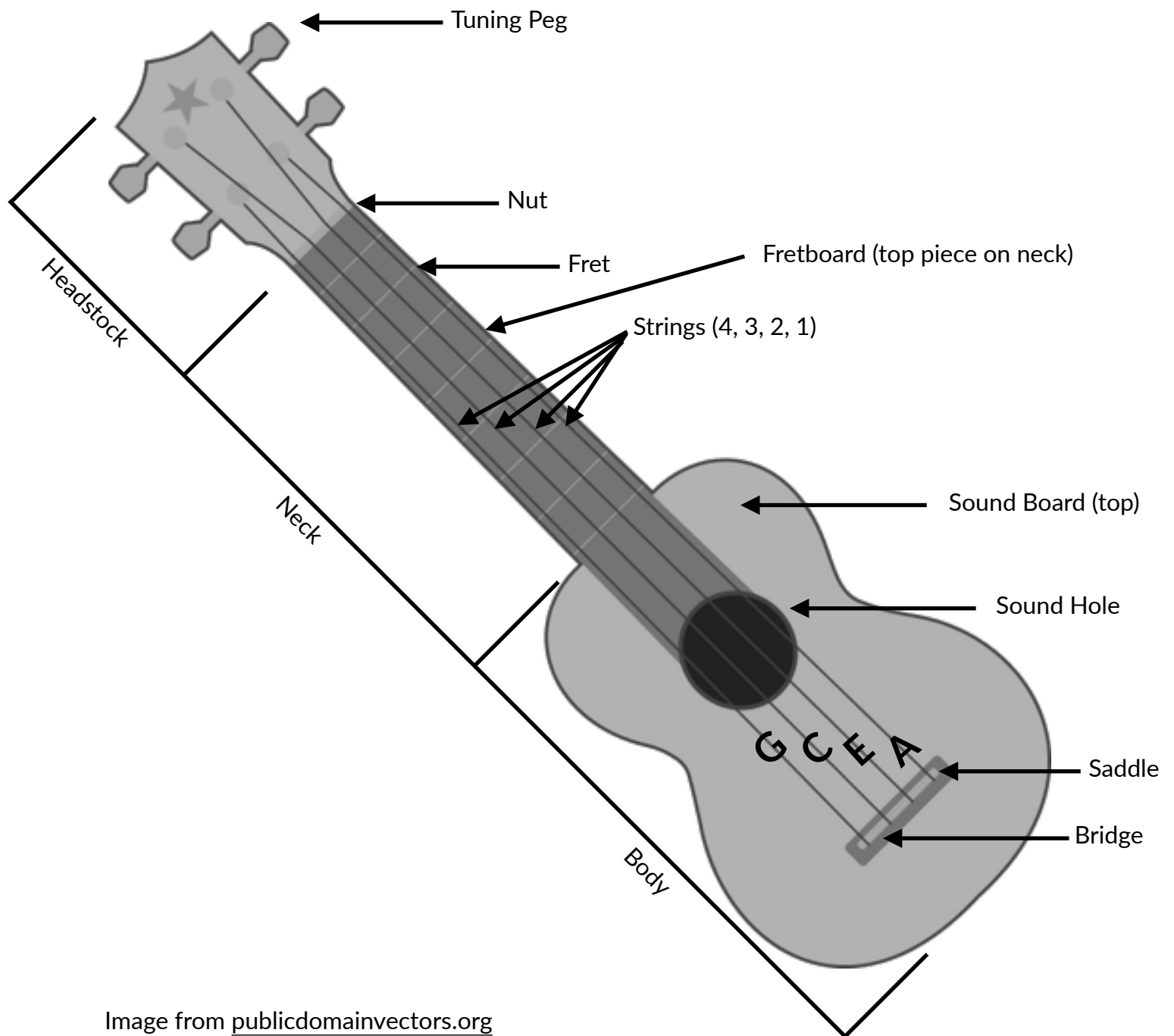


Image from publicdomainvectors.org
(Public Domain)

Tuning a Ukulele

While there are a number of tunings that can be used on the ukulele, we are going to use reentrant (High G) C6 tuning, where the strings are tuned GCEA. It gets a little confusing, but we call strings by numbers instead of pitch (because the pitch changes when you press down on the string), and in the numbering, the first string is lowest to the floor. Most people generally tune in reverse order (4, 3, 2, 1 or GCEA).

Another challenging aspect is that all of the notes of the ukulele are above the middle C on the piano. The fourth string G is actually ABOVE the third string C. This is called reentrant tuning, and it dates back to the creation of the ukulele, which borrowed most of its tuning from an existing five string instrument called the rajão. This special tuning is part of what gives the ukulele its unique sound. If you look closely, you will also notice that the lower the note, the thicker the string.

As you tune the ukulele, the two most important things to know are to a) know which way to turn to make the pitch go up or down, and b) to turn the knob for the correct string (we've all turned the wrong one). If you turn a string too far, it may break. Strings can be replaced, but many people are too intimidated to replace their own strings (don't be...there are many lessons on YouTube), and often do not have extra strings on hand. So...just make sure you are turning the correct tuning peg for the correct string!

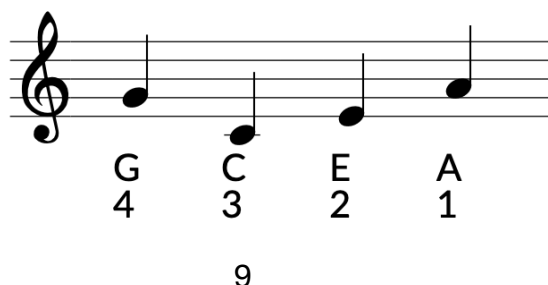
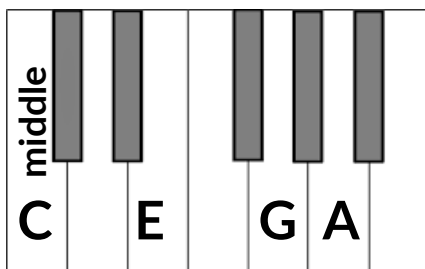
Also...new strings will stretch for a long time, so you need to tune, play, tune, play, etc. Some ukuleles come with low quality strings and will not hold their tuning (especially true with "bargain" ukuleles). If this happens, you will want to replace your strings. If you have played a ukulele a lot for over a week and it isn't holding pitch—it isn't the tuners—it's the strings, and you will want to get new ones.

There are three popular ways to tune a ukulele (if you don't have perfect pitch):

- 1) Match the Pitch (Piano, pitch pipe, tone generator)
- 2) Microphone Based Tuner
- 3) Vibration Based Tuner

In the first method, you hear the required pitch, and then turn the knob of each string until it matches or comes close to the pitch. This is what you will need to do the first time you tune a new ukulele. Some online tuners, such as the tuner on UkeBuddy.com, have an option to play the pitches as well.

On the piano, the pitches are:



Tuning a Ukulele (continued)

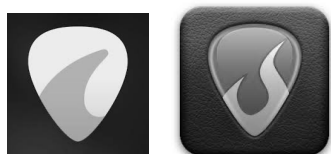
In the second method, you use a tuner with a microphone to make sure that each string is at the correct pitch. The most common microphone method is to use a phone app to tune your ukulele. This can be a challenge in a noisy environment, but if the phone can hear the ukulele, it can help you tune correctly. Many apps also include the ability to play the correct pitches, so that you can “generally” match the pitch (first method) before fine-tuning. There are many tuning apps, just a couple are listed below.

In the final method, the tuner measures vibrations (the very basis of sound) through the headstock of your instrument with a clip-on tuner or through the pickup on an internal tuner. These tuners tend to be highly accurate because they are sensing the direct vibration of the strings rather than listening for a pitch. Many clip-on tuners can be used with many instruments, and as a result, have a special setting for ukulele (usually indicated with a U or Uk), although you can also tune with the chromatic setting (usually indicated with a C). These tuners all require a power source, usually a battery—although some are USB rechargeable, so make sure that you turn off your tuner as soon as you are done using it. While these tuners usually have auto-shutoff, it is still best to turn them off.

With a clip on tuner or phone app, you want to hit the “center” of each note. If the indicator is to the left of the note letter name, the pitch of the string is too low (flat) and must be made higher (tighter) to hit the right note. If the indicator is to the right of the note letter name, the pitch of the string is too high (sharp), and must be made lower (loosen) to hit the right note. In general, it is usually best to tune a string up (approach from being too low), but do what you need to do to be in tune.

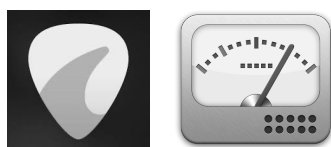
Once you have tuned, quickly tune again, just to be sure.

Apple iPhone



GuitarTuna Guitar Toolkit

android



GuitarTuna gstrings



Holding the Ukulele

Believe it or not, how you hold the ukulele greatly impacts your ability to play the ukulele.

1. Hold the ukulele next to your body
2. Hold the bottom of the ukulele in a snug grip with your right arm
3. The sound hole should face away from you, pointing away from your body, away from your belly button
4. The neck should be at the 10 o'clock position, and held in your left hand (if you are right handed)
5. If you turn the ukulele to look at your fingers, turn it back before you start to strum (learn to put your fingers down without looking at the top of the fretboard)
6. Try to avoid wrapping your thumb over the top of the neck, as this will impact your ability to move freely to other chords
7. Use your fingertips when making chord shapes
8. Your wrist should generally stay in line with your arm while making chord shapes
9. Don't press too hard; press just hard enough to get a clear sound on a fretted string
10. Your fingers will hurt when learning to play—take breaks often!
11. You can use a strap with a ukulele, and there are different kinds of straps. Some beginner ukulele packs include strap buttons and a strap. A strap gives you peace of mind while you play as you won't drop your ukulele, and it frees your left hand to move up and down the fretboard. For these lessons, a strap isn't essential, but as you move to barre chords in the future, or if you want to play standing up, a strap can be a great accessory to own



Cleaned up image from Wikimedia
(Public Domain Image)

How to Practice the Ukulele

If you want to learn how to play the ukulele, you are going to have to practice the ukulele. These lessons are intended to help you start playing, but you should practice the skill drills (when available) and songs until you can play them with confidence, and then move to the next video.

1. Choose a place and time you can practice without interruption
2. Don't try to practice when you are doing two things at once (e.g. Binging Netflix and playing ukulele)
3. Have a comfortable chair—whatever that means for your own preference
4. Tune your ukulele!
5. Do some ukulele warm-ups, such as the caterpillar and barre warm-ups (discussed below)
6. Practice the chord you are currently working on: make the chord as quickly as you can, strum, remove the hand. Repeat a lot of times.
7. Go through the skill drill of the chord you are working on (if one is available)
8. Practice songs using that new chord; both with and without singing along
9. If there is a place in a song that causes issues, after you have made it through the song, go back and practice just that part, slowly at first and getting faster every repeated time. When you are ready, go back try the whole song again. Then move on!
10. Play something that makes you happy, or just experiment up and down the neck.

Caterpillar Warm-Up

Play each string separately, with each finger of the left hand (add a finger) starting with the 4th string. You can pluck the strings with your right hand thumb or first finger:

Open, 1st fret, 2nd Fret, 3rd Fret, 4th Fret, 3rd Fret, 2nd Fret, 1st Fret, Open

Play strings 4 and 3 with your thumb, string 2 with your index finger, and string 1 with your middle finger

Barre Warm-Up

We will not play any chords with a barre until the end of this set of lessons, but you should start playing barre chords on the very first day you play ukulele. Don't get uptight about this...this is a warm-up!

Extend your first finger over all four strings, pull against the fretboard, and use your thumb behind the neck to give you enough strength to push down all four strings. Start at the 5th fret (where this is easier to do) and play all four strings with your thumb...and then go down and up the neck with the barre:

5th fret, 4th fret, 3rd fret, 2nd fret, 1st fret, 2nd fret, 3rd fret, 4th fret, 5th fret

If you do this every day, you will develop the skill and when it comes to barre chords later, you will find it to be much easier than you ever expected!

Strumming Basics

While you can play individual notes on the ukulele (as well as harmony and rhythm at the same time), we are focusing on the skills of playing the first chords in the context of songs, as a way to accompany singing.

From its start, the ukulele has been used to accompany singers by providing harmonic and rhythm support through strumming.

The basic process of strumming is this: your right hand moves up and down—without stopping—to create a pattern under a melody that someone sings or plays. What makes strumming sound different is how fast you strum, and whether you hit the strings as you move up and down.

1. Traditionally, the index finger is used, especially as a beginner. You extend your index finger, and point towards yourself and then point at the floor
2. You can use your thumb or multiple fingers—but try to master the index finger first
3. The action is in the wrist, rather than in the arm, like shaking water off your hand
4. You strum where the body of the ukulele meets the neck of the ukulele, not over the sound hole
5. Think about strumming through the strings, into the fretboard, rather than touching the tops of the strings
6. You can use a pick, but picks are not traditionally used with ukulele. If you use a pick, it should be a leather or felt pick rather than a plastic pick. Plastic picks are used by guitarists, as guitars have a thicker top and often include a pick guard.
7. Strumming patterns are SUGGESTIONS, not requirements, unless you are playing along with a group that has decided on a specific pattern to use.
8. ALWAYS strum with the beat. Your ability to keep a steady beat and follow a steady beat is important. Music, by its very definition, is sound over a defined period of time.
9. If you make a mistake, stop, reset, and join back in as soon as possible. Don't give up!
10. Don't forget to keep your right hand moving up and down. Don't freeze your hand!
11. And again, there is **NO RIGHT ANSWER** when it comes to strumming patterns, but there are certain patterns that sound better than others. This is supposed to be fun, so learn how to strum, but don't cause

Some Common Strumming Patterns

Can you see how these are all variations of the same pattern?



(Swung/Shuffle)



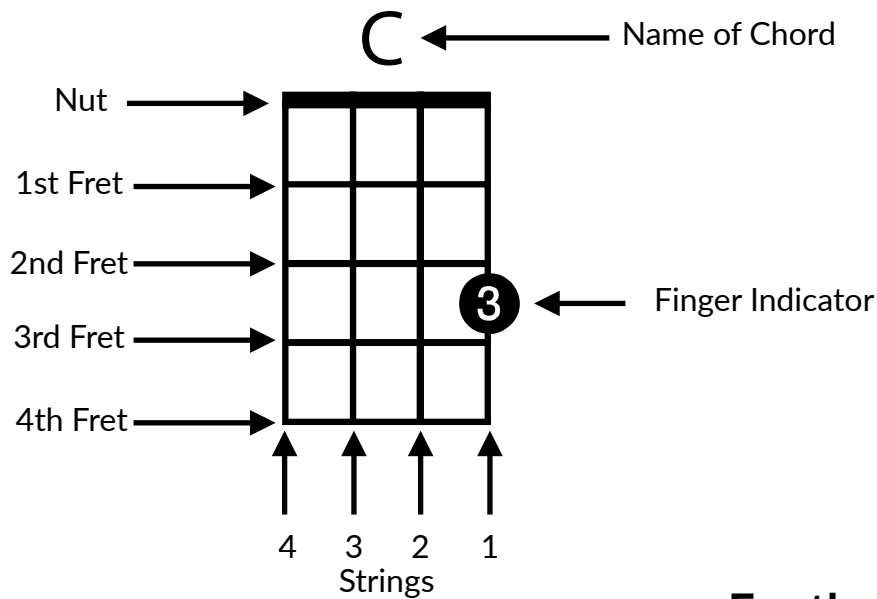
(Island Strum)

Reading Chord Diagrams

As it comes to ukulele, there are three types of “notation” that are used (sometimes in combination with each other):

- Chord diagrams
- Tablature
- Traditional music notation

In these lessons, we will focus on chord diagrams, although traditional notation is included on these songs for people that already read music. Chord diagrams show where to put your fingers to play a chord (provided that your ukulele is in tune). Some chord diagrams even indicate what finger to use. To understand a chord diagram, imagine that you are holding your ukulele in front of you, with the strings facing toward you.



**For these chords,
play all 4 strings!**



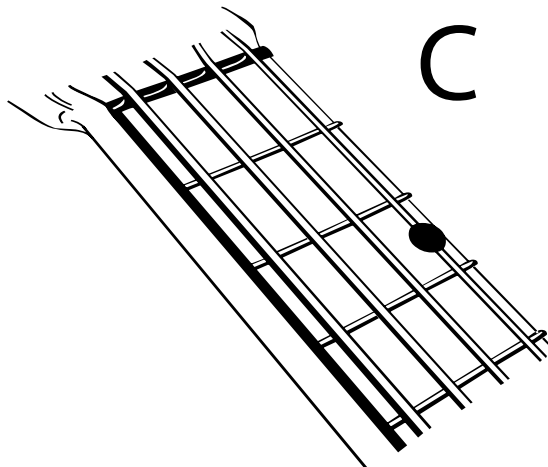
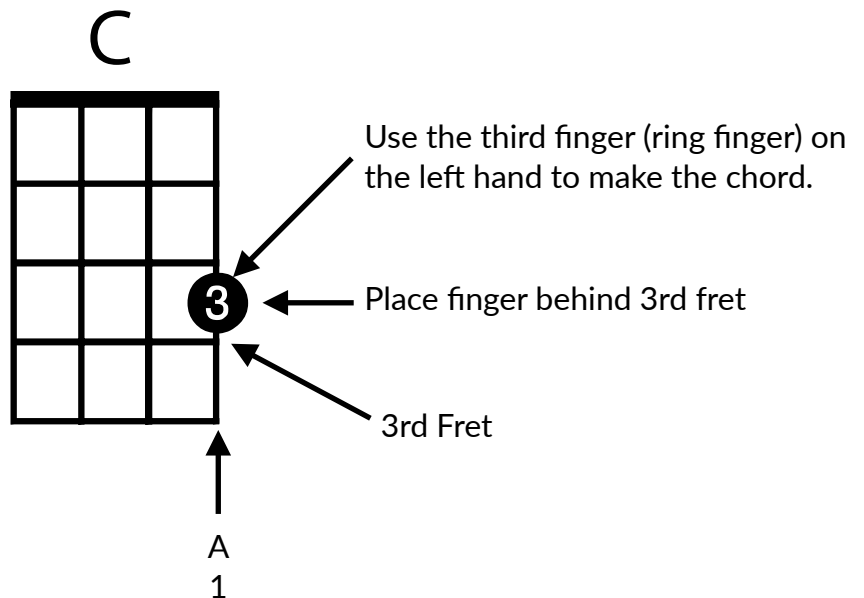
The C Chord

If you have been following along in this method, you have already done a lot of work—important work—to allow you to reach this point and start playing. Here is our first chord, the most used chord on GCEA ukulele, the C Chord.

On GCEA ukulele, the C chord is played with one finger from the chording hand, and is a great sounding chord because it uses a majority of open strings.

It is recommend that you use the 3rd finger on the 1st string to make the C chord—for now. Think about the caterpillar warm-up. If you assign a finger to each fret, starting with the 1st fret, naturally the 3rd finger should play the fretted note.


- Use your fingertip to play the chord
- Get a clear sound on the 1st string!
- Practice with an arch in your hand (make a mouse hole)
- Make sure the thumb isn't sticking over the opposite side of the fretboard
- Make sure your finger is behind the fret and not ON the fret—as close as you can be to the fret without being on top of it.



Row, Row, Row Your Boat

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)

C



Row, row, row your boat gen - tly down the stream.

Mer - ri - ly, mer - ri - ly, mer - ri - ly, mer - ri - ly, life is but a dream.

Play Along Video: https://youtu.be/_2Q94jPlhG4

Strumming Suggestions:



Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Traditional Folk Song

Key of C

C

Row, row, row your boat

Gently down the stream

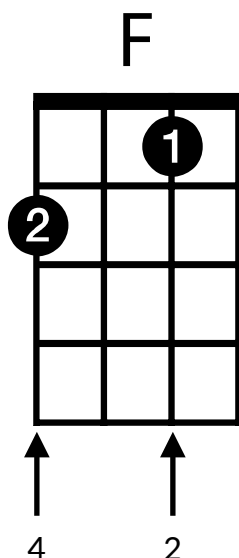
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily

Life is but a dream

The F Chord

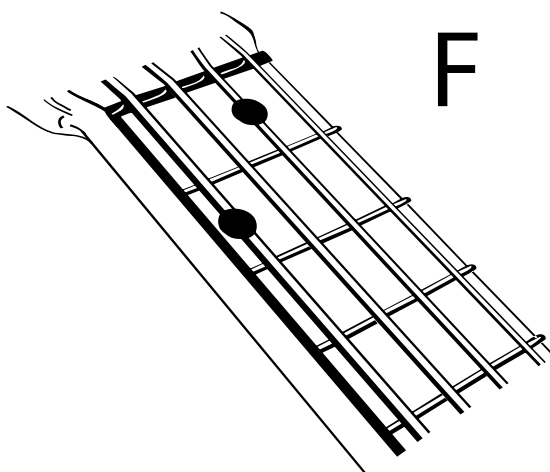
The second chord you will learn is the F chord. F is a two-finger chord, and is the third most frequently used chord on GCEA ukuleles. Remember to use your fingertips and to create an arch in your fingers that a mouse could sneak through. If you hear “dead” notes, make sure you are behind the fret (not on it), that you are playing with your fingertips, and that you have an arch in your hand as you make the chords. A dead sounding note occurs when you are stopping the strings (the official term is “muting”) with some part of your hand.

- Use your fingertips to play the chord
- Get a clear sound on the fretted strings
- Practice with an arch in your hand (make a mouse hole)
- Make sure the thumb isn't sticking over the opposite side of the fretboard
- Make sure your fingers are behind the fret and not ON the fret



Quick Check!

How are you holding your ukulele?



Ukulele Skill Drill #01 (Add F)

We will be using skill drills with new chords, so that you can master the changes between chords without having to worry about changing chords in time to a song/melody. The key is to hold a steady tempo while changing chords.

When you can transition through the chords smoothly, move on to the songs!

The image displays three rows of a ukulele skill drill, each consisting of a sequence of chord diagrams and corresponding musical notation in 4/4 time.

- Row 1:** A sequence of seven chords: F, C, F, C, F, C, F. Each chord is represented by a diagram and a musical staff with a double bar line indicating a full measure.
- Row 2:** A sequence of ten chords: F, C, F, C, F, C, F, C, F, C. Each chord is represented by a diagram and a musical staff with a double bar line indicating a full measure.
- Row 3:** A sequence of eleven chords: F, C, F, C, F, C, F, C, F, C, F. Each chord is represented by a diagram and a musical staff with a double bar line indicating a full measure.

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/nMRFnNwMucl>

Make New Friends

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)

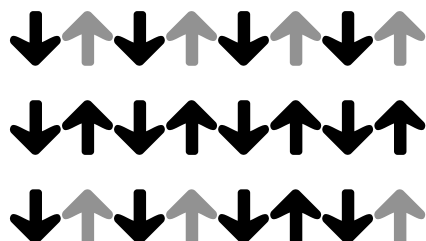
F



Make new friends and keep the old, one is sil - ver and the o - ther's gold.

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/8mYDQynNtEY>

Strumming Suggestions:



Make New Friends

Traditional Folk Song

Key of F

F

Make new friends and keep the old
One is silver and the other's gold

The More We Get Together

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)

The more we get to - ge - ther, to - ge - ther, to - ge - ther. The
The more we sing to - ge - ther, to - ge - ther, to - ge - ther. The

more we get to - ge - ther, the hap - pi - er we'll be. For
more we sing to - ge - ther, the hap - pi - er we'll be. For

your friends are my friends, and my friends are your friends. The
your songs are are my songs, and my songs are are your songs. The

more we get to - ge - ther, the hap - pi - er we'll be.
more we sing to - ge - ther, the hap - pi - er we'll be.

The More We Get Together

Traditional Folk Song

Key of C

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/aaTRnEfcAZw>

Strumming Suggestions:



The Pattern
is in 3!

F **C** **F**
The more we get together, together, together

C **F**
The more we get together, the happier we'll be

C **F**
For your friends are my friends

C **F**
And my friends are your friends

C **F**
The more we get together, the happier we'll be

F **C** **F**
The more we sing together, together, together

C **F**
The more we sing together, the happier we'll be

C **F**
For your songs are my songs

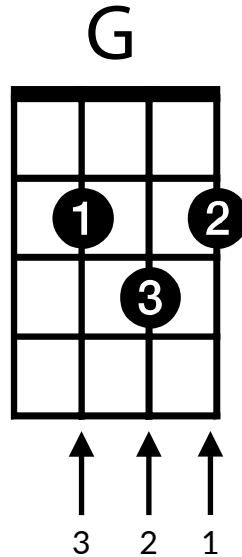
C **F**
And my songs are your songs

C **F**
The more we sing together, the happier we'll be

The G Chord

The next chord to learn is the G Chord, which uses 3 fingers. Many methods introduce this chord at a later time. The G chord is the second-most used chord on GCEA ukulele, and while you might find it challenging at first, as soon as you learn it, it will open many more possibilities for your playing. In addition, this is the first “gateway chord.” If you can master this chord, you can face every future chord challenge in context of this chord. In other words, you can say to yourself, “Do you remember how hard the G chord was at first? Well, I’ll conquer this chord, too.”

- Use your fingertips to play the chord
- Get a clear sound on the fretted strings!
- Practice with an arch in your hand (make a mouse hole)
- Make sure the thumb isn’t sticking over the opposite side of the fretboard
- Make sure your fingers are behind the fret and not ON the fret

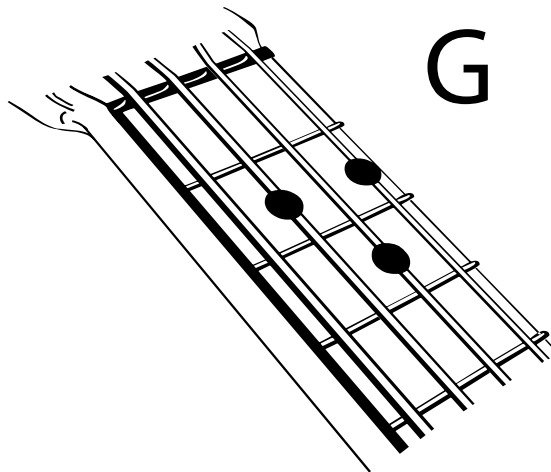


Quick Check!

How are you holding your ukulele?

Are you playing on your fingertips?

Do you have space underneath your fretting fingers?



Ukulele Skill Drill #02 (Add G)

Skill drills allow you to add new chords into chord progressions without having to change chords while following a song or melody. Hold a steady tempo while changing chords, and accuracy is more important than speed.

When you can transition through the chords smoothly, move on to the songs!


The image displays three rows of musical notation for a 4/4 ukulele skill drill. Each row begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. Above the staff, chord diagrams are provided for each measure, with the chord name (C, F, or G) written above the diagram. The diagrams show fingerings on the four strings: C (1st fret, 4th string), F (1st fret, 2nd and 4th strings), G (2nd fret, 3rd and 4th strings), and C (1st fret, 4th string). The first row consists of eight measures, each containing a single chord diagram. The second row consists of five measures, each containing two chord diagrams. The third row consists of five measures, each containing four chord diagrams. The notation includes double bar lines at the end of each row and within the measures of the second and third rows to indicate measure boundaries.

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/UnE3Odeau4k>

It's Raining, It's Pouring


GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)

C




It's rain - ing, it's pour - ing, the old man is snor - ing. He

G



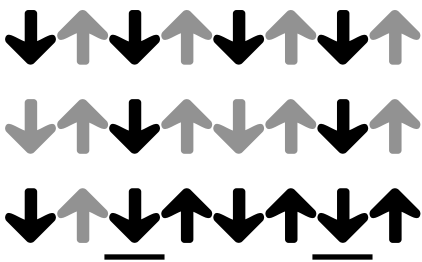
bumped his head and he went to bed and he could - n't get up in the morn - ing.

C



Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/nJW6sz6ABxQ>

Strumming Suggestions:



It's Raining, It's Pouring

Traditional Folk Song

Key of C

C

It's raining, it's pouring

The old man is snoring

G

He bumped his head

And he went to bed

And he couldn't get up


C

In the morning

You Are My Sunshine




GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)

C






You are my sun - shine, my on - ly sun - shine. You make me

F **C** **F**

hap - py when skies are gray. You'll ne - ver know, dear,

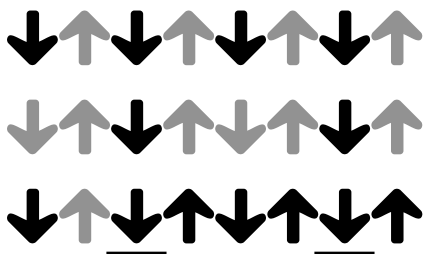
C **G** **C**

how much I love you. Please don't take my sun - shine a - way.

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/jKZXGffAGDQ>

Strumming Suggestions:



You Are My Sunshine

Traditional Folk Song

Key of C

C
You are my sunshine
My only sunshine

F
You make me happy

C
When skies are gray

F
You'll never know, dear

C
How much I love you

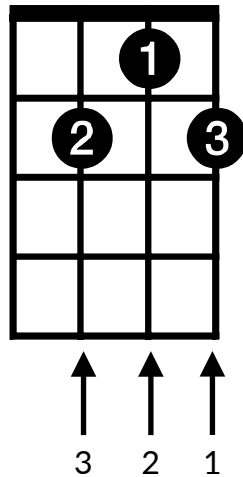
G **C**
Please don't take my sunshine away

The G7 Chord

The G7 chord is a very special chord; many people find it easier to play than G, as it shares a similar finger position (with fingers 1 and 2) with the F Chord. The G7 chord has all the notes of a G Chord PLUS an extra note, which makes it harmonically unstable. Ultimately, the G7 wants to collapse to the C chord (If you play G7 to C, you'll hear it). The G7 is used less frequently than G in music for GCEA ukulele, but you do need to know both—and they are not always interchangeable. There are times to use G, and times to use G7. The G7 requires a “reshuffling” of fingers from the G chord.

G7

- Use your fingertip to play the chord
- Get a clear sound on the fretted strings!
- Practice with an arch in your hand (make a mouse hole)
- Make sure the thumb isn't sticking over the opposite side of the fretboard
- Make sure your finger is behind the fret and not ON the fret

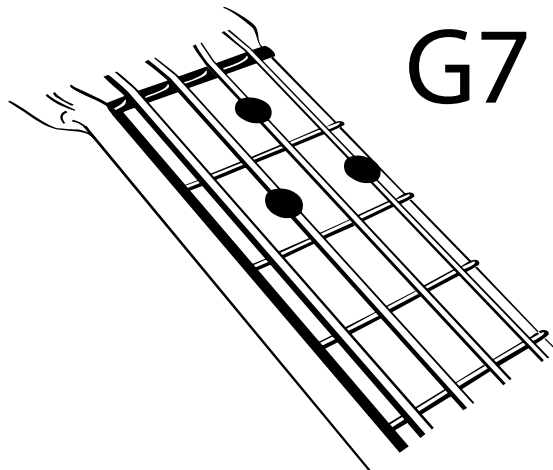


Quick Check!

How are you holding your ukulele?

Are you playing on your fingertips?

Do you have space underneath your fretting fingers?



Ukulele Skill Drill #03 (Add G7)

Skill drills allow you to add new chords into chord progressions without having to change chords while following a song or melody. Hold a steady tempo while changing chords, and accuracy is more important than speed.

When you can transition through the chords smoothly, move on to the songs!!

The image displays three rows of musical notation for a 4/4 ukulele skill drill. Each row begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. Above the staff, chord diagrams are provided for each measure, with dots indicating finger placement on the fretboard. The first row consists of eight measures with the following chords: C, F, C, G, C, F, G7, and C. The second row consists of eight measures with the following chords: C, F, C, G, C, F, G7, and C. The third row consists of sixteen measures with the following chords: C, F, C, G, C, F, G7, C, C, F, C, G, C, F, G7, and C. Each measure is represented by a staff with a double bar line at the end of each measure.

Play Along Video: https://youtu.be/-c89_FH36Ek

Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)

C F C F C G7 C

Twin - kle, twin - kle lit - tle star, how I won - der what you are.

F C G7 C F C G7

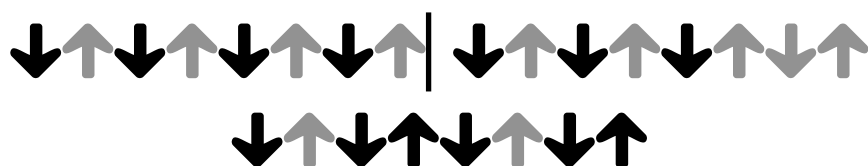
Up a - bove the world so high, like a dia - mond in the sky.

C F C F C G7 C

Twin - kle, twin - kle lit tle star, how I won - der what you are.

Play Along Video: https://youtu.be/mm6-1dCA_zg

Strumming Suggestions:



Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

Traditional Folk Song

Key of C

C F C
Twinkle, twinkle little star

F C G7 C
How I wonder what you are

F C G7
Up above the world so high

C F C G7
Like a diamond in the sky

C F C
Twinkle, twinkle little star

F C G7 C
How I wonder what you are

On Top of Old Smokey

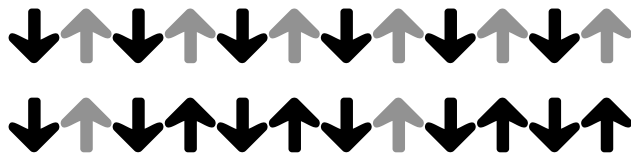
GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)

On top of Old Smokey, all covered in snow.
From courtin' too slow, dear, from courtin' too slow.

I lost my true lover from courtin' too slow.

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/T54NZHILTww>

Strumming Suggestions:



The pattern
is in 6!

On Top of Old Smokey

Key of C

F

On top of Old Smokey

C

All covered in snow

G7

I lost my true lover

C

From courtin' too slow

F

From courtin' too slow, dear

C

From courtin' too slow

G7

I lost my true lover

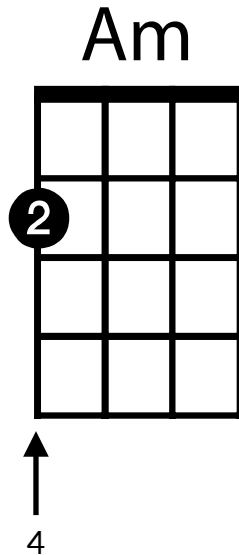
C

From courtin' too slow

The Am Chord

The Am (A minor) is a one-finger chord, where you reach over with the second finger to the fourth string. Many ukulele methods introduce this chord immediately after the C chord, as it is a one finger chord, but in reality, there are very few songs that use just C and Am. If we introduce the Am chord at this point in the lesson, we unlock hundreds of songs that are not in the public domain—songs that you know and love. You can search for songs to play with video play alongs at ukeability.org!

- Use your fingertip to play the chord
- Get a clear sound on the fretted strings!
- Practice with an arch in your hand (make a mouse hole)
- Make sure the thumb isn't sticking over the opposite side of the fretboard
- Make sure your finger is behind the fret and not ON the fret

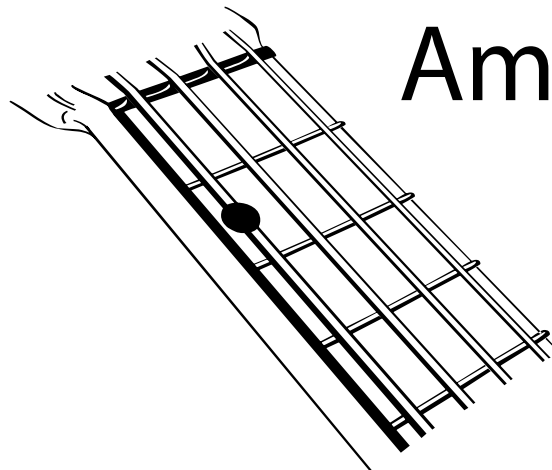


Quick Check!

How are you holding your ukulele?

Are you playing on your fingertips?

Do you have space underneath your fretting fingers?



Ukulele Skill Drill #04 (Add Am)

Skill drills allow you to add new chords into chord progressions without having to change chords while following a song or melody. Hold a steady tempo while changing chords, and accuracy is more important than speed.

When you can transition through the chords smoothly, move on to the songs!!

The image displays three staves of musical notation for a ukulele skill drill. Each staff is in 4/4 time and contains a sequence of chords with corresponding fingerings. The first staff has 8 measures: C, Am, F, G, C, Am, G7, C. The second staff has 8 measures: C, Am, F, G, C, Am, F, G7, C. The third staff has 10 measures: C, Am, F, G, C, Am, F, G7, C, Am, F, G7, C. Each measure contains a chord name and a 4-fret grid with dots indicating finger positions.

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/VHiK549zRnU>

What Shall We Do With a Drunken Sailor?

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)

Am G

What shall we do with a drun - ken sai - lor, what shall we do with a drun - ken sai - lor,

Am G Am

what shall we do with a drun - ken sai - lor ear - lye in the mor - ning?

G

Way, hey, and up she ri - ses, way, hey, and up she ri - ses.

Am G Am

Way, hey, and up she ri - ses, ear - lye in the mor - ning?

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/xkJqtJPmM1E>

What Shall We Do With a Drunken Sailor

Traditional Sea Shanty

Key of Am

Am

What shall we do with a drunken sailor?

G

What shall we do with a drunken sailor?

Am

What shall we do with a drunken sailor

G

Am

Earlye in the morning?

Am

Way, hey, and up she rises

G

Way, hey, and up she rises

Am

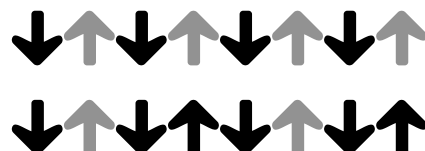
Way, hey, and up she rises

G

Am

Earlye in the morning

Strumming Suggestions:



Streets of Laredo

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)

As I walked out in the streets of Laredo, as

I walked out in Laredo one day, I

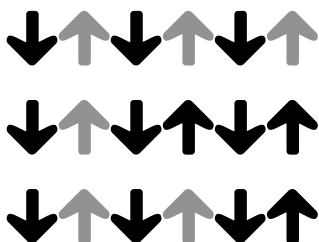
spied a poor cowboy dressed up in white linen, dressed

up in white linen, as cold as the clay.

* Eventually Dm will work better in place of this F

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/rPNsGisRArg>

Strumming Suggestions:



The pattern
is in 3!

Streets of Laredo

Traditional Cowboy Song

Key of C

C G7 C G7

As I walked out in the streets of Laredo

C G7 C G7

As I walked out in Laredo one day

C G7 C G7

I spied a poor cowboy dressed up in white linen

Am F* G7 C

Dressed up in white linen as cold as the clay

Bingo

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)

C F C G7 C F

There was a far - mer had a dog, and "Bin - go" was his name - o. B - I - N - G - O,

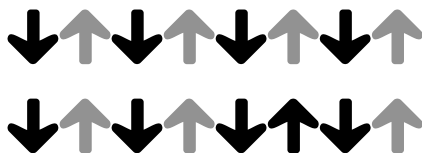
G7 C Am F * G7 C

B - I - N - G - O, B - I - N - G - O, and "Bin - go" was his name - o.

* Eventually Dm will work better in place of this F

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/6Y5EKnaq1f4>

Strumming Suggestions:



Bingo

Traditional Folk Song

Key of C

C F C

There was a farmer had a dog

G7 C

And "Bingo" was his name-o

F

B-I-N-G-O

G7 C

B-I- N-G-O

Am F *

B-I- N-G-O

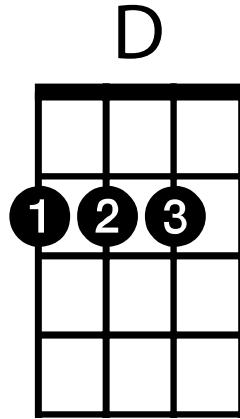
G7 C

And "Bingo" was his name-o

The D Chord

The D Chord is the first chord where you really have a choice to make on how to play the chord based on what works best for you. You can play it with three fingers (123, 213, 234), two fingers (12), or one finger (3). It doesn't matter which you choose as long as you can make a clear sound with the chord. I personally use 213 most of the time, as it makes for an easier change to A and F#m.

- Use your fingertip to play the chord
- Get a clear sound on the fretted strings!
- Practice with an arch in your hand (make a mouse hole)
- Make sure the thumb isn't sticking over the opposite side of the fretboard
- Make sure you can create a clear sound regardless of your choice of fingers

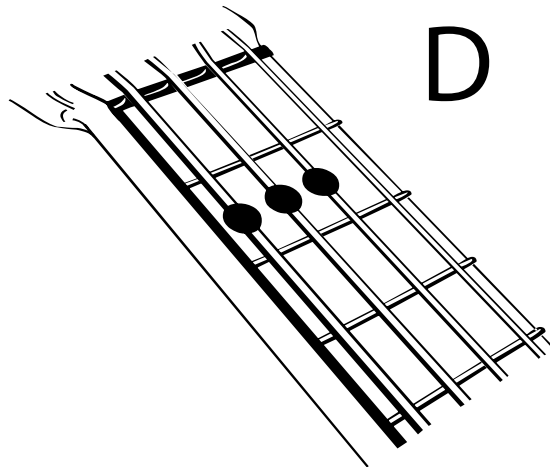


Quick Check!

How are you holding your ukulele?

Are you playing on your fingertips?

Do you have space underneath your fretting fingers?



Ukulele Skill Drill #05 (Add D)

Skill drills allow you to add new chords into chord progressions without having to change chords while following a song or melody. Hold a steady tempo while changing chords, and accuracy is more important than speed.

When you can transition through the chords smoothly, move on to the songs!

The drill consists of three rows of chords in 4/4 time. Each chord is represented by a diagram and a musical staff with a double bar line.

Row 1: G, C, G, D, G, Am, D, G

Row 2: G, C, G, D, G, Am, G, D, G

Row 3: G, C, G, D, G, Am, G, D, G, C, G, D, G, Am, G, D, G

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/zZasf-ZAkUU>

John B. Sails

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, Tenor)

Bahamian Folk Song

G



We came on the Sloop John B, my grand - fa - ther and me A - round Nas - sau

D G C Am



town we did roam. Drink - ing all night, got in - to a fight. I

G D G G



feel so broke up, I want to go home. So hoist up the John B. Sails.

D



See how the main sail sets. Call for the Cap - tain a - shore, let me go home.

G C Am G



Let me go home. I want to go home. Well, I feel so broke up.

D G



I want to go home.

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/FzWeZ0YsFk4>

John B. Sails

Bahamian Folk Son

Key of G

Strumming Suggestion:



G

We came on the sloop John B
My grandfather and me

D

Around Nassau town we did roam

G

Drinking all night

C A^m

Got into a fight ...

G

I feel so broke up

D

G

... I want to go home

G

So hoist up the John B. Sails
See how the main sail sets
Call for the Captain ashore

D

G

Let me go home, let me go home

C A^m

I want to go home ...

G

Well, I feel so broke up

D

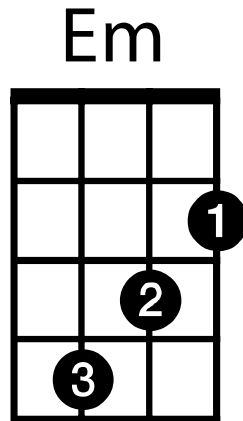
G

... I want to go home

The Em Chord

The Em Chord is a fun chord, as it “waterfalls” down the fretboard. Place your first finger, then your second finger, and finally your third finger. Some chord charts show Em as a four finger chord, which works, but is not needed on reentrant (High G) GCEA Ukulele.

- Use your fingertips to play the chord
- Get a clear sound on the fretted strings!
- Practice with an arch in your hand (make a mouse hole)
- Make sure the thumb isn't sticking over the opposite side of the fretboard
- Make sure you can create a clear sound regardless of your choice of fingers

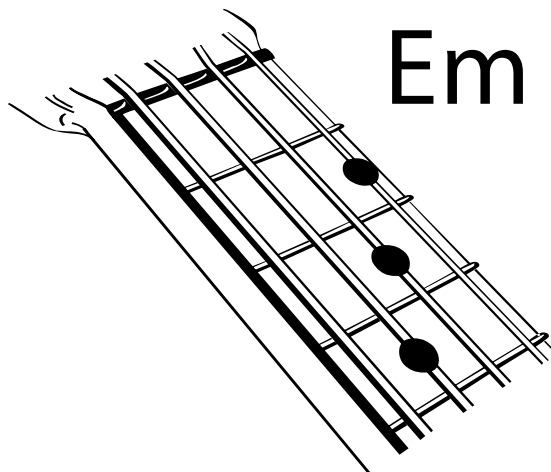


Quick Check!

How are you holding your ukulele?

Are you playing on your fingertips?

Do you have space underneath your fretting fingers?



Ukulele Skill Drill #06 (Add Em)

Skill drills allow you to add new chords into chord progressions without having to change chords while following a song or melody. Hold a steady tempo while changing chords, and accuracy is more important than speed.

When you can transition through the chords smoothly, move on to the songs!

The image displays three staves of music, each in 4/4 time, featuring chord diagrams and musical notation for a skill drill. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature.

Staff 1: Shows a sequence of eight chords: G, D, Em, C, G, D, C, and G. Each chord is represented by a diagram above a musical staff. The musical staff contains a single note in each measure, indicated by a double slash (//).

Staff 2: Shows a sequence of nine chords: G, D, Em, C, G, C, Am, D, and G. Each chord is represented by a diagram above a musical staff. The musical staff contains a single note in each measure, indicated by a double slash (//).

Staff 3: Shows a sequence of fifteen chords: G, D, G, C, G, D, Em, C, G, D, G, C, G, C, Em, D, and G. Each chord is represented by a diagram above a musical staff. The musical staff contains a single note in each measure, indicated by a double slash (//).

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/Wx-wJ7hivXY>

The Water is Wide

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, Tenor)

English Folk Song

The wa - ter is wide, I can - not cross o'er.

And nei - ther have I wings to fly.

Build me a boat that can car - ry two.

And both shall row, my love and I.

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/1dw-QylrNQ>

Strumming Suggestion:



The Water Is Wide

English Folk Song

Key of G

G C G
The water is wide ... I cannot cross o'er

E^m A^m D
And neither have I ... wings to fly

G C G
Build me a boat ... that can carry two

D G
And both shall row, my love and I

What Shall We Do With a Drunken Sailor?

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)

The musical score is written on a single staff in GCEA tuning (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor). It features four systems of music, each with a guitar chord diagram above the staff. The chords are Em, D, Em, Dm, and Em. The lyrics are: "What shall we do with a drunken sailor, what shall we do with a drunken sailor, what shall we do with a drunken sailor ear-lye in the mor-ning? Way, hey, and up she ri-ses, way, hey, and up she ri-ses. Way, hey, and up she ri-ses, ear-lye in the mor-ning?"

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/VdsKjcUx94c>

What Shall We Do With a Drunken Sailor

Traditional Sea Shanty

Key of Em

E^m

What shall we do with a drunken sailor?

D

What shall we do with a drunken sailor?

E^m

What shall we do with a drunken sailor

D **E^m**

Earlye in the morning?

E^m

Way, hey, and up she rises

D

Way, hey, and up she rises

E^m

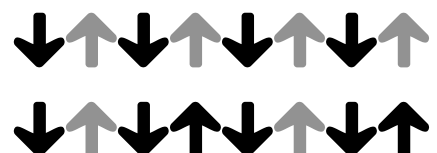
Way, hey, and up she rises

D

E^m

Earlye in the morning

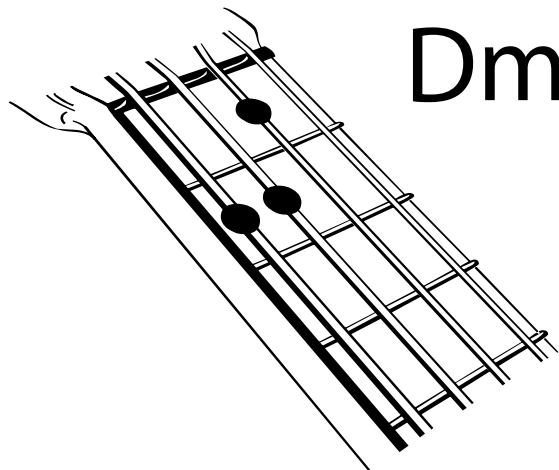
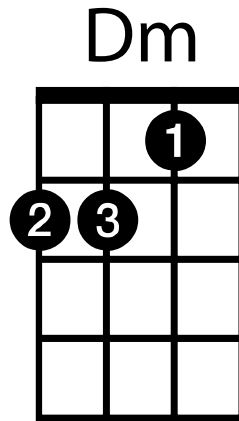
Strumming Suggestions:



The Dm Chord

The Dm chord is a common chord in the key of F, which is a good key for many singers. The chord is simply an F chord with an added finger. In the key of C, F and Dm (which share two notes) both act as secondary dominants and can often be interchanged with each other! The Dm acts as the ii chord (minor chord on the second step of the scale) in the Key of C, and is a very common chord when moving to the V chord (major dominant or 5th step of the scale) which is G. As result, the ii->V->I progression is very common in music, and in the Key of C, that would be Dm->G->C.

- Use your fingertips to play the chord
- Play the F chord and add a finger!
- Get a clear sound on the fretted strings!
- Practice with an arch in your hand (make a mouse hole)
- Make sure the thumb isn't sticking over the opposite side of the fretboard
- Make sure you can create a clear sound regardless of your choice of fingers



Ukulele Skill Drill #07 (Add Dm)

Skill drills allow you to add new chords into chord progressions without having to change chords while following a song or melody. Hold a steady tempo while changing chords, and accuracy is more important than speed.

When you can transition through the chords smoothly, move on to the songs!

Staff 1: C, Em, Dm, G, C, F, G7, C

Staff 2: C, Em, Dm, G, C, Am, F, G7, C

Staff 3: C, Em, Dm, G, C, Am, F, G, C, Am, C, Em, C, F, Dm, G7, C

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/UACuQUXJ4kU>

I Love The Mountains

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)

Folk Song

C Am Dm G7

I love the moun - tains, I love the roll - ing hills,

C Am Dm G7

I love the foun - tains, I love the daf - fo - dills.

C Am Dm G7

I love the fi - re - side when the lights are low.

C Am Dm G7

Boom dee ah dah boom dee ah dah, boom de ah dah boom dee ah dah

C Am Dm G7 C

Boom dee ah dah boom dee ah dah, boom de ah dah boom dee ah dah boom!

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/za16233PVjs>

Strumming Suggestion:



I Love The Mountains

Folk Song
Key of C

C	A^m
I love the mountains	
D^m	G⁷
I love the rolling hills	
C	A^m
I love the flowers	
D^m	G⁷
I love the daffodils	
C	A^m
I love the fireside	
D^m	G⁷
When the lights are low	

C
Boom-dee-a-dah
A^m
Boom-dee-a-dah
D^m
Boom-dee-a-dah
G⁷
Boom-dee-a-dah
C
Boom-dee-a-dah
A^m
Boom-dee-a-dah
D^m
Boom-dee-a-dah
G⁷
Boom-dee-a-dah

Streets of Laredo

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)



As I walked out in the streets of Laredo, as

I walked out in Laredo one day, I

spied a poor cowboy dressed up in white linen, dressed

up in white linen, as cold as the clay.

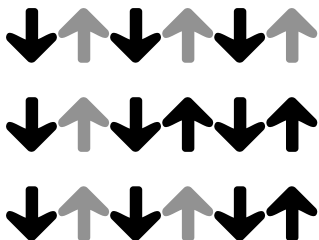
Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/0f3nGCkxoz0>

Streets of Laredo

Traditional Cowboy Song

Key of C

Strumming Suggestions:



The pattern
is in 3!

C G⁷ C G⁷

As I walked out in the streets of Laredo

C G⁷ C G⁷

As I walked out in Laredo one day

C G⁷ C G⁷

I spied a poor cowboy dressed up in white linen

A^m D^m G⁷ C

Dressed up in white linen as cold as the clay

Bingo

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)

C F C G7 C F

There was a far - mer had a dog, and "Bin - go" was his name - o. B - I - N - G - O,

G7 C Am Dm G7 C

B - I - N - G - O, B - I - N - G - O, and "Bin - go" was his name - o.

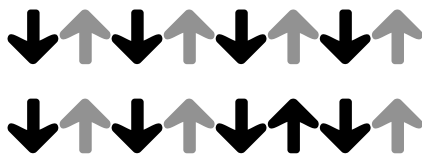
Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/k-Gbt07u-OQ>

Bingo

Traditional Folk Song

Key of C

Strumming Suggestions:



C F C

There was a farmer had a dog

G⁷ C

And "Bingo" was his name-o

F

B-I-N-G-O

G C

B-I-N-G-O

A^m D^m

B-I- N-G-O

G⁷ C

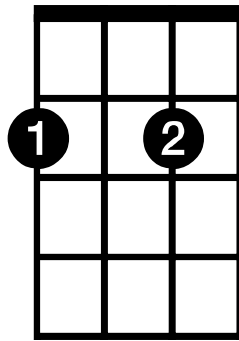
And "Bingo" was his name-o

The (Hawaiian) D7 Chord

The D7 chord leads to G, in the key of G; and as G is the second most used chord on the ukulele, chords that move to G are very important. The full D7 chord is a barre chord which we will not learn in this lesson series, but ukulele resources usually use the Hawaiian D7 instead, which is a chord that acts like D7 but doesn't actually contain a D (it has the other notes of a D7 of F-sharp, A, and C). When you play the Hawaiian D7, your brain "fills in" the missing note so that the chord sounds right moving to G. It is called Hawaiian D7 because this chord is used in a very common Hawaiian "turnaround," or sequence.

- Use your fingertips to play the chord
- Get a clear sound on the fretted strings!
- Practice with an arch in your hand (make a mouse hole)
- Make sure the thumb isn't sticking over the opposite side of the fretboard
- Make sure you can create a clear sound regardless of your choice of fingers

D7 Hawaiian

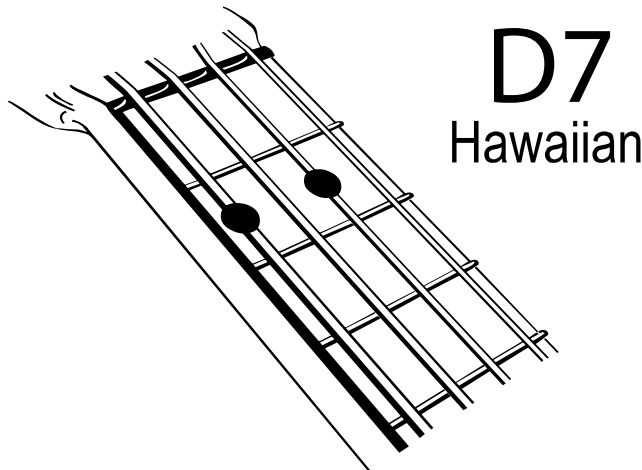


Quick Check!

How are you holding your ukulele?

Are you playing on your fingertips?

Do you have space underneath your fretting fingers?



D7 Hawaiian

Ukulele Skill Drill #08 (Add D7)

Skill drills allow you to add new chords into chord progressions without having to change chords while following a song or melody. Hold a steady tempo while changing chords, and accuracy is more important than speed.

When you can transition through the chords smoothly, move on to the songs!

The image displays four rows of musical notation for a 4/4 ukulele skill drill. Each row begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. Above the staves, chord diagrams are provided for each measure, with the chord name written above the diagram. The diagrams show fingerings on the four strings of the ukulele.

Row 1: G, D, C, G, G, G, D7, G. The staff contains a double bar line in each of the eight measures.

Row 2: G, C, Em, D, G, C, G, D7, G. The staff contains a double bar line in each of the eight measures.

Row 3: G C G C G D G G G C Em D G C G D7 G. The staff contains a double bar line in each of the ten measures.

Row 4: D7, G7, C. The first measure is labeled "Hawaiian Turn Around". The staff contains a double bar line in each of the three measures.

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/BMdF0SALFRQ>

Down By the Bay

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)

Down by the bay, where the wa-ter - mel - ons grow,

back to my home I dare not go.

For if I do my moth - er will say:

"Did you ev - er see a goose kiss - ing a moose,
 "Did you ev - er see a whale with a pol - ka dot tail,
 "Did you ev - er see a fly wear - ing a tie,
 "Did you ev - er see a bear comb - ing his hair,
 "Did you ev - er see lla - mas eat - ing their pa-jamas,
 "Did you e - er have a time when you could - n't make a rhyme,

down by the bay?" Down by the bay?"

Play Along Video: https://youtu.be/OMSrXAM_vPM

Strumming Suggestion:



Down By The Bay

Traditional Children's Song

Key of G

G

Down by the bay

D⁷

Where the watermelons grow

G G⁷

Back to my home I dare not go ...

C

For if I do

G E^m

My mother will say ...

G

** "Did you ever you ever see a goose kissing a moose"

D⁷

G

Down by the bay?

** Substitute:

"Did you ever see a whale with a polka dot tail"

"Did you ever see a fly wearing a tie"

"Did you ever see a bear combing his hair"



"Did you ever see llamas wearing pajamas"

"Did you ever have a time when you couldn't make a rhyme"



On Top of Spaghetti

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)



Words by Tom Glazer

C  G 



On top of spa - ghet - ti, all cov - ered in cheese.
gar - den, and un - der a bush.
co - vered with beau - ti - ful moss.

D7  G 

I lost my poor meat - ball when some - bod - y sneezed.
And then my poor meat - ball was noth - ing but mush.
It grew love - ly meat - balls with to - ma - to sauce.


C  G 

It rolled of the ta - ble, and on - to the floor.
The mush was as tas - ty, as tas - ty can be.
If you eat spag - het - ti all cov - ered with cheese,

D7  G 

1, 2.

And then my poor meat - ball rolled right out the door.
And ear - ly next sum - mer, grew in - to a tree.
hold on to your meat - balls, and don't ev - er

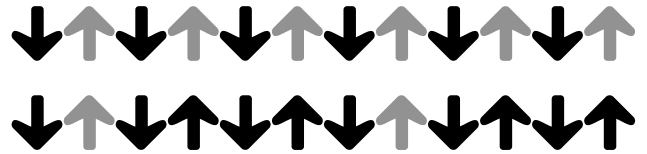
G 

3.

2. It rolled in the
3. The tree was all
sneeze.

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/GFQExo3bgFQ>

Strumming Suggestions:



On Top of Spaghetti

Tom Glazer

Key of G

G **C** **G**
On top of spaghetti, all covered in cheese
D⁷ **G**
I lost my poor meatball, when somebody sneezed
C **G**
It rolled off the table and onto the floor
D⁷ **G**
And then my poor meatball rolled right out the door

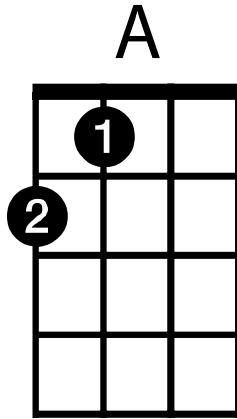
G **C** **G**
It rolled in the garden, and under a bush
D⁷ **G**
And then my poor meatball was nothing but mush
C **G**
The mush was as tasty, as tasty can be
D⁷ **G**
And early next summer, grew into a tree

G **C** **G**
The tree was all covered with beautiful moss
D⁷ **G**
It grew lovely meatballs with tomato sauce
C **G**
If you eat spaghetti all covered with cheese
D⁷ **G**
Hold onto your meatballs, and don't ever sneeze

The A Chord

The A chord is a two finger chord that is very similar to the F chord. You may want to start by playing the F chord, and then moving the first finger to play the A chord. While this lesson series does not include the A7 chord, the A7 is a one finger chord, lifting the second finger and leaving the first finger (A7 would be used in the key of D, leading to the D chord).

- Use your fingertips to play the chord
- Get a clear sound on the fretted strings!
- Practice with an arch in your hand (make a mouse hole)
- Make sure the thumb isn't sticking over the opposite side of the fretboard
- Make sure you can create a clear sound regardless of your choice of fingers

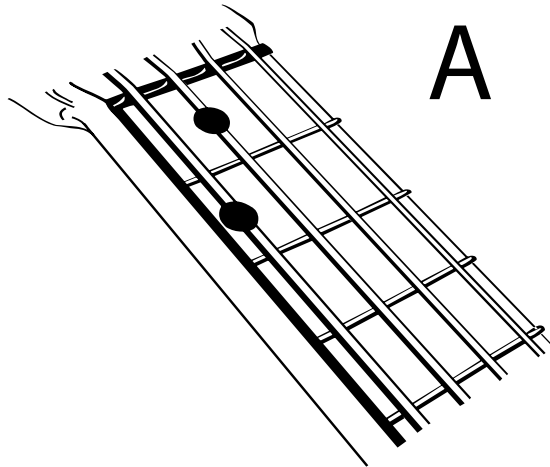


Quick Check!

How are you holding your ukulele?

Are you playing on your fingertips?

Do you have space underneath your fretting fingers?



Ukulele Skill Drill #09 (Add A)

Skill drills allow you to add new chords into chord progressions without having to change chords while following a song or melody. Hold a steady tempo while changing chords, and accuracy is more important than speed.

When you can transition through the chords smoothly, move on to the songs!

The image displays three rows of chord diagrams and corresponding musical staff notation for a 4/4 time signature drill. Each diagram shows the finger placement on the four strings of a ukulele.

Row 1: Shows eight measures. The chords are D, G, D, A, D, G, A, and D. Each measure contains a single chord diagram above a staff with a double slash (//) indicating a whole note.

Row 2: Shows eight measures. The chords are D, G, D, A, D, G, D, and A. Each measure contains a single chord diagram above a staff with a double slash (//) indicating a whole note.

Row 3: Shows sixteen measures. The chords are D, G, D, A, D, G, A, D, D, G, D, A, G, D, G, and A. Each measure contains a single chord diagram above a staff with a double slash (//) indicating a whole note.

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/HgaXr6MM1Sg>

Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)

Old English Air

Drum notation: D G D G D A D

Drum notation: D G D G D A D

Drum notation: D G D A

Drum notation: D G D A D

Lyrics: Drink to me on-ly with thine eyes and I will pledge with mine.

Lyrics: Or leave a kiss with - in the cup and I'll not ask for wine. The

Lyrics: thirst that from the soul doth rise doth ask a drink di - vine.

Lyrics: But might I of Jove's nec- tar sip, I would not change for thine!

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/LvGsXtbyHFw>

Drink To Me Only With Thine Eyes

Old English Air

Key of D

Strumming Suggestion:



Drum notation: D G D G D A D

Lyrics: Drink to me only with thine eye and I will pledge with mine

Drum notation: D G D G D A D

Lyrics: Or leave a kiss within the cup, and I'll not look for wine

Drum notation: D G D A

Lyrics: The thirst that from the soul doth rise doth ask a drink divine

Drum notation: D G D G D A D

Lyrics: But might I of Jove's nectar sip, I would not change for thine

Scarborough Fair

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)

English Folk Song

Ukulele chord diagrams and musical notation for Scarborough Fair:

Chord Diagrams:

- Dm:** Fret 1, strings 2, 3, 4.
- C:** Fret 0, strings 2, 3, 4.
- F:** Fret 1, strings 1, 2, 3.
- G:** Fret 2, strings 1, 2, 3.
- A:** Fret 2, strings 1, 2, 3.

Musical Notation:

Are you go - ing to Scar - bor - ough Fair? _____

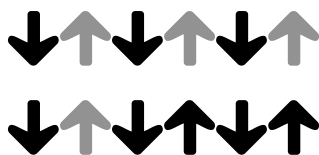
Par - sley, sage, rose - ma - ry, and thyme. _____

Re - mem - ber me to the one who lives there. _____ For

she once was a true love of mine. _____

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/Pwx8OQI65Ng>

Strumming Suggestions:



Scarborough Fair

English Folk Song

Key of Dm

D^m C D^m
Are you going to Scarborough Fair?

G A
Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme

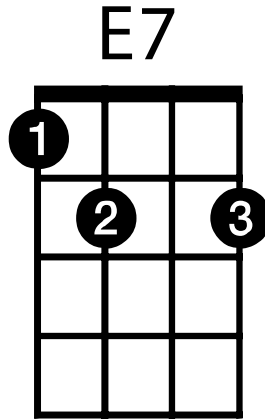
D^m F C
Remember me to one who lives there

D^m C D^m
She once was a true love of mine

The E7 Chord

The E7 is my favorite chord, and it leads to A in the key of A. The three primary chords in A are A, E (or E7), and D. Some ukulele players try to substitute E7 for every E, which is not a ukulele-friendly chord. This can work, especially if the chord after the E7 is an A or F#m, but harmonically, E7 should not be an automatic substitution for E. Why is E such a popular chord? It is the most “open” chord (fewest fingers needed) on a guitar—so many guitar players use E as a home key or a prominent chord in their songs.

- Rotate your wrist up, towards the headstock, to make the E7 easier to play
- Use your fingertips to play the chord
- Get a clear sound on the fretted strings!
- Practice with an arch in your hand (make a mouse hole)
- Make sure the thumb isn't sticking over the opposite side of the fretboard
- Make sure you can create a clear sound regardless of your choice of fingers



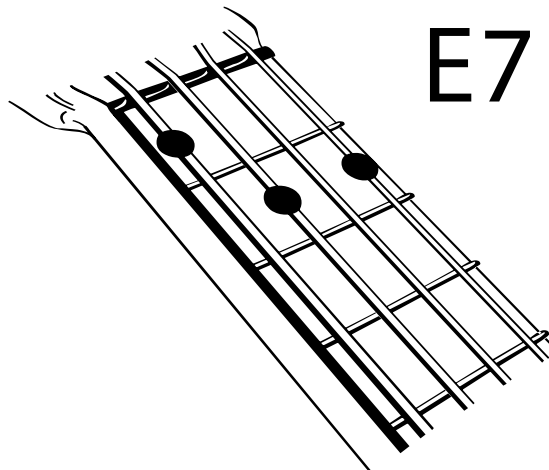
Quick Check!

How are you holding your ukulele?

Did you rotate your wrist to play the chord?

Are you playing on your fingertips?

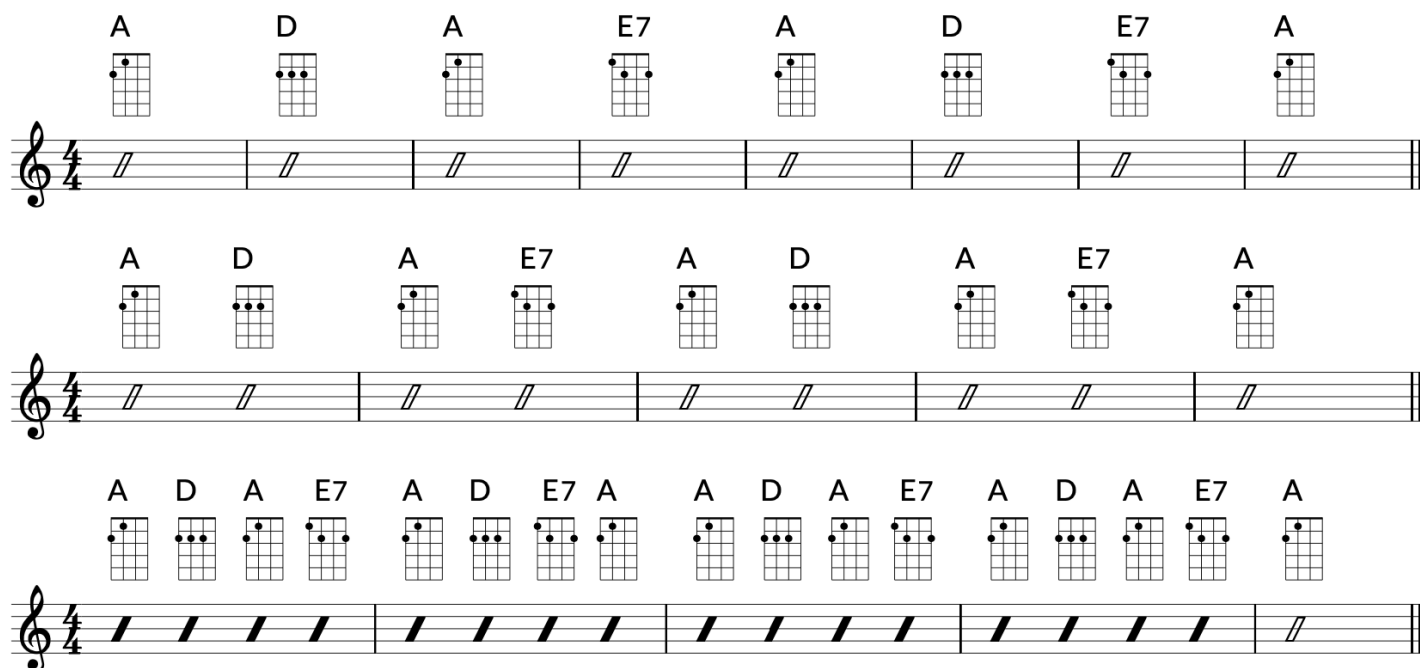
Do you have space underneath your fretting fingers?



Ukulele Skill Drill #10 (Add E7)

Skill drills allow you to add new chords into chord progressions without having to change chords while following a song or melody. Hold a steady tempo while changing chords, and accuracy is more important than speed.

When you can transition through the chords smoothly, move on to the songs!



The image displays three staves of musical notation for a ukulele skill drill in 4/4 time. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. Above each staff, chord diagrams for A, D, and E7 are provided. The first staff contains eight measures, each with a single chord: A, D, A, E7, A, D, E7, and A. The second staff contains eight measures, each with two chords: A D, D A, A E7, E7 A, A D, D A, A E7, and E7 A. The third staff contains sixteen measures, each with four chords: A D A E7, A D E7 A, A D A E7, A D A E7, A D A E7, A D A E7, A D A E7, and A D A E7. The notation uses a slash (/) to indicate a single note or a group of notes, and a double slash (//) to indicate a full measure of a single chord.

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/7HAU77IBuhc>

Oh, Dear, What Can The Matter Be?

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)

Old English Song

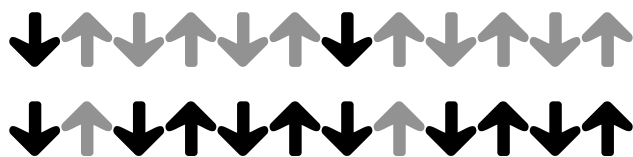
Chord diagrams for A and E7 are shown above the first two staves.

Staff 1: Oh, dear, what can the mat - ter be? Dear, dear, what can the mat - ter be?

Staff 2: Oh, dear, what can the mat - ter be? John - ny's so long at the fair.

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/49Qn8EJG7HU>

Strumming Suggestion:



Oh, Dear, What Can The Matter Be?

Old English Song

Key of A

A

Oh, dear, what can the matter be?

E7

Dear, dear, what can the matter be?

A

Oh, dear, what can the matter be?

E7

A

Johnny's so long at the fair

Buffalo Gals

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)

American Western Folk Song

As I was walk - ing down the street, down the street, down the street. A

pret - ty girl I chanced to meet, by the light of the sil - ver - y moon. Oh,

Buf - fa-lo Gals, won't you come out to-night? Come out to-night? Come out to-night? Oh,

Buf - fa-lo Gals won't you come out to-night and dance by the light of the moon?

Buffalo Gals

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/IFeezYMeph0>

Key of A

Strumming Suggestions:



(Cut/Double Time)



(Cut/Double Time)

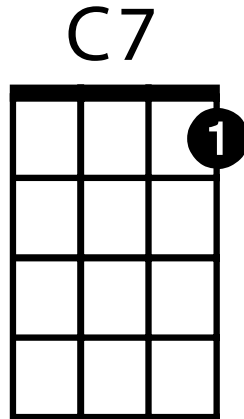
A
As I was walking down the street
E7 **A**
Down the street, down the street
A
A pretty girl I chanced to meet
E7 **A**
By the light of the silvery moon

A
Buffalo Gals, won't you come out tonight?
E7 **A**
Come out tonight? Come out tonight?
A
Buffalo gals won't you come out tonight?
E7 **A**
And dance by the light of the moon?

The C7 Chord

How about an easy, one finger chord? Here is the C7! Many music educators teach this chord early in the learning sequence, but the problem is that the C7 interacts with home key (and chord of) F, and many songs require three chords. In F, you usually need (at least) F, C (or C7), and B-flat, and B-flat is a more challenging chord (and, incidentally, will be our next chord). That said, the key of F is a friendly key for many singers, and C7 is essential for songs in the key of F, so this one finger chord is

- Use your fingertip to play the chord
- Get a clear sound on the fretted strings!
- Practice with an arch in your hand (make a mouse hole)
- Make sure the thumb isn't sticking over the opposite side of the fretboard
- Make sure you can create a clear sound regardless of your choice of fingers

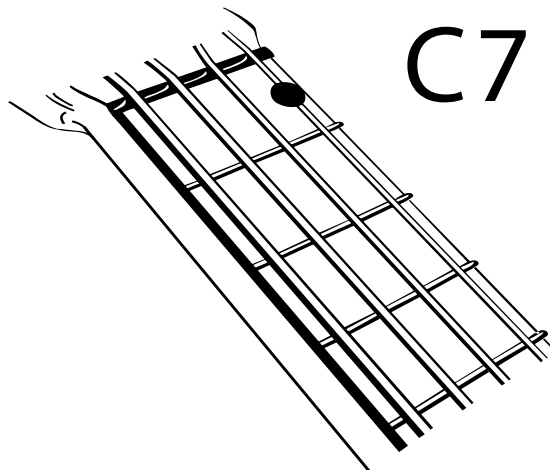


Quick Check!

How are you holding your ukulele?

Are you playing on your fingertips?

Do you have space underneath your fretting fingers?



Ukulele Skill Drill #11 (Add C7)

Skill drills allow you to add new chords into chord progressions without having to change chords while following a song or melody. Hold a steady tempo while changing chords, and accuracy is more important than speed.

When you can transition through the chords smoothly, move on to the songs!

The image displays three rows of musical notation for a 4/4 ukulele skill drill. Each row consists of a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and a staff with four measures. Above each measure are chord diagrams and labels. The first row shows a sequence of eight chords: F, Am, Dm, Am, F, Dm, C7, and F. The second row shows a sequence of nine chords: F, Am, Dm, Am, F, Am, Dm, C7, and F. The third row shows a sequence of fifteen chords: F, Am, F, Am, F, Dm, C7, F, F, Am, Dm, F, F, Am, Dm, C7, and F. Each chord is represented by a diagram showing the fretting of the four strings. The musical notation includes double slashes (//) in each measure, indicating a steady tempo or a specific rhythmic pattern.

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/xvCNFDVt5qA>

The More We Sing Together

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor) English Children's Song

The more we sing to - geth - er, to - geth - er, to - geth - er. The

more we sing to - geth - er the hap - pi - er we'll be, for

your songs are my songs and my songs are your songs. The

more we sing to - geth - er the hap - pi - er we'll be.

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/uyd3Bkqyral>

Strumming Suggestions:



The More We Sing Together

English Children's Song

Key of F

F C7 F

The more we sing together, together, together

F C7 F

The more we sing together the happier we'll be

C7 F C7 F

For your songs are my songs and my songs are your songs

F C7 F

The more we sing together the happier we'll be

Apples and Bananas

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)

North American Children's Song

Four staves of music for the song "Apples and Bananas". Each staff includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (Bb), and a 4/4 time signature. The lyrics are: "I like to eat, eat, eat ap-ples and ba - na - nas." Above each staff is a chord diagram for C7 (first, third, and fourth staves) and F (second and fourth staves).

Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/qCxTckjRq8c>

Strumming Suggestions:

↓↑↓↑↓↑↓↑ (Swung/Shuffle)

↓↑↓↑↓↑↓↑

Apples and Bananas

North American Children's Song

Key of C

Chord progression for the song "Apples and Bananas" in the key of C:

C⁷ F C⁷
 ... I like to eat, eat, eat apples and bananas

C⁷ F
 I like to eat, eat, eat apples and bananas

F C⁷
 I like to eat, eat, eat apples and bananas

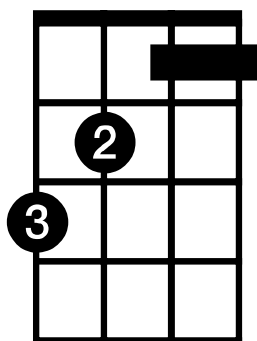
C⁷ F
 I like to eat, eat, eat apples and bananas

The B-flat Chord

The B-flat Chord is a chord that many ukulele players find difficult and try avoid. It is usually the first barre chord that is played (though if you have been following this approach, you have been barring since the first lesson), and this requires a different approach, as you do not barre with your fingertips. Use leverage to pull against the fretboard for the barre, and then add the other two fingers. Use the thumb as a support, not as a vice grip. The action of your ukulele can make B-flat easier as well. B-flat is a common chord in F, which tends to be a good key for many singers—so you want to learn how to play it!

B \flat

- Barre across strings 1 & 2, right above the first fret; pull against the fretboard—use your leverage!
- Add fingers 2 & 3
- Use your thumb for support, not as a vice grip.
- Get a clear sound on all four strings!

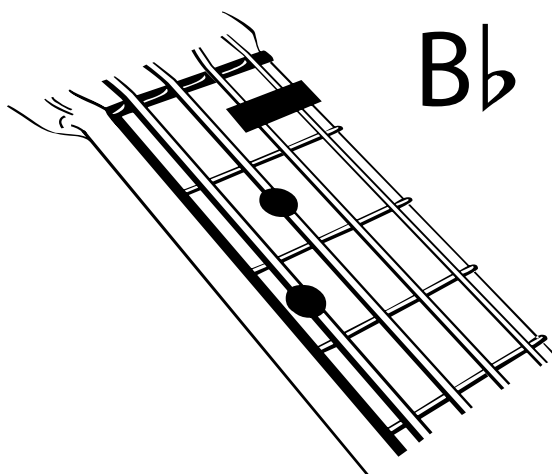


Quick Check!

How are you holding your ukulele?

Are you using leverage to make the chord?

Do you have space underneath fingers 2 & 3?



Ukulele Skill Drill #12 (Add B-flat)

Skill drills allow you to add new chords into chord progressions without having to change chords while following a song or melody. Hold a steady tempo while changing chords, and accuracy is more important than speed.

When you can transition through the chords smoothly, move on to the songs!

The image displays three rows of musical notation for a 4/4 ukulele skill drill. Each row begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. Above the staff, chord names are listed, and below them, their corresponding fingerings are shown on a four-string grid. The first row contains eight measures, each with a single chord: F, Am, Dm, Bb, F, Bb, C7, and F. The second row contains eight measures with two chords per measure: F and Am, Dm and Bb, F and Am, Bb and C7, and F. The third row contains sixteen measures with four chords per measure: F, Am, F, Bb; F, Dm, C, F; F, Am, Dm, Bb; F, Dm, Bb, C7; and F. The notation uses double slashes (//) to indicate where the chords are held for the duration of the measure.

Play Along Video: https://youtu.be/NCJ_8YXRfE

Happy Birthday

GCEA Ukulele (Soprano, Concert, or Tenor)

Patty and Mildred J. Hill

Hap - py birth - day to you! Hap - py birth - day to

you! Hap - py birth - day, dear *** ** Hap - py birth - day to you!

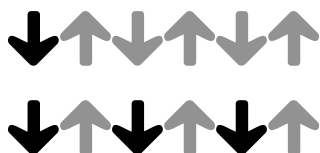
Play Along Video: <https://youtu.be/RotAv3LTOcg>

Happy Birthday

Patty and Mildred J. Hill

Key of F

Strumming Suggestions:



F **C7**
... Happy birthday to you!

C7 **F**
Happy birthday to you!

F **Bb**
Happy birthday, dear *** **!

F **C7** **F**
Happy birthday to you!

Aloha 'Oe

Queen Liliuokalani

B \flat F

A - lo - ha 'oe, a - lo - ha 'oe E ke

C7 F

o - na - o - na no - ho i - ka li - po One

B \flat F

fond em - brace a ho - i a - e

C7 F

au Un - til we meet a - gain.

Play Along Video: https://youtu.be/hUCuy49_DA0

Strumming Suggestion:



Aloha 'Oe

Queen Liliuokalani

Key of F

B \flat F

Aloha 'oe, aloha 'oe

C⁷ F

E ke onaona noho ika lipo

B \flat

One fond embrace

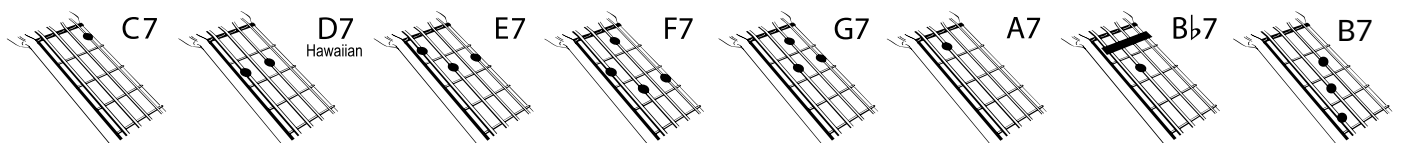
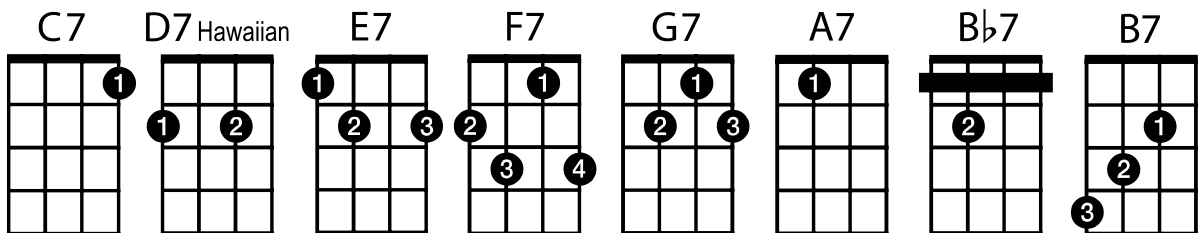
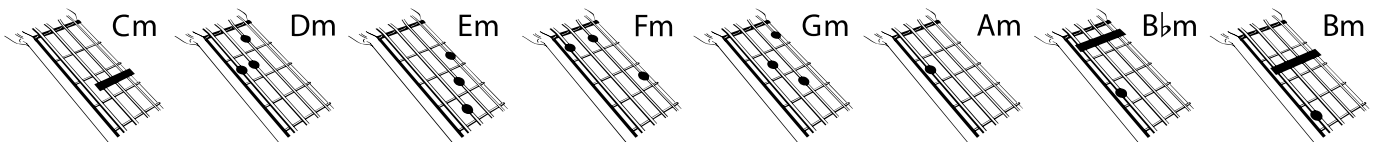
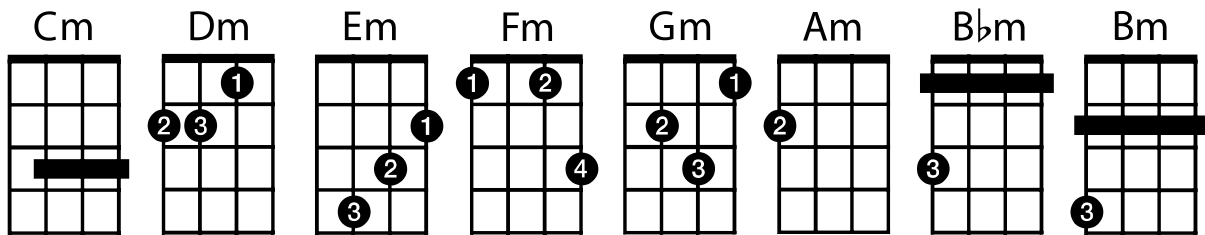
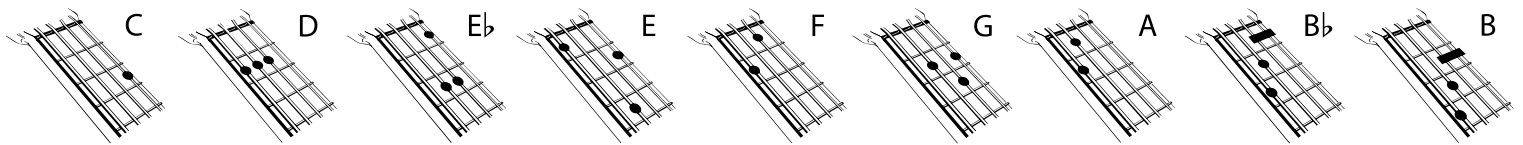
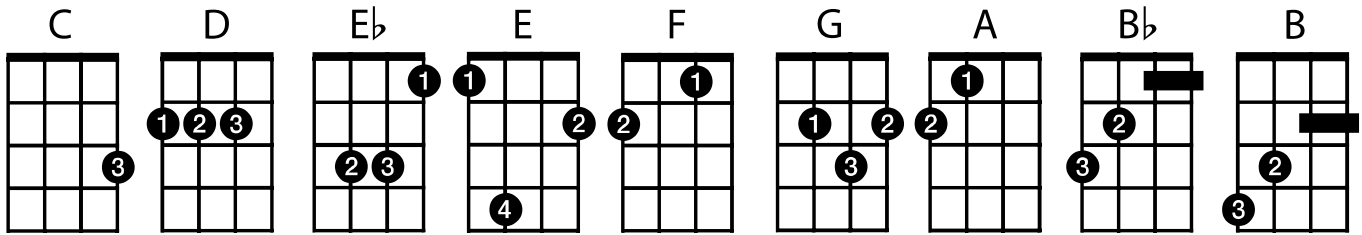
F

A hoi ae au

C⁷ F

Until we meet again

Chord Chart



Next Steps

Now that you have worked through this method, what are the next steps?

- You can play along with many play along videos on YouTube, such as on my channel (UkePlayAlongs), or many others including Ukulaliens, Andy Ramos, and others.
- You can follow along with lessons from many teachers on YouTube!
- You can keep learning new chords, including diminished and jazz chords!
- You can keep learning new strumming patterns, particularly the “chuck” (also known as the “chunk” or “palm mute”).
- You can learn the basic chord shapes and how to move them up and down the neck of the ukulele.
- You can learn the notes of the fretboard (start with the 3rd and 1st strings!)
- You can learn how to play the melody line of any song.
- You can learn Chord Melody, which allows you to play the melody and chords at the same time, usually with just your thumb—try to use music with both traditional notation and tablature.
- You can learn “fingerstyle” which is a way of picking chords with your strumming hand while you continue to use the ukulele as an accompaniment to singing.
- You can learn how to play songs written in tablature, which is how advancing or advanced ukulele players approach solo playing (think of Jake Shimabukuro, Taimaine, or James Hill)
- You can learn “clawhammer” picking, which is a special type of playing that originated with bluegrass banjo players.
- I highly recommend the fingerstyle and claw hammer resources by Aaron Keim at The Quiet American Music. <https://www.quietamericanmusic.com>
- You can learn “Campanella” playing, which takes advantage of “reentrant” or “High G” tuning on the ukulele, allowing notes to ring as long as possible (like a bell).
- You can find a private teacher, online or in person, or subscribe to a online method.
- You can join a group near you so you can play and sing your favorite songs with others.
- You can join communities online, such as the Ukelandia group on Facebook.
- You can attend ukulele events, such as The Silver Creek International Ukulele Carnival.

But most importantly, keep working on your skills and having fun!

Resources for Next Steps

If you are interested in further instruction on the ukulele, check out the following websites. Some of these are subscription-based, and appear in alphabetical order. Please note that no one paid for inclusion in this list.

ArtistWorks (Craig Chee & Sarah Maisel)
<https://artistworks.com/ukulele-lessons-craig-sarah>

Bernadette Teaches Music (YouTube)
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHF88ovEEPETzNtEUbgGBuw>

Bernadette's 30 Day Ukulele Course
<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLJFa3EaocfZmuwRS6jXrrpUj7uWoTaqVW>

Cynthia Lin
<https://www.youtube.com/user/cynthialinmusic>

Dr. Uke (Wesley Lamonte)
<https://www.youtube.com/user/WesleyLamonte>

Katie DeNure (One Music School)
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXGiCLn-Xh9VwDT8h06rOIA>

Rock Class 101
<https://rockclass101.com>

U Can Uke
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJw6mvMFO5YaK-rMcQRQ0Ew>

Uke Like the Pros
<https://www.ukelikethepros.com>

UkeStuff (YouTube)
<https://www.youtube.com/ukestuff>

Ukulele Underground
<https://ukuleleunderground.com>

The Ukulele Sisters
<https://ukulele.io>

Ukulele Wales (YouTube)
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCQxNRbyi3i4Nvqpo55bWBkg>

The Ukulele Way/Uketropolis
<https://www.uketropolis.com/theukuleleway>

Uncle Rod's 'Ukulele Boot Camp
<http://ukulelebootcamp.weebly.com>

Ukulele Zen
<https://www.youtube.com/user/StUkulele>