

Uke3A

Introduction to learning the ukulele

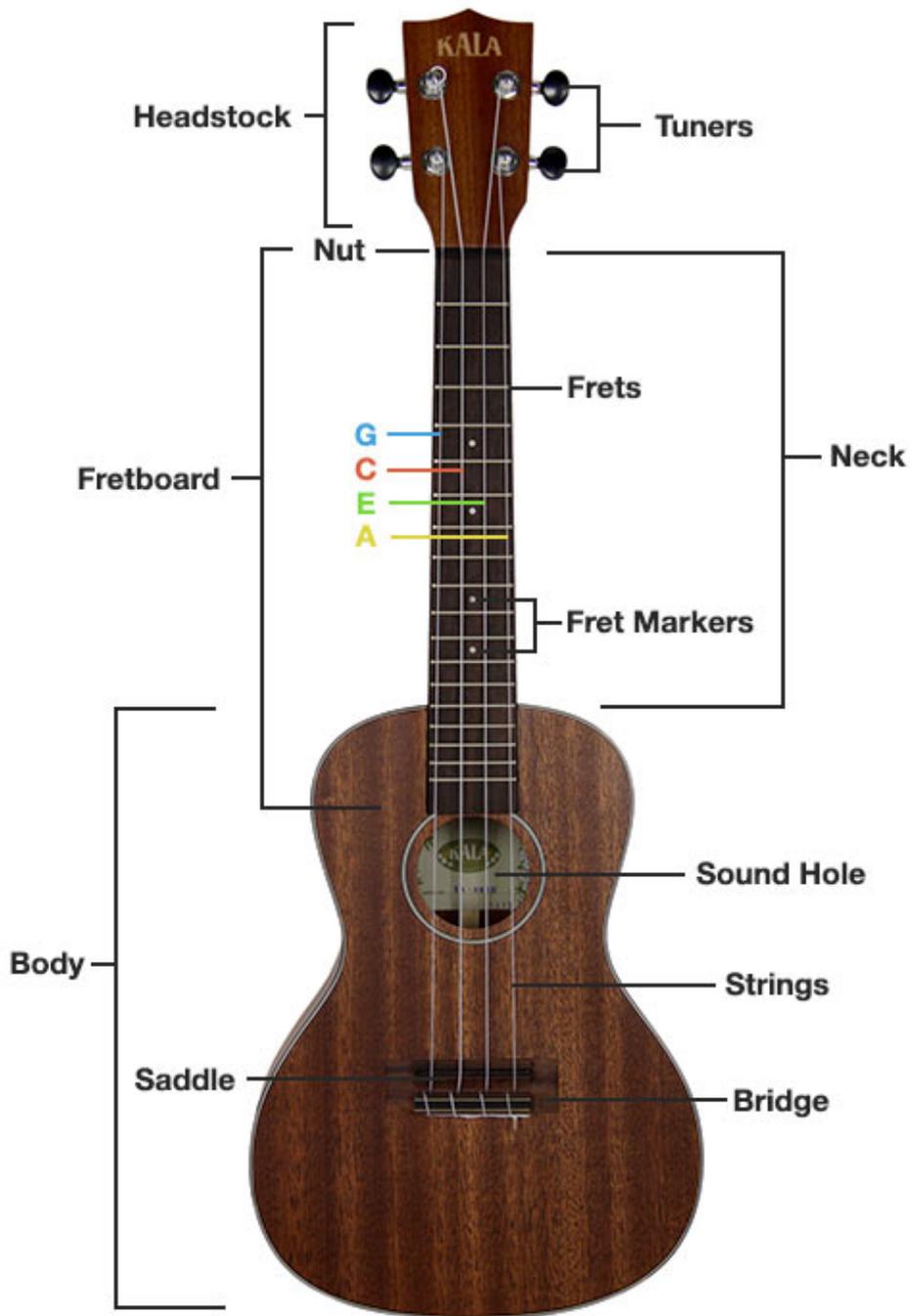


Lesson One

You have a ukulele and you want to learn to play it?

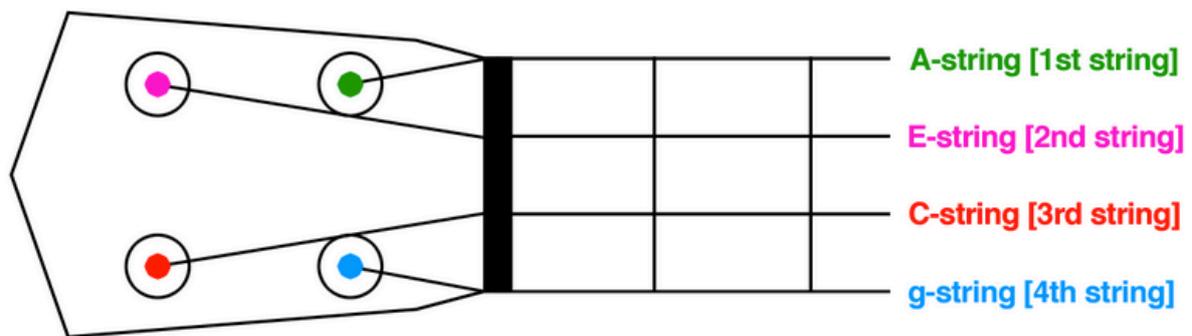
Our number 1 rule is to have fun and enjoy yourself!

Parts of the ukulele: Handy when you are talking with other people about the ukulele or when you are in need of a spare part.



Tuning:

This is most important and the first thing you do before you start to practice or play your ukulele. You can do this by either using a tuner (attaches to the end of your ukulele), by ear, or using software (app) on your computer, tablet or smartphone and turning your tuning pegs and strumming the individual string until the desired pitch is achieved. The most common tuning is GCEA. Note this image below is a top down perspective as if you were ready to play.



As you can see, the bottom string or **first string** is tuned to an **A**. The **second string** is tuned to an **E**. The **third string** is tuned to a **C**, and the **fourth string** or top string of the ukulele is tuned to a **G**.

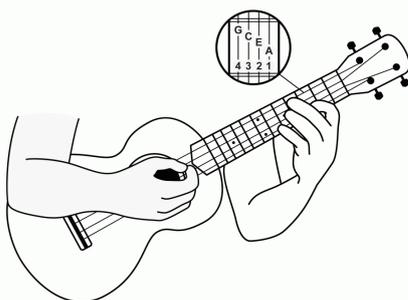
Posture & Form:

Remember to pick up your ukulele by the neck close to the body.

Sit up straight on your chair with feet flat on the floor. Good posture (no slouching) is important.

The ukulele should be close to your body in an upright position with the neck pointing slightly upwards. Hold the ukulele against your chest with your right forearm (if righthanded). Your left hand holds the neck. Try to keep your thumb behind the fretboard (between frets 1 & 3) as much as possible. You will soon find what is most comfortable to you. It is best to keep your fingernails short on your fretboard hand.

A neck strap is an option, especially if you have trouble with your ukulele slipping out of position.



Strumming:

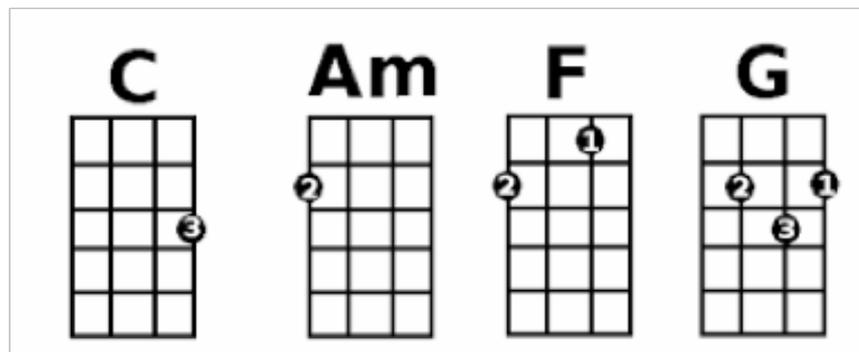
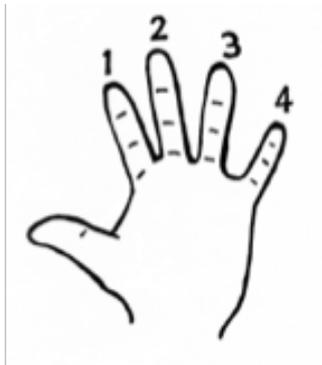
A *strum* or stroke is a sweeping action where a finger or plectrum brushes over several strings to generate sound.

Start out with the basic hand position which is a loose fist. Strum with the index finger of your right hand, fingernail side down. When you strum down, you should be hitting the strings with your nail. When you're strumming up, with the fleshy tip of your finger. It is important to use your wrist rather than your whole hand. The ideal place to strum is roughly from half way between the sound hole and fretboard to a couple of inches over the fretboard.

Reading Chords:

A chord consists of two or more notes played together. You make chords by placing different finger combinations on the fretboard. Chord boxes (as below) are graphic representations of the first few frets of the neck of the ukulele, showing you where to put your fingers to make a chord. The vertical lines represent the strings, and the horizontal lines represent the frets.

When looking at chord diagrams you'll often see numbers placed on individual frets. These numbers correspond to the fingers on your hand. Universal numbering is used so regardless of what website or book you are looking at the index finger will always be labelled #1. We use the very ends of our fingertips to hold down the strings while strumming a chord.



I recommend watching this youtube clip by Andy G (lesson 1) <https://youtu.be/5bTE5fbxDsc>

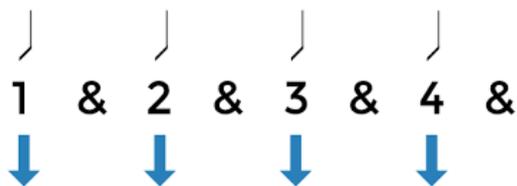
Lesson Two

Reminders from Lesson One:

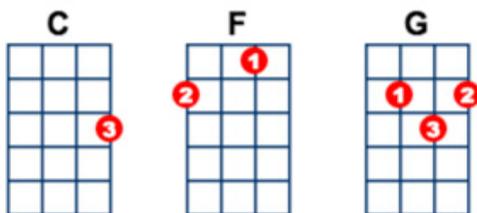
1. Always tune your ukulele before you start playing. When you are first learning it is good to tune every 15 minutes.
2. Posture – sit upright with feet on ground. Form – check you are holding your ukulele correctly.

More on Strumming:

Get a little loose in the wrist, and don't use your whole arm to strum. If strumming is totally new to you then it will take some time to get comfortable with it. Start with only strumming down strokes with your index finger. You can place your fretboard hand over all the strings on the fretboard to mute them while you practice strumming. Keep a steady beat by counting to four (repeat). Learning to tap your foot also can help you keep a steady beat. Use a metronome which allows you to control the speed of the beat. There are free metronome apps available for your computer, tablet or smart phone.



We will learn these three chords and then have a try at the following exercises:



Exercise One

1	2	3	4
↓	↓	↓	↓
Row	row	row your	boat
Gently	down the	Stream	
Merrily	merrily	merrily	merrily
Life is	but a	dream	

Exercise Two

[C]				[F]			
1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
[C]				[F]			
1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓

Exercise Three

[C]				[G]			
1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
[F]				[G]			
1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓

You Are My ^CSunshine

My only sunshine.

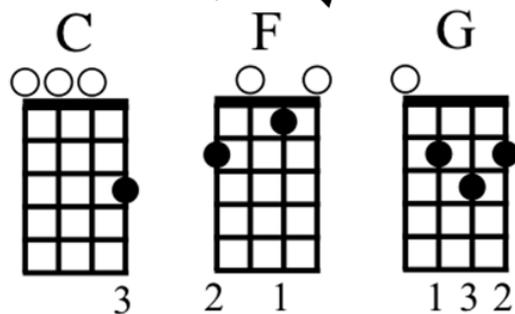
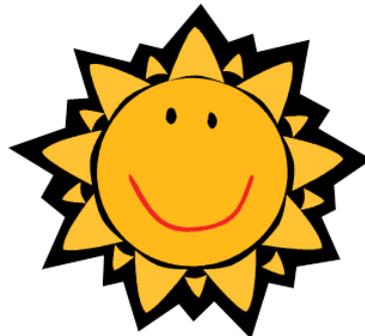
You make me happy ^F

When skies are ^Cgrey.

You'll never know, dear, ^F

How much I love you. ^C

Please don't take my ^Gsunshine ^Caway



There are many good youtube videos to play along with to either learn a song or learn chords:
Chord practice C, F & Am - <https://youtu.be/9cfmMs5Icf0>
You are My Sunshine - <https://youtu.be/GlrOzQzASRA>
To change playback speed hover over video and look for settings (cog icon) and click/tap.
You should see a playback speed option where you can change to slow it down.

Lesson Three

Practice makes Better

Yes we all know the old saying “practice makes perfect.” Here are some good things to remember when practicing.

1. Practicing is NOT playing. Both are valuable but practice is the focus on specific skills in order to improve. Make time for both practice (set yourself a goal to achieve), and play songs just for fun.
2. Learn when fresh as you will retain things better. Find a good space where you are comfortable and won't get disturbed.
3. Set yourself a realistic time goal that you can always meet. Best to space out your practice evenly over the week and it allows you to build upon what you learned in your last session.
4. Learning chords is muscle memory so it is good to practice just changing chords without strumming, especially when learning new or difficult chords. Remember if a chord doesn't sound clean it is usually because you are not pressing the active fingers hard enough on the fretboard, or you are touching other strings.
5. Try not to watch your fingers. As you get confident with each chord you will find you don't need to watch your fingers, but you need to make this a good habit.
6. When playing songs look ahead to see what the next chord is so you can be prepared and ready to change. This really does help.
7. Learning faster means playing slower. Set your metronome very slow when learning a new song or new chords as this will give you more time to change chords. Once you feel confident playing at a slow speed increase your speed by 5BPM each time around until you are at performance speed.
8. If you don't have a metronome then tapping your foot to the beat will also help you keep time.
9. Record yourself and play it back. This will give you a better idea of how you are progressing. Use a voice recorder on your smart phone, tablet or computer. Eg. Audacity on your computer.
10. When jamming with the UKE3A group, feel free to skip the chords you are not confident with yet.
11. Have fun and enjoy!

Singing along as you play

Don't panic, a good singing voice is not essential! When you first start playing and trying to sing it can be too much to concentrate on all at once. The best tip is to start off just strumming one chord while you sing and as you get more comfortable add more chords until you can play and sing the whole song. Alternatively some people prefer to start off by humming the tune while playing. Pick simple songs at this early stage. As you progress and you need help to learn a song you will usually find a video clip via the internet that will help.

Lesson Three

Practice makes Better

Yes we all know the old saying “practice makes perfect.” Here are some good things to remember when practicing.

1. Practicing is NOT playing. Both are valuable but practice is the focus on specific skills in order to improve. Make time for both practice (set yourself a goal to achieve), and play songs just for fun.
2. Learn when fresh as you will retain things better. Find a good space where you are comfortable and won't get disturbed.
3. Set yourself a realistic time goal that you can always meet. Best to space out your practice evenly over the week and it allows you to build upon what you learned in your last session.
4. Learning chords is muscle memory so it is good to practice just changing chords without strumming, especially when learning new or difficult chords. Remember if a chord doesn't sound clean it is usually because you are not pressing the active fingers hard enough on the fretboard, or you are touching other strings.
5. Try not to watch your fingers. As you get confident with each chord you will find you don't need to watch your fingers, but you need to make this a good habit.
6. When playing songs look ahead to see what the next chord is so you can be prepared and ready to change. This really does help.
7. Learning faster means playing slower. Set your metronome very slow when learning a new song or new chords as this will give you more time to change chords. Once you feel confident playing at a slow speed increase your speed by 5BPM each time around until you are at performance speed.
8. If you don't have a metronome then tapping your foot to the beat will also help you keep time.
9. Record yourself and play it back. This will give you a better idea of how you are progressing. Use a voice recorder on your smart phone, tablet or computer. Eg. Audacity on your computer.
10. When jamming with the UKE3A group, feel free to skip the chords you are not confident with yet.
11. Have fun and enjoy!

History of the Ukulele

The ukulele is commonly associated with music from Hawaii where the name roughly translates as "jumping flea. Developed in the 1880s, the ukulele is based on several small guitar-like instruments of Portuguese origin, the machete, introduced to the Hawaiian Islands by Portuguese immigrants. Common types of ukuleles include soprano (standard ukulele), concert, tenor, and baritone.

Jim's Songbook

This link will take you straight to the song download page. It should open with the Ukulele (gCEA) option highlighted. Either scroll down to see all the songs available or type in your song title in the search box. To print click on PDF/Img and choose your preferred option. Note if you need to change the key click on Transpose and select the key you require.

<https://ozbcoz.com/Songs/index.php?errorids=4&cat=3&type=99&instr=soprano>

Ukulele Music terms

You don't need to learn these but you may come across some of these terms and wonder what they are mean.

Acoustic - The term that means the ukulele makes its sound with no amplification, utilising its own construction and soundhole to project the tone and volume. A pure electric ukulele makes very little sound on its own, without being plugged in to an amplifier. An electro acoustic does both.

Arpeggio - The process of plucking the individual notes in a chord separately opposed to strumming them together.

Bar - (or measure) is a segment of time corresponding to a specific number of beats in which each beat is represented by a particular note value and the boundaries of the **bar** are indicated by vertical **bar** lines.



Barre - The action of placing a finger (usually the forefinger) across all strings of the ukulele at a certain fret to effect the action of moving the nut down, and shortening the strings.

BPM or Tempo – Beats per Minute is the same as tempo or the speed of the beats.

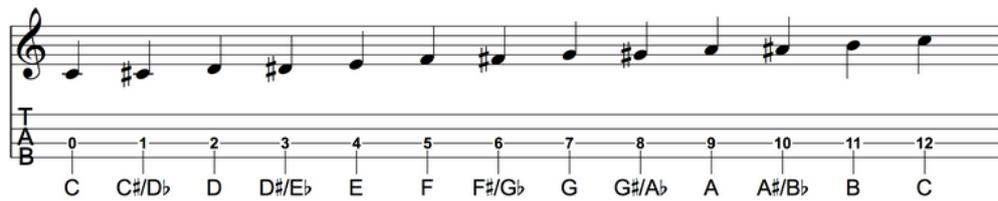
Capo - A device which attaches to the ukulele at a certain fret which, when tightened, has the effect of moving the nut to that fret, thus shortening the strings and raising the register of the instrument. Usually used by those wishing to play the same chord patterns to a song that is otherwise too deep for them to comfortably sing to.



Chord: two or more notes of different pitch sounding together.

Chord Chart - A diagram showing a range of chords and how the fingers should be applied to the strings (and at which frets) to play the particular chord.

Chromatic Scale - The chromatic scale or twelve-tone scale is a musical scale with twelve pitches, each a semitone or half-step above or below its adjacent pitches. Example:



Fingerboard - The area of the neck over which the strings run and into which the frets are mounted. The fingerboard is where your fretting hand holds the notes by pressing down on the strings between the frets.

Fingerstyle, fingerpicking or picking - The technique of playing the ukulele by picking individual strings with the fingers or a pick, rather than strumming them.

Four Four Time (4/4) - A time signature of four quarter beats in one bar of music.

Fret - The thin strips of metal set into the neck of a ukulele to allow you to change notes. By holding a string between frets, the fret nearest the bridge acts as a nut and shortens the length of the string, hence sharpening the note higher.

Fretting - The action of placing a finger between frets, thus changing the length and pitch of the vibrating string.

Key: the basic scale and tonality of a composition.

Key signature: the sharps or flats placed at the beginning of a composition or line of music denoting the scale on which the music is based.

Major Chord - A combination of the first, third and fifth notes of a scale played at once.

Melody - A succession of notes played one after the other - creates the tune for a piece of music.

Metronome - A device that creates an audible clicking sound that can be set to any beat to assist with timing of a musical piece.

Note - The sound made when a string is plucked at a particular fret position. The position of the frets on the ukulele creates different notes when the string is held and plucked in the various positions.

Nut - The strip of material, either hard plastic or bone located at the top end of the fingerboard over which the strings are held in slots on their way to the tuning pegs.

Nut Slots - The four grooves cut into the nut that hold the strings in place at the correct spacing.

Open - The term which refers to playing a string without holding it at any fret, thereby letting it ring along the full length - this plays the note to which the string is naturally tuned. Sometimes shown on ukulele tabs as an X or an O.

Pitch - the highness or lowness of a tone, as determined by the frequency of vibrations per second.

Range - distance between the lowest and highest tones of a melody or the lowest and highest tones an instrument or voice can produce.

Refrain - also called *chorus*; the part of a song repeated at the end of each verse or section.

Rhythm - the element of music that deals with the beat or pulse and the distribution of notes within that beat.

Riff - is a series of notes played within a song that creates a catchy melody. A riff can be played as a pattern of single string notes, or as a series of chords.

Root - The first note of a scale. A chord is named after its root note (even if, on occasion, that note isn't played)

Scale - a sequence of tones which progress step by step in pitch and serve as the basis of a composition.

Sharp - The term given to a note that is sounded higher than its normal pitch.

Signature - the sharps and flats at the head of the staff indicating the key.

Strumming - A style of playing which involves running the fingers over all or some of the strings in a rhythm.

Tablature / Tab - A system of music notation for stringed instruments used as an alternative to sheet music. In tablature the notes appear as numbers representing the fret position on a set of lines representing the strings.

```
-----3-----  
-----0-----0-----  
-----0-----0-----  
-----0-----
```

Tempo – tempo is Italian for Time. Tempo is the speed or pace of a given piece of music. Tempo is a crucial element of any musical piece, as it can affect the mood and difficulty of a composition. Ukulele playing uses a wide range of tempos from slow to super fast.

Timing – in music refers to the ability to “keep time” accurately and to synchronise to a beat such as a metronome or a drum beat.

Transpose - To change the key of a piece of music by a specific interval. Transposing chords on ukulele (or any other instrument) basically means shifting all the chords in a song up (or down) the same number of steps. Sometimes the best way to play a uke song with hard chords is just to transpose it into a key with easier to play chords.