



Learning to play really great Ukulele

Beginner's Course

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Learning to play really great Ukulele

Lesson One

- Introduction
- What can you play on a ukulele?
- Parts of the ukulele
- How to tune your ukulele
- How to hold your ukulele
- How to strum your ukulele
- Learning Chords in the key of C
- Playing songs in the key of C
- So you want to play lead uke
- How to practice before next week

All the Resource Material can be found on Low Fell Ukes website together with audio clips used in this lesson.

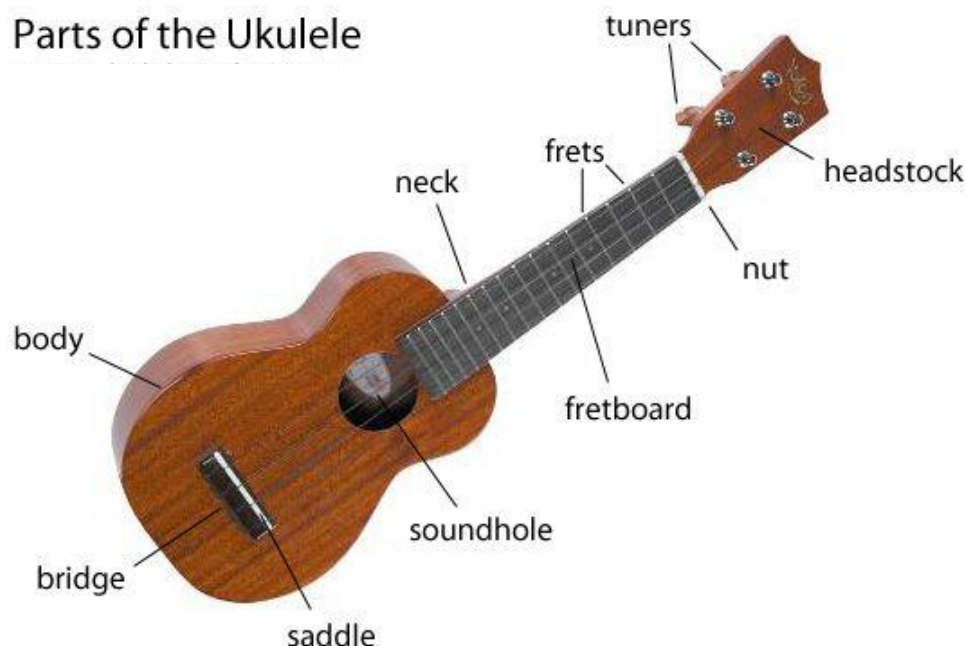
<https://www.lowfellukes.com/beginners-course>

What can you play on a ukulele

The answer is pretty much anything –

- Classical - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZsGtqH-YISQ>
- Folk - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ncJY-RBLyD0>
- Old Time - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMJEtLjnO7E>
- Modern pop - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkHTsc9PU2A>
- Jazz - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKpk9SO7iLM>
- Film music - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pLgJ7pk0X-s>
- Blues - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7EqLeGXwPUg> – take special note of this one as we will be playing this by the end of the course.

Parts of the Ukulele



Tuning your Ukulele

The number one way to sound better as a beginner ukulele player is to *tune your ukulele*. Your audience will thank you for it and you'll be inspired and even surprised by the beautiful sound you create!

A lot of new ukulele players don't realize the ukulele has to be tuned frequently to maintain the best sound. Relatively cheap ukuleles require more frequent tuning whereas higher-end ukuleles often hold their tuning for longer.

As a rule of thumb, check your ukulele tuning every 15 minutes.

Now this might sound like a lot of tuning at first but following these easy steps you'll soon be a pro at tuning your ukulele quickly in no time at all.

How to Tune Your Ukulele

This tuning method works for almost any ukulele including soprano, concert and tenor ukuleles. The fastest and easiest way to tune is to use an electronic tuner. There are two ways of getting an electronic tuner –

- Buy one or
- Download an App on your smartphone

If you are buying a tuner, find a chromatic tuner. This is a device that detects the pitch of a note as you pluck a string of the ukulele. With the aid of a chromatic tuner, you can quickly identify if you are sharp or flat (that is to say “too high” or “too low” in pitch) relative to the desired note. I prefer the Snark SN-6 ukulele tuner that clips on to the headstock of your ukulele.



The down side of this is that it costs up to £15 whereas you can get a perfectly good tuner on your smartphone for nothing. Just go to the App Store and press Search, then type in ukulele tuner and choose one you fancy. I use one called AP Tuner (just type that into search).

Know what you are tuning to...



- 4th string (nearest your nose) **G**
- 3rd string **C**
- 2nd string **E**
- 1st string (nearest your toes) **A**

My tuner says a different letter...

Musical notes are name by letters from A to G – ABCDEFG... then repeat.

You may see on your tuner the symbols # and b after notes these mean sharp and flat and are notes in between the main notes e.g, C# - C sharp or Bb – B flat. Think of the main notes as being the white keys on the piano and the sharps and flats as the black keys.

So the whole range of notes is – **A Bb B C C# D Eb E F F# G Ab A.....**

This is important to know so you know whether you have to tune up or down. For instance if you were trying to tune the 4th string - **G** and the tuner said **F#** you would have to tune it higher. If it said **Ab** you would have to tune it lower.

Let's tune..

1. Clip the tuner onto the headstock of your ukulele and switch it on or place your smart phone with the tuner App switched on close to your ukulele.
2. Start by plucking the g-string (the first one, nearest your nose).

You're aiming for the g note. If the tuner has an arrow display, when the arrow is pointing toward the left, you need to tune up. When the arrow points to the right, tune down.

3. Turn the tuning peg to make the note higher or lower –
 - Strings 4 and 3 turn away from you for higher / towards you for lower
 - Strings 2 and three towards you for higher and away for lower
4. When you get the arrow pointing straight up, you're in tune and you can repeat the process with the next string.

Not all electronic tuners work in the same way. Some use a system of lights (for example, red for too high/too low, green for in tune). The important thing is to make sure that you know which note you're tuning your string to. That's particularly important when you first get your ukulele, because often ukes are very out of tune when you buy them.

Here is a video which refreshes all the issues raised in this section -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hYmhTD_zNnQ

How to hold a Ukulele

Traditionally, most ukulele players use their right hand to strum, while their left hand functions as the fretting hand. Even lefties tend to play the ukulele right-handed, as finding a lefty ukulele can be a challenge. To properly hold your ukulele, follow these steps:



Keep it close to your chest. Hold the body of the ukulele to your chest, with the neck running parallel to the floor or at a slight angle. Cradle the weight of the ukulele in your right arm.

Hold the neck in your left hand. Hold it near the top of the neck, but not on the very top, or headstock. Press your thumb against the back of the neck and let your fingers gently curl around the front and over the fretboard. You'll need to generate enough pressure to hold various ukulele chord shapes, so feel free to adjust your left-hand position to make fingering as efficient as possible.

Bend your right arm at the elbow.

Your right arm is your strumming arm, so extend the lower part of your arm in a straight line over the ukulele. Allow your right-hand fingers to rest gently on the ukulele strings a little bit up the neck from the sound hole. You'll be strumming the ukulele and picking individual notes with your index finger, so it's important to keep your right hand loose and agile.

If you are sitting you can rest the uke on your knee or you may find it easier to have a strap to hold it in place.



Basic Strumming

The first thing to realise about strumming is that it's not about how fancy or complicated you make a strumming pattern. Since strumming is a form of rhythm, in order to be effective, it must be consistent and steady. A steady, consistent strumming rhythm is always more pleasing to listen to than a really complicated strumming pattern played out of time.

There are many ways of strumming –

- With your thumb
- With a single finger – your first finger
- With your first finger with your thumb behind (See picture)
- With a plectrum



Each method gives a different sound. For the moment we will be using the third way of strumming. We will explore lots of other ways of strumming in future sessions.

You will be making the sound with the nail of your first finger.

Strumming Pattern #1



Chords in the key of C

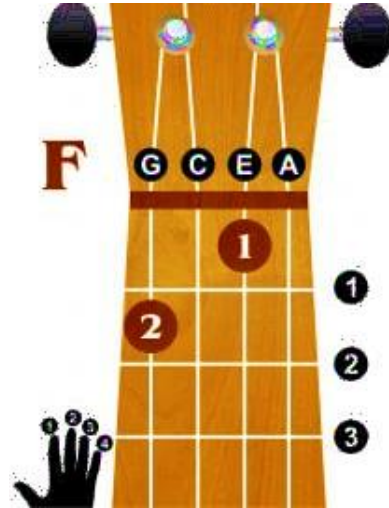
C

Fret 3: Position Finger 3 on the bottom string (A string).



F

Fret 1: Use Finger 1 to fret the E string.
Fret 2: Use Finger 2 to fret the G string.
Arch your fingers to avoid touching the C and A strings when you reach over to get to the E and G strings.



G

Fret 2: Place Finger 1 on the C string
And use Finger 2 to fret the A string.
Fret 3: Position Finger 3 on the E string.



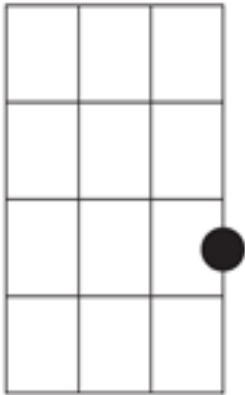
A minor

Fret 2: Use Finger 2 to fret the G string.

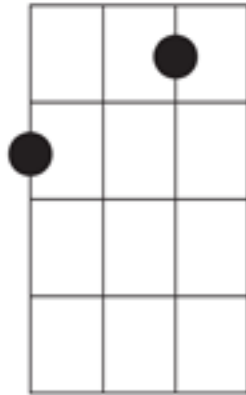


Chord Boxes...

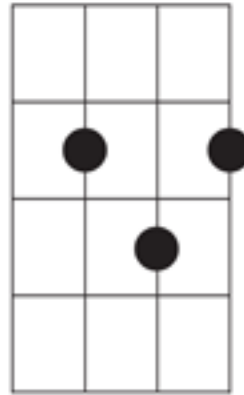
C



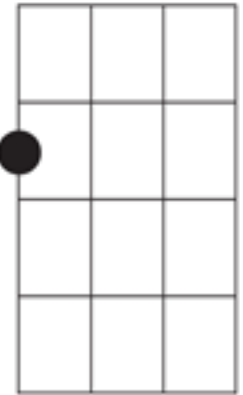
F



G



Am



[Tacet] You are my **[C]** sunshine my only **[C]** sunshine
 You make me **[F]** happy when skies are **[C]** grey
 You'll never **[F]** know dear how much I **[C]** love you
 Please don't **[C]** take my **[G]** sunshine a**[C]**way

You Are My Sunshine

Verse 1: **[Tacet]** You are my **[C]** sunshine my only **[C]** sunshine
 You make me **[F]** happy when skies are **[C]** grey
 You'll never **[F]** know dear how much I **[C]** love you
 Please don't **[C]** take my **[G]** sunshine a **[C]** way

Verse 2: **[Tacet]** The other **[C]** night dear as I lay **[C]** sleeping
 I dreamed I **[F]** held you in my **[C]** arms
 But when I **[F]** woke dear I was mis **[C]** taken
 And I **[C]** hung my **[G]** head and I **[C]** cried

Verse 3: **[Tacet]** You are my **[C]** sunshine my only **[C]** sunshine
 You make me **[F]** happy when skies are **[C]** grey
 You'll never **[F]** know dear how much I **[C]** love you
 Please don't **[C]** take my **[G]** sunshine a**[C]**way

Verse 4: **[Tacet]** You are my **[C]** sunshine my only **[C]** sunshine
 You make me **[F]** happy when skies are **[C]** grey
 You'll never **[F]** know dear how much I **[C]** love you
 Please don't **[C]** take my **[G]** sunshine a **[C]** way
[Tacet] Oh please don't **[C]** take my **[G7]** sunshine a **[C]** way
[Tacet] Oh please don't **[C]** take my **[G7]** sunshine a **[C]** way **[G] [C]**

Blowing in the Wind – Bob Dylan

- Intro:** (Last 2 lines of verse)
[F] [G] [C] [Am] [F] [G] [C]
- Verse 1:** [C] How many [F] roads must a [C] man walk down
Before you [F] call him a [G] man?
[C] How many [F] seas must a [C] white dove [Am] sail
Be-[C]-fore she [F] sleeps in the [G] sand?
[C] How many [F] times must the [C] cannonballs fly
Before they're for[F]ever [G] banned?
- Chorus:** The [F] answer, my [G] friend, is [C] blowin' in the [Am] wind,
The [F] answer is [G] blowin' in the [C] wind.
- Verse 2:** [C] How many [F] times must a [C] man look up
Before he can [F] see the [G] sky?
[C] How many [F] ears must [C] one man [Am] have
Be-[C]-fore he can [F] hear people [G] cry?
[C] How many [F] deaths will it [C] take 'til he knows that
Too many [F] people have [G] died?
- Chorus:** [F] The answer, my [G] friend, is [C] blowin' in the [Am] wind,
The [F] answer is [G] blowin' in the [C] wind.
- Verse 3:** [C] How many [F] years can a [C] mountain exist
Before it is [F] washed to the [G] sea?
[C] How many [F] years can some [C] people ex[Am]ist
Be-[C]-fore they're a[F]llowed to be [G] free?
[C] How many [F] times can a [C] man turn his head and
Pretend that he [F] just doesn't [G] see?
- Chorus:** [F] The answer, my [G] friend, is [C] blowin' in the [Am] wind,
The [F] answer is [G] blowin' in the [C] wind.
[F] The answer, my [G] friend, is [C] blowin' in the [Am] wind,
The [F] answer is [G] blowin' in the [C] wind.

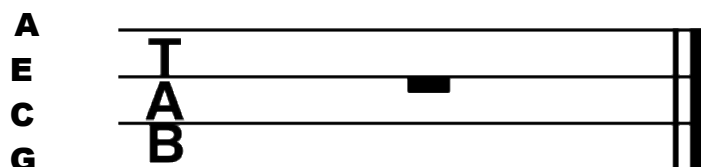
Hound Dog – Jerry Leiber & Mike Stoller

- Verse 1:** [Tacet] You ain't nothin' but a [C] hound dog cryin' all the time
You ain't nothin' but a [F] hound dog cryin' all the [C] time
Well you ain't [G] never caught a rabbit
And you [F] ain't no friend of [C] mine
- Verse 2:** [Tacet] Well they said you was [C] high class well that was just a lie
Yeah they said you was [F] high class well that was just a [C] lie
Well you ain't [G] never caught a rabbit
And you [F] ain't no friend of [C] mine
- Verse 3:** [Tacet] You ain't nothin' but a [C] hound dog cryin' all the time
You ain't nothin' but a [F] hound dog cryin' all the [C] time
Well you ain't [G] never caught a rabbit
And you [F] ain't no friend of [C] mine
- Verse 4:** [Tacet] Well they said you was [C] high class well that was just a lie
Yeah they said you was [F] high class well that was just a [C] lie
Well you ain't [G] never caught a rabbit
And you [F] ain't no friend of [C] mine
- Verse 5:** [Tacet] Well they said you was [C] high class well that was just a lie
Yeah they said you was [F] high class well that was just a [C] lie
Well you ain't [G] never caught a rabbit
And you [F] ain't no friend of [C] mine
- Verse 6:** [Tacet] You ain't nothin' but a [C] hound dog cryin' all the time
You ain't nothin' but a [F] hound dog cryin' all the [C] time
Well you ain't [G] never caught a rabbit
And you [F] ain't no friend of [C] mine
Well you ain't [G] ↓ never caught a rabbit
And you [F] ↓ ain't no friend of [C] ↓ mine [G] [Am7] ↓

So you want to be the Eric Clapton of Ukes

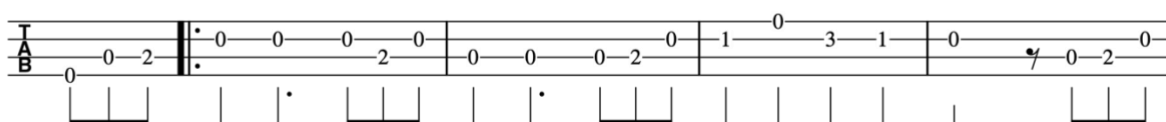
Reading Tab...

Each line represents a string and each number a fret on that string. The top line is the A string (the one nearest your toes with line 2 being the E, line 3 being C and line 4 G (nearest your nose)



You are my Sunshine

Instrumental



Practicing

1. Make sure you can hold your uke comfortably
2. Make sure you can tune your uke
3. Learn to play the chords C, F and G
4. Slowly strum 'You are my Sunshine'
5. Have a go at playing the Instrumental for 'You are my Sunshine'

Tip – When practicing always start off slowly and when you have mastered a skill try to do it a bit faster. If you try to go too fast before you have mastered a skill you will only get it wrong and get frustrated.

Any queries or problems between sessions email me at lowfellukes@outlook.com and I will answer as soon as I can.

Notes:

Jot down any questions, reminders or anything, otherwise you'll forget it!