

How to Uke

Just about one year ago, in April our beloved Chiaki wrote an amazing article on Today We Dream, about how anyone can become a Musician. Just like Chiaki, I started to learn how to play the Ukulele when I started working here at Ohana, and just like Chiaki, I also was urged to start by the very same "Coworker". Today, I would like to give you a one stop guide on, "How To Uke"!

The Ukulele is a beautiful, portable, instrument that you can pull out anytime, anywhere and entertain yourself as well as the people around you. Although the Ukulele is said to be a beginner friendly instrument even to those with no musical background. Just like any other instrument or skill, it will take practice. However, with just a little bit of practice you can get started playing simple tunes and with further practice you can expand your repertoire indefinitely!

Here are the topics discussed in this article, please feel free to jump to any section that interests you!

- 1) Your "Uke"
- 2) Tuning
- 3) Learning the first and most important chord, the C chord
- 4) F and G chord
- 5) How to Strum
- 6) Let's play our first song!

Part 1: Your Uke

Okay, let's get started! First let's talk a little about the Ukulele. The Ukulele generally comes in four different sizes. The most common and smallest Ukulele is the Soprano, the next largest is Concert, followed by the Tenor, and the largest is Baritone. To make things simple, I recommend you start off with the small Soprano size as it is the most common variant. If the Soprano size feels too small, or you want more volume you might want to consider a bigger size, at a later stage. I recommend getting a strap for your ukulele and I do **NOT** recommend using a pick.

You will notice that there are "boxes" on the neck of the Ukulele. These are called "Frets". The first fret is the first box on the far left. The next on the right is the second fret, so on and so forth. When you look at chords, you will see something like this:

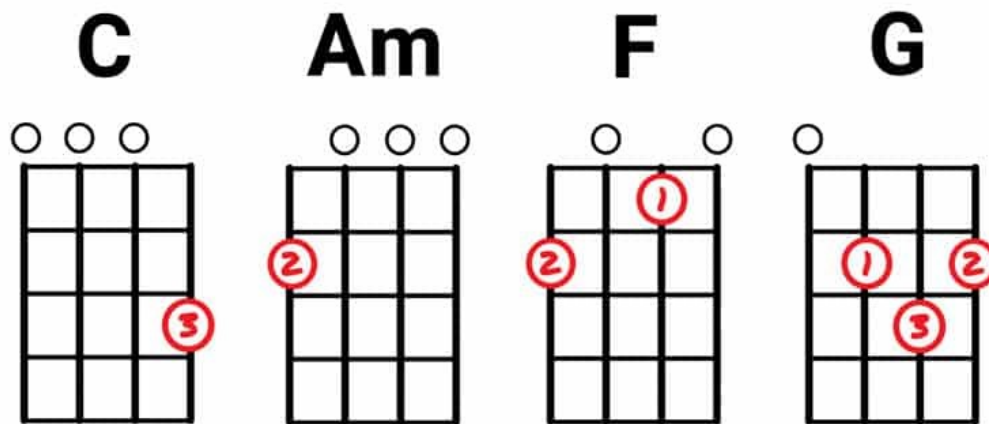


Image from <https://acousticbridge.com/easy-ukulele-songs-for-beginners/>

Let's take the *G* chord for example. The 1 is our pointer finger, 2 is our middle finger and 3 is our ring finger. Thus, our pointer finger (1) goes on the second fret of the second string, our middle finger (2) goes on the second fret of the fourth string, and then our ring finger (3) on the third fret of the third string, like so:

Part 2: Tuning

Now we have our Ukulele, it's time to get ready to play! The first thing we need to do is make sure our Ukulele is in "tune". With the Ukulele facing you, the string on the very left is the *G* string (meaning the sound it makes is *G* which is "so" in do re mi.). The next one is the *C* string which is the "do" sound, third string is *A* ("la") and at the very right is *E* ("mi"). You can download a free tuner app and adjust the pegs to get the right sound. Generally, you will need to tune your Uke every time before you play.

Part 3: Learning the first and most important chord, the *C* chord

Now we have our Ukulele in tune and are ready to play. Let's learn one of the most used and easiest chords on the Uke! Simply put your ring finger (3) on the third fret of the last string. Congratulations! You have mastered the *C* chord! Most of the beginner songs on the Ukulele or easy arrangements of songs usually revolve around the *C* chord. So get comfortable with this as soon as you can!



Part 4: Am (A minor), F, G Chords



Am (A Minor)



F



G

Now we have mastered the C chord next we will master three chords that are very commonly used as well, which are the Am (A minor), F, and G chords. To make the Am chord, place your middle finger on the second fret of the first string, that's it! For the F string, simply make the Am chord and then place your pointer finger on the first fret of the third string. The G chord is explained in part one.

Part 5: How to strum

Now we have our first chord down, now it's time to make the ukulele sing it's beautiful tune! With your right pointer finger simply run your finger down and up the string. A very important tip is to make sure you don't stiffen or tense up your finger. Make sure to relax and let your finger flow through the strings. Once you have completely mastered the down up down up motion, you can try different strumming patterns to spice up your music. One of my personal favorites is down, down, up, down, up, down, up. Whenever you learn a new strumming pattern make sure it becomes complete muscle memory to make the next section easier on you.



Part 6: Let's play our first song!

We are now ready to finally play a song on our Ukulele! Since we are now masters of the C, F, and G chords, we can play a very popular song with just these three chords! At first, singing and playing may be extremely difficult and confusing. This is normal and happens to everyone that plays the Ukulele. As frustrating as it can be, hang in there and keep practicing! Once you climb that steep wall, singing and strumming will quickly become second nature!

You Are My Sunshine by Jammie Davis

[C]

You are my Sunshine

My only Sunshine

[F]

You make me Happy

[C]

When skies are Grey

[F]

You'll never Know dear,

[C]

How much I Love you.

[G] [C]

Please don't take my sunshine away.

First start the song by strumming the C chord and sing along to the words, with the chord. Switch to the F chord right as you sing the first syllable in "Happy" then continue to play the F chord until the first syllable of "Grey", here we will switch back to the C chord. Switch to F at "Know", back to C on "Love" and then finish with G and C.

Congratulations! You have successfully played your first song and now you know how to play the Ukulele! With the power of the internet you can easily look up sheet music for your favorite songs, and look up new chords as well. If a song looks too complicated, you can search for modified versions which focus on the easy chords such as C, F, and G.

Hope you enjoyed this article and hope this helps you take your first step into the wonderful world of Uke!

Happy playing!!!

Love,

Nimo