



A Recipe for Success

The Ukulele Parts

Body, Neck, Head, Strings, Sound Hole, Tuners, Bridge, Saddle, Frets, etc.

The Player Parts

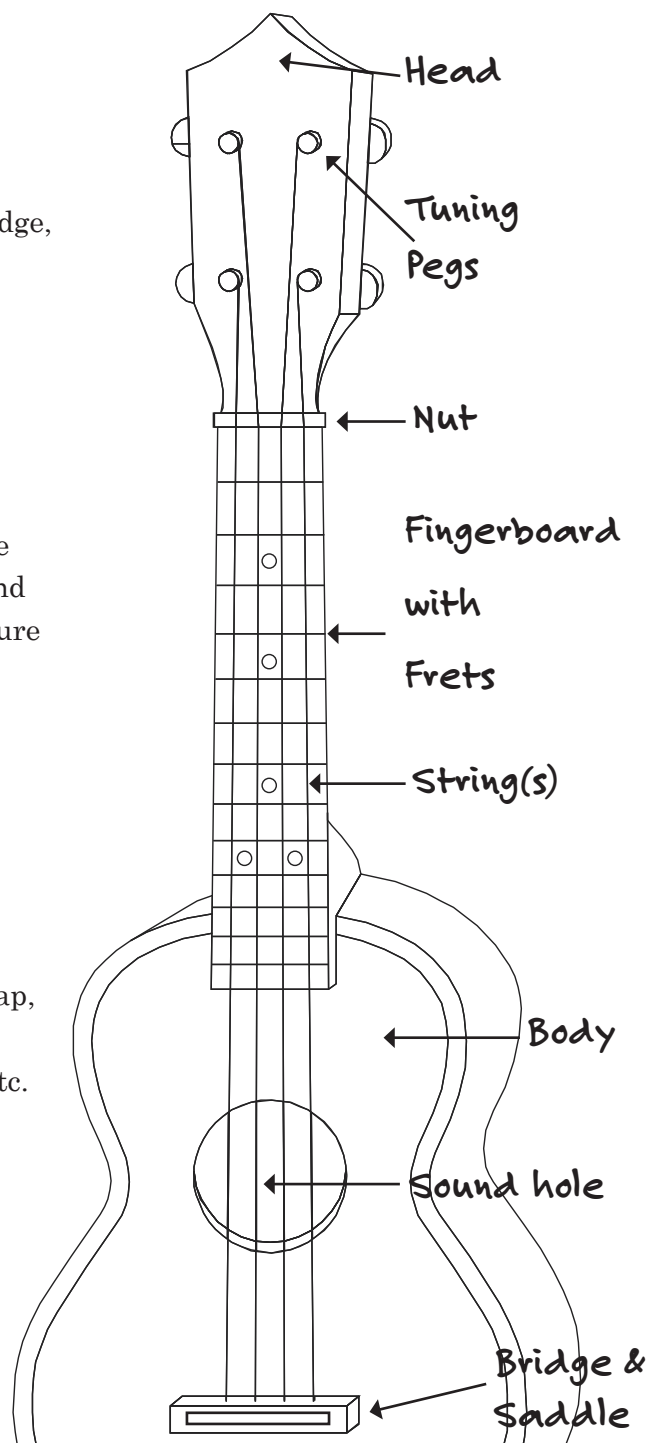
YOU – *your mind, ear and hands.*

For your fretting hand, the fingers play notes with the thumb's primary role supporting the fingers. The fingers are pressing the strings to the fingerboard and the thumb needs to supply equal and opposite pressure in the *back* of the neck.

Your *strumming and picking* hand, your other hand strikes, strums or picks the strings to set things in motion, producing music.

Accessories

Books, strings, tuners, metronome, music stand, strap, CDs, DVDs, downloads, the Internet, tools, frequent flyer miles, loud Hawaiian shirts (required attire), etc.



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Tuning - Re-entrant and linear

First - Be sure to ALWAYS play your ukulele in tune. Using an electronic tuner is the fastest and most accurate way to tune your ukulele.

Common Tunings - C, D and G

Here are the three most common ukulele tunings.

C Tuning - G C E A

G Tuning - G D B E

D Tuning - A D F# B

Linear - refers to a tuning more associated with traditional string instruments such as the guitar where the lowest open string is the lowest note available and each successive string is higher than than the previous string.

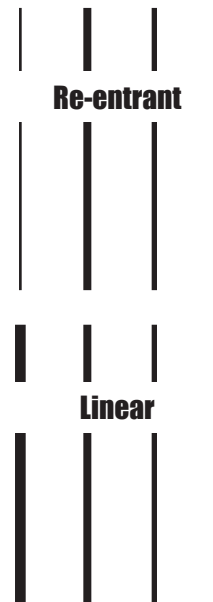
Re-entrant - refers to the string four being an octave then the string in a linear tuning. This would actually be string two with string three becoming string four and string two moving to string three.

“Core” Skills for Ukulele

Depending on your goals you might want to be able to do:

- 1) Chords for accompanying yourself or others singing
- 2) Strumming
- 3) Reading Music
- 3) Single Note Melodies
- 4) Improvising
- 5) Learning songs, creating a repertoire

You can take the ukulele to any level you would like.



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Chords

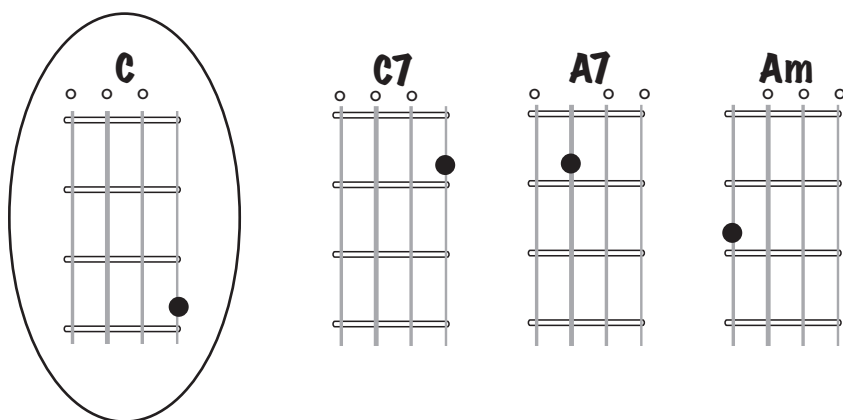
Learn a “Core” Set of Basic Chords

Most beginners learn chords based on what chords are needed to play a particular song. Simple two and three chord songs are the first songs most players use to learn the ukulele.

Your First Ukulele Chord - C Major or Just plain “C”

With a C chord needing only one finger to play and used in several common keys. It's no wonder C is the most common first chord a player typically learns.

Here are a few other basic chords that use only one finger.



Memorizing Chords

Pick a simple song and memorize at least one way to play each of the chords required for the song.

Switching Chords

After chords are memorized, they're played in a particular sequence creating a song or chord progression. Using the order of the chords in the song, practice switching between the chords using one down stroke for each chord. Then one down and up song.

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Strums

A strum is the execution of a specific rhythmic pattern, in a particular style at tempo.

Strumming Chords

After you can successfully switch between chords, use a basic “four” beat, quarter strum and play the chords in order for the number of beats required per chord.

The *beat* is what we typically respond to when listening to music. We tap our foot or clap our hands to the *beat* while listening to a song. If you have ever danced, you are responding to the beat and the harmonic rhythm of the song.

A *downbeat* is the audible part of the beat. The up beat is half way between the up beat and the next downbeat and is not audible. If you’re tapping your foot to the music it’s when you reset your foot preparing for the next downbeat.

A Basic “Four” Strum

Chords and music are organized into bars or measures. For the Basic “Four” Beat Strum, the number of beats per bar or measure is four. This is the most common number of beats used on songs.

Using the basic four strum, every beat has two parts. a down part and an up part. If we are tapping our foot evenly, we hear the down part of the beat when our foot strikes the floor. The up part of the beat is when we are resetting our foot for the next down beat.

Counting evenly, count the down beats using 1 2 3 4 and the up beats, with “and”, indicated with a plus sign below. This gives us:

1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +

▼ down strokes
 ▲ up strokes
 = attack, strike/STROKE the strings

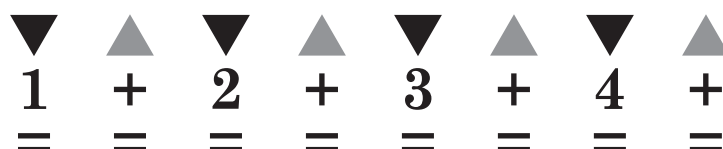
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A Basic Four Beat Strum Variation

Strum down on the downbeat (▼), the numbers and down or up on the up beat (▲ ▲), the “and” (+). For your basic four beat strumming pattern, strum up on the “and”.

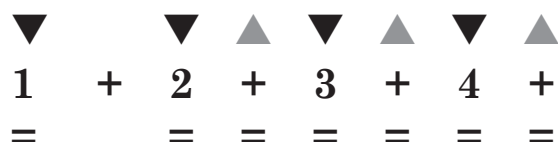


Here is what the *Basic Four* strum looks like using standard music notation.



Remember to count evenly and you'll will be playing in tempo.

Strumming pattern



Standard Music Notation



These are just two of the possible, basic four beat strumming patterns. And, two of the more famous strums that are used a lot.

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Reading Music

Whether reading TAB or Standard Music Notation, reading music is understanding the written language of music.

This can be anything from reading simple, single note melodies in the open position on the ukulele to complex solo arrangements.

Reading music is: note recognition and execution, note location, fingering solutions, rhythm recognition and execution. It includes the ability to follow the “Roadmap” – a series of written instructions that move you from one section of a song or composition to another section and indicates something of the interpretation of the piece.

Putting these together IS reading. Putting these together without preparation – just as you would read a book or magazine – that’s sight reading!

See my book Reading Music on Ukulele - Primer

Improvising

Improvising is the art of spontaneous composition. For single note soloing, you need a core set of essential scales. For chord improvisation you need multiple places on the ukulele that you can play any given chord

Learning Songs

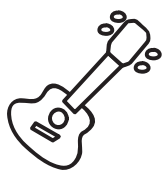
Learning songs and creating a personal repertoire is what music, learning and playing an instrument is all about – the ukulele is no exception. The song or composition is a recipe containing the ingredients that are needed to play the song: the notes, chords, scales, rhythm and arrangement. You supply the technical expertise and the feeling to pull it all together.



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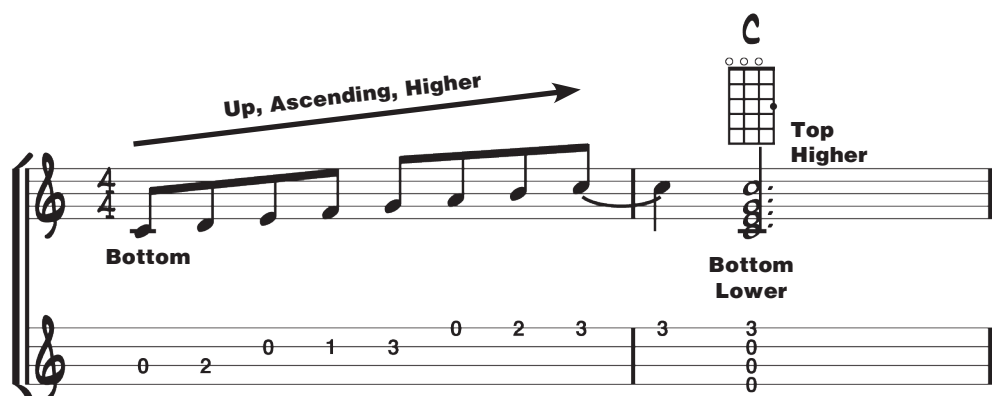
Which Way Is Up?

When navigating the ukulele world on the Internet it's good to know *Which way is up?*. This is especially as most lessons and videos online do not communicate in musical terms. So it is essential to actually know the correct and in-correct terms that are used to communicate music.

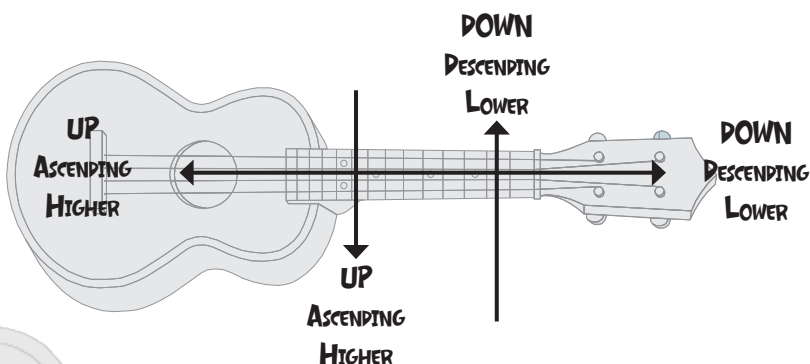
What is up, down, higher, lower, top, bottom, ascending, descending on a ukulele?

Up, down, higher, lower, top, bottom, ascending, descending should refer to musical pitch and are related to gravity as we know it. Up and higher refers to the raising of musical pitch and down and lower refer to the lowering of musical pitch. Top refers to the upper note of a chord voicing or musical phrase and bottom the lowest note.

These terms can be shown best using standard music notation.



The standard music notation also happens to show one of the problems with tab. Tab does not accurately show the ascending and descending nature of pitch or the contour of a musical line as well as written music notation can.



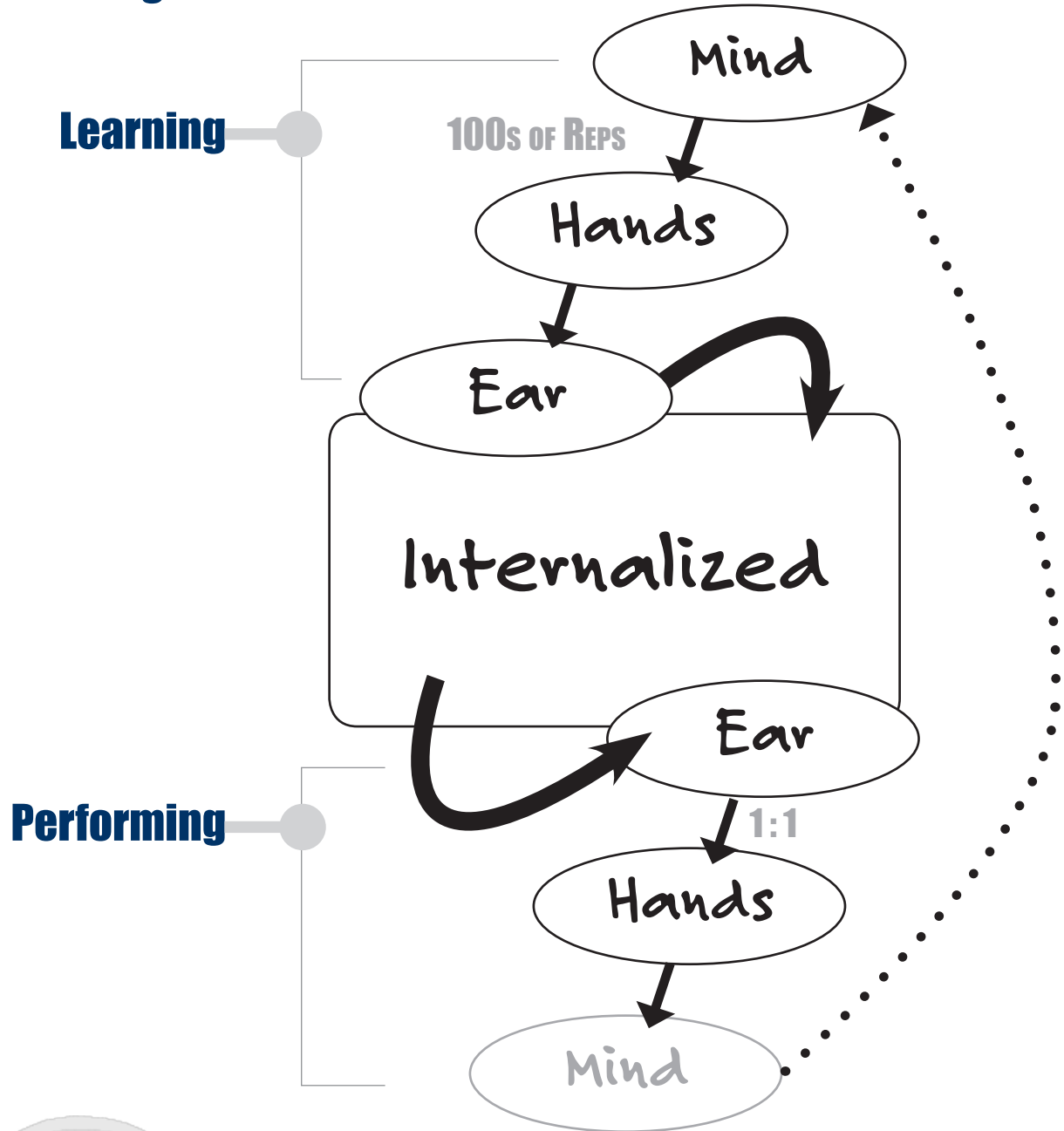
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The Learning Process



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