

Welcome to Willunga Ukuleles where you can learn to STRUM FOR FUN!

Visit <https://willungaukuleles.wixsite.com/website> for play-along session times

This Handbook provides beginners with information that will help them progress towards proficiency and enjoyment of the ukulele.

What Size Ukulele to Buy?



Ukuleles tuned to G C E A come in three different sizes:

Tenor is the biggest with the deepest sound

Concert is middle size and mellow

Soprano is the smallest with a higher pitch sound.

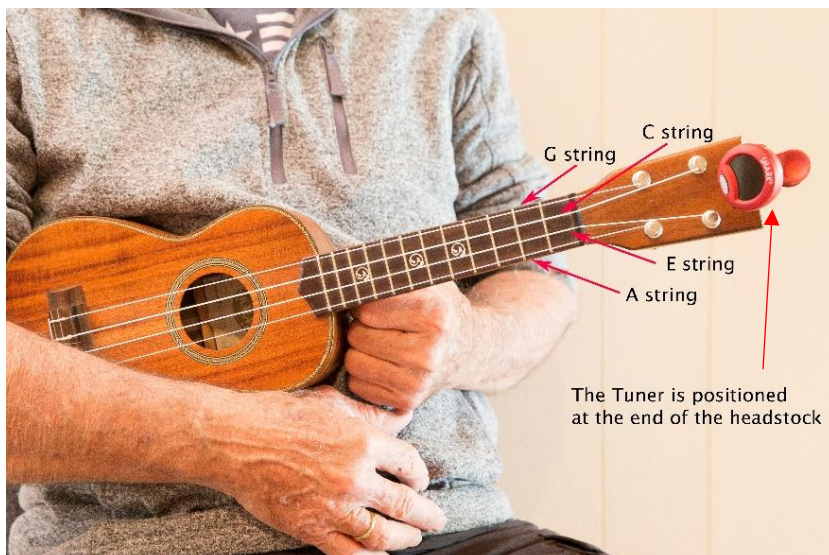
Baritone ukulele (not shown here) is larger again but is tuned to guitar tuning.

What size you prefer is totally up to the individual player. You may start with a soprano which is smaller in hand, but finish-up with a tenor because you prefer the mellower sound. The best way to help with your decision is to try as many as you can, either at a music store or at ukulele club.

But be warned, there is a condition called 'Ukulele acquisition syndrome' – why have one ukulele when you can have three!

Keep Your Ukulele in Tune

A ukulele sounds best when it is in tune. A cheap \$20 tuner is what we suggest, and have it attached to the headstock at all times (see below). You can always ask a helpful club member if you are not sure how to use the tuner. Generally, the cheaper the uke the more you have to tune it – so tune it every time you play and more! Also, when the strings are new they stretch easily and will need frequent retuning.

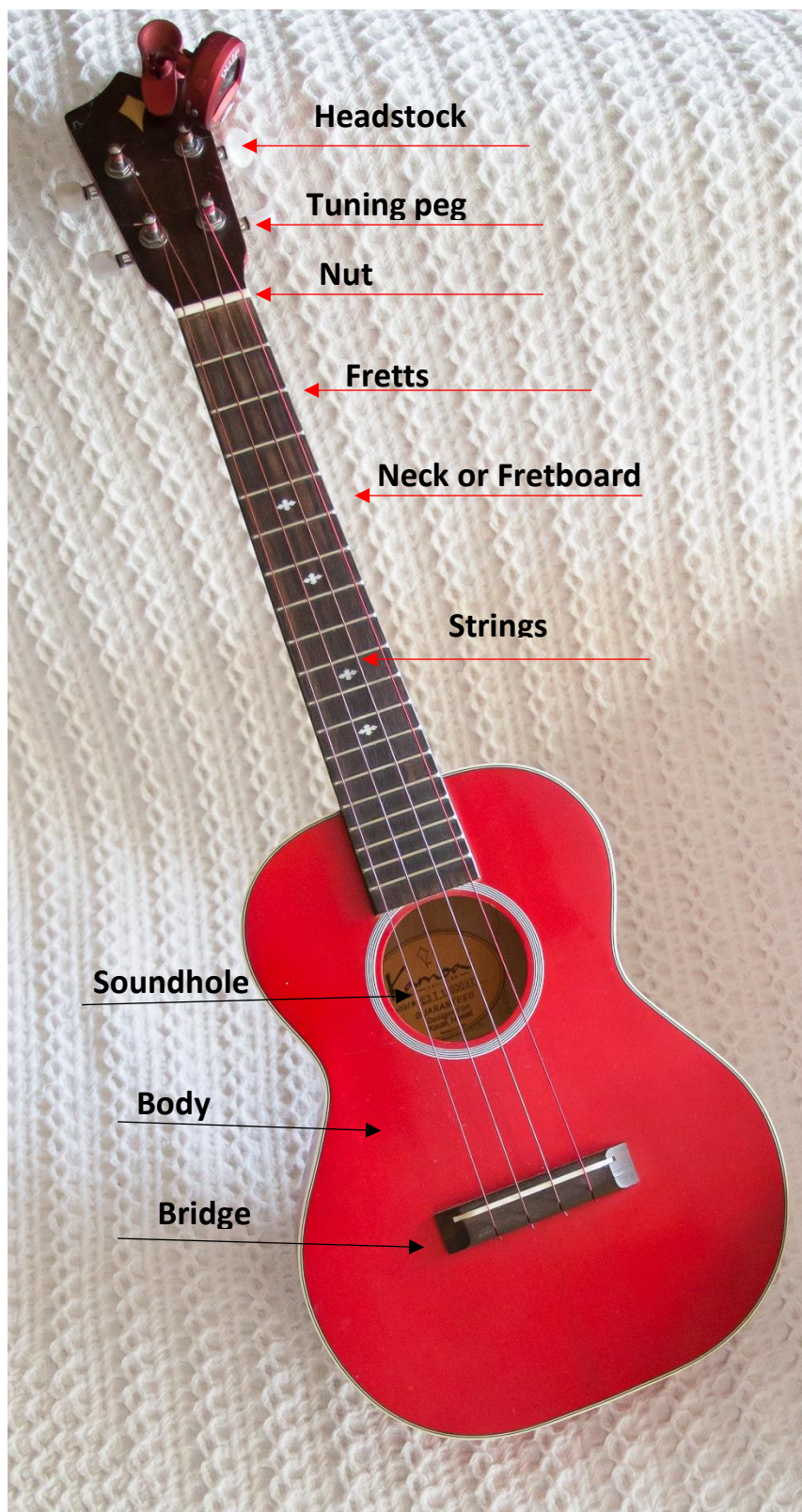


The Strings

- G** string is the top string
4th string from the bottom
- C** string
3rd string from the bottom
- E** string
2nd string from the bottom
- A** string
1st string at the bottom

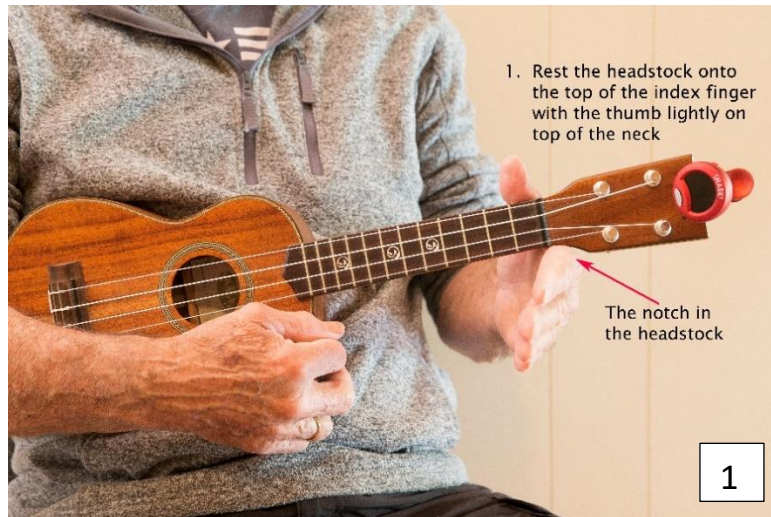
TIP: Ukulele players need to memorise the names of the strings, as they will be referred to often!

Get to Know the Parts of the Ukulele



How to Hold Your Ukulele

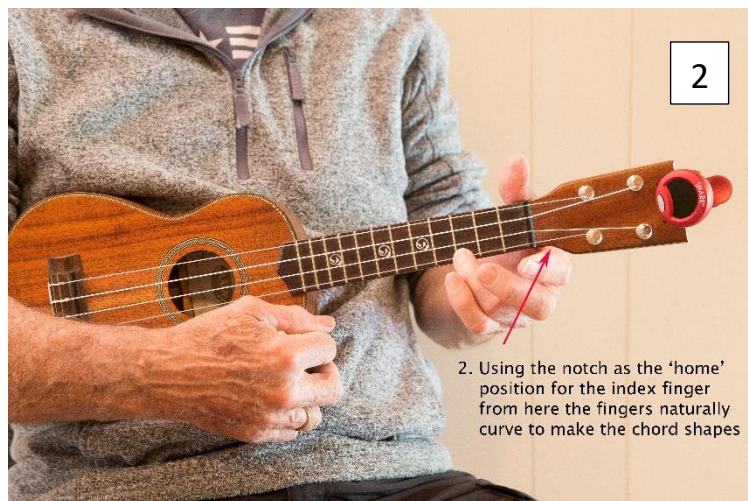
Hold the ukulele comfortably against the body, tilting it up at a slight angle (see photos 1, 2 & 3).



1. Place the index finger of your fretting hand in the notch at the end of the headstock.

2. This position allows for the fingers to naturally turn when playing chords. Have the thumb of the fretting hand resting lightly on the top of the neck or at the back of the neck. No pressure is required at all from the thumb, it is just resting lightly.

3. The objective is to maintain a straight wrist, this ensures that you avoid pain and injury to your wrist joint.



These photos show a right handed player. If you are a lefty, you have to decide if you would like to learn to play right handed (as above), or alternatively have the strings re-strung for playing left handed. Either way can have advantages and disadvantages for the left handed player.

Let's Start Playing!



Fretting Hand – Exercise 1 'Caterpillar'

Position the index finger on the A string 1st fret, the middle finger on the 2nd fret, the ring finger on the 3rd fret, and the pinkie on the 4th fret. The finger tips are the only part of the fingers to touch the strings. Each finger is pressing the string in-between the frets. Now 'walk' your fingers one at a time up to the E string, then the C string and lastly the G string. Now try walking them down the strings, one finger at a time.

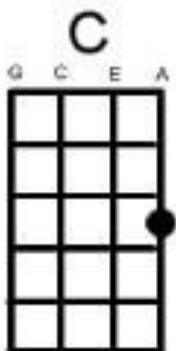
The 'Caterpillar' is a great exercise for building strength and flexibility in your fingers, and can be used as a warm-up exercise before the playing session.

The C Chord – everyone's favourite One Finger Chord

The first chord most players learn is an easy one finger chord called **C major**. Take your 3rd (ring) finger of the fretting hand and position the tip in the middle of the 3rd fret on the A string. Using your thumb slowly strum down all strings. If the A string rings clearly, congratulations you have strummed a C major chord.

Have a look at the diagram below, this shows a C major chord as represented on a **Chord Chart**.

The black dot shows the position of the 3rd finger on the 3rd fret of the A string. The G C and E strings are played open i.e. not fretted. A way to verbally explain how to play a C chord would be open, open, open, three or 0, 0, 0, 3.



C major



The Strumming Hand

It's fun to strum and feeling the rhythm of the strum is one of the joys of playing the ukulele.

Your right hand or the strumming hand is positioned so that the elbow and the forearm lightly hold the ukulele in place against the body. The strumming fingers should reach just past the soundhole, where the neck connects to the main body of the ukulele, as shown in the photos below.

By using either the thumb or the index finger pass over the strings gently. You will notice that the sound can be quite different by either using the flesh of the thumb or the nail of the index finger.

Exercise 2: Practise with 4 down strums using the thumb, counting 1, 2, 3, 4 as you strum. Then practise 4 down strums using the nail of the index finger, counting 1,2,3,4 as you strum. Strum slowly and lightly at first. Pay attention that the fretting hand is holding the C chord correctly and all the notes ring clear.



Playing the C chord and strumming using the flesh of the thumb



Playing the C chord and Strumming using the nail of the index finger

Strumming Tip 1: Resist using a full-arm action when strumming, it should be more of a rotation or roll of the wrist that gives you a small, smooth and efficient strumming action. There are many different strumming patterns and strumming techniques some of which we will cover later.

The F Chord – the friendly Two Finger Chord

F is a major chord in the Key of C. Placing your 1st (index) finger on the 1st fret of the E string, and the 2nd (middle) finger on the 2nd fret of the G string (see photo below).



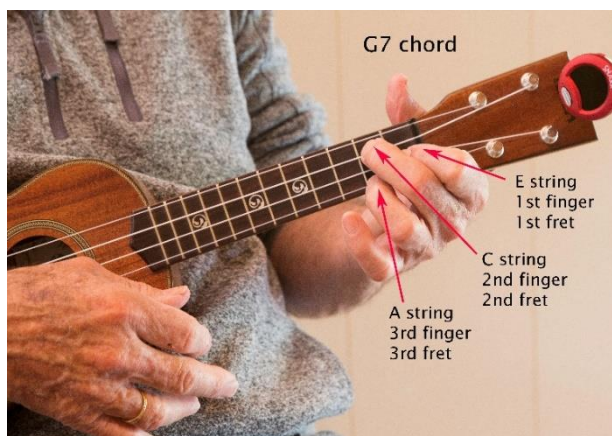
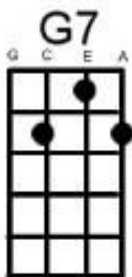
A minor – an easy Bonus Chord: if you take your 1st finger off the E string, but leave your 2nd (middle) finger on the G string you have an Am chord (A minor), also a chord in the Key of C (refer to the graphics above).

Exercise 3: Transitioning slowly and smoothly from C to F to Am and then back to C is an excellent exercise to practice. Strum 4 down strums, counting 1,2,3,4 on each chord. Then you can reverse the transitions Am to F to C – all good practice for achieving smooth transitions.

Transitioning Tip: While changing chords be sure to maintain your correct hand position, with the index finger in the notch of the headstock and keep your wrist straight.

The G7 Chord – a triangle shape Three Finger Chord

As you can see from the graphic below G7 forms a triangle shape using the 1st (index) finger on the 1st fret of the E string, the 2nd (middle) finger on the 2nd fret of the C string, and the 3rd (ring) finger on the 2nd fret of the A string. Strum the chord slowly and let the notes ring clear, what a beautiful sounding chord!



Congratulations! You have learnt one finger chords **C** and **Am**, a two finger chord **F** and now a three finger chord **G7**. By learning these four chords you will be able to practise and play a large assortment of songs –

it's all at your fingertips, and with only 15 mins practise a day you'll be impressing your friends in no time.

More Strumming for Fun

Now that you have learnt and practised a few chords, it is time to learn some basic strumming patterns. Strumming down to a constant steady beat is a good place to start, but when you add an upstroke to your strum, or use a more complicated pattern like the very popular Calypso strum 'down, down up, up down up' then your music will start to come alive.

Use the nail for your index finger for the down strum, and the fleshy inside for the up strum.

Strumming tip 2: Count out loud! By practicing the strum and counting out loud you are developing a steady rhythm for the strum. The most common time signature will be 4/4, which is a count of four, so count out loud '1, 2, 3, 4' for all down strums. Or count '1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &' for down up, down up, down up, down up strums. Counting helps you to develop a good sense of timing.

Strumming Patterns in 4/4 Time

1. Straight Strum: down up, down up, down up, down up

Straight	d	u	d	u	d	u	d	u
Count	1	&	2	&	3	&	4	&
	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑

2. Folk Strum: down, down up down, down up

Folk	d		d	u	d		d	u
Count	1		2	&	3		4	&
	↓		↓	↑	↓		↓	↑

3. DuD Strum: down up down, down up down

DuD	d	u	d		d	u	d
Count	1	&	2		3	&	4
	↓	↑	↓		↓	↑	↓

4. Calypso: down, down up, up down up

Calypso	d		d	u		u	d	u
Count	1		2	&	3	&	4	&
	↓		↓	↑		↑	↓	↑

5. Reggae or backbeat strum: down DOWN, down DOWN, down DOWN, down DOWN

Playing all down strums, with emphasise on the &'s

Reggae	d	D	d	D	d	D	d	D
Count	1	&	2	&	3	&	4	&
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓

Strumming tip 3: Keeping a steady, even beat is essential to having good rhythm, and every musician wants to develop good rhythm. So to assist with your rhythm, **get that foot tapping!** A constant and steady foot that goes UP with the UPSTROKE of the strum, and DOWN with the DOWNSTROKE of the strum is the best built-in tool you have to help you keep in time.

After a while, you will develop a steady internal rhythm and you will **'feel the rhythm'**, and the strumming patterns will become secondary to your own internal sense of rhythm. Then you will truly start to **STRUM FOR FUN!!**