

# *Ukey Hooky*

## Getting Started Guide

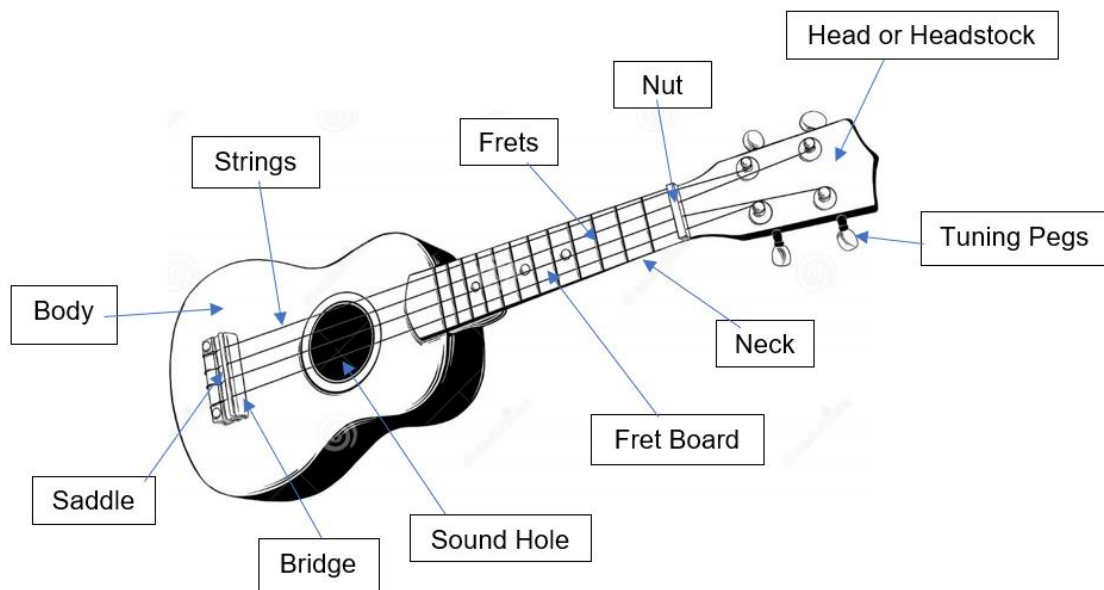


Packed with invaluable information for anyone thinking of learning to play the Ukulele including: Tuning, Chord Charts, Strings, Fingers and Frets, and much more.

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## Parts of the Ukulele



## Strings, Notes, and Frets

The standard Ukulele has 4 strings; **G, C, E, and A**

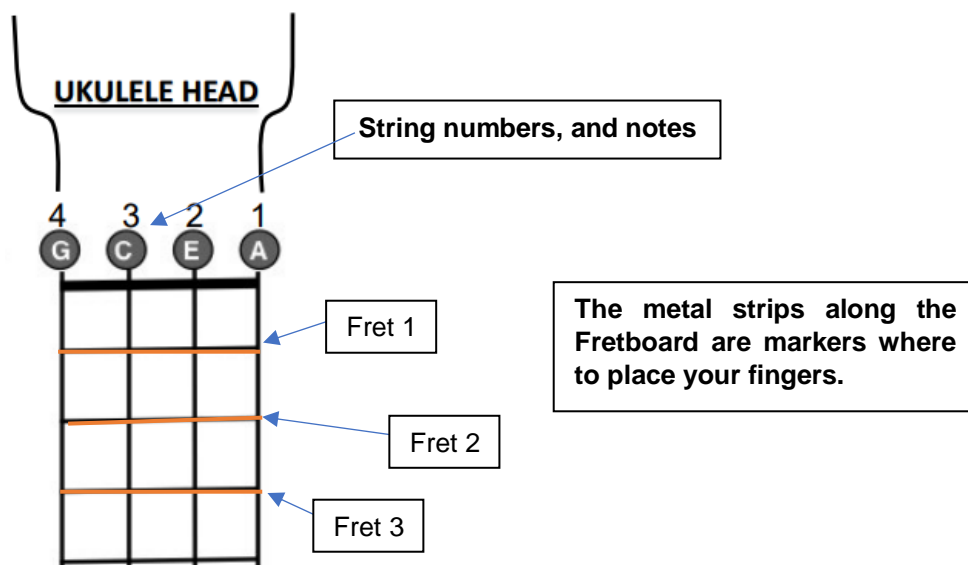
**G: 4<sup>th</sup> String**

**C: 3<sup>rd</sup> String**

**E: 2<sup>nd</sup> String**

**A: 1<sup>st</sup> String**

You will need to know the names of the strings when you tune your Ukulele.



## **Tuning**

Most Ukulele tuners nowadays are fairly generic in that they can be used to tune other stringed instruments like the Guitar, Banjo, Violin and Mandolin by scrolling through the on/off button. The Ukulele setting is sometimes displayed as 'U' or it may provide you with another 2 options: 'Uc' and 'Ud', in which case select '**Uc or Uk**'.

You can also select the option that says '**Chromatic**' or '**C**', which can go through all the notes in the musical scale; C, C#, D, D#, E, etc. as you tune up. It is probably best to select 'U' or 'Ukulele' to avoid confusion. whereas the 'Ukulele' setting will only display one of the 4 strings G, C, E and A, so

A common tuning issue, especially with a new Ukulele or when changing the strings is that the tuner may light up, indicating that the string you are plucking is in tune but displays a different note for that string. For instance, you may be tuning the 'E' string but the tuner lights up green and displays 'C'. What is most likely happening is that the 'E' string still needs to be tightened a bit more until it displays 'E' on the tuner, and lights up. Remember, as you tune up, the tuner goes through each of the notes in turn; G, C, E, and A.

If you purchase your Ukulele online there is every chance that the strings will be very loose when it arrives, and it may surprise you just how much you have to tighten them to get it in tune. You may even think they are going to snap, however standard Ukulele strings are nylon and are quite stretchy. Aquila strings are made of synthetic nylon, which are now becoming very popular and are likely to be on your new Ukulele.

There is also a good selection of tuning apps that can be downloaded onto your phone but it is still handy to have a tuner that you can clip onto the end of your Uke.

**For more guidance on Tuning see “[Tunning Your Ukulele](#)” Video**

## Ukulele Size Guide

If you haven't yet purchased your Ukulele it's a good idea to visit a music shop and try out the different sizes to see which is most suitable. There are 3 main sizes:

1. Soprano (smallest)
2. Concert (middle size)
3. Tenor (biggest)



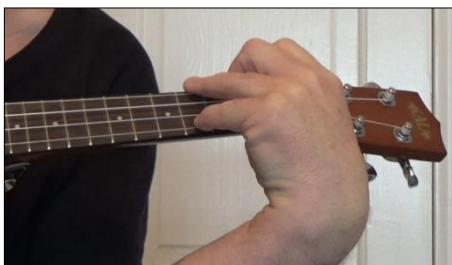
It's important to choose the size of Uke that you are most comfortable with. If you go for something too small or too big your playing experience won't be as enjoyable as it could be, and you may be more reluctant to play.

See the Video [“What size of Ukulele should I buy?”](#) for further guidance.

## How to hold the Ukulele



The Ukulele should be held at **approximately a 45° angle** with **the strings facing out towards the wall** and **not facing upwards towards the ceiling**. From the player's perspective this is so they can see where to put their fingers on the fret board, however I'm afraid to say this is one of those 'bad habits' that doesn't help your playing, and **can actually make it more difficult to hold down chords**. It also means you would need to bend your wrist further round the fret board to reach the strings, which can be awkward and painful and **may also cause damage to your wrist over time!**



**Try to avoid overstretching or posture that is uncomfortable**

**Everything should fit with the natural curvature of our hands, so if it hurts, check how you are holding the Ukulele, you may need to adjust your posture.**

## Chord Hand

When holding down the chords, **your fingers should come in at an angle from behind the nut**, and will make it easier to hold down some of the trickier chords. Think of it as **the default position** for your chord (or fret) hand, particularly in the early stages when learning basic chords. Try and avoid placing your fingers straight up and down, which is more suitable for more advanced chords or when playing a guitar.

**Note:** [If you are right handed you would strum with your right hand and hold down the chords with your left hand](#) (chord hand). This would be reversed if you are left handed, and you would need to buy a left handed Ukulele.



✓



X

Another common mistake that new players often make is to hold the neck of the Ukulele like a Guitar, with their fingers almost vertical. **Your chord hand should actually come in at an angle from behind the nut.** The spaces between the frets on the Ukulele are a bit smaller than on the guitar so it is much easier to play some of the trickier chords if you bring your fingers in at an angle, as shown in the diagram.

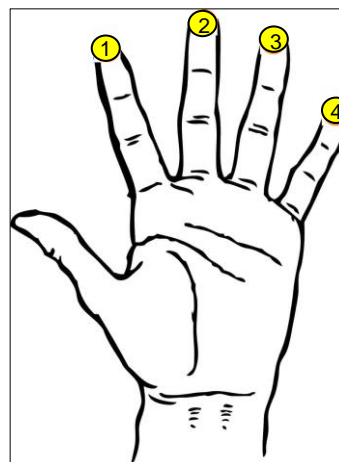
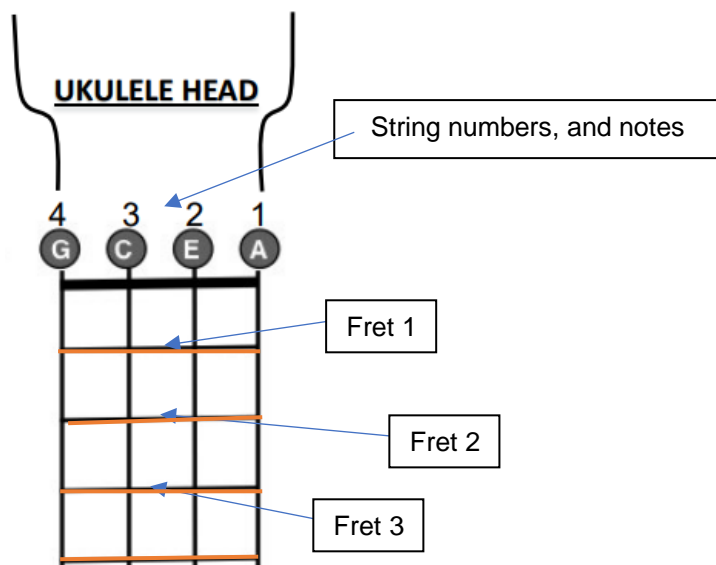
The exception to the rule is chords like **E minor** and barre chords that are a little further up the neck of the ukulele where you need to move your hand away from the default position to reach them. The good news is that **all of the chords in this guide can be played from the default position** so you don't need to worry about moving your fingers up the fretboard just yet.



### **Top Tip**

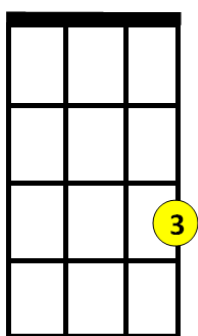
**One way to get used to bringing your chord hand in at an angle from behind the nut is to use an arm rest.**

## Strings, fingers and frets



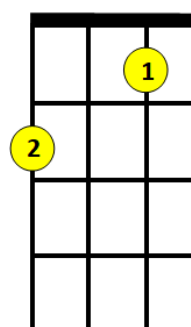
The numbers in the diagram above indicate which fingers to put on the frets.

The diagram below shows the **3<sup>rd</sup> finger** on the **1<sup>st</sup> string**, on the **3<sup>rd</sup> fret**, which is our first chord: **C**



Chord C  
3<sup>rd</sup> finger, 1<sup>st</sup> string, 3<sup>rd</sup> fret

The next chord is **F**, which is the **2<sup>nd</sup> finger** on the **2<sup>nd</sup> fret**, on the **4<sup>th</sup> string**. And the **1<sup>st</sup> finger** on the **1<sup>st</sup> fret**, on the **2<sup>nd</sup> string**.



Chord F  
2<sup>nd</sup> finger, 2<sup>nd</sup> fret, 4<sup>th</sup> string.  
1<sup>st</sup> finger, 1<sup>st</sup> fret, 2<sup>nd</sup> string.

When putting your finger on the Fret, place it **just behind the fret** towards the nut and **not 'on' the actual fret**.

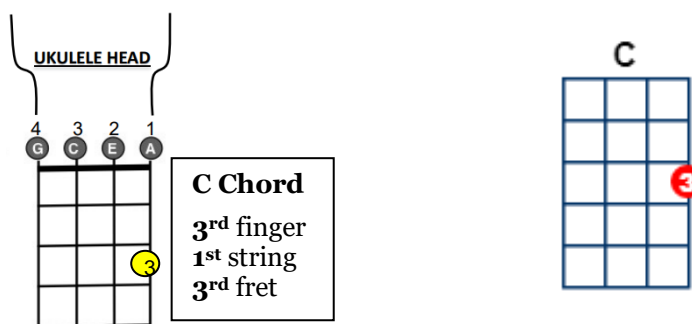
## Chords

A chord is simply 3 or more notes played together. On the Ukulele, we play a chord by placing our fingers on specific frets and **strum all the strings**.

When placing fingers on the chords, it's important to **use the tips of our fingers** and the hand should form a gentle.

### Reading the Chord Chart

This can be a bit tricky at first. Chord charts are usually displayed vertically in the song sheets so it will be a slightly different from the angle we hold the Ukulele. One way to try and make sense of this is to hold the Ukulele almost vertical so it is in the same direction as the chord chart – obviously you wouldn't play the Uke in this position!



The diagram shows a ukulele head with strings labeled G, C, E, A from left to right (4, 3, 2, 1). A yellow circle with the number 3 is on the 3rd fret of the 1st string. To the right is a 4x4 grid representing a chord chart for C, with a red circle containing the number 3 on the 3rd fret of the 1st string.

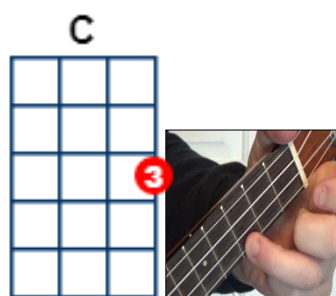
**C Chord**  
3<sup>rd</sup> finger  
1<sup>st</sup> string  
3<sup>rd</sup> fret

**C**

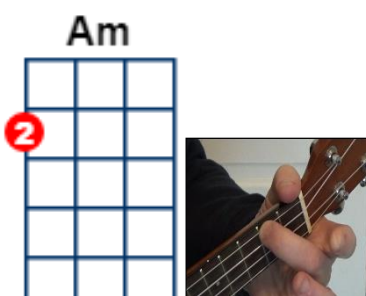
This is how the C Chord is usually shown on the Chord Chart.

The numbers within the red circles indicate which fingers to place on the strings.

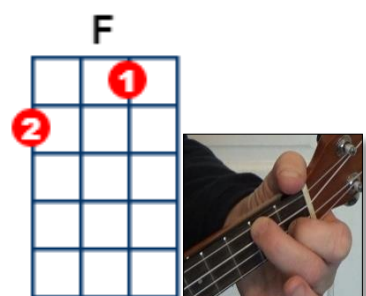
The main chords used in song book 1 are: **C**, **A minor**, **F**, **G**, **D**, and **G7**.



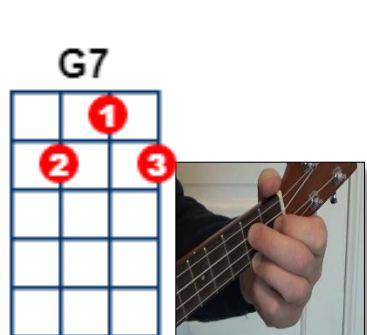
**C**



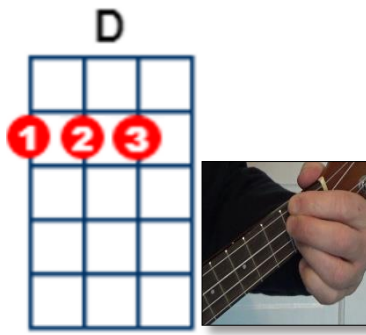
**Am**



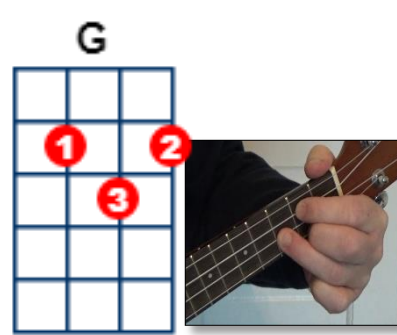
**F**



**G7**



**D**

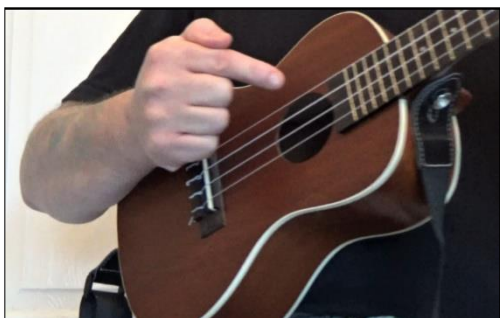


**G**



## **Strumming**

When strumming the Ukulele, the index finger is the best one to use for both **down** and **up** strokes. Some people like to use a plectrum (or pick), however this is more suitable for playing solos, and less so for strumming.



## **Strumming Patterns**

A common question that a lot of new players ask is “**how should I strum the Ukulele?**” Do I go down and up etc.

The golden rule, especially for new players is **KEEP IT SIMPLE**. **Basic down strokes or Down and Up strokes work absolutely fine for most songs** when you’re just getting started. There is plenty of advice and suggestions on YouTube on which strumming patterns work for different songs but ***don’t get too caught up on this;*** these are only suggestions, and as a new player you will have enough to think about.

More often than not, **strumming patterns tend to emerge in time**. It’s not so much that you need to learn the strumming pattern then apply it when playing a song. In most cases, **strumming patterns develop from playing basic strums**.

## Bars

When we mention 'Bars' in music it's not a place to hang out with your mates for a couple of pints! It simply means '**a small segment of music that contains a number of beats**'.

The most commonly used is 4 beats to the bar, which means we count 1, 2, 3, 4 for each bar throughout the song, and we do 4 strums of the Ukulele for each bar.

So, if we were to play the **C** chord for one bar (4 strums) it will be shown like this:

<b>C</b>
----------

This will become more clear as we progress.

## Chord Progressions

Most songs have a chord progression. Basically it is **a series of 3 or 4 chords that are repeated, and played throughout the song**. The example below is the chord progression for 'Achy Breaky Heart' by Billy Ray Cyrus. This song has a basic chord progression of **4 bars of Chord F** then **4 bars of Chord C**, which is repeated throughout the entire song.

Count:	1, 2, 3, 4	1, 2, 3, 4	1, 2, 3, 4	1, 2, 3, 4
and				
Strum	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>F</b>
	<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>

This is a fairly straightforward chord progression and most songs usually have a slightly different chord progression for the chorus than the verses. But the main point to keep in mind that most songs have a series of chords that are repeated throughout. The lyrics in most songs are often different for each verse but the chord progressions are usually repeated in each verse.

## **5-Point Checklist (Troubleshooting Chords)**

Most people who are new to the Ukulele may find it a little bit tricky changing chords quickly. Sometimes it may be difficult to make the chords ring out clear when strumming, and the strings may buzz or sound dud.

Mostly this will be down to **posture**; either your own posture, or in the way you are holding the Ukulele. So **whenever you are struggling to learn a new chord**, or something about it doesn't sound quite right, it can be helpful to **go through the 5-Point Checklist** below to see if you are doing everything correctly.

- 1. Hold the Ukulele at a 45° angle.** This isn't usually a problem when getting started, and is a standard way to hold the Ukulele **(page 3)**.
- 2. Point Strings Out towards the wall, and not Up towards the Ceiling.** New players will often angle the Ukulele towards themselves, usually to be able to see what they are doing. However, this will require further stretching on the hand and can feel awkward and sore. **(page 3)**.
- 3. Chord Hand to be in the Default Position.** There isn't a lot of space between the frets on the ukulele, and some of the trickier chords can be a bit of a squeeze. It will be much easier to hold down the chords if your hand comes in at an angle from behind the nut of the Ukulele. **(see page 4)**.
- 4. Place the tips of your fingers on the strings.** Try to avoid using the pads of your fingers when holding down the chords. This will help prevent buzzing or dud sounding strings.
- 5. Maintain a gentle curve on your wrist.** When holding down the chords your hand should form a gentle curve with a small gap between your hand and the fretboard. This will further reduce buzzing or dud sounding strings and is a comfortable playing position enabling good posture.

## **How often should I Practice?**

If you're looking to learn to play an instrument but don't want to spend a huge amount of time practicing, the Ukulele is a great option. However, like anything else, the more time you spend practicing the better you will become. The good news is that you don't have to spend hours and hours practicing to be able to play a few songs and have a bit of fun. **Regular short practice sessions is better than long practice sessions** once in a blue moon. If you were to practice **just 20 mins a night for about 3 nights a week** you would see a noticeable difference within a few weeks.

## How to encourage continued playing (how to keep going and not give up!)

### 1. Purchase the right size of Ukulele.

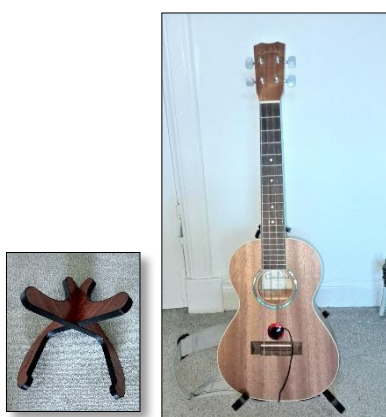
If you buy a Ukulele that is too small or too big, chances are you won't have the most enjoyable playing experience and you may give up. Ukuleles are fairly small instruments and unless you have small fingers it's probably best to opt for a Concert or Tenor size. Soprano Ukulele's are great for kids or if you have small hands but may not be the best size to go for if you have large hands. It's best to go into a music store and try out the different sizes of Ukulele to see which is most suitable.



The **3 main sizes** of Ukulele are: **Soprano, Concert, and Tenor**, and have the standard Ukulele Strings. There is also a 4<sup>th</sup> size; The Baritone, which is closer to that of a small guitar.

### 2. Invest in a stand

A lot of new players who buy their first Ukulele don't often invest in a stand and may leave it in the bag or box it came in, keeping it in the corner of the room so it doesn't get knocked over or damaged. However, quite often the Ukulele will just stay there gathering dust. We are all familiar with the saying 'out of sight, out of mind'. And sadly, that can happen with the Ukulele if you decide to keep it in its box. Investing in a stand is a smart move. If you display your Ukulele on a stand in the room you use most often, you are more likely to pick it up every so often and have a bit of a play, and they don't cost much either. You can usually pick [a brand new stand for less than £10](#).



A **Floor Stand** is the most popular and are easy to assemble with just 2 pieces of wood that slide into each other. Your Uke can look great sitting next to your T.V. or stereo.



**Wall-mounted** stands are screwed to the wall. Your Uke hanging on the living room wall can add a bit of class, and will no doubt be a talking point if you have visitors.

### 3. Join a group.

There are loads of Ukulele groups up and down the country; Google it! If there aren't any in your area, why not get together with a few friends and learn how to play together. The Ukulele is a very social instrument, and it's a great way to get together with some friends for a bit of a singalong.



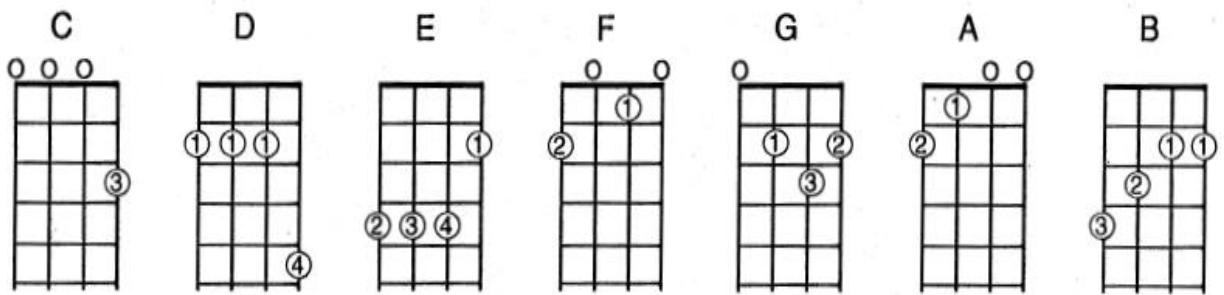
The **Ukey Hookr's** Group in Falkirk; December 2022

### 4. Practice.

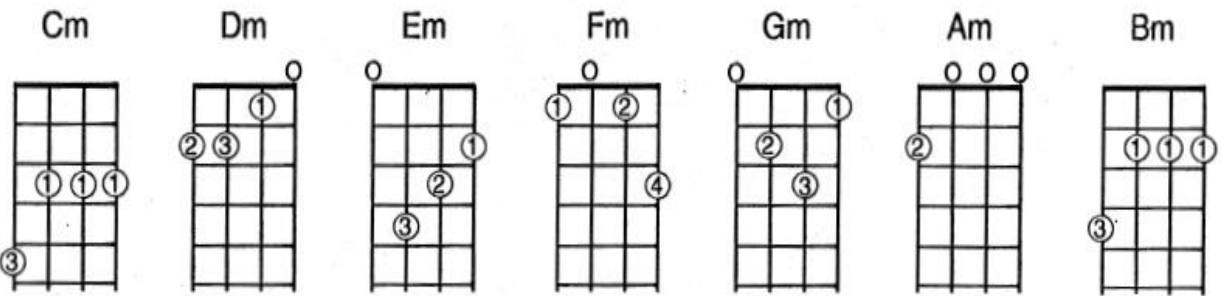
We have already established that it doesn't require hours and hours of practice before you can knock out a few tunes. There is a bit of a misconception that because the Ukulele is relatively small and portable in comparison to other instruments it can be seen as a bit like a 'toy' but **it's still a musical instrument**. **And just like any other instrument, it requires a bit of regular practice.** However, once you get through the initial stages of learning the basics and you have mastered 3 or 4 chords it becomes less like 'work' and starts to become more enjoyable. And with a bit of practice you will soon be able to change chords at a reasonable pace. **Then it really does become more fun and enjoyable to play!** And if it's fun and enjoyable, you are more likely to continue playing.

# Ukulele Chord Chart

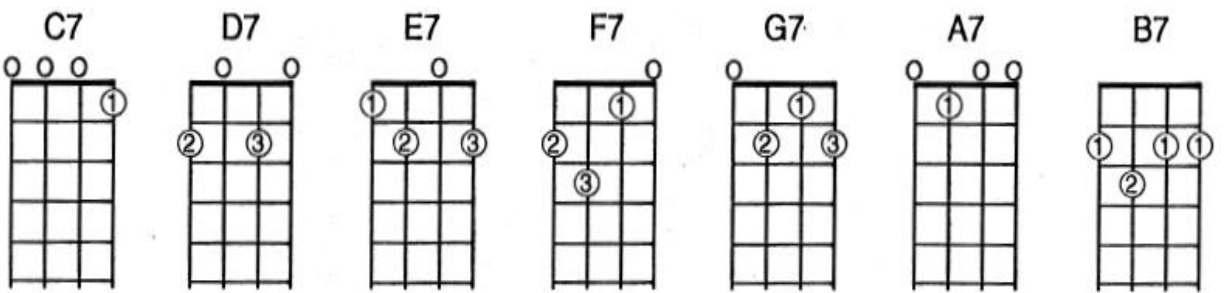
## MAJOR



## MINOR



## SEVENTH



## Alternate Chords

