



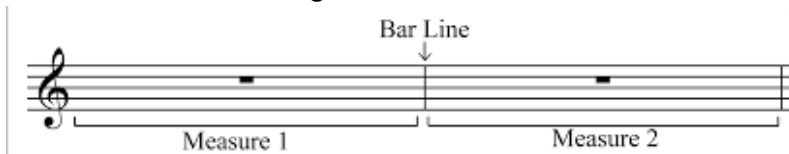
# STRUMMING YOUR UKULELE

Unless you read music notation, there are no definite visual ways to define how to strum. You may find all kinds of weird and wonderful methods online that might help but UCL has developed a simple, effective visual way to get you started by using just arrows.

There are a few things you need to acknowledge before you begins your training. Music is made up of elements which include; timing, rhythm & tempo (amongst other things) working together to create the overall sound structure. Below are 5 of the starter essentials:

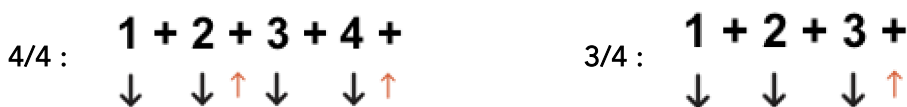
**1. TEMPO:** The speed or pace of the song. The tempo is defined in **BPM** aka **Beats Per Minute**. 60 beats per minute is the same as real time seconds, so 120 beats per minute is the same as counting 2 beats per second. **90BPM - 140BPM** is the average tempo for popular music from Blues, Soul, R&B to Rock and Pop. If you ever tap your foot to music – you are probably tapping out the tempo.

**2. BAR:** A bar is one measure of a song and contains notes relative to the time signature.

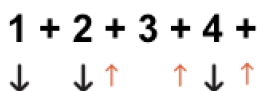


**3. TIME SIGNATURE:** Determines how many **beats** there are in each **bar**. We will be looking at both **3/4** and **4/4** time throughout this course. 3/4 is also know **waltz time**. 4/4 is also known as **common time** and can be represented with a C on sheet music. Have you ever seen a drummer count in using their sticks? They are determining both the time signature and tempo of the song so that the rest of the group can start on time & in pace.

**4. RHYTHM:** We use a simplified visual method for practising rhythmic strumming. According to the tempo we set each note of the bar to numbers with add (+) signs in between:



Then we use those numbers to define either **DOWN** or **UP** strokes. Most of the down strokes tend to fall on the numbers and most of the up strokes on the +’s.



**EG:** (This rhythm is also known as the Calypso stroke)

But we don’t just strum up and down, sometimes we mute the strings or create a ‘chuck’ sound (as often used in reggae music) which would be represented by the letter X. More on that in Level 2.

**5. DYNAMICS:** Once you’ve got the hang of basic strumming, it’s time to start thinking about dynamics. That just means how loud or soft you hit the strings. Loud, or heavier strums are represented by writing the [D U] strokes in capital letters, whereas the softer strums will be written in lower case, [d u] (as above).

**PRACTICE TIP:** Start off slowly at speeds of either 60BPM or 80BPM and gradually take the speed up by 10BPM each time you feel like you are progressing. Remember... no pain, no gain& practice makes perfect! ;)