



UCL GUIDE TO BUYING A UKULELE

1. UKULELE BUDGET



This may sound obvious, but quite a few outlets sell low end ukuleles that cost around £10 - £20. These ukuleles are usually produced for the novelty factor and are not built with precision or to the standards required to make it sound effective when strumming. They rarely stay in tune and they can often fall to bits within weeks.

Ideally, you should make to visit to a music shop and try some out, but we know that can be a bit daunting at first, especially if you're not sure what you are doing with it, so online shopping can be effective if you know what to look out for. We highly recommend that you spend at least £30 - £60 on your first ukulele to ensure that it is fit for purpose and will last for the duration. There are plenty of ukulele reviews online you can research or pop over to this fantastic guide: <https://thehub.musiciansfriend.com/folk-instrument-buying-guides/ukuleles-how-to-choose#parts>

2. UKULELE SIZES



There are 4 main sizes of ukulele (see picture to left) although you may come across in between types such as super-soprano and sopranino. We can help you narrow it down by encouraging you to opt for a size that suits you. At beginners we highly recommend an acoustic soprano or concert size uke. There are main 2 reasons for this:

1. The tuning we teach at UCL is GCEA, standard for Soprano & concerts.
2. They are easier to transport, less expensive and look cool when playing 😊

WARNING: Don't just ask for a small/smallest Ukulele, as you could end up with something like this:



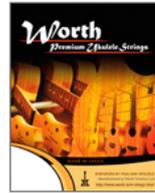
4. UKULELE BRANDS: It is There are literally thousands of ukulele brands on the market so it really is down to personal preference but here are some that we can recommend from past experience: KALA, SNAIL, LANIKAI, CORDOBA, MAHALO and if you are happy to invest more then we recommend checking out NOAH UKES, PONO and KANILEA. Then there is MARTIN \$\$\$



4. UKULELE STRINGS: It is always a good idea to purchase some good quality strings as ukuleles often ship out with the cheaper variety strings – even though the quality of the ukulele itself is fine. It will not only sound much sweeter but you will notice the difference in the feel of them as you play - it can be a magical experience. Strings we recommend are [Aquila](#) or [Worth](#)...



Cost aprox £6-£8 for soprano & concert. Made of Nylgut. Brighter sounding



Cost £13.99 sold in double length as standard. Made of Flourocarbon.

Aquila strings for sopranos and concert sized ukuleles are available from UCL HQ for just £5.00. Please beware of the cheap counterfeit copies that often get sold a little cheaper online and in stores. Here is a great guide from the authentic manufacturers of Aquila, which will help you find what to look for when buying authentic strings:

http://www.aquilacorde.com/wp-content/uploads/counterfeit_aquila_strings.pdf

5. UKULELE CARE & MAINTENANCE:

CARRY CASE: We recommend that you purchase a ukulele case, preferably padded with back straps for ease of transport. Hard cases are even better for protecting your ukulele on transit but are much more expensive. There are literally thousands of designs for carry cases so go with one that suits you. A decent ukulele case may start cost £12-£25 but trust me it is worth the investment if you want your ukulele to last.



WARNING: Make sure you buy the correct size for your ukulele if purchasing separately.



PLECTRUMS: Personally, I do not like to use them myself as it restricts fingerstyle technique but if you prefer to pick with a plectrum go for one of the leather variety, which are a tad more expensive than the plastic one at around £3.00 but highly recommended for ukulele playing. The thick felt ones that are often sold for beginner ukists are very rigid and can be difficult to use and do not compliment the sound of the uke strings. The more flexibility the better.

NECK STRAPS: Another tip for when you want to play whilst standing in a is to get a neck strap that will support the ukulele. Straps range from around £4 - £20. Make sure the hook part is suitable for the size & shape of your ukulele's sound hole.



TUNERS: A key accessory that all ukulele players should own right from the start. Tuning is something you will master in your 1st session and does not take long to get used to but an essential part of playing music – especially with others and for good practice. These devices can range from around £5 - £20.