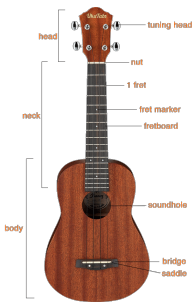




UCL TOP TIPS

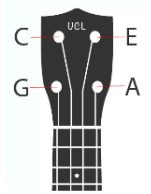
FOR BEGINNER UKULELE PLAYERS



As the saying goes, learn to walk before you start running. It's the same with any type of practical training, whether with an instrument, ball, car, bike etc. It's all about repetition and fine tuning as your training gets underway.

Before you begin, familiarise yourself with your ukulele as you will be spending a lot of time with it. Get to know the parts, the string names, how to hold it effectively, how to tune it properly and understand key finger positions and the importance of sticking to them throughout training. (See the *GETTING TO KNOW UKE PDF*)

TUNING UP: The first thing you need to do is learn how to tune up your ukulele. Each of the strings have a letter name as follows: When holding your ukulele, the top string is tuned to the note of **G**, second down is **C** and has a lower pitch than the **G**, third down is **E** and the string nearest the floor is an **A**. If you own a tenor uke, you may have a **low G string**, so the pitch will be chronologically tuned with G being the lowest note. More on this in class!



CHORD SHAPES: Practising chord shapes is an essential part of training and helps to build the essential muscle memory. Switching between chord shapes can be tricky but the more practice time you put in, and the slower you train, at first, the easier your brain will respond to the repetitive action and store the information. Once you are comfortable moving about from shape to shape you can start to gradually increase speed. There will be lots of exercises on this subject.



FINGER POSITIONING: You will get to know each of your fingers individually. You may also learn that even though you thought you had complete control over your fingers, this is not the case. You will often find yourself looking at them expecting them to do what you are trying to tell them to do subconsciously, but your fingers have a mind of their own and can be a little mischievous. You will find out about that soon enough. They all have very different jobs to do so please treat them well. Our finger gym exercises will help immensely with finger control so make sure you practice them as often as possible.

STRUMMING: Strumming comes in many shapes and forms and can be achieved using fingers, thumbs and plectrums, so use what suits you best. The key to great strumming is to stay relaxed and loosen up when attempting each of the basic strumming patterns. A twist of the wrist can make all the difference. There will be arrow diagrams for each strumming pattern on associated work sheet and song sheet PDFs such as the one below, where numbers relate to beats: **1 + 2 + 3 + 4 +**



TAB: Tab is another, easier form of reading music notes and is presented with numbers (representing the frets) and 4 vertical lines (representing the strings), with bar lines to separate each bar section. You will develop a basic understanding of how to read tab at Level 1 with some simple instrumental song examples to try out so it's not just all about strumming, there's melody picking and even riffs, which are repetitive sequences that make songs highly recognisable. See below for an example of tab:





HOME PRACTICE: As with any new training, you need to put in the extra practice time at home. Ideally you should make your ukulele easily accessible, e.g. leave it out of its case and pick it up as often as you get a chance. A good idea is to store it by the couch when watching TV & when adverts come on, press mute, pick up your uke and practice just one of your weekly exercises. If other people are with you and you don't want to be rude you can practice your movement of chord shapes without strumming. Find quiet spaces to practice even if for just 10 minutes at a time. Micro practicing, more often, can be more effective than one giant hour-long practice. It is good to focus on just one exercise per practice session and work on the bits you find more challenging rather than the things you can already do. Wooden uke stands are fantastic for storing your ukulele safely available to buy at UCL HQ and can be collected or delivered.



WARM UP & GO SLOW: Always have a quick warm up and stretch out your arms, fingers and neck to avoid tension before you start your practice sessions just like we will do during live class sessions. Practice each ukulele exercise at a slow pace of around 60BPM to start with. You want to make sure that every string or chord you play, rings out tunefully. If you hear any buzz noises or dampened strings, spend a bit of time adjusting your finger positions to make sure all notes you strike ring out clearly and coherently before moving on. Some chord shapes need more work than others. Some use just one finger and some use all four fingers.



PAIN MANAGEMENT: Take regular breaks when practicing, especially if you start to feel any pain in your hands, arms or fingers. There will be some aches and pain from building these muscles in a new way, but if you do feel any sharp and excessive pain stop playing immediately and seek medical attention.

PATIENCE: Not everyone will progress at the same speed so please don't think for one minute you can't do it. YOU CAN. It takes time to develop new skills in any area of physical development. You may not notice any major improvements straight away, but believe me, after 10 weeks with UCL, you will. If there are any exercises you are particularly struggling with, don't be afraid to ask for advice in the WhatsApp chat. Extra one to one tutorial sessions can be book for 20 mins for a small fee if you require extra assistance at any time during the course. Please email: ukuleleclub@live.com to book a slot.

HAVE FUN: Frustration can often get in the way of the fun side of things during your initial training, and inertia will set in during the first few weeks but it's up to you to negotiate with your frustration and have the will power to tell it that the FUN stuff is on its way and keep at it. Think of it like a 10 week prescription of medication. Results will become effective once the entire course is complete. Now let's getting ready to uke and go!!



GOOD LUCK!