

?

SO

you've just
got your

FIRST

UKULELE





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So You've Just Got Your **First Ukulele**

Five Nuggets to Know

1. How the Ukulele is Tuned

From the string nearest your head to the string nearest the ground it goes: gCEA (there are other tunings, but this is by far the most common, so don't worry your pretty little head about those for now). Unlike most instruments, the string nearest your head is pitched higher than the next two strings (it's indicated by the small g in gCEA). You can hear the notes here: [Tuning Notes](#)

2. How to Read Chord Charts

[How to Read Ukulele Chord Charts](#)

3. How to Make Your Ukulele Sound Good

Definitely worth getting into good habits right from the start:

[Get Good Tone](#)

4. The History of the Ukulele

John King is the patron saint of ukulele history. This is an excellent article on the early history of the uke:

[A Strum Through Ukulele History](#)

For something more brief (and inaccurate) here's my quick breeze through ukulele history:

[Ukulele History: A Brief and Inaccurate Guide](#)

5. These 10 Tips for Beginners

[Ten Tips for Ukulele Beginners](#)

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Five Chords to Learn

1. C



Ring finger on the third fret of the A-string.

2. F



Middle finger on the g-string at the second fret. Index, E-string first fret.

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3. G7



Middle finger: C-string, second fret. Index (pointer) finger: E-string, first fret. Ring finger: A-string, second fret.

4. Am (A minor)



Middle finger: g-string, second fret.

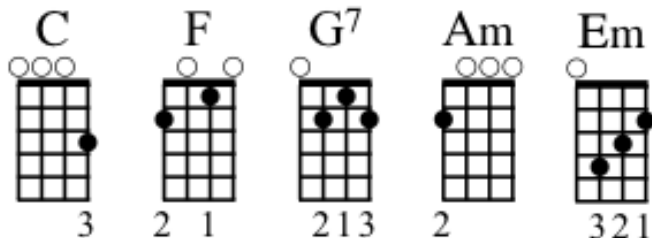
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5. Em (E minor)



Ring finger: C-string, fourth fret. Middle finger: E-string, third fret. Index finger: A-string, second fret.

This is how they look in [chord chart form](#):



The numbers underneath the diagrams refer to the finger you use to fret them.

Once you've learned these chords you can [use them to play these songs](#).

And for some fancier chords [here are the five best ukulele chords](#).

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Five Patterns to Strum

1. All Downs

The simplest strum there is. Hit the strings with the nail of your index finger.

Video: <http://youtu.be/zX6G-ZvtE2s>

2. Down, Ups

This time when you're bringing your hand back up hit the strings with the pad of your index finger.

Video: <http://youtu.be/--WiB1t8q8c>

3. Down, Down, Down, Up, Down, Up

A combination of the last two patterns.

Video: http://youtu.be/-QRZIIWN_E

4. Down, Down, Up, Up, Down

Keep the same down-up motion going but miss the strings with some of them to get this pattern

Video: <http://youtu.be/8X9pLK0wXeo>

5. Down, Down, Up, Down, Up

A shorter pattern than the rest here.

Video: <http://youtu.be/VUTWUvB-5wo>

For loads more strumming patterns and an in-depth explanation of them [download How to Play Ukulele Strums](#). And because you're so handsome here's a code to use in the basket that'll get you \$3 off it: snollygoster

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Five Songs to Play

1. Over the Rainbow

When Israel Kamakawiwo'ole covered this song it became an instant ukulele classic. This version is the more beginner-friendly one played by Jason Castro on American Idol.

[Over the Rainbow](#)

2. Ring of Fire

The ultimate Johnny Cash song and a favourite singalong for ukulele players.

[Ring of Fire](#)

3. Hallelujah

Originally by Leonard Cohen but the definitive version was recorded by Jeff Buckley. Beirut regularly play this live on the ukulele.

[Hallelujah](#)

4. Blitzkrieg Bop

Three chord classic from the Ramones. Make sure you start by shouting, "1,2,3,4" at an entirely unrelated tempo.

[Blitzkrieg Bop](#)

5. Ho Hey

The Lumineers' folky mega hit. The strumming for this one is a bit tricky so head down to the bottom of the post for an easier strum.

[Ho Hey](#)

More songs and tips for [ukulele beginners here](#).

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Five Websites to Visit

1. Ukulele Hunt

That would be my website and probably the place you got this. To make sure you don't miss anything, you can get email updates by entering your address in the sign up form in the top right hand side of this page.

[Ukulele Hunt](#)

2. Top 50 Ukulele Sites

Including this one on the list is cheating; a bit like being granted 3 wishes and saying, "I wish for a million wishes." There are loads of websites here that you have to check out. The best place to start finding out what's available on the net.

[Top 50 Sites](#)

3. Ukulele Tricks

Lots of useful pointers for ukulele beginners.

[UkuleleTricks.com](#)

4. Chord Transposer

Ever come across chords for a song and find they don't work well on the ukulele? Ever find a song is too high or too low for you to sing? Copy and paste the chord sheet into this site and change the key (try C for easier chords to play).

[Chord Transposer](#)

5. Chordie

If you can't find the chords for a song written up for ukulele, Chordie has loads of chords and can be adjusted for uke. It's aimed at guitar so it's not always ideal or accurate, but it's better than nothing.

[Chordie](#)

So You've Just Got Your **First Ukulele**

Five Freebies to Grab

1. Tuner

Nothing is going to ruin your ukulele playing more than being out of tune. To keep yourself in tune it's useful to have a tuner on your phone. There are plenty of free tuners available on iOS and Android. [insTuner](#) is a good one for iOS and [DaTuner](#) for Android. The app I use is [Cleartune](#) which isn't free but is available for iOS and Android.

2. Chord Chart

Here's a simple beginner ukulele chord chart you can print out and reference for most chords you'll come across: [Beginner Chord Chart PDF](#).

3. Audacity

Recording your playing and listening back to it is the quickest way to improve your playing. [Audacity](#) is a free and simple audio recorder for Windows and Mac.

Even though Audacity is available for Mac, if you have [GarageBand](#) use that. I use it and it's fantastic. It's also good for recording quick ideas on your phone or iPad.

4. Power Tab

Write your own ukulele tabs. The website itself is very confusing. You can download it directly here: [PowerTab](#)

Mac alternative: [GuitarPro](#). Not free but better than Power Tab and suitable for Windows/Mac/Linux. It's the software I use.

5. Ukulele Music

If you're a Spotify user I've put together [a bunch of ukulele playlists](#). Or you can catch up on [the latest choice ukulele videos here](#).

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Five Things to Buy

1. Ukulele Tuner

If you're going to be playing the uke out and about, you'll need a tuner. These clip on to the end of the uke and can tell whether you're in tune no matter how much noisy it is. My current favourite is the Snark tuner.

[Ukulele Tuners](#)

2. Strings

If you've got a cheap ukulele, the chances are the strings that came with it are not great. Putting better quality strings such as Aquila will improve the sound.

[Aquila Strings](#)

3. Ukulele for Dummies

The book I wrote for ukulele beginners. It's the most comprehensive ukulele book out there. It covers all the basics and goes on to introduce playing a bunch of styles.

Buy it on [Amazon US](#) or [Amazon UK](#). Or [read more about it here](#).

4. Ukulele Chord Book

Always useful to have a reference book on hand.

[Ukulele Chord Book](#)

5. Metronome

Metronomes do the simple and very important job of keeping time in your playing. You can buy a real-life one or get one on your phone. There are plenty of free ones around but my favourite iOS app is Visual Metronome. On Android I use Mobile Metronome which has free and paid versions.

[Visual Metronome \(iOS\)](#)

[Mobile Metronome \(Android\)](#)

So You've Just Got Your **First Ukulele**

Five Videos to Watch

1. Jake Shimabukuro – While My Guitar Gently Weeps

The most popular ukulele video on YouTube. It's a master class in arranging a song for instrumental ukulele and inspired countless people to pick up a uke.

[Jake Shimabukuro - While My Guitar Gently Weeps](#)

2. James Hill – Billie Jean

James Hill is absolutely the best ukulelist in the world right now. And you should [see what he can do with a pair of chopsticks](#).

[James Hill - Billie Jean](#)

3. Roy Smeck – His Pastimes

The Wizard of the Strings. A legend on the ukulele and many other stringed instruments.

[Roy Smeck - His Pastimes](#)

4. Taimane Gardner – Toccatta by Bach

Taimane doesn't do anything by half. Every note is played with a flourish whilst wearing an outlandish costume and doing a dance move.

[Taimane - Toccatta by Bach](#)

5. Amanda Palmer – Ukulele Anthem

Love her or hate her there's no ignoring Amanda Palmer. Her epic ode to the ukulele is both hilarious and inspiring.

[Amanda Palmer - Ukulele Anthem](#)

So You've Just Got Your **First Ukulele**

Five YouTube Channels To Subscribe To

1. Ukulele Orchestra of Great Britain

The original ukulele orchestra and still the best with videos from throughout their nearly 30 year career displaying the orchestra's musical dexterity and sense of humour.

youtube.com/UkuleleOrchestra

2. Keston Cobblers' Club

A band full of multi-instrumentalists with ukes being swapped around with tubas, accordions, banjos and anything else that falls into their hands.

youtube.com/kestoncobblersclub

3. Garfunkel and Oates

The ukulele-led, foul-mouthed ukulele duo best. [Their sitcom](#) debuted on IFC in 2014 but their YouTube has a long history of hilarious songs.

youtube.com/rikilind

4. Walk off the Earth

Shot to fame with their [five-people-one-guitar version of *Somebody That I Used To Know*](#). Now that they can afford one instrument each they regularly include ukulele.

youtube.com/walkofftheearth

5. Matt Kresling

Matt has some excellent ukulele songs about student debt collectors and the places he's lived. But I'm mainly recommending it for his Madagascar Diaries series. It's his account of his trip to Madagascar with his ukulele and it's the best travel documentary I've ever seen. [Watch the trailer for the series here.](#)

youtube.com/kresling

And if you want to check out my YouTube videos you can [subscribe to my channel here.](#)

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To keep up to date with all the new goings-on the ukulele world and get regular new chords and tabs sign up to receive updates from my blog [Ukulele Hunt](#) by entering your email in the form at the top right of the page.

And for some in-depth uke playing tuition take a look at my [How to Play Ukulele eBooks](#).

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