

rockschool®

UKULELE 7 STEP GUIDE

Rockschool's beginners
guide to learning the ukulele.

**JOIN THE ROCKSCHOOL
UKULELE REVOLUTION**
#RockschoolUkuleleRevolution



WELCOME

We are delighted that you've decided to start learning the ukulele.

The ukulele is one of the most accessible instruments for anyone wanting to learn music, regardless of age or music ability.

Here at Rockschool, we are committed to supporting high-quality music education. That's why we have recently released our very first comprehensive suite of ukulele learning materials, from our Ukulele Method books (for a complete beginner) to our fully regulated Ukulele graded music series (Debut to Grade 8).

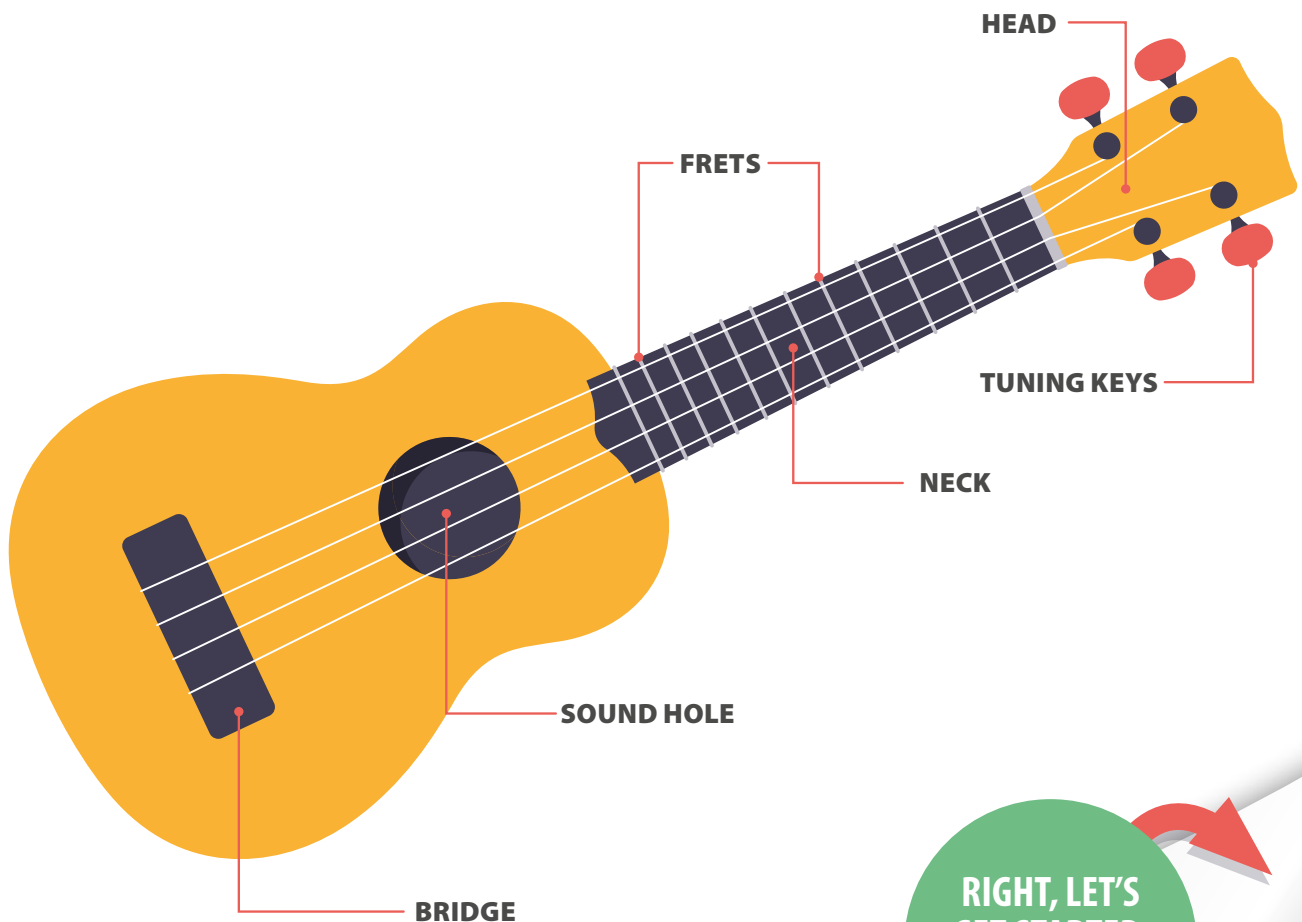
We hope this guide inspires your passion for the instrument everyone loves to play and supports your journey to mastering the ukulele. Join the Rockschool ukulele revolution.



CONTENTS

A QUICK GUIDE

A ukulele looks like a little guitar with only four strings. In fact, the playing style is quite similar! Once you have learnt one instrument it is quite easy to switch between guitar and ukulele.



RIGHT, LET'S GET STARTED.

Time to move onto Step 1...

HOW TO TUNE



Top tip!

Remember the order of the notes with this unforgettable saying...

"Goats Can Eat Anything"

The easiest way to tune a ukulele is to buy an electronic tuner, or even to download a free tuning app. Most brands of electronic tuners should have a chromatic mode so you will be able to easily get your ukulele in tune. This should apply to most clip-on tuners and tuners you can get on your mobile phone.

It is nice to understand how your instrument works though, and ukulele tuning is particularly interesting.

The strings on most instruments start low and get progressively higher if you play them in order; but the ukulele starts with a high note before dropping low! **This is called re-entrant tuning.**

UKULELES ARE TUNED TO:

G

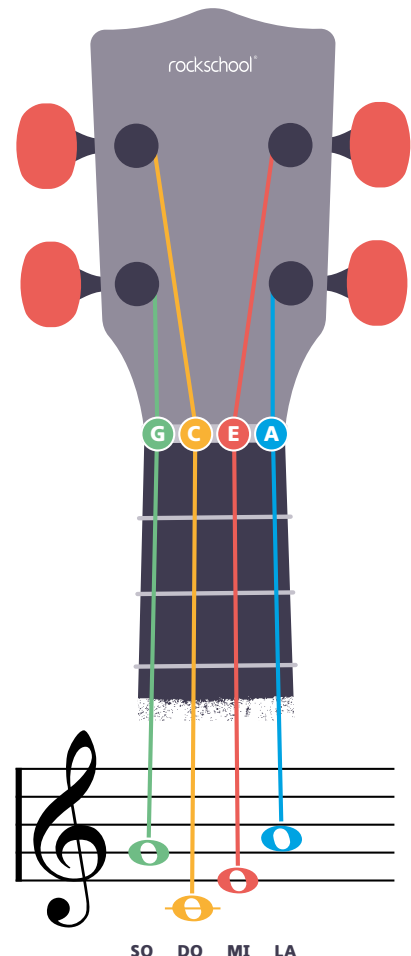
C

E

A

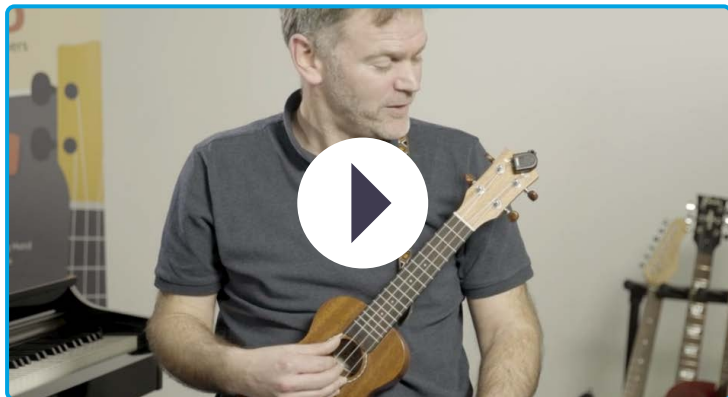
G = 4th C = 3rd E = 2nd A = 1st

The majority of ukulele chord charts, tabs and resources in circulation, including the new [Rockschool Ukulele Method Books](#) and [Grade Books](#), are written with this tuning as standard.



HOLDING YOUR UKULELE

2



Did you know?

It is tricky to wriggle your fingers if your wrists are too bent. Give it a go! Make sure your wrists are straight when you hold your uke. Don't squeeze your ukulele's neck! Rest your thumb on the back of the neck so you have room to move your fingers comfortably.

There are many ways you can hold a ukulele when you are playing, but it is important to be comfortable and that you can use both hands without worrying about dropping your instrument on the floor.

You play best when your shoulders and arms feel relaxed. **Don't scrunch anything up!**

STANDING

It is a great idea to use a **ukulele strap**. Keep the strap short so the ukulele head is **level with your shoulder**. You can **sit** or **stand** with the ukulele in the same position.



SITTING

If you want to sit with your uke then it is best to rest the body between your legs so it feels secure. Raise your left leg and point the ukulele head at the sky.



You should always sit or stand up straight when practising. Keep your back and shoulders straight and don't position your neck in an uncomfortable angle

PLUCKING, PICKING & STRUMMING TECHNIQUES

3&4

PLUCKING & PICKING

You can use your uke to play **one note at a time**, or **lots of notes together**. You can try playing with a **pick**, or you can use your **fingers**, or even your **thumb**.

1

Rest your forearm on the edge of the uke body. Make a 'thumbs up' shape with your hand and rest your thumb on string 4. Uncurl your fingers and rest the tip of your index finger on string 1.

2

Scratch the string with your finger to make a sound. **Don't pull the string or it will twang!**

3

Now put your middle finger on the string and scratch again.

4

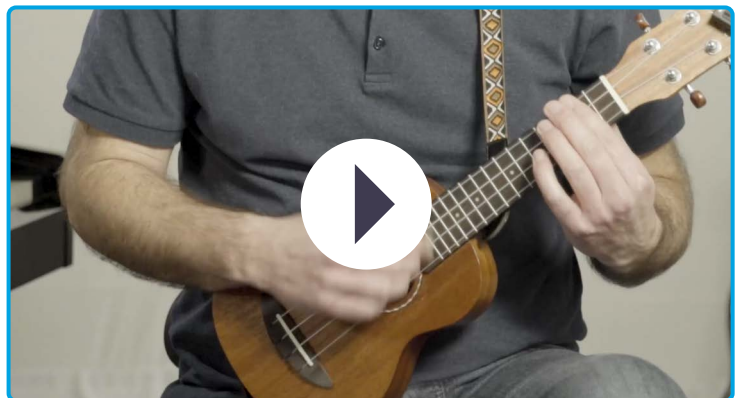
Keep scratching with your index and middle fingers, one after another. We call this **'walking fingers'**.



STRUMMING

You can play all the strings at once by brushing or stroking them with your **pick**, your thumb or one of your **fingers**. You can strum **downwards** by stroking towards the floor or **upwards** by stroking towards your nose.

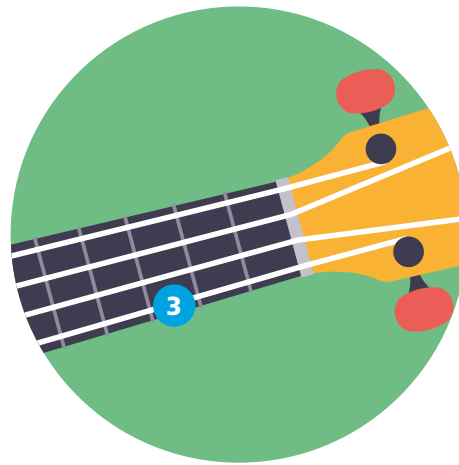
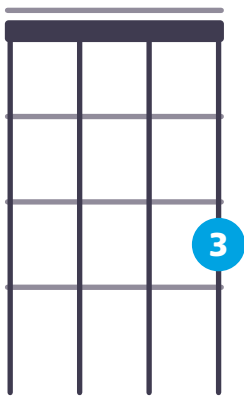
Please watch the video opposite for more information on picking and strumming techniques, as well as using a plectrum.



YOUR FIRST CHORD

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Now that you're holding the ukulele correctly and you're in tune, let's get your fingers playing a chord. A great place to start is the **C Major chord** because you only need one finger to play this chord.



READING CHORD BOXES

We can draw chords with a diagram of the end of the ukulele neck showing the strings and frets. **Sometimes this shows finger numbers, too.**

The solid black line at the top is the nut on your ukulele, the point where the strings cross over from the headstock to the fretboard and through the plastic nut. The lines going down the page are your strings (read from left to right as G, C, E, A) and the lines horizontal across the box are the frets.

You can see here that the G, C and E strings do not have any fretted notes, they are just played open (played without any notes pressed down). On the A string, there is a directive to place your third finger on the third fret of this string.

HOW TO PLAY C MAJOR

- 1 Start by thinking about your posture. It is always easier to play if you are holding the ukulele well.
- 2 Keep your thumb on the back of the neck behind the 2nd fret.
- 3 Curl your third finger and press down the first string in the third fret.
- 4 Strum **all** the strings.

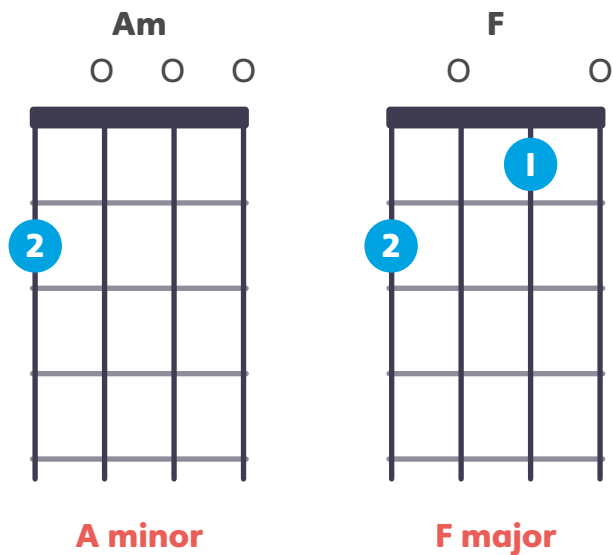
CHORDS & MORE CHORDS

6

CONGRATULATIONS ON LEARNING YOUR FIRST CHORD!

You're nailing it so far. Let's learn a couple more chords so you can practise changing between different finger shapes and hear how playing chords in a sequence will start to resemble the structure of your first song.

ONE AND TWO FINGERED CHORDS



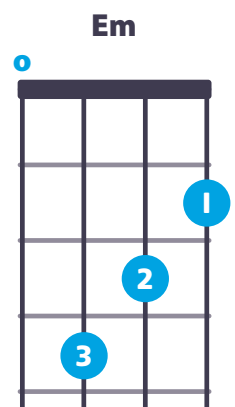
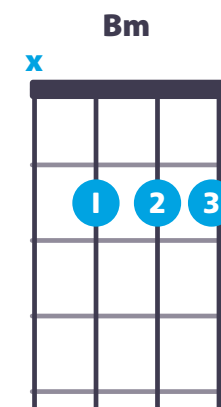
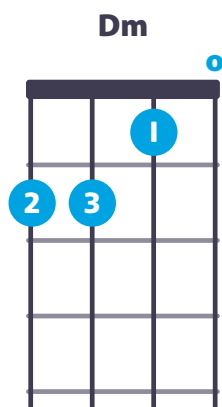
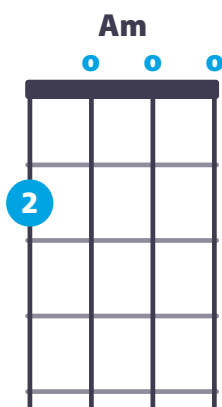
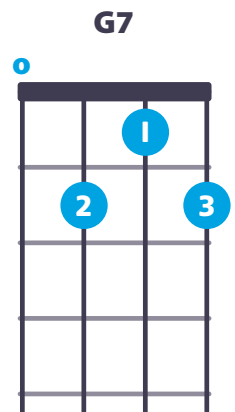
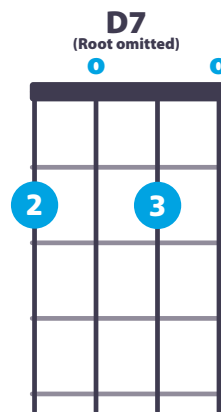
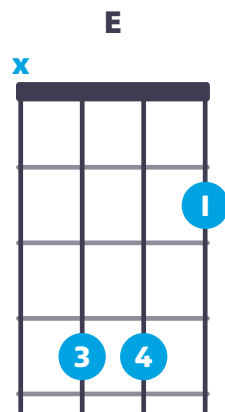
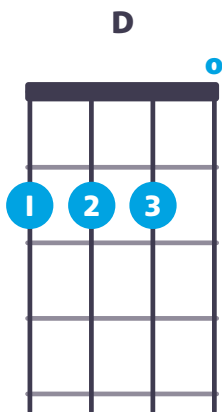
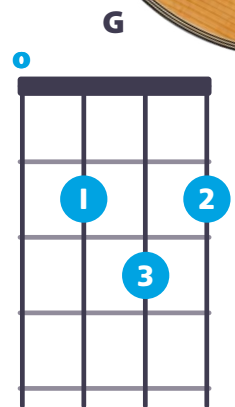
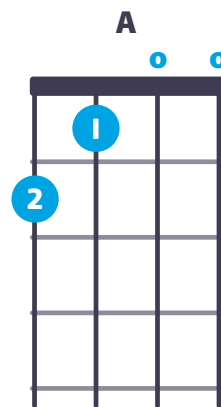
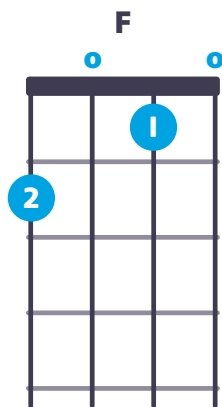
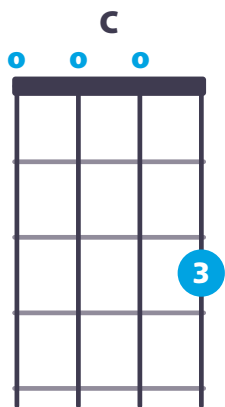
EXERCISE THOSE FINGERS!

We need to learn to change quickly between our chords. The exercise below should help.
Start super slow so you have plenty of time to change chords.



CHORD CHART

Now that you've mastered your first chords, these 12 chords will give you the ultimate introduction to playing a wealth of songs on the instrument and kickstart your journey towards Rockscool Debut & Grade 1 Ukulele.



EXTENDED UKULELE

TECHNIQUES

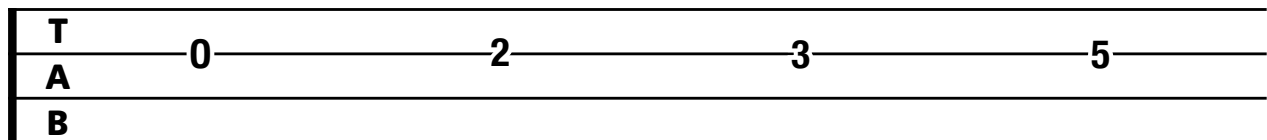
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As touched upon in Step 1, the Ukulele is in a unique group of instruments where re-entrant tuning is in the fabric of its design. This allows us to play sequences of notes using different hand positions to let the strings ring over each other. This style of playing is called Campanella.

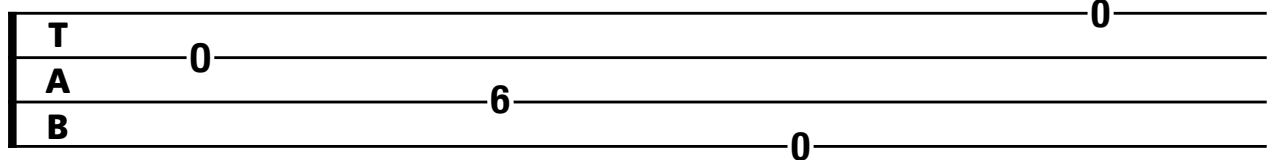
Campanella, meaning "little bells" in Italian, allows the sounds of notes ring over each other. So, when the notes are played as part of a sequence, the melody will harmonise with itself.

Here's a simple example of Campanella using just four notes:

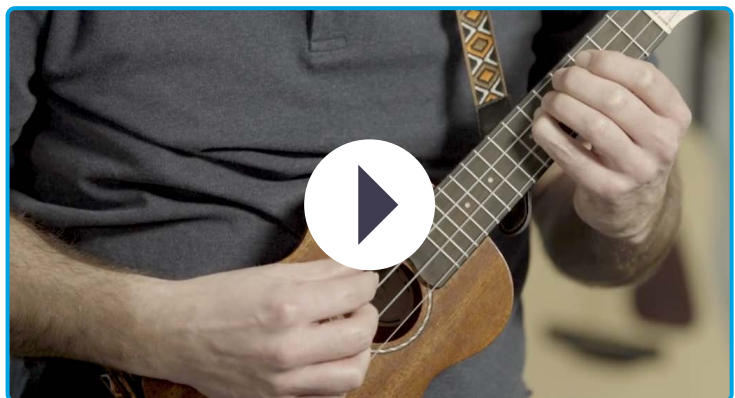
SINGLE STRING PICKING



CAMPANELLA



Click the video opposite to see Ashley Hards explain and demonstrate Campanella, with a performance of a Rockscool Ukulele Grade 6 piece – The Beatle's "Eleanor Rigby" – that utilises Campanella throughout.



THE rockschool® Ukulele METHOD

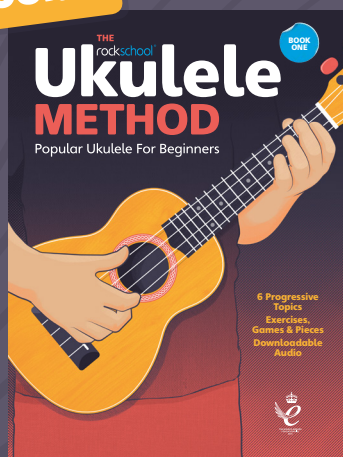
Popular Ukulele For Beginners

**Designed for
Beginners!**

**Preparation
for Debut!**

**Progressive
Topics!**

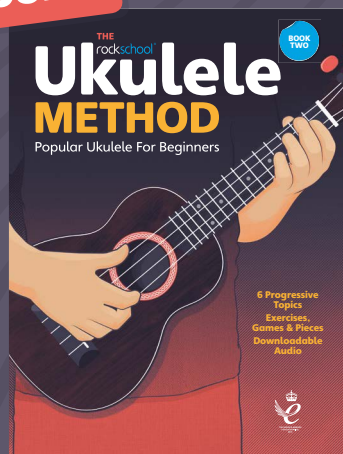
Book 1



TOPICS INCLUDED:

- ✓ Getting Started
- ✓ Using The Fretting Hand
- ✓ 4/4 Time Signature and First Chord
- ✓ Further Pitches and the 3/4 Time Signature
- ✓ Further Pitches

Book 2



TOPICS INCLUDED:

- ✓ Syncopation
- ✓ Songwriting in C
- ✓ Sharps and Flats
- ✓ 8th Notes and More Chords
- ✓ Pentatonics and Call and Response (Jamming)
- ✓ Styles of Music and Performance Pieces

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UKULELE

DEBUT—GRADE 8

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The Rockschool Ukulele syllabus has evolved, enabling you to master the ukulele with Rockschool's first fully regulated suite of ukulele grades (Method Books through to Grade 8), regardless of your age or musical ability. Play your part on the instrument everyone loves to play.



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