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http://www.kauairainbow.com/Ukulele/Uke%20Home/uke_home.html

[Terminology](#). Start here. Make sure we're using the same terms to mean the same thing!

[Chord Magic](#). How to play any chord in any key, without memorizing 576 chord shapes.

[Chord Theory](#). What makes a minor chord a minor chord? (...or a suspended chord, or a Major 9th chord?) Now you'll know!

[All The Notes on the Fretboard](#). Here's a diagram of the ukulele fretboard showing all of the notes of the scale.

[Scales](#). How to play scales on the ukulele.

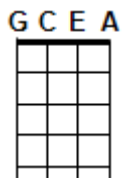
THE BASICS

One of the problems in writing an instruction manual aimed at intermediate players is that you can't be sure what your readers know and don't know. With a beginner's text, it's easy: they don't know anything! You're past that, but the author doesn't know how far past that you are.

Just to make sure that the later sections don't confuse anybody, let's make sure of some terminology. Some of this may seem pretty basic. We're not trying to insult you, just making sure we're all talking the same language.

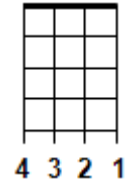
String pitch:

A ukulele has four strings, and here we're going to use a uke with the strings tuned to G, C, E, and A. It doesn't matter whether you use a high G or a low G, the principles we're presenting work for both. If you don't know what "high G" and "low G" means, don't worry about it – like I said, it doesn't matter. But since you asked: with "high G" tuning, the G string is tuned a fifth above the C string. With "low G" tuning, the G string is an octave lower than in the "high G" tuning.



String number:

The strings are numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4, with string 1 being the highest pitch string (the string closest to the floor as you hold the uke). Note that on a diagram in a book, this means that string 1 is on the right – this is not necessarily what you'd expect, but it's the convention that everyone uses, so we'll use it here too.

**Up and down the neck:**

Here's some more counter-intuitive notation:



When we speak of playing "up the neck" or "higher up on the fretboard", it'll be shown as farther down on the diagram of the fretboard. The note will be a higher pitch, which is why it's called "up", but the fact that it is diagrammed farther down the page can be confusing at first.

Sharps and flats:

The same note can have two different names: C# and Db are the same note, for example. When we're writing out a scale or specifying a chord, we'll use one name or the other – to write out both just clutters up the page.

Chord position:

Chords can be played in different "positions". When we speak of a chord played in "first position", this means that the chord is played as low as possible on the neck (don't forget that "low" on the neck means "near the tuning pegs" – see the section "Up and down the neck", just a few paragraphs back.) This "first position" chord is the fingering typically shown in chord charts. "Second position" means an alternate fingering for the same chord, but higher up the neck. "Third position" is even higher up the neck.

Finding the notes on the fretboard:

You'll need to know where the notes of the scale are on the fretboard. You already know four notes: G, C, E, and A (the open tones of the four strings). From the open strings, each fret moves you one-half step up the scale. For a more complete explanation of where the rest of the notes are, refer to [All Of The Notes On All Of The Strings](#).

Chord Magic

We're going to teach you how to play all of the chords (major, minor, 7th, diminished ...) in all of the keys (A, Bb, B, C ...) in all of the positions (up and down the fretboard). The magic in "Chord Magic" is that you can do this without a lot of memorization.

Let me show you what I mean. Think about the 7th chords for example. You can play an A7 chord at four different positions on the fretboard of a soprano ukulele (trust me on this for now – I'll show you how in a minute). On a tenor uke with a longer fretboard, you can play an A7 chord in six different positions. So to learn all of the 7th chords in all twelve keys, you need to memorize $6 \times 12 = 72$ different patterns (if you learn it the hard way). But you don't have to learn it the hard way. Chord Magic shows you how to learn all 72 chords, but you only need to learn four patterns plus how to shift those patterns up and down the fretboard.

Same for every other chord: to play all 72 major chords, you only need to learn four more patterns. To play all 72 minor chords, you only need to learn four more patterns.

Don't be intimidated by the length of this write-up. It really doesn't take very long to learn everything in here. There are many diagrams, so it reads quickly. The principles are really very simple and straightforward – the text is as long as it is only because we've taken the time to explain everything very completely. Moreover, there's some supplemental information ([A Little Bit Of Chord Theory](#)) that you don't really need to read – it's just there for the more inquisitive among you.

The ideas here are simple, and you'll pick them up pretty quickly. By the time you're finished with "Chord Magic", you'll never get stuck not knowing a chord, you'll be able to transpose a song into any key, and you'll be able to add color and interest to your music by playing chords in alternate positions up and down the neck.

If you're already an advanced player, or if you've already got an understanding of some of these concepts, you can skim through this document: read the "Important Points" and the "Tips", and study the summary Fig. 21: [How To Play All Of The Chords In All Of The Keys](#). You can read back over some of the more detailed explanations if the summary page isn't clear.

Before we get started, though, you might want to check out [this page](#) to make sure that we're all using the same terminology.

A Little Bit Of Chord Theory

You don't need to know this to play the chords, but it's interesting to know how to "spell out" a chord. That is: what notes make up a major chord? ... or an augmented chord, or a 9th chord? If you learn how the chords are constructed, and then get stuck somewhere without a chord chart, you can still sit down and figure out how to play a minor chord, or a suspended chord, or whatever, in any key.

Here's a brief summary.

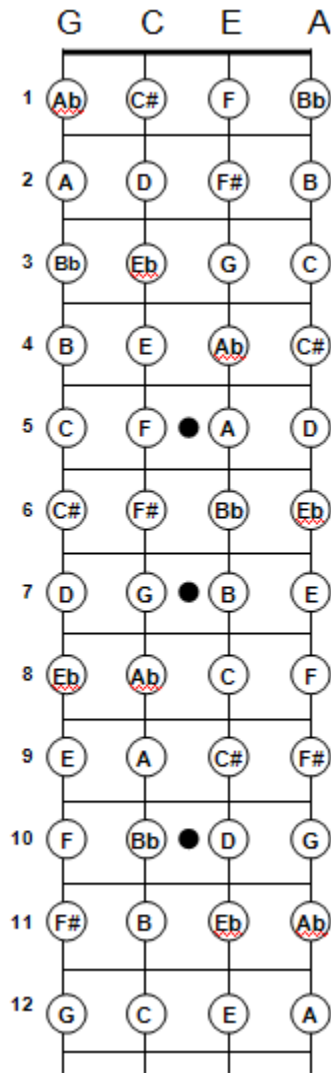
NAME	SYMBOL	NOTE NUMBERS IN THE SCALE	EXAMPLE	NOTES IN THE CHORD	FOOT-NOTE
major	(none)	1 3 5	C	C E G	(none)
minor	m	1 b3 5	Cm	C Eb G	1
dominant 7th	7	1 3 5 b7	C7	C E G Bb	2
diminished 7th	dim or o	1 b3 b5 6	Cdim	C Eb Gb A	3
minor 7th	m7	1 b3 5 b7	Cm7	C Eb G Bb	4
augmented 5th	aug or +	1 3 #5	C+	C E G#	5
major 7th	Maj7	1 3 5 7	CMaj7	C E G B	6
major 6th	6	1 3 5 6	C6	C E G A	7
dominant 9th	9	(1) 3 5 b7 9	C9	(C) E G Bb D	8
minor 6th	m6	1 b3 5 6	Cm6	C Eb G A	9
suspended	sus	1 4 5	Csus	C F G	10
7th suspended	7sus	1 4 5 b7	C7sus	C F G Bb	11
dominant 7th w/ aug. 5th	7+5	1 3 #5 b7	C7+5	C E Ab Bb	12
dominant 7th w/ flat'd 5th	7-5	1 3 b5 b7	C7-5	C E Gb Bb	13
minor 7th w/ flatted 5th	m7-5	1 b3 b5 b7	Cm7-5	C Eb Gb Bb	14
major 9th	Maj9	(1) 3 5 7 9	Maj9	(C) E G B D	15

Footnotes:

1. Like the major chord, but with a flatted 3rd.

2. Like the major chord, but with an added b7 (flatted 7th).
3. Four equally spaced tones, each a minor third above the other.
4. Has a flatted 3rd (like the minor chord) and an added b7 (like the dominant 7th chord).
5. Like the major chord, but with a sharped 5th.
6. Like the major chord, but with an added 7th (in contrast to the dominant 7th chord, which adds a flatted 7th).
7. Like the major chord, but with an added 6th.
8. Like the dominant 7th chord, but with an added 9th (an octave above the 2nd). The root note is frequently omitted in 9th chords.
9. Has a flatted 3rd (like the minor chord) and an added 6th (like the major 6th chord).
10. Like the major chord, but with a sharped 3rd (this changes the 3rd to a 4th).
11. Has a sharped 3rd (like a suspended chord) and an added b7 (like a dominant 7th chord).
12. Like the dominant 7th, but with a sharped 5th.
13. Like the dominant 7th, but with a flatted 5th.
14. Like a minor 7th, but with a flatted 5th.
15. Like a major 7th, but with an added 9th (an octave above the 2nd). The root note is frequently omitted in 9th chords.

All The Notes On All The Strings



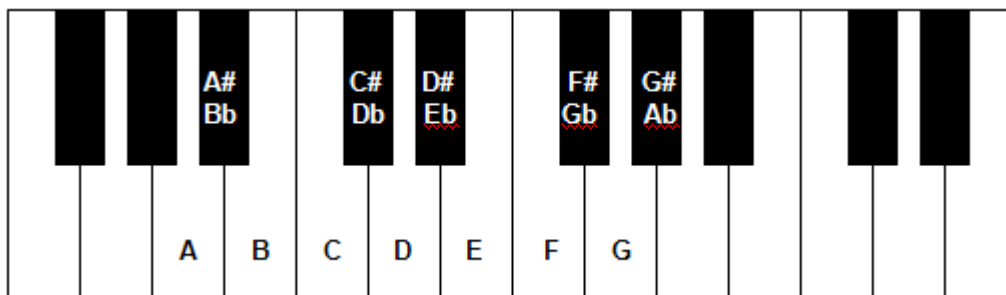
You don't need to memorize this diagram. But you do need to understand how to find the notes. To do this, you'll need to know two things: (1) the open tones of each string, and (2) the notes of the chromatic scale.

(1). The open tones (the note that sounds when the string is unfretted) of the four strings are G, C, E, and A. This is the familiar "My Dog Has Fleas" melody that all ukulele players know.

(2). Each time you move one fret higher on a string, you move one note higher on the chromatic scale. The twelve notes of the chromatic scale are A, A#/Bb, B, C, C#/Db, D, D#/Eb, E, F, F#/Gb, G, G#/Ab.

Looking at the diagram, you can see how the chromatic scale extends up the fretboard, one note at a time, starting at the open tone for each string.

If you're wondering why the chromatic scale doesn't always have a flat or sharp between each of the "natural" notes of the scale, take a look at the scale as it shows up on a piano keyboard. The white keys are the whole notes (A, B, C, ...) and the black keys are the sharps and flats. The irregular pattern of sharps and flats is represented in the irregular pattern of black keys on the piano. You can see that there are no sharps or flats between B and C, or between E and F.



Scales

Let's look at how to play scales on the ukulele. Why? Well... The easy answer is that, like eating your vegetables, it's good for you. But there are also more substantial reasons. As you learn to compose and play solos, you'll need to be able to play scales effortlessly. Also, scales are an important part of playing leads and improvisation. And they're good just as drills to improve your speed and dexterity on the uke. Lots more reasons, but let's move on to actually learning something.

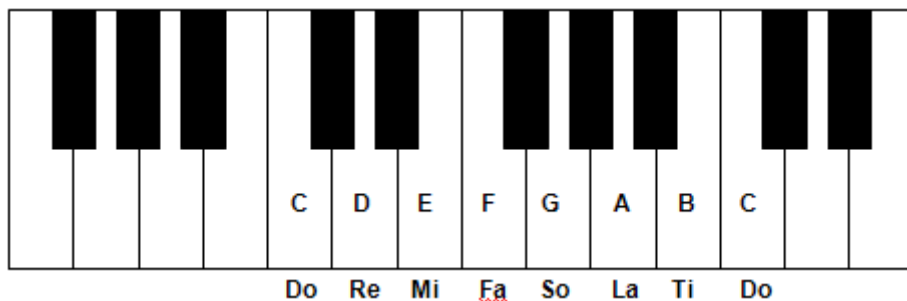
We're assuming some basic level of understanding of music theory here (not very much though, so don't run away yet!) Hopefully, you know what a scale is, and that scales exist for each key. And you should know that the intervals between notes are not equal as you go up the scale: sometimes it's a half step between notes and sometimes it's a full step (two half steps). You might want to check out [this page](#) to make sure we're using the same terminology.

We're not going to go into more exotic modes (if you don't know what a mode is, don't worry – we're not going there in this tutorial), we're just going to show you how to play major scales, with a brief paragraph at the end to talk a little about minor scales.

The first scale to learn is the C major scale. Let's look at it in a few different ways. Here's the scale as shown in conventional musical notation:



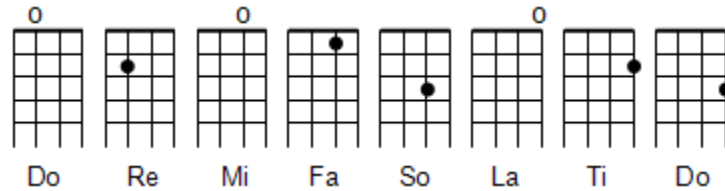
Here are the notes of the C scale on a piano keyboard. Notice that the intervals E-to-F and B-to-C are half steps (there are no flats or sharps between the notes), and the others are full steps. You'll need to know this to play scales on the uke: to raise a note by a half step you go up one fret on the uke, to raise a note by a full step you go up two frets.



Now, there are many ways to play a scale on the ukulele. You can play all of the notes on one

string, going up one fret or two frets as appropriate for each note. But this isn't the most practical way to play a scale. It's cumbersome and slow, and you can't always fit the whole scale on one string without running out of frets. Better to use more than one string.

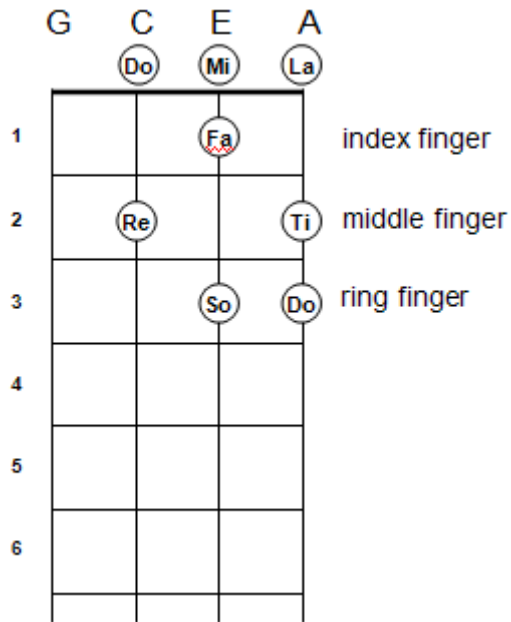
Here's the most practical way to play the C scale on a ukulele. (Here, you're playing only one string at a time – not chords. The first two notes are played on the C string, the next three notes are played on the E string, and the last three notes are played on the A string. The notation "o" above a string means to play that string open – unfretted.)



Now you may have noticed that the fifth note ("So", a G) is played on the E string third fret rather than the open G string. Either way, you're playing a G, so why aren't we using the open string? Well, there are a couple of reasons. One reason is that some people set up their ukuleles with a low G string, so if you played the "So" note on the G string, it would be an octave too low. Another reason is that you can play a scale faster and more evenly if you don't have to jump back and forth between strings quite so much.

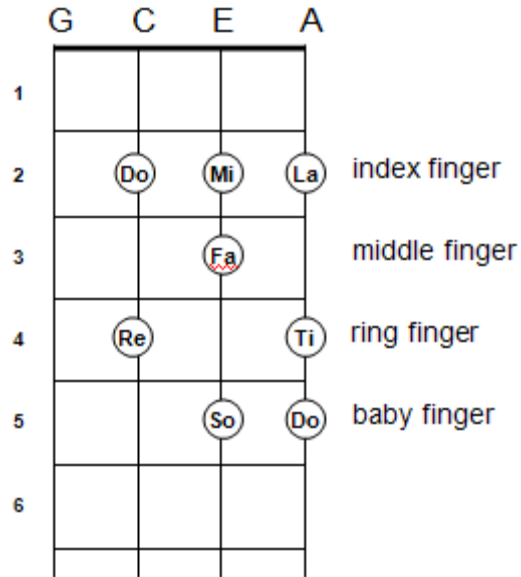
One more reason: As you'll see in a moment, we will be creating patterns for playing scales, patterns that you can then shift up the fretboard to play scales in other keys. As you shift these pattern up the fretboard, you'll no longer be playing an open G string, so the advantage of an open string for that note exists only in the case of the C scale.

Here's that C major scale shown all at once on the fretboard:



Pay attention to which fingers to use in playing the scale. Of course, the scale will sound the same no matter which fingers you use, but it's a good idea to use a consistent and logical pattern. It'll help as you pick up the speed of your playing.

Now, if you move that same pattern somewhere else on the fretboard, you'll still be playing a major scale, just in a different key. For example, if you move it up two frets (moving "up" the fretboard moves you to a higher pitch, even though it is shown as moving down on the diagram), you'll be playing a D major scale (if it's not clear to you why moving up two frets makes this a D scale, you might want to check out [All The Notes On All The Strings](#)).



Notice that the fingering is different, since you can no longer use the nut (the nut is that slotted string guide between the fretboard and the tuning pegs) to provide you with some of the notes. So the C scale is really a special case, its fingering is unique. All of the other scales (C#, D, D#, E, etc.) are fingered like you see in the example of the D scale. Again, learn to use this fingering pattern. While it's tempting at first to avoid using your baby finger (little finger, pinkie, whatever...) because it isn't as strong or as agile as your other fingers, you'll be a better player if you learn to use it.