

Assorted Hints and Tips for **HUGGERS**



Ukuleles are good for the soul

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1. COMMON CHORD PROGRESSIONS AND WARM-UP

Practice these, four or eight beats to the bar, until you can play them all without looking at the fretboard. It might be best to master the C and G chords before moving on to the D, A and E chords.

C-2-3-4	F-2-3-4	G-2-3-4	C-2-3-4
C-2-3-4	Am-2-3-4	F-2-3-4	C-2-3-4
C7-2-3-4	F-2-3-4	G7-2-3-4	C-2-3-4
G-2-3-4	C-2-3-4	D-2-3-4	G-2-3-4
G-2-3-4	C7-2-3-4	D-2-3-4	G-2-3-4
G7-2-3-4	C-2-3-4	D7-2-3-4	G-2-3-4
D-2-3-4	G-2-3-4	A-2-3-4	D-2-3-4
D-2-3-4	G7-2-3-4	A-2-3-4	D-2-3-4
Dm-2-3-4	G-2-3-4	A7-2-3-4	Dm-2-3-4
A-2-3-4	D-2-3-4	E7-2-3-4	A-2-3-4
Am-2-3-4	D7-2-3-4	E7-2-3-4	Am-2-3-4
Am-2-3-4	Dm-2-3-4	E7-2-3-4	Am-2-3-4
Em-2-3-4	A7-2-3-4	B7-2-3-4	Em-2-3-4
Em-2-3-4	Am-2-3-4	B7-2-3-4	Em-2-3-4
E7-2-3-4	A7-2-3-4	B7-2-3-4	E7-2-3-4

Based on the chord progression of 1st, 4th and 5th intervals

To learn about or find other chords search for chord finders or chord guides on the internet. One of the best is '<https://ukebuddy.com/ukulele-chords/>'.

2. UKE STRUMMING PATTERNS

Strumming is very much down to the style you adopt, simple or complex. Practice until it becomes a natural and easy action. (*The letter 'd' in the patterns below is the down-stroke and 'u' is the up-stroke.*)

Use your nail to hit the strings as you strum down and use the fleshy pad of your finger as you strum up. Try to move your hand and not your arm by flexing at the wrist.

The best spot to strum is in the area between where the neck meets the body and the edge of the sound hole. Further along the neck towards the headstock gets mushy and closer to the bridge sounds tinny so experiment to find how the sound differs and where the sweet spot on your uke is.

Keep the fingernails of your fretting hand (the one that makes the chord shapes) as short as possible so that the fingertips press the strings down, not the fingernails. You can harden the pads of your fingertips using a rub of surgical spirit.

Patterns for 4/4 time (four beats to the bar)

Beat	1	2	3	4
Strum	d	d	d	d
	du	du	du	du
	d	du	du	du
	d	d	du	du
	d	du	ud	u
	d	du	u	d

Play all of the strumming patterns with the chords on page 2 until they become second nature.

Patterns for 3/4 time (three beats to the bar)

Beat	1	2	3
Strum	d	d	d
	d	du	du
	d	du	d

3. UKE PICKING PATTERNS

Picking is also down to you and the style you adopt. It can simply be picking out the melody notes using your finger or a plectrum; or it can be a steady pattern played on all four strings using your thumb and three fingers (**T**humb on string 4, **I**ndex on string 3, **2nd** finger on string 2 and **3rd** finger on string 4), or it can be freestyle using all your fingers as normal strumming but at the same time using your thumb and index finger to pick out important melody notes.

Two simple patterns to get you started

<i>Fingers</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>2nd</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>3rd</i>	
<i>Strings</i>	3	2	4	1	<i>(play this with the chords on page 2)</i>

<i>Fingers</i>	<i>3rd</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>2nd</i>	<i>I</i>	
<i>Strings</i>	1	4	2	3	<i>(play this with the chords on page 2)</i>

4. TUNING

The strings of your uke in standard tuning are:

- String 1 is tuned to A (the string furthest from you)
- String 2 is tuned to E
- String 3 is tuned to C
- String 4 is tuned to G (sometimes called high G)

I believe that the best way to tune your uke is with an electronic tuner made to tune ukes. It is quick, simple and accurate. And when you change the strings on your uke you'll find it a blessing.

There are other methods such as tuning the uke to itself (relative tuning) or tuning to other instruments such as a ukulele or a piano. However, these methods require a musical 'ear' which you may not have developed yet.

See Section 7 for guidance on fitting new strings to your uke.

5. MORE CHORD PROGRESSIONS THE KEY OF C AND G

Practice these, four beats to the bar and three beats to the bar until you can do them all without looking at the fretboard.

C chord patterns				
C	Am	F	G	C
C	Am	Dm	G	C
C	Dm	F	G	C
C	Dm	Am	G	C
C	E7	Dm	G	C
C	Em	Am	G	C
G chord patterns				
G	Em	C	D	G
G	E7	A7	D	G
G	A7	C	D	G
G	Am	Em	D	G
G	B7	Em	D	G

Based on the 1st, 6th, 4th and 5th intervals

6. TWELVE-BAR BLUES IN C, G, D, A and E

Try playing these with a shuffle rhythm (**d – d – u – u**). Play the two down beats slowly and play the two up beats quickly.

Bar numbers:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
C	C	C	C	F	F	C	C	G	F	C	G
G	G	G	G	C7	C7	G	G	D7	C7	G	D7
D	D	D	D	G7	G7	D	D	A7	G7	D	A7
A	A	A	A	D	D	A	A	E7	D	A	E7
E	E	E	E	A	A	E7	E7	B7	A	E	B7

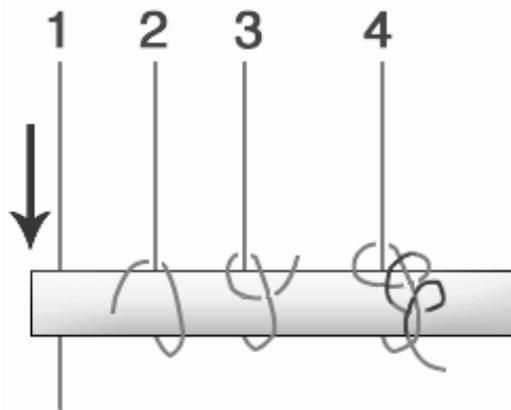
(Use 7th chords where appropriate)

7. FITTING NEW STRINGS

To remove a string

1. Turn the tuning key to slacken and unwind the string from the tuning peg until the string is loose or completely unwound.
2. When the string is loose enough, free it from the tuning peg and pull it out of its hole in the bridge to remove it completely.
3. You could repeat this for the other three strings until they are all removed or (recommended) you could remove and replace *one string at a time*.

To fit a new string



1. Take the new string from the packet making sure you have the right one, either G, C, E or A. Strings may be in separate packets marked G, C, E and A or colour-coded with the code printed somewhere on the outer packet.
2. Feed the new string through bridge hole. It doesn't matter which side, but make sure to have about 2-3 inches sticking out on the bottom side of the uke (No 1 in the picture above).
3. It might help if you feed the other (longer) part of the string through the hole in the tuning peg just to be certain it will reach.
4. Now we come to the knot around the bridge. Do this carefully by wrapping the short end of the string under and around the long end (No 2 above).
5. Then wrap the string around itself twice (3 and 4 above).
6. Hold the short end of the string against the bridge and carefully pull the long end to tighten the knot and secure the string securely. Try not to kink the long end of the string while you are pulling it tight.
7. Go to the headstock and turn the tuning peg until the hole is in line with the string and then feed the string through the hole (you can loop it through twice if you want it to be extra secure).

8. Adjust the length of the string (the slack) so there is about an inch of string available to wrap around the tuning peg.

9. Tighten the string and as it comes up to tension make sure it is firmly attached to the bridge and wrapping nicely around the tuning peg. Make sure also it is slotted into its groove in the nut.

10. Fit your tuner to the headstock and turn it on. Continue to tighten the string while watching the tuner until it shows the correct tension and tuning for the relevant string (string 1 = A, string 2 = E, string 3 = C, string 4 = G).

11. When it is in tune trim off any excess string. See the next step for keeping it in tune.

Keeping your in uke tune

With new strings you'll notice that you have to retune a lot at first. This is because the strings are stretching under tension. Be patient and keep retuning and after a while (maybe a day or so) you'll find the less and less retuning is needed.

After a few days retuning won't be required as often but it is still important to check the tuning before, and maybe even during, a playing session.

See also my notes on tuning in Section 4.

When should you change your strings?

How often to change the strings is up to you, if you play a lot then the change will need to be more frequent. As a rule of thumb changing strings every 4 – 6 months is probably sufficient.

If you break a string it is advisable to replace all of them as adding a new string to an old set might upset the sound balance (or it might not), the choice is yours.

Always fit the best quality strings you can. Uke strings aren't expensive and they will ensure you get the very best sound possible from your uke, no matter what it cost.

8. AFTERTHOUGHTS

The only way to master the ukulele or any instrument is to practice, practice and practice more.

Play every day, even if it's for only 15 minutes, but try to have longer sessions if you can as they are so much more productive and satisfying.

Endeavour to master one song that is simple and fun (Banana Boat Song is good) so that you can play and sing it from memory. Do that and you will gain so much confidence. Other songs will follow easily.

No matter how hard it may seem at times, remember that the uke is one of the easiest stringed instruments to play (but don't let non-players know, let's keep it as our secret).

Use the chord progressions on pages 2 and 5 to improvise and make up your own tunes.

There are lots more hints and tips on these websites:

Ukuguides.com – for general stuff and one of the best

Gotaukulele.com – for general good stuff

Get-tuned.com – for tuning hints

Ukulelehunt.com – for lots of 'how to' stuff