

Making Everything Easier!™

Ukulele Exercises

FOR
DUMMIES®
A Wiley Brand

Learn to:

- Play with greater ease, comfort and agility
- Improve your strumming and chord changes
- Become a stronger and steadier fingerpicker
- Perform actual songs in various styles



Download the audio files
for all of the exercises

Brett McQueen

Founder of ukuleletricks.com

Alistair Wood

Contributing Editor

Founder of ukulelehunt.com



Get More and Do More at Dummies.com®



Start with **FREE** Cheat Sheets

Cheat Sheets include

- Checklists
- Charts
- Common Instructions
- And Other Good Stuff!

To access the Cheat Sheet created specifically for this book, go to
www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/ukuleleexercisesuk

Get Smart at Dummies.com

Dummies.com makes your life easier with thousands of answers on everything from removing wallpaper to using the latest version of Windows.

Check out our

- Videos
- Illustrated Articles
- Step-by-Step Instructions

Want a weekly dose of Dummies?

Sign up for Newsletters on

- Digital Photography
- Microsoft Windows & Office
- Personal Finance & Investing
- Health & Wellness
- Computing, iPods & Mobile Phones
- eBay
- Internet
- Food, Home & Garden

Find out **“HOW”** at Dummies.com



***Ukulele
Exercises***

FOR
DUMMIES[®]
A Wiley Brand

Ukulele Exercises

FOR
DUMMIES[®]
A Wiley Brand

by Brett McQueen

FOR
DUMMIES[®]
A Wiley Brand

Ukulele Exercises For Dummies®

Published by:

John Wiley & Sons, Ltd
The Atrium, Southern Gate,
Chichester, West Sussex

www.wiley.com

This edition first published 2013

© 2013 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, Chichester, West Sussex.

Registered office

John Wiley & Sons Ltd, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, United Kingdom

For details of our global editorial offices, for customer services and for information about how to apply for permission to reuse the copyright material in this book please see our website at www.wiley.com.

The right of the author to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted by the UK Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at <http://booksupport.wiley.com>. For more information about Wiley products, visit www.wiley.com.

Designations used by companies to distinguish their products are often claimed as trademarks. All brand names and product names used in this book are trade names, service marks, trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners. The publisher is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

LIMIT OF LIABILITY/DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTY: WHILE THE PUBLISHER AND AUTHOR HAVE USED THEIR BEST EFFORTS IN PREPARING THIS BOOK, THEY MAKE NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES WITH THE RESPECT TO THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS BOOK AND SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIM ANY IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. IT IS SOLD ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE PUBLISHER IS NOT ENGAGED IN RENDERING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AND NEITHER THE PUBLISHER NOR THE AUTHOR SHALL BE LIABLE FOR DAMAGES ARISING HEREFROM. IF PROFESSIONAL ADVICE OR OTHER EXPERT ASSISTANCE IS REQUIRED, THE SERVICES OF A COMPETENT PROFESSIONAL SHOULD BE SOUGHT.

For general information on our other products and services, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at (001) 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002. For technical support, please visit www.wiley.com/techsupport.

For technical support, please visit www.wiley.com/techsupport.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-118-50685-1 (paperback) ISBN 978-1-118-50693-6 (ebk)

ISBN 978-1-118-50691-2 (ebk) ISBN 978-1-118-50694-3 (ebk)

Printed in Great Britain by CPI Clowes Ltd, Beccles

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents at a Glance

<i>Introduction</i>	1
<i>Part I: Getting Started with Ukulele Exercises</i>	7
Chapter 1: Preparing to Practise.....	9
Chapter 2: Warming Up for Practice	15
<i>Part II: Becoming a Better Strummer</i>	23
Chapter 3: Foundations For Strumming.....	25
Chapter 4: Building a Repertoire of Strumming Patterns.....	33
Chapter 5: Taking Strumming Patterns to a Higher Level	55
Chapter 6: Refining Advanced Strumming Techniques	73
<i>Part III: Becoming a Better Fingerpicker</i>	89
Chapter 7: Examining Fingerpicking Technique	91
Chapter 8: Developing Rhythmic Fingerpicking Patterns	97
Chapter 9: Improving Your Solo Fingerpicking Skills.....	117
Chapter 10: Taking a Deeper Look at Single-Note Fingerpicking Techniques	135
<i>Part IV: Mastering the Ukulele Fretboard</i>	151
Chapter 11: Learning the Fretboard with Major Scales	153
Chapter 12: Taking On Three Minor Scales	177
Chapter 13: Commanding the Fretboard with Chords.....	197
Chapter 14: Using Scales to Solo and Improvise.....	213
<i>Part V: The Part of Tens</i>	229
Chapter 15: Ten Ways to Improve Your Practice Times	231
Chapter 16: Ten Tips for Every Performing Ukulele Player	235

Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	1
About This Book	1
Conventions Used in This Book	2
What You're Not to Read	2
Foolish Assumptions	3
How This Book Is Organised	3
Part I: Getting Started with Ukulele Exercises	3
Part II: Becoming a Better Strummer	3
Part III: Becoming a Better Fingerpicker	4
Part IV: Mastering the Ukulele Fretboard	4
Part V: The Part of Tens	4
Accessing the Audio Tracks	4
Icons Used in This Book	5
Where to Go from Here	5
<i>Part 1: Getting Started with Ukulele Exercises</i>	7
Chapter 1: Preparing to Practise	9
Equipping Yourself with the Right Practice Tools	9
Tuning up with a chromatic tuner	9
Keeping time with a metronome	10
Tracking your progress with a practice journal	10
Reviewing Ukulele Notation	11
Deciphering tablature	11
Understanding chord diagrams	12
Comprehending neck diagrams	13
Reading rhythm charts	13
Chapter 2: Warming Up for Practice	15
Limbering Up Your Body to Play Ukulele	15
Loosening up with stretches	15
Relaxing with breathing exercises	16
Strengthening your hands with exercises	16
Brushing Up on Perfect Playing Posture	17
Looking at Some Warm-Up Exercises on the Ukulele	17
Practising single-note exercises	17
Practising chord exercises	19
<i>Part II: Becoming a Better Strummer</i>	23
Chapter 3: Foundations For Strumming	25
Working Out Your Strumming Technique	25
Choosing the right strumming technique	26
Strumming with your index finger	26
Strumming with your thumb	27
Strumming with four fingers	27

Getting Acquainted With the Golden Rules of Strumming	28
Rule #1: Strumming is consistent	28
Rule #2: Strumming is relaxed.....	29
Rule #3: Strumming is intentional.....	30
Finding the Right Strumming Pattern for Any Song	30
Building a strumming repertoire	30
Listening to the song.....	31
Counting the song.....	31
Starting with down strums	31
Knowing when to change chords.....	32
Singing and Strumming at the Same Time.....	32
Playing the song through without singing.....	32
Humming first, singing later	32
Simplifying isn't a bad thing.....	32
Chapter 4: Building a Repertoire of Strumming Patterns	33
Discovering How to Use These Exercises to Become a Better Strummer.....	33
Mastering the Universal Strumming Pattern.....	34
Counting along with down strums.....	34
Keeping the beat with up strums.....	35
Combining down and up strums.....	35
Application song: 'Mary Had a Little Lamb'	36
Tackling Common Time Strumming Patterns	37
Developing eighth note strums	37
Building a multi-purpose strumming pattern.....	38
Practising chord changes on different beats	39
Application song: 'Jingle Bells'	40
Making Common Time Strumming Patterns More Interesting	41
Accenting the beat.....	42
Using syncopation in three different ways.....	43
Rearranging up strums to create different feels	45
Application song: 'I've Been Working On the Railroad'	47
Waltzing Along With 3/4 Time Signature Strumming Patterns	48
Practising versatile 3/4 strumming patterns	48
Application song: 'Oh My Darling, Clementine'	49
Getting More Advanced With 6/8 Time Signature Strumming Patterns	50
Developing delightful 6/8 strumming patterns	51
Application song: 'O Holy Night'	52
Chapter 5: Taking Strumming Patterns to a Higher Level.....	55
Getting Groovy With Shuffle Rhythms	55
Finding the pocket with shuffle rhythm exercises	56
'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot'	57
Strumming Faster Without Getting Slopplier	58
Working on relaxing strumming movements	58
Minimizing wasted strumming motion.....	59
Drawing up a plan to improve strumming speed	59
'Hello! Ma Baby'	60
Showing Off Subdivided Strumming Patterns.....	61
Souping up your strumming with sixteenth notes	62
Trying out triplet strums	63
Putting the pedal down with speed rhythm exercises	64
Making Your Strumming Dynamic.....	66
Playing loudly and softly.....	66
Varying rhythmic complexity.....	67
'Oh! Susanna'	67

Recognising Offbeat Chord Changes.....	68
Switching to chords on offbeats	69
Variation on the 12 bar blues.....	69
Switching Chords Without Interrupting Your Strumming.....	70
Setting up a chord change	70
‘O Little Town of Bethlehem’	71
Chapter 6: Refining Advanced Strumming Techniques.....	73
Playing Percussively With Two Muting Techniques.....	73
Developing your ‘chnking’ technique.....	74
Figuring out fret hand muting	75
‘Michael, Row the Boat Ashore’	77
Perfecting Alternative Strumming Techniques.....	77
Taking on the touch strum	77
‘Billy Boy’	79
Improving the thumb ’n strum.....	80
Application song: ‘Rock a Bye Baby’	82
Wrapping Your Mind Around Rolling Finger Strums	83
Four finger roll.....	84
Five finger roll	84
Eight Finger Roll.....	84
Ten Finger Roll	85
Practising finger roll strumming pattern exercises.....	85
Application song: ‘Sweet Lei Lehua’	86
 Part III: Becoming a Better Fingerpicker.....	 89
Chapter 7: Examining Fingerpicking Technique	91
Practising Two Different Fingerpicking Techniques.....	91
Polishing the four-finger technique.....	92
Perfecting the alternating thumb technique	93
Looking at the Golden Rules of Fingerpicking	94
Rule #1: Stay loose.....	94
Rule #2: Slow and steady wins the race.....	95
Rule #3: Repeat, repeat, repeat.....	95
Chapter 8: Developing Rhythmic Fingerpicking Patterns.....	97
Practising the Four-Finger Picking Technique.....	97
‘Inside-out’ pattern	98
‘Outside-in’ pattern.....	99
Simultaneous pinched patterns	101
Patterns in varied rhythms.....	104
‘The Water Is Wide’.....	107
Practising the Alternating Picking Technique	109
‘Inside-out’ pattern	109
‘Outside-in’ pattern.....	110
Simultaneous pinched patterns	110
Patterns in varied rhythms.....	112
Application song: ‘I Am a Poor Wayfaring Stranger’	114
Chapter 9: Improving Your Solo Fingerpicking Skills	117
Tackling Solo Fingerstyle Pieces	117
Learning two pieces of music.....	118
Playing Carcassi’s ‘Andantino’	119



Strengthening Your Fingerpicking with Arpeggio Exercises..... 120
 Trying your hand at ‘p i m’ arpeggios 121
 Playing Tárrega’s ‘Étude in E minor’ 125
 Working through more advanced arpeggios 127
 Playing Aguado’s ‘25 Pièces Pour Guitare, no. 17’ 130
 Developing Lightning-Fast Tremolo Technique..... 132
 Tackling three-finger tremolo..... 132
 Playing ‘Étude in C major’ 133
 Figuring out four-finger tremolo 133

Chapter 10: Taking a Deeper Look at Single-Note Fingerpicking Techniques 135

Speeding up Single-Note Passages 135
 Practising four alternation techniques 136
 Applying alternation techniques to pieces of music 137
 Articulating Single-Note Passages 140
 Hammer-on exercises 141
 Pull-off exercises 142
 Slide exercises 143
 Bend exercises 144
 Strumming and Fingerpicking for Melody 145
 Playing ‘Silent Night’ 146
 Playing ‘Danny Boy (Londonderry Air)’ 147

Part IV: Mastering the Ukulele Fretboard 151

Chapter 11: Learning the Fretboard with Major Scales 153

Taking a Quick Look at the Chromatic Scale 154
 Building a Major Scale..... 155
 Learning the major scale interval pattern 155
 Creating a major scale in any key 156
 Practising Major Scale Patterns in Three Different Keys 158
 Learning natural notes with C major 158
 Seeing how sharps work with G major..... 161
 Figuring out flats with F major 164
 Getting Your Fingers Moving with Major Scale Sequences..... 167
 Faking Fretboard Knowledge 170
 Recognising fretboard landmarks..... 170
 Locating the same note on different strings..... 171
 Finding octave notes 172
 Using Major Scales to Play Actual Songs 173
 Playing ‘Angels We Have Heard On High’ 173
 Playing ‘When the Saints Go Marching In’ 174

Chapter 12: Taking On Three Minor Scales..... 177

Building a Natural Minor Scale 177
 Discovering the natural minor scale interval pattern..... 178
 Relating natural minor to major..... 179
 Playing the Natural Minor scale..... 180
 Homing In On Harmonic Minor..... 184
 Mixing It Up With Melodic Minor..... 187
 Practising Five Different Minor Scale Sequences 190

Playing Songs Using All Three Minor Scales	193
Playing 'O Come, O Come Emmanuel'	193
Playing 'Coventry Carol'	194
Playing 'Greensleeves'	195
Chapter 13: Commanding the Fretboard with Chords	197
Building Major and Minor Triads	197
Constructing major triads.....	198
Putting together minor triads	199
Practising Triads Up and Down the Fretboard	200
Major triad exercises.....	201
Minor triad exercises	202
Combined triad exercises	203
Taking Triads and Playing Actual Songs	204
Playing 'Red River Valley'	205
Playing 'Joy to the World'	206
Turning Triads Into Moveable Chord Positions	207
Making moveable major chords.....	207
Assembling moveable minor chords.....	208
Practising moveable chord progressions	208
Getting Jazzy with Moveable Seventh Chords.....	209
Figuring out dominant seventh chords.....	209
Mastering major seventh chords.....	210
Tackling minor seventh chords	211
Practising jazz chord progressions	211
Chapter 14: Using Scales to Solo and Improvise.....	213
Rocking Out with Pentatonic Scales	213
Learning the minor pentatonic scale	213
Constructing the major pentatonic scale	214
Practising pentatonic scale licks and exercises	215
Playing a rock solo.....	217
Expressing Soul with the Blues Scale.....	218
Building the blues scale	218
Practising blues scale licks and exercises	219
Playing a blues solo	221
Sounding Jazzy with the Bebop Scale	221
Discovering the dominant bebop scale	222
Mastering the major bebop scale	223
Practising bebop scale licks and exercises	224
Playing a jazz solo.....	226
Part V: The Part of Tens.....	229
Chapter 15: Ten Ways to Improve Your Practice Times.....	231
Setting a Location.....	231
Scheduling a Time	231
Creating Time Limits.....	232
Keeping a Practice Journal.....	232
Trying Out Different Musical Styles	232
Practising with Other People	232
Writing a Song.....	233
Working on Active Listening	233
Leaving Your Ukulele Out On a Stand.....	233
Taking a Break.....	234

Chapter 16: Ten Tips for Every Performing Ukulele Player	235
Becoming a Better Performer	235
Getting Involved in the Local Music Scene	236
Finding a Place to Perform	236
Building a Set List of Songs	236
Preparing to Play Before an Audience	237
Handling Nerves Right Before the Show.....	237
Mastering the Art of Focus.....	238
Remembering to Breathe.....	238
Engaging With Your Audience	238
Being Confident in Yourself.....	239

Introduction

Whether you've played ukulele for years or just started playing a couple of weeks ago, *Ukulele Exercises For Dummies* is a practice book for anyone who wants to become a better ukulele player. With hundreds of exercises and dozens of songs, you have a practice roadmap for improving your chops and becoming a more confident ukulele player. Through the exercises in this book, your fingers will come out stronger and more agile, and your mind will be sharpened and opened up to new and exciting ways of playing the ukulele through the different styles and techniques to which I introduce you.

One of the best parts of the ukulele is that it has such a relaxing, peaceful and joyful aura when played. Because the ukulele originates from Hawaii, some people say it carries the Hawaiian *Aloha Spirit*. It's hard to listen to someone play the ukulele and not crack a smile or grin from ear to ear (I dare you to try). In this way, this book isn't about rigorously practising an overwhelming amount of exercises; it's about equipping you to go from practice to playing those songs that carry the joyful spirit of the ukulele.

About This Book

Ukulele Exercises For Dummies isn't necessarily meant to be read from cover to cover like a normal book. The cool thing about this book (if I do say so myself) is that it's written so you can look over the table of contents and flip to the chapters that cover the techniques and aspects of playing the ukulele that interest you most. In fact, as you practise, you might choose several different exercises to practise at a time from multiple chapters.

At the same time the chapters of this book are organised and developed the way they are for good reasons. When learning about music, different concepts and ideas tend to compound and build on each other. This is only natural, and you should expect it. For example, in Part II 'Becoming a Better Strummer', Chapter 3 addresses a lot of foundational ways of thinking and approaching the strumming exercises that come in Chapter 4, 5 and 6. The goal throughout each part of the book is to develop and improve a particular aspect of your technique, so at times, there is a gradual but noticeable progression of growth throughout each chapter. In this way, if you do come across something that seems unfamiliar, flip a few pages back because it was most likely covered a little earlier. When later chapters pull on information taught in earlier chapters, I do my best to include a reference for you.

There are *a lot* of exercises in this book. The exciting thing about these exercises is that almost all of them are designed so you can come back to them even after you've 'mastered' the techniques. I say 'mastered' because I've been playing ukulele my entire life and I still use the exercises in this book in my practise sessions. These exercises will always assist as a way to challenge your fingers and improve your overall playing technique.

Because of the amount of exercises presented throughout this book, avoid tackling all of the exercises from a chapter in one sitting. It's best to take a couple of exercises from a chapter and spend time practising those for a day, week or month – however much time you need – before moving on. It's okay to mix and practise exercises from multiple chapters during your practice times, but if you do this, I recommend using a practice journal to write out the things you are practising to keep track of your progress. In Chapter 1, I discuss more about how to use a practice journal.

Overall, with this book, I want to help you unlock the parts to playing the ukulele that allow you to approach your playing more creatively and expressively, so you are able to go beyond the pages of this book and be more inspired as a musician and artist. To that end, along with the practice exercises, I include many songs in a variety of popular ukulele styles that you are able to learn and apply your skills.

Conventions Used in This Book

One of the most challenging aspects to learning and progressing at the ukulele can be sifting through the musical terms and lingo that gets thrown around. In this book, when I introduce an important, new term, I *italicise* the term and follow it with a definition. At the same time, there are a few common terms that show up over and over again that are worth going over since they can be confusing if you're a relatively new ukulele player.

For example, when I refer to your *fretting hand*, I'm talking about the hand that forms the chord positions and presses against the strings on the ukulele fretboard. If you're a right-handed player, your fretting hand is your left hand. If I refer to your *strumming hand* or *picking hand*, I'm talking about the hand that strums or plucks the strings. If you are a right-handed player, this is your right hand. For left-handed players, reverse hands.

All of the exercises in this book are written for a ukulele tuned in standard tuning: g-C-E-A. If I refer to the *top string* of the ukulele, I'm talking about the g-string, and if I refer to the *bottom string* of the ukulele, I'm talking about the A-string. Additionally, if I refer to the *1st string*, I'm talking about the A-string; the *2nd string* indicates the E-string; the *3rd string* indicates the C-string; and lastly, the *4th string* indicates the g-string.

In the context of strumming the ukulele, the terms *down* and *up* refer to the direction to strum across the strings. Strumming down requires you to strum starting from the top string to the bottom string. Strumming up requires you to strum starting from the bottom to the top string.

The terms *high* and *low* are often used in this book to refer to the pitch and positioning of a note on the ukulele fretboard. When I say a note is played *high* on the neck, I mean that the note is played on the fretboard of the ukulele closer to the sound hole. If a note is played *low* on the neck, it is played closer to the headstock. Thus, notes played higher up on the fretboard are higher in pitch, whereas notes played lower on the fretboard are lower in pitch.

There are two separate ways to indicate which fingers are used for an exercise. The numbers 1–4 are used to indicate the fingers in your fretting hand – often used for chord diagrams and in certain music notation. The number 1 indicates the index finger, number 2 the middle finger, number 3 the ring finger and number 4 the little finger (or pinky). When referring to your picking hand, four letters are used. The letter *p* indicates you pluck the string with your thumb, *i* indicates the index finger, *m* indicates the middle finger and *a* indicates the ring finger. This way of identifying fingers is unpacked more in the pages ahead.

Lastly, in an effort to present the exercises, this book makes use of ukulele tab and notation, chord and scale diagrams, and metronome markings, which are discussed and explained in more detail in Chapter 1.

What You're Not to Read

Each exercise in this book is created and presented with as much necessary information as possible, so if you wanted, you could play the exercises without having to read the

surrounding text. At the same time, the explanations surrounding the exercises often give you helpful pointers and help you understand what you're playing on a deeper level, which gives you the ability to take the concepts behind the exercises and apply them to actual pieces of music.

More importantly, be sure to listen to the audio demonstrations that go along with the exercises. The audio is the biggest aspect to this book. These audio recordings provide a demonstration so you can get a really good, quick idea for how the exercise should sound and feel when you play it. Additionally, you can use these audio examples to play along with me. Notice that I play all of these audio examples to a metronome so you can get an idea of how to practise with a metronome too, if you have one. In Chapter 1, I talk more about using a metronome in your practice.

Foolish Assumptions

You don't have to have a lot of experience playing the ukulele in order to use this book. Throughout the book, I provide detailed explanations of the exercises to ensure you're up to speed with what's being presented. Still though, because this is a practice book, I try to spend less time talking and more time getting the ukulele in your hands with practice exercises. If you need information on things like learning basic chords, tuning the ukulele, or buying a ukulele, I highly recommend checking out *Ukulele For Dummies*.

The biggest assumption I do make is that you have a soprano, concert, or tenor ukulele that is tuned in standard tuning (g-C-E-A). Unfortunately, if you have a baritone ukulele tuned to D-G-B-E, or if you tune your ukulele to another tuning, you will be unable to follow along with the majority of the exercises presented in this book.

How This Book Is Organised

There are three main focuses to this book: strumming, fingerpicking and learning the ukulele fretboard. Within each of these focuses, there are many different techniques to learn and explore. Depending on the technique, each part of the book can look a little different in terms of what kind of exercises are used. Check out the following descriptions to get a bird's eye view of how this book is organised.

Part I: Getting Started with Ukulele Exercises

I get you up to speed on the things you need to know to get the most out of the exercises in this book. If you've been playing ukulele for awhile, chances are some of this information will be familiar for you. In Chapter 1, I recommend and explain the use of three different practice tools that make your practice sessions more productive. I also review how to read ukulele notation and tab, chord diagrams, scale diagrams and rhythm charts, which helps you easily follow along with the exercises in this book. In Chapter 2, you start warming up your fingers and hands with stretches, breathing exercises and strength-building exercises. You also pick up the ukulele and play through several practice exercises.

Part II: Becoming a Better Strummer

You strengthen your rhythm, timing and ability to find the right strumming pattern for any song. Because strumming is a form of rhythm, you learn how to count, feel and play to the

beat. I teach you exercises that break down strumming into its simplest parts, and then, I show you how to add to these simple strumming patterns to make them more complex and interesting sounding for your listener. Throughout this part, you learn how to play more than a dozen songs in different styles. By the end of this part, you will be able to build your own strumming patterns that's right and fits for whatever song you're playing.

Part III: Becoming a Better Fingerpicker

There are a couple of different styles of fingerpicking on the ukulele. The first way is *rhythmic fingerpicking* (Chapter 8), where you fingerpick a repeating pattern that allows you to pick the chords and sing the melody of a song. The second way is *fingerstyle* (Chapter 9), where you take beautiful and intricate sounding classical guitar pieces and perform them on ukulele. The third way, which is another form of fingerstyle, is often referred to as *solo fingerpicking* (Chapter 10), where you fingerpick the melody of a song that is normally sung. Throughout this part, you practise a variety of picking exercises that improve the speed, flexibility and fluidity of your picking hand.

Part IV: Mastering the Ukulele Fretboard

To master the ukulele fretboard means to learn the notes of the fretboard and how you relate those notes with one another in meaningful ways to play songs. In this part, you learn how to build major and minor scales across the neck of the ukulele (Chapters 11 and 12), and then you see how those notes relate to one another by building chords in different positions across the ukulele fretboard (Chapter 13). This means you won't ever have to look at a chord diagram again. You also pick up some soloing techniques in musical styles like rock, blues and jazz (Chapter 14).

Part V: The Part of Tens

In case you're not familiar, in any *For Dummies* book, there is a special part of the book called the Part of Tens. This part breaks away from the exercises in the rest of the book to give you some extra, free-of-charge tips about improving your practice sessions (Chapter 15) and learning about how to take those steps to taking your ukulele skills and performing for an audience (Chapter 16). Both of these chapters include ten quick tips that you can apply to your ukulele playing today.

Accessing the Audio Tracks

Ukulele Exercises For Dummies comes with 256 audio tracks – each one an essential aid to mastering the songs, techniques and exercises that I cover in the book. If you've purchased the paper or e-book version of *Ukulele Exercises For Dummies*, just go to www.dummies.com/go/ukuleleexercises to access and download these tracks. (If you don't have internet access, call 877-762-2974 within the U.S. or 317-572-3993 outside the U.S.) Each exercise in the book which ties into an audio track has the track number above it in a black box, so you'll always be able to match what you see on the page to what you're hearing.

Icons Used in This Book



In the left-hand margins of this book, you'll find the following icons:

This icon reminds you of important information that is essential to playing the ukulele. This is the stuff you never want to forget.



Every now and then I go a little deeper in my explanations of certain musical terms, techniques, or ideas. This icon indicates interesting information that is a bit more technical. Not essential, but you might find it interesting.



These quick pointers help make the exercises and songs easier to play or understand.



I use this icon to caution you of anything that could cause discomfort, pain or injury to you or your ukulele.

Where to Go from Here

Flip right over to Chapter 1 if you need a refresher on some of the basics. To get your hands warmed up and ready to practise, start at Chapter 2 for some stretches and exercises. If you are a relatively new ukulele player, after going over Chapter 1 and 2, I recommend starting at Part II 'Becoming a Better Strummer' as this will get you playing some of the 'staple' ukulele songs right away. If you've been playing ukulele for awhile, or if you already have a pretty specific practice routine, skip around through the book to pick and choose exercises you'd like to add to your routine to improve different aspects of your technique.

Part I

Getting Started with Ukulele Exercises

getting started
with

**Ukulele
Exercises**
EXERCISES



Go to www.dummies.com/go/ukuleleexercises to listen to audio tracks.

In this part . . .

- ✔ Learn three different practice tools to make your practice sessions more productive.
- ✔ Review ukulele tablature and the different sorts of diagram you'll come across.
- ✔ Pick up tips on how to warm up for practice.
- ✔ Pick up your uke and get started on practice.
- ✔ Go to www.dummies.com/go/ukuleleexercises to listen to audio tracks accompanying this book.

Chapter 1

Preparing to Practise

In This Chapter

- ▶ Looking at three essential practice tools
- ▶ Brushing up on ukulele tab and notation

Many exciting exercises lie ahead in the coming chapters. With your hard work and practice, you're going to see amazing improvements in your ukulele playing, but before picking up your ukulele, take a moment to cover some essentials. In this chapter, you discover three helpful practice tools that enable you to get the most out of the exercises in this book, and you review how to read ukulele tab and notation, which allows you to easily follow along with the exercises I present in this book.

Equipping Yourself with the Right Practice Tools

While the following tools aren't necessary or required to enjoy the exercises in the pages ahead, they can make your practice times more productive and effective.

Tuning up with a chromatic tuner



It's always a good idea to tune up your ukulele every time you practise. Through playing, and through small changes in temperature and humidity, the strings of the ukulele go out of tune. An in-tune ukulele is always more inspiring to play and listen to than one that is out of tune.

In standard ukulele tuning, from the top to bottom string, a ukulele is tuned to a G note above middle C on the piano, middle C, E above middle C, and A above middle C. In this way, a ukulele is tuned: g-C-E-A (the lower case 'g' represents the high g-string).

The ukulele can be tuned in a variety of different ways, but the exercises in this book are created for ukuleles tuned to standard tuning. To learn more about other ukulele tunings, be sure to check out *Ukulele For Dummies* by Alistair Wood.

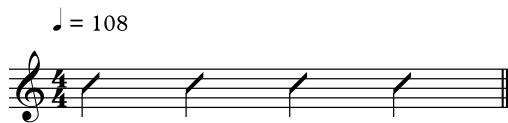


Tuning your ukulele is easy if you have a piano nearby, but more often than not, this isn't the case. The easiest and most accurate way to tune your ukulele is to use a *chromatic tuner*. A chromatic tuner is a small, inexpensive, portable electronic device that listens to each string you pluck on the ukulele and tells you whether that string needs to be tuned higher or lower in pitch. I strongly recommend you purchase a chromatic tuner at your local music store, or if you have a smartphone, purchase and download a chromatic tuner app to your device.

Keeping time with a metronome

A metronome is a small device that helps strengthen your sense of timing (musically referred to as *tempo*) by producing a short, consistent ‘click’ sound. By lining up your ukulele playing with the ‘click’ of a metronome, you improve your timing and rhythm, which creates a more pleasing sounding performance for your listener. You can buy a metronome at any music store or you can purchase a metronome app for your smartphone. Additionally, some chromatic tuners are combined with a metronome for just a little bit more money.

Tempo is measured in *beats per minute* (BPM). Typically, a slow tempo is considered anywhere around 40 to 60 BPM and a fast tempo is considered 120 BPM or higher. For some of the exercises and songs in this book, I notate a suggested tempo at the beginning of the figure. In music notation, tempo is often indicated with a quarter note and a number, as shown in the following figure.



These suggested tempos throughout the book should be seen as a goal. If you set your metronome at the suggested tempo and you are unable to play the song or exercise that fast, slow down the tempo to a speed that allows you to play without mistakes. Then, gradually increase the speed in small increments to play at the suggested tempo.



While practising, don't use a metronome all the time. Sometimes the pressure of keeping time with a metronome can create tension in your playing, which works against you. First, spend time practising the exercises and songs in this book without a metronome, and then, to tighten up your timing and rhythm, add in the use of the metronome.

Tracking your progress with a practice journal

Truthfully, this book contains a lot of exercises. To get the most out of your practice sessions, and to become a better ukulele player, it's important you're practising in a focused way. This means it's best to select a few exercises to work on at a time from different sections of this book. The exercises aren't meant to be tackled all at once.

I highly recommend using a practice journal to focus your practice sessions, and to prevent yourself from getting overwhelmed. A pen and a notebook will do the trick, or you can create an updatable text file on your personal computer.



Here are a couple of different ways to use a practice journal:

- ✓ **Create a practice plan for the week.** For example, one day you might work on a couple of major scale patterns from Chapter 11, then, the next day, select a few rhythmic fingerpicking patterns to learn from Chapter 8, and then later on, to cap it off, practise a handful of strumming patterns from Chapter 4. You might mix these things up on the same day, but whatever you decide, write it out, so you know exactly what you're practising throughout the week.
- ✓ **Identify successes and current challenges.** After you practise, take a minute to list out your successes. For example, you might note in your journal, 'Able to successfully

fingerpick Carcassi's 'Andantino' from Chapter 9 at a moderate tempo.' In addition, write out challenges, like, 'Need to work on fretting the notes in measures 7 and 8 of Carcassi's 'Andantino' in Chapter 9.' By writing these successes and challenges out, you can be encouraged in your practice and identify exactly what you need to work on for the next practice session.

- ✔ **Write out measurable goals.** Think about where you want to be in a week, a month, six months, or a year. You might write out things like, 'I want to learn and memorise all C major scale positions from Chapter 11 in two weeks,' or, 'I want to be able to play Tárrega's 'Étude in E minor' from Chapter 9 at 92 BPM in a month.' The more specific you can be in your goals the more it can inform you about how to structure your practice times and help focus you in practising the things that help you reach your goal.

Throughout the following chapters, I give you some more recommendations for how to use your practice journal. Give it a try and see how it works for you.

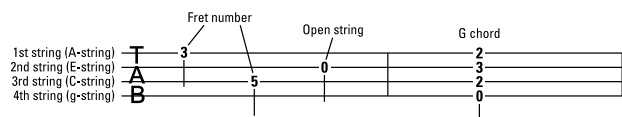
Reviewing Ukulele Notation

Depending on the concepts and techniques I'm teaching you, the exercises in this book are presented in a few different ways. You don't need to be a pro at reading music in order to use the exercises and songs in this book, but it is helpful to review some of the basics.

Deciphering tablature

Tablature, often just called *tab*, is a simplified form of musical notation for the ukulele. Unlike regular music notation, tab shows exactly where to play the notes of an exercise or song across the ukulele's fretboard.

In the most basic way, in ukulele tab, there are four lines, with each line representing a different string of the ukulele, as shown in the following figure.



Tab is drawn from the perspective as if you are holding the ukulele in playing position and looking over the neck of the ukulele down at the strings. In this way, the top line of the ukulele tab represents the bottom or 1st string of the ukulele, and the bottom line of the ukulele tab represents the top or 4th string of the ukulele.

The numbers on each line represent a fret number. For example, in the previous figure, the number 3 on the top line means you press down on the 3rd fret of the 1st string of the ukulele, or more accurately, in between the space between the 2nd and 3rd fret on the bottom string. Likewise, the number 5 on the third line from the top means you press down on the 5th fret of the 3rd string. If you see a number 0, that you means you pluck the open string, without touching the string with your fretting hand.

Tab is commonly used to represent single-note melody lines or fingerpicking patterns (such as those in Part III of this book), but tab can also be used to represent chords. If the numbers

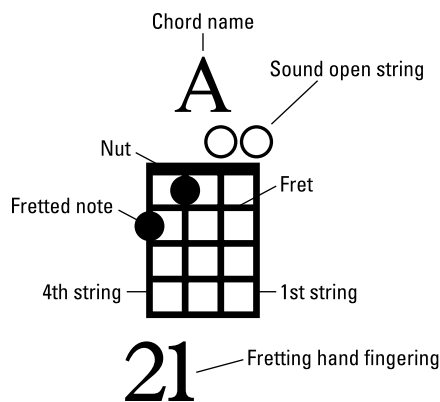
line up vertically across multiple strings, that means you fret and sound the notes across those strings all at once.



Using tab to represent music is advantageous because of how easy it is to read the notes, but the downside to using tab is that often times tablature doesn't express note durations, meaning, it can be hard to tell how long to hold certain notes just from a piece of tab. For this reason, and for your benefit, the tab in almost all of the exercises in this book is presented in combination with actual music notation.

Understanding chord diagrams

A *chord diagram* is a representation of a chord's finger position on the neck of the ukulele. The chord diagram should be seen and read as if you were holding the ukulele up vertically in front of you and looking directly at the fretboard.



The capital letter at the top of the diagram tells you the name of the chord. In the figure above, the letter 'A' indicates that this is an A major chord. Additional letters and numbers might follow the letter to indicate other chord qualities (minor, dominant seventh, major seventh, etc.).

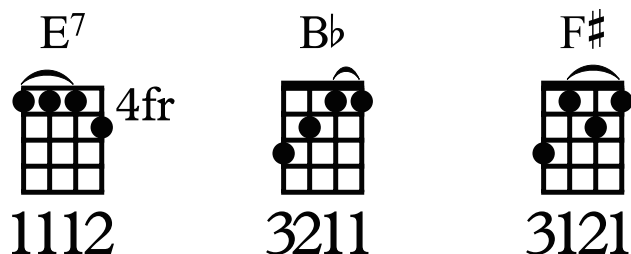
The vertical lines represent each of the four strings of the ukulele. The horizontal lines represent frets. The thick black horizontal line at the top of the diagram is representative of the nut of the ukulele. The black dots represent the notes that are fretted on the ukulele.

The numbers at the bottom of the chord diagram indicate which finger you should use to fret the note on the string. The index finger is represented by the number '1', middle finger by the number '2', ring finger by the number '3', and the little finger by the number '4'.

In some cases, chord diagrams indicate chords played at higher positions on the fretboard. For example, at the right of the E7 chord in the following figure, the number and letters *4fr* indicate the starting notes of the chord are played at the 4th fret. The curved line arching over the three notes on the 4th fret indicate a *barre*; meaning, at the 4th fret, you fret the notes by laying a finger over the strings (usually the index finger). The Bb and F# chords show other ways a barre shows up in a ukulele chord, although you might decide to use your index finger to barre all four strings for these chords too.

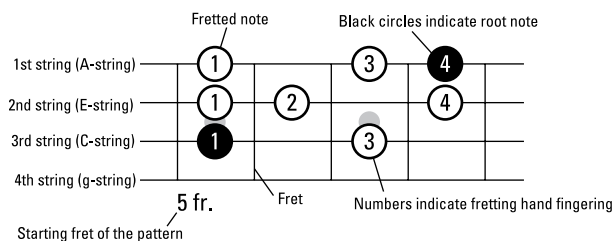


Chord diagrams give you a suggestion for the chord's fingering. You might find alternate fingerings that make more sense and work better than others in the context of certain chord progressions and songs.



Comprehending neck diagrams

A *neck diagram* is a visual representation of notes across the ukulele fretboard. In this book, I use neck diagrams to demonstrate different scale positions and note names across the fretboard. Neck diagrams are like tab in that the top line of the neck diagram represents the bottom or 1st string of the ukulele, and the bottom line of the diagram represents the top or 4th string of the ukulele. The perspective is as if you are holding the ukulele in playing position and looking over the neck of the ukulele down at the fretboard.



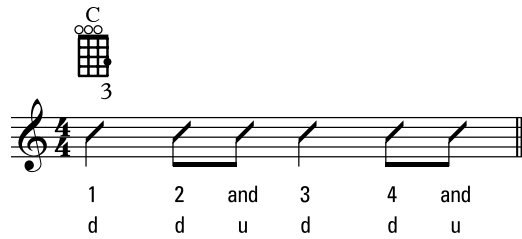
Most of the time, neck diagrams are used to show a scale's position on the ukulele fretboard. At the bottom of the diagram, the number and letters *5fr* indicate that the starting note of the scale position starts on the 5th fret.

Each circle represents a note you fret with a finger on the fretboard. Filled in circles represent the root note of a scale. For example, the previous figure shows an F major scale pattern on the bottom three strings of the ukulele. The black dot on the 5th fret of the 3rd string and the 8th fret of the 1st string represents an 'F' note, which is the root note of an F major scale.

The numbers in the circles indicate which finger to use to fret the note. The index finger is represented by the number '1', middle finger by the number '2', ring finger by the number '3', and the little finger by the number '4'. In some examples, where I demonstrate the name of the notes across the fretboard, the name of the note is shown in the circle rather than the fingering.

Reading rhythm charts

A *rhythm chart* is written on a normal music staff, but rather than indicating actual notes, the chart indicates the rhythm of a strumming pattern. The chord diagram above the music indicates which chord you strum.



The image shows a ukulele chord diagram for the C major chord, with the letter 'C' above it and a '3' below it indicating the third fret. Below the diagram is a music staff in 4/4 time signature. The staff contains four measures of music, each represented by a single diagonal slash (a rhythm slash). Below the staff, the following sequence is written: 1 d, 2 d, and u, 3 d, 4 d, and u.

In this figure, the rhythm chart is written in 4/4 time signature; meaning, there are four beats per measure. *Rhythm slashes* or black lines going through the music staff represent quarter notes and eighth notes (more on those in Part II).



The numbers and letters below the chart are what you want to concern yourself most with. The numbers help you count out loud the strumming pattern. The letters 'd' and 'u' indicate which direction to strum across the strings: down or up.