



# **MY SOPRANO UKULELE BOOK**

## About the Soprano Ukulele

While stringed instruments have existed for more than 3000 years, the ukulele is a unique Hawaiian descendant of the Portuguese *cavaquinho*—or one of its direct descendants, the *braguinha* and *machete*—that came to Hawaii during the late 1800s.

The ukulele has become popular around the world, and many music teachers use the instrument to promote music literacy and performance skills. There are several sizes of ukulele; the most common size is the soprano.



## Caring for the Ukulele

Stringed instruments are affected by temperature and humidity. Never leave a stringed instrument outside or in a car for more than a few minutes. *Cold weather can make the strings of your ukulele get so tight that they can break*, so loosen the strings before transporting your ukulele on cold winter days. **Always let your ukulele come to room temperature before tuning it.**

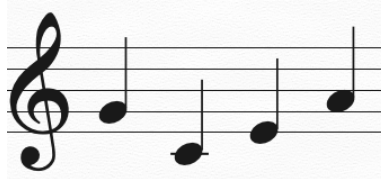
If you prefer to play with a pick, *use only a ukulele pick*. Ukulele strings are made of nylon and hard plastic guitar picks can weaken your strings. Ukulele bodies are often made of lightweight wood as well. Using a hard pick can damage the wood.

Similarly, if you like the flexibility of playing with a capo, be sure to use only a *ukulele capo* that is thinner and narrower than a guitar capo.

## Tuning the Soprano/Concert Ukulele

Tuning the ukulele is essential for it to sound right. Once tuned, be careful not to bump the tuning pegs or you will likely have to tune again. Tuning is very precise. When your ukulele is new, it should be tuned precisely *at least once every day for a couple of weeks*. After that, tune your ukulele right before you want to play it.

Ukuleles have four strings. Most people strum the ukulele with their right hand, even if they are left-handed. On the soprano and concert ukuleles, the string closest to your face—when you strum right-handed—is tuned to the pitch G (392 Hz). The next string is tuned to the C *which is lower than that G* (261.6 Hz). The following string is tuned to E (329.6 Hz). The highest pitched of the strings—the one furthest from you when you strum right-handed—is tuned to A (440 Hz). Thus, working from your face to the floor when strumming right-handed, the strings are **GCEA**.



To tune:

1. Open a **digital oscilloscope** tuning app like UKULELE TUNER FREE.
2. Trace the **G** string up the neck to lower left tuning peg.
3. Pluck the **G** string.
4. Make note of the little digits on the app *at the exact moment you pluck*.
5. Turn the **G** string's tuning peg a quarter turn to the left.
6. Pluck the **G** string and watch the little digits change on the tuning app.
7. If the digits are going in the right direction (getting closer to 392 Hz), keep plucking the **G** string, turning its peg to the left, and watching until the display reads exactly 392 Hz. If the digits are going the wrong way (getting further from 392 Hz), keep plucking the **G** string, turning its peg to the right, and watching until the display reads exactly 392 Hz.
8. Repeat steps 2-7 with the **C** string (upper left tuning peg) and 261.6 Hz.
9. Repeat steps 2-7 with the **E** string (upper right tuning peg) and 329.6 Hz.
10. Repeat steps 2-7 with the **A** string (lower right tuning peg) and 440 Hz.

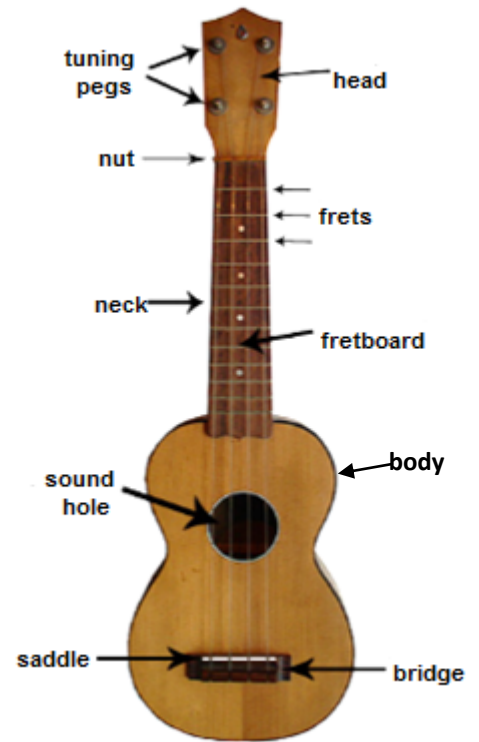


Be very careful not to overtighten the strings or you may break a string *or even the ukulele!*

## Holding the Ukulele

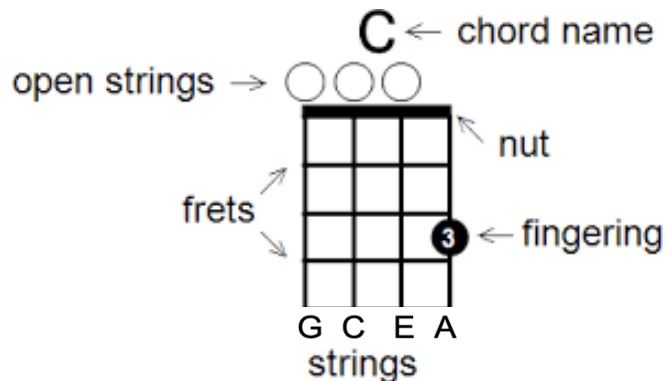
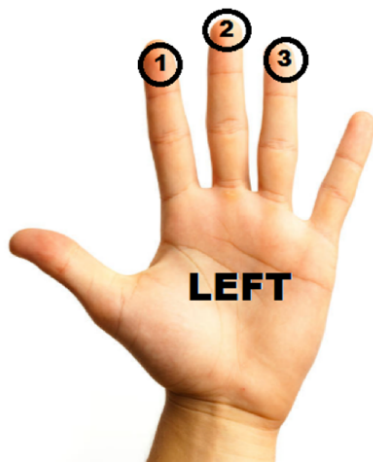
While it is possible to purchase some stringed instruments strung/tuned for left-handed players, the instruments we will be using are tuned for playing *right-handed*. Playing right-handed means that the left hand will be used to fret the ukulele (on its neck, between the frets) and the right hand will be used to strum and pluck the strings.

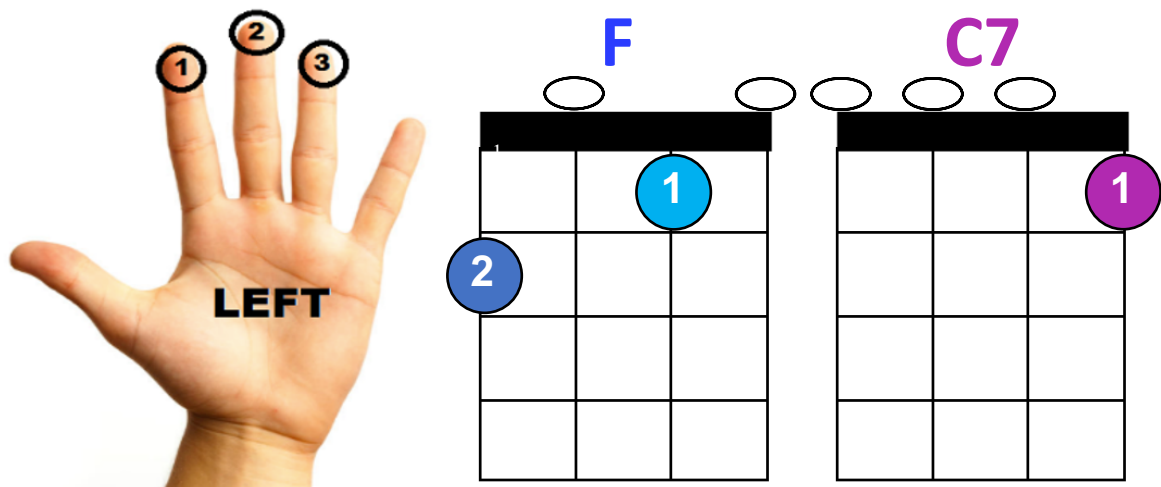
To get ready to play, hold the uke's neck in your left hand, place the body flat against your tummy, and strum all four strings—*very gently*—with your right pointer finger over the 11<sup>th</sup> fret. *Traditionally, the ukulele is strummed on the fretboard. You could also try strumming over the sound hole like you are playing guitar.*



## Reading Chord Diagrams

When reading chord diagrams, notice the position of the strings closest to you and furthest from you. Then place the correct finger on the string and between the frets as shown. **Push hard when fretting.**





## Please Pass the Sweets

Musical notation for the song "Please Pass the Sweets". The music is in 2/4 time and features the following lyrics and chords:

1 Please pass the pud - ding! Please pass the pie!

5 Please pass the sweets and don't be shy!

9 1 2 3 4 5!

*This game is played like Raw Macaroni, Aquaqua, or Down by the Banks of the Hanky Pank. All players stand in a circle with their palms up. All players' right hands go on top of their (right) neighbors left hands. Then, the beat is passed around the circle as each person, in turn, lifts their right hand—like a windshield wiper—and touches their (left) neighbor with it. On "5" the person touched is out.*

# One Bottle o' Pop

One bot-tle o' pop, Two bot-tle o' pop, Three bot-tle o' pop, Four bot tle o' pop,

Five bot-tle o' pop, Six bot-tle o' pop, Seven bot-tle o' pop, POP!

Don't throw your trash in my dust - bin, my dust - bin, my dust - bin,

Don't throw your trash in my dust - bin, my dust - bin's full!

Fish and chips and tar - tar sauce! Tar - tar sauce! Tar - tar sauce!

Fish and chips and tar - tar sauce! Tar - tar sauce and POP!

*This is a triple partner song.  
Try singing one part while two friends (or two groups of friends) sing the other two parts.*



# One Elephant

Musical notation for the song "One Elephant" in 4/4 time, key of F major. The melody is written on a single treble clef staff. The lyrics are: "One el - e - phant went out to play on a spi - der's web one day. He had such e - nor - mous fun; he asked a - no - ther el - e - phant to come." Chords are indicated above the staff: F (blue), C7 (purple), C7 (purple), F (blue) for the first line, and F (blue), C7 (purple), C7 (purple), F (blue) for the second line.

*This game is played like Hot Potato with someone getting out on the last word. Each time the group passes the potato around the circle—without dropping it—for the whole song, add another potato. In music class, we use stuffed elephants for the potatoes.*

# Johnny Get Up and Light the Fire

Musical notation for the song "Johnny Get Up and Light the Fire" in 6/8 time, key of F major. The melody is written on a single treble clef staff. The lyrics are: "John - ny get up and light the fire. — Turn the gas a wee bit high - Go and tell your Aunt Ma - ri - ah ba - by's got a tooth - ache." Chords are indicated above the staff: F (blue), F (blue), C7 (purple), C7 (purple) for the first line, and F (blue), F (blue), C7 (purple), F (blue) for the second line.

*This game is played seated in a circle of four players. To begin, each person bounces and catches their own tennis ball. Then, working with a **neighbor**, they bounce—first one ball and then both balls—to each other. Finally, the four face each other, and all four balls are bounced into the same center and caught by each person's **opposite**.*

## Dipi Du

Gui - di, a - zi - ka - ku! Gui - di, oh, di - pi du.

5 Gui - di, a - zi - ka - ku! Gui - di, oh, di - pi du.

9 Dip, dip, di - pi du, di - pi du di - pi du.

13 Dip, dip, dip, dip, di - pi du, di - pi du, di - pi du.

*This game is played standing in a circle of four players. To begin, each person turns to one neighbor and performs clap (your own hands)-high 10 (your neighbor)-high 10 (your neighbor). When the meter changes to groups of 2, all switch to clap (your own hands)-high 10 (your neighbor). Eventually, each person pivots between each neighbor on each clap. Note: Opposites do not interact.*

## There are Wolves among the Sheep

There are wolves a-mong the sheep. Wait - ing for their chance to eat.

5 While they're a - way the sheep will play then fall a - sleep.

*This game is played with several wolves watching sheep dancing in the meadow. On "fall asleep" the sheep freeze and the wolves walk among the sheep to "eat" any sheep that are not standing perfectly still.*



Note that it is not necessary to write a chord for every time you strum provided that the chord **does not change**. Thus, *There are Wolves among the Sheep* could be written like it is written like this:

## There are Wolves among the Sheep

Musical notation for the song "There are Wolves among the Sheep". The first line shows the melody starting with a blue 'F' chord above the first measure. The lyrics are: "There are wolves a-mong the sheep. Wait - ing for their chance to eat." The second line starts with a blue 'F' chord above the first measure, followed by a pink 'C7' chord above the second measure, and then blue 'F', pink 'C7', and blue 'F' chords above the remaining measures. The lyrics are: "While they're a - way the sheep will play then fall a - sleep."

## Are You Sleeping?

Musical notation for the song "Are You Sleeping?". The first line shows the melody with blue 'F' and pink 'C7' chords alternating above the notes. The lyrics are: "Are you sleep - ing, Bro - ther John". The second line continues with the same chord pattern. The lyrics are: "Morn - ing bells are ring - ing, Ding ding dong". Repeat signs are present at the end of each line.

*This song is a four-part round. To sing a round, find a friend to start the song and sing it all the way through. Once that friend gets to the "Brother John" phrase, you should start at the beginning (singing "Are you sleeping") and keep singing until the end of the song. Watch out for the repeat signs!*

Until now, we have been singing songs in the *key of F*, which has one *flat* in the *key signature*. You can find the *key signature* to the right of the *treble clef*. However, some songs may feel *too high* or *too low* in the *key of F*. In that case, we can transpose to a new key.

Look at this version of *Are You Sleeping*. It is in the *key of C*. The *key of C* has no *sharps* or *flats*, which is why there is no *key signature* to the right of the *treble clef*.

## Are You Sleeping?

Are you sleep - ing, Bro - ther John

Morn - ing bells are ring - ing, Ding ding dong

To play *Are You Sleeping* in the *key of C*, we will need two new chords.

**LEFT**

**C**

**G6**

