

Mastering Ukulele

Strumming & Rhythm

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Module 1: Foundation of Groove & Timing

Lesson 1: Understanding the Basics of Timing & Rhythm

Rhythm – The pattern of beats and timing in music. It gives music its flow and helps keep a steady beat.

Tempo – The speed or pace of a piece of music. It tells how fast or slow the music should be played.

Beat – The steady pulse of music that you can clap or tap along to. It provides the basic timing that keeps the rhythm organized.

Metronome – A device that produces steady regular beats to help musicians maintain a consistent tempo. It helps improve timing and keeps your strumming at the correct speed.

When strumming, you may accidentally speed up or slow down without noticing. To avoid these mistakes, use a metronome to help you keep a steady tempo.

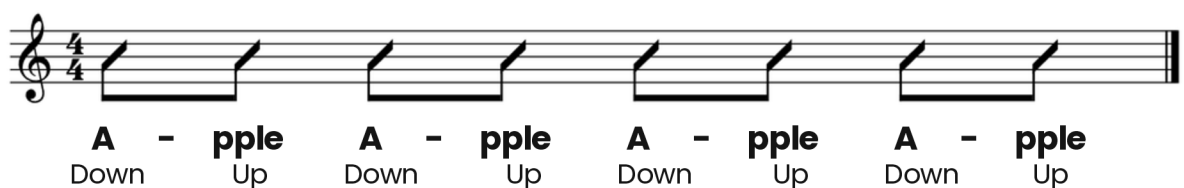
BPM (Beats Per Minute) – A unit that measures the speed of music by counting how many beats happen in one minute.

Set the metronome to 90 BPM and follow the exercises below, keeping the rhythm steady. Practice by following the rhythm patterns using different fruits as your timing guide.

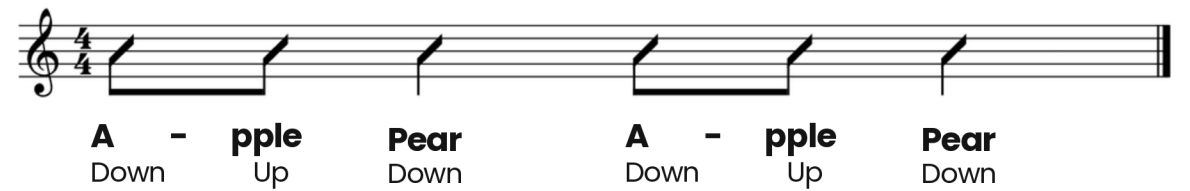
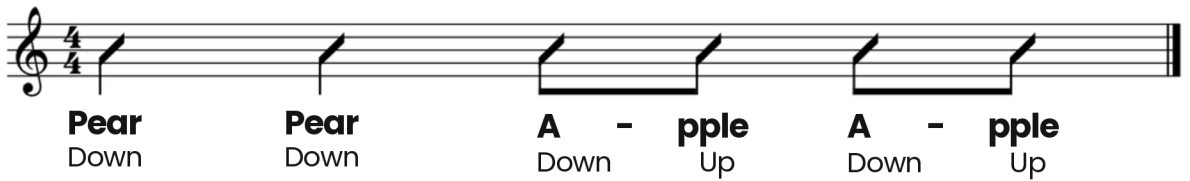
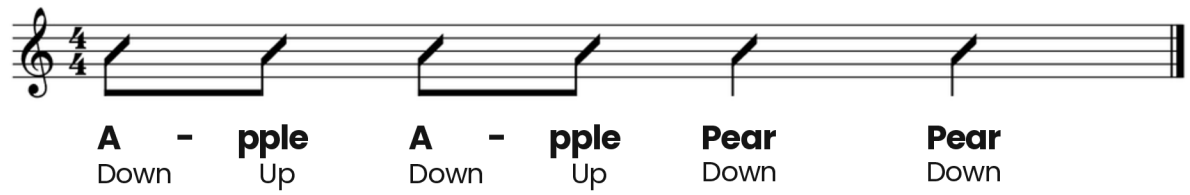
Exercise No. 1.a: Pear Pattern



Exercise No. 1.b: Apple Pattern



Exercise No. 1.c: Pear/Apple Combo



Exercise No. 1.d: Island Strum



Lesson 2: Keeping a Consistent Pulse as Song Alters Tempo

When strumming, playing too fast can make your rhythm feel rushed and cause your strumming pattern to become messy or uneven. On the other hand, playing too slow can make the song lose its energy and break the natural flow of the music. This is why maintaining the correct tempo is important—it helps you stay consistent, keep your rhythm steady, and play in time with the beat. Developing a strong sense of tempo will allow your strumming to sound smoother, more controlled, and more musical.

Practice the strumming patterns that you learned in Lesson 1 to help build consistency, improve your timing, and strengthen your rhythm.

Exercise No. 2: Follow the Tempo

in this exercise, strum according to the tempo.

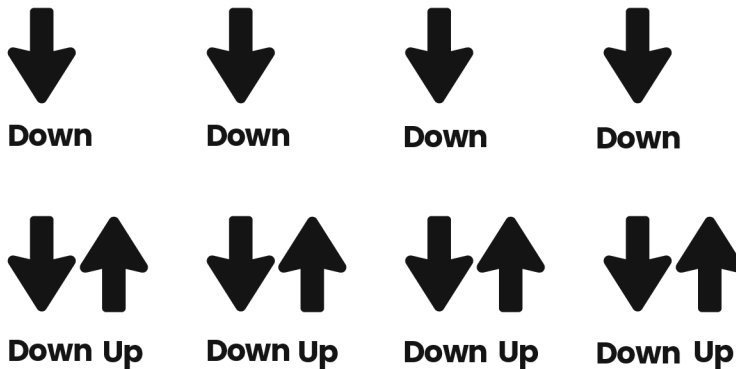
- Start by strumming at a steady speed.
- When you hear the word **“Hip”**, increase your strumming speed.
- Each time you hear **“Hip”** again, double your current speed.
- When you hear the word **“Hop”**, slow down your tempo.
- Continue following the **“Hip”** and **“Hop”** commands until the exercise ends.

Lesson 3: Recognizing and Transitioning Between Rhythmic Feels

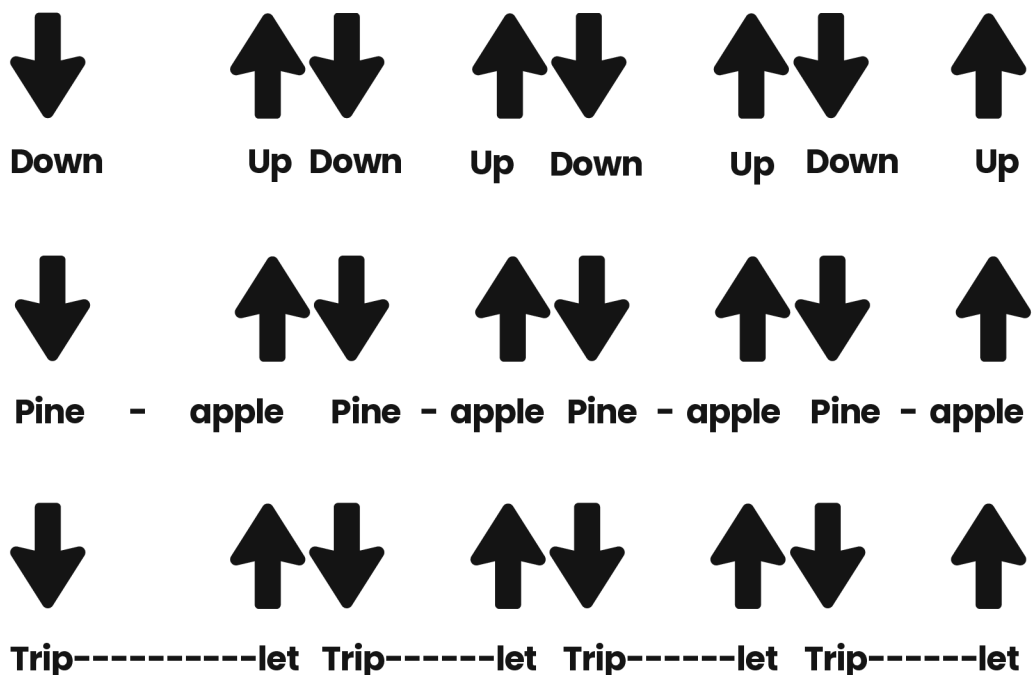
Rhythmic feel is the way a rhythm sounds and moves in music. It gives the music its groove or character by changing how the beats are played. The three common rhythmic feels are **straight**, **shuffle**, and **swing**.

- **Straight** – The beats are played evenly with a steady and regular rhythm.
- **Shuffle** – The beats have a bouncy long-short pattern that creates a lively groove.
- **Swing** – The beats flow with a smooth, relaxed long-short pattern. This feel gives the music a natural, swinging groove that is commonly heard in jazz and blues.

Exercise No. 3.a: Straight



Exercise No. 3.b: Shuffle



Exercise No. 3.c: Swing



Down



Down Up Down



Down Up Down

Quiz No.1: What's the Feel?

For each example, identify the rhythmic feel of the strumming. Choose whether it is straight, shuffle, or swing.

Watch until the end for the answers.

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Module 2: Advanced Strumming

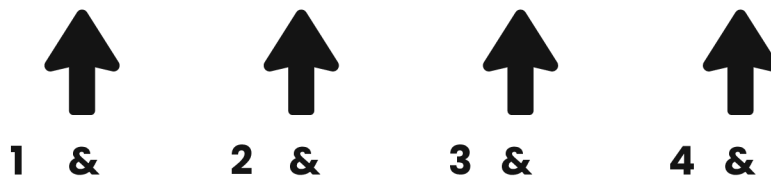
Lesson 1: Learning Syncopated Strumming Patterns

Syncopation – A rhythmic technique that places the emphasis on the weaker beats or between the main beats instead of the strong beats. It creates a more interesting, lively, and expressive musical feel.

You can watch the “Three Little Birds” by Bob Marley on our YouTube channel to see an example of a syncopated song.

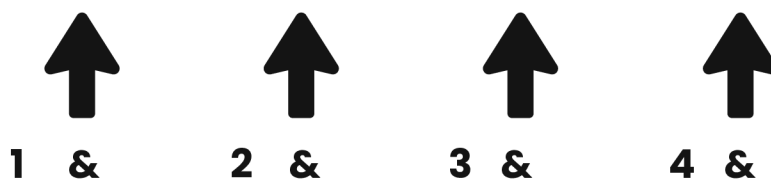
Exercise No. 4.a:

In this exercise, strum on every “&” after each beat to practice chord changes while using a syncopated rhythm. The chords are **C** and **F**.



Exercise No. 4.b:

The next exercise is the same. but this time you will add the **G** chord and use the **C**, **F**, and **G** chords.



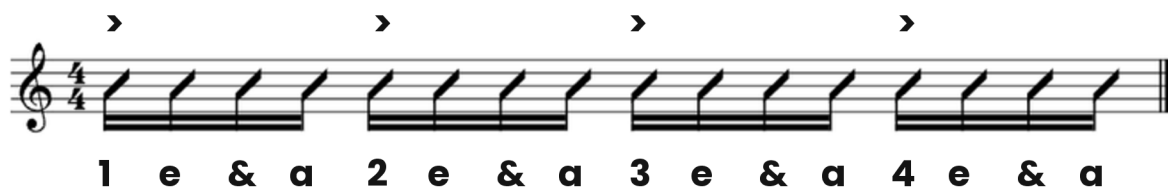
Lesson 2: Exploring Percussive Strumming Techniques

Percussive Strumming Techniques – A ukulele playing style that adds rhythmic, drum-like sounds to strumming by using mainly the strings to create muted and percussive effects.

This includes techniques such as muted hits, ghost strokes, and chuck strums, which help create groove, rhythm, and texture in the music.

Exercise No. 5.a: Muted Hits

Muted Hits – Percussive strikes on the strings where the sound is muted, creating a drum-like effect that adds rhythm and texture to the strumming pattern.

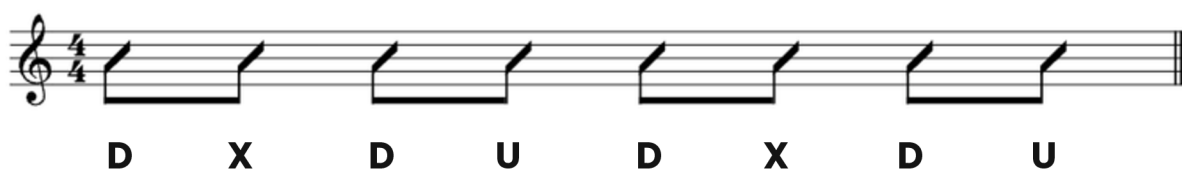


Exercise No. 5.b: Ghost Strokes

Ghost Strokes – A light strum where the strings are barely pressed or muted, producing a soft rhythmic sound that adds groove without a full chord tone.

X = missed strum (ghost stroke)





Exercise No. 5.c: Chuck Strums

Chuck Strums – A strumming technique where the strings are muted with the fretting hand or picking hand to create a short, percussive “**chuck**” sound instead of a ringing chord.

X = chuck strum



Lesson 3: Strumming with Dynamics for Expressive Playing

Dynamics – The way music changes in volume, from soft to loud and everything in between. It helps express emotion and adds contrast to a song. dynamics make music more interesting by creating movement and feeling.

Exercise No. 6.a: Verse – Soft Dynamics

In this exercise, you will play the verse part using a fingerpicking style for a **soft** sound.

Chord diagrams for C, F, G7, and C are shown above the first staff. The notation is in 4/4 time. The first staff has four measures with the following notes: C (C4, E4, G4), F (F4, A4, C5), G7 (G4, B4, D5, F5), and C (C4, E4, G4). The second staff has three measures with the following notes: F (F4, A4, C5), G7 (G4, B4, D5, F5), and C (C4, E4, G4). The lyrics are: "I've got a dog named Mary, She is quite hairy. She likes to go on walks. She really like sticks."

Exercise No. 6.a: Chorus – Loud Dynamics

In this exercise, you will play the chorus part using strumming for a **loud** sound.

Am F
Oh, I love Mary, she's so hairy.
G7 C Cmaj7 Am
I don't care, 'cause she's always there for me.
F G7 C
I love Mary, she's the best doggie for me.

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Module 3: Overcoming Common Strumming Challenges

Lesson 1: Addressing Stiff and Uneven Strumming

Stiffness and Uneven Strumming – Developing a relaxed strumming technique with minimal tension to improve consistency and control. The primary focus is on the strumming hand.

Proper ukulele strumming comes from a relaxed motion using the arm and elbow, while the wrist stays loose to let the fingers glide smoothly across the strings. To feel this fluid motion, imagine your hand is wet and you're shaking off the water – the movement naturally starts from the arm and elbow, with the wrist following effortlessly.

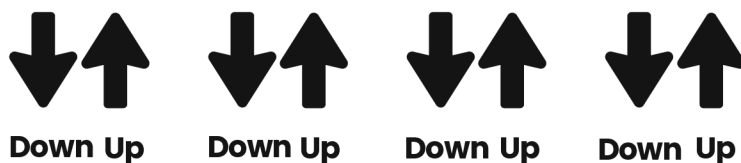
Exercise No. 7.a:

In this exercise, practice using only down strums while holding the **Em7** chord. Focus on keeping your arm relaxed, letting the movement come from the elbow with a loose wrist, and allowing your finger to naturally follow through the strings at the end of each strum. Aim to make every strum feel smooth and effortless.



Exercise No. 7.b:

In this exercise, practice down-up strums while using the **Em7** chord. Aim for a consistent and even strumming pattern throughout the exercise.



Exercise No. 7.c:

In this exercise, practice a down–down up strumming pattern using the **Em7**, **Am**, and **B7** chords. Aim for a consistent and even rhythm as you move between the chords.



Down



Down Up



Down



Down Up



Down

Lesson 2: Developing a Solid and Maintaining Time

Developing solid and consistent timing means keeping a steady beat without rushing or dragging. Strong timing creates smooth, controlled strumming and helps you stay in sync with the rhythm. As your timing improves, you'll begin to **play in the pocket**.

Playing in the Pocket means staying locked into the groove and keeping your strumming perfectly aligned with the beat. It creates a relaxed, steady rhythm that feels natural and musical.

Exercise No. 8.a: Bass/Snare

In this exercise, we will use only down strums. We'll refer to each beat as either the bass or the snare to help you feel the groove and develop a stronger sense of rhythm.



Bass



Snare



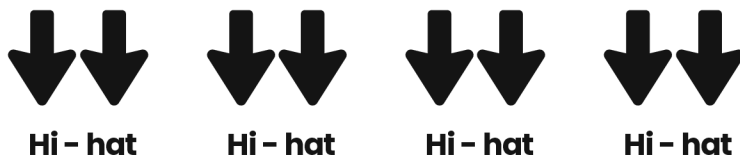
Bass



Snare

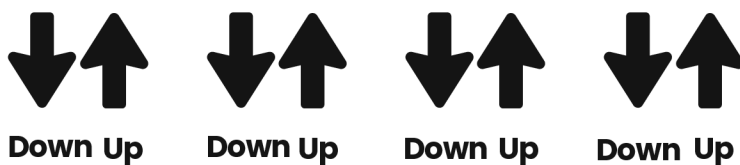
Exercise No. 8.b: Hi-hat

Now we'll play eighth notes with down strums on every count. We'll refer to these eighth notes as the hi-hat to help you build a stronger sense of rhythm.



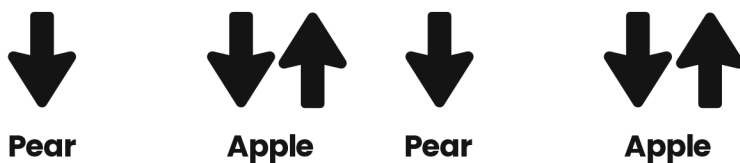
Exercise No. 8.c: Down/Up

In this exercise, we will use a down-up strumming pattern.



Exercise No. 8.d: Pear/Apple

In this exercise, we will use a down - down up strumming pattern. we'll call this pattern pear-apple to help you remember and feel the rhythm more easily.



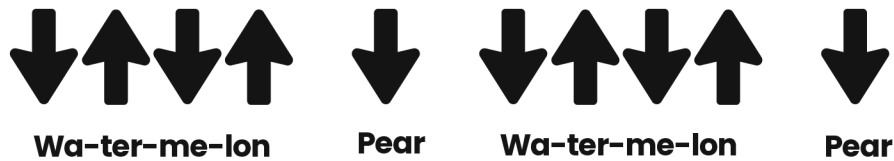
Exercise No. 8.d: Pear/Apple

Now let's reverse the pattern and play it as apple-pear.



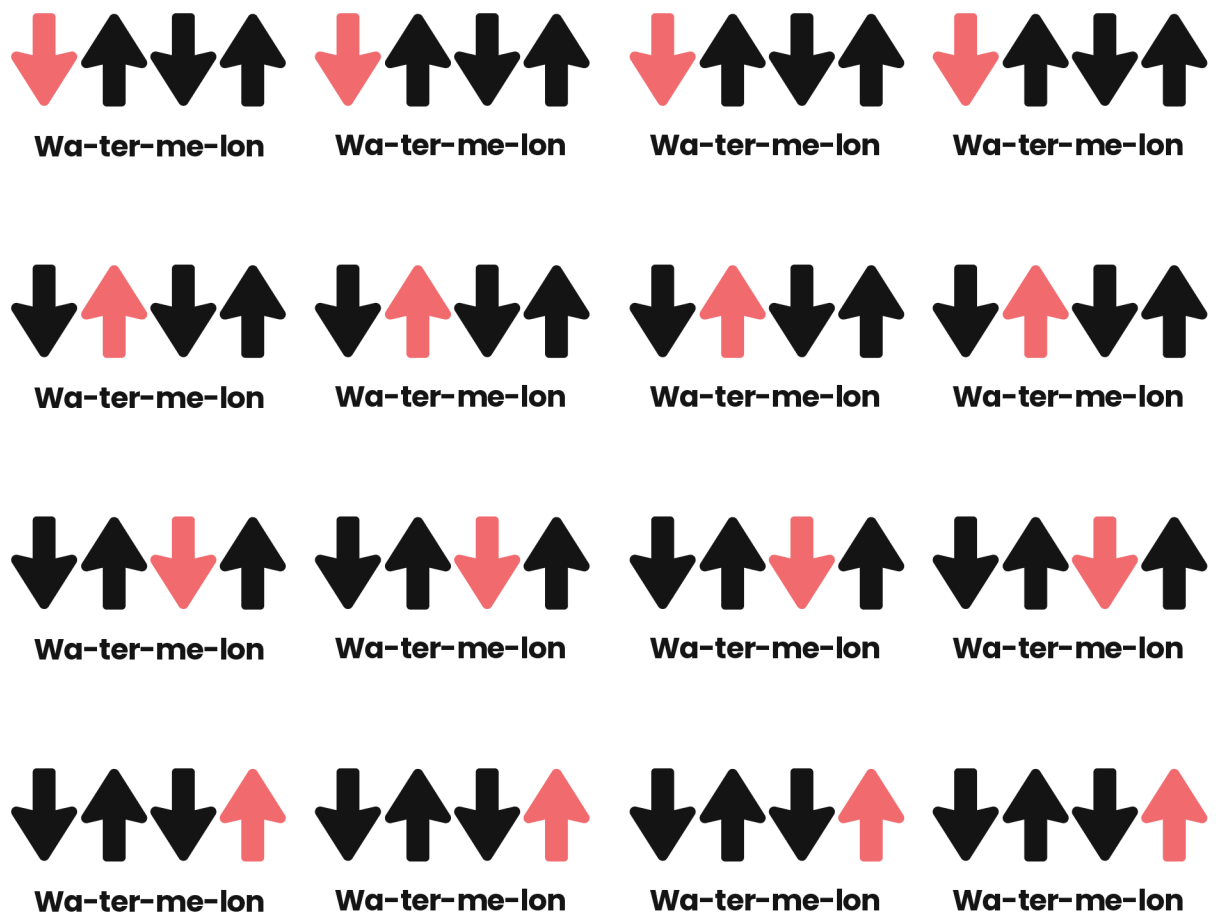
Exercise No. 8.f: Watermelon/Pear

The next pattern is watermelon-pear. The watermelon represents four sixteenth notes, while the pear represents one quarter note.



Exercise No. 8.f: Accent Grid

In this exercise, we will play sixteenth notes and add accents on different notes within the four-note group. The first accent will fall on the “wa” of watermelon, the second accent will fall on the “ter,” and we will continue moving the accent through each syllable.



Lesson 3: Practical Exercise for fluid Transitions and Rhythm Stability

This lesson focuses on developing fluid transitions and rhythm stability. In this exercise, we will apply everything we have learned throughout this course while playing **“Love Potion No. 9.”**

Love Potion No. 9

Dm **G7**
I took my troubles down to Madame Ruth
Dm **G7**
You know that gypsy with the gold-capped tooth
F
She's got a pad down on Thirty-Fourth and Vine
G7 **A7** **Dm - G7 - Dm - G7**
Selling little bottles of love potion number nine

Dm **G7**
I told her that I was a flop with chicks
Dm **G7**
I've been this way since 1956
F
She looked at my palm and she made a magic sign
G7 **A7** **Dm - G7 - Dm - G7**
She said, "What you need is love potion number nine"

G7
She bent down and turned around and gave me a wink
Em7
She said, "I'm gonna make it up right here in the sink"
G7
It smelled like turpentine, it looked like Indian ink
A7
I held my nose, I closed my eyes, I took a drink

Dm **G7**
I didn't know if it was day or night
Dm **G7**
I started kissing everything in sight
F
But when I kissed a cop down on Thirty-Fourth and Vine
G7 **A7** **Dm - G7 - Dm - G7 - Dm**
He broke my little bottle of Love Potion Number Nine