Lesson 1: Meet Your Ukulele

Keep this page beside you while you watch. Pause the video whenever you like. There's no rush.

The four ukulele sizes



Soprano

about 21 in / 53 cm

Smallest and most traditional. Bright, happy sound. Light and easy to hold, so it suits beginners and smaller hands.



Concert

about 23 in / 58 cm

A little bigger, with more room for your fingers. Fuller, balanced sound for strumming or fingerpicking.



Tenor

about 26 in / 66 cm

Longer scale and a deeper, fuller sound. More room between frets, good for bigger hands and fingerstyle.



Baritone

about 30 in / 76 cm

The biggest, with a warm sound like a small guitar. Tuned differently, so it's less common for beginners.

My ukulele is a: **Soprano** **Concert** **Tenor** **Baritone** **Not sure yet**

> **Which size for this course?** A soprano or concert is perfect, and a tenor works just as well. A baritone is tuned differently (D G B E), so the chords in this course will sound different on it.

Holding your ukulele: a quick checklist

Your posture

- [ ] Sit up straight, relaxed rather than stiff
- [ ] Both feet flat on the floor
- [ ] Shoulders loose. Take a breath and let them drop

Holding the ukulele

- [ ] The back rests gently against your chest or belly
- [ ] The neck points slightly upward
- [ ] Hold it close, without squeezing

Your strumming hand

- [ ] Your right arm rests gently over the top of the body
- [ ] Your hand hovers just above the sound hole
- [ ] Strum with your thumb or the side of your index finger

Your fretting hand

- [ ] Thumb behind the neck, like a gentle hug
- [ ] Fingers curve around the front, ready to press
- [ ] Wrist relaxed, fingers curved as if holding a small ball

Remember: relaxed shoulders, upright posture, gentle hands. If it feels awkward at first, that's completely normal. It gets easier every time you pick it up.

Your five-minute finger warm-up

Kai shows you two simple finger exercises in this lesson. Do them for about five minutes each time you sit down to play. They loosen your hands and help your fingers find their way around the fretboard.

Finger exercise 1

Follow along with Kai in the video. The step-by-step version is in the free ebook, *Ukulele Practice Secret for Beginners*.

My notes

Finger exercise 2

Go slowly, keep your fingers curved, and press only as hard as you need to.

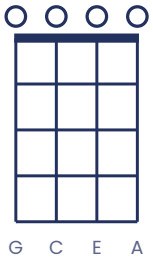
My notes

Tick a box each day you do your warm-up this week

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Your very first chord

Am7 / C6



0000 · all four strings open

Strum all four strings without pressing anything down, and you've just played your first chord. It has two names, **Am7** and **C6**: same shape, same sound.

In a chord diagram, a small circle above a string means you play that string open, with no finger on it.

Try this: strum the open strings four times, slowly and evenly. Listen to how the sound rings. That's the sound you'll be making music with from here on.

Before Lesson 2

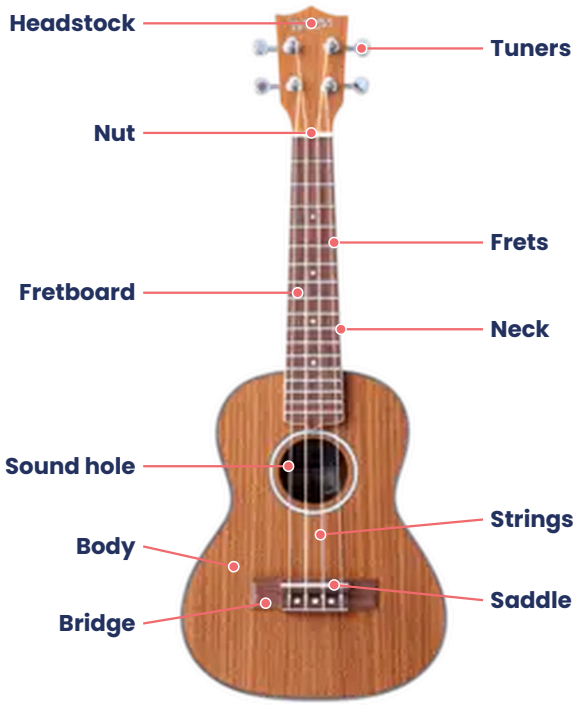
- [ ] I know which size ukulele I have
- [ ] I can sit and hold my ukulele comfortably for a few minutes
- [ ] I've tried both finger exercises
- [ ] I've strummed my first chord, Am7 (also called C6)

Next up, Lesson 2: Understanding Your Ukulele. You'll learn the parts of your ukulele and how to read a chord diagram.

Lesson 2: Understanding Your Ukulele

Keep this page beside you while you watch. Pause the video whenever you like. There's no rush.

The parts of your ukulele



Part	What it does
Headstock	The top of the ukulele. It holds the tuners.
Tuners	Four pegs that tighten or loosen each string to change its pitch.
Nut	A small ridge that spaces the strings and lifts them above the frets.
Fretboard	The smooth front of the neck, under the strings, where you press.
Frets	Metal bars across the fretboard. Pressing behind one changes the note.
Neck	The long wooden part behind the fretboard that your hand wraps around.
Strings	Usually nylon. They vibrate to make the sound.
Sound hole	The round opening that lets the sound out. Strumming here is loudest.
Body	The main hollow "box". It amplifies the strings and shapes the tone.
Saddle	Like the nut, but at the bridge end. It sets the string height.
Bridge	Where the strings attach to the body.

Your four strings

String number	4th	3rd	2nd	1st
Note	**G**	**C**	**E**	**A**
Where it sits	Closest to your face	Lowest-sounding string	Between C and A	Closest to the floor, highest-sounding

Easy way to remember G C E A: "**G**ood **C**ooks **E**at **A**pples." The G string sounds higher than the C string next to it. That's normal, and it's what gives the ukulele its bright, happy sound.

How strings and frets work together

Strings make the sound

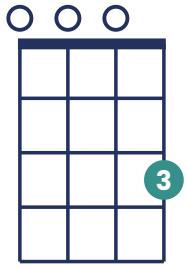
Pluck a string and it vibrates. Think of the strings as the four "voices" of your ukulele.

Frets change the note

Press a string just behind a fret and you make it shorter. A shorter string vibrates faster, so the note sounds higher.

How to read a chord diagram

C chord



0003

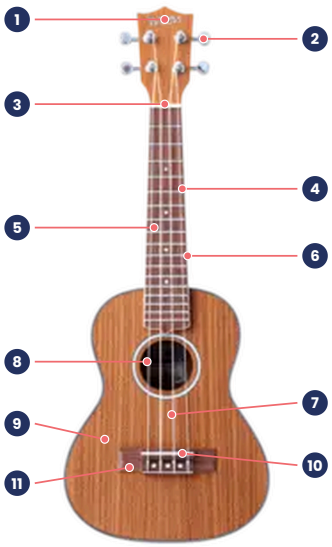
- [ ] **Vertical lines are the strings.** Left to right: G, C, E, A. The left line is the string closest to your face.
- [ ] **The thick line at the top is the nut.** The thinner lines below it are the frets.
- [ ] **A dot shows where a finger goes.** The number inside tells you which finger.
- [ ] **A small circle above a string** means play it open, with no finger on it.

1	2	3	4
Index	Middle	Ring	Pinky

> **Your C chord:** place your ring finger (finger 3) on the 3rd fret of the A string. Leave the other three strings open and strum all four. That's C!

Label it yourself

Cover page 1 and write the name of each numbered part. Then check your answers.



1 _____ 2 _____

3 _____ 4 _____

5 _____ 6 _____

7 _____ 8 _____

9 _____ 10 _____

11 _____

Lesson 3: Strumming Made Simple

Keep this page beside you while you watch. Pause the video whenever you like. There's no rush.

Quick hold check

Sit up straight, rest the back of your ukulele against your chest or belly, and let your strumming arm drape gently over the top of the body. Neck pointing slightly up, shoulders relaxed.

Where to strum

Where the neck meets the body

Warm, round and soft. A comfortable spot for your hand to rest.

Over the sound hole

The fullest, loudest sound. Your main strumming spot in this course.

Near the bridge

Brighter and thinner. Fine for a change of tone, but not your everyday spot.

Strum four times in each spot. The sound I like best: **Neck joint** **Sound hole** **Near the bridge**

How to strum: thumb or index finger

Using your thumb

- Brush down across the strings with the soft, fleshy side of your thumb
- Gives a gentle, warm sound
- Easy to control, which makes it a great place to start

Using your index finger

- Down strum: brush down with the nail side of your index finger
- Up strum: brush gently back up across the strings
- Gives a brighter, crisper sound

Three tips that help straight away

1. Brush the strings, don't hit them. Think of lightly dusting something off.
2. Keep your wrist loose. The movement comes mostly from the wrist, not the whole arm.
3. Go from the G string down to the A string on a down strum, and back up on an up strum.

Key: ↓ Down strum ↑ Up strum ↓ Hand moves, no strum

Ex. 1.a Down strums, normal speed

Count out loud and strum down once on every beat. Four beats, then start again.

1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓

How it feels today: Tricky | Getting there | Comfortable

Ex. 1.b Down strums, slower speed

The same strums at half speed. Take your time and let each strum ring before the next one.

1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓

How it feels today: Tricky | Getting there | Comfortable

Ex. 2.a Up strums, normal speed

Now brush upward, from the A string back to the G string. Keep it light: up, up, up, up.

1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑

How it feels today: Tricky | Getting there | Comfortable

Ex. 2.b Up strums, slower speed

Half speed again. Don't worry if it doesn't sound clean at first. That's completely normal.

1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑	↑

How it feels today: Tricky | Getting there | Comfortable

> **Make it musical:** once these feel easy, try Ex. 1.a and 2.a while holding the C chord from Lesson 2 (ring finger on the 3rd fret of the A string).

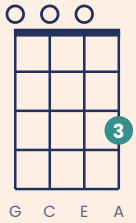
> **Next up, Lesson 4: First Chords & Easy Switches.** You'll learn C, F and G7 and how to move between them smoothly.

Lesson 4: First Chords & Easy Switches

Keep this page beside you while you watch. Pause the video whenever you like. There's no rush.

Ex. 3.a

C

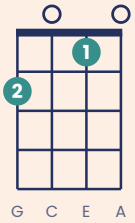


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Ring finger (3) on the 3rd fret of the A string. Other strings open.

Ex. 3.b

F

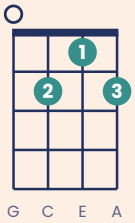


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Index (1) on the 1st fret of the E string. Middle (2) on the 2nd fret of the G string. C and A open.

Ex. 3.c

G7



0212

Index (1) on the 1st fret of the E string. Middle (2) on the 2nd fret of the C string. Ring (3) on the 2nd fret of the A string. G open.

> **Check each chord:** pick each string one at a time. If one buzzes or sounds dull, adjust just that finger, then strum again.

How a chord change works

Step by step

- [ ] Look at the next chord shape before you move
- [ ] Lift your fingers just a little, staying close to the strings
- [ ] Move your fingers together as one shape where you can
- [ ] Land on your fingertips, just behind the fret
- [ ] Strum, listen, and adjust one finger at a time

Fretting tips

- [ ] Press only as hard as you need to. Squeezing makes your hand tired
- [ ] Keep your fingers curved so they don't touch other strings
- [ ] Press close to the fret, not on top of it
- [ ] Thumb relaxed behind the neck
- [ ] A buzz usually means move a little closer to the fret

Shortcuts: anchor and guide fingers

F ↔ G7

Anchor finger. Your index finger stays on the 1st fret of the E string for both chords. Leave it there and move only the others.

C → G7

Guide finger. Your ring finger slides from the 3rd fret down to the 2nd fret on the A string. Then add fingers 1 and 2.

C ↔ F

No shared fingers. Lift your ring finger and place fingers 1 and 2 together, as one shape, rather than one at a time.

Ex. 4.a Switch C ↔ F, no strumming

Fingers only. Make the C shape, then the F shape, then back again. Go slowly and aim for all fingers landing together. Ten times back and forth.

C	→	F	→	C	→	F
no strum		no strum		no strum		no strum

How it feels today: Tricky | Getting there | Comfortable

Ex. 4.b Switch C → F → G7 → C, no strumming

Now all three chords. Use your anchor finger between F and G7 and your guide finger from G7 back to C.

C	→	F	→	G7	→	C
no strum		no strum		no strum		no strum

How it feels today: Tricky | Getting there | Comfortable

Ex. 5.a Switch C ↔ F with strumming

Strum each chord four times with slow, even down strums, then change. Keep counting even if a change is late.

C	→	F	→	C	→	F
↓↓↓↓		↓↓↓↓		↓↓↓↓		↓↓↓↓

How it feels today: Tricky | Getting there | Comfortable

Ex. 5.b C, F, G7 and back to C

Four strums on each chord, then finish with one strum on C. Take it slow and focus on moving your fingers correctly. Speed comes later.

C	→	F	→	G7	→	C
↓↓↓↓		↓↓↓↓		↓↓↓↓		↓

How it feels today: Tricky | Getting there | Comfortable

Next up, Lesson 5: Timing & Rhythm Basics. C, F and G7 turn up in a huge number of songs. Next, you'll learn to count a bar and keep a steady beat so you're ready to play one.

Lesson 5: Timing & Rhythm Basics

Keep this page beside you while you watch. Pause the video whenever you like. There's no rush.

Counting a bar

Most songs are built in groups of four beats called **bars**. When you see **4/4** (say "four four"), it means four beats in every bar. You count each bar 1, 2, 3, 4, then start again.

Beats only: one down strum on each number

1	2	3	4
↓	↓	↓	↓

To fit up strums in, split each beat in half and count **1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &**. Down strums land on the numbers and up strums land on the "&".

Every beat split in two: down on the numbers, up on the &

1	&	2	&	3	&	4	&
↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑

> **The secret to steady strumming:** your hand keeps swinging down and up like a pendulum the whole time, even when it doesn't touch the strings. Down on the numbers, up on the "&".

Key: ↓ **Down strum** ↑ **Up strum** ↓ **Hand moves, no strum**

Keeping a steady beat

Tap your foot

Tap lightly on every beat as you strum. It helps your body feel the timing, not just your hands.

Use a metronome

Any free metronome app is fine. Start around **70 to 90 BPM** (beats per minute). Slower is always fine.

The metronome routine from the video

- [ ] **Listen.** Let the metronome play for a few clicks without doing anything
- [ ] **Count.** Count 1, 2, 3, 4 out loud along with the clicks
- [ ] **Strum.** Play one down strum on every click while you keep counting

My comfortable speed today: _____ BPM

Ex. 6.a / 6.b Down strums in 4/4 with G7

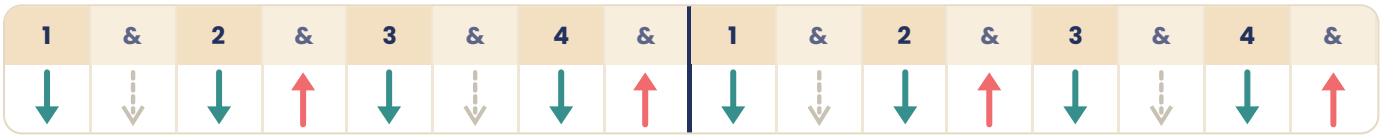
Hold G7 and play one down strum on every beat, with the metronome. Play **6.a** at normal speed and **6.b** slower.



How it feels today: Tricky | Getting there | Comfortable

Ex. 7.a / 7.b Down and down-up in 4/4 with C

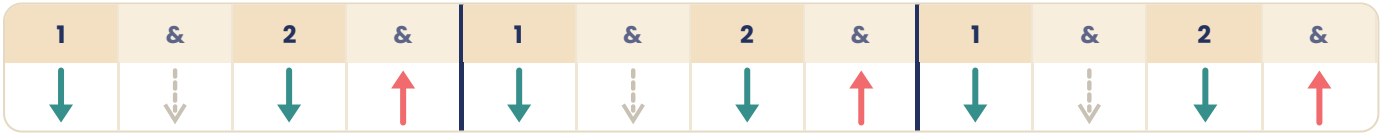
Down on 1, down-up on 2, down on 3, down-up on 4. Keep your hand moving on the "&" of 1 and 3, without touching the strings.



How it feels today: Tricky | Getting there | Comfortable

Ex. 8 A new time signature: 2/4 with F

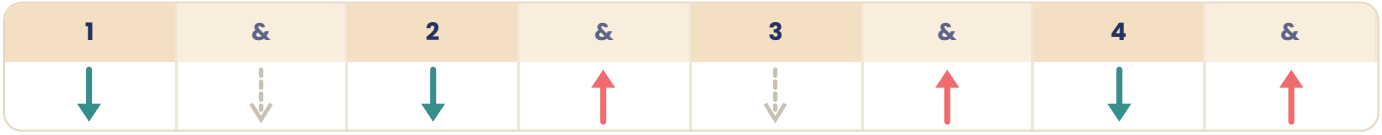
In **2/4** there are only two beats in each bar, so you count 1, 2, then start again. Down on 1, down-up on 2. Keep it light and bouncy.



How it feels today: Tricky | Getting there | Comfortable

Ex. 9.a / 9.b The Island Strum with C

Down, down-up, **(rest)**, up, down-up. On beat 3 your hand still moves down, but misses the strings. That little gap gives the pattern its swing. Play **9.a** slowly, piece by piece, then **9.b** all the way through.



How it feels today: Tricky | Getting there | Comfortable

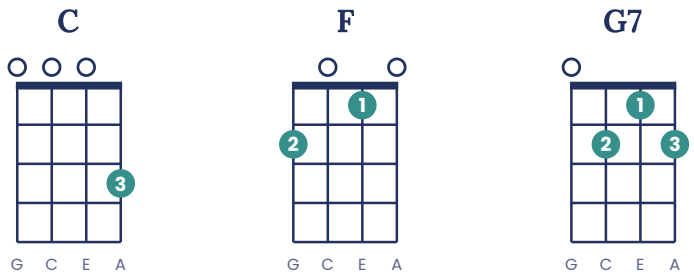
> **Focus on staying on the beat, not on perfect strums.** A missed string here and there is fine. Stopping your hand is what breaks the rhythm.

> **Next up, Lesson 6: Strum Your First Song.**

Lesson 6: Strum Your First Song

"Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" uses three chords you already know.

The chords



The strum: down, down

↓ ↓

Two down strums for each chord. Use your thumb: it's easy to control and sounds lovely here.

Ex. 10.a / 10.b Strum the first verse

Play the first two lines with the down, down strum. **10.a** is normal speed, **10.b** slower. When you see a new chord, switch on your next strum.

How it feels today: Tricky | Getting there | Comfortable

Ex. 11 Play-along: the whole song

Each box is two down strums. Read across, left to right.

C ↓ ↓ Twinkle,	**C** ↓ ↓ twinkle,	**F** ↓ ↓ little	**C** ↓ ↓ star,
F ↓ ↓ How I	**C** ↓ ↓ wonder	**G7** ↓ ↓ what you	**C** ↓ ↓ are.
C ↓ ↓ Up a-	**F** ↓ ↓ bove the	**C** ↓ ↓ world so	**G7** ↓ ↓ high,
C ↓ ↓ Like a	**F** ↓ ↓ diamond	**C** ↓ ↓ in the	**G7** ↓ ↓ sky.
C ↓ ↓ Twinkle,	**C** ↓ ↓ twinkle,	**F** ↓ ↓ little	**C** ↓ ↓ star,
F ↓ ↓ How I	**C** ↓ ↓ wonder	**G7** ↓ ↓ what you	**C** ↓ ↓ are.

Tips for playing it through

- [ ] Play it once slowly before you try to sing
- [ ] Humming the tune is a great step before singing the words
- [ ] Keep strumming even if a chord change is late. Catch up on the next strum
- [ ] Practice the trickiest change (for most people, F to C or C to G7) on its own first
- [ ] Speed up only when the slow version feels easy
- [ ] It's not about being perfect. It's about making music

Same chords, another song

"You Are My Sunshine"

Kai plays a short teaser at the end of the video. It uses the very same chords: **C, F and G7**. Switching between both songs is a fun way to practice your chord changes. The full tutorial is in our **YouTube song playlist**.

C F G7

My song log

Date	Song	Speed	How it went
		Slow · Normal	
		Slow · Normal	
		Slow · Normal	
		Slow · Normal	
		Slow · Normal	
		Slow · Normal	
		Slow · Normal	

Next up, Lesson 7: Practice & Progress. A simple daily routine, how to know when you're ready to move on, and more songs to try.

Lesson 7: Practice & Progress

Keep this page beside you while you watch. Pause the video whenever you like. There's no rush.

Warm-ups

Ex. 12.a

Finger taps

Touch your thumb to each fingertip in turn, index to pinky and back again, in one smooth motion. **20 seconds.**

Ex. 12.b

Wrist circles

Arms out in front. Make small circles with your wrists: **10 seconds** clockwise, then **10 seconds** counter-clockwise.

Ex. 12.c

Finger exercise

On the A string, place fingers 1, 2, 3, 4 on frets 1, 2, 3, 4. Lift them one at a time, pinky first. Repeat on each string up to G, then back down to A.

Your 15-minute daily routine

3 min
Warm up
Finger taps, wrist circles and the finger exercise (Ex. 12).

3 min
Strumming
Down-down strums. Count 1 to 4 out loud as you play.

4 min
Chords
C, F and G7, about a minute each. Check every string rings clearly.

5 min
A song
Choose a simple song that uses the chords you've practiced.

Short and regular beats long and rare. Fifteen minutes most days will take you further than one long session a week.

Learning a new song: five simple steps

1	**Listen first.** Play the song a few times and hum along so you know how it goes.
2	**Check the chords.** If there's one you don't know, learn that chord on its own first.
3	**Practice the tricky change.** Find the hardest chord switch and practice just that, back and forth.
4	**Strum slowly.** Start with simple down strums at a slow, steady speed.
5	**Add the singing last.** Once your hands know the way, add your voice a line at a time.

Am I ready to move on?

You're ready for a new chord or song when you can tick most of these, on two different days:

- [ ] Every string rings clearly on C, F and G7
- [ ] I can switch between all three without stopping my strum, at a slow speed
- [ ] I can play "Twinkle, Twinkle" all the way through
- [ ] My hand keeps moving, even when I miss a strum

Songs to try next

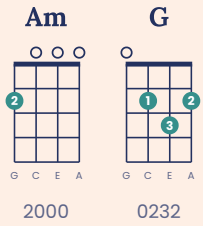
Every song below has a step-by-step tutorial in our YouTube song playlist. Tick each one off as you try it.

Ready now: C, F and G7

- [ ] **You Are My Sunshine** · C, F, G7
- [ ] **Lava (Disney)** · C, F, G7
- [ ] **Three Little Birds** · C, F, G or G7
- [ ] **Jingle Bells** · C, F, G7
- [ ] **Silent Night** · C, F, G7
- [ ] **Away in a Manger** · C, F, G7

Next step: add Am and G

- [ ] **Stand By Me** · C, Am, F, G
- [ ] **Let It Be** · C, G, Am, F
- [ ] **Riptide** · Am, G, C, F
- [ ] **Feliz Navidad** · F, G, C, Am



Find them all in our song tutorial playlist:
youtube.com/playlist?list=PLGcW7DTjCTsWU3GxMKhvLiexo7RTvD_xI
Or search "My First Ukulele" on YouTube. Start with the slower parts of each tutorial and take your time.

Four-week practice tracker

Write the minutes you practiced each day. Even five minutes counts.

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total
Week 1								
Week 2								
Week 3								
Week 4								

My progress notes

What feels easier now

One thing to work on

Next song I'll learn

Well done on finishing the course. Progress, not perfection. Keep playing the songs you know, enjoy the process, and come and share how you're going in our Facebook community.

Ukulele Basics: Quick Reference

Everything from the course on one page. Keep it on your music stand or stick it on the fridge.

Your strings (G C E A)

4th	3rd	2nd	1st
G	C	E	A

G is closest to your face. "**G**ood **C**ooks **E**at **A**pples."

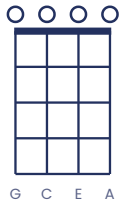
Finger numbers

1	2	3	4
Index	Middle	Ring	Pinky

Your thumb stays relaxed behind the neck.

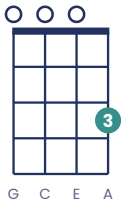
Your four chords

Am7



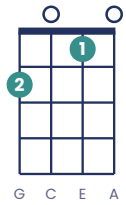
0000 · also C6

C



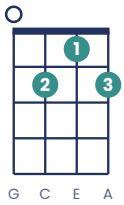
0003

F



2010

G7



0212

Switching shortcuts: F ↔ G7, keep finger 1 on the E string. C → G7, slide finger 3 down one fret on the A string.

Your strumming patterns

Key: ↓ **Down strum** · ↑ **Up strum** · ↓ **Hand moves, no strum**

All downs, 4/4 · Lessons 3 and 5

1	2	3	4
↓	↓	↓	↓

All ups · Lesson 3

1	2	3	4
↑	↑	↑	↑

Down, down-up, 4/4 · Lesson 5

1	&	2	&	3	&	4	&
↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↓	↓	↑

Down, down-up, 2/4 · Lesson 5

1	&	2	&
↓	↓	↓	↑

Island Strum · Lesson 5

1	&	2	&	3	&	4	&
↓	↓	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑

Down, down: two strums per chord · Lesson 6

1	2
↓	↓

> **Counting:** 4/4 has four beats per bar (1 2 3 4). Split each beat to fit up strums: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &. Your hand keeps swinging the whole time. Start your metronome around 70 to 90 BPM.

Every exercise in the course

Exercises are numbered in one sequence through the whole course, so you can always find your way back to one. Tick each one when it feels comfortable.

Exercise	Lesson	What it is	Comfortable ✓
Ex. 1.a	Lesson 3	Down strums, normal speed	
Ex. 1.b	Lesson 3	Down strums, slower speed	
Ex. 2.a	Lesson 3	Up strums, normal speed	
Ex. 2.b	Lesson 3	Up strums, slower speed	
Ex. 3.a	Lesson 4	C chord	
Ex. 3.b	Lesson 4	F chord	
Ex. 3.c	Lesson 4	G7 chord	
Ex. 4.a	Lesson 4	Switch C ↔ F, no strumming	
Ex. 4.b	Lesson 4	Switch C → F → G7 → C, no strumming	
Ex. 5.a	Lesson 4	Switch C ↔ F with strumming	
Ex. 5.b	Lesson 4	C, F, G7 and back to C with strumming	
Ex. 6.a	Lesson 5	Down strums in 4/4 with G7, normal speed	
Ex. 6.b	Lesson 5	Down strums in 4/4 with G7, slower speed	
Ex. 7.a	Lesson 5	Down and down-up in 4/4 with C, normal speed	
Ex. 7.b	Lesson 5	Down and down-up in 4/4 with C, slower speed	
Ex. 8	Lesson 5	2/4 time with F	
Ex. 9.a	Lesson 5	Island Strum, slowly, piece by piece	
Ex. 9.b	Lesson 5	Island Strum, all the way through	
Ex. 10.a	Lesson 6	Twinkle, Twinkle: first verse, normal speed	
Ex. 10.b	Lesson 6	Twinkle, Twinkle: first verse, slower speed	
Ex. 11	Lesson 6	Twinkle, Twinkle: full play-along	
Ex. 12.a	Lesson 7	Warm-up: finger taps	
Ex. 12.b	Lesson 7	Warm-up: wrist circles	
Ex. 12.c	Lesson 7	Warm-up: finger exercise	