

HAL LEONARD

UKULELE METHOD BOOK 1

BY LIL' REV



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Hal Leonard *Ukulele Method Book 1*. This method has been designed to help you accomplish your goal of becoming a proficient ukulele player. While there are many styles and techniques to learn from, this book will focus on individual note or melody playing.

Once you begin, you will find that the ukulele is a magical little instrument that always seems to attract a smile. It really has the power to make people happy. Whether it is the novelty of its size or its infectious rhythmic nature, you can expect that your endeavors to play the uke will result in a lot of toe-tapping, finger-snapping, hand-clapping, and plain old-fashioned singing along.

Over time, you will also find that the ukulele's potential extends far beyond the parameters of simple strumming to include fingerpicking, solo, lead and chord-melody playing, intricate strums, rolls, tremolo, slides, and a whole slew of rhythmic and novelty effects.

Practice may not always make perfect, but it sure helps to keep ya moving along. While it is important to work hard, please remember that music should first of all be fun! You don't have to practice for ten hours a day in order to improve. Rather, strive for more consistent practice over shorter periods of time. With diligence, soon you will master important techniques and concepts.

Good luck and happy strumming!

—Lil' Rev

Special Thanks to Jennifer Rupp, Will Branch, and Dennis Felber for technical assistance.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lil' Rev is a Milwaukee, Wisconsin-based award-winning multi-instrumentalist, writer, and music historian. He tours the U.S. teaching and performing original and traditional folk, blues, ethnic, and old-time music.

To learn more about Lil' Rev's schedule, recordings, or programs, visit www.lilrev.com



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UKULELE

Most ukulele historians agree that the birth of the ukulele began in 1879, when Portuguese agricultural workers arrived in Honolulu aboard the English ship *Ravenscrag*. Many of these workers—like Augusto Dias, Manuel Nunes, Joao Fernandes, Joao Luiz Correa, and Jose do Espirito Santo—brought with them a remarkable ability to play the machete (a small guitar-like instrument with four cat-gut strings, the precursor to the uke). In turn, these workers also shared an intense passion for working with wood, and thus began a rich tradition of ukulele craftsmanship on the islands.

The year 1915 brought with it the Pan-Pacific International Exposition held in San Francisco. Here, the Hawaiian contingent and their beloved ukulele helped to spark its popular appeal amongst players and consumers alike. What followed were Hawaiian-themed songs and musicians, a sheet-music industry that regularly printed ukulele chord symbols on its music, uke-strumming Vaudeville entertainers, and mainland manufacturing companies like Martin, Gibson, Harmony, Lyon & Healy, and Epiphone all working overtime to meet the demand for quality ukes.

Some of the greatest players to emerge from this early era included Cliff Edwards (Ukulele Ike), Wendell Hall (The Red-Headed Uke Player), Johnny Marvin (Honey Duke), Roy Smeck, Frank Crumit, King Bennie Nawahi, Ukulele Bailey, and George Formby (in the UK).

While the depression years of the 1930s and the war years of the forties may have brought a temporary lapse of interest, uke hysteria began anew in the 1950s with the appearance of baritone uke player Arthur Godfrey, whose numerous television and radio appearances helped to put the ukulele back in the limelight. In the next decade, Tiny Tim's 1968 novelty cover of the Nick Lucas tune "Tiptoe Through the Tulips" made quite a splash, and it's safe to say it is still the best-known uke song amongst non-players in the U.S.

Today's ukulele revival is experiencing a groundswell of interest amongst both the young and old, while drawing from traditional and eclectic sources. There is a vitality to the current crop of professional players, all of whom treat the uke with a lot of historic respect while continuing to push the envelope in many new directions. We are just as likely to hear Canadian virtuoso James Hill play his incredible rendition of the "Super Mario Brothers" theme as we are to hear the young Hawaiian star Jake Shimabukuro play Paul Simon's "Mrs. Robinson," or for that matter, ukulele guru Jumpin' Jim Beloff croon the classic "Bye Bye Blackbird."

So ya see, once you learn the basics of picking and strumming, the sky is the limit... for the history is still being written!



Courtesy of David Garrick

Cliff Edwards: the Golden Voice of the 1920s and '30s.



From BBC Picture Archives/Redferns

George Formby: the Uke Star of the U.K.



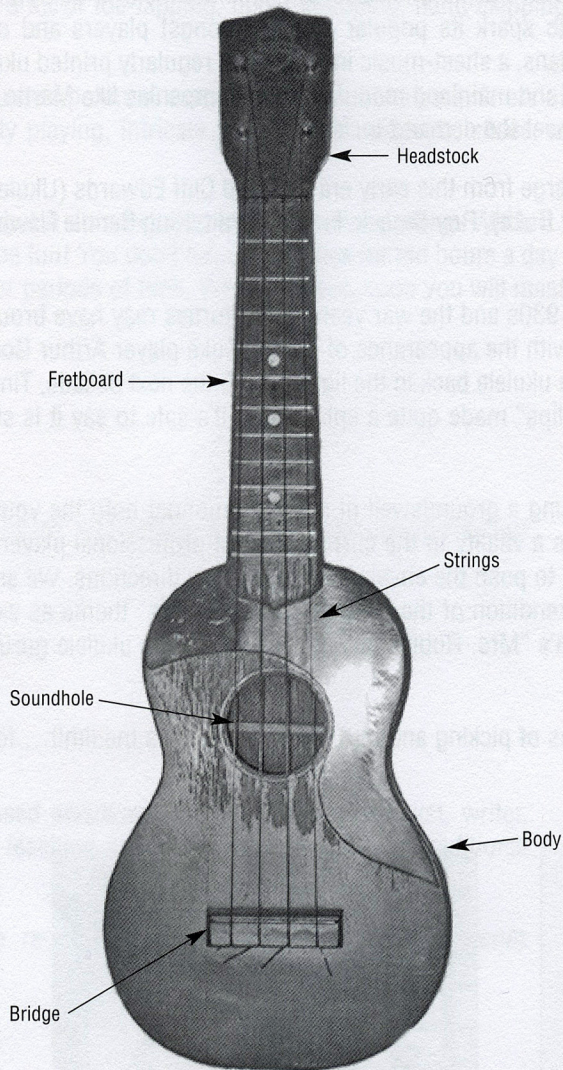
Photo by Dick Barnatt/Redferns

Tiny Tim: broke into pop culture with his novelty cover of the Nick Lucas tune "Tip Toe Through the Tulips."

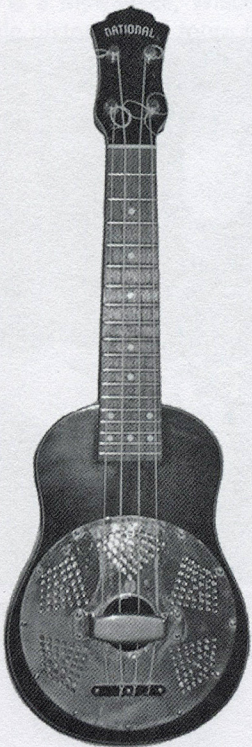
YOUR UKULELE

This book is designed for use with any type of soprano, concert, or tenor ukulele—whether they are wood-bodied, banjo-ukulele, or resonator-style ukuleles. You may use any of these models to study the music in this manual.

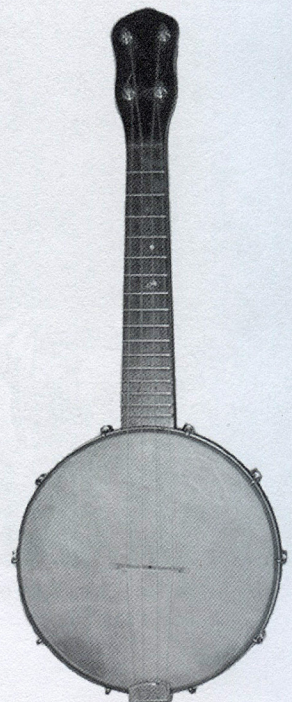
Wood-Bodied Ukulele



Resonator Ukulele

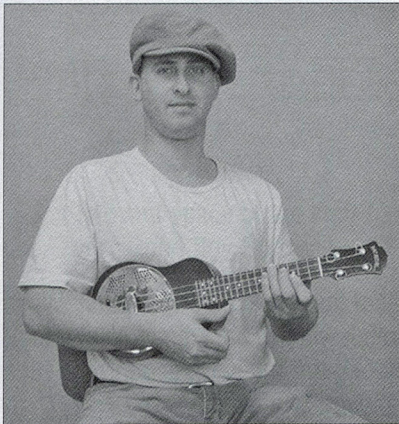


Banjo-Ukulele



PLAYING POSITION

There are many ways to hold your ukulele comfortably. Typically, you will be seated, but you may find it necessary to stand on occasion. See what works best for you.



The seated position allows you to rest the uke on your right leg. Or, apply a small amount of pressure with your right forearm to press the uke up against your right side rib cage.



The standing position takes a little more getting used to. You must apply a little more pressure with your right forearm to keep the uke in place.



Some folks like to use a strap to hold their uke in place.

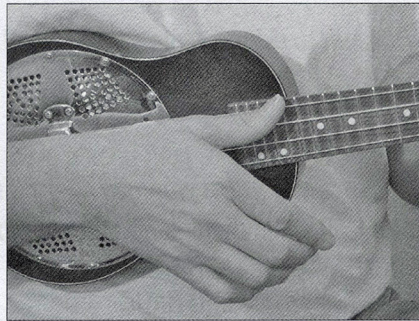
THE RIGHT HAND

Once you are comfortable holding the uke, you will need to become familiar with the proper hand, thumb, and finger positions so that you will be able to pick and strum properly.



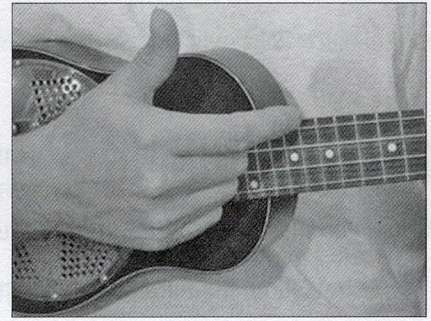
Hand

Hold your hand just slightly above the sound hole with your fingers extended over the fretboard.



Thumb

Place your thumb over the lower end of the fretboard for a gentle brush.



Finger

Slightly curl your right pointer finger inward and place it just above the tenth fret (you'll learn more about fret numbers soon).

TUNING

When you tune your ukulele, you will adjust the **pitch** (highness or lowness) of each individual string. When you tighten a string you will raise the pitch. When you loosen a string you will lower the pitch.

The strings on your uke are numbered 1 through 4, with string 4 being the one closest to your chest. This book uses the standard C tuning (the most common ukulele tuning), so your uke would be tuned as follows:

Pitch:	G	C	E	A
String:	4	3	2	1

TUNING WITH AN ELECTRONIC TUNER

An electronic tuner will “hear” whether or not your strings are in tune, allowing you to adjust them to the correct pitch. While I advocate learning how to tune by ear (being able to recognize and match the sound of a pitch without the help of a machine), an electronic tuner can be real handy when you are just starting out and have not yet developed the ability to recognize in-tune pitches. A tuner’s accuracy and efficiency make it a useful tool.

TUNING BY EAR

Tune the G string (string 4) to a reliable source like a piano, tuning fork, or pitch pipe. Then tune the other strings to the following notes to create this musical phrase:

The diagram shows a musical staff in 4/4 time with four quarter notes: G, C, E, and A. Below the staff, the notes are mapped to strings: G (string 4), C (string 3), E (string 2), and A (string 1). To the right, a piano keyboard diagram shows the keys for C (3rd string), E (2nd string), G (4th string), and A (1st string). The words "dog has fleas" are written above the keys, with "My" above the G key.

RELATIVE TUNING

Often, you may have to tune your instrument to itself when there is no other source available. To do this, follow these steps:

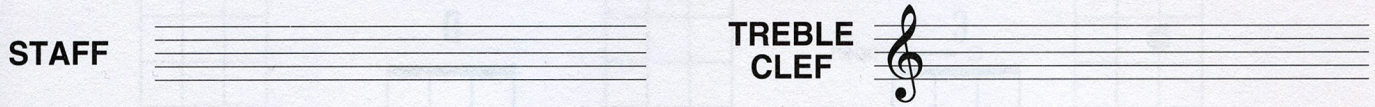
1. Assume the third string is tuned correctly to C.
2. Press down on the third string behind the fourth fret (E) and tune the second string until they sound alike.
3. Press down on the second string at the fifth fret (A) and tune the open first string to it.
4. Finally, press down on the second string above the third fret (G) and tune the fourth string to it.

When all of the strings are in tune, they will sound out the familiar musical phrase:

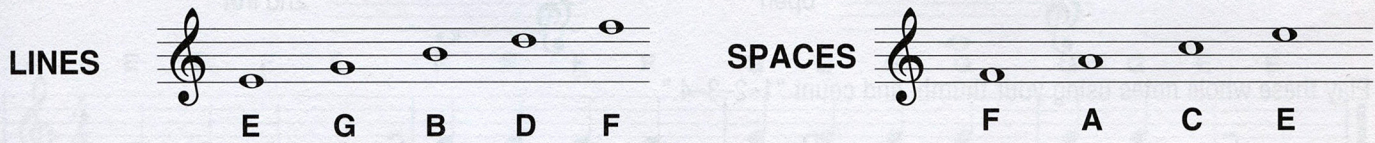
The diagram shows a fretboard with four strings labeled A, E, C, G from top to bottom. The notes G, C, E, and A are circled on the fretboard: G on the 3rd fret of the 2nd string, C on the 4th fret of the 3rd string, E on the 5th fret of the 2nd string, and A on the 5th fret of the 1st string. The words "My Dog Has Fleas" are written above the notes, with "My" above G, "Dog" above C, "Has" above E, and "Fleas" above A.

MUSICAL SYMBOLS

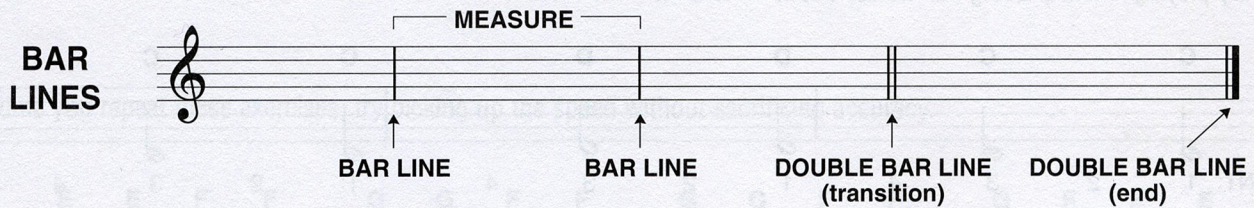
Music is written with notes on a **staff**. The staff has five lines and four spaces between the lines. Where a note is written on the staff determines its pitch (highness or lowness). At the beginning of the staff is a clef sign. Ukulele music is written in the treble clef.



Each line and space of the staff has a letter name. The **lines** are (from bottom to top) E-G-B-D-F, which you can remember as "Every Good Boy Does Fine." The **spaces** are (from bottom to top) F-A-C-E, which spells "face."

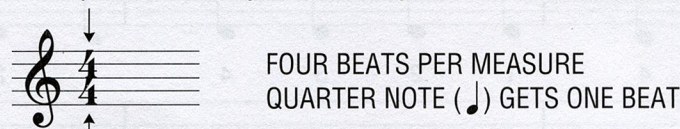


The staff is divided into several parts by bar lines. The space between two bar lines is called a **measure** (also known as a "bar"). At the end of a piece of music a double bar is placed on the staff.



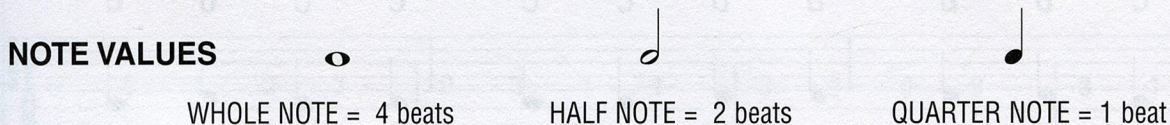
Each measure contains a group of **beats**. Beats are the steady pulse of music. You respond to the pulse or beat when you tap your foot.

The two numbers placed next to the clef sign are the **time signature**. The top number tells you how many beats are in one measure.



The bottom number of the time signature tells you what kind of note will receive one beat.

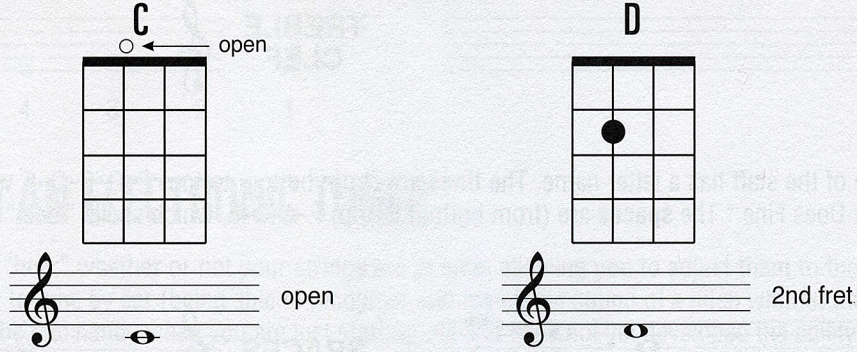
Notes indicate the length (number of counts) of a musical sound.



When different kinds of notes are placed on different lines or spaces, you will know the pitch of the note and how long to play the sound.

NOTES ON THE C STRING

We begin learning notes on the C string, or third string, because in C tuning, the fourth (G) string is usually not fingered except when making chords. However, many players (like Hawaii's legendary Ohta San) tune the G string low so that it can be used for melody playing. To fret single notes on the fretboard, first anchor your left-hand thumb on the back of the neck, and then use the appropriate finger (index, middle, ring, or pinky) to depress the indicated strings and frets.



Play these whole notes using your thumb, and count "1-2-3-4."

1

Now try playing C and D using half notes. Count "1-2-3-4."

2

In **tablature** (or tab) notation, the horizontal lines represent strings. The numbers indicate which fret to play (0 = open). You'll always see the tab staff under the main staff.

Keep using your thumb, and count "1-2-3-4" while playing these quarter notes.

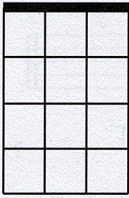
3

Let's mix it up a little more now!

4

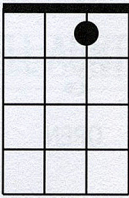
NOTES ON THE E STRING

E



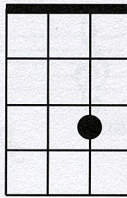
open

F



1st fret

G



3rd fret

Count "1-2-3-4" as you did on the last exercise.

5

E	E	E	E	F	F	F	F	G	G	G	G	G	G	E	E	
																
T	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	0	0
A																
B																

Each time you repeat these exercises, try picking up the speed without sacrificing accuracy.

6

E	E	F	F	G	G	F	F	G	G	F	F	G	F	E	E	
																
T	0	0	1	1	3	3	1	1	3	3	1	1	3	1	0	0
A																
B																

Now let's mix it up again.

7

E	F	G	G	E	G	F	F	G	F	E	E	G	F	E		
																
T	0	1	3	3	0	3	1	1	3	1	0	0	3	1	0	
A																
B																

C AND E STRING REVIEW

A diagram of a guitar neck showing the first five frets. The notes are indicated as follows:

- C:** OPEN (on the C string)
- D:** 2ND FRET (on the C string)
- E:** OPEN (on the E string)
- F:** 1ST FRET (on the E string)
- G:** 3RD FRET (on the E string)

FRÈRE JACQUES (Are You Sleeping?)

Children's Melody

8

Musical notation for the first four measures of 'Frère Jacques' in 4/4 time. The melody is written on a treble clef staff. Below the staff is a tablature line with fret numbers for the C and E strings.

T	0	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	3	0	1	3
A														
B														

MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB

9

Musical notation for the first four measures of 'Mary Had a Little Lamb' in 4/4 time. The melody is written on a treble clef staff. Below the staff is a tablature line with fret numbers for the C and E strings.

T	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	2	2	0	3	3
A													
B													

Musical notation for the next four measures of 'Mary Had a Little Lamb' in 4/4 time. The melody is written on a treble clef staff. Below the staff is a tablature line with fret numbers for the C and E strings.

	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	2	0

This American folk melody, like “Skip to My Lou,” “Old Dan Tucker,” and so many other “play party” tunes, has become an enduring classic. Just for fun, I have added a schnazzy little ending.

Gray chord symbols are used throughout this book to indicate the chords that back up your melody—they can be played by an instructor or another uke player.

GO TELL AUNT RHODY

American Folk Song

10

Chord symbols: C, G7, C

Go tell Aunt Rhody. Go tell Aunt Rhody.

T	0	0	2	0	0	2	2	1	0	2	0
A											
B											

Chord symbols: G7, C, C6

Go tell Aunt Rhody the old grey goose is dead.

	3	3	1	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0

This classical uke arrangement will help you get familiar with many of the notes you’ve just learned while switching back and forth between the C and E strings.

ODE TO JOY

Beethoven

11

Chord symbols: C, G, C, G

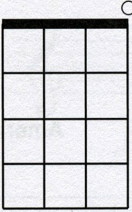
T	0	0	1	3	3	1	0	2	0	0	2	2
A												
B												

Chord symbols: C, F, C, G, C


	0	0	1	3	3	1	0	2	0	0	2	0	2	0	0

NOTES ON THE A STRING

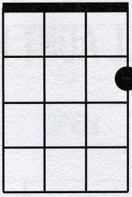
A



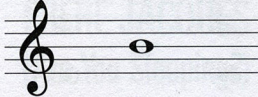
open



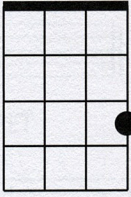
B



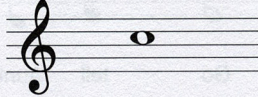
2nd fret



C



3rd fret



Count "1-2-3-4" as you did in the previous exercises.

12



A A B B C C B B A

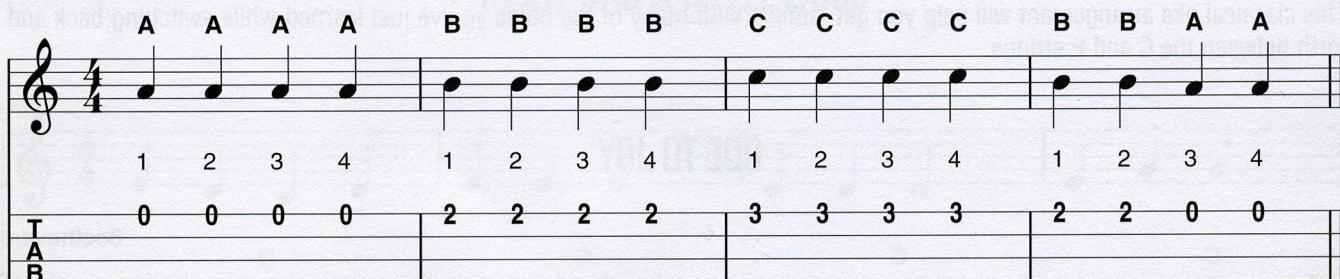
1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3

T 0 0 2 2 3 3 2 2 0

A
B

Try saying each note aloud as you play it.

13



A A A A B B B B C C C C B B A A

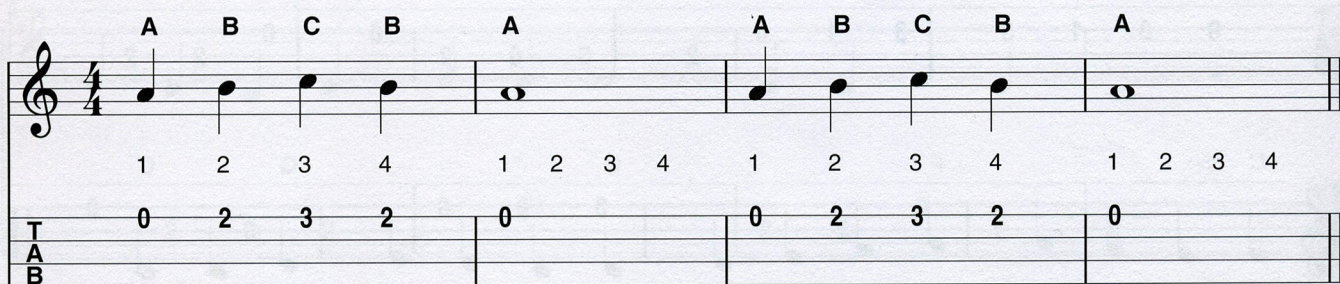
1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

T 0 0 0 0 2 2 2 2 3 3 3 3 2 2 0 0

A
B

Now let's mix it up again.

14



A B C B A A B C B A

1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4

T 0 2 3 2 0 0 2 3 2 0

A
B

Now let's play a basic melody everyone knows using the notes we've learned on the C, E, and A strings. Observe the quarter notes and half notes, and play with your thumb.

TWINKLE, TWINKLE LITTLE STAR

Children's Melody

15

The musical score is presented in four systems. Each system consists of a treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a guitar tablature staff below it. The tablature uses numbers 0-3 to indicate fret positions on the strings. The melody is simple, using only the C, E, and A strings.

System 1: Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: C4 (quarter), C4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), F4 (quarter). Tablature: 0 0 3 3 | 0 0 3 | 1 1 0 0

System 2: Treble clef. Notes: G4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (quarter), C4 (quarter). Tablature: 2 2 0 | 3 3 1 1 | 0 0 2

System 3: Treble clef. Notes: Bb4 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), F4 (quarter). Tablature: 3 3 1 1 | 0 0 2 | 0 0 3 3

System 4: Treble clef. Notes: E5 (quarter), E5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), C5 (quarter), C5 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter), Bb4 (quarter). Tablature: 0 0 3 | 1 1 0 0 | 2 2 0

Great melodies never stray too far from our hearts. Often they inspire parodies, like the classic “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,” which we also know as “Bah Bah Black Sheep” and “The Alphabet Song.”

Little known and often neglected is the great body of work recorded in the 1920s and thirties by old-time country, blues, and jug bands. Their use of the ukulele demonstrates not only its percussive role, but also the full gamut of uke styling—from intricate strums, rolls, and fingerpicking to tremolo and single-string lead work—all, of course, complimented by scat singing, whistling, yodeling, and other vocal embellishments of the period. Some of these important bands were the Hillbillies, Fiddlin’ Powers Family, Jimmie Rodgers, Memphis Jug Band, and DaCosta Woltz’s Southern Broadcasters.

OH! SUSANNA

Stephen C. Foster

19 C

I come from A - la - ba - ma with a ban - jo on my

TAB: 0 | 0 3 3 0 | 3 0 0 2 | 0 0 2 0

G7 C

knee. We're goin' to Lou - si - an - a, our

TAB: 2 | 2 | 0 3 3 0 | 3 0 0

G7 C F

love for to — see. Oh Su - san - na oh

TAB: 0 0 2 2 | 0 | 1 1 | 0 0 0

C G7 C

don't you cry for me. We're goin' to Lou - si -

TAB: 3 3 0 0 | 2 2 | 0 3 3 0

G7 C

an - a just to strum a - while you see.

TAB: 3 0 0 2 | 0 0 2 2 | 0

THE C MAJOR SCALE

PUTTIN' IT ALL TOGETHER

Begin by playing the scale in both directions, up and down. Use your thumb (or a felt-tip pick) and go slowly, gradually building up speed. While you are playing the scale, say the notes aloud as you pick them. When you can do this smoothly without breaking your rhythm, then you're ready to begin playing some more basic melodies.

20

C D E F G A B C C B A G F E D C

T																					
A																					
B	0	2	0	1	3	0	2	3	3	2	0	3	1	0	2	0					

Try playing up and down the C scale, picking twice per note. Your goal is to sound smooth and even.

21

C C D D E E F F G G A A B B C C

T																				
A																				
B	0	0	2	2	0	0	1	1	3	3	0	0	2	2	3	3				

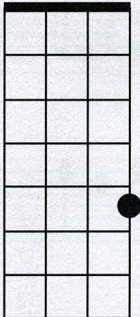
C C B B A A G G F F E E D D C C

T																				
A																				
B	3	3	2	2	0	0	3	3	1	1	0	0	2	2	0	0				

HIGH D AND HIGH E

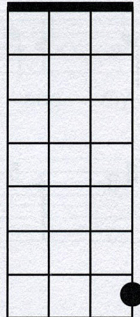
You already know the fingering for low D and E. Higher versions (or **octaves**) of these notes exist along the A string. Here they are:

D



5th fret

E



7th fret

Try playing high D and high E using half notes. Count "1-2-3-4."

22



	D		D		E		E		D		D	
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
T	5		5		7		7		5		5	
A												
B												

Remember, use your thumb and count while playing these quarter notes.

23



	D	D	D	D	E	E	E	E	D	E	D	D
T	5	5	5	5	7	7	7	7	5	7	5	5
A												
B												

Let's mix it up a little more now!

24



	D	D	E	E	D	D	E	E	E	D	E	D
T	5	5	7	7	5	5	7	7	7	5	7	5
A												
B												

This lovely folk melody was known as “Aura Lee” until 1956, when Elvis Presley’s rendition made it popular as “Love Me Tender.”

AURA LEE

Traditional

25

C D7 G7 C

The first system of musical notation for 'Aura Lee' consists of a treble clef, a 4/4 time signature, and four measures. The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (half). The guitar tablature below shows fingerings: 3 3 2 3 | 5 0 5 | 3 2 0 2 | 3 3.

D7 G7 C

The second system of musical notation consists of a treble clef and four measures. The notes are: D5 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (half). The guitar tablature below shows fingerings: 3 3 2 3 | 5 0 5 | 3 2 0 2 | 3.


E7 Am E7

The third system of musical notation consists of a treble clef and four measures. The notes are: D4 (quarter), C4 (quarter), B3 (quarter), A3 (quarter), G3 (quarter), F3 (quarter), E3 (quarter), D3 (half). The guitar tablature below shows fingerings: 0 0 0 | 0 0 0 | 0 2 0 2 | 0.

C D7 G7 C

The fourth system of musical notation consists of a treble clef and four measures. The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), D5 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), G4 (quarter), F4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (half). The guitar tablature below shows fingerings: 0 0 1 0 | 2 0 5 | 3 2 0 2 | 3.

TIES

This symbol (—) is known as a **tie**. When you see two notes tied together (), even across measures, play them as a single note. In other words, you simply add the first note to the second and hold them out for the full duration of both notes.

In the twelfth measure of "Wildwood Flower," the number (3) over the first two notes means that you should play these notes with the third (or ring) finger of your left hand. Watch for ties!

WILDWOOD FLOWER

Traditional, Late 1800s

26

G7

I will sing and I'll dance and my laugh shall be

T
A
B

0 1 | 3 0 3 | 0 1 0 | 2 0 2

C

gay. I will charm ev - 'ry heart and the

0 | 0 1 | 3 0 3 | 0 1 0

G7 C

crowd I will sway. I will live yet to

2 0 2 | 0 | 3 3 | 7 7 5

F C

see him re - gret the dark hour when he

3 3 2 | 0 3 0 | 3 | 0 2



G7 C


left me lone - ly this frail wild - wood flower.

0 0 | 0 3 0 | 2 0 2 | 0









EIGHTH NOTES

We're about to encounter some tunes with **eighth notes**. Two eighth notes equal one quarter note in value.

1 quarter note  = 2 eighth notes 

One eighth note is written with a flag (). Consecutive eighth notes are connected with a beam (.

To count eighth notes, say "and" in between the beats. In 4/4 time, there are eight eighth notes in a measure.

$\frac{4}{4}$     = $\frac{4}{4}$    

1 2 3 4 = 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

Try these eighth notes. Go slowly and evenly, and count "1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and."

27



T
A
B

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 | 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0



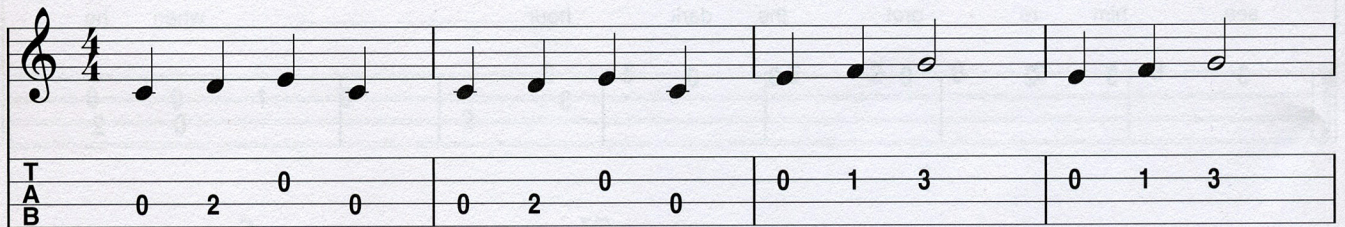
3 3 3 3 3 3 3 3 | 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

The next tune mixes quarter and eighth notes.

FRÈRE JACQUES (Are You Sleeping?)

Children's Melody

28



T
A
B

0 2 0 0 | 0 2 0 0 | 0 1 3 | 0 1 3



3 0 3 1 0 0 | 3 0 3 1 0 0 | 0 3 0 | 0 3 0

First, play this melody using mostly quarter notes.

SHORTENING BREAD

Southern Folk Song

29

C G7 C

Mama's little baby loves short-nin', short-nin', mama's little baby loves short-nin' bread.

T
A
B

0 0 3 0 | 0 0 3 0 | 0 0 3 0 | 0 2 0

Now, play the same melody using eighth notes. As always, play very slowly at first, then gradually work up to speed.

SHORTENING BREAD

Puttin' It All Together

30

C

Ma - ma's lit - tle ba - by loves short - nin', short - nin',

T
A
B

0 0 | 0 0 3 3 0 | 0 0 3 0

G7 C

Ma - ma's lit - tle ba - by loves short - nin' bread. Ma - ma's lit - tle ba - by loves

0 0 3 3 0 | 0 2 0 | 0 0 3 3 0

G7 C

short - nin', short - nin', Ma - ma's lit - tle ba - by loves short - nin' bread.

0 0 3 0 | 0 0 3 3 0 | 0 2 0

"The ukulele became the official instrument of the Islands when King Kalakaua took it up in 1886 and featured it for the first time with hula dancers."

—Acoustic Guitar and Other Fretted Instruments

LITTLE BROWN JUG

Old Time Country

31

C F G7

My wife and I lived all a - lone in a log hut we

T 3 0 3 3 3 1 0 0 2 2 2 2 0 2

A

B

C F

called our own. She loved rum and I loved gin.

3 5 7 0 3 3 3 1 0 0

G7 C

To - geth - er we had lots of fun. Ha! Ha! Ha!

2 2 2 2 0 2 3 3 3 3 3 3

F G7 C

You and me. Lit - tle brown jug don't I love thee. Ha! Ha! Ha!

0 0 0 2 2 2 2 0 2 3 5 7 3 3 3

F G7 C

You and me. Lit - tle brown jug don't I love thee.

0 0 0 2 2 2 2 0 2 5 3 3