

Ukulele Doodling

When first learning an instrument like the ukulele enthusiasm and the eagerness to play are not in short supply. What's in short supply is what to play. And maybe your chops (technical skills), a chord vocabulary, what single notes to play and just what can I play.

Luckily we don't have to wait for monster chops, a massive chord vocabulary or endless hours of practicing scales and chords. Although practice is good. All we need are a few chords and single notes and we can have hours of ukulele fun just doodling around on the uke.

Learning Tips from a Piano

The piano is a color coded instrument, black & white. Notes move horizontally either higher or lower. Higher notes move to the right and lower notes move to the left. Each individual key, white or black is a unique pitch or note - no duplicates.



The ukulele is not as lucky. It's not a color coded instrument. Notes can move both horizontally and vertical along the fingerboard. There are duplicate notes - the same pitch available on different strings. BUT - there are a few easy chords that can be learned to explore the ukulele.

The Key of C - The Learning Key

C D E F G A B C'

Some times called the learning key. The key of C major and its relative minor key of A minor are somewhat easy to explore. On the piano the notes and chords for the of C major and A minor are the white keys only. These are called natural notes, no sharp or flat notes. Again not so visual on the ukulele. So if you were told to just play the key of C major notes and chords on a piano it would be easy - Don't play any black keys.

This is the same approach that we are going to take with the ukulele. We'll find these natural note patterns and the chords for the key of C major on the ukulele.

C major basic chords: C Dm Em F G G7 Am Bdim





The White keys of the ukulele

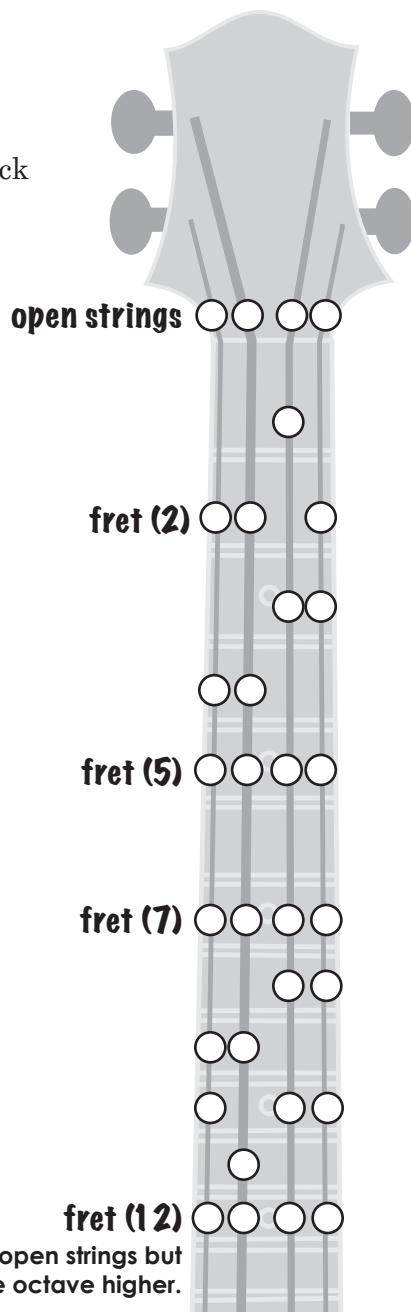
Here are the natural notes or white keys on the ukulele. Not much help as it is not the symmetrical pattern as the piano's black and white key arrangement. But - there are the open string and two additional frets that are only a combination of the natural notes (A B C D E F G) of the musical alphabet:

open strings	G	C	E	A
fret (5)	C	F	A	D
fret (7)	D	G	B	E

fret 12 are the same letter one octave higher.

Fret (2) is "D" tuning. A common tuning in some parts of the world and might be easy to learn.

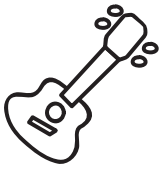
Fret (2)	A	D	F#	B
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QuickStart Scale Fingerings for Ukulele

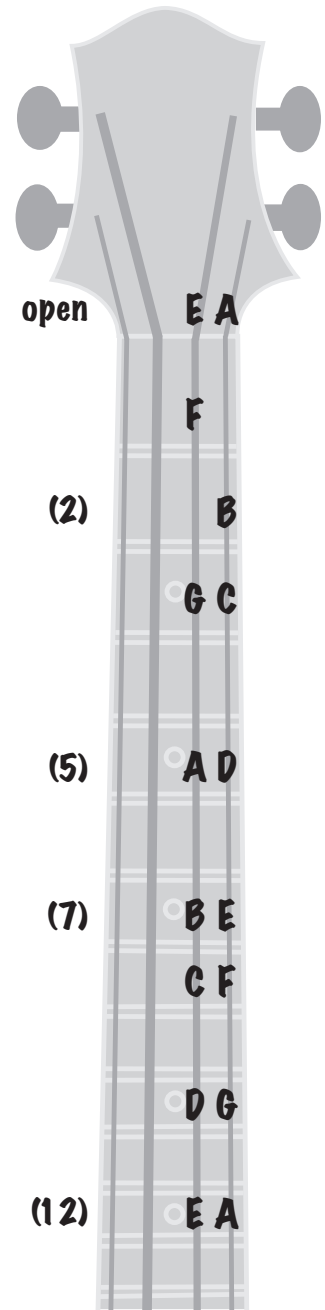
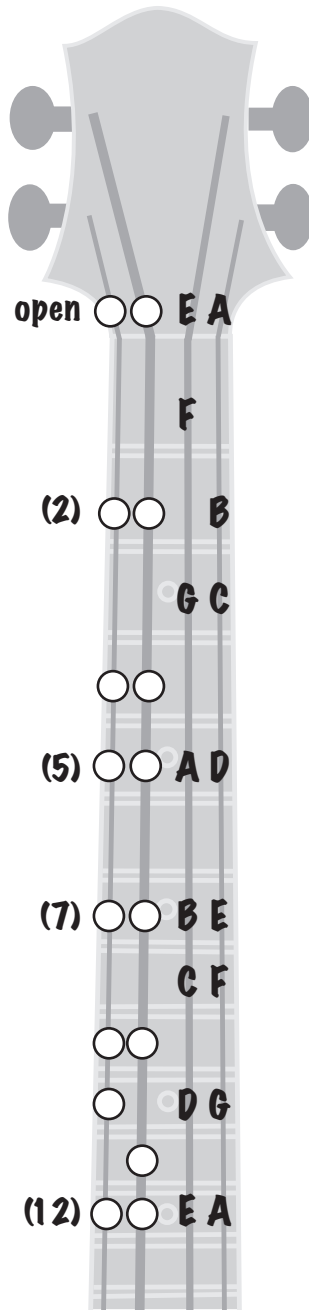
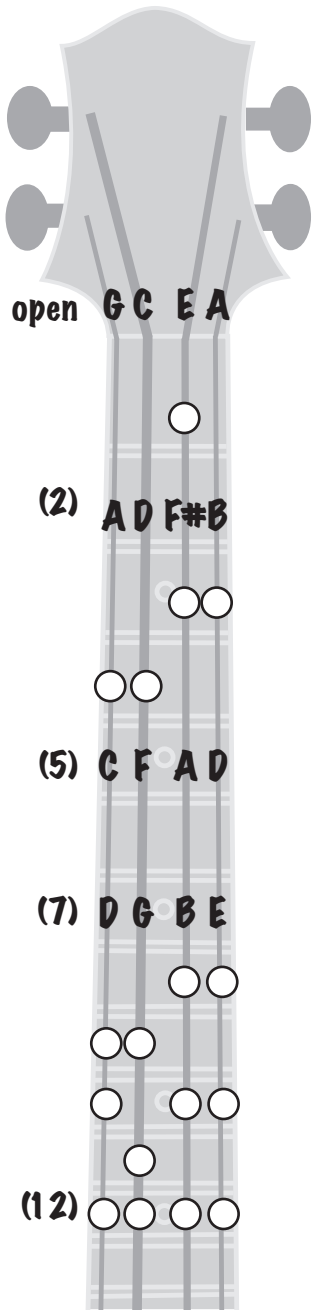
Six essential scales for ukulele. Covers the Blues, Pentatonic, Dorian, Mixolydian, Aeolian and Ionian scales for a standard "low G" or high "G" tuned (G C E A) ukulele.

Volumes covering C, D and G Tunings



From the natural notes (*white dots*), we can get the note names. And if we only deal with strings one and two we can get a lot of notes to use with the chords for the key of C major and limit the amount of information that we initially need to learn.

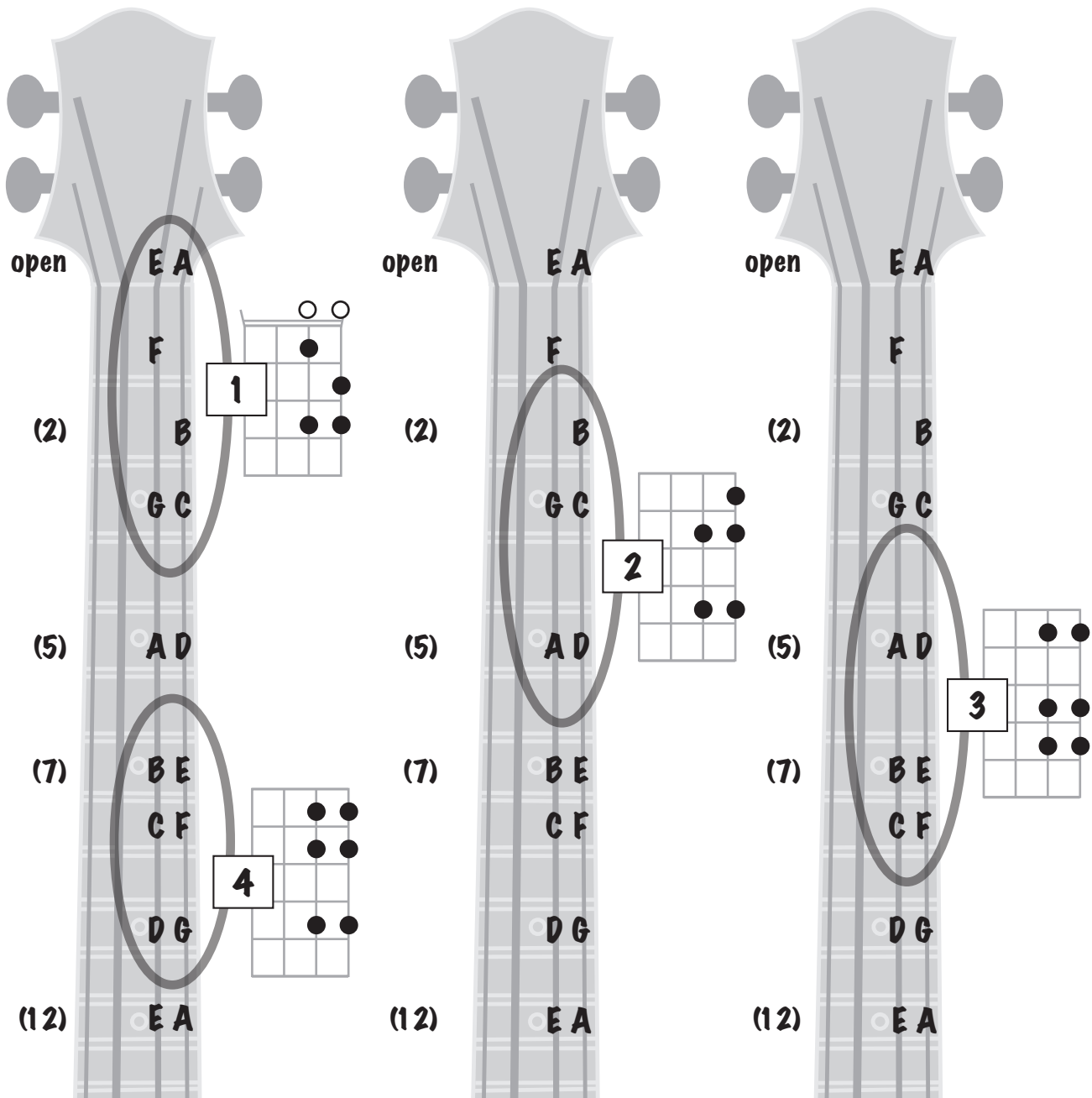
NOTE: That along a single string the F is always the next fret (1/2 step) above E and C is the next fret (1/2 step) above B. These are the white keys of the piano without a black key between them.





Four Overlapping Single Note Patterns

The notes on string one and two can be grouped into four overlapping, four fret span, single note patterns. These notes can be added to any of the chords from the key of C.

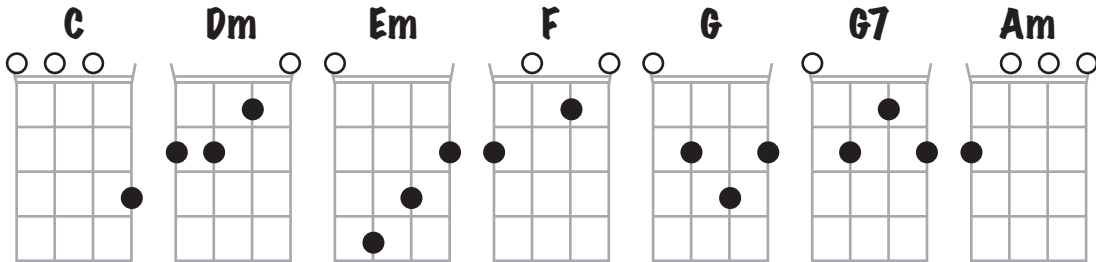




The Open Position Chords of the Key of C Major

C Dm Em F G G7 Am Bdim

As the Bdim is not very common in progressions for the key of C we will skip that chord. But all the other chords are very common and easy open position chords.

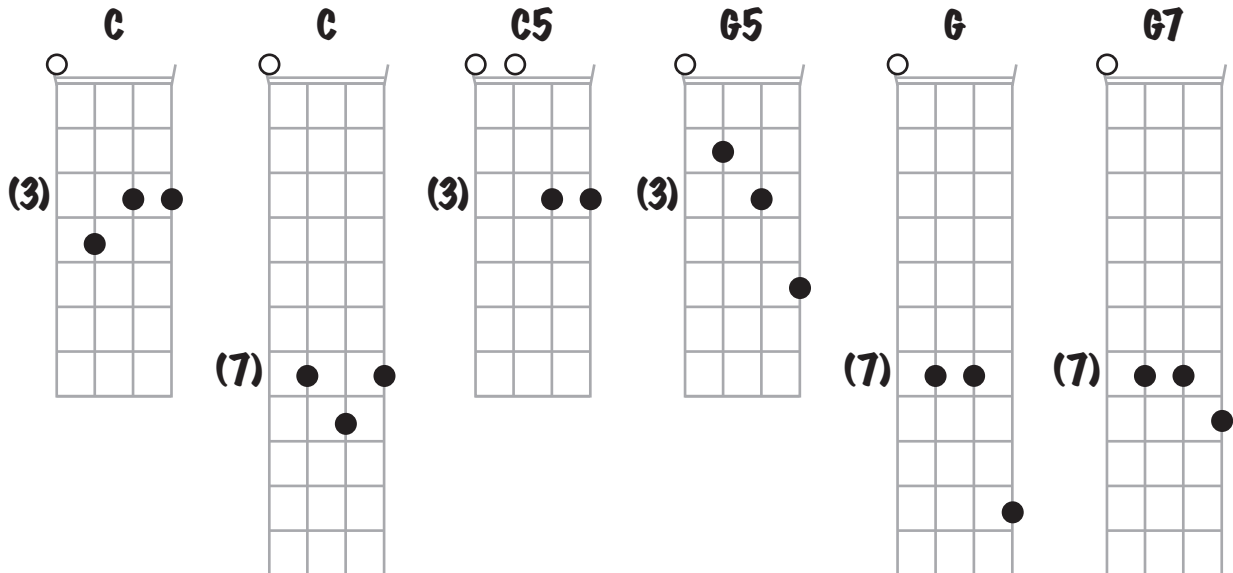


None of the above chords uses all four fingers. So this gives a free finger or two to make some music and explore the key of C.

Primary Chords - C, F, G, G7

The primary chords in the key of C are: C, F and G, G7. A lot of songs in the key of C use these chords, some just C and G. The Dm, Em, and Am are secondary chords.

Here are some additional C and G chord voicings. Both C and G contain a G note so the open string four can be used in voicings higher up the neck.





Example Progressions

Although any chord can change to any chord in a progression or song. There are some common chord sequences. In the key of C, using the C, Dm Em, F, G, G7 and Em some common sequences would be:

- C G
- C G7
- C F G
- C G7 F
- C G G7
- C Dm G7 C
- C Am
- C Am F G
- C Am F G7
- C Am Dm G
- C Am Dm G7
- Am Em
- Am Dm Am Em

The Blues progression (12 bars)

- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| C | C | C | C | F | F | C | C | G | F | C | G |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |