

MUSIC FOR GOOD HEALTH

UKULELE FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART



JOHN HEYWORTH

PART 3 Reading Notation

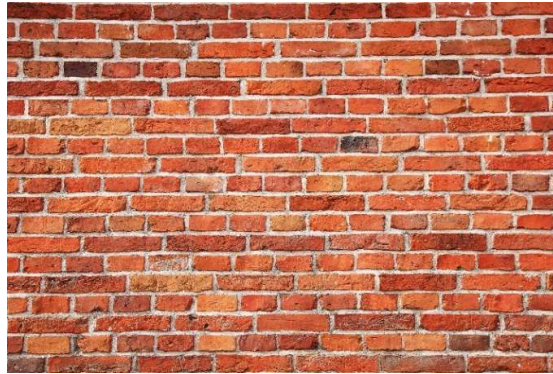


Reading Music.

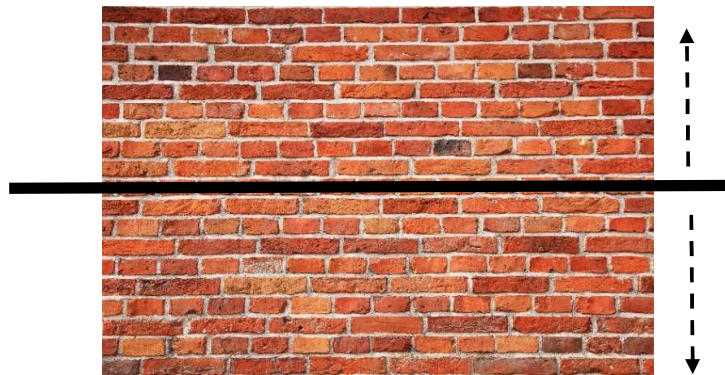
(Don't panic- it's easy)

Notes are either high or low (*pitch*), fast or slow (*tempo, beat and rhythm*), loud or soft (*dynamics*).

Let's start with high and low. Imagine a brick wall.



Now imagine a black line drawn across the middle of the wall.



Above the black line the bricks get higher from the ground – brick by brick (you can see the mortar separating them as you climb up).

Below the line the bricks become lower.

Let's remove the wall and put a brick on the line that was in the middle of the wall.

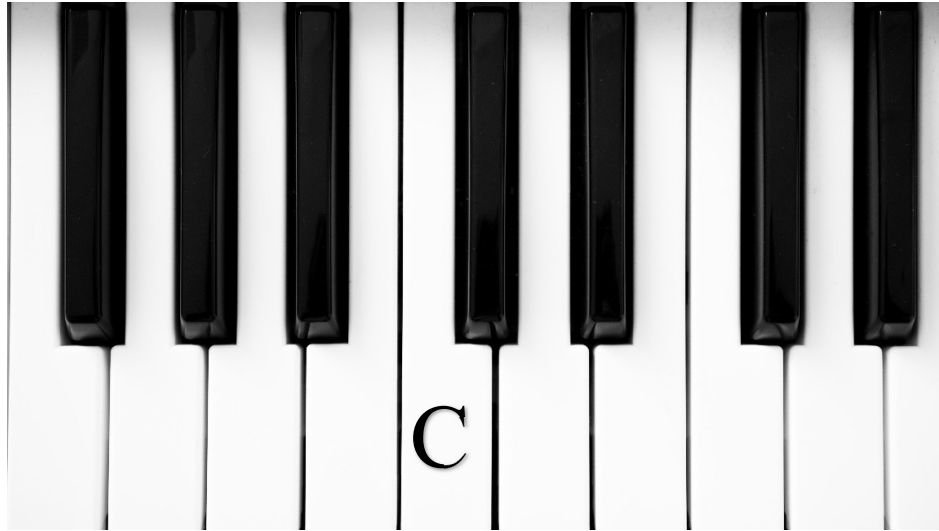


This brick is in middle. Shorten the line and change the brick into a note.

This is middle C



Middle C can be found in the middle of a piano.

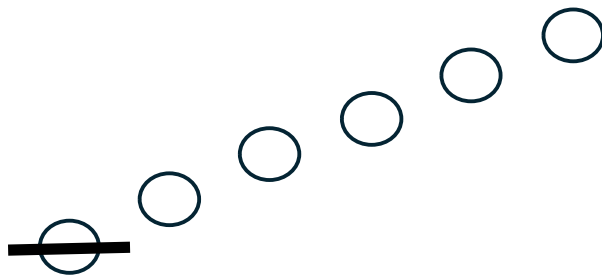


BUT it is also the *lowest note* you can play on the soprano/concert ukulele.

It is the 3rd string C– pluck it with your thumb.

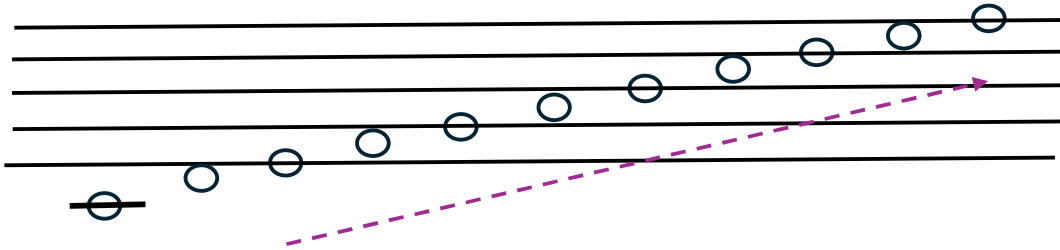


That means all the notes (*aka bricks*) played on the uke must all be *above* middle C.



But we need the mortar to help us separate and identify each individual note above.

We will use 5 black lines (mortar) above middle C.



As we climb the black lines **and spaces** each note (brick) becomes *one step higher*.

Luckily, we only use 7 letters of the alphabet: – A B C D E F G.

When we get up to G, we start again: – A B C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C D and so on....

Note, we have bolded the note middle C here: - C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C

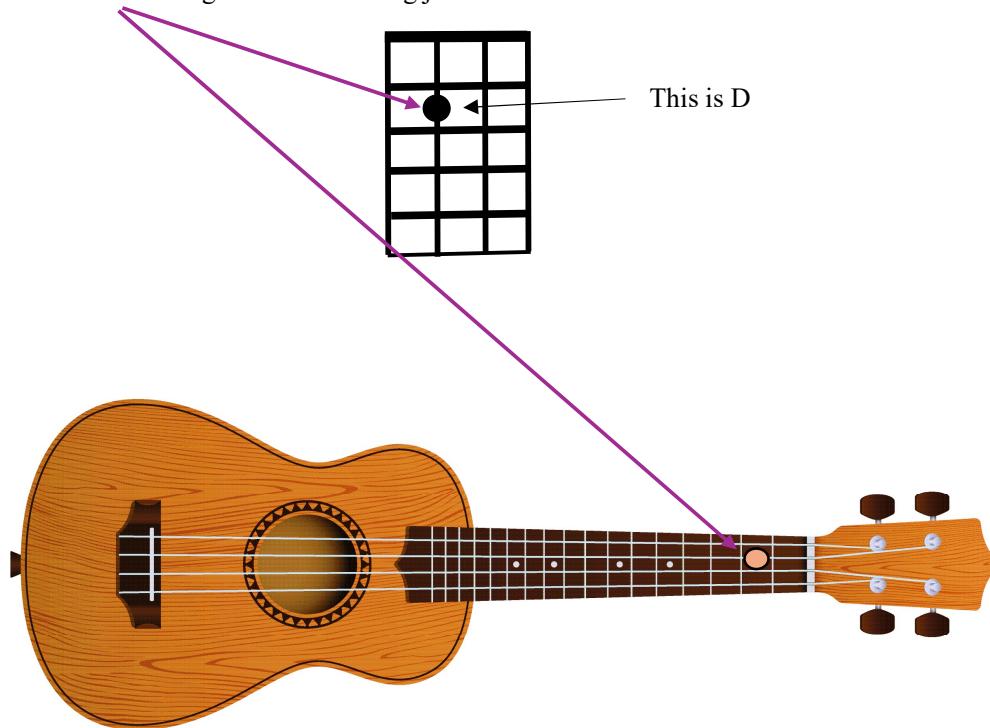
So what is the next note up going to be called?

After that, can you name each note going up in order.

Good! How easy was that?

Let's isolate a C major scale: - A B C D E F G A B C D E F G A B C D E F

We can play C already, by plucking the 3rd string open. **The next note D** will be higher. Place the left-hand 2nd finger on the 3rd string just behind the 2nd fret.

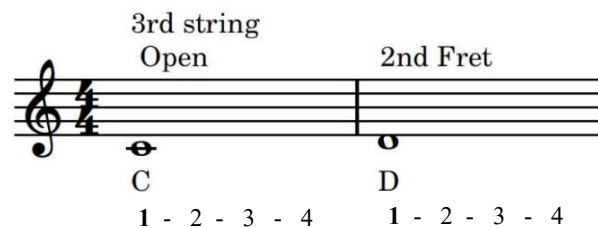


Now pluck the 3rd string with your right-hand thumb.

Reading and playing middle C and D

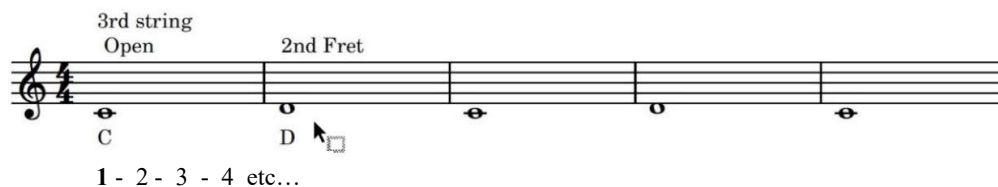
Okay, here we go, play middle C on the open 3rd string followed by D by placing the tip of your finger on the same string just behind the 2nd fret.

Repeat the pattern, holding each note for 4 counts **long** (NOTE: the sound will fade, but still let the note ring for 4 counts).

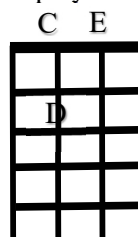


Congratulations!!, you are now reading and playing from traditional music notation.

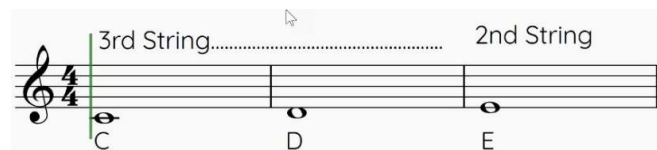
Try the following (each note on the 1st example lasts for 4 counts each, *but on the 2nd example* each note only lasts for two beats – (except the very last note – we are discovering beat and rhythm!))



Now we are ready to move to the 2nd string where the next note up will be E (open). Pluck the 2nd string open with your thumb to play E.



Now play C, D, E. – 4 counts each note.



Play C D E – 2 counts each note



Play C D E – 1 count each note



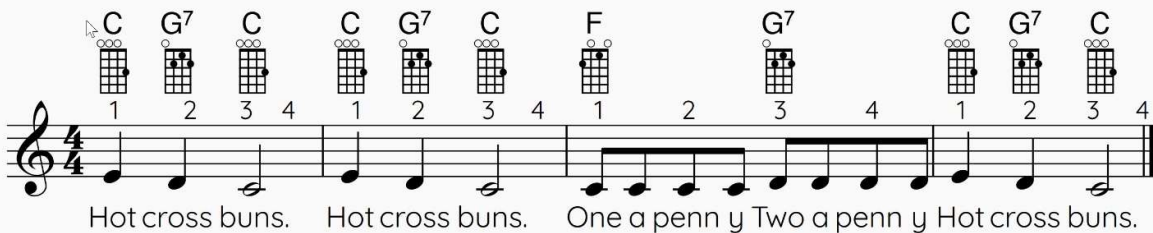
Try 2 notes within the 1 count; if you wish, count 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &.. Now we are playing faster notes!



Great, we can pitch C, D and E with different rhythms, so we can play Hot Cross Buns – our first simple melody (*We have to start somewhere* 😊).

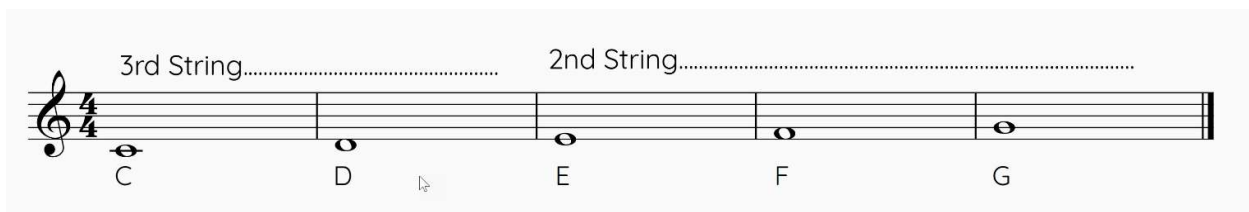


Terrific, you can now read and play melodies! Now let's play the chords. You can sing to the chords, or if you have a friend, they can play the chords while you play the melody, keep a steady 4 count beat.

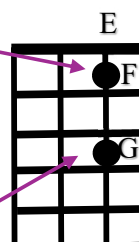


More 2nd string notes.

Moving up from the notes C, D, E, we need the notes F and G.



F is on the 1st fret of the 2nd string, use your left-hand 1st finger.



G is on the 3rd fret of the 2nd string, use your left-hand 3rd finger.

Sight read the following. *Hang in there, you are doing great!*

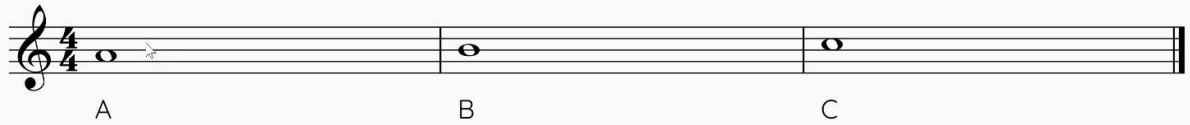


That was C up to G and back. Good work. Now something a little harder. Can you guess the song?



Finally, the 1st string notes.

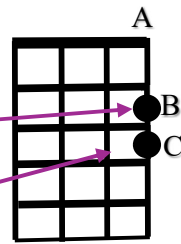
It's easy as A B C!



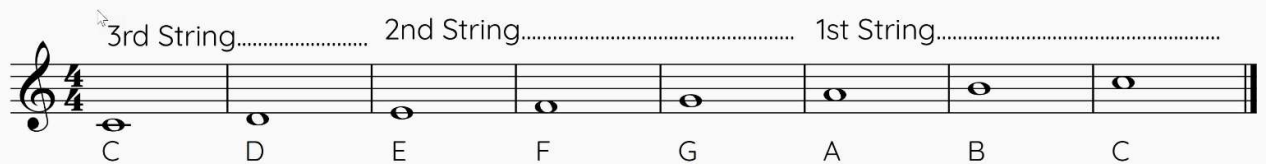
The note A is the first string open

B is the 2nd fret (use your 2nd finger)

And C is the 3rd fret (use your 3rd finger)



Let's play from low C all the way up to high C



This is a **C major scale**. It spans eight notes – which is an octave (octo=8). Therefore we can say high C is an octave higher than low C.

Time for some more sight reading. This time 3 counts/beats per bar.

Purcell's Canon



Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

Ukulele

Twink-le Twink-le Litt-le Star, How I wond-er what you are.

Uke.

5

Up a-bove the world so high, Like a diam-ond in the sky

Uke.

9

Twink-le Twink-le Litt-le Star, How I wond-er what you are.

Ode to Joy

Ode to Joy

Moderato

Beethoven

Ukulele

mf 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

Uke.

5

Uke.

9

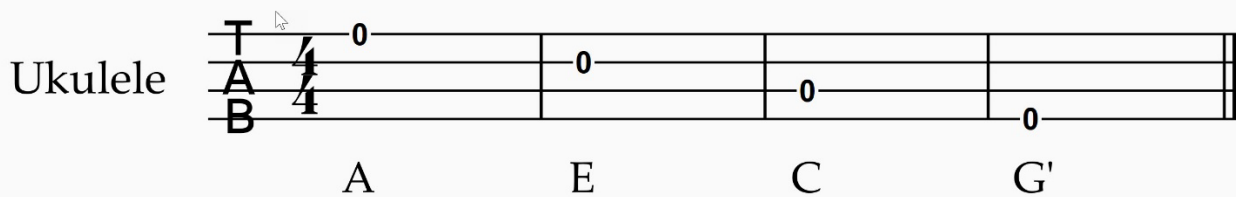
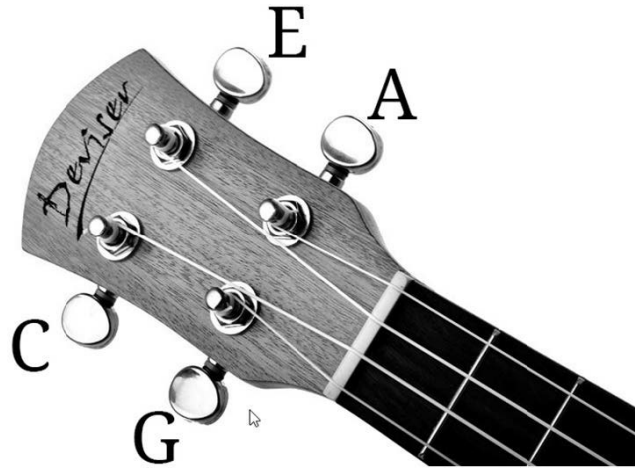
Uke.

13 Fine

How to read TABS

TABS = Tablature is another way to write and read music.

TABS have 4 lines. The top line represents string number 1 (The A string)

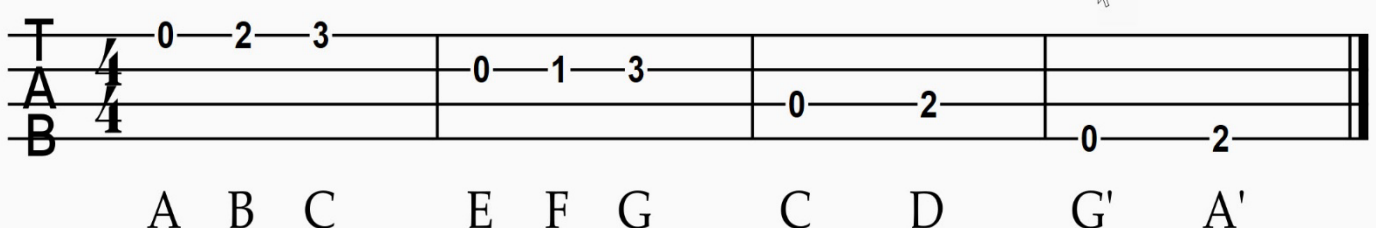


The second line from the top represents string number 2 (The E string)

The third line from the top represents string number 3 (The C string)

The bottom line represents string number 4 (The high G string)

The numbers on each line represent the fret to place your finger on that string.
e.g. The number 0 on the top line means pluck the first string open (A). But the number 2 means pluck that string with your finger on the 2nd fret (B). The number 3 represents the note C on the 3rd fret of the 1st string and so on.



When the Saints Go Marching In

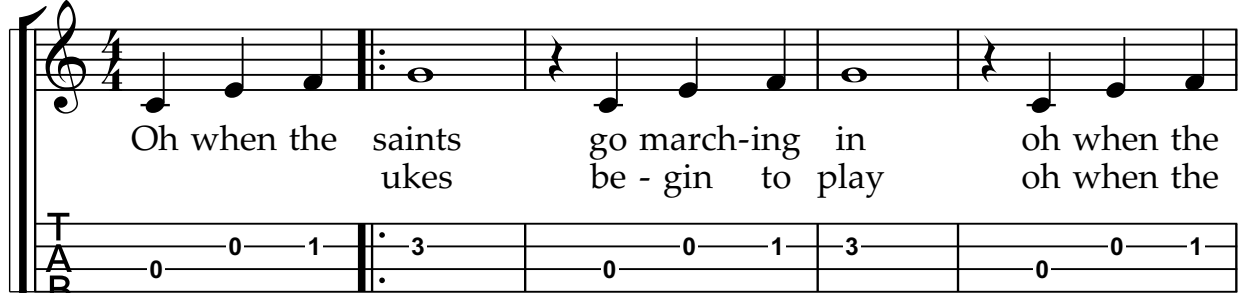
Trad

Allegretto

Ukulele

Oh when the saints go march-ing in oh when the
ukes be - gin to play oh when the

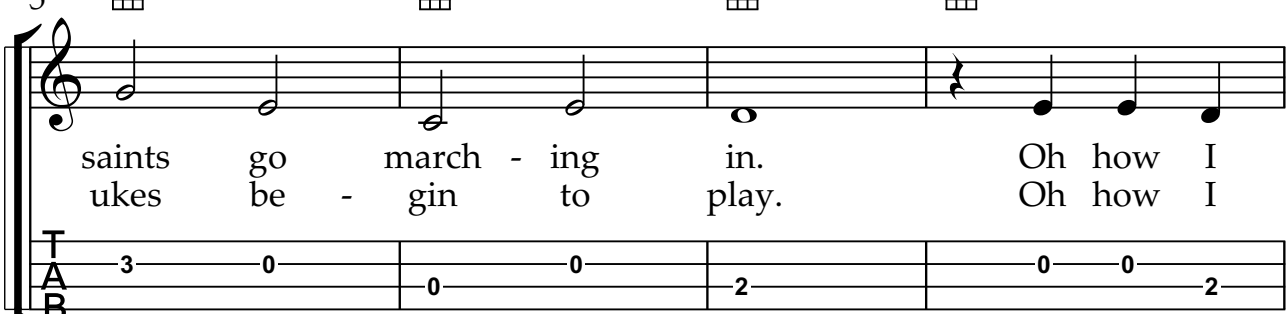
C Cmaj7



Uke.

saints go march - ing in. Oh how I
ukes be - gin to play. Oh how I

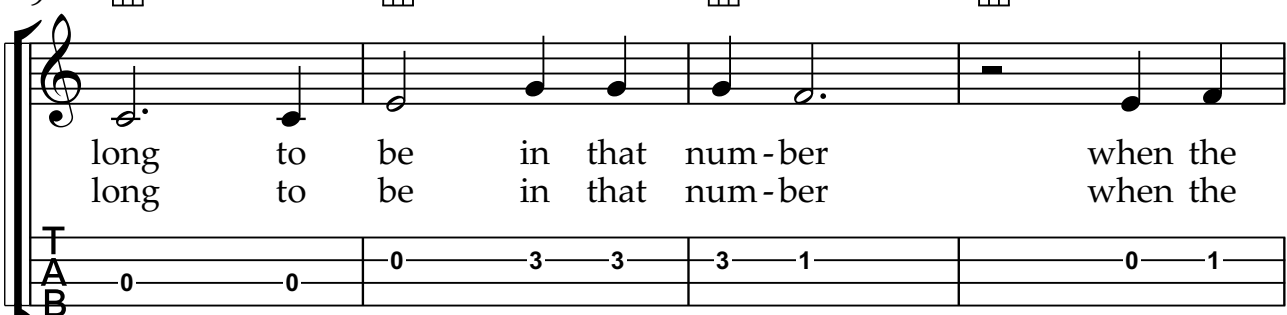
C7 C6 Dm7 G7



Uke.

long to be in that num-ber when the
long to be in that num-ber when the

C C7 F Fm

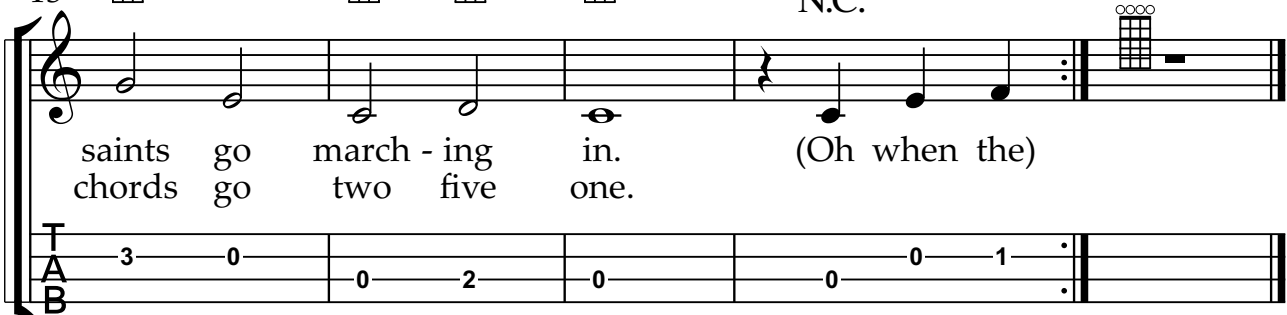


Uke.

saints go march - ing in. (Oh when the)
chords go two five one.

C Dm7 G7 C

1. N.C. 2. C6 Fine



Time for some rock and roll!

La Bamba

Trad

repeats through the song

Tie - play this G only and hold down for the tied G

Ukulele

Strum

C F G⁷

T A B

D D U D U U U D U D U D U

The strum pattern is a loop – that means it stays the same and it keeps going throughout the whole song.

This Strum pattern can be a little tricky. Listen to recordings of *La Bamba* and also *Twist and Shout* – both have similar chord and rhythmic structures. NOTE: we are learning this in a different key (C) from the recordings– you will get the feel by trying to play along, BUT, the chords will sound out of tune.

La Bamba

USE G7 for G

[Verse 1]

 C F G
Para bailar la Bamba
 C F G
Para bailar la Bamba se necesita
 C F G
una poca de gracia
 C F G
una poca de gracia pa' mi, pa' ti
 C F G
ay arriba y arriba
 C F G
y arriba y arriba por ti seré
 C F G N.C.
por ti seré, por ti seré

[Verse 2]

 C F G
Yo no soy marinero
 C F G
yo no soy marinero, soy capitán
 C F G
soy capitán, soy capitán

[Chorus]

C F G
Bamba, bamba
C F G
Bamba, bamba
C F G
Bamba, bamba
C F G N.C.
Bamba, bam

Repeat 1 , 2, Chorus Finish - N.C. =No Chord

Introduction suggestion for the song Alberta

We learnt the song Alberta earlier in the book. Here is a cool way to open the song.

Play the notes as instructed by the notation. (Swing the rhythm – not too quick).

The image shows musical notation for the introduction of the song "Alberta". It consists of two staves: Piano (top) and Ukulele (bottom). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The Piano part starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp. The Ukulele part starts with a C-clef and a key signature of one sharp. The notation includes fingerings (0, 1, 2, 3) and chord names (G, G7, C). Arrows point from the text instructions to specific notes and chords in the notation.

Piano

Ukulele

Chords indicated: G, G7, C

Strum the chords as indicated inbetween – i.e. G on beats two three four and then G7 once.

Continue on with playing the notes up the C.

And then strum C two three four – G7 one two three and start singing Alberta, Alberta....

Acknowledgements

Website references:

¹ (Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 84(2), 191–215. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191>)

² Open University *OpenLearn* Website 2025 (<https://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/discovering-music-the-blues/content-section-4#:~:text=Alyn%20Shipton%2C%20a%20scholar%20of,of%20spiritual%20and%20gospel%20music%27>).

³ Cambridge University Website 2025
(<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/blues>)

⁴ NICE 2025. Website (<https://www.nice.org.uk/about/nice-communities/social-care/quick-guides/promoting-positive-mental-wellbeing-for-older-people#:~:text=A%20quick%20guide%20for%20registered,sense%20of%20belonging%20and%20support.>)

⁵ Lawrence Robinson, Melinda Smith, M.A., Jeanne Segal, Ph.D. and Jennifer Shubin, 2025). HelpGuide.Org. (<https://www.helpguide.org/mental-health/wellbeing/benefits-of-play-for-adults>)

⁶ Bigger, Better Brains: Why repetition is important (website 2025):
<https://www.biggerbetterbrains.com.au/research-updates/the-power-of-repetition#:~:text=Muscle%20Memory:%20Repeating%20movements%20help,Lea%20Faes>

⁷ Britannica: <https://www.britannica.com/art/chord-music>

Internet Sites for lyrics:

GetLyrics.com,
Chordie.com
ultimateguitar/ukulele.com

YouTube sites:

The Orchard Enterprises: Eric Clapton, Alberta (Acoustic Live).
https://youtu.be/6mR86U1_g3Y?si=BezworJEMv-ETQCe Retrieved 2025.

The Ukulele Fool: 10 Songs with only C Am F G7.
<https://images.app.goo.gl/T9rfcuNfXvYgzi6Z9> Retrieved 2025

Christopher Davis-Shannon. Forget Strumming Patterns- Build Your Ukulele Swing Strum from Scratch. <https://youtu.be/DSwbC1357JU?si=k3xTHNFlgfwqrN9> Retrieved 2025

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1. Stock Photo ID: 2109744443 Miguel G. Saavedra. Hands of musician playing ukulele on blue lights background.
2. Stock Photo ID: 187289915 Slava SelfStudio. Happy young man is playing ukulele guitar and singing on the sofa at home.
3. Stock Photo ID: 1699903171 ZoneCreative. Dad teaching guitar and ukulele to his daughter. Little girl learning guitar at home. Close up. Ukulele class at home. Child learning guitar from her father/
4. Stock Photo ID: 2144285757: Dragon Images. Happy Asian family of five laughing, playing ukulele and singing song into microphone.
5. Stock Vector ID: 2257124397 Kids and professional Ukulele sizes comparison in centimeters, flat diagram vector poster.
6. Stock Photo ID: 1589850895 OB production. Tuning ukulele tuner. Close up. Isolated on white background.
7. Stock Photo ID: 104314223 Trofimov Denis. tuning the first string of ukulele, human hands, closeup.
8. Stock Vector ID: 2259574495 Topuria Design. Ukulele in a top view, realistic vector illustration isolated on white background.
9. Stock Photo ID: 2163638903 Elena Tcykina. ukulele in women's hands, learning to play the ukulele close-up, Girl playing the ukulele, selective focus.
10. Stock Photo ID: 2202232381 Mangkorn Danggura. senior couple in love and playing ukulele in a park
11. Stock Vector ID: 2056409201 Artitok. ukulele chord C chord.musical symbol.Isolated vector illustration on a white background.
12. Stock Photo ID: 2236341743 jrpPhoto. Woman sitting singing and playing ukulele in the garden next to the house. The sun shines on the ukulele. Women are happy in music.
13. Stock Vector ID: 2061715589 Artitok. Ukulele chords, G7 chords.musical symbol.Isolated vector illustration on a white background.
14. Stock Photo ID: 763996024 Fernando Macias Romo. beautiful Hawaiian dancer with flowers and diverse outfit and playing ukulele, on black background.
15. Stock Vector ID: 2060515925 Artitok. Ukulele chords, F chords.musical symbol.Isolated vector illustration on a white background.
16. Stock Vector ID: 2058789641 Artitok. Ukulele chords Am chords.musical symbol.Isolated vector illustration on a white background.
17. Stock Vector ID: 2095806427 Artitok. The chart sheet shows the basic ukulele chords. There is a picture of a ukulele on the left side of the chart. Isolated vector illustration on a white background.

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John Heyworth, *Dip.Teach, B'Ed, MMustech, PhD*. Composer, Educator and Writer. John Heyworth is a published educator and academic. He has also written original music and musical plays for children. <https://www.free4music.com/>



John is a retired Lecturer and has taught into both the undergraduate and postgraduate education courses at Edith Cowan University in WA. He lives in Perth and enjoys writing, swimming, bush walking and music. He currently works for the Nedlands community's Positive Aging group as a music volunteer accompanist and also as a ukulele instructor. He has written two novels *A Cat Among the McIvers* and *The Cowrie Shell*.
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