



Lesson 1




How to hold your Ukulele.

The first thing you will want to do is hold your Ukulele in the correct position. Holding it wrongly might feel more comfortable now but will cause some serious problems with your playing later on.


 Make sure that you are holding the long “neck” part of your Ukulele in you left hand (it does not matter if your left handed we are all going to hold them the same way.)


 Hold the flat back part of the Ukulele flat against your stomach. This will mean that you can't see all of the strings properly (don't worry you don't need to be able to see them yet anyway) but it does mean that you are not twisting your hands or arms into uncomfortable positions. Avoid the temptation to sit it flat on your lap or twist it to look, you can always lean your head over to see what you are doing.


 Sit up nice and straight towards the front of your seat. This will give your arms more freedom to move about when playing.

Strumming the Ukulele

The first sound your going to want to make on your Ukulele is the strum. Strumming involves playing all four strings quickly one after the other.


 There are a few common techniques for strumming the Ukulele. We are going be using our thumbs (just because we find it hurts a lot less if you get it wrong), So stick your thumb up like your really happy with something.


 Hold your hand so that the side of your thumb is resting against the top string (the one closest to your head).


 Quickly but gently run your hand downwards so that your thumb brushes against each of the strings.

 Try strumming four times in a row keeping a steady beat. When your ready you can try the trading fours exercise.


Song 1 - My Dog Had Fleas! (Strumming)


 Listen to the backing track and try singing along with the words (you might want to do this a few times so that you get used to the tune).


 Now try clapping four times between each line in a steady beat (watch the video demonstration if your unsure about this)


 This time replace the clapping with strumming on your ukulele. Well done your playing your first real piece of ukulele music!

Picking the Ukulele


 Picking is the word used for playing one string at a time (you sometimes hear the word plucking used for this too but we are going to use picking).


 There are several ways to pick, we will use our thumbs again like we did when strumming. Hold your thumb up again and rest it against the top string.


 Instead of running your thumb over all of the strings rub the side of your thumb over just that one top string.

 You can now try picking the other strings to hear the different notes that they play. Try the exercise below to get used to playing different strings.

My Dog Has Fleas! (Picking)

 Now you can pick the string you can play “My Dog Has Fleas” in a different way.

 Sing the song again but this time listen closely to the tune you are singing. Each line has the notes G,C,E,A.

 This time as you sing the line ‘My Dog Has Fleas’ pick each of the strings from top to bottom one at a time. Notice you are singing and playing the same tune.



You can now play that tune with every line of the song.

My Dog Has Fleas! (Picking and Strumming)



Try Splitting into two groups, one group can play the strumming part to “My Dog Has Fleas” from earlier in the lesson whilst the other plays the picking part. Then try swapping and playing it the other way round.



Finish the lesson by giving everyone the choice whether to play picking or strumming. Those of you who are really brave could try doing **both!**