

Learning the Ukulele Fingerboard

by Curt Sheller



*It's not as hard as
you think!*



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Introduction

Memorizing the notes of the ukulele fingerboard is not as hard as one would think. Although there doesn't seem to be any pattern and the same letter can be found on every string. There is a systematic approach that can be used to help remember the notes.

There are four different sized ukuleles in common use today, using any one of three different tunings.





Learning the Ukulele Fingerboard

“C” Tuning

A ukulele can use any tuning as long as there is a string available and its construction can support the string tension when tuning to pitch.

Of the four common sizes of ukulele the soprano, concert and tenor ukulele can all be tuned using “C” tuning. C tuning is the most common tuning currently in use.

Finally, and really learning and knowing the names of names of the notes of the ukulele fingerboard is liberating musical moment. A major breakthrough in most player’s learning and enjoyment of the ukulele.

Knowing the names of the notes of the fingerboard is separate from learning to read standard music notation. To learn to read music on the ukulele in “C” tuning, see my series of books and lesson: *Reading Music on Ukulele*.

www.learningukulele.com/books/code/ULUNN-C



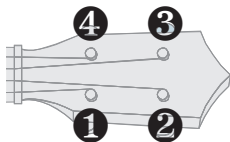
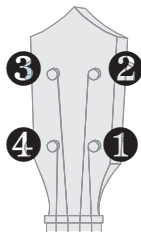


“C” Tuning

“C” tuning, both low and high “G” variations, is common on the Soprano, Concert and Tenor ukulele. When string four is tuned to a low “G”, it is referred to as a “Low G”, C tuning.



Nose to ④ ③ ② ① Toes
 G **C** **E** **A**





Learning the Ukulele Fingerboard

Key Frets

<i>open</i>	G	C	E	A
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In addition to the open strings and fret twelve, which most ukulele players seem to remember. There are two other frets with no sharp or flat notes, frets (5) and (7). These are easy to remember.

<i>fret (5)</i>	C	F	A	D
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<i>fret (7)</i>	D	G	B	E
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<i>fret (12)</i>	G	C	E	A
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These are *reference* or *key frets*. From these frets other frets can be derived.

Frets (1), (4), (6), (9) and (11) can be referenced relative to the open strings, fret (4), fret (6) and fret (11) by flatting or sharpening all the notes of those frets.



Learning the Ukulele Fingerboard



open	G	C	E	A
fret (1)	G#*	C#	F	A#
fret (4)	Cb	E	Ab	Db
fret (5)	C	F	A	D
fret (6)	C#	F#	A#	D#
fret (6)	Db	Gb	Bb	Eb
fret (7)	D	G	B	E
fret (8)	D#	G#	C	F

* See page 11 & 12 for enharmonic equivalent note spellings.





Secondary Key Frets

Frets (2) and (10) have one sharp each.

<i>fret (2)</i>	A	D	F#	B
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<i>fret (10)</i>	F	A#	D	G
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From fret (2) we can get fret (1) and fret (3).

<i>fret (1)</i>	Ab	Db	F	Bb
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<i>fret (2)</i>	A	D	F#	B
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<i>fret (3)</i>	A#	D#	G	C
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Learning the Ukulele Fingerboard



From fret (10) we can get fret (9) and fret (11).

fret (9)	E	A	Db	Gb
fret (10)	F	A#	D	G
fret (11)	F#	B	D#	G#

That is every fret and note of the ukulele fingerboard in “C” tuning, low or high “G”. A lot easier with a system.

Review the frets *ascending* and *descending*; with sharps; with flats; mixed sharps and flats. Know the fingerboard inside and out.

Whether practicing or playing; reading or improvising; playing single notes or chords; no matter what style you are playing. **ALWAYS** know the notes you are playing. This will make the notes of the ukulele reflexive and second nature.





Learning the Ukulele Fingerboard

Other Common Ukulele Tunings

“D” Tuning

Fret (2) in “C” tuning is the same as the open strings in “D” tuning. D tuning was very common in the early part of the twentieth century. D tuning is common in Canada and Europe.

<i>open</i>	A	D	F#	B
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“G” Tuning

Fret (7) in “C” tuning is the same as the open strings in “G” tuning and the same as the thin four strings of a standard tuned guitar (E A **DGBE**). This is a common tuning for baritone ukulele.

<i>open</i>	D	G	B	E
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Enharmonic Equivalents

Enharmonic Equivalents are where the same pitch can have multiple names. In other words, if two notes have the same pitch but are represented by a different letter name and accidental ($\sharp$ $\flat$) they are enharmonic.

Sharps to Flats

A $\sharp$ is the same pitch as **B $\flat$**

B $\sharp$ is the same pitch as **C**

C $\sharp$ is the same pitch as **D $\flat$**

D $\sharp$ is the same pitch as **E $\flat$**

E $\sharp$ is the same pitch as **F**

F $\sharp$ is the same pitch as **G $\flat$**

G $\sharp$ is the same pitch as **A $\flat$**





Learning the Ukulele Fingerboard

Flats to Sharps

A^b is the same pitch as **G[#]**

B^b is the same pitch as **A[#]**

C^b is the same pitch as **B**

D^b is the same pitch as **C[#]**

E^b is the same pitch as **D[#]**

F^b is the same pitch as **E**

G^b is the same pitch as **F[#]**



Learning the Ukulele Fingerboard

Natural and Sharp Notes



STRING	④	③	②	①
open	G	C	E	A
1	G [#]	C [#]	F	A [#]
2	A	D	F [#]	B
3	A [#]	D [#]	G	C
4	B	E	G [#]	C [#]
5	C	F	A	D
6	C [#]	F [#]	A [#]	D [#]
7	D	G	B	E
8	D [#]	G [#]	C	F
9	E	A	C [#]	F [#]
10	F	A [#]	D	G
11	F [#]	B	D [#]	G [#]
12	same as open strings one octave higher			





Learning the Ukulele Fingerboard

Natural and Flat Notes

STRING

	④	③	②	①
open	G	C	E	A
1	A ^b	D ^b	F	B ^b
2	A	D	G ^b	B
3	B ^b	E ^b	G	C
4	B	E	A ^b	D ^b
5	C	F	A	D
6	D ^b	G ^b	B ^b	E ^b
7	D	G	B	E
8	E ^b	A ^b	C	F
9	E	A	D ^b	G ^b
10	F	B ^b	D	G
11	G ^b	B	E ^b	A ^b
12	same as open strings one octave higher			



Learning the Ukulele Fingerboard

Natural and Sharp Notes



Word Search

Turns out there are a few words throughout the ukulele fingerboard that can aide in remembering the frets. Here are the fingerboard charts, without the frets.

Natural and Sharp Notes

open	G	C	E	A
fret (1)	G $\sharp$	C $\sharp$	F	A $\sharp$
fret (2)	A	D	F $\sharp$	B
fret (3)	A $\sharp$	D $\sharp$	G	C
fret (4)	B	E	G $\sharp$	C $\sharp$
fret (5)	C	F	A	D
fret (6)	C $\sharp$	F $\sharp$	A $\sharp$	D $\sharp$
fret (7)	D	G	B	E
fret (8)	D $\sharp$	G $\sharp$	C	F
fret (9)	E	A	C $\sharp$	F $\sharp$
fret (10)	F	A $\sharp$	D	G
fret (11)	F $\sharp$	B	D $\sharp$	G $\sharp$





Learning the Ukulele Fingerboard

Word Search

Natural and Flat Notes

open	G	C	E	A
fret (1)	A ^b	D ^b	F	G ^b
fret (2)	A	D	G ^b	B
fret (3)	B ^b	E ^b	G	C ^b
fret (4)	B	E	A ^b	D ^b
fret (5)	C	F	A	D
fret (6)	D ^b	G ^b	B ^b	E ^b
fret (7)	D	G	B	E
fret (8)	E ^b	A ^b	C ^b	F ^b
fret (9)	E	A	D ^b	G ^b
fret (10)	F	B ^b	D	G
fret (11)	G ^b	B	E ^b	A ^b

