

Reading for Ukulele - Open Position

Now that you can recognize the notes on the staff in the Treble clef, it's time to start connecting that knowledge to the ukulele.

One of the most significant problems in reading for the ukulele, is that many of the same notes can be found in multiple locations on the neck. For example, the same A note is an open string one, string two - fret (5) and string three, fret (9) and if using a high G tuning - string four fret (2). The only way to cut down this complexity is to organize the ukulele into positions where this duplication is either eliminated or at least, minimized.

We're going to begin by isolating the first position. The first position is all the notes falling between string four and string one, from frets one through four. Open position includes these same notes but also takes advantage of open strings.

Low G or No Low G?

For the purposes of this reading series I recommend using a low G. This gives you access to five additional notes not available when using a high G. The only duplication in open position is the E note located on string two - open and string three - fret (4). Other than these 2 notes, all other notes are in unique positions on the staff relative to their locations on the fingerboard.

In the open position, notes can be divided into Natural notes and Chromatically Altered notes. The Natural notes are the notes named by the seven pure alphabetical letters: A, B, C, D, E, F and G. The Chromatically Altered notes are notes that have been raised one half step with sharps (#) or have been lowered one half step with flats (b). Chromatically Altered notes are based on the Natural notes for their letter identities and their locations.



Low G, C Tuning



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The Natural Notes of Open Position

Let's begin this section by linking up our knowledge of notes on the staff to their locations in the open position on the ukulele fingerboard.

String One ①

String one, open is **A** - 2nd space from the bottom

String one, fret two is **B** - 3rd line from the bottom (middle line)

String one, fret three is **C** - 2nd space from the top

String Two ②

String two, open is **E** - Bottom line String

two, fret one is **F** - Bottom space

String two, fret three is **G** - 2nd line from the bottom

String Three ③

String three, open is **C** - 1st lower ledger line

This is the famous middle C

String three, fret two is **D** - 1st space below the staff

String three, fret four is **E** - Bottom line

This E note is the same pitch as the open 2nd string.

String Four - Low G ④

String four, open is **G** - Space below 2nd lower ledger line

String four, fret two is **A** - 2nd lower ledger line

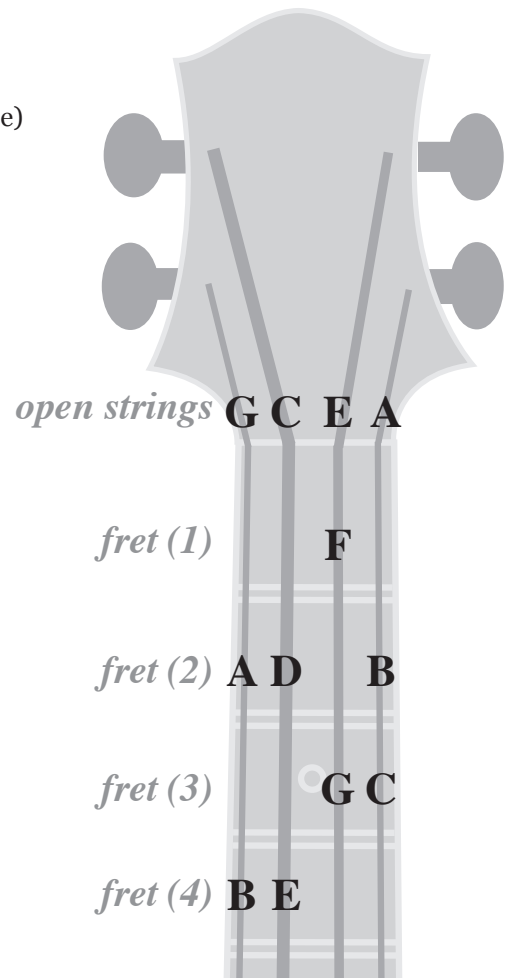
String four, fret four is **B** - Space below 1st lower ledger line

String Four - High G ④

String four, open is **G** - Same note as string two, fret three

String four, fret two is **A** - Same note as string one, open

String four, fret four is **B** - Same note as string one, fret two



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This set of notes represents the natural notes of the open position. Here's what they look like on the musical staff with treble or G clef. String four is shown first using a low G tuning and then using a high G tuning.

1	A	B	C
	<i>open</i>	<i>2nd</i>	<i>3rd</i>
2	E	F	G
	<i>open</i>	<i>1st</i>	<i>3rd</i>
3	C	D	E
	<i>open</i>	<i>2nd</i>	<i>4th</i>
4	G	A	B
<i>Low G</i>			
	<i>open</i>	<i>2nd</i>	<i>4th</i>
4	G	A	B
<i>High G</i>			
	<i>open</i>	<i>2nd</i>	<i>4th</i>

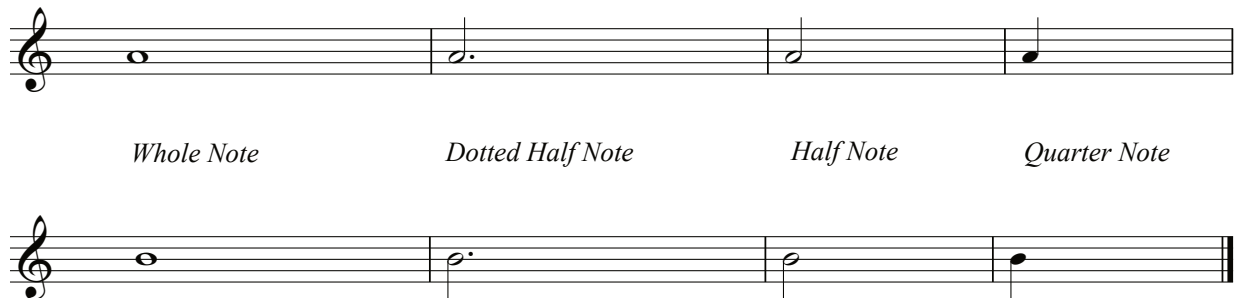
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Rhythm

Rhythm is the duration of a note - how long does it ring. We'll begin with four basic rhythm values. They are the whole note, the dotted half note, the half note and the quarter note. The visual look of each of these is as follows. The whole note, the dotted half note, the half note, the quarter note. The whole note has no stem but the other three note values do. The stem can go up or down. If the stem goes up, the stem will be on the right side of the note. If it goes down, it will be on the left.



Counting Level I Rhythm

The term Level I Rhythm is a term used in Chuck Anderson's Rhythm System called **Modular Phonetic Rhythm**. This is the system that I use with all my teaching, lessons and books. It is a system that I've had great success using with students at ALL levels of development.

The count used for each Level I Rhythm is as follows:

Whole Note Count 1-2-3-4. The counts represent the steady beat of a metronome. In the whole note, strike the note on the count of 1 and let it ring through counts 2, 3 and 4.

Dotted Half Note Count 1-2-3. Use the same approach. Strike on 1 and let it ring through 2 and 3.

Half Note Count 1-2. Strike on 1 and let it ring through 2.

Quarter Note Count 1. Strike on 1 and hold through that single beat.



Exercise Level One

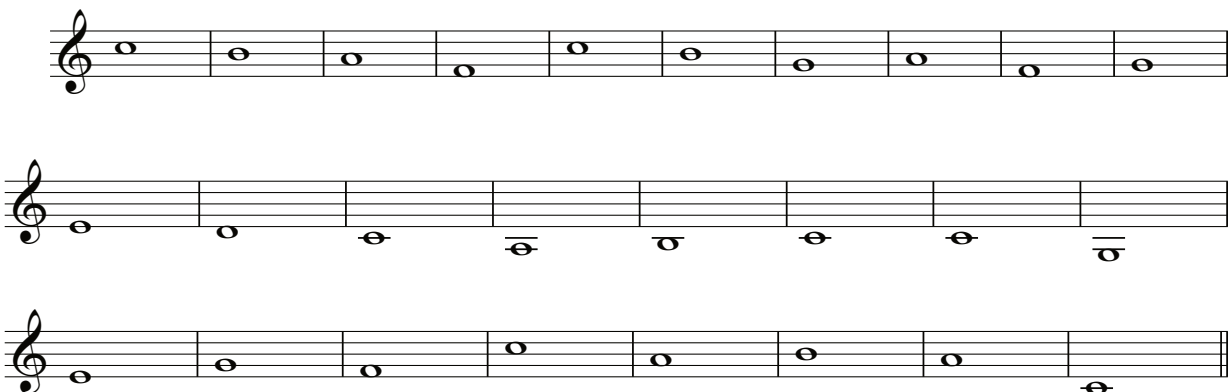
These exercises represent all combinations of Level I rhythm in four beat measures. Play them using any single note.



Combining Natural Notes With Level I Rhythm

Now we're ready to combine note locations with rhythm values. These reading exercises are designed to be random and to sound random. Since they lack a musical quality, they work better as reading exercises. If notes sound melodic, the ear has a tendency to "read" them. The way that these are exercises structured will **force** you to read them, not **memorize** them.

Whole Notes



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Dotted Half Notes



Half Notes



Quarter Notes



Mixed Level One



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Introducing Sharps and Flats - Low G, C Tuning

Having covered natural notes in the open position, it's time to introduce sharps and flats.

Sharps of Fingered Notes

If you need the sharp of any note that's fingered in the open position, play the note one fret higher than the fingered note. F# would be string two, fret two. D# would be string three, fret three. C# would be string one, fret four.

Sharps of Open Notes

If you need the sharp of an open string, play it in the first fret of the same open string. C# can be played on string three, fret one. A# can be played on string one, fret one. E# - yes there is an E#, is string two, fret one.

Flats of Fingered Notes

If you need the flat of any note that's fingered in the open position, play the note on the same string, one fret lower than the fingered note. Bb could be string one, fret one.

Flats of Open Notes

If you need the flat string one A to Ab play it on string two, fret four.

If you need the flat string two E to Eb play it on string three, fret three.

If you need the flat string three C to Cb, which is an enharmonic equivalent to B. Play it on string four, fret four.



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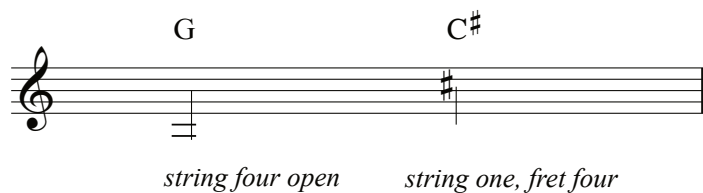
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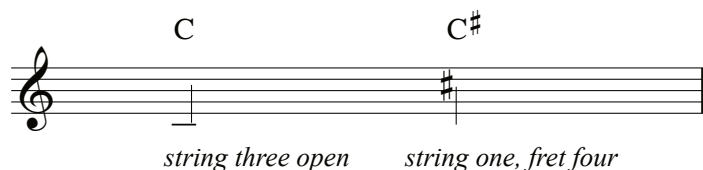
Introducing Sharps and Flats - High G, C Tuning

My recommendation is to complete this reading series using a low G, C tuning. And after that you'll have more than enough reading and music knowledge and experience to figure out reading using a high G in C tuning.

In the open position the range for **Low G, C Tuning** is:



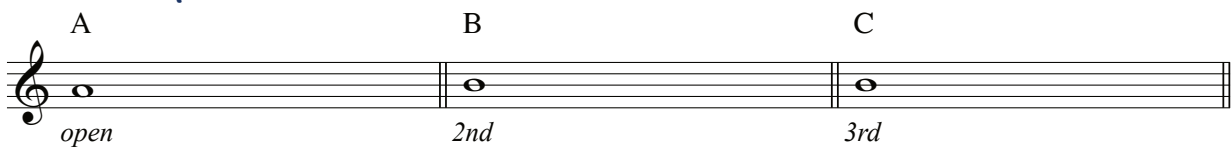
For a **High G, C Tuning** the range is:

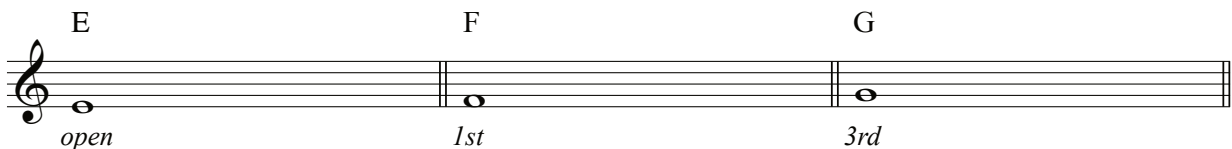


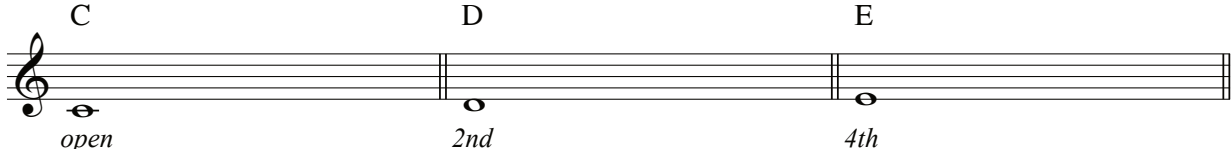
As you can see the effective range of notes you can cover using a low G is an additional five notes below middle C. This relationship will be relatively the same as we learn to read in additional positions along the ukulele fingerboard.

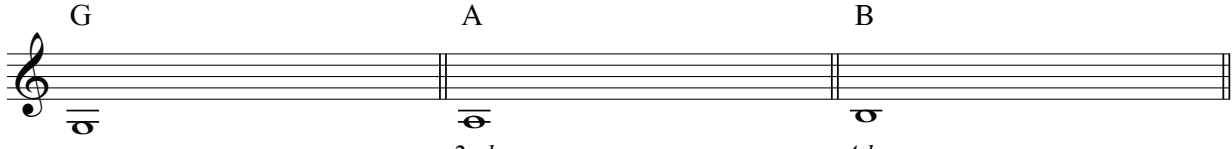
Note Glossary

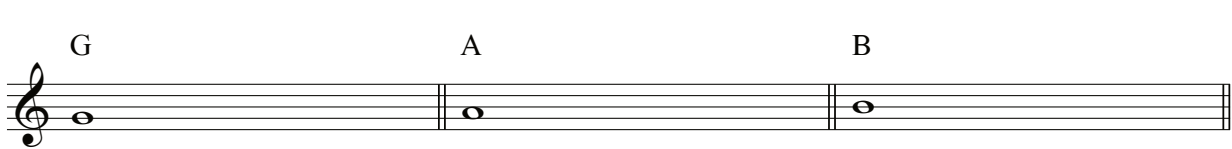
Natural Notes in Open Position

1 
A open B 2nd C 3rd

2 
E open F 1st G 3rd

3 
C open D 2nd E 4th

4 
Low G open A 2nd B 4th

4 
High G open A 2nd B 4th

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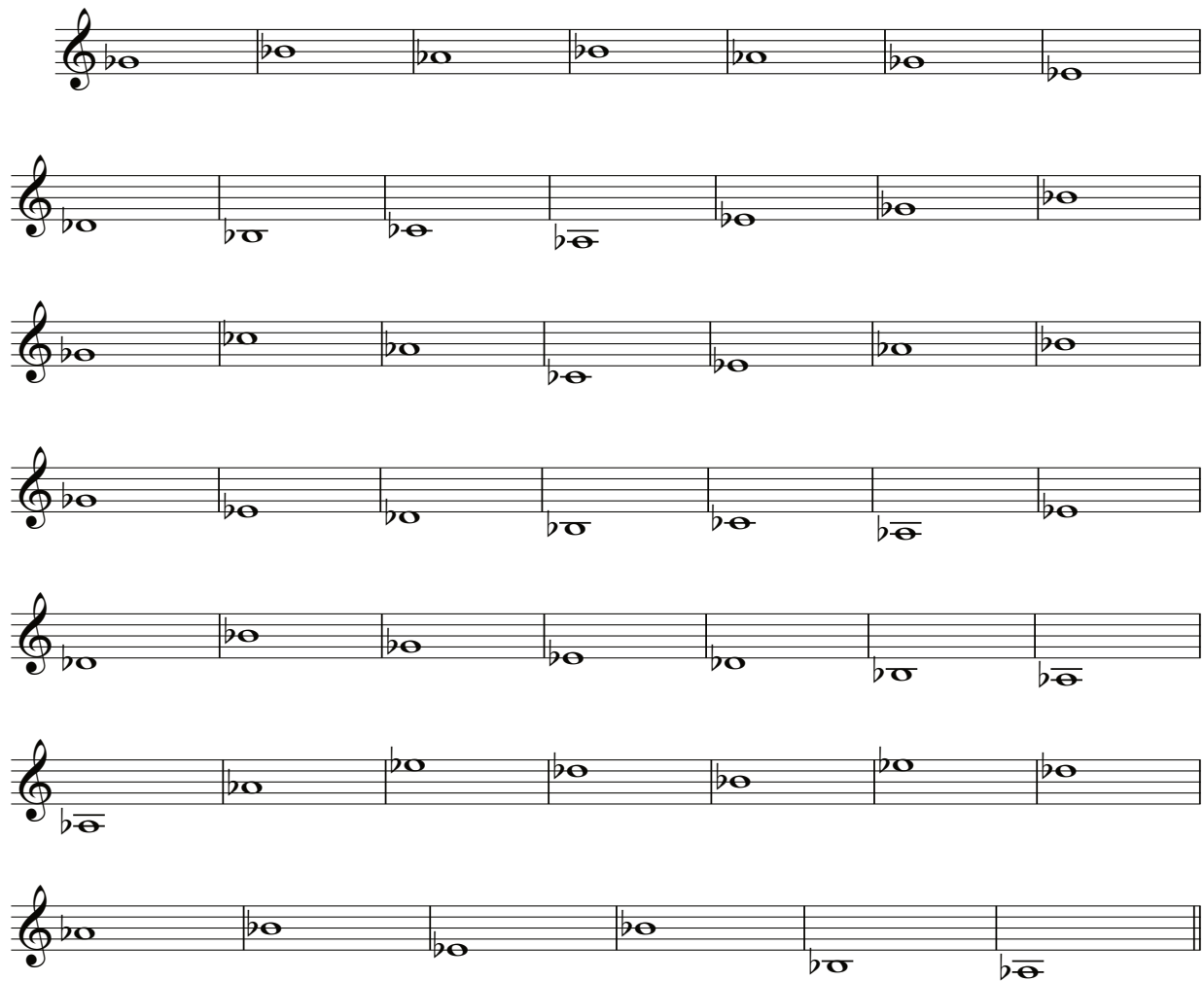
Sharp Notes in Open Position



Diagram illustrating the sharp notes in open position for the four strings of a ukulele, shown across ten staves. Each staff represents a string, and the notes are marked with a sharp symbol (#) and an 'o' for an open note.

- Staff 1 (Treble Clef): F#4, G#4, A#4, B#4
- Staff 2 (Treble Clef): C#5, D#5, E#5, F#5
- Staff 3 (Treble Clef): G#5, A#5, B#5, C#6
- Staff 4 (Treble Clef): D#6, E#6, F#6, G#6
- Staff 5 (Treble Clef): A#6, B#6, C#7, D#7
- Staff 6 (Treble Clef): E#7, F#7, G#7, A#7
- Staff 7 (Treble Clef): B#7, C#8, D#8, E#8
- Staff 8 (Treble Clef): F#8, G#8, A#8, B#8
- Staff 9 (Treble Clef): C#9, D#9, E#9, F#9
- Staff 10 (Treble Clef): G#9, A#9, B#9, C#10

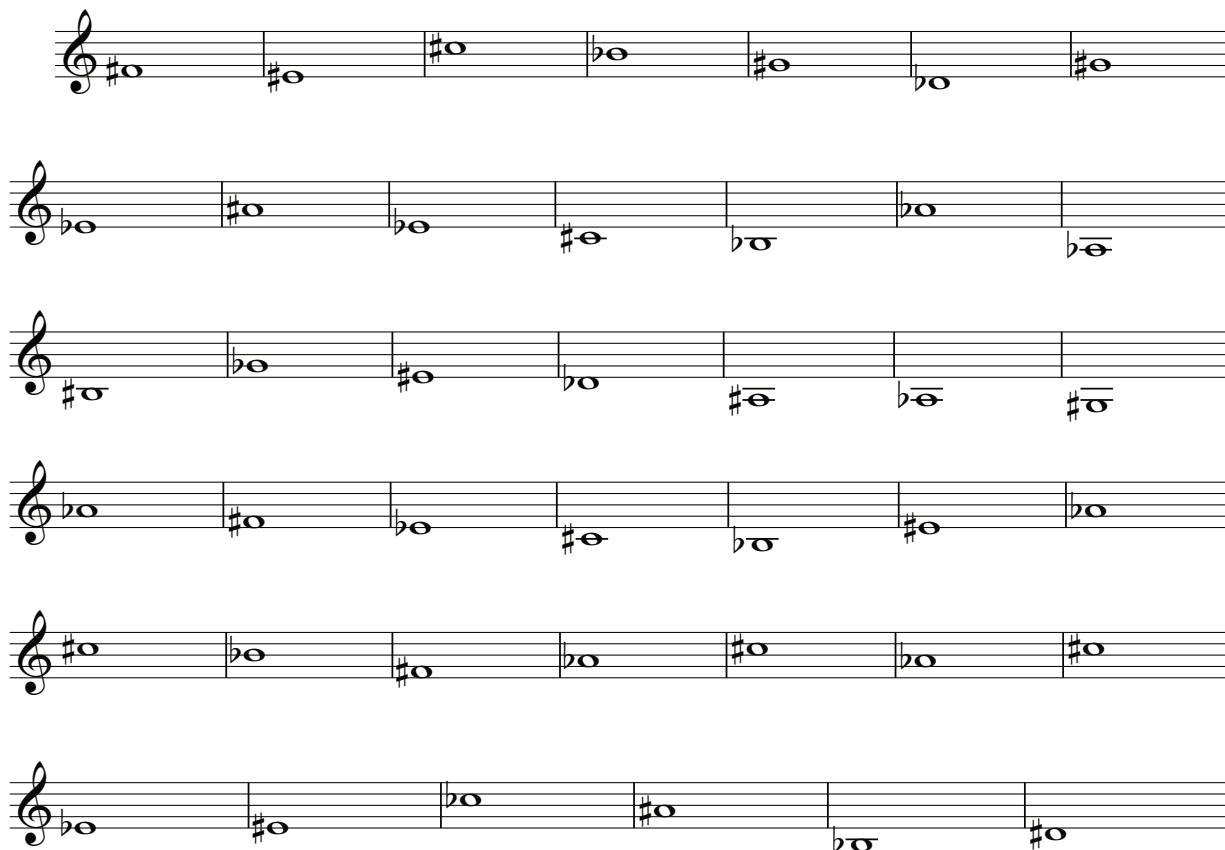
Flat Notes in Open Position



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Sharp & Flat Notes in Open Position



Adapted for Ukulele from Chuck Anderson's
Reading for Guitar

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 guitarist, author and educator.

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