

Basic Ukulele Chords

The art and science of chord fingering. “Why are some chords harder to finger than others?”

Fingers, Strings, Frets

Why one chord would be harder to finger than another is dependent on the fingers, strings, and frets that are involved. The more fingers, strings, and frets involved, the harder a chord can be to finger. What fingers used to finger a chord also a play roll.

Fingers?

We have four fingers, and they are all not equal. Some shorter than others and some stronger than others. Everybody's hand is a little different playing a role in fingering chords. An example shows up with the first chord we will cover, a C major chord using only one finger chord, that can be played using any one of your four fingers.

The combination of fingers used to play a chord. Which strings are fingered? Whether they are adjacent strings involved. The total range of frets covered. Finger dexterity, etc...

Assigning a Chord Weight

Assigning a numbered weight to each chord allows you to compare chords and discover why one can be harder than another.

If you add up the number of fingers, strings, and frets that used for a particular chord you can arrive at a number that can be used to compare chords. The process also forces you to focus on fingering and not merely take it for granted. What feels natural and comfortable is not always the most efficient, low maintenance and reproducible in a consistent manner.

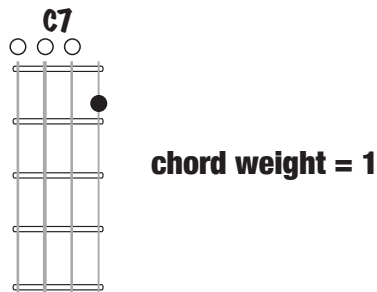


The C Major Chord

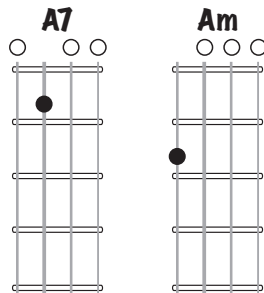
C major can be played with one finger, any one of your four fingers. Which finger is used can be determined by what chord comes before the C and what chord follows. Typically finger three is used in preparation of switching to the other chords that are commonly used with C, such as Dm, Em F, G, G7 and Am to name a few.

The C Major Chord Weight

The **C Major** chord using finger 3, string ①, fret (3), has a weight of five. It uses all four strings and one finger for a five. The lower the weight of the chord, the easier it should be to play. With all the basic open position chords using all four strings we can drop counting the number of strings and consider that the default for basic chords.



Here are a few other basic, open position chords with a weight of 1.

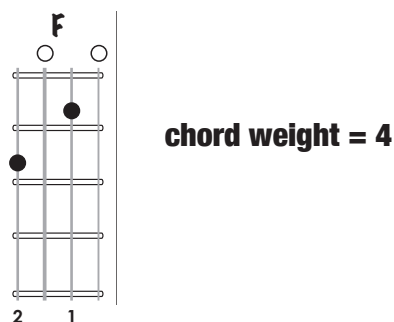


Learning Chords

Most beginners learn chords based on what chords are required for a particular song. Simple two and three chord songs are the first songs most players use to learn the ukulele. With the ease of the C chord fingering is one of the factors that contributes to it being one of the most common first chord to learn. In songs that use a C chord, the F chord and G chord are also very common as they are also, in addition to C one the primary chords for the key of C major. The C chord as we saw, using only one finger is pretty easy to play. The F is not too bad and the G is the hardest of the three common chords that are typically used with C.

F Major

The **F Major** chord uses two fingers and two different frets, for a weight of 4. As with all



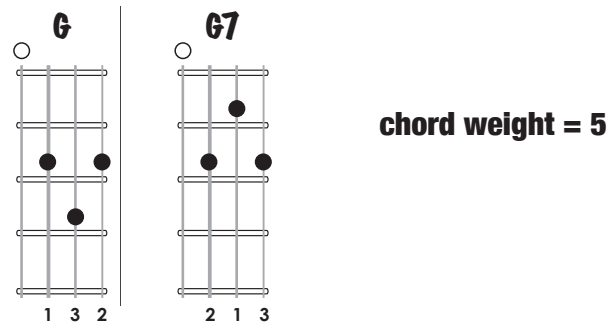
these basic ukulele chords , all four string are used.

If you use your dominant fingers 2 and 1 it will be a little easier to play than using an alternate fingering with fingers 3 and 2 or fingers 4 and 3.

Note: The fingering shown for each chord is a recommended finger and not mandatory. Alternate fingerings can and should be explored depending on the context of the preceding and following chord

G Major and G7

The **G Major** and **G7** chords are three fingers, and two different frets, for a weight of five.



Fingering DOES matter!

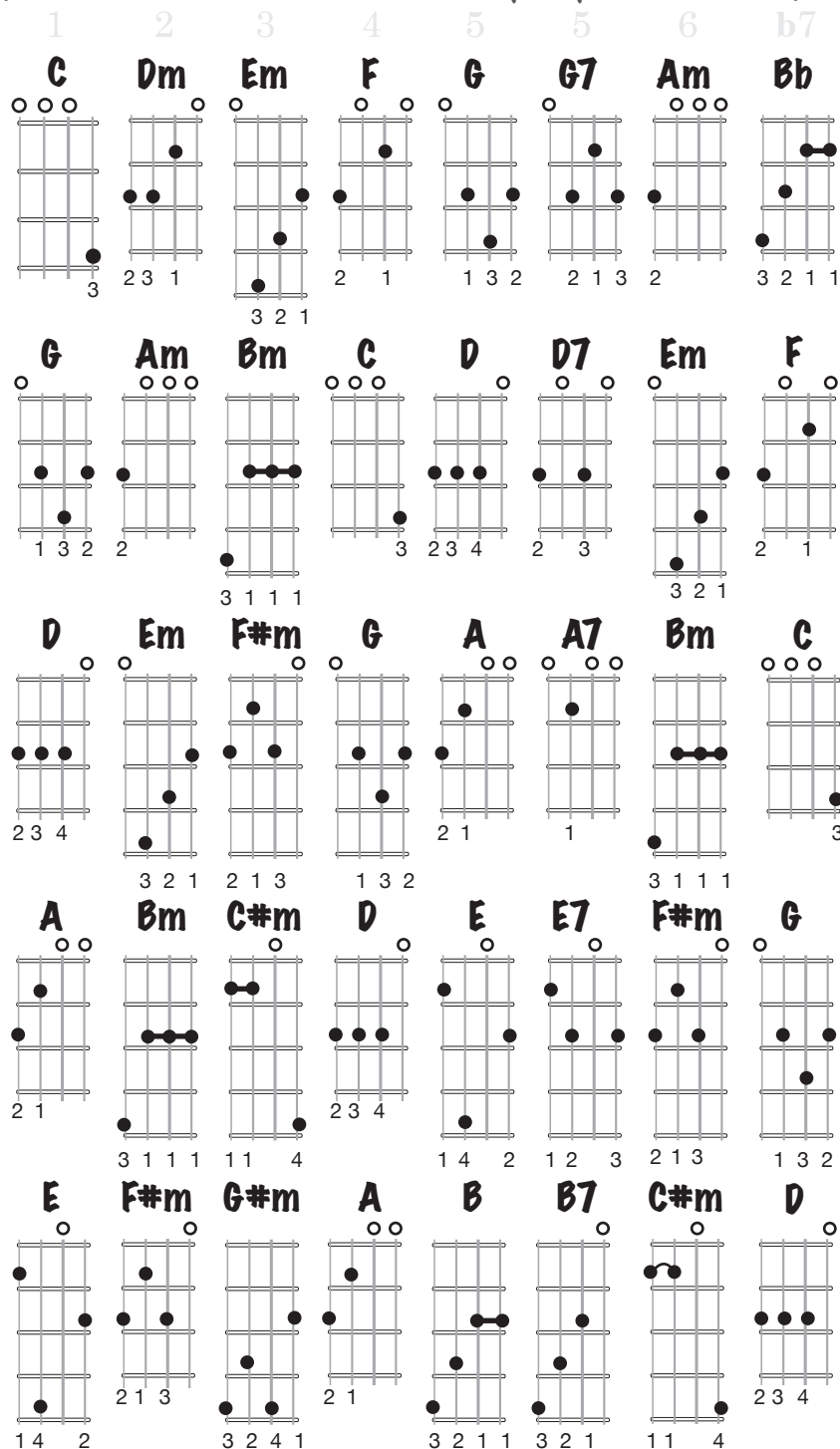
Although the G and G7 are the same chord weight, the G7 might be little easier to finger than the G. If you are playing F before the G7 having one finger or note that is shared between the F and G7 – and finger two is on the right fret and only one string away - helps with switching.

If you are using the G7 fingering combination 2 1 3 as shown. It allows you to use your longer second finger the reach to the lower string three note. Your second finger, your longest finger can reach to a lower string's fret with out changing your hand position. Generally the longer fingers can reach to lower strings better then the shorter fingers.

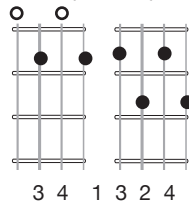
The G chord requires you to have finger 3 arch over string one and still have it sound when playing the chord. This is what makes the G a little harder to finger than the G7.

Basic Ukulele "Uke" Chords - "C" Tuning (G C E A), High or Low G

A core set of basic chords in open position that ALL Ukulele players should know.

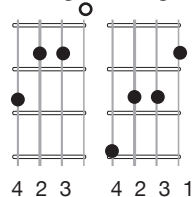


dim7dim7



A diminished seventh (dim7, °7) chord is usually played in place of a diminished chord

aug aug

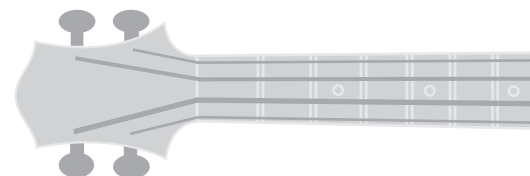


Any one of the notes of a dmin7 or augmented (aug, +) chord can be the root or letter name of the chord.

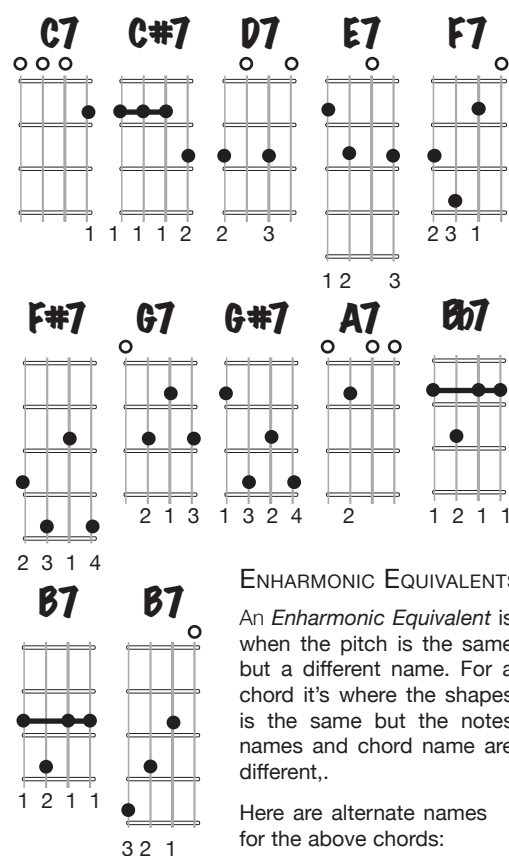
Basic Chords

Open Position Chords in Common Keys

Chords with no open position voicing are shown as their movable form.



Seventh chords can show up in any key.



ENHARMONIC EQUIVALENTS

An *Enharmonic Equivalent* is when the pitch is the same but a different name. For a chord it's where the shapes is the same but the notes names and chord name are different.

Here are alternate names for the above chords:

C#7 equals **Db7**

F#7 equals **Gb7**

G#7 equals **Ab7**

Bb7 equals **A#7**

Curt Sheller Publications

2050 Orlando Rd
Pottstown, PA 19464-2348

www.curtsheller.com
www.LearningUkulele.com



ACGCH-UKEC-BASIC \$3.95

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