

Technique - Fretting Hand 🎵

Single String, Single Note, Basic Fingering Drills

The fretting hand, left hand for right hand players and right hand for left hand players, is responsible for fretting single notes, intervals, triads and chords. Pretty much anything other than the open strings.

"One day of practice is like one day of clean living. It doesn't do you any good."
- Abe Lemmons

Although I started life out left handed. I was converted to right handed in first grade. For the lessons and articles on my site I'll assume the most of the world plays the ukulele right handed, fretting with the left hand and strumming with the right.

It is critical that you develop the finger strength and independence to explore your full musical potential. By developing great left hand technique you will be able to explore more challenging musical situations.

To develop this great left hand technique there is a series of graduated drills or finger gymnastics that will allow you to play at higher and higher levels and increase your the comfort zone of usable technique.

Gymnastics is the performance of a sequence of movements requiring physical strength, flexibility, and kinesthetic awareness...

Finger Gymnastics

All exercises should be played SLOW with an even tone and volume. Speed comes from practicing accurate, slow and under control.

All exercises can be played plucking the string with the fingers, thumb, pick or any combination of each.

Finger Names and Numbers

There are probably some fancy names for the fretting hand like there are for the plucking hand used in classical guitar instruction - but I'll go with this easy to remember assignment of numbers to fingers that typically play notes.

Finger 1 is your index finger or pointer finger

Finger 2 is your middle finger

Finger 3 is your ring finger

Finger 4 is your pinky finger

"I know you've heard it a thousand times before. But it's true--hard work pays off. If you want to be good, you have to practice, practice, practice." - A.J. English



One Note Finger Gymnastics

Taking each finger AT A time, play a single note on each string using the same fret for each. You should be able to do this using any fret. Apply only enough pressure to play the note cleanly. Anymore and it is a waste of energy.

Finger One Gymnastics

Examples are shown in standard “C” tuning, g C E A. However, tuning does not matter and the exercises are tuning independent. They can even be played on an out of tune ukulele.

The exercises can be done at any fret. Example shown starting at fret (5) with the finger indicated above the note and TAB.

***NOTE:** Standard music notation is shown for High “G”, C Tuning. All examples can be played in any tuning using the TAB.*

Finger 1

1 1 1 1 1 1

T 5 5 5 5 5 5

A 5 5 5 5 5 5

B 5 5 5 5 5 5

Model: One Note - Single String - Each String

Things to Watch for...

- **Keep your fingertips pointing to the strings.**

Regardless of which finger is playing at the time - each finger should remain pointing to the fingerboard and the strings at all times. Keep them hanging out over the fingerboard and frets that they would be playing and ready to go.

- **Don't move fingers more than needed.**

Fingers only have to come off a string just enough to not interfere with other notes sounding.

- **Play right behind the fret**

For single notes, play right behind the fret. This position requires the least amount of physical effort to play a note. Any further from the fret requires you to press harder and is more effort than necessary.

- **Thumbs Job?**

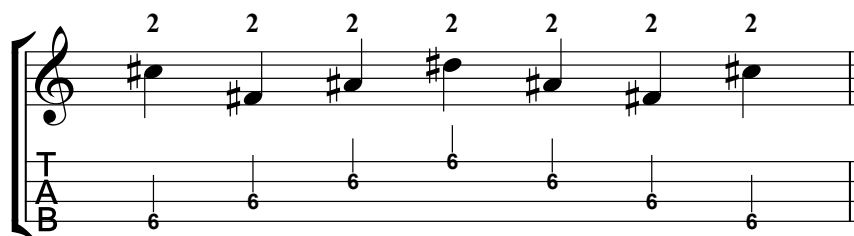
The thumbs main job when playing the ukulele is to support the fingers. Not to hold the neck of the ukulele up or hang your arm off the neck. Think of the process that is used to squeeze



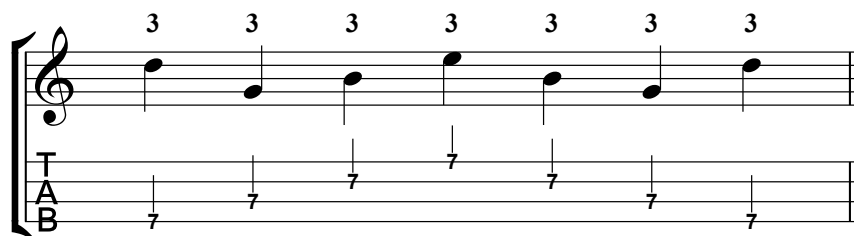
something between your fingertips and thumb. You are pressing you finger(s) down on the fingerboard and need to apply the opposite and equal pressing pressure with the thumb. The position that offers the most support is right behind the dominant fingers one and two.

A lot of technique has nothing to do with music and is simply the most efficient way to achieve the desired results. These drills can be done while watching TV.

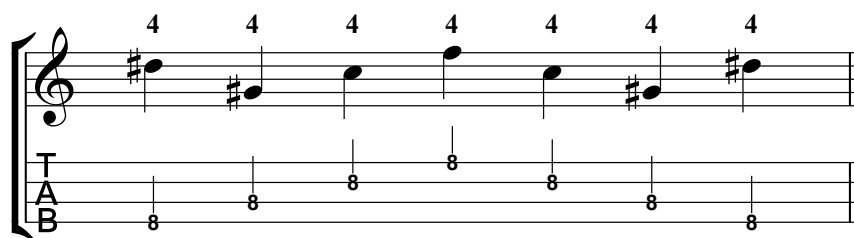
Finger Two Gymnastics



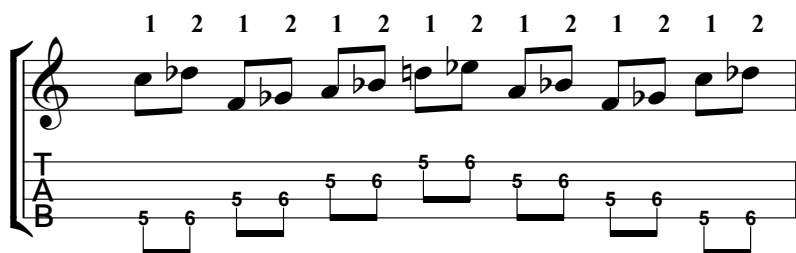
Finger Three Gymnastics



Finger Four Gymnastics



2, 3 and 4 Note Gymnastics



Two Note - Two Finger Model



Things to Watch for...

The things to watch for with these 2, 3, and 4 notes gymnastics are the same as the one finger gymnastics, plus...

• Don't move fingers more than needed

If the next note is higher and on the same string keep the current finger down. An example would be when doing the two note exercise: 1 2. Keep finger one down while playing finger two. Move fingering one to the next string while playing finger two.

"I learned that the only way you are going to get anywhere in life is to work hard at it. Whether you're a musician, a writer, an athlete or a businessman, there is no getting around it. If you do, you'll win--if you don't, you won't." - **Bruce Jenner**

"There is a right and a wrong way to do everything. If you practice eight hours a day doing something the wrong way, you will become very good at doing it the wrong way."
" - **Michael Jordan**

All Possible Two Finger Combinations

There are twelve possible two finger combinations.

1 2	2 3	2 1	3 2
1 3	2 4	3 1	4 2
1 4	3 4	4 1	4 3

All Possible Three Finger Combinations

There are 24 possible 3 finger combinations.

123	231	213	321
124	234	214	324
132	241	312	421
134	243	314	423
142	341	412	431
143	342	413	432



All Possible Four Finger Combinations

There are 24 possible 4 finger combinations.

1234	2341	2134	3241
1243	2314	2143	3214
1341	2413	3124	4213
1324	2431	3142	4231
1423	3412	4123	4312
1432	3421	4132	4321

Some finger combinations will be harder than others. Keep track of the tougher ones. Those are the ones to focus on. All four fingers need to be developed equally and function independently.

Additional Gymnastics

Beyond these basic finger gymnastics additional exercises can be created incorporating repeated notes by combining 1, 2, 3, and 4 note exercises, incorporating open strings, skipping strings.

12123 12132 12134 12143 etc...

The possibilities are almost endless. Create exercises that address specific playing skills needed or that address weaknesses in your playing.

All exercises should be played ascending and descending.



