

How to Start, Organize, and Grow Your Local Ukulele Players Club

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Most ukulele players agree they find it is really fun and rewarding when they play their ukuleles with others at a ukulele club meeting. Many ukulele players are tired of playing alone because they don't have a local ukulele club. They have asked me "how can I find other ukulele players near me". It seems like a difficult task and it is, but I encourage you to start your own local ukulele club. I have written this article as a cook book to reduce the difficulty, and time it takes to have a successful ukulele club. Why not take the challenge and form you own ukulele club, group, society or whatever you want to call it now! Don't wait to name the group, just start and the name will become apparent later on. Let the Uke playing start ASAP!

Just follow the following GCEA yellow brick road below, and most important have fun playing and sharing your ukulele with others.

1. How to find or develop other ukulele Players?
2. How to find a free, free, free meeting place?
3. What should the meeting day, and time and length be.
4. What to before you meet.
5. What to do at the meeting.
6. Other things you can do.

Starting your Ukulele club

How to find or develop other Ukulele Players

The first thing you need is connect with people who would be interested in the Ukulele if they knew the benefits of playing it.

They may be living next door to you.

If you are a member of the **Ukulele Hall of Fame Museum** UHoFM you can email or call and ask if there are any other members near you.

You can inquire on Jim Beloff's Flea Market Music Player Directory (<http://www.fleamarketmusic.com>). The players are listed by the state they live in. If you have an e-mail address go ahead and enter yourself as a player, that way other may find you. Start a new Yahoo ukulele interest group.



Visit Meetup is the world's largest network of self-organized clubs and community groups. Here is the **Ukulele Meetup** page (<http://ukulele.meetup.com/>).

Visit the ukulele forums and online groups around the internet. Here a few that I (Curt Sheller) visit often. They are a great resources for meeting fellow uke players around the world.

- **Flea Market Music** (<http://www.fleamarketmusic.com>)
- **Ukulele Underground** (<http://www.ukuleleunderground.com>)
- **4th Peg** (http://www.4thpeg.com/parlor_room/index.php)
- **UkeTalk** (<http://uketalk.com/v-web/bulletin/bb/index.php>)
- **Taropatch.net 'UkeTalk** (http://www.taropatch.net/forum/forum.asp?FORUM_ID=13)
- **Ukulele Cosmos** (<http://www.ukulelecosmos.com/>)
- **Google (Uke)** (<http://groups.google.com/group/alt.music.makers.ukulele?lnk=srg&hl=en>)

They May already play a related Musical instrument

Find out when the local banjo, dulcimer, folk societies, singing groups, and sheet music societies meet. Attend a meeting with your ukulele and when they introduce you can say proudly "I am looking for a few who are interested in learning the ukulele to form a group" You may find out you like their instrument. It is OK to know more than one instrument, many ukulele players play one or more instruments. They are all related and learning another stringed instrument will probably make you a better Ukulele player. Hooray!

Visit you local music stores and ask them if they know any ukulele players. Ask them who is buying their ukuleles and ukulele strings and having their ukulele repaired.

Hint - All people who play another instrument are good candidates for your club

Advertise

Make a sign announcing the formation of your Ukulele club for the music stores Laundromat, supermarket bulletin board, or community web site.

Place an Ad in a local community calendar calling all ukulele present and future players.

Ad copy suggestion: Ukulele Club forming!!!

We are forming a local ukulele club to have fun, learn how to play, and grow as musicians. The ukulele, invented in Hawaii in 1879, is a wonderful instrument for all music levels. You can attend without owning or ever having picked up any musical instrument. If you always wanted to play a musical instrument and thought is it was too difficult, the Ukulele is known as an easy instrument to lean. We will have a few ukuleles at the meeting for you to learn on. There is no cost to attend. So if you ever wanted to play a musical instrument, or are already a ukulele player please join us at this day.at this time.at this address. Or call me at xxx xxxx

Hint - Do not pay for this advertising You have to keep your personnel expenses as low as possible.



How to find a free, free, free meeting place

Ukulele clubs meet in almost every imaginable locations from, coffee houses, private home's, houses of worship, libraries, malls, parks, retirement community rooms, restaurants, schools and town halls, etc. If the first location is not ideal that's OK, you should expect to move as you gain members with their location ideas.

Members of many organizations can ask them for the use of their facilities. The more members you have the more possible meeting spaces will become available to you. An advantage of having the ukulele club at a location is that their members can sit in and learn also. Many restaurants would provide space because your members would buy food from them and their other customers would hear music. Some businesses want free entertainment and the customers it may bring. I like the idea of a public jamming location so passers by can hear the music and join in singing and possibly you can recruit new players.

Hint - Use a free a meeting place, that will allow you to not charge for the meeting, and give you the most financial flexibility

What should the meeting day, and time and length be

The key for whatever you decide is to schedule a consistent location, date, and time. Every individual will have their own most convenient location and time, but because you are the organizer and have to be there for all of the first meetings, I suggest you make it convenient for you and least disruptive to your family. It's OK and you should expect that you will not be able to satisfy everyone with the location and time. Wouldn't it be great if someday there is more than one ukulele group in your town meeting at different times to satisfy different schedules.

It seems that most clubs I have talked to meet at least monthly, many meet weekly or every other week. If you meet every other week it would be announced as say the first and 3rd Thursday of every month. On the length of the meeting there are no rules on the but it seems 2 or 3 hours is the normal length of time. I am a big believer of ending in time because people have other obligations and things to do so ALWAYS END ON TIME!. You can have the space available for addition time, but never use the time as a formal group.

Hint - Keeping members: In the long run you will lose members if you do not end the meeting on time. Did you ever not want to pick up a telephone call because the person calling you always talks on and on and on and you do not know the call will end?

Again the most important thing to remember is be consistent to location, day and time. People have other obligations and once you change any of these you cause potential conflicts for them and their families.

What to before you meet

The meeting should support the reason you started your ukulele club? What are the reasons you started your club possibly to form a band, form an act, have fun, help others, learn music, learn the ukulele, master the ukulele, meet other ukulele players, play for others, or whatever. I



started playing the ukulele to keep my mind stimulated, and it does. Why did you start to play the Ukulele?

Hint - Have Fun, Fun, Fun without fun your club just won't be fun

The music club music book and chord charts. It seems every established club has its own music book. You can start your club book with the free Flea Bag song book from the UHoFM web site, or use Jumpin' Jim's Ukulele Tips 'n' Tunes" by Jim Beloff, or "Happy Time Ukulele Method and Song Book" by Buddy Griffin. A 3 ring binder is good because you can add additional songs as you find them. If you are going to make transparencies of the music to display on a screen for group playing, the words and chords is all you need. I like having the melody notes on the music so some of the members can play along with the notes, and those not familiar with the song can read the music and know how the melody goes. I use the popular GCEA "C" tuning for most songs.

Invite guests and music teachers. Guests can sing along and the music teachers can lecture on some aspect of the Ukulele or music.

Create a web site. A web site is not a necessity to start, but it will increase your visibility and it is the cheapest way to communicate with members. A good way to set up a web site is to find a member who will become your web master and can locate a free web site. You can make announcements, post pictures of your ukulele events, and publish your song book. Respect the music copyrights whenever you reproduce music, but especially if you publish your song book on your web site. The Ukulele Society of Connecticut's web site is an example at www.ukuleles.org. You can find other examples of club web sites on detail data posted for some of the clubs on the Flea Market Music club list. Be sure to get listed on the Flea Market Music club list and right here on the dedicated UkuleleClubs.com site.

Have an inexpensive Ukulele, tuners and song book available for beginners. Ukuleles can be purchased on-line, but I like the idea of a buying ukuleles from a music local store. (Hey they may sponsor your club someday). When there is an instrument problem your local music store will probably have the best solution.

Hint - Explain the advantages to a local music store and they may will let you have some ukuleles and tuners on consignment for your meetings. Invite them to show their instruments and other products that might be of interest to ukulele players. We need string, books, ukulele and the like.

The way club's pay for the meetings, snacks, copies varies quite a bit. Some have formal meeting dues, others just pass the hat and ask for some contribution. It is good to have the members pay for the costs so you as the founder don't have to lay out all of the money forever. If you have a paid teaching guest you can have the teacher set the price and collect those special fees.

Hint Dues. I like the voluntary "pass the hat idea" because each club member can pay what they can want to pay, this will leave no one out of the group because of cost. Have a paid performer that can present a workshop and mini concert and charge admission to cover costs. Many of the ukulele musicians on the Ukulele Musicians page at Curt Sheller's ukulele musicians listings will perform and present workshops.



What to do at the meeting

Have a set general format for each meeting but also be flexible at each meeting. Do whatever the group wants to do at that meeting. Sometime you may not get to all of the agenda, but remember do not run over the stop time.

An example would be:

Tune Up before you start (A chromatic electronic tuner is best, It will tune to a reproducible perfect 440 concert pitch every time). It's always good to play in tune as your ear is always taking it in.

An opening song, "Aloha Oe" or "The Song of Best"

Meeting Introductions (Each attendee plays a short piece on their ukulele as a hello to the groups) New Attendees can introduce themselves and say why they are interested in the ukulele.

Round Robin where each attendee would pick a song for all to play, if it is not in the club song book then they will hand out copies so all can play along with them. It seems good to play each song at least 2 times.

Some learning (Keep it simple). Who ever feel comfortable would teach some info (Don't forget those beginners) possibly from info learned from a Ukulele exp or a new method book they bought. Keep this short 20 minutes or so. They can practice what they learned at home.

Here are a few links to songs to get a club rollin'

A lot of the clubs listed on the Ukulele Clubs page have a list of the songs that the club performs when they get together.

WIDIPEDIA: Three Chord Song (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three-chord_song)

WIDIPEDIA: Common Chord Progressions (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chord_progression#Common_progressions)

Three Chord Songs

Songs that can be played all the way through using only the I, IV, and V7 chords of the key in which the tune is being performed.

Three Chord Trick, Olav Torvund's Guitar Site (

By just knowing three chords, the I, IV and V7, you can play thousands of songs.

google spreadsheet: Three Chord Song List: Sheet1

Two and Three Chord Songs (PDF file)

Hint - Don't forget the beginners. Each meeting should have some 2 cord songs so you do not lose the beginners. You can ask the advanced players to sit next to and become the beginners coach for that meeting. Without new beginners, it will be difficult to grow and maintain your club.



Hint - Have a sign in sheet so they can record their information so you can contact them easily.

Hint - Different player levels: There would be huge differences in player levels. Try to ask the better players to become a mentor of the beginners. All of them will learn from this.

Other meeting ideas:

- Have water and snacks available
- Talk about your expo and other festival experience
- Show and tell your instruments

Tell clean Uke Jokes. Here is a link to a site of instrument jokes. Many can have ukulele substituted as the instrument of the joke. Joke like “How do you get a ukulele player to play softer? Give him some sheet music.” Here is another musician joke site.

- Organize that Ukulele trip to Hawaii
- Play some Ukulele CD's and try to play along

Other things

- Ask your local music stores to carry Ukuleles.
- Hold ukulele workshops at Dulcimer and other acoustic music festivals.
- Establish your own “Ukes for kids” using existing children’s organizations.
- Play as a group at the Open Mike at the Next Ukulele Expo.
- Recognize all spellings of the ukulele, ukelele, uke or whatever.
- Suggest all members join the Ukulele Hall of Fame Museum.

Hint - Children: If you allow children; then children under the age of (18 ?) have to attend with their parents. I suggest you only allow children at the meeting if their parent or legal guardian were present at every meeting. You are not a baby sitting club, and I always believed that you and you're your club members should not assume any responsibility or liability for children.

Be sure to visit www.UkuleleClubs.com for links to sites mentioned in this article.