

Ukulele Info and Resources

Firstly: The spelling is **UKULELE**, not **UKELELE**. This may help when you are looking for resources online!

There are several types, or sizes of uke. By far the commonest is the **Soprano**. Other common types are the

Concert	slightly bigger body and longer neck (thus more frets). Frets are slightly wider and it generally is louder.
Tenor	bigger body and longer neck again. Easier to form chords due to wider frets.
Baritone.	Much larger and more guitar like. Normal tuning is the same as the top (highest pitched) four strings on a guitar – D G B E.

String numbering: There is a standard convention for numbering the strings. This is very useful info when being taught chords, replacing strings, reading Tabs (see below). The numbering starts at the bottom string ie. the one closest to your lap when you are holding the uke in a playing position, and goes from 1 to 4 (the one closest to your chin).

Tuning: The standard tuning of Soprano, Tenor and Concert ukes is G C E A:

String 4 (nearest your chin)	G	tuned up an octave compared to the others *
String 3	C	(middle C)
String 2	E	
String 1	A	

* Some Tenor ukes have the G string tuned down an octave ie pitched below the C string. This is called Low G tuning.

Another common tuning, more common for island music is A D F# B – a notch up from the other tuning.

Hint: When you buy strings the packet may state the 2nd tuning – A D F# B. These strings will work fine for the GCEA tuning.

If you have a keyboard instrument, pitch pipe etc and the ear for it that's all you need for tuning. If not, don't panic! There are accessories to help:

Online tuner: <http://www.ukuleletricks.com/ukulele-tuner/>

This site allows you to play the correct pitch of each of the strings.

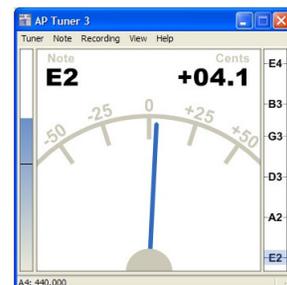
Tuner for Iphone, Ipad

<http://itunes.apple.com/us/app/ukulele-tuner/id327762565?mt=8>

If you have a Windows or Android Smartphone it will likely have an App Store button where you will find Uke Tuners. If you have an android phone, in the App Store search for Gstrings.

Some of the above tuners as well as playing the pitch can also “listen” to the note you are playing and on a meter on the screen tell you what the note is and whether you are sharp or flat.

For your PC try <http://www.ap tuner.com>. To use this you will have have a mic attached to your PC.



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Probably your best friend will be an actual tuner that you can pick up and clip to your uke. They work like the meter shown above – a screen shows you whether you are flat (to low), sharp (too high) or in tune. There are a range of these available. Most being flexible in that they can tune other instruments eg guitar, bass as well as ukes. These are available from most music shops from around \$25.

Changing strings: Fiddly and not for the faint hearted. Here's a couple of tips: Before removing a string, note carefully which way it is wound round the tuning shaft at the top of the uke and how it is attached at the bridge. You will find that strings are wound to the **inside** of the shaft. This is important or you will get confused when tuning. Also, you will see that the string is wound **DOWN** towards the body of the uke from the hole where it is inserted in the tuning shaft. This helps keep it seated in its slot where it passes onto the fretboard.

Tip: Don't buy real cheapo strings (eg \$8 ones from TradeMe). Good brands selling for under \$20 include D'Addario, Martin, Aquila..

Tip: When you change a string, it will stretch for the first week or so, thus you have to tune it constantly.

Tip: If you buy a cheap ukulele, buy a decent set of strings and immediately change them – it will make a world of difference.

Chord Chart: A MUST HAVE and available online. Download one from <http://www.ukalady.com/Images/UkeChart.pdf>

Tabs: Tabs are ukulele arrangements of songs. Most commonly they show the lyrics of songs with the chords indicated. However there are also tabs which show how to pick the melody of a song. You can probably find a tab for pretty well any song ever written on the web! This site has hundreds: http://www.muffin.net.nz/muffin/Pdf_Tablatore.html

Buying a Uke

As with any item, you get what you pay for. Cheap ukes is cheap ukes. The main problems with the cheap brands are: they may be impossible to tune correctly, don't hold their tuning, are more difficult to play as the strings are too high off the fretboard and they just don't have the sound. However, if you are careful when buying one (best to take someone along who can play them to check the tuning) and immediately replace the strings with a decent set, you can get something that is fine to start out with. Of the cheap brands (eg. Stagg, Ashton, Mahalo, Alvarez, Makala) my pick is Alvarez and Makala. If you want to aim a bit higher, Kala ukes range from \$100 - \$400+ and are worth looking at.

Where to buy:

I have a range of ukes, ranging from \$110 - \$500. You can see them at www.handpickedukes.co.nz As you are in my class, I'll do you a deal!

Piano Traders, 90 Mt Eden Rd have a splendid range of ukes ranging in price from \$47 to \$400+. They also have tuners, strings and books. I can recommend the book "Kiwi Ukulele" by Mike Dickison.

KBB Music, 157 Manukau Rd and **Mainline MusicWorks**, 219 Great South Rd both have small ranges of ukes.

Planet Music, 42 Taharoto Rd, Takapuna has a reasonable range from \$39 (Staggs) to nice baritones at \$200.