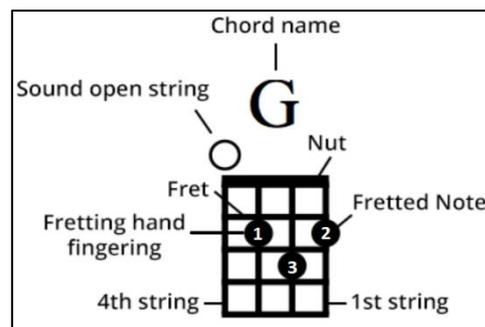


All about Chords

How to Read Ukulele Chord Diagrams

A chord diagram is designed to look like a ukulele fretboard, as if the ukulele was positioned in a vertical, upright position.

The numbers in chord diagrams (often not included in chord diagrams) indicate a suggested fingering for the chord. The number 1 indicates the index finger, number 2 the middle finger, number 3 the ring finger, and number 4 the little finger. These are just suggested fingerings.



What Are The Most Important Beginner Ukulele Chords To Know?

These are the most common ukulele chords you will encounter:

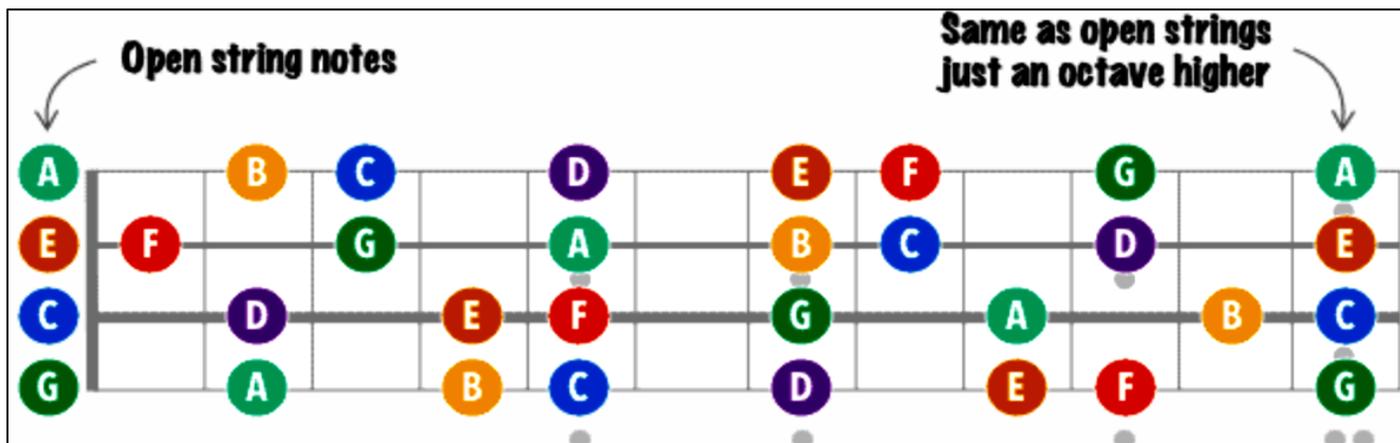
C, Am, F, G, Dm, A, A7, E7, D, D7

How do major scales work?

You don't need to understand anything about chords or scales to play the ukulele, but if you do, it can enrich your playing and give you a lot more control and understanding of why chord shapes are what they are – and even to work out chords yourself if you want.

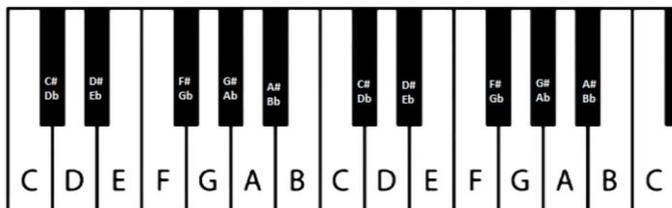
To understand how chords relate to the notes that are played, you need to think about scales.

Firstly, it helps to know that every fret on every string plays a specific note, as this fretboard diagram shows.



The notes which are left out of this diagram are sharps and flats (\sharp \flat) (the black notes on a piano). E.g., one note higher than A is both A \sharp and B \flat ; the note between C and D is both C \sharp and D \flat , etc.

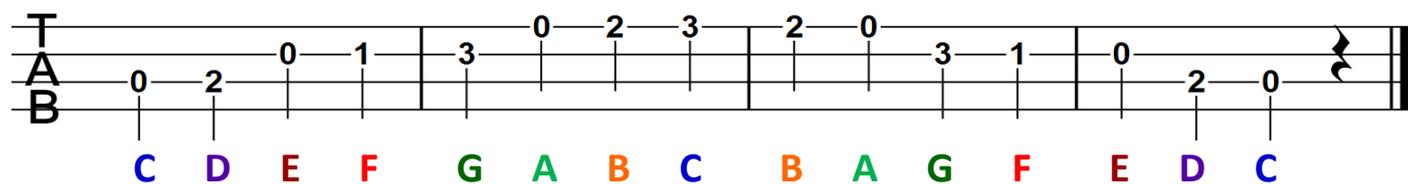
The easiest way to think about scales is to look at a piano keyboard. The C Major scale starts on the C note, and continues up the white notes to the next C. That's 8 notes (or an Octave).



The black notes are skipped. Moving up or down one note (= moving up or down one fret on the ukulele) is called a semitone, or half step.

So, moving from C note up the keyboard to the next C, the intervals between the notes are: T T S T T T S (t = Tone, S = semitone) or 1 1 1/2 1 1 1 1/2 (1 = whole step = 1/2 = half step)

C scale



All major scales are based on these intervals. It all depends on note you start with! For example, if you start with an F you will have an F major scale, which is shown below.

Scale	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th (Octave)
C major	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C
D major	D	E	F#	G	A	B	C#	D
E major	E	F#	G#	A	B	C#	D#	E
F major	F	G	A	Bb	C	D	E	F
G major	G	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G
A major	A	B	C#	D	E	F#	G#	A
B major	B	C#	D#	E	F#	G#	A#	B

You can also start on a 'black note, producing, for example an E^b scale, or F# scale

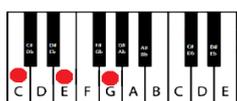
Minor scales, blues scales, etc. are made up of different combinations of whole and half steps.

What Do The Different Chord Types Mean?

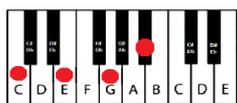
The diagrams below use the C major scale to illustrate chord names and what they mean. The C scale is the white notes of the piano:

C D E F G A B C. That's 8 notes in one octave. Other major scales (D, G, etc) have 1 or more black notes.

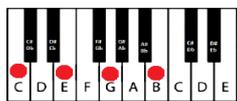
If you want to learn more about scales, check out this resource: [Scales \(Major & Pentatonic\)](#).



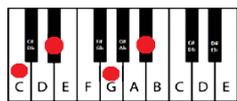
major: Major chords, the most common chord. Represented by a single letter – the *C major* chord is written 'C'. It is notes 1, 3, 5 of the C major scale. Major chords sound strong and solid.



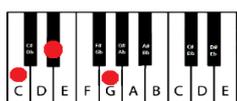
7: (e.g. C7) *Seventh* chords, are made up of notes 1, 3, 5, 7^b (i.e. 7th note of is scale flattened by one interval – or 'semitone', represented as a small ^b). Major chords sound discordant and unresolved.



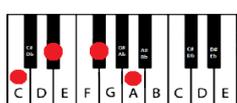
maj7: (e.g. Cmaj7) A *major seventh* chord: 1,3,5,7 (the 7th note is not flattened). Major seventh chords sound dissonant, because there are two notes only a semitone apart.



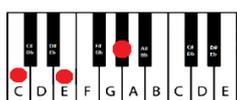
min7: (e.g. Cm7) *Minor seventh* chords have the flattened 3rd and flattened 7th notes of the scale: 1, 3^b, 5, 7^b. They sound a bit jazzy: sad and slightly unresolved.



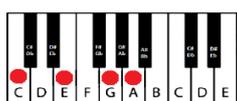
minor: (e.g. Cm) *Minor* chords have the third note of the scale flattened: notes 1, 3^b, 5. *Minor* chords tend to sound sad.



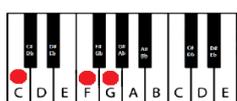
dim: (e.g. Cdim or C^o) The *diminished* chord is a very jazzy and fairly unusual chord. It is the 1, 3^b, 5^b, 6 notes of the scale. (Note, because of the mathematics of music, there are only 3 diminished chords: C^o, C#^o and D^o. So C^o = D#^o = F#^o = A^o, etc.)



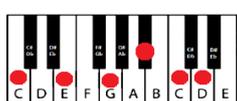
aug: (e.g. C+ or C⁺) The *augmented* chord. It can also be represented by a "+" sign. The 5th note of the scale is raised (i.e. sharpened) a semitone, 1, 3, 5#. Augmented chords sound weird and a bit demented.



6: (e.g. C6) *Sixth* chords are notes 1, 3, 5, 6 of the scale. They sound pleasant, but unresolved. (Sixth chords are also minor seventh chords of a different scale). You can also have a Minor Sixth chord: 1, 3^b, 5, 6.



sus: (e.g. Csus4) The *suspended* chord has the 4th note of the scale instead of the 3rd: 1, 4, 5. It also sounds pleasant, but unresolved, and will almost always resolve to the major chord of the scale: i.e Csus4 is almost always followed by C.



add9/sus2: (e.g. Cadd9/C9/Csus2) The "add9" chord is the seventh chord with the 9th note of the scale added: 1, 3, 5, 7^b, 9. There are 8 notes in an octave, so the 9th note is also the second note, hence "add9" can also be called "sus2".

Chord Variations

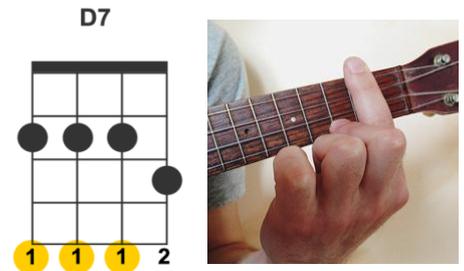
There are multiple ways to play the same chord across the ukulele fretboard. This is because most chords contain 3-4 notes, and these notes can be rearranged in different orders, known as inversions, and in different octaves up and down the neck. This is because any given note will occur in several positions on different strings of the ukulele, as the diagram shows. Depending on where they are, these are either the same note on a different string, or octaves of each other.

A chord played lower on the fretboard will have a lower, warmer sound. A chord played higher up the fretboard will have a higher, brighter sound. Some chord variations are easier to play than others!

Barre Chords

When you see a chord diagram which indicates the same fret across adjacent strings, then, that means to **barre** or press down multiple strings with a single finger. The **index finger** is pressed flat across all (or most) strings.

Barre chords are more difficult for beginners, so they require more practice!



How Can I Make a Chord Easier to Play?

- Search for an easier variation. For example, the D7 chord can be played like this:  or this: 
- Mute or don't play a string. E.g. Bb is a difficult chord especially for those with arthritis. If you ignore the bottom (G) string it becomes way easier!
- Practice! When learning a new or difficult chord, alternate it again and again with one or more other chords - especially chords that tend to come before the chord in question.

Position of fingers on fretting hand

Bend your fingers over so the tips are as close to being at right angles to the strings as possible. To do this, make sure your wrist is well forward under the neck of the ukulele, to give the fingers room to come around over the strings properly. Put your finger just behind the fret, not on it.

How Do I Stop My Chords From Buzzing?

Buzzing chords are very common, especially when you're first getting started. The trick is to fret the strings as close behind the fret as possible! A quick way to check whether the notes are ringing clearly is to fret the chord and pluck each string individually to make sure it isn't being muted by either poor finger position, not enough pressure or another finger accidentally muting the string.

Why Do My Chords Sound Out of Tune When I Play?

If your ukulele chords sound out of tune, check your tuning. It's not uncommon to need to tune every 15 minutes of playing, depending on the quality of your ukulele. Cheaper ukuleles tend not to be as in tune further up the neck.

How Do I Change to a Chord in time?

Plan and visualize your chord changes in advance, and if necessary, don't strum the last beat or two (or more) before the chord change.

More information: <https://ukuleletricks.com/ukulele-chords/>

Online chord finder and reverse chord finder: <https://www.tigardukes.com/songbook/>