

STRUMMING

There is a great variety of preferred styles and techniques for strumming. Experiment to see what you are most comfortable with, and what gives you the most flexibility and best sound.

There are lots of tutorials on YouTube for every aspect of uke playing. Take a look at some on strumming (use search terms like *ukulele*, *strumming*, *techniques*, *tutorial*, etc.)

Different strumming patterns will work with different songs. Experiment. As you get more confident, emphasise the more prominent beats by strumming these louder (with more force), and make some of the unemphasised beats softer. In conventional songs with 4 beats to the bar, the first and third beats are stronger. On some tunes the second and fourth beats may be stronger. This is the case in reggae, as well as lots of rock songs. Listen to recordings of the songs and try to emulate the feel.

The most critical thing is to keep your wrist loose and relaxed, not tense. Also try to strum all of the strings evenly.

Three different ways to strum

- 1st finger bent. Down with the nail, up with the fleshy part of the tip of the finger
- You can also use the nail of the thumb on the up strokes with your 1st finger on the down strokes
- For gentle, single strums, just the thumb sounds nice
- Some players use a plectrum. A ukulele plectrum is a thick felt plectrum, rather than a plastic plectrum as used in a guitar (which sounds too harsh on the uke)

There are more, but they're fancier.

Other things to remember when strumming

- Over where neck meets the body (that's about the middle of the string).
- Relaxed wrist, swing from the wrist. (Shake it about to warm up)

Strumming patterns

Likewise, there are lots of strumming patterns you can use.

At the very beginning, when there is a lot to concentrate on, you might prefer to do a simple down stroke at the start of every bar. This will sound fine, and give you time to think about that next chord change. In time, you should aim to become comfortable with doing upstrokes as well. As a rule, downstrokes are stronger sounding than upstrokes, which are more like 'fill in' strokes.

Some basic strumming patterns

1. Downbeat on 1
2. Downbeat on 1 3
3. Downbeat on 1 2 3 4
4. Downbeat on 2 4
5. 1&2&3&4& (up on the &s)
6. Always up on the &s (well, almost always)
7. Try 1 then 1 3, then 1 2 3 4 then 1&2&3&4&
8. Then 1 2&3 4& / 1 2&3 4& / 1 2&3 4& / 1 2&3 4& /
9. 1 2&3& 4 / 1 2&3& 4 / 1 2&3& 4 / 1 2&3& 4 /
10. 1& 2&3&4 / 1&2 3&4 / 1&2 3&4 / 1&2 3&4 / 1&2 3&4 /
11. 1 2&3&4& / 1 2&3&4& / 1 2&3&4& / 1 2&3&4& /
12. 1 2& &4& / 1 2& &4& / 1 2& &4& / 1 2& &4& /
13. 1 2& &4 / 1 2& &4 / 1 2& &4 / 1 2& &4 /
14. 1 2&3 4 / 1 2&3 4 / 1 2&3 4 1 / 1 2&3 4 1 /
15. 1 2 3&4& / 1 2 3&4& / 1 2 3&4& / 1 2 3&4& /

Swing feel

Lots of forums of music popular on the uke use swing time – such as Hawaiian, jazz and blues. In swing time the down strum lasts twice as long (ish) as the up strum like this: **Daah-de daah-de daah-de daah-de**

Chnking

You can funk up the strumming a little with a few 'chnks'. With a chnk you strum down and hit the strings with the underside of your hand, so you get a percussive sound from the strum. Try: **down, up, then a chnk followed by an up**

As you get more advanced, you can try the strumming technique that really makes you sound like a fancy ukulele player: **Triplets**. This involves two down strokes and one upstroke in one beat (i.e. not *one and*, but *one ah and*). Again, there are lots of ways to achieve this, but the most common involve holding your thumb and first finger several centimetres apart, and strumming down with finger then thumb, and then up with either your thumb or finger. Each of the 3 strokes should be evenly spaced). Start very slowly. It takes a lot of practice to get this up to speed and be comfortable with it, but it sounds great. Again, check out YouTube see what it sounds like and to get instructions.

FINGER PICKING

Here are a few really simple finger picking patterns, which will add variety to your playing. They involve playing one string at a time, rather than strumming across all at once.

T = Thumb F = Finger(s)

Pattern 1: Alternating thumb and finger

	Beat 1	Beat 2	Beat 3	Beat 4
String 1 (G)	T			
String 2 (C)			T	
String 3 (E)		F		
String 4 (A)				F

Pattern 2: Arpeggio

	Beat 1	Beat 2	Beat 3	Beat 4
String 1 (G)	T			
String 2 (C)		F1		
String 3 (E)			F2	
String 4 (A)				F3

Pattern 3: Arpeggio with reverse (for songs in 3:4 or 6:8)

	Beat 1	Beat 2	Beat 3	Beat 4	Beat 5	Beat 6
String 1 (G)	T					
String 2 (C)		F1				F1
String 3 (E)			F2		F2	
String 4 (A)				F3		