

ELEMENTARY
'UKULELE EXPLORATION

WITH MILES WILCOX

MMEA ALL STATE 2022

OUTLINE

- **Introduction**
- **Setting Expectations**
- **The Basics**
 - ▶ **Brain Break**
- **Differentiation**
- **Helpful Resources**
- **Teaching Tips**
- **Questions**

A person is shown from the waist down, sitting on a bed and playing a light-colored wooden ukulele. The person is wearing a light blue and white checkered shirt and matching pants. The background consists of a bed with a white sheet and a pinkish-red pillow. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The word "INTRODUCTION" is written in large, bold, black capital letters across the center of the image.

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT ME

➤ MR. MILES

- **BA in Music** : Bard College at Simon's Rock
- **Masters of Music in Music Education** : Boston Conservatory at Berklee
- **Berklee Institute for Arts Education and Special Needs** : Private Lessons, Music Class for Young Children, Rock Band, 'Ukulele Ensemble (2015–)
- **Newton Public Schools** : K-5 General Music including 'ukulele, Band, Orchestra (2020–)



LEARNING TARGETS

- ©I can explain the basics of playing the 'ukulele
- ©I can name at least 3 best practices for teaching 'ukulele
- ©I can identify next steps in my 'ukulele learning & teaching journey



***There will be time at the end
for questions— you may also
raise your hand at any point!***

A photograph of two young girls with curly hair sitting on a patterned rug. The girl on the left is holding a brown ukulele and looking down at it. The girl on the right is also holding a ukulele, which is partially inside a pink gift bag, and looking towards the first girl. The background is a warm, yellowish light. The text 'SETTING EXPECTATIONS' is overlaid in the center in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

HOW DO WE TREAT OUR INSTRUMENTS?

- **Pre-practice of handling delicate instruments**
- **Establish Rest and Ready Positions first**
- **Attention Grabbers**
- **Logical consequences**
- **Allow students a chance to earn back an instrument that was taken away**

ATTENTION GRABBERS

TO BE TAUGHT BEFORE STUDENTS HAVE AN INSTRUMENT IN THEIR HAND

Rest Position:

- Strings are quiet
- Right hand covering sound hole
- Strings face down on lap
- *Shave and a haircut, "two bits"* = "tap tap" sound hole
- "Instruments down in 5, 4, 3, 2, 1"

Ready Position:

- Instrument in playing position, "body on belly"
- Left hand chord is set up
- Start in silence
- "Are you ready?" "Aye aye, captain!"
- "Ho'omakaukau" - "'Ae!"

THE BASICS



First of all, what do I call it?

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE HAWAIIAN AND AMERICAN PRONUNCIATIONS

* Hawaiian: spelled with an 'okina

'Ukulele : oo-koo-LEH-leh

* American: no 'okina, diphthongs

Ukulele : yoo-kuh-LAY-lee





How do you hold the 'ukulele?
Under your arm, or in your lap.

Two hands!

**Left hand
pushes
strings
down on
the
fretboard**



**Right
hand
strums or
plucks
the
strings**



Left Hand

**Left hand
pushes
strings
down on
the
fretboard**



Left Hand con't

**Keep
fingers
round,
press
fingertips
all the
way down
on strings**



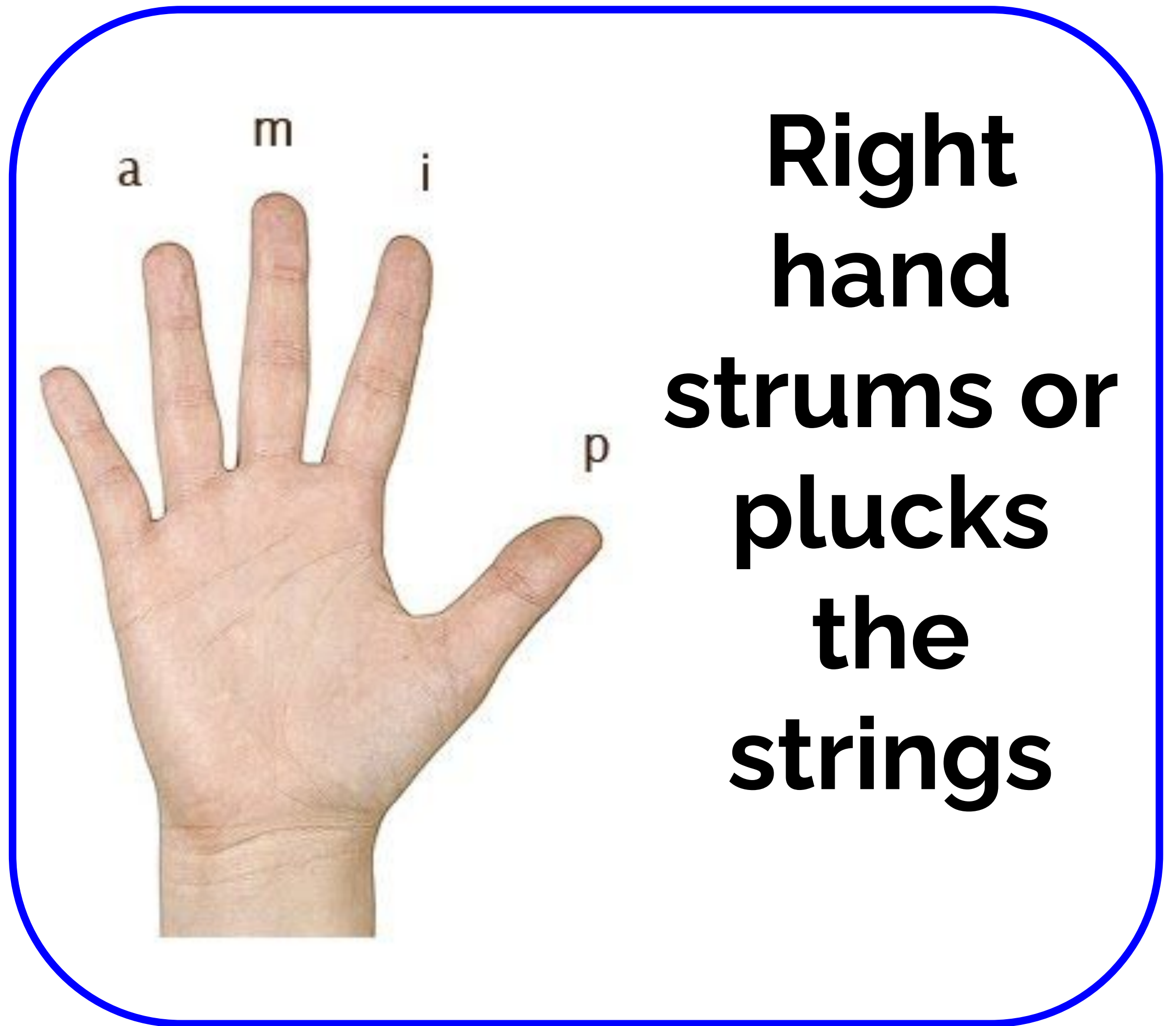
LEFT HAND

**THIS HAND IS IN CHARGE OF MELODY & HARMONY :
CHANGING NOTES**

- **Round fingers: make the letter C**
- **Look for lines on fingertips after pressing**
- **Touch only one string with each finger**
- **Thumb sits at the top where fretboard and neck meet, does not wrap and touch strings**
- **Fingers sit between frets “in the fret space”**



Right hand



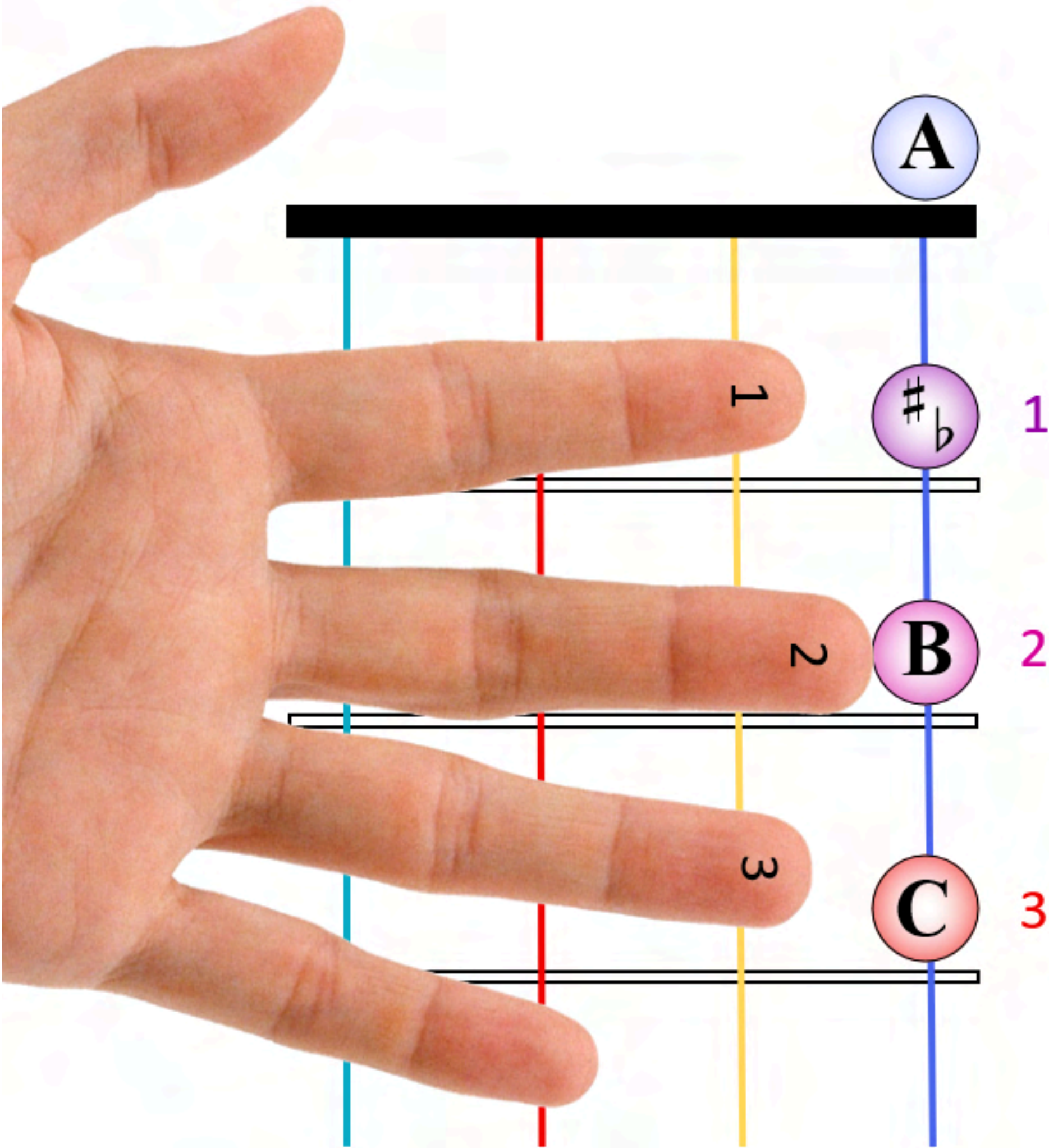
**Right
hand
strums or
plucks
the
strings**

RIGHT HAND

THIS HAND IS IN CHARGE OF RHYTHM & STEADY BEAT

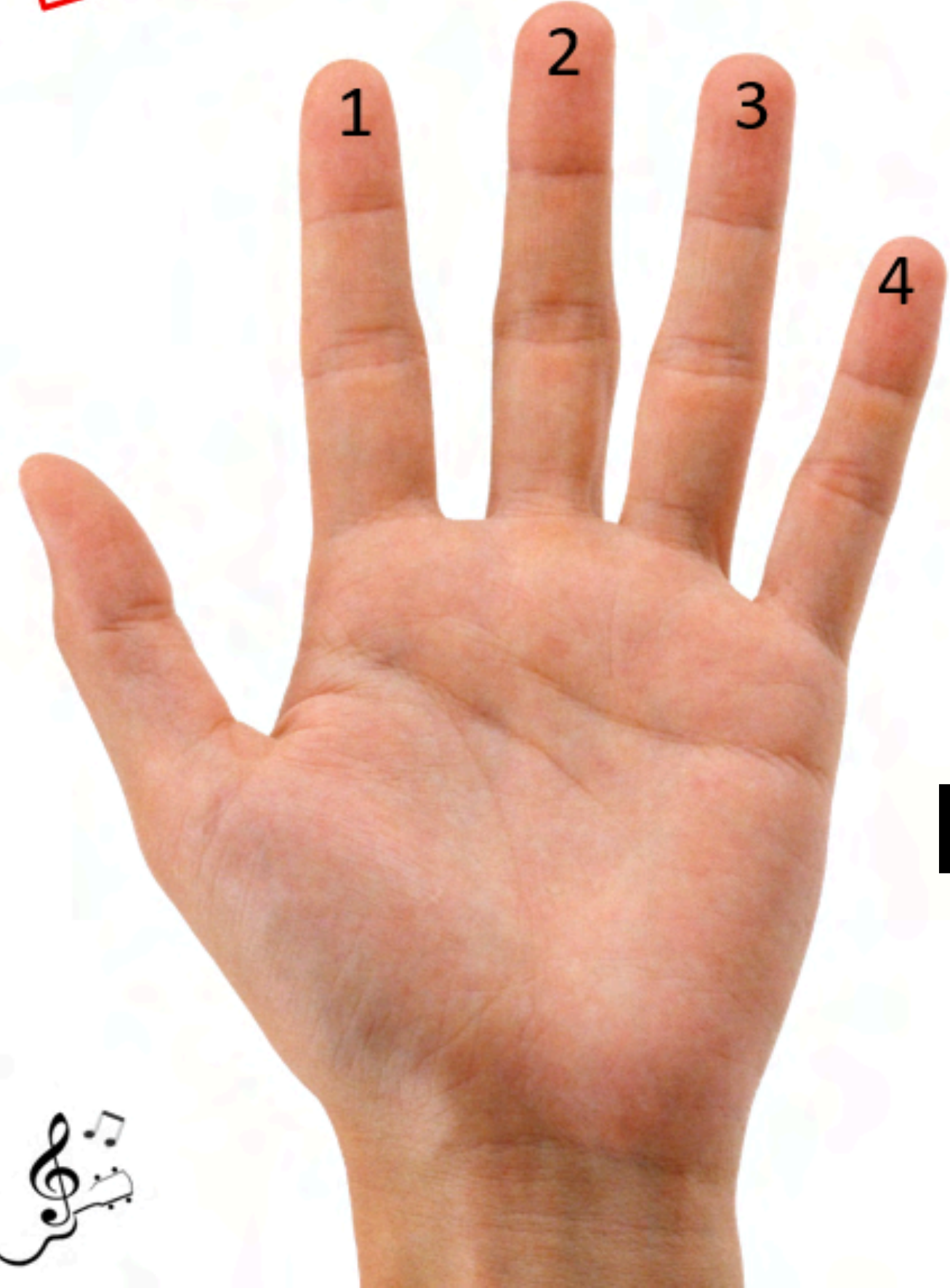
- **Plucking versus Strumming**
- **Use the sideways thumb for ease, offer choice to use pointer finger**
- **Gentle strums**
- **Up and Down strums**
- **Down beats (quarter notes) on Down strum, upbeats on the Up strum**
- **Flexible wrist and elbow**





"Batman Theme"
3-3 2-2 1-1 2-2
3-3 2-2 1-1 2-2
Strum, strum!

BATMAN SONG

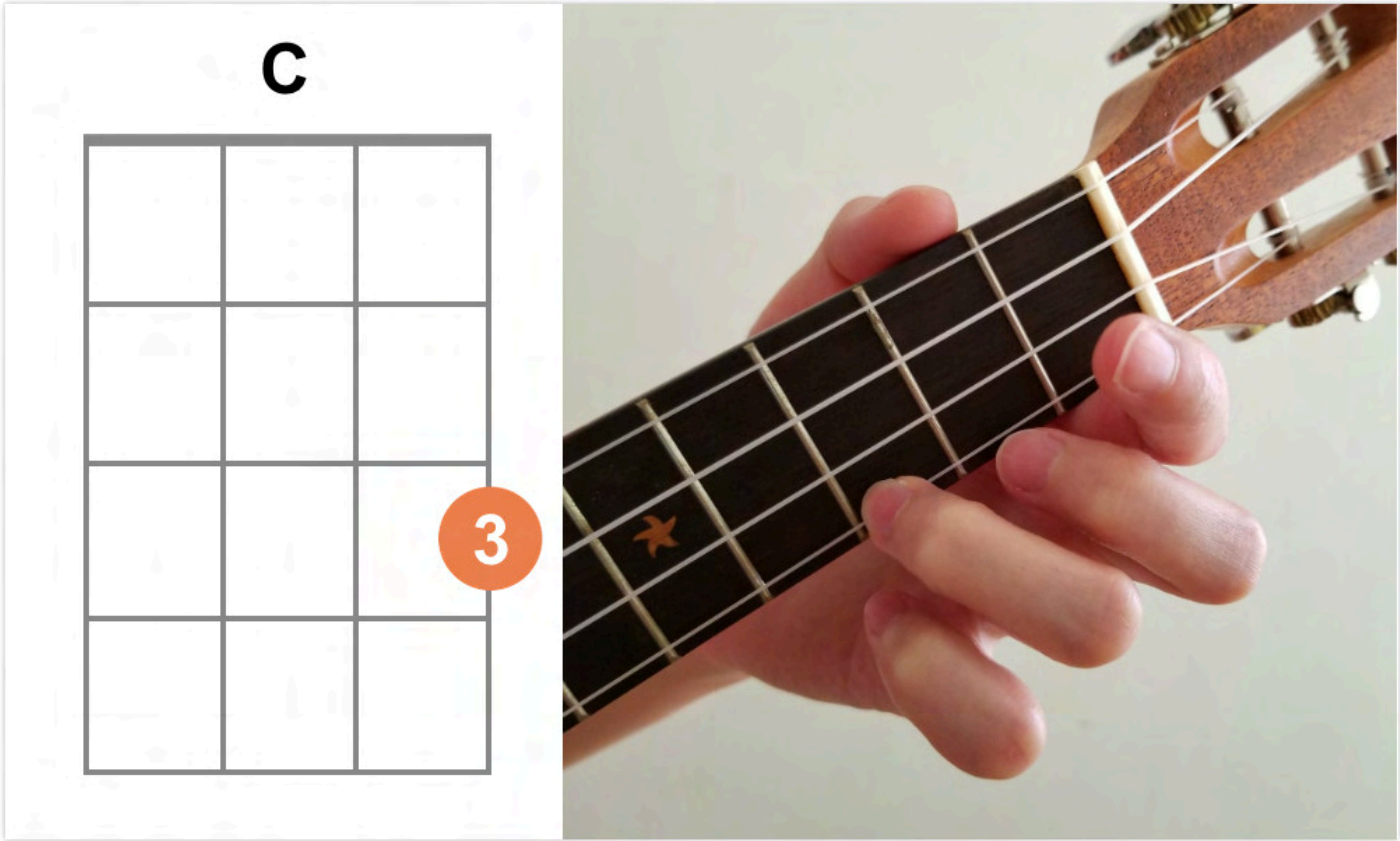


**In preparation of
playing a C chord**



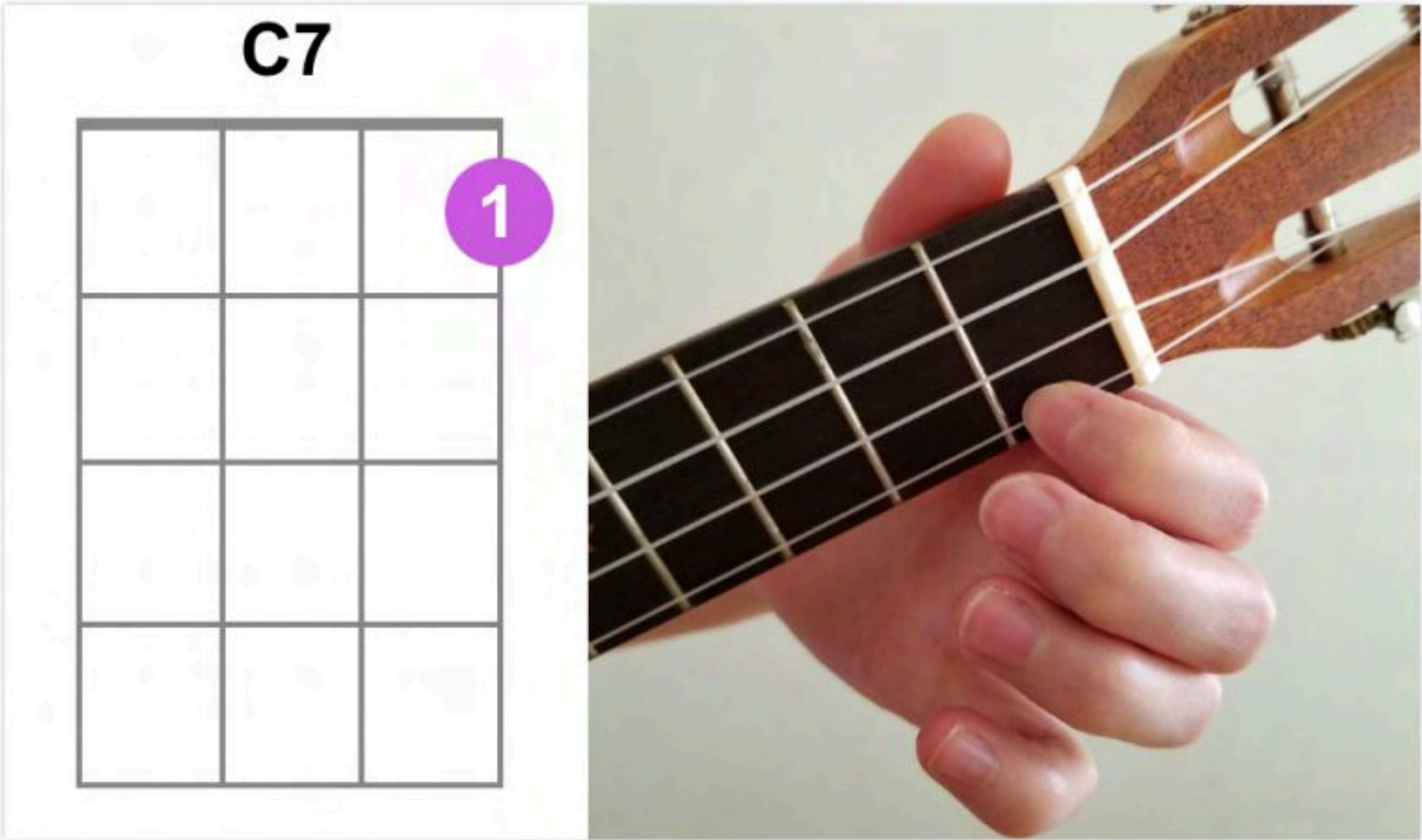
C MAJOR CHORD

First chord for upper elementary students



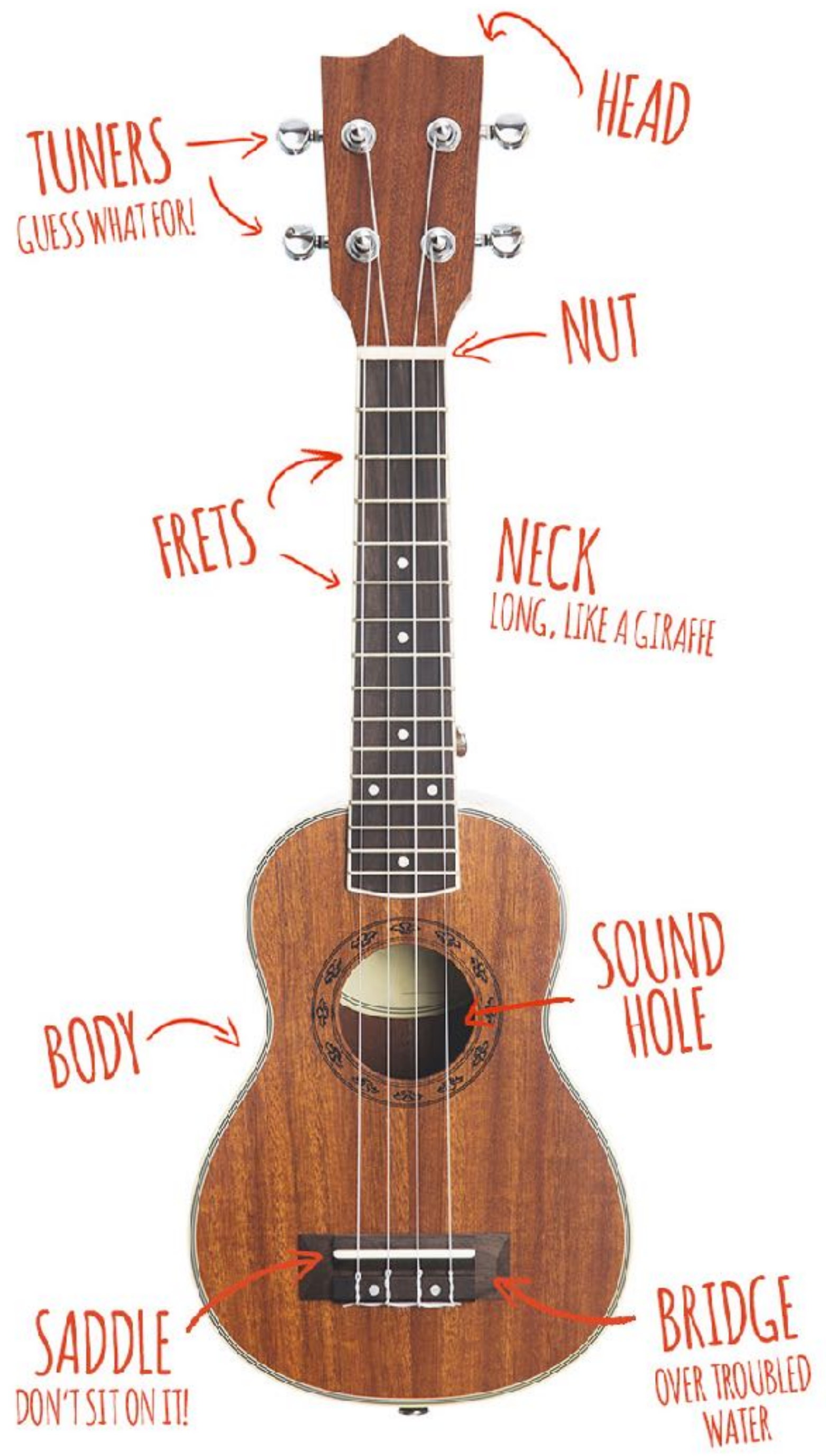
C7 CHORD

First chord for early childhood/lower elementary students



A photograph of a ukulele resting on a wooden crate. To the left of the ukulele is a woven basket with a rope handle. In the background, the legs of a person wearing white pants are visible. The image has a soft, warm color palette with a gradient from light blue on the left to light pink on the right.

**WHAT ELSE DO WE LEARN ABOUT,
BESIDES PLAYING THE UKULELE?**



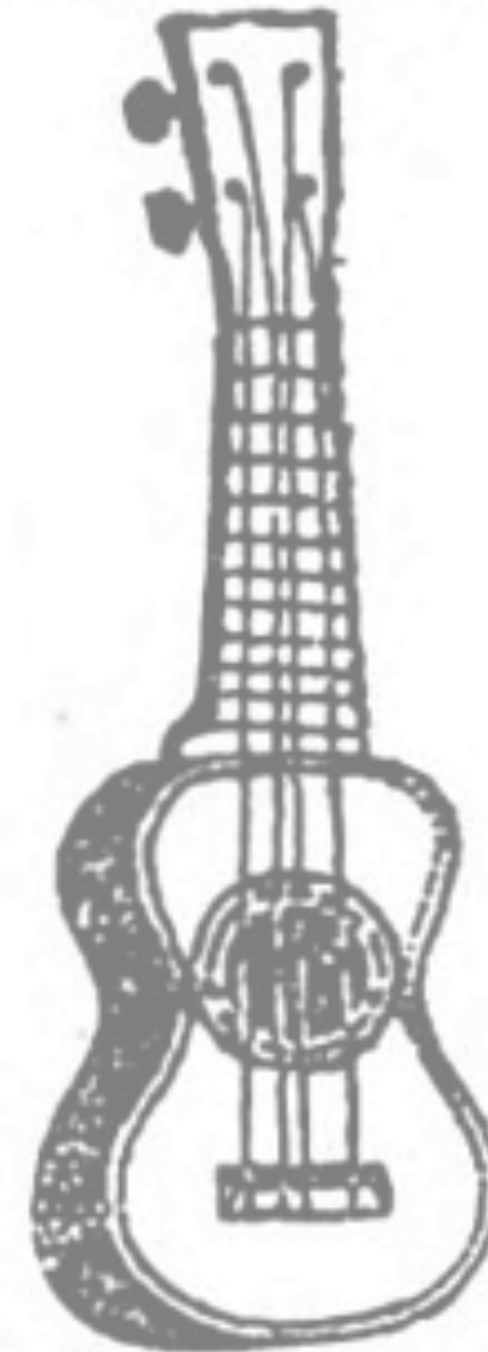
PARTS OF THE UKULELE



This Genuine Hawaiian
UKULELE OUTFIT

Only **\$4.50**

Including Genuine Hawaiian Ukulele
and Complete Book of Instructions.



HERE'S a dandy Musical Gift, for grown-ups and youngsters alike! Everybody loves the plaintive, strumming melody of the Ukulele—and everybody can play it—it's the easiest musical instrument to learn.

The book of instructions which We carry the largest stock of
in as a present. You can get a genuine Hawaiian Ukulele in the
with an explanation of the instrument. Price range \$4.50, \$6.00, \$8.00,
\$10.00, \$12.00, \$15.00, \$20.00.
After Christmas morning with a Drop in and let us show you how
"Uke!" Get one as a "gift" for yourself. easily they are played.

MAIL ORDERS FILLED.

All Other Musical Instruments

—are here in a wide range of good, reliable
grades, all most reasonably priced.

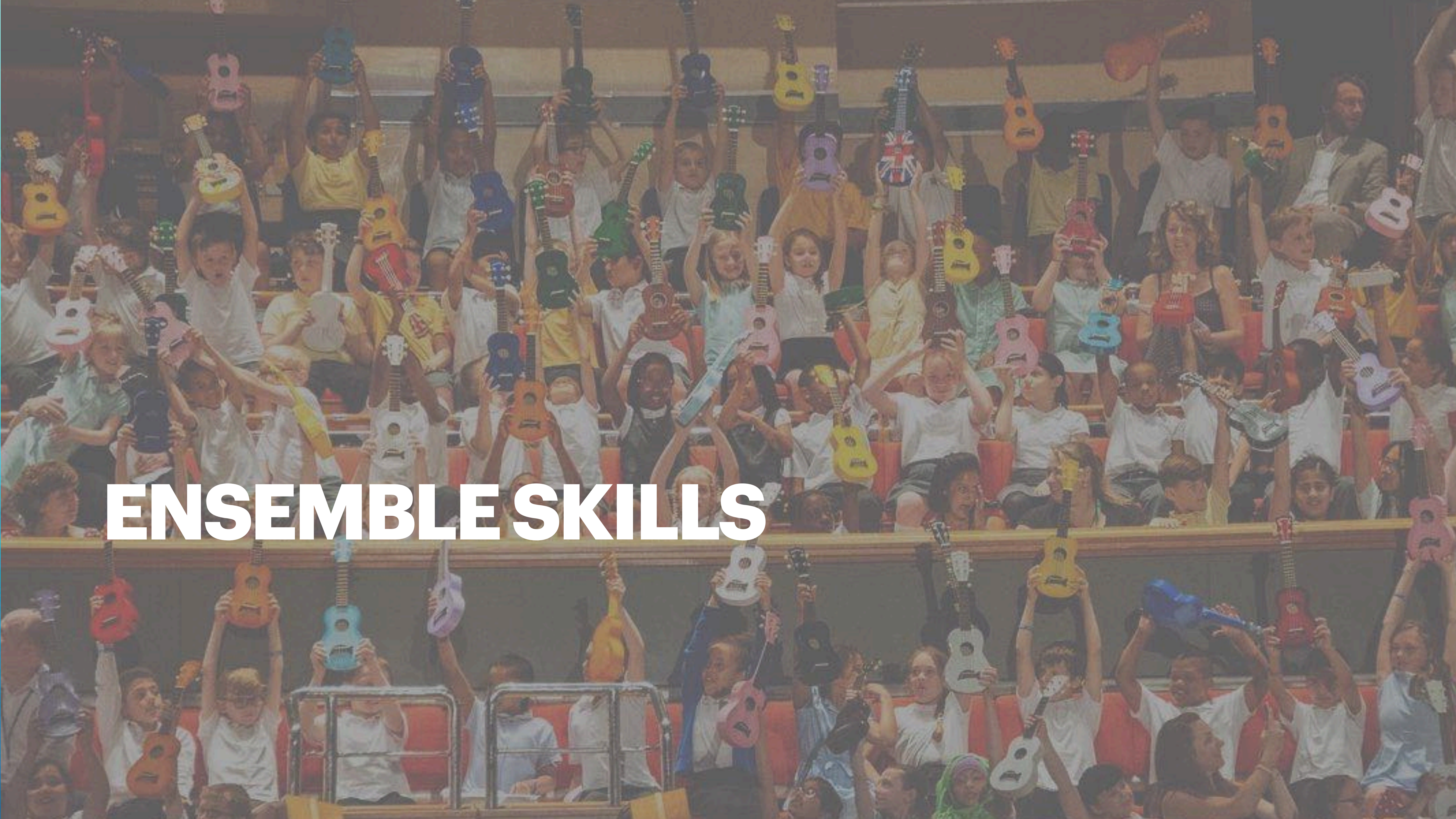
Violins, \$12 up.

Bugles, \$3.00 up.

Mandolins, \$5.00 up.



HISTORY OF THE UKULELE



ENSEMBLE SKILLS

4 MIN BRAIN & STRETCH BREAK!



LONOMUSIC.COM

A young child with dark hair and bangs is smiling while playing a wooden ukulele. The child is wearing a light-colored shirt. The background is a warm, slightly blurred indoor setting. A teal-to-yellow gradient overlay covers the entire image, with the text 'DIFFERENTIATE FOR GRADE LEVELS' centered in bold black letters.

DIFFERENTIATE FOR GRADE LEVELS

KEEP IT SIMPLE, SILLY!

DON'T FEEL LIKE YOU NEED TO TEACH LOTS OF CHORDS, OR A NEW CHORD EACH WEEK.

For Early Childhood:

Strumming & plucking open strings

Can detune A string down to G

For Lower Elementary:

Songs in C Major: C only

Songs in F major: F - C7 (or C)

For Upper Elementary:

Songs in C major:

C - Am - F - G (or G7)

For Further Learning:

Songs in G major:

G - Em - C - D (or D7)

CHORD SEQUENCE

WHAT ORDER DO YOU TEACH THE CHORDS IN? IT ALL DEPENDS ON WHAT YOUR GOALS ARE.

For Lower Elementary:

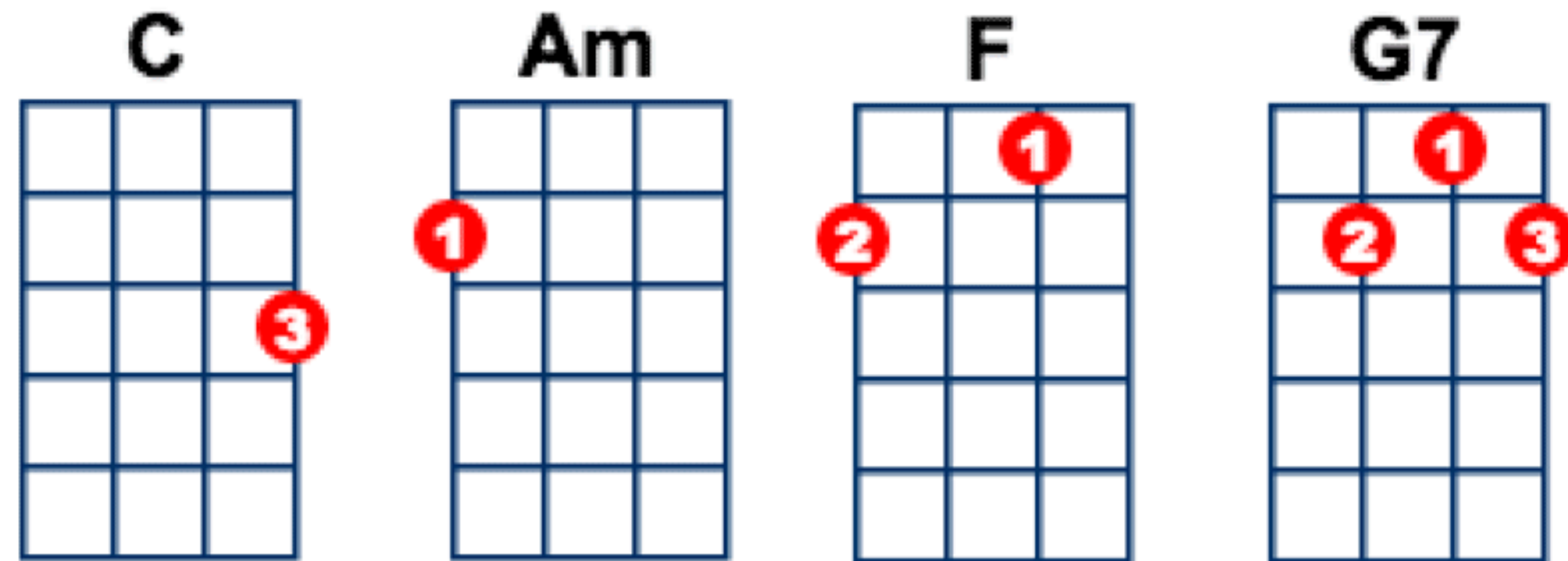
1. C7 chord
 2. C chord
 3. Modified *F, Am
-

4. F chord

For Upper Elementary:

1. C & C7 - Batman Song
 2. Am, F or Modified *F
 3. G7
-

4. G, Dm, Em, D7, E7, ...



FOUR MAGIC CHORDS

YOU CAN PLAY HUNDREDS OF SONGS WITH JUST THESE FOUR CHORDS!

SCAFFOLDING

EVERY STEP HAS PRE-KNOWLEDGE, AND PRE-STEP ACTIONS

- Consider musical prior knowledge (steady beat, high/low, harmonic awareness, etc)
- Consider the physical actions involved in each step
- For changing from C7 to *F, practice switching strings, going from ground to chin
- Pre-teach isolated concepts: strumming/plucking separately from left hand skills
- Pre-teach songs (melody, lyrics, even chord changes) before applying to instruments

ONE CHORD (I) SONGS

Students strum the tonic chord on a steady beat

Ideal for simple songs

C / / / /

Row, row, row your boat,

C Major

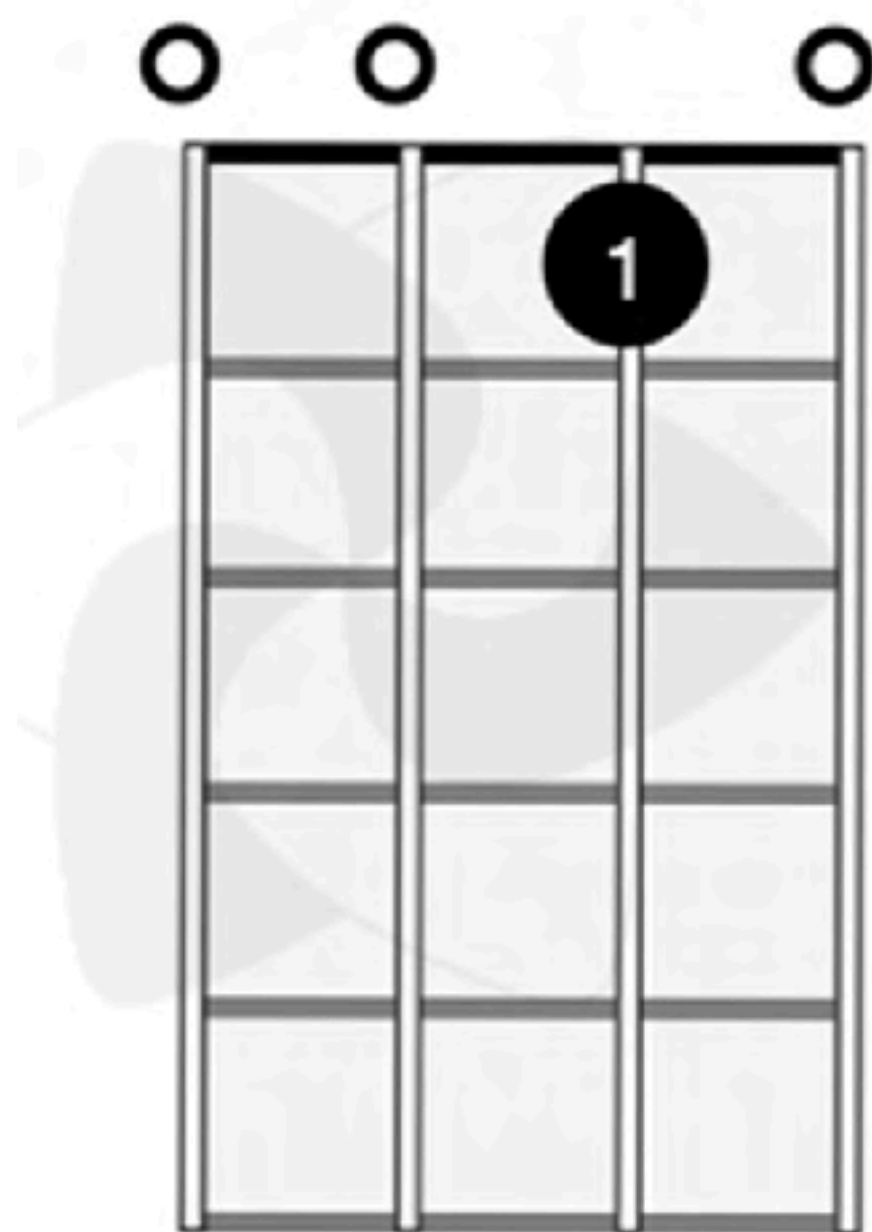
Visual Musical Minds

MODIFIED F MAJOR CHORD

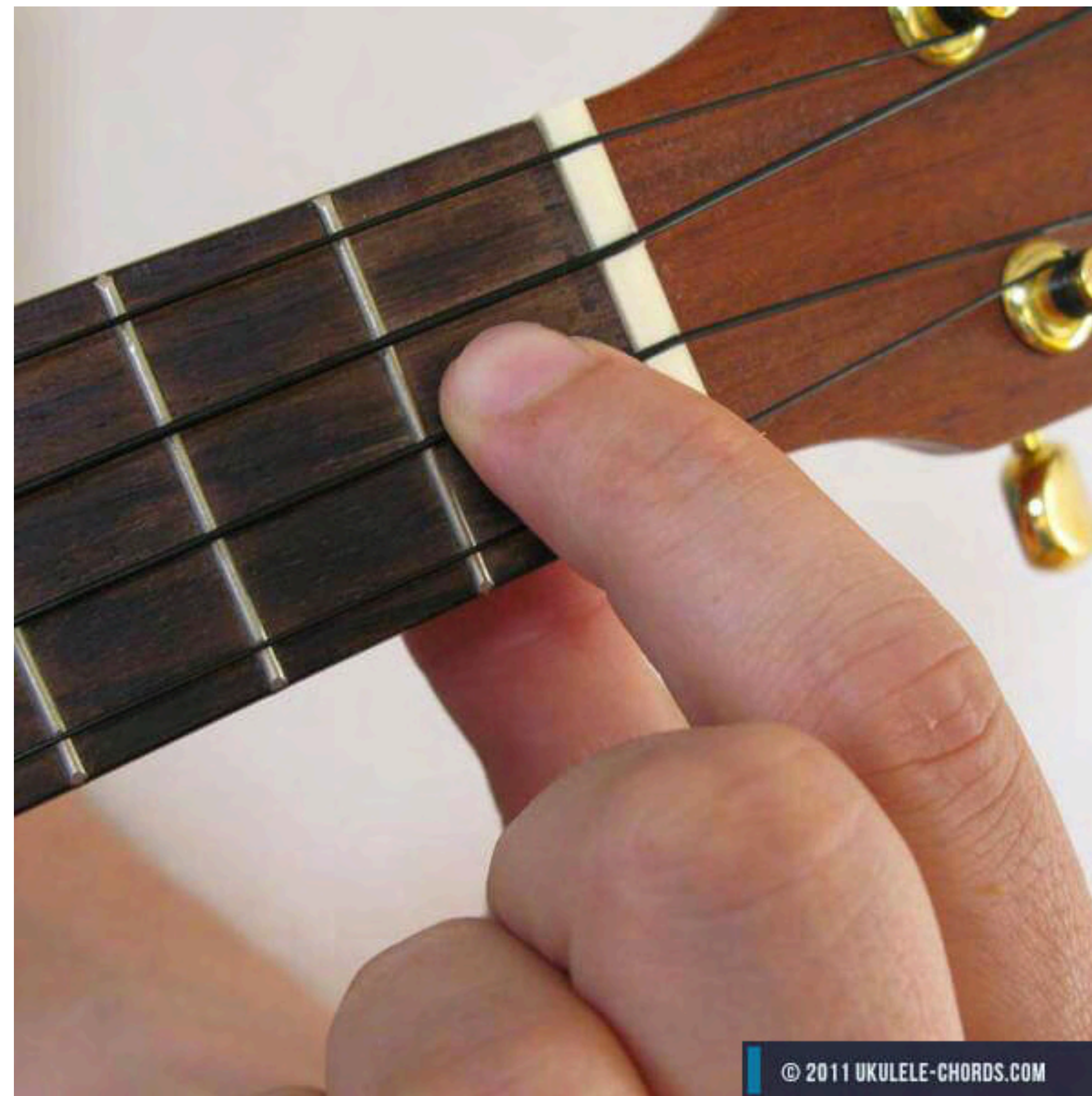
TECHNICALLY AN FADD9

ONLY ONE FINGER,
EXACTLY ONE STRING
AWAY FROM C7

Thanks Maria Doreste!



www.justinguitar.com



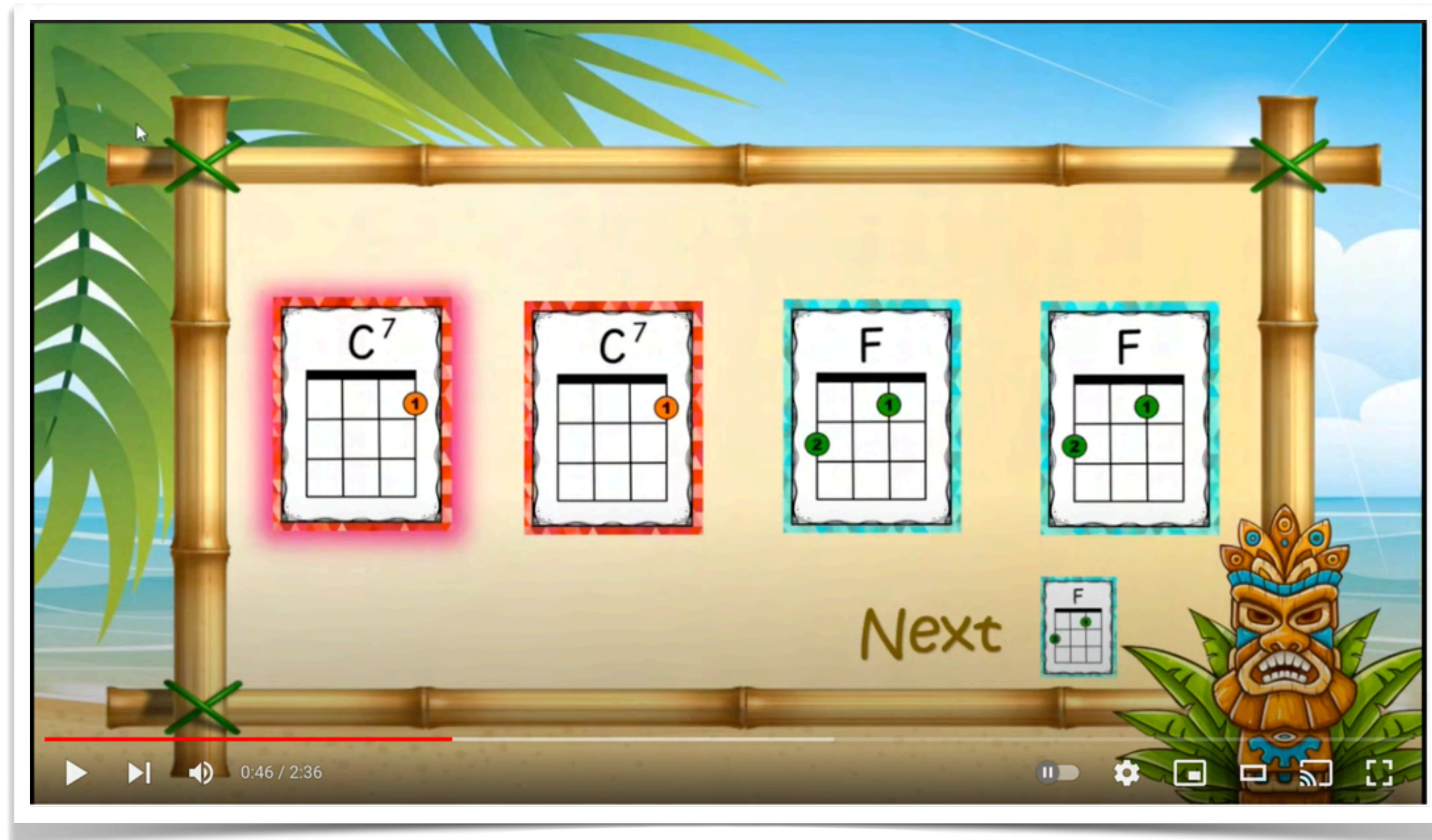
© 2011 UKULELE-CHORDS.COM

TWO CHORD (I V) SONGS

Transpose to F Major (F & C7 or C) or C Major (C & G7 or G)

Simplify songs to I V

With pre-teaching, students can play chord changes by ear



CONNECTIONS TO CURRENT CURRICULUM

YOU CAN ADD UKULELE TO YOUR EXISTING LESSONS!

- **Orff instrument substitute: ostinato**
- **Sol - Do - Mi - La = open strings**
- **Transpose songs for the ukulele: either C major or F major (F, C7)**
- **Recorder Substitute: mi re do**
- **Steady beat & Rhythm reading**



STRUMMING & RHYTHM READING CONNECTIONS



Eight Favorite Strum Patterns



1

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

2

↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑

3

↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑

4

↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓

5

↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑

6

↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑

7

↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑

8

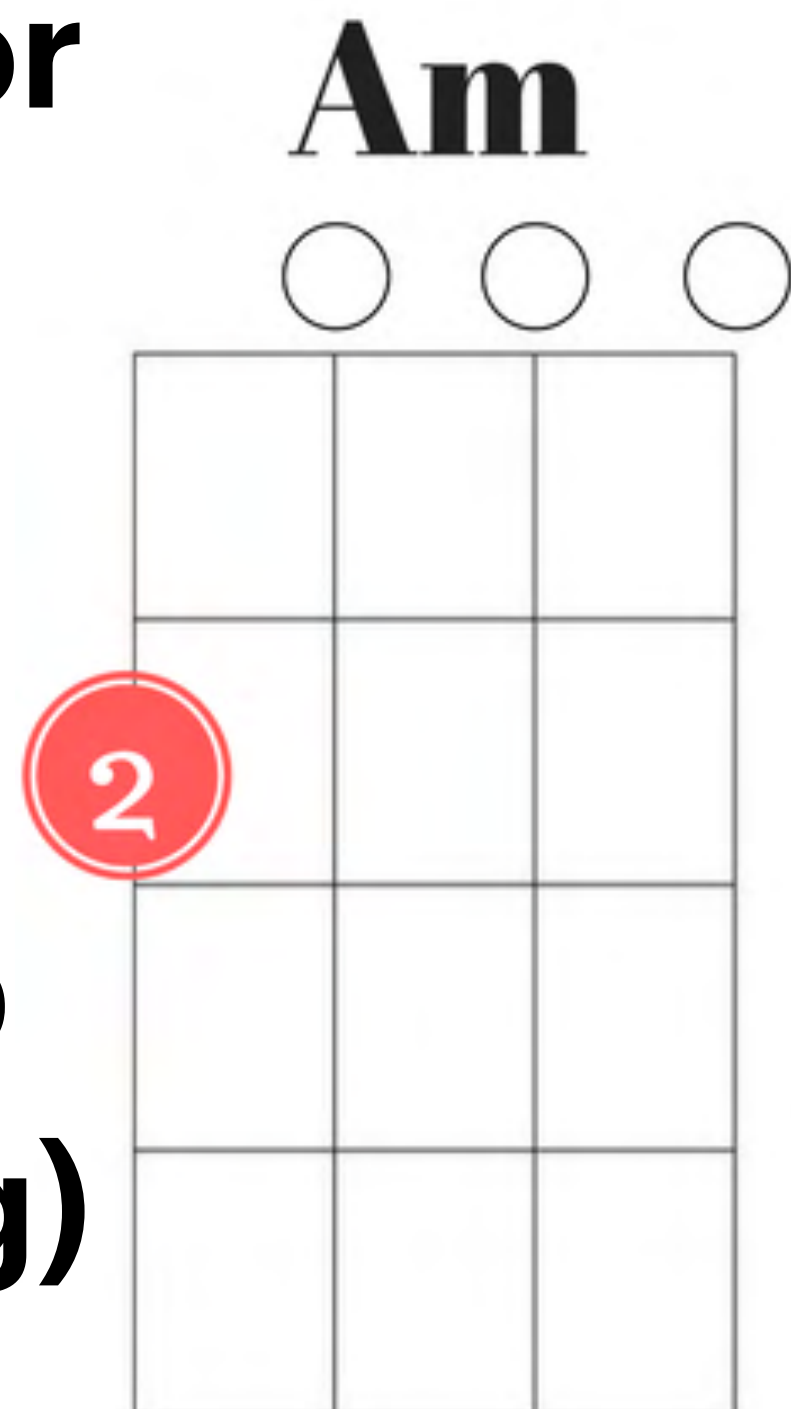
↓ x ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑



A MINOR CHORD

Teach after C or C7,
after modified *F or
before F

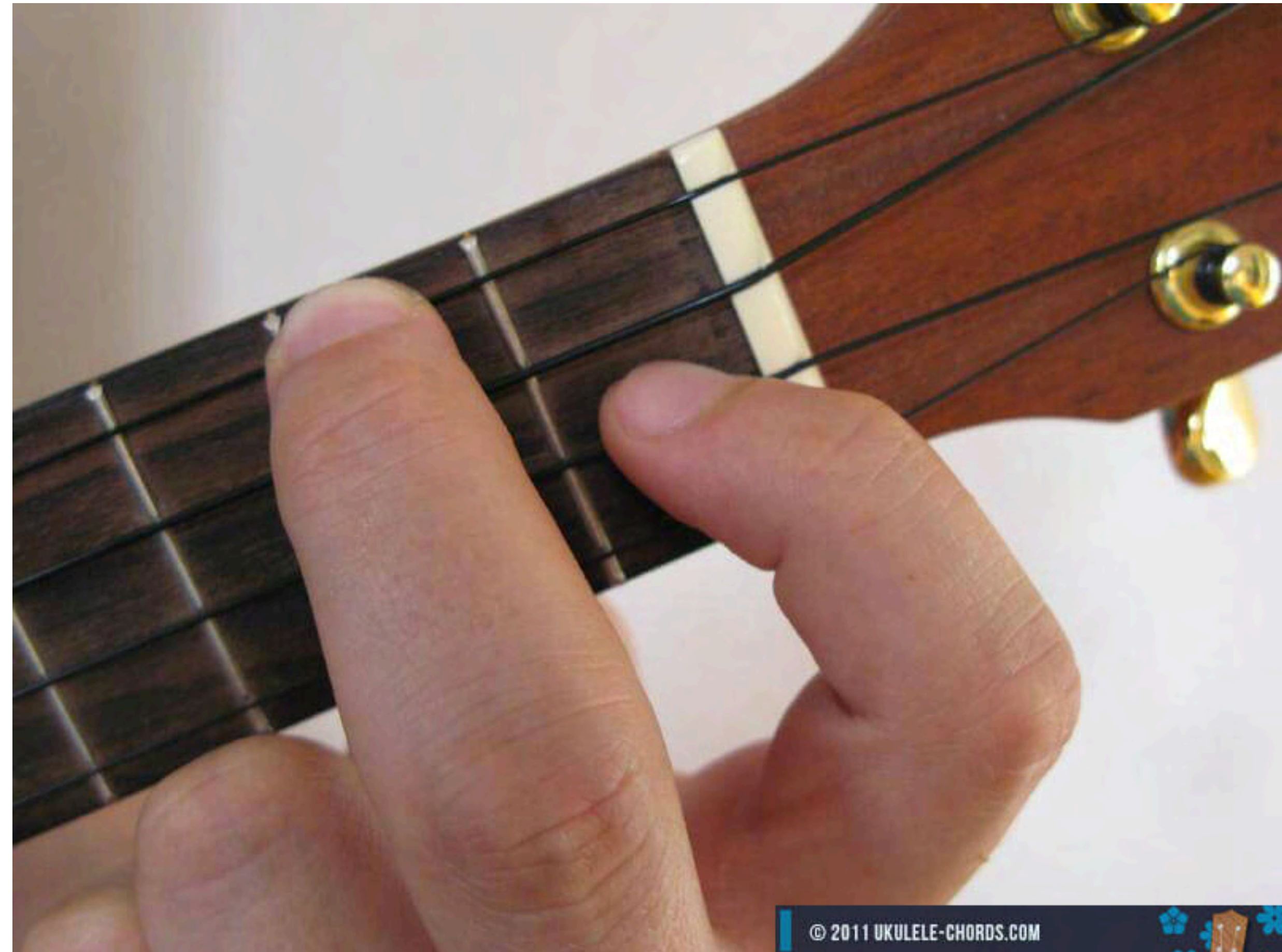
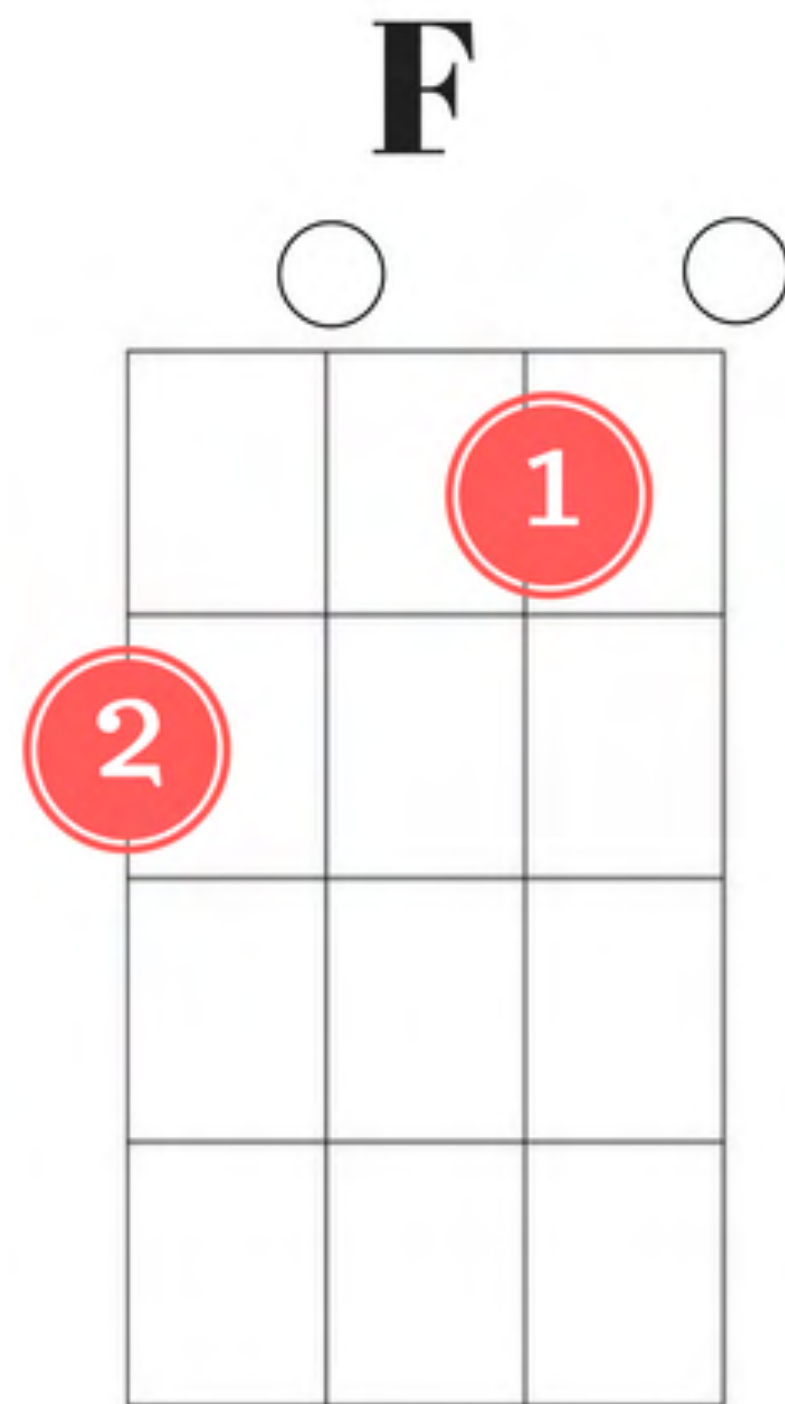
Practice “bunny
fingers” and 2nd
finger reaching up
to the sky (G string)



F MAJOR CHORD

For upper elementary students

Teach after Am
so you can say,
“F is A minor
plus first finger
on E”

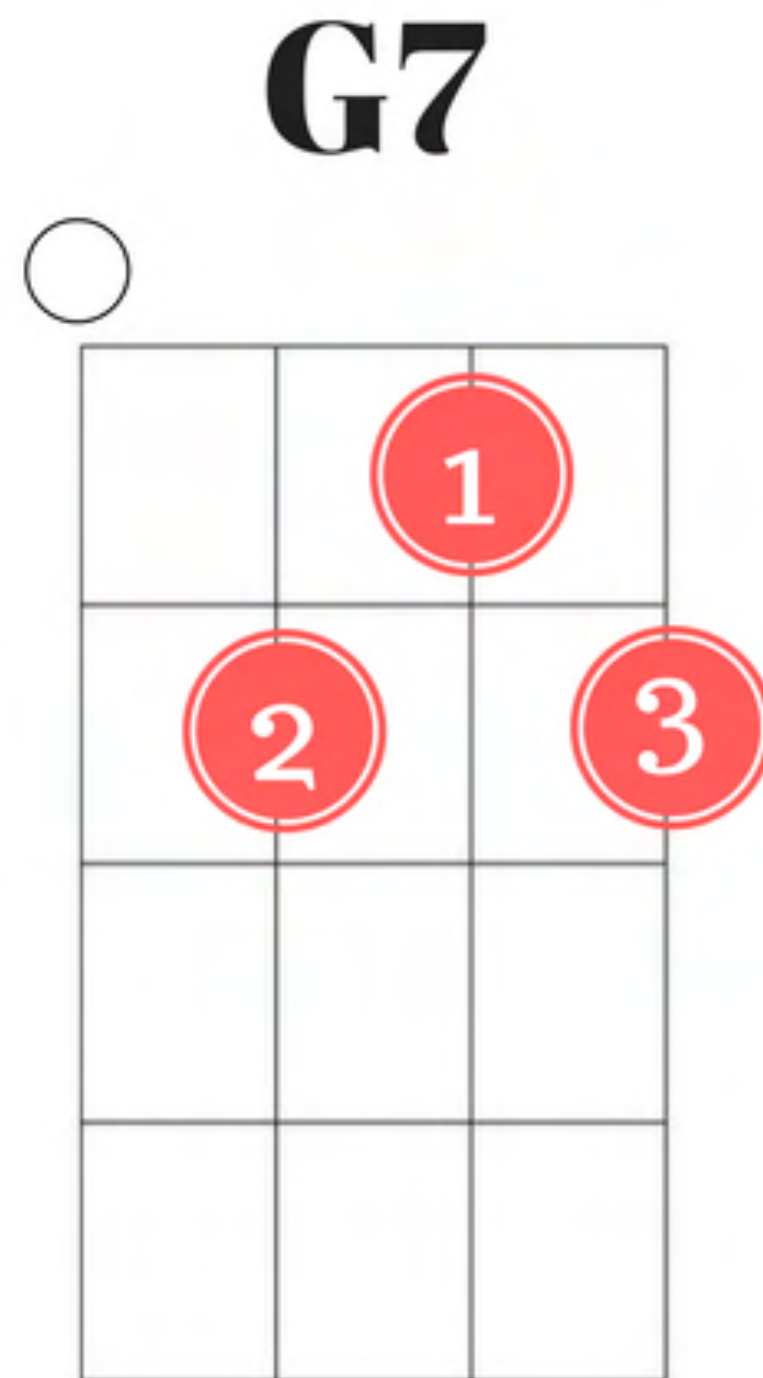


G7 CHORD

Teach after F chord:
1st finger stays in the
same place

“Triangle Chord”

Teach before G
 (“Upside down
triangle”)



HELPFUL RESOURCES





**LITTLE
KIDS
ROCK:
JAMZONE**

LESSONS AND CHORD CHARTS

UKUTABS

CHORDS AND TABS FOR POPULAR SONGS





UKULALIENS

PLAY-ALONG VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE

UKE PLAY ALONG

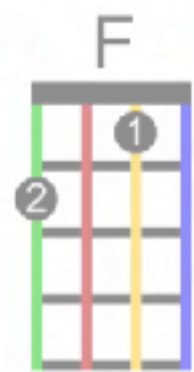
PLAY-ALONG VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE



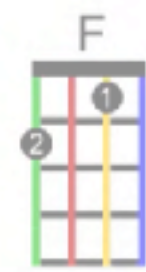
***YOUTUBE IS A VAST
RESOURCE, HERE ARE SOME
PRE-SORTED PLAYLISTS:***

Where is Thumbkin? Where is Thumbkin?
Here I am. Here I am.
How are you today sir?

EASIEST



Next:



I have a dream
I hope will come true
That you're here with me
And together we can

EASY



(At)lanta, na-na-na
but my heart is in Havard
There's somethin'
out his manners (uh hu
Havard, na-na-na

MORE



***ALWAYS PRE-TEACH
PROGRESSION AND
STRUMMING PATTERN***

TEACHING TIPS

Mistakes
ARE
PROOF
YOU ARE
TRYING

TEACHING TIPS

PART 1

- **Add dot stickers (6mm) to frets, color-coded chords**
- **Ensure students master a chord before moving on to the next chord**
- **Be prepared to demonstrate “mirrored”**
- **Use “Match Me” games to pre-teach physical movements such as left/right, strumming, changing chords**
- **Students can tap strings with palm for unknown chords in a song**

TEACHING TIPS

PART 2

- **Don't bother teaching lefty: tell left-handed students they have an advantage with their super dexterous left hand**
- **Picks are not necessary, but if you must: use felt picks or homemade picks of folded index card wrapped in masking tape— not plastic/nylon guitar picks**
- **Usually sound issues are left hand related, such as not pressing fingers down or incorrect finger placement**
- **Teach one-finger “modified” F chord**
- **G7 is easier to learn than G because 1st finger stays in the same place from F major**

MODIFICATIONS & ADAPTATIONS

THE UKULELE CAN BE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL STUDENTS

- **Detuning to Open C tuning (G - C - E - G)**
- **Color coded visuals**
- **Teach the “chuck” - steady beat**
- **Modified playing position: flat on lap**
- **Silicon finger protectors for sensory issues**
- **Chord Buddy as a last resort**

FURTHER LEARNING

SO THEY'RE READY TO GO ABOVE AND BEYOND?

- **Melodies**
- **Passing notes between chords**
- **Trickier strumming patterns, syncopation**
- **Add fingerpicking techniques**
- **Improvisation**

**Always have students leave a
lesson or class feeling a sense
of ACCOMPLISHMENT.**

QUESTIONS?

LINKS

Play Alongs and Resources:

Little Kids Rock - Jamzone: <https://jamzone.littlekidsrock.org/>

Ukulaliens Play Along Videos: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZjDV_1UEbVsAQA_q9tyTWw

Uke Play Along Videos: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6jZYLoYuV1CxY4Stzm6mgg>

UkuTabs - Ukulele Tabs and Chords: <https://ukutabs.com/>

Easy Tablature Melodies: <https://www.capotastomusic.com/ukulele-sheet-music/tabs.htm>

Mr. Miles created playlists:

Easiest (C7, C, F, Am) : <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-2wj0W87IXoMZhdu10TTfoxtkXhAAG>

Easy (C, C7, F, Am, G, G7) : <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-2wj0W87IXqpKA6G3Y5JLaLgmvnFGF9L>

More (+ Dm, D7, Em, E7) : https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-2wj0W87IXpZbgJSn0WV1EAz8pZ7_fSI

GET IN TOUCH!



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