
GRAB THIS PRESENTATION



bit.ly/ABLE2023

ACCESSIBLE 'UKULELE EXPLORATION

WITH MILES WILCOX

ABLE ASSEMBLY CONFERENCE 2023

OUTLINE

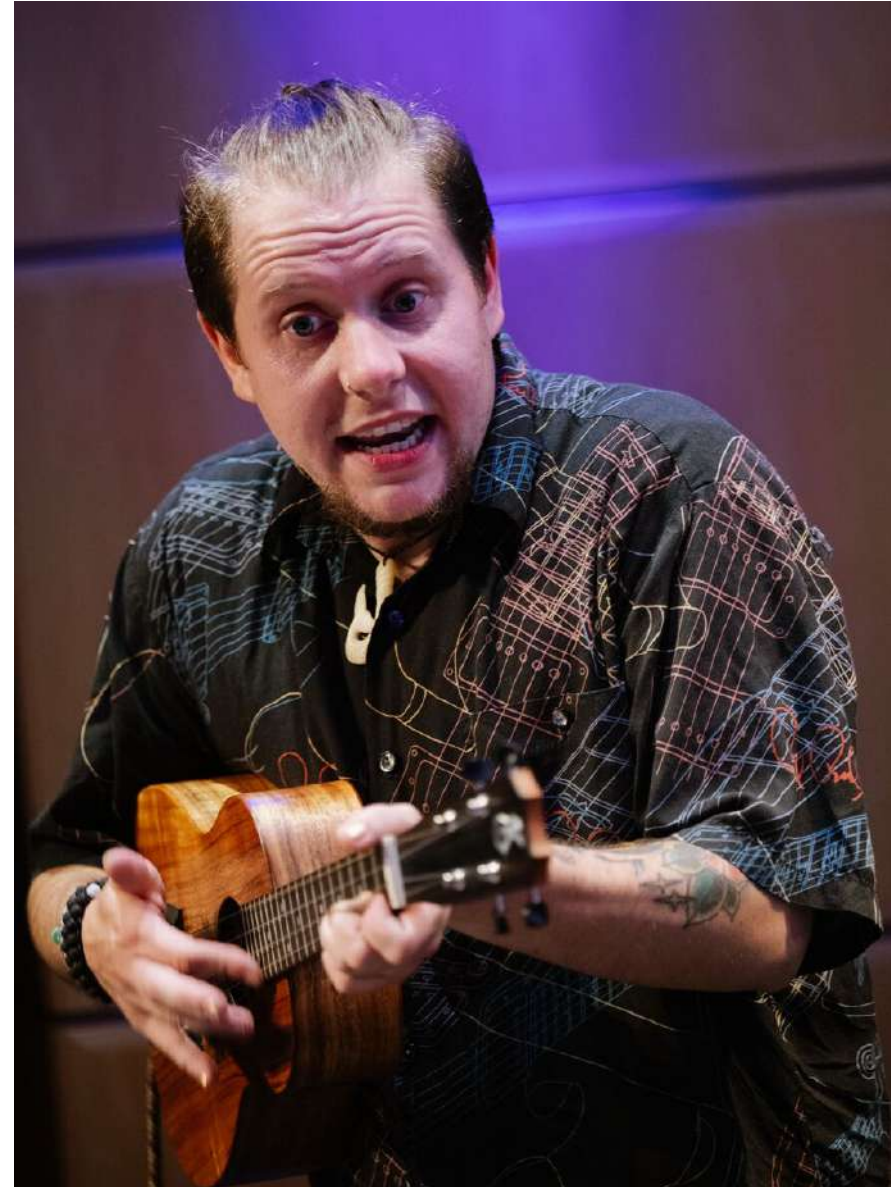
- **Introduction**
- **Setting Expectations**
- **The Basics of Playing**
- **Sequencing**
- **Accessibility**
- **BIAAE 'Ukulele Ensemble**
- **Helpful Resources**
- **Questions**

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 Accessible Arts Education**: Private Lessons, Music Class for Young Children, Rock Band, 'Ukulele Ensemble (2015-)
- **Newton Public Schools** : K-5 General Music including 'ukulele, chorus, band, orchestra (2020-)



LEARNING TARGETS

©I can explain the basics of playing the 'ukulele

©I can name at least 3 best practices for teaching accessible 'ukulele

©I can identify next steps in my 'ukulele learning & teaching journey



***There will be time at the end
for questions— feel free to
raise your hand at any point!***

***Keep your eyes out
for the menehune!
That means it's
time to JAM!***



SETTING EXPECTATIONS

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

HOW DO WE TREAT OUR INSTRUMENTS?

- **Pre-practice of handling delicate instruments: the egg test**
- **Establish Rest and Ready Positions first**
- **Attention Grabbers**
- **Logical consequences**
- **Allow students a chance to earn back an instrument that was taken away**
- **Durable instruments: Kala Waterman, made of plastic but NOT a toy**

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?

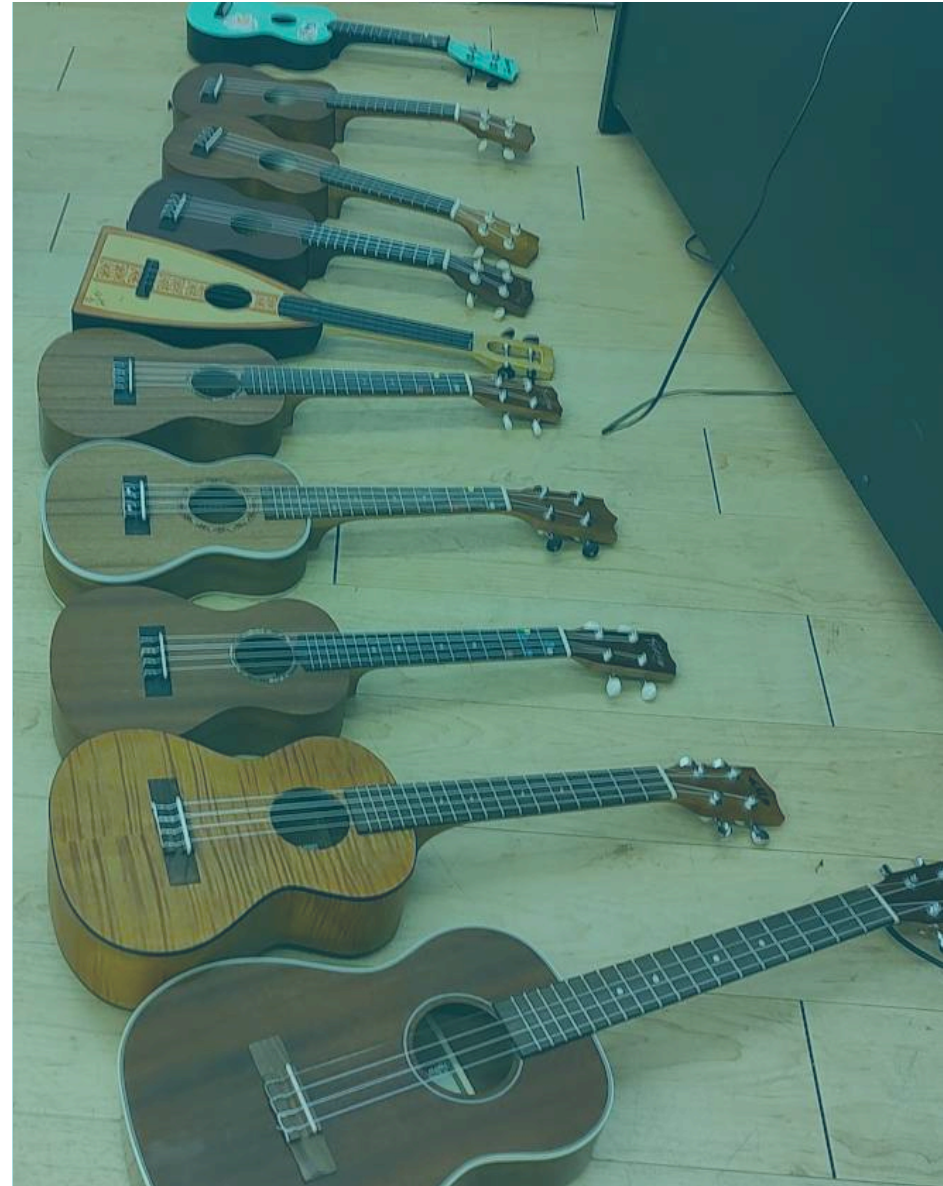
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE HAWAIIAN AND AMERICAN PRONUNCIATIONS

* 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

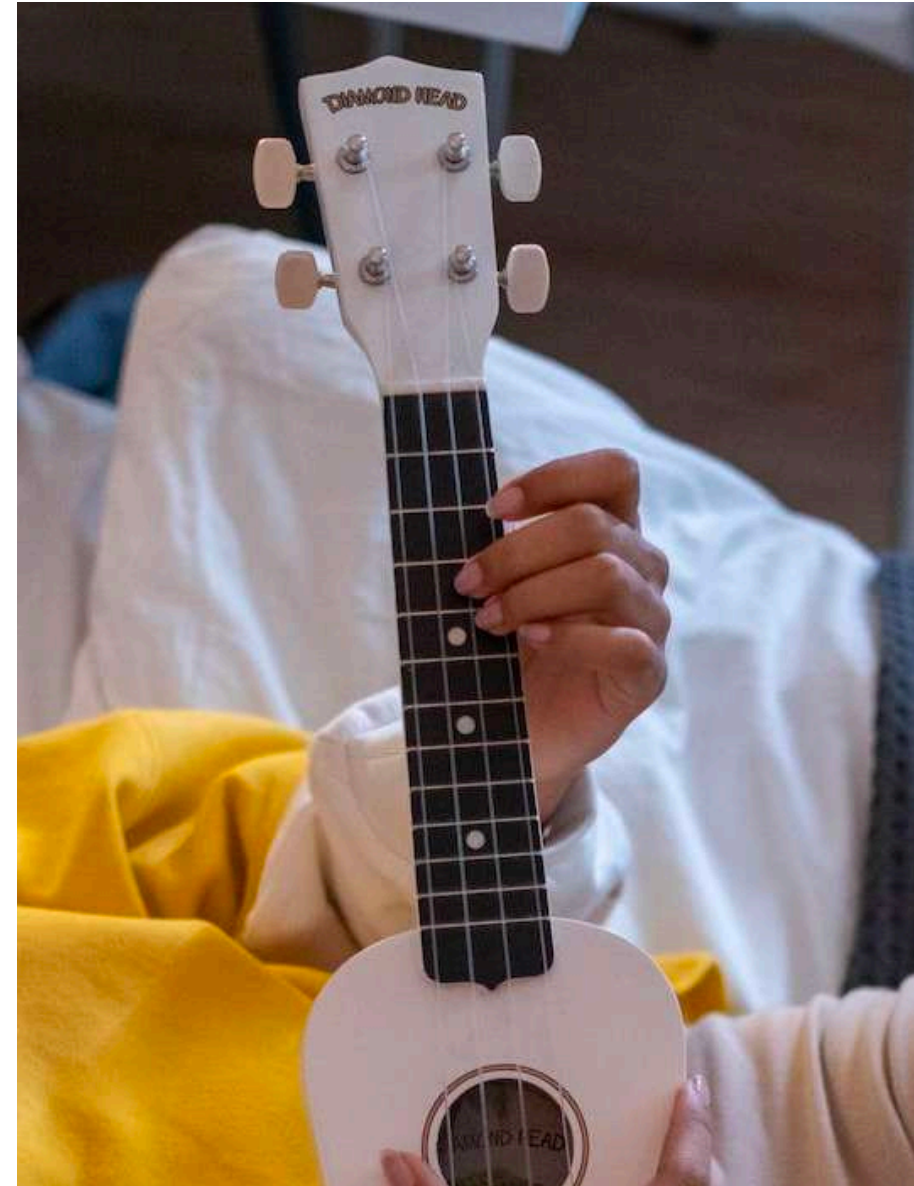
Keep
fingers
round,
press
fingertips
all the
way down
on strings



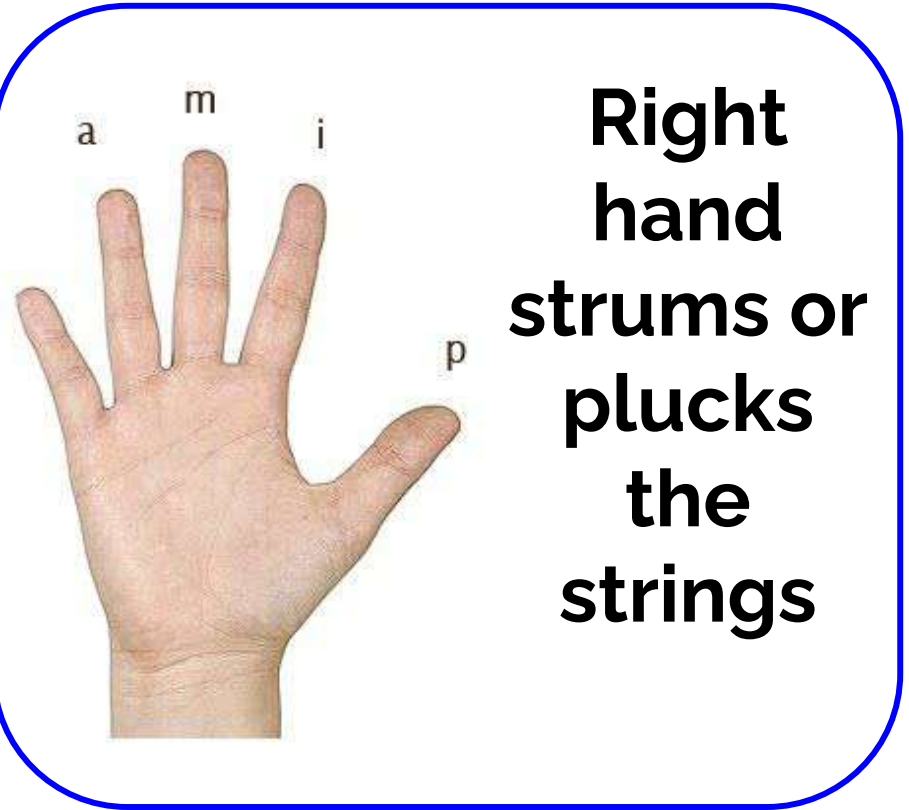
LEFT HAND

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— no bar chords yet
- Thumb sits at the back of the neck, does not wrap and touch strings
- Fingers sit between frets “in the fret space”
- Left hand fingers “squeeze the strings”



Right hand



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, follow through**
- **Down beats (quarter notes) on Down strum, upbeats on the Up strum**
- **Flexible wrist and elbow**

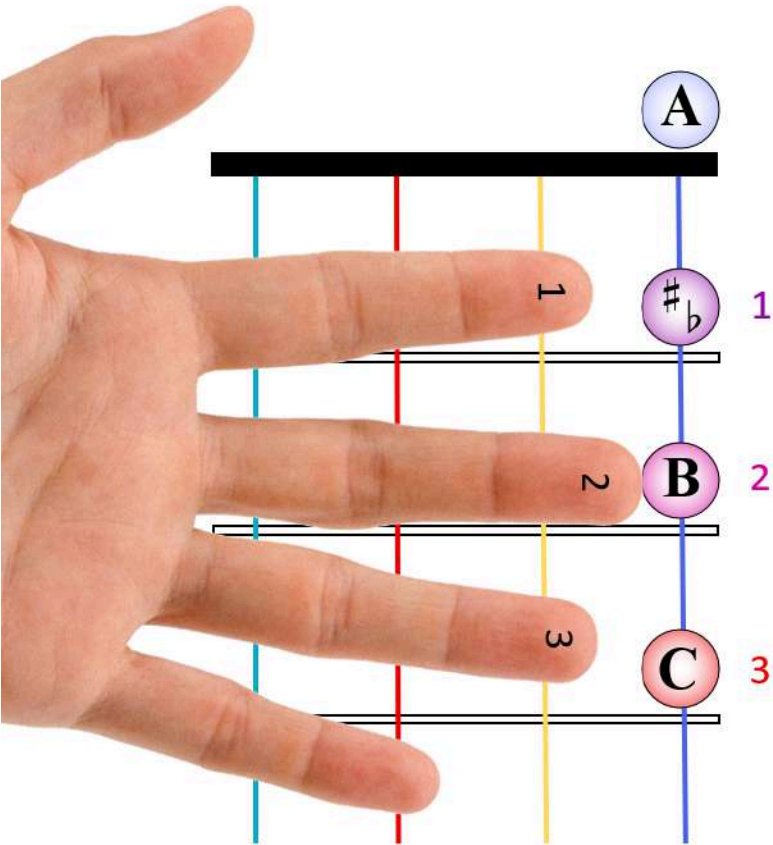




"Batman Theme"
3-3 2-2 1-1 2-2
3-3 2-2 1-1 2-2
Strum, strum!

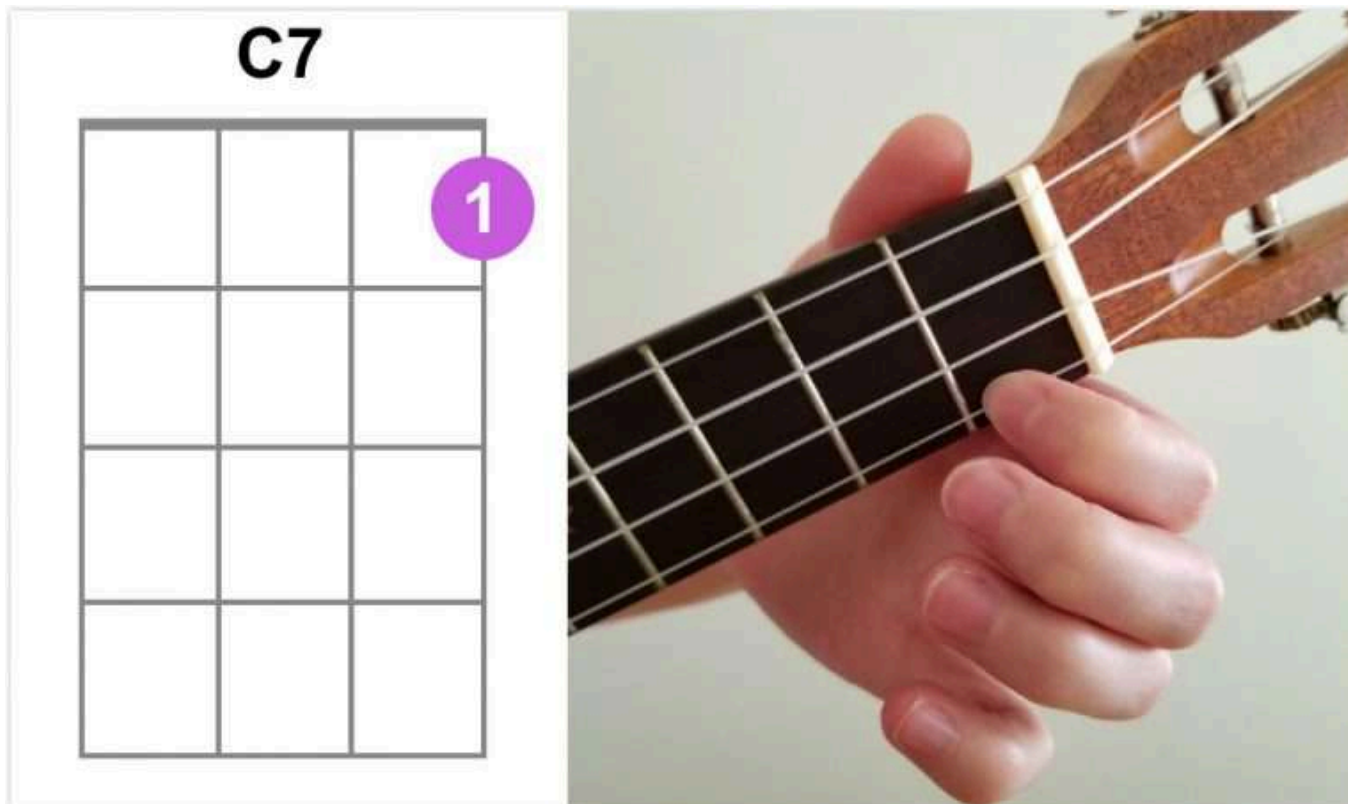
BATMAN SONG

In preparation of
playing a C chord



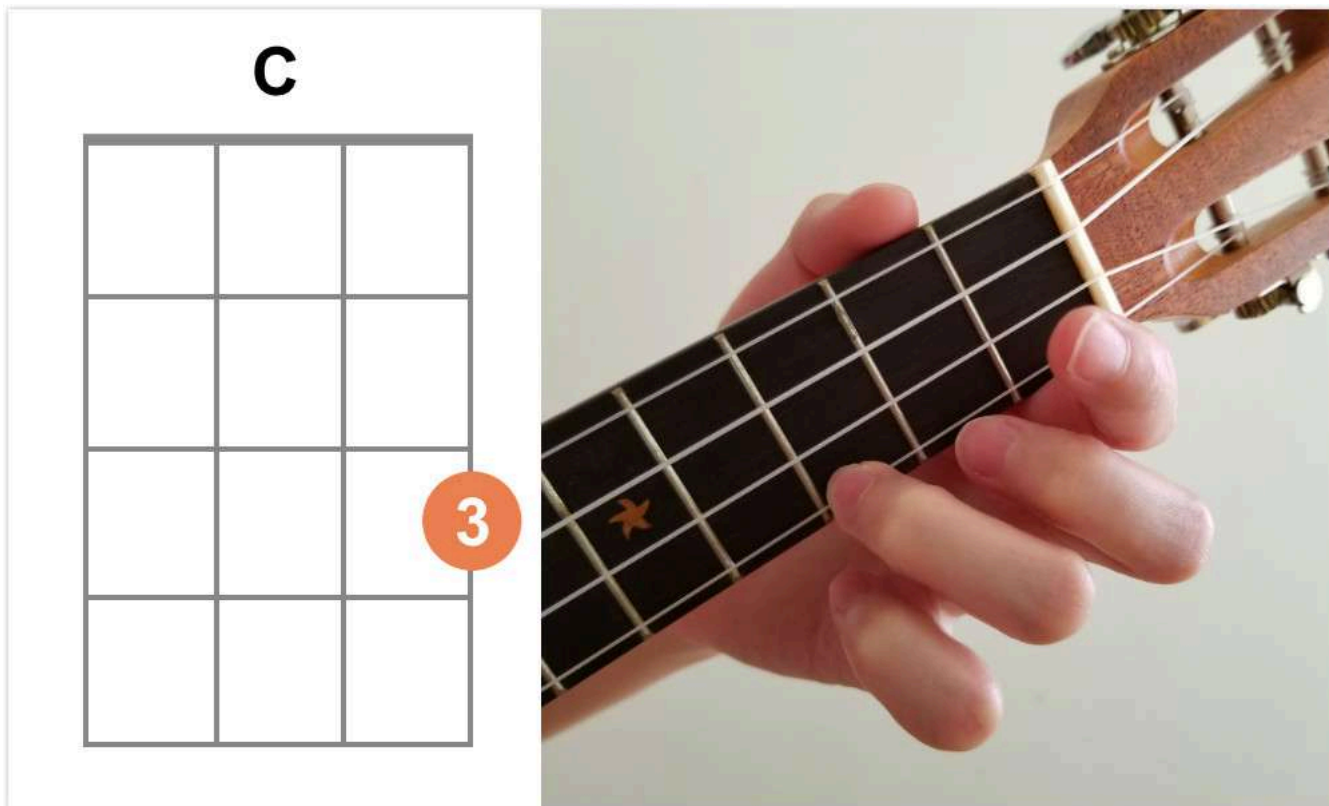
C7 CHORD

First chord for easiest learning



C MAJOR CHORD

First chord with more than index finger



C CHORD RHYTHM PLAY ALONG



SEQUENCING

CHORD SEQUENCE

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

EASIEST:

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

4. F chord

EASY:

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

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

KEEP IT SIMPLE, SILLY!

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

For Easiest Learning:

Strumming & plucking open strings

Can detune A string down to G

For Easy Learning:

Songs in C Major: C only

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

For Further Learning:

Songs in C major:

C - Am - F - G (or G7)

Even Further Learning:

Songs in G major:

G - Em - C - D (or D7)

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,

G C E A

C Major

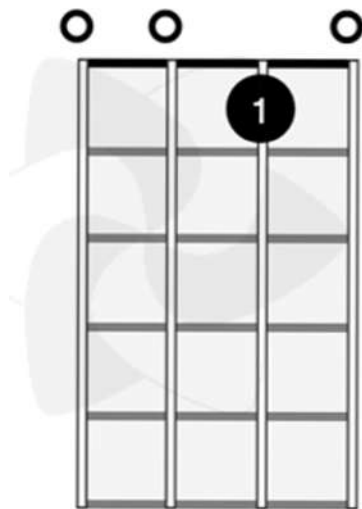
Visual Musical Minds

MODIFIED F MAJOR CHORD

TECHNICALLY AN FADD9

ONLY ONE FINGER,
EXACTLY ONE STRING
AWAY FROM C7

Thanks Maria Doreste!



www.justinguitar.com



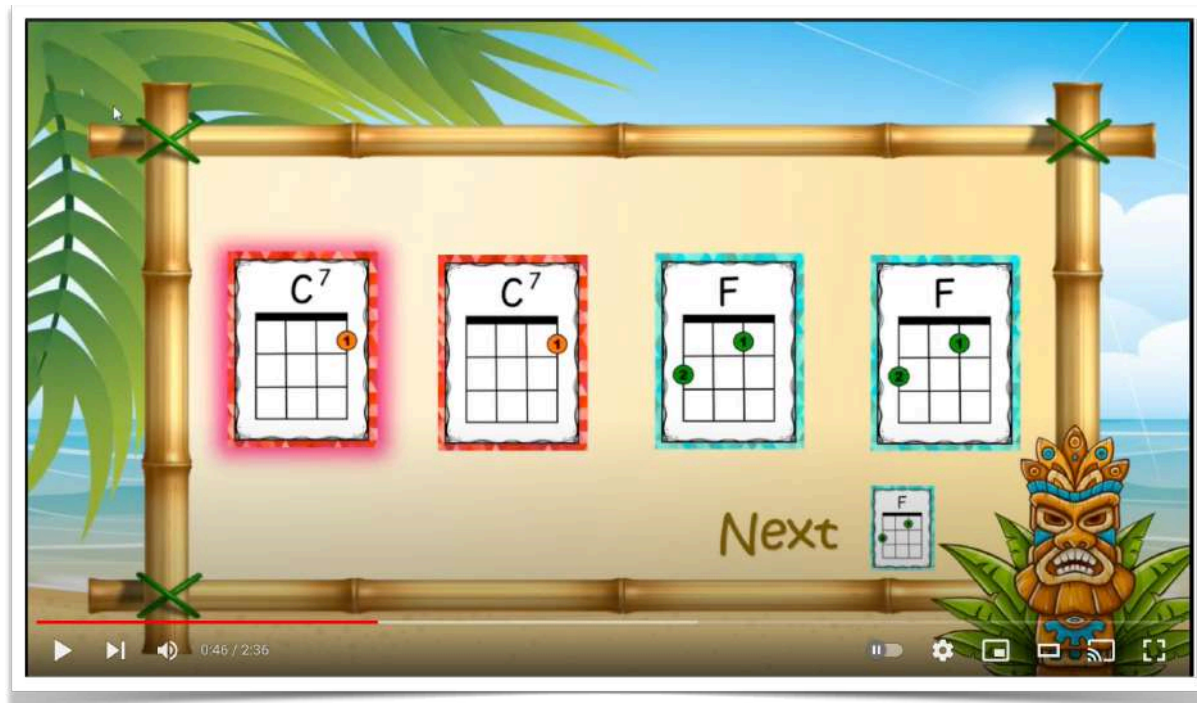
© 2011 UKULELE-CHORDS.COM

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



IKO IKO PLAY ALONG



Iko Iko

^FMy grandma and
your grandma
Sitting by the fire^{C7}
My grandma told
your grandma
"I'm gonna set
your flag on fire"^F



STRUMMING & RHYTHM READING CONNECTIONS



Eight Favorite Strum Patterns



1

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

2

↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑

3

↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑

4

↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓

5

↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑

6

↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑

7

↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑

8

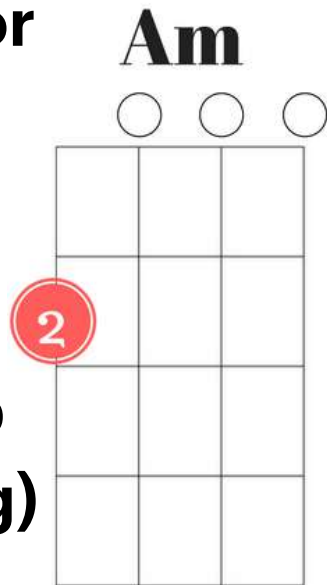
↓ x ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑



A MINOR CHORD

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

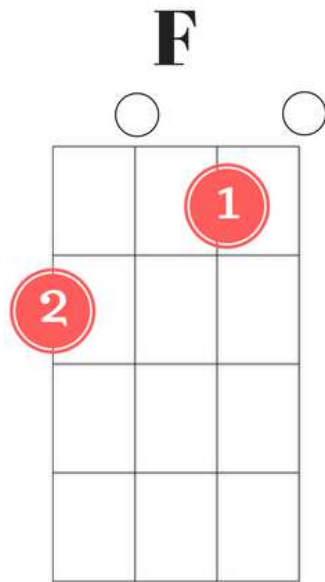
Practice “bunny
fingers” and 2nd
finger reaching up
to the sky (G string)



F MAJOR CHORD

For upper elementary students

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

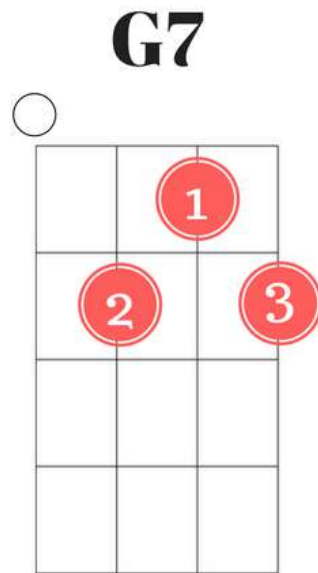


G7 CHORD

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

“Triangle Chord”

Teach before G
 (“Upside down
triangle”)



MAKING IT ACCESSIBLE

COLORED STICKERS

OFF AMAZON - 6MM

MARKING
INDIVIDUAL CHORDS



COLORED STICKERS

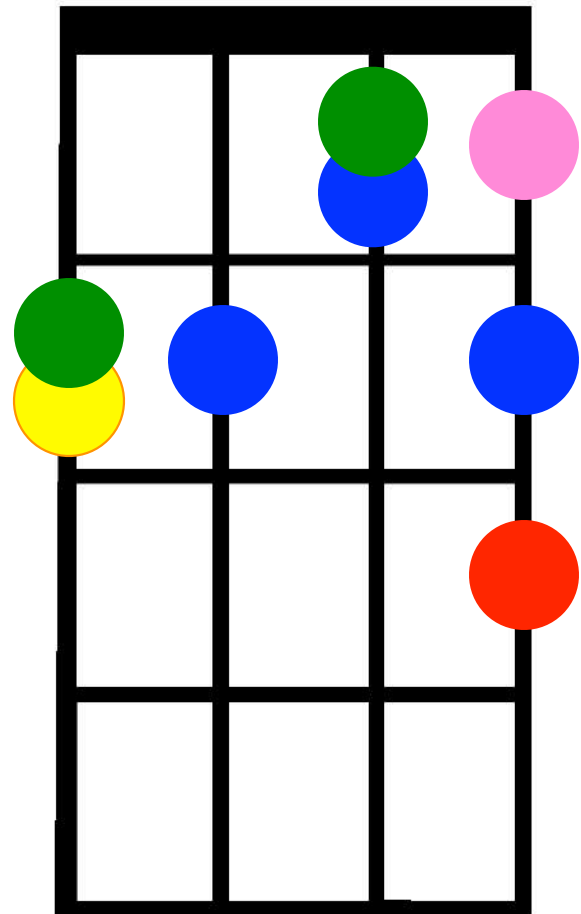
C: red

C7: pink

F: green

Am: yellow

G7: blue



COLORED STRINGS

GUITAR CENTER:
\$7.99

may not be financially feasible
for big groups, public schools,
etc.



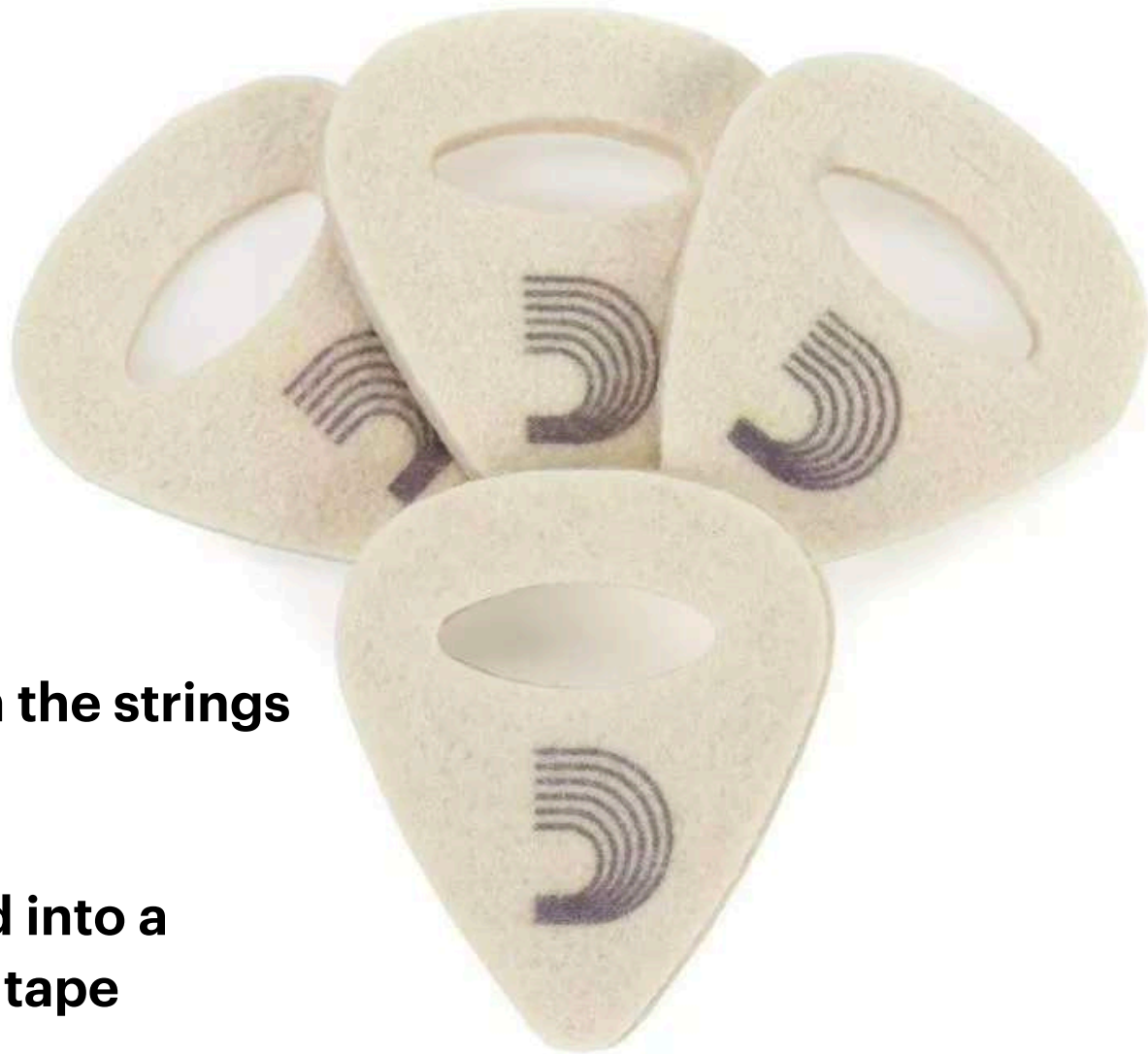
UKULELE PICKS

NOT the same as guitar picks

material should be softer than the strings

purchase: felt picks

homemade: fold an index card into a triangle and cover in masking tape



FINGER PROTECTORS

Made of silicon

Get short ones to allow fingers to bend



DETUNING TO OPEN C TUNING

TUNE A STRING DOWN ONE WHOLE STEP TO G

G - C - E - G

NO LEFT HAND



ADAPTIVE PLAYING POSITIONS

allow for lap playing

using a strap

thumb strums down

hands should still be mobile



CHORD BUDDY

- A LAST RESORT -

works better on some sizes/models
of 'ukuleles better than others



BIAAE

OUR ENSEMBLE

- Ages 7-12+
- Started online July 2020
- Met & performed May 2022
- Experienced multi-instrumentalists plus absolute beginners joining each semester
- Diagnoses including ASD & ADHD



DIFFERENTIATION:

When I teach an 'ukulele ensemble of various levels

Level 1: Strumming on One Chord/Note

Level 2: Strumming Chord Progression

Level 3: Plucking Melody

Reggae Vibes

The sheet music for 'Reggae Vibes' is presented on three staves, each with a treble (T) and bass (B) clef. Above each staff are chord diagrams for C, F, and G. Level 1 consists of a single C chord strummed throughout. Level 2 follows a C-F-F-C-C-F-F progression. Level 3 features a melodic line with fret numbers (7, 7, 5, 3, 7, 7, 5, 3, 2, 2, 2, 3, 5) and includes first and second endings, a D.C. (Da Capo) instruction, and a final 3/8 time signature.

MR. GRAY'S MUSIC CLASSROOM

Reggae Vibes



Three systems of guitar tablature for the song "Reggae Vibes". Each system includes a treble clef (T), an acoustic guitar (A), and a bass clef (B). Chord diagrams are shown above the treble clef staff, and fret numbers are written on the strings. The first two systems use a 3/4 time signature, while the third system uses a 4/4 time signature.

System 1: Treble clef (T), Acoustic guitar (A), Bass clef (B). Chords: C, C, F, F, C, C, F, F. Fret numbers: 3, 3, 3, 3 | 3, 3, 3, 3 | 3, 3, 3, 3 3. Rhythmic notation: quarter notes, quarter notes, quarter notes, quarter notes.

System 2: Treble clef (T), Acoustic guitar (A), Bass clef (B). Chords: C, C, F, F, C, C, F, F. Fret numbers: 7, 7, 5, 3 | 7, 7, 5, 3 | 7, 7, 5, 3 3. Rhythmic notation: quarter notes, quarter notes, quarter notes, quarter notes.

System 3: Treble clef (T), Acoustic guitar (A), Bass clef (B). Chords: C, C, F, F, G, G, G, G, C. Fret numbers: 7, 7, 5, 3 | 7, 7, 5, 3 | 2, 2, 2, 3 5. Rhythmic notation: quarter notes, quarter notes, quarter notes, quarter notes. Includes a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.) with a double bar line and repeat sign. The second ending ends with a D.C. (Da Capo) instruction and a final measure with fret numbers 3, 0, 0, 0.



FOCUS ON ABILITY

WHAT SKILLS ARE STUDENTS ALREADY CAPABLE OF?

- **Steady Beat**
 - Tap on strings
 - Strum open C tuning
 - “Chuck” with left hand muting strings
- **Plucking or strumming**
- **Left or right hand dominance**
- **Aural, visual, kinesthetic preference**

ADVANCED LEARNING

WHEN STUDENTS ARE READY FOR MORE:

- 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.**

TEACHING TIPS

TEACHING TIPS

- **Ensure students master a chord before moving on to the next chord**
- **Backwards-plan to decide what chords to teach first**
- **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**
- **Only teach “Lefty” when there is a LH disability & RH dominance**

HELPFUL RESOURCES

KALA BRAND

MY PREFERRED BRAND OF 'UKULELE

Waterman Model is plastic but NOT
a toy

Look at their Education Portal for
discounts



MR. GRAY'S CLASSROOM

PLAY-ALONG VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE





UKULALIENS

PLAY-ALONG VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE

UKE PLAY ALONG

PLAY-ALONG VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE



UKUTABS

CHORDS AND TABS FOR POPULAR SONGS



**EASY SHEET
MUSIC PDF |
FREE
POPULAR
MELODIES
FOR
BEGINNERS**

CAPOTASTIC

FREE EASY TAB MELODIES

***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 her who...

EASY



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

MORE



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

Ho Hey by The Lumineers



QUESTIONS?

GET IN TOUCH!



MILES WILCOX

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mileswilcox.weebly.com

LINKS

Play Alongs and Resources:

Kala Ukuleles - <https://kalabrand.com/>

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>

Music with Mr. Gray - Ukulele playlist: https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLn3HdYkrH7Jf26h_hBjiF4A5nl3X56V08

Diverse Music Learners: <https://diversemusiclearners.com/>

Mr. Miles created playlists:

Easiest (C7, C, F, Am) : <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-2wjOW87IXoMZhdU10TTfoxtkXhAAG>

Easy (C, C7, F, Am, G, G7) : <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-2wjOW87IXqpKA6G3Y5JLaLgmVnFGF9L>

More (+ Dm, D7, Em, E7) : https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-2wjOW87IXpZbgJSn0WV1EAz8pZ7_fSI