

UKULELE EXPLORATION

INTRODUCTION TO ELEMENTARY 'UKULELE INSTRUCTION

WITH MILES WILCOX

GRAB THIS PRESENTATION



bit.ly/MMEAukulele

OUTLINE

- **Introduction**
- **Setting Expectations**
- **The Basics**
- **Differentiation**
- **Utilizing Existing Materials**
- **Teaching Tips**
- **Questions**

A close-up photograph of a person's hands playing a wooden ukulele. The person is wearing a light blue, long-sleeved shirt with a subtle grid pattern. The ukulele is light-colored wood with a circular sound hole. The background is a soft-focus, warm-toned fabric. The entire image is overlaid with a color gradient that transitions from a light blue on the left to a pale yellow on the right.

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT ME

MR. MILES DOUGLAS WILCOX

- **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–)



THE HAPPIEST INSTRUMENT ON EARTH!

So you want to teach the 'ukulele, but aren't sure where to start?

In this presentation, you will learn the basics of playing the 'ukulele through my sequencing of the first "four magic chords", along with tips for teaching the instrument to early childhood through upper elementary students.



I'll address frequently discussed issues, and will leave time for additional questions at the end.

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**
- **Attention Grabbers**
- **Logical consequences**
- **Allow students a chance to earn back an instrument that was taken away**

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



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”**

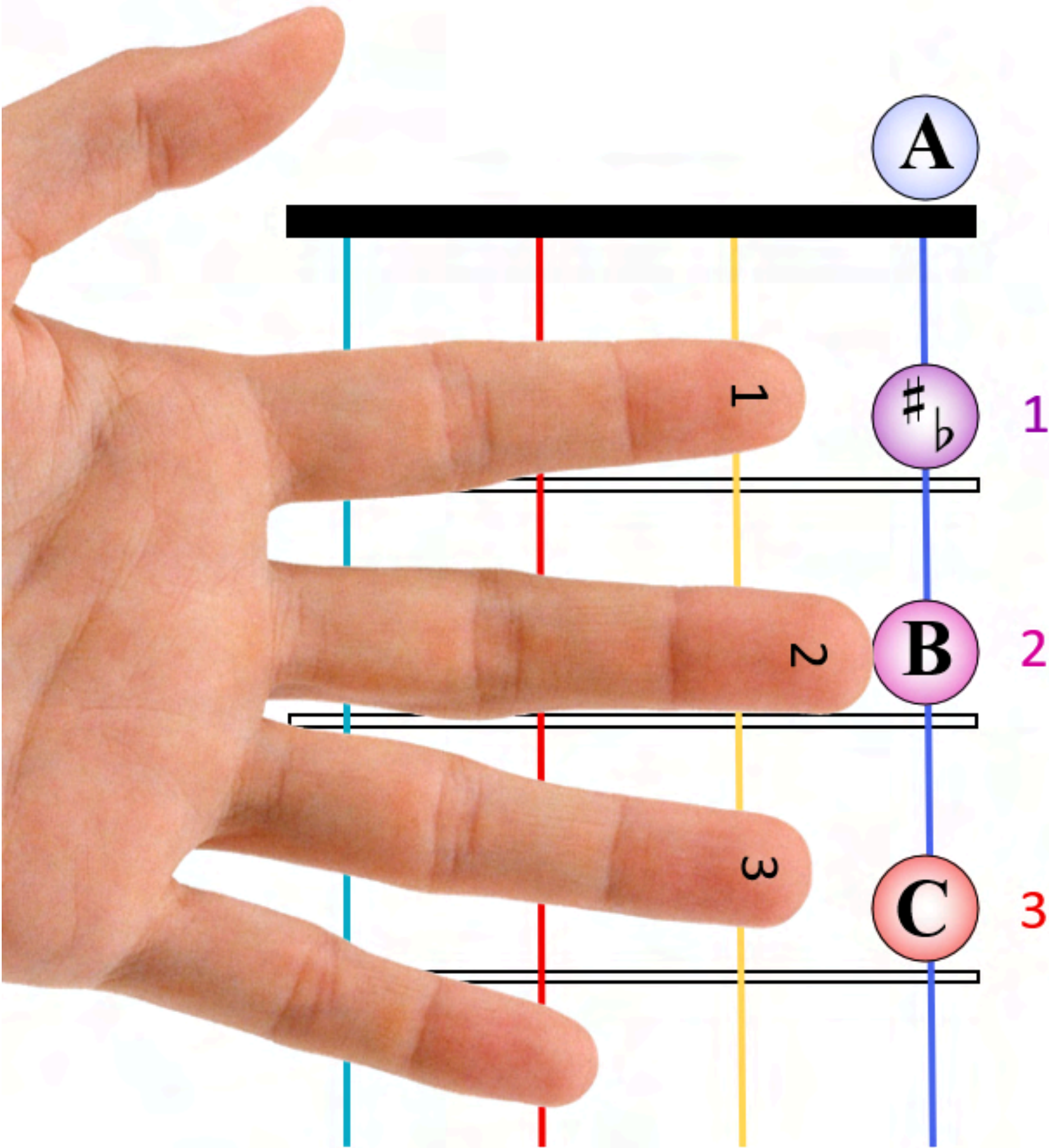


RIGHT HAND

THIS HAND IS IN CHARGE OF RHYTHM & STEADY BEAT

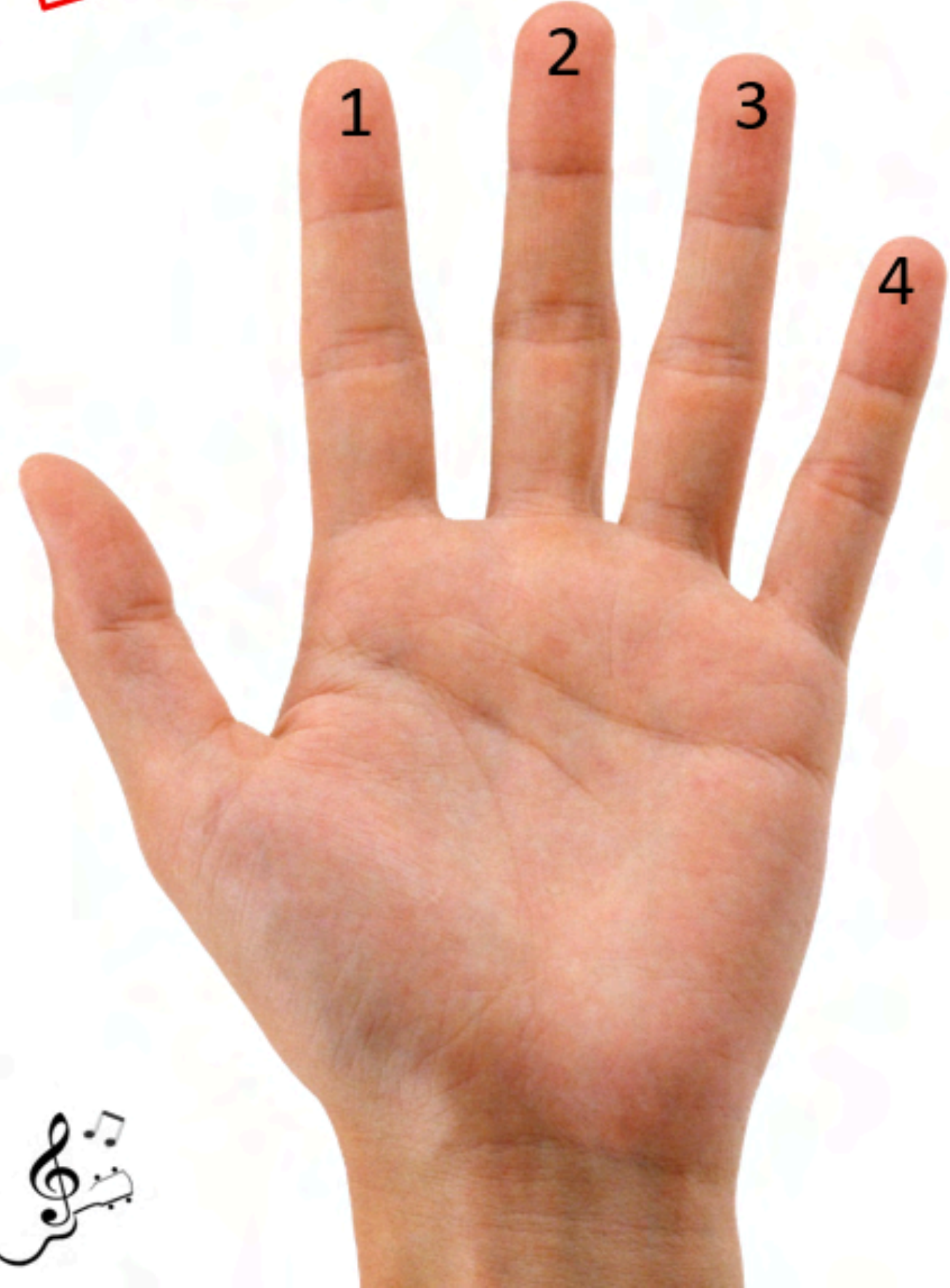
- **Plucking versus Strumming**
- **Use the sideways thumb for ease, offer choice to use pointer finger**
- **Gentle strums**
- **Up and Down strums**
- **Down beats (quarter notes) on Down strum, upbeats on the Up strum**
- **Flexible wrist and elbow**





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

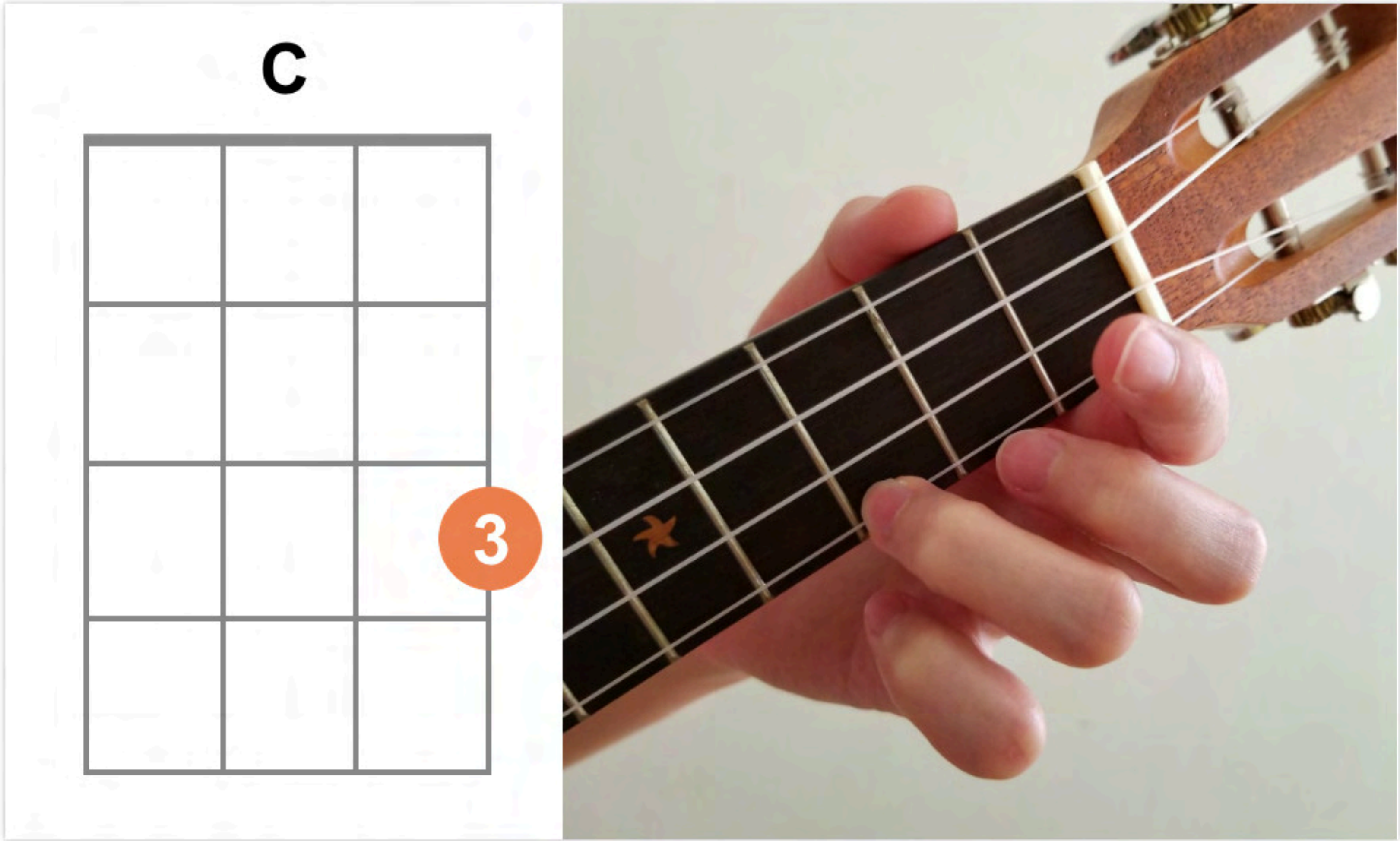
BATMAN SONG



**In preparation of
playing a C chord**

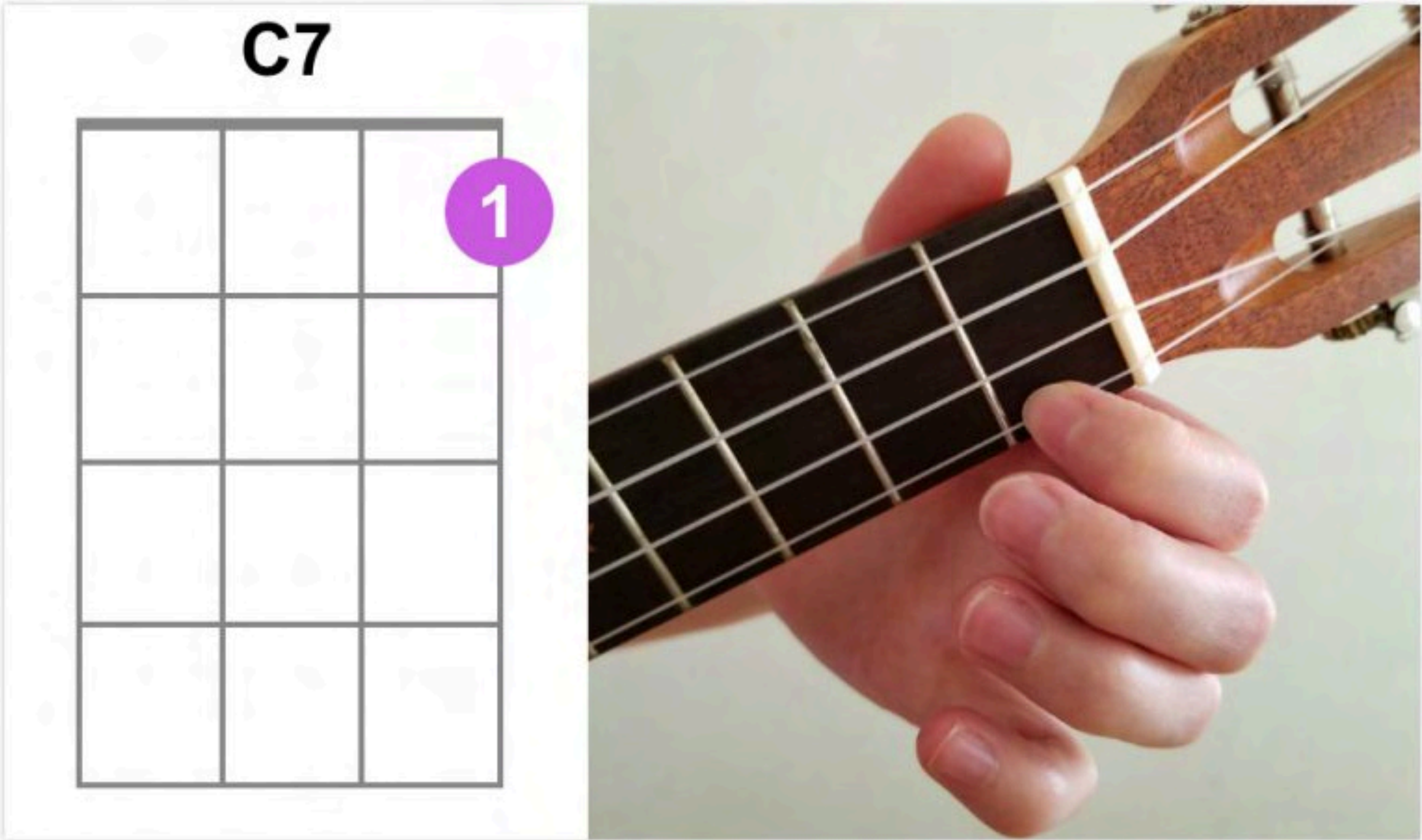
C MAJOR CHORD

First chord for upper elementary students



C7 CHORD

First chord for early childhood/lower elementary students



A photograph of a wooden ukulele resting on a wooden crate. To the left of the ukulele is a large, light-colored woven basket with a handle. In the background, a person's hand is visible, holding a long, thin object, possibly a stick or a piece of wood. The image has a soft, warm glow and a slight blur, giving it a dreamy or artistic feel. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

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



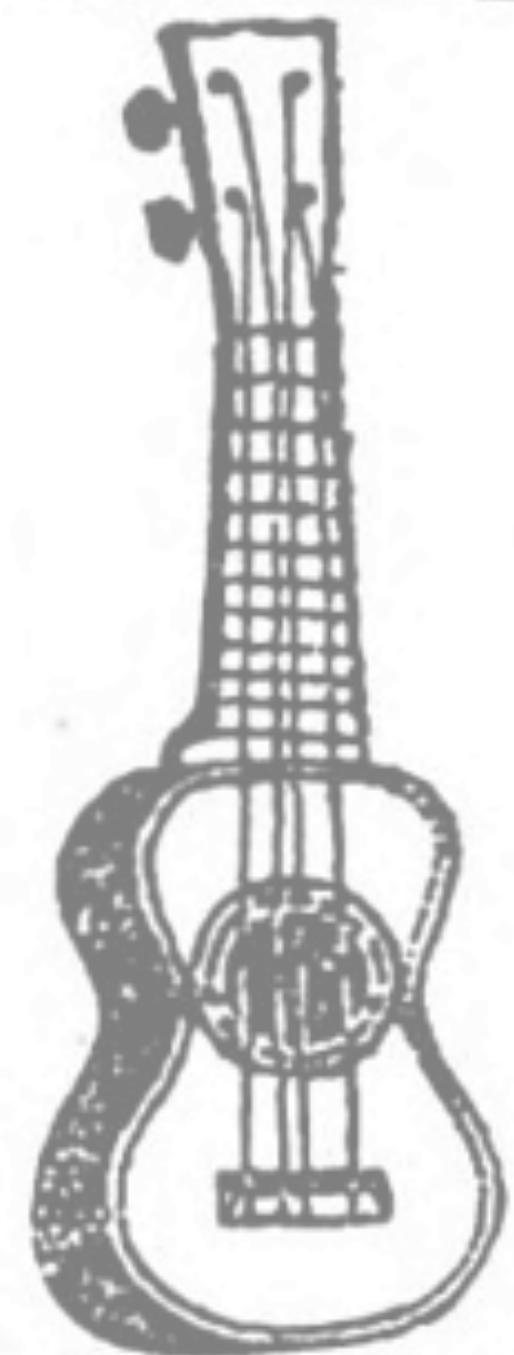
PARTS OF THE UKULELE



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 may find a large number of ukuleles in the
with explanations of the various parts. Price range \$4.00, \$6.00, \$8.00,
\$10.00, \$12.00, \$15.00, \$20.00, \$25.00, \$30.00, \$40.00, \$50.00, \$60.00, \$70.00, \$80.00, \$90.00, \$100.00.
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.

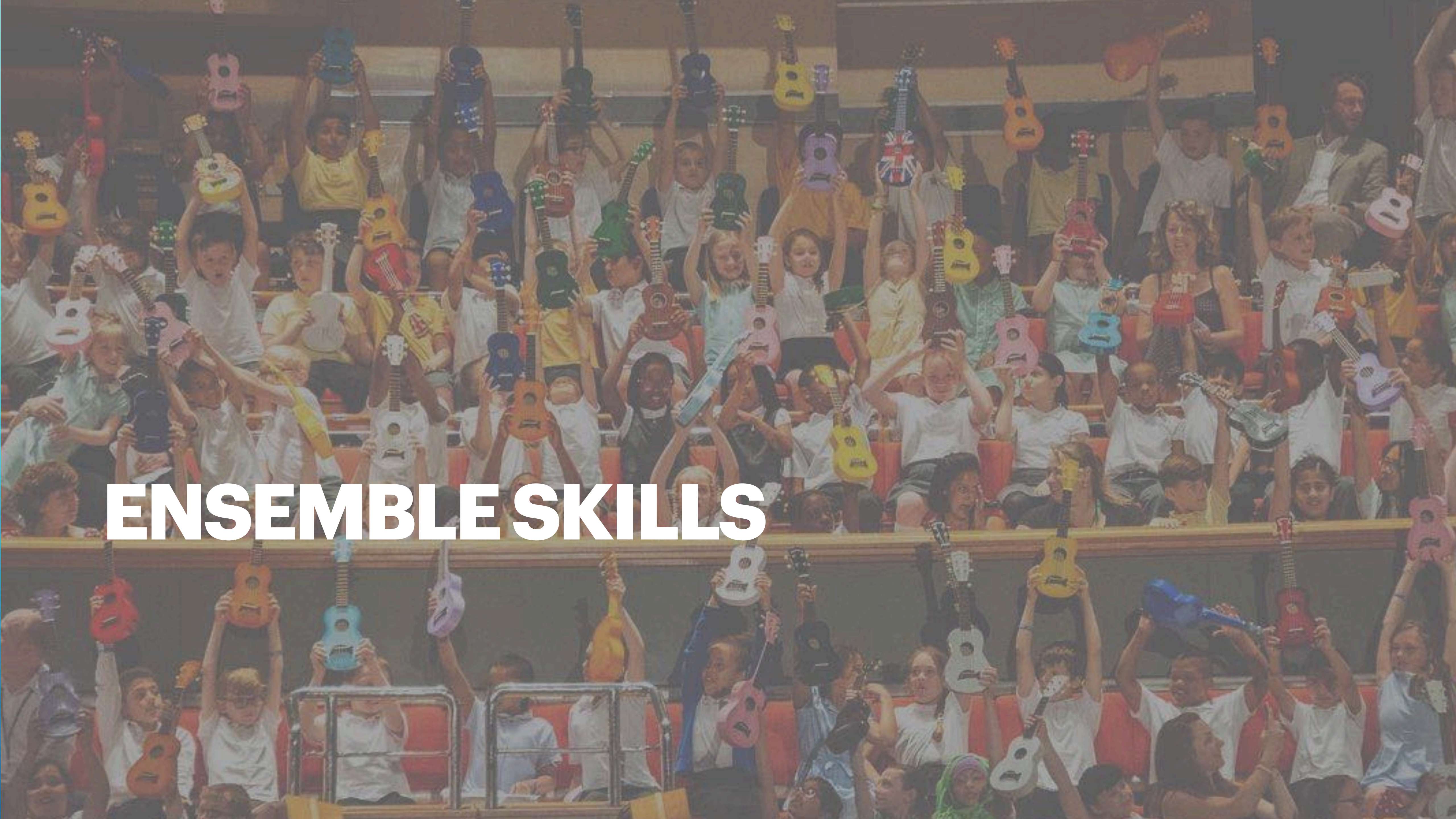
All Other Musical Instruments

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

- Violins, \$12 up.
- Mandolins, \$5.00 up.
- Bugles, \$3.00 up.



HISTORY OF THE UKULELE



ENSEMBLE SKILLS

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-blue gradient overlay covers the left side of the image. The text 'DIFFERENTIATE FOR GRADE LEVELS' is written in large, bold, black capital letters across the middle of the image.

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:

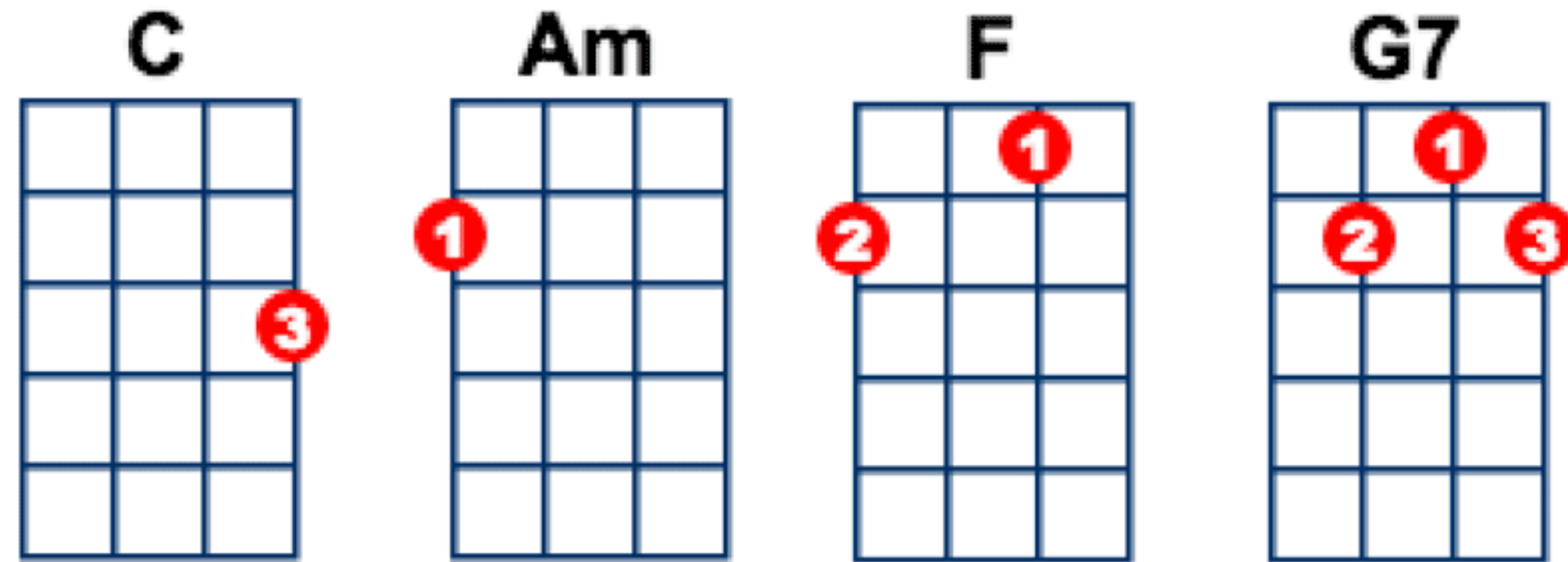
Songs in C major:

C - Am - F - G (or G7)

For Further Learning:

Songs in G major:

G - Em - C - D (or D7)



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

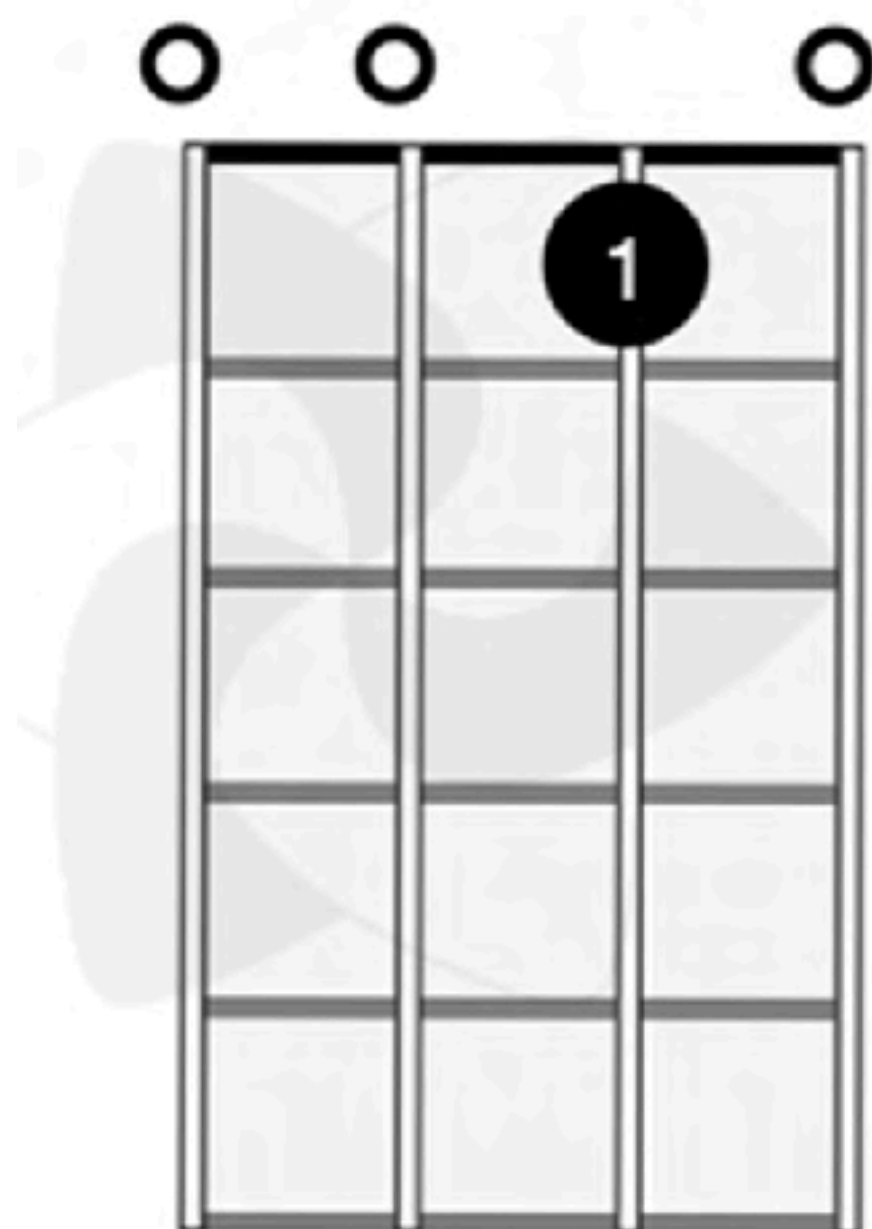
Visual Musical Minds

MODIFIED F MAJOR CHORD

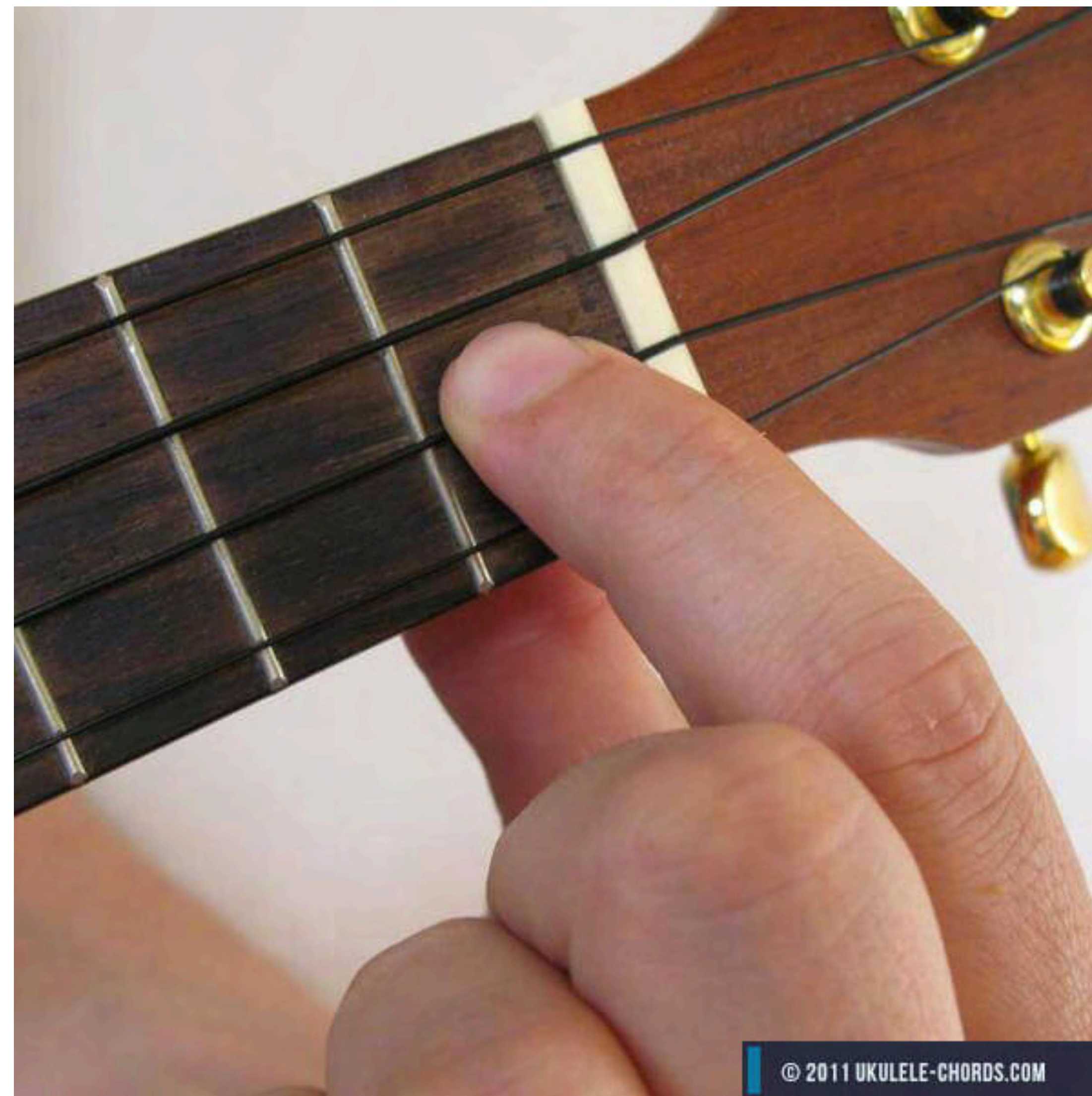
TECHNICALLY AN FADD9

ONLY ONE FINGER,
EXACTLY ONE STRING
AWAY FROM C7

Thanks Maria Doreste!



www.justinguitar.com



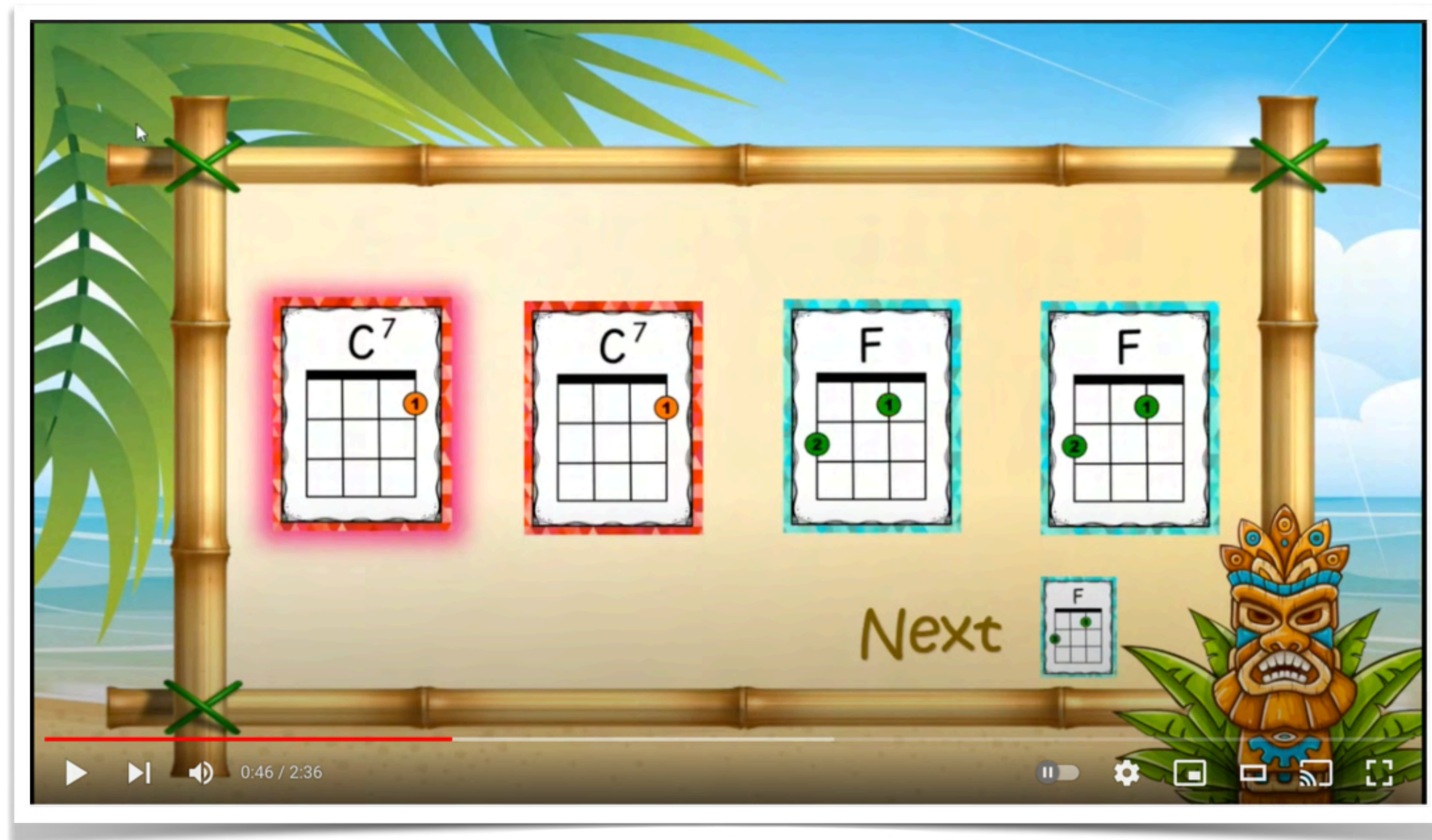
© 2011 UKULELE-CHORDS.COM

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

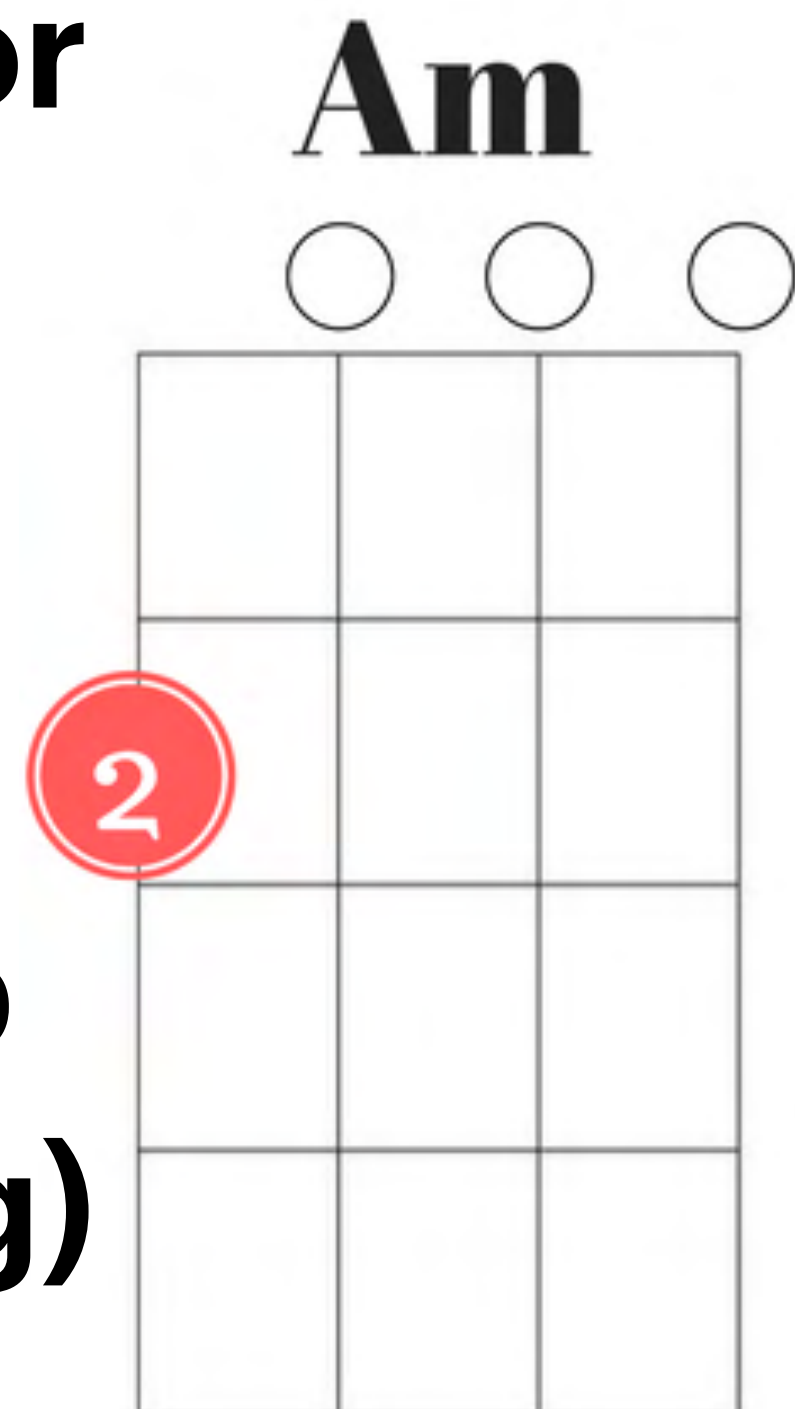
↓ x ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑



A MINOR CHORD

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

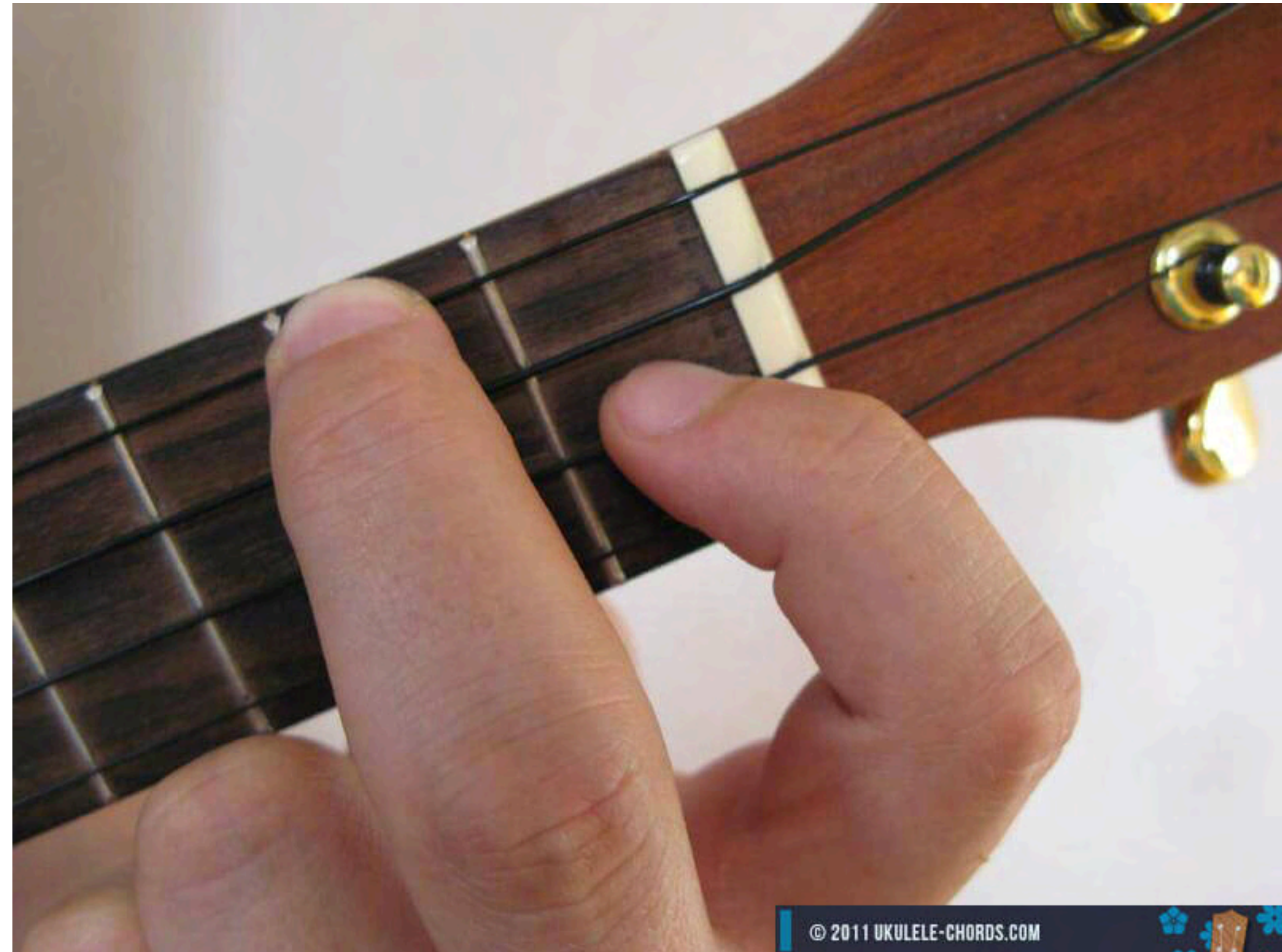
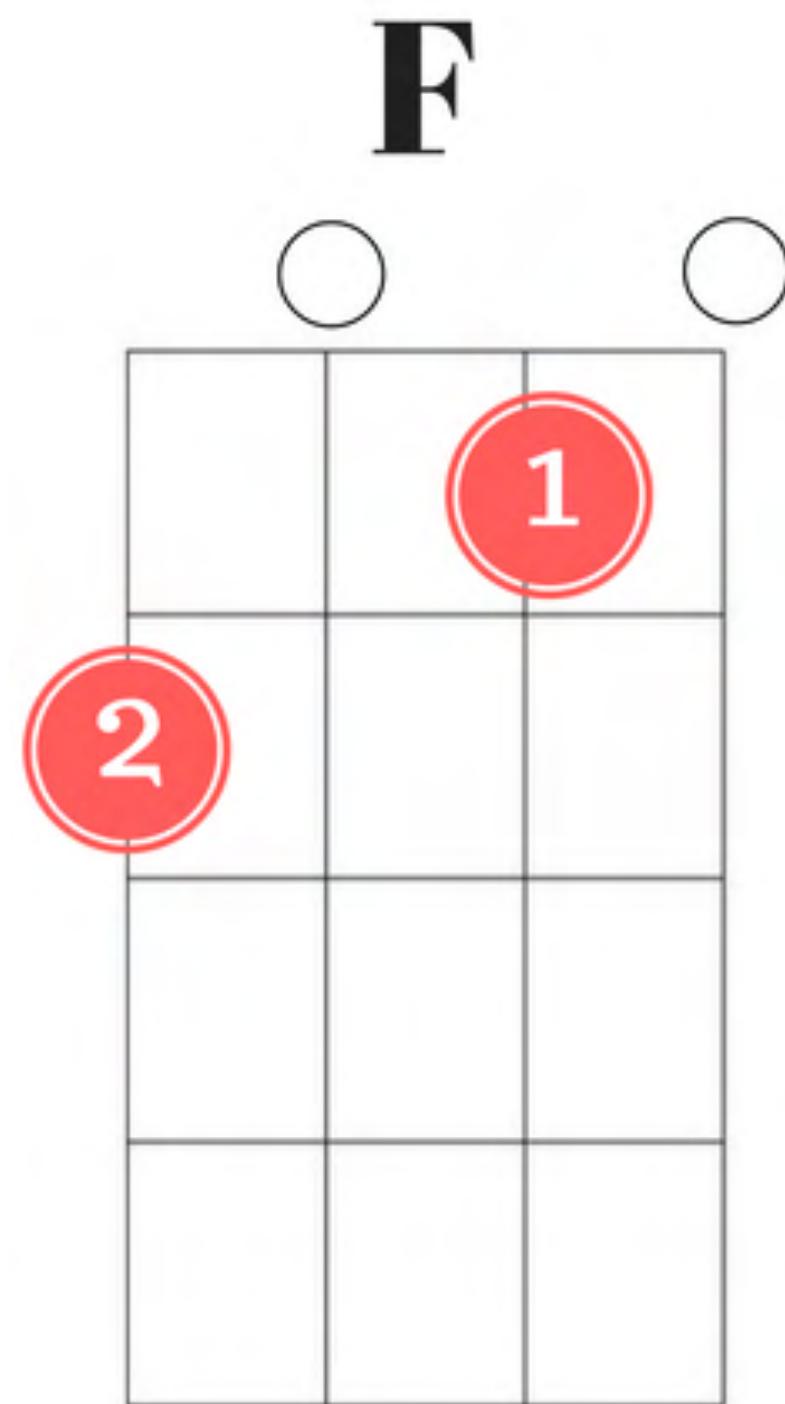
Practice “bunny
fingers” and 2nd
finger reaching up
to the sky (G string)



F MAJOR CHORD

For upper elementary students

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

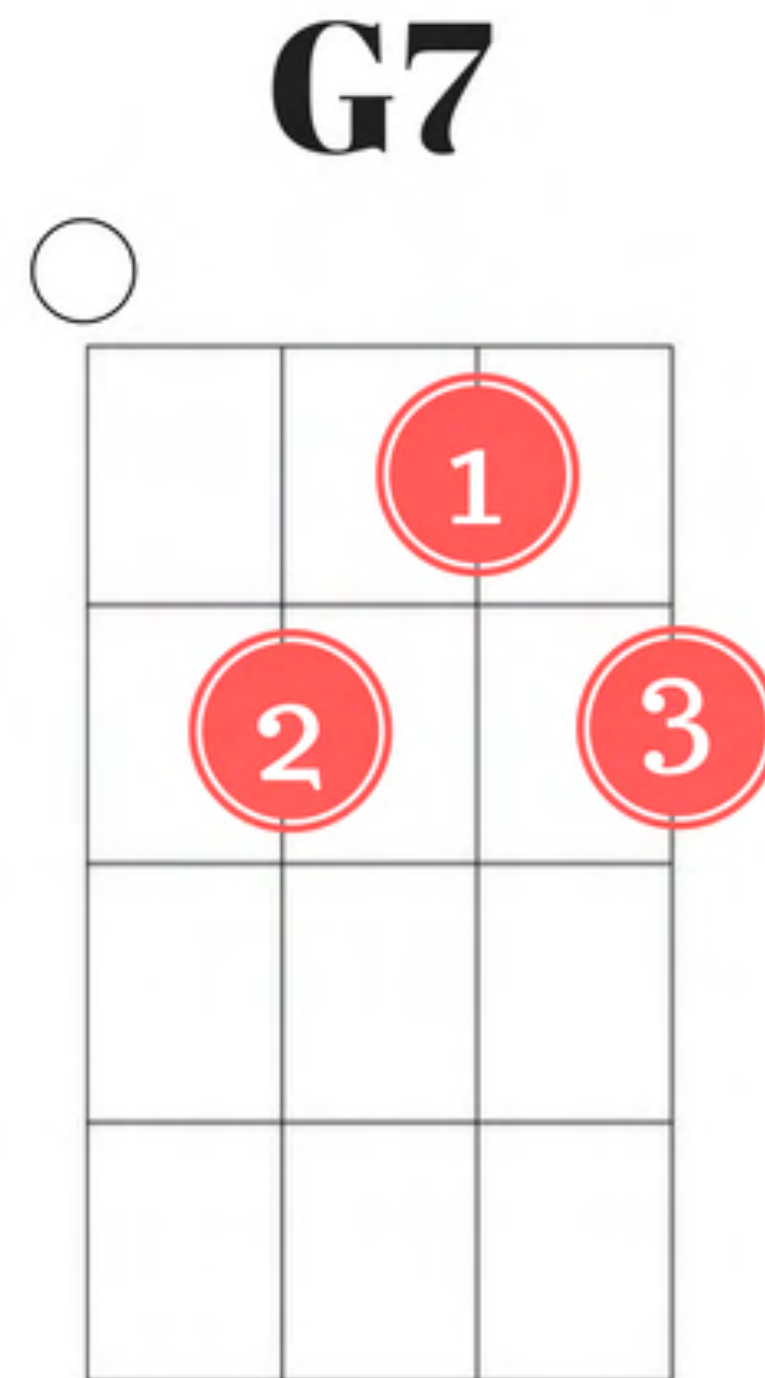


G7 CHORD

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

“Triangle Chord”

Teach before G
 (“Upside down
triangle”)



A top-down view of a ukulele, a laptop, and a coffee cup on a textured surface. The ukulele is positioned diagonally, with its headstock at the top right. The laptop is open, showing the keyboard and trackpad. A white coffee cup is visible on the left side. The entire scene is overlaid with a blue-to-purple gradient. The text "UTILIZING EXISTING MATERIALS" is written in large, bold, black capital letters across the center of the image.

UTILIZING EXISTING MATERIALS



**LITTLE
KIDS
ROCK:
JAMZONE**

LESSONS AND CHORD CHARTS



UKULALIENS

PLAY-ALONG VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE

UKE PLAY ALONG

PLAY-ALONG VIDEOS ON YOUTUBE



UKUTABS

CHORDS AND TABS FOR POPULAR SONGS



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

EASIEST



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

MORE

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

EASY



***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 not endorsed by this music teacher**

**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/>

Mr. Miles created playlists:

Easiest (C7, C, F, Am) : <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-2wj0W87IXoMZhdu10TTfoxtkxbXhAAG>

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!

MILES WILCOX

mwilcox2@berkeley.edu

mileswilcox.weebly.com