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CHAPTER 2

Strum, Strum, Strum

LESSON 1: YOUR FIRST CHORDS

With just a few chords and a bit of know-how, you can make some real music right away. A *chord* is three or more notes sounded simultaneously. The way to remember that is a *note* is one sound at a time (like one person singing), and a *chord* is a bunch of notes played or sung together. Your first chords are called *open chords* because they involve a mixture of *open* (unfingered) strings and fretted notes.

SUPER UKE TIP

During this phase of your learning, it is more important to practice often than to practice for long periods of time. Play for a while, then put the uke down and come back to it again later (but not days and days later!).

Muscle memory is what gives us the ability to perform a complex action (like walking) without having to plan it out every time. Muscle memory builds through cycles of repetition, then rest, then returning to repeat the motion again. Give yourself the patience, persistence, and time to let your fingers learn how to master each new skill.

STRUMMING

One of the most common ways to play a chord is to *strum*. You can strum with a pick, fingers, or thumb. Many uke players do most of their strumming using the index, middle, or ring finger—all of which carry the added bonus of being hard to misplace or send through the clothes dryer (unlike a pick).

To strum with a finger (of your strumming hand), start with your hand held near the place where the neck joins the body, with your finger above the 4th string. In one motion, rapidly move your finger across all the strings, striking them all (see photos to the right). It should sound like you hit them all at the same time. It may feel like flicking the back of your fingernail across the strings, or like flicking your hand from the wrist, or a bit of both. Stay very loose and relaxed and practice this several times on the open strings.

Strumming symbols:

- ▣ Downstroke
(strum toward the floor)
- ∨ Upstroke
(strum toward the ceiling)



Strum setup.



Strum follow-through.

SUPER UKE TIP

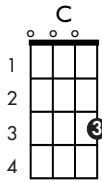
The best basic uke tone is produced by strumming the strings somewhere between the soundhole and the neck joint (where the neck meets the body). Find the spot that is comfortable and sounds good to you, and use this spot as “home base” most of the time. Next, try moving toward the headstock where the sound gets softer and sweeter, and then toward the bridge where the sound gets louder, brighter, and, eventually, more nasal or metallic. It’s your uke. Go nuts.

The following exercise uses the 3+3+2 strum in the first four measures, then the triplet triple strum in the next three measures. The triple strums have been highlighted. This exercise also contains a four-finger version of F7 in measure four that you might not have tried yet. If you're having trouble getting the triple strums together, try strumming through this progression a few times with simple swing eighths using the regular down-up alternating motion. Practice the triple strum patterns separately and then try plugging them into the progression as they get easier.

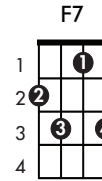
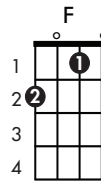
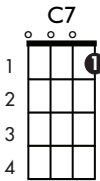


THE SECRET HANDSHAKE RAG

Swing 8ths



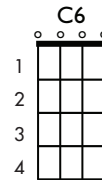
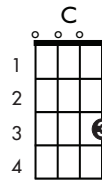
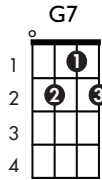
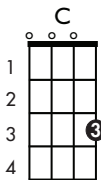
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$\overset{>}{i}$ $\overset{>}{T}$ i $\overset{>}{i}$ $\overset{>}{T}$ i $\overset{>}{i}$ $\overset{>}{i}$ etc.

Count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & etc.



$\overset{>}{i}$ $\overset{>}{i}$ $\overset{>}{i}$ $\overset{>}{i}$ $\overset{>}{i}$ $\overset{>}{i}$ $\overset{>}{T}$ $\overset{>}{i}$ etc.

Count: 1 2 & 3 & 4 & ah etc. 1 (2) 3 4

LESSON 5: THE TRIPLE BURST STRUM

You have learned how to incorporate the triple strum into regular eighth-note strumming. You can also learn to do triples very fast and use them as a flourish to accentuate a normal rhythm. These types of flourishes are sometimes called *bursts*, *rolls*, or *shakes* after both the sound and the quick movement of the hand.

INTRODUCING THE SIXTEENTH-NOTE TRIPLET

The triple burst is shown as a *sixteenth-note triplet*. *Sixteenth notes* look like eighth notes, but with a double beam, or a double flag for single sixteenths. Normal sixteenth notes divide a quarter note into four pieces, counted “l-e-&-a.”

Triplet sixteenths, like all triplets, allow you to fit three notes where there are normally two. Normal sixteenths are *two* equal notes in the space of an eighth note. Triplet sixteenths are *three* equal notes in the space of one eighth note. One common way to count two sets of sixteenth-note triplets (one full beat’s worth) is “l-la-li-&-la-li.” This can be a tongue twister if the tempos are fast, so an alternative is “l-a-la-&-a-la.”

Sixteenth Notes

Sixteenth-Note Triplets

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CHAPTER 6

Fingerstyle Uke

LESSON 1: FINGERPICKING PATTERNS

While the uke is most often heard strummed, it has a beautiful, harp-like sound when played fingerstyle. To play the uke fingerstyle, we'll be picking individual strings with the fingers of the right hand. Some picking patterns will use four fingers (thumb, index, middle, and ring), and others will use three fingers (thumb, index, and middle).

In classical guitar notation, the picking fingers are designated using the letters *p*, *i*, *m*, and *a*:
p = thumb, *i* = index, *m* = middle, and *a* = ring.

In banjo notation, the letters *T*, *i*, and *m* are used:
T = thumb, *i* = index, *m* = middle.

For this book, we're using a hybrid of the two, the letters *T*, *i*, *m*, and *a*:
T = thumb, *i* = index, *m* = middle, and *a* = ring.

First, we'll explore some patterns in $\frac{4}{4}$ time. Each measure is an individual exercise, so repeat it until you can play it smoothly without mistakes. The exercises are written using a C chord, but once you get comfortable with that, try using other chords, keeping the pattern going smoothly as you change from chord to chord.

Our first exercise is a simple arpeggio using four fingers. The next pattern uses three fingers, with the thumb alternating between the 3rd and 4th strings. This is similar to a fingerstyle guitar pattern, and on the C chord, it creates the arpeggio root–3rd–5th–8th(root). The next two patterns use what is often called a *pinch*, plucking two strings together. In the first pinch exercise, the pinch is on the downbeat of the measure, and in the second pinch exercise, it occurs on the second beat. As you get proficient with these patterns, you can combine them into longer, two-measure patterns. The final exercise demonstrates a two-measure pattern. For those wishing guitar-like fingerstyle patterns with extended bass range, consider trying the low-G tuning. (For more about the low-G tuning, see Appendix on page 95.)

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Exercise 1: *T i m a T i m a T i T m T i T m m T T i T m T i*

Exercise 2: *T m T T i T m T m T T i T m T i T m*

LESSON 4: GREENSLEEVES (CHORD-MELODY)

We'll play one more chord-melody arrangement, "Greensleeves," in the key of D Minor. Again, make sure to hold down the notes of the chord so they sustain while you're playing the melody notes that follow.



Track
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GREENSLEEVES (CHORD-MELODY)

Chords: Dmin, F, C, Dmin, B^b, A

Fingerings for the first system:

T	2	1	3	0	1-0	3	0	0	2	0	1	2	2	3	1-2	0	0
A	2	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	2	3	1	2	1	2
B	3	1	4	0	1	0	3	0	0	2	0	1	3	2	1	2	0
		3	0	1	0		0						3	2	1	2	0
		2	0	0			0						2	3	1	2	0
			2	0			0						2	3	1	2	0

Chords: Dmin, F, C, B^b, A, Dmin

Fingerings for the second system:

T	1	3	0	1-0	3	0	0	2	0	1	0	2	1	0	1	2	1
A	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	3	0	2	2	1	0	1	2
B	3	4	0	1	0	3	0	0	2	0	1	3	0	3	1	0	1
	2	0	0	0		0				2	0	2	2	0	1	3	2
		2	0	0		0				2	0	2	2	0	1	3	2
			2	0		0				2	0	2	2	0	1	3	2

Chords: F, C, Amin, Dmin, B^b, A

Fingerings for the third system:

T	3	3	2	0	3	0	0	2	0	1	2	2	3	1-2	0	0
A	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	2	3	1	2	1	1
B	4	4	3	0	3	0	0	2	3	0	1	3	2	1	2	0
	1	1	0		0						3	2	3	1	2	1
	0	0	0		0						2	3	3	1	2	0
	2	2	0		0						2	3	3	1	2	0

Chords: F, C, Amin, B^b, A, Dmin

Fingerings for the fourth system:

T	3	3	2	0	3	0	0	2	0	1	0	2	1	0	1	2	1
A	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	2	3	1	0	1	2	2
B	4	4	3	0	3	0	0	2	3	0	1	0	3	1	0	1	3
	1	1	0		0						3	2	2	0	1	3	1
	0	0	0		0						2	3	2	1	2	0	2
	2	2	0		0						2	3	2	1	2	0	2

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INTRODUCTION

Mastering Ukulele builds on what you learned in *Beginning Ukulele* and *Intermediate Ukulele*. In this section, you will learn:

- How to construct and play more types of chords across the fretboard
- Major scales and modes
- Major and minor pentatonic scales
- Arpeggios
- Working your way up the neck using moveable positions
- Music theory applied to the ukulele
- Playing techniques including strums, fingerstyle, harmonics, and muting
- Playing and arranging chord-melody style
- Improvisation

We will venture into styles such as blues, jazz, rock, folk, classical, and fingerpicking. As you work through *Mastering Ukulele*, many songs and exercises can be combined to extend the range of possibilities. For example, try various rhythms learned in one chapter over a song or chord progression in another lesson. We will present ideas on how to progress and create your own style using the concepts presented in this section.

CHAPTER 3

Yet More Strums and Techniques

LESSON 1: REVIEWING TRIPLES, BURSTS, AND SPLIT STRUMS

This lesson is a quick review of techniques covered in *Beginning* and *Intermediate Ukulele*. The lessons that follow will build on these techniques, and in the next chapter, you'll use many of them in larger musical examples.



Track 6

THE TRIPLE STRUM

The *triple strum* (also simply called a “triple”) is a three-stroke pattern that can be executed a number of ways. A common approach is to begin with a downstroke of the index finger (*i*), followed by a downstroke of the thumb (*T*), then an upstroke of the index finger. The first part of Example 5 shows the triple in a 3+3+2 *rhythm* (two triples and a single down-up strum in eighth notes).



Track 7

THE TRIPLE BURST

The *triple burst* uses the triple strum as a flourish to set up a strong downstroke on the next beat. At slow tempos, it sounds like a triplet, but at faster tempos it sounds like quick burst of strums. The second part of Example 5 shows the triple burst.

5

Track 8

Triple strum 3+3+2

Triple burst

3+3+2 Count: 1 2 3 | 1 2 3 | 1 2

i T i i T i i i

i T i i i T i i

THE SPLIT STRUM

The *split strum* is often associated with British uke star George Formby. It produces a three-stroke rhythm, all with the index finger. The first stroke is a full downstroke. The second stroke is an upstroke that just hits the first two strings. The third stroke is a downstroke that just hits strings 3 and 4. Split strums often appear in a 3+3+2 rhythm of eighth notes. It is very common with split strums to lift a left-hand finger on and off one of the notes of the chord. This technique can be called a *tap finger*.

6

Track 9: Bar 1

Track 10: Bar 2

Split strum A7

Split strum with tap finger on 1st string A9

3+3+2 Count: 1 2 3 | 1 2 3 | 1 2

1 2 3 | 1 2 3 | 1 2

0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0

1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1 | 1 1

0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0

0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0

0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0 | 0 0

LESSON 4: BUILDING A GROOVE BY LAYERS

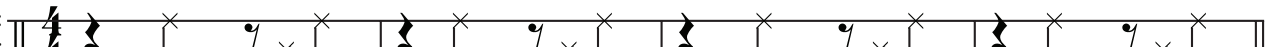
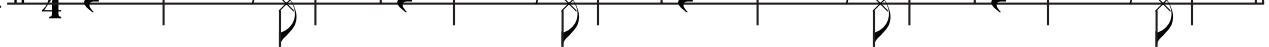
A great way to build an arrangement is to layer simple ideas, the way some musicians layer short electronic loops to build a complex groove. Ukulele virtuoso James Hill used this approach to build a cool arrangement of Michael Jackson's hit "Billie Jean." Hill's arrangement pulls together a bass riff, a body percussion groove, and a chord sequence. We'll take a similar approach to build a groove for this lesson called "Gloves Off." Your strumming in this piece will mainly be with your index finger.

First, learn this little percussion groove. The top line shows the "flick" you learned on page 212. The lower line shows a light finger tap on the top. Make these sounds in the area of the upper bout of the uke, on the side above the 4th string. This will make it easier to integrate with the strums. Flick with your middle finger, so your index will be free for the tap.

27



Track 43

Flick top: 
 Finger tap: 

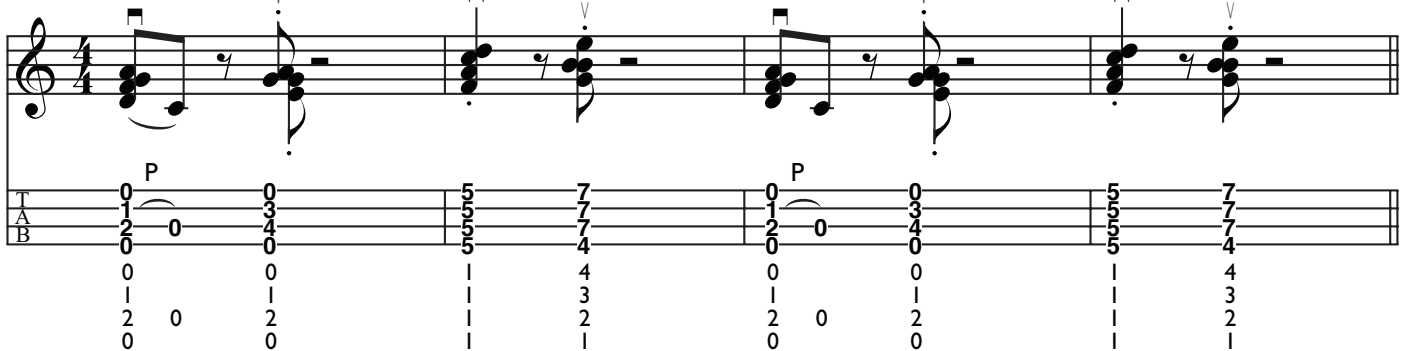
After you've got the percussion groove, put it aside and work on this chord progression that goes up the neck. Watch out for the pull off in the first chord of the four-chord pattern.

28



Track 44

Dmin7 Emin II F6 Emin Dmin7 Emin II F6 Emin



Fingerings (T, A, B):

0	0	5	7	0	0	5	7
1	3	5	7	1	3	5	7
2	4	5	7	2	4	5	7
0	0	5	4	0	0	5	4
0	0	5	4	0	0	5	4
1	1	4	3	1	1	4	3
2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1


Now, try integrating both moves together. You'll find that the rests in one part line up with the moves in the other part. Later in the tune, you get to incorporate those sliding funk chords from the previous lesson, plus a couple of single-note runs.



GLOVES OFF

Track 45

Dmin7 Emin II F6 Emin Dmin7 Emin II



Fingerings (T, A, B):

0	0	5	7	0	0
1	3	5	7	1	3
2	4	5	7	2	4
0	0	5	4	0	0
0	0	5	4	0	0
1	1	4	3	1	1
2	2	2	2	2	2
0	0	1	1	0	0