

Uke N Sing: Simple Strumming Techniques

Strumming Position

On most ukuleles (Soprano, Tenor, Concert) your strumming fingers will fall naturally over the last fret on the fingerboard, or nearby. This is the “sweet” spot ie. best strumming spot.

Which fingers (or thumb)?

Although there are various methods of strumming including both, forefinger, thumb or both, the standard method (and one which leads to greater flexibility later on) is strumming with your forefinger: Your forefinger does both the down and up stroke. It should be bent at right angles at your first knuckle so your fingertip is at right angles to the strings. Your other fingers are relaxed in their natural curve and your wrist should be straight. You strike the strings with either side of your fingertip.

Some things to note

Strum with a rolling motion of the wrist and leave the forearm relaxed. **Everything** should be relaxed including the fingers you are strumming with.

Evenness of **rhythm** and **volume** are really important. As you progress with strumming you will find that we can vary rhythm and volume to good effect. However, these variations can only come about from a solid base of even strumming, so really work on that.

Learning strumming, like learning most instruments, is an exercise in muscle control. It might seem tricky at first, but practice is your friend – the muscles will get the idea in time. **And remember to keep your hand and arm relaxed**

Simple Rhythms

Even Strum. The simplest rhythm is an even Down Up Down Up, affectionately known as Jimi

Count 1 and 2 and 1 and 2 and. OR 1 2 1 2 1 2 1 2 or Ji-mi Ji- mi Ji- mi
 ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑

Listen to an example (playing the chord of C) here: <http://www.singforjoy.org.nz/ukemp3/StrumSimple.mp3>
Note that whereas the rhythm is steady, every 2nd down stroke is emphasized. This gives you a “marker” to help you to keep the rhythm steady, and also it is very common in music that the first note of a bar is emphasized. **Try doing this strum initially totally steady with no emphasis, and then you can play with the emphasis.** .

You can try this strum with “Kingston Town” in your Songs in the Key of G sheet.

Swing Strum. (affentionately know as Martin). More common, and has more of a lift. It still alternates Down Up, but the Down stroke gets **twice as long** as the up stroke. Here the count is

Count 1 and a 2 and a 1 and a 2 and a. OR 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3
 ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑

Listen to an example (playing the chord of G) here: <http://www.singforjoy.org.nz/ukemp3/StrumSwing.mp3>

Try this strum to “Rock My Soul” in the Songs in C sheet.

Variations – a bit of spice!

You can make these basic strums more interesting by adding some simple variations.

