

PICKING THE UKULELE...

The art of finger picking or plectrum picking a ukulele has as many ways to start as there are chords on a uke. I personally think the best way to start is with the fundamentals, that is why you see below that picking an actual song is way down in Step 5.

The decision of how you are going to pick, thumb, index finger, multiple fingers or a plectrum, will come with practice and as you develop your style. Remember, the notes of the song are usually within the Chord on strings 1 2 or 3.

The choice of the combination of picking and strumming is also a personal choice and one that seems more popular with the ukulele players of today.

STEP 1. Learn the “C” scale, frontwards and backwards. It is important to practice on a steady beat, one, two, three, four, very slow at first, gaining speed as you practice.

STEP 2. Learn the “C” scale working through the chords in the “C” Triad. Remember in the Triad, the 5 Chord can be either a 7th or a Major.

CHORD	C	G7	C	F	G	F	G7	C
NOTES	C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C

NOTE: For the notes from F to G to A you begin and end in the F Chord, so, a touch with the pinkie might work rather than going from the F Chord to the G Chord and then back to the F Chord. This comes with practice and depends on the beat and the rhythm of the song. Practice Step 2 frontwards, and backwards, working to keep that same beat from Step 1.

STEP 3. Practice Step 1 and Step 2 changing the meter from a half note to a quarter or eighth note occasionally. Also try changing progression through the scale, ie:

C D C D E..., or E F G E G... or A B C B C... or a turnaround I use for “Please don’t talk about me when I’m gone” E E F F# G C Bb G... or any combination you might want to try. These are licks, ones that you might use for a turnaround or a bridge to add some spice to your picking.

STEP 4. Next it’s time to add some tricks and techniques such as hammer ons, vibrato, or pull offs. Or use that pinkie to move from note to note staying in the same chord. Or use some of the chording techniques you learned in the Chording Lesson.

STEP 5. OK now you are ready to try some songs using the techniques you have learned in Steps 1 through Step 4. You can also decide which picking technique you want to use. Chet Atkins, Merl Travis or Ukulele Mike picking technique, or a combination of those, or even develop your own technique. BUT...

PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE