

Soprano/concert/tenor ukulele

BLUES UKULELE IN C

For beginners



John Heyworth



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BLUES UKULELE IN C FOR BEGINNERS*

By John Heyworth

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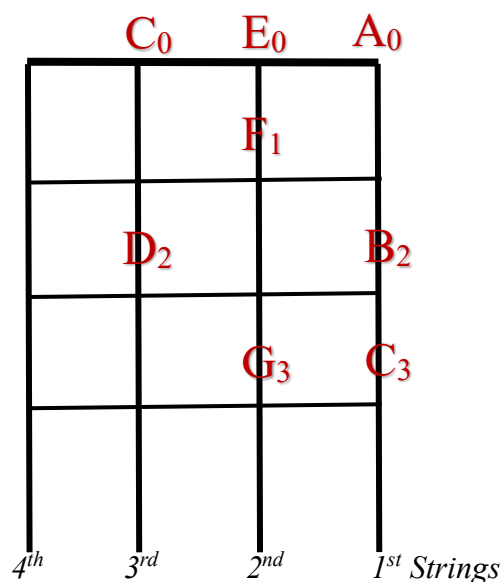
**A basic knowledge of ukulele music is assumed.*

Let's start with the C major scale.

The image shows the C major scale on a ukulele. The notation is in 4/4 time, with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C. The TAB below shows the fret positions for each note: C (0), D (2), E (0), F (1), G (3), A (0), B (2), C (3).

For now, use the same finger as the fret position. That is: 1st fret = 1st finger, 2nd fret = 2nd finger, 3rd fret = 3rd finger and 0 is the open string. *Pluck each note with your thumb.*

Finger board.

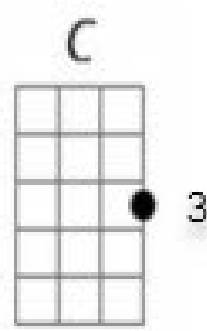


Practise slowly, in both directions up and down: 4 times each note, then 3 then 2 and finally 1 until you are fluent and can play the following notes. [**Tip:- use this technique for all scales**]

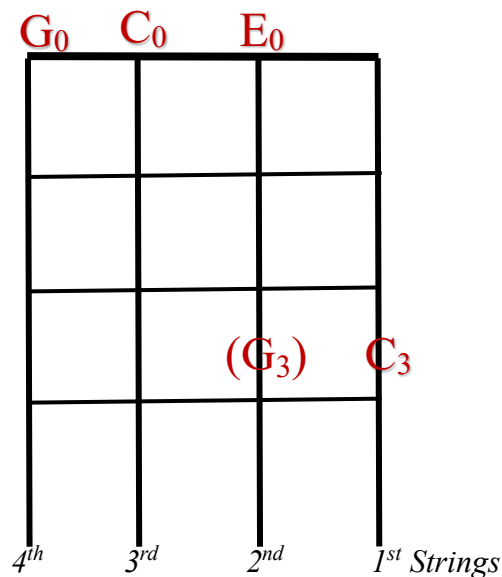
The image shows a practice exercise on a ukulele. The notation is in 4/4 time, with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C. The TAB below shows the fret positions for each note: C (0), D (2), E (0), F (1), G (3), A (0), B (2), C (3).

GREAT! When you are ready, move on.

Let's examine the C major chord.



There are only 3 different notes in a major chord. For C: they are C, E and G. But they are not necessarily in that order when you strum the C major chord diagram (all strings) above.



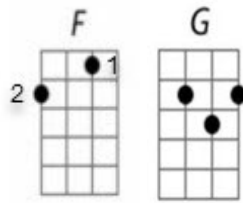
The notes C, E and G can be played as an arpeggio (notes played one after the other instead of all together). It is a useful technique for blues, rock, jazz, pop, and classical music.

Let's learn to play a simple C pattern using a C major arpeggio. Note: Use the G on the 2nd string.

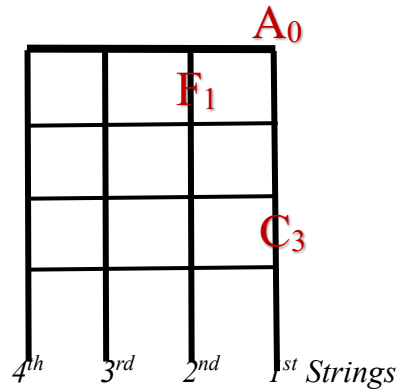
Great, we are only using three notes from the C major scale: C D E F G A B C

(The 1st, 3rd & 5th notes)

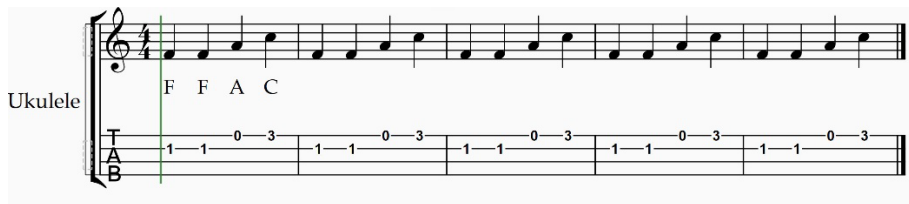
Let's add more major chords to this pattern: The **F** and **G** major chords.



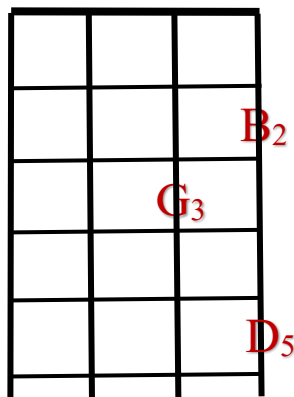
The 3 different notes in an F major chord are *F, A and C*.



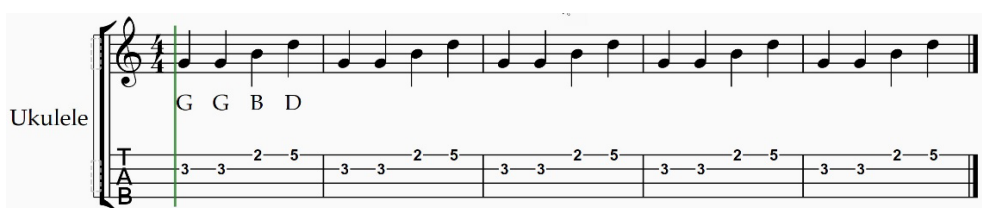
Learn to play the **F** pattern.



The **G** arpeggio, G, B and D will be a little harder to master. Persist, slowly at first.



We will have to change our fingering. Use your 2nd finger on G, 1st finger on B and 4th finger on D.



Great, it's time to put these patterns into a basic 12 bar blues chord progression!

Note that I have *not* put the note names in the score. Just look at the chord name and play the patterns accordingly (e.g. for the C chord play the C arpeggio pattern). This will help you learn to follow a chord progression and/or lead sheet. Play each note with your thumb.

12 Bar Blues in C (1)

The musical score for '12 Bar Blues in C (1)' is presented in three systems, each with a treble clef staff and a four-line tablature staff. The first system (bars 1-4) is labeled 'Ukulele' and features a C chord diagram above the staff. The second system (bars 5-8) is labeled 'Uke.' and features F and C chord diagrams above the staff. The third system (bars 9-12) is labeled 'Uke.' and features G, F, and C chord diagrams above the staff. The tablature for the first system shows a simple 0-0-0-3 pattern. The second system shows a 1-1-0-3 pattern for the first two bars, followed by 0-0-0-3 for the last two bars. The third system shows a 3-3-2-5 pattern for the first bar, followed by 1-1-0-3 for the second bar, and 0-0-0-3 for the last two bars.

That last line will need extra practice. Go over that line several times and then play the whole 12 Bar Blues progression when you have mastered it.

If you have a friend, one person can strum the chords while the other plays the notes.

(Note: When playing chords with a straight strum over 4 beats per bar, emphasize the off beats by strumming the 2nd and 4th strings a little harder – 1 2 3 4 this will give your playing bounce. We will talk about swing later.)

If you are enjoying this, why not get a backing app so you can play along with a full band. *iReal Pro* is great – you can find the *Blues Simple* - choose the key of C and set your own tempo (speed). This follows the blues progression above. You'll notice that the chords C, F and G are written as C7, F7 and G7. We will be exploring that soon! (*iReal pro is not free, but there are other great apps that are free.*)

Let's move on to a Pentatonic scale in C.

The C major scale has seven different notes – C D E F G A B
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

The C pentatonic scale has 5 different notes - C D E G A

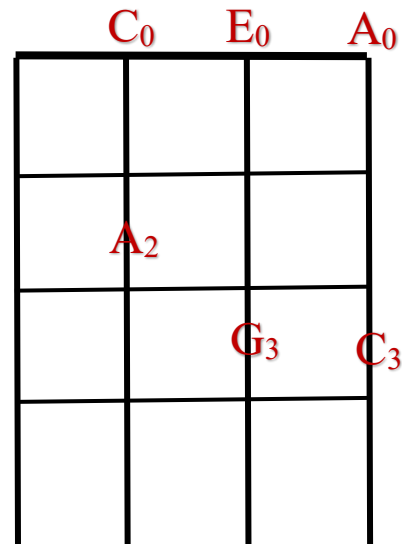
The 4th and 7th notes are omitted.

C Pentatonic Scale

Ukulele

T
A
B

0 2 0 3 0 3



As before, play each note with your thumb. Practise slowly, in both directions up and down: 4 times each note, then 3 then 2 and finally 1 until you are fluent and can play the following two exercises.

Ukulele

T
A
B

0-2-0-3-0-3-0-2-0-0-2-0-3-0-3-0-3-0-2-0

The pentatonic scale provides the foundation for improvisation. Play around with the notes and see what you can do – they will all fit over a C chord progression – try it with a friend or a backing track. (*Experimenting is a great way to learn and fun too!*)

New patterns for C, F and G using the pentatonic scale:

For C pattern, we have added the 6th note in the C major scale to the 1st pattern we have learnt.

Ukulele

Uke.

For the F pattern, we need to change the fingering by moving the 1st finger up to the C at the 3rd fret so we can reach the D.

Uke.

For the G pattern, we need to change the fingering by moving the 1st finger from B up to the D at the 5th fret so we can reach the high E, remembering that we use the 2nd finger for G.

There are alternatives (e.g. play B on the 7th fret of the 2nd string after playing G with the 1st finger – but we will be looking at movable shapes later on.)

12 Bar Blues using Pentatonic scale.

12 Bar Blues in C (2)

Ukulele

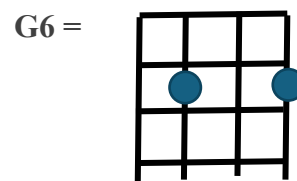
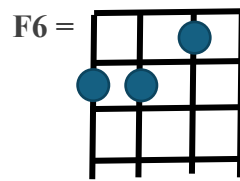
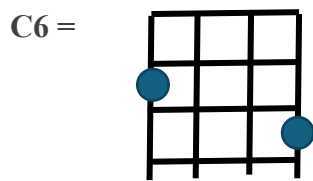
Uke.

Uke.

In the next example we might will add some colour to the chords and also add a turn-around to the notes.

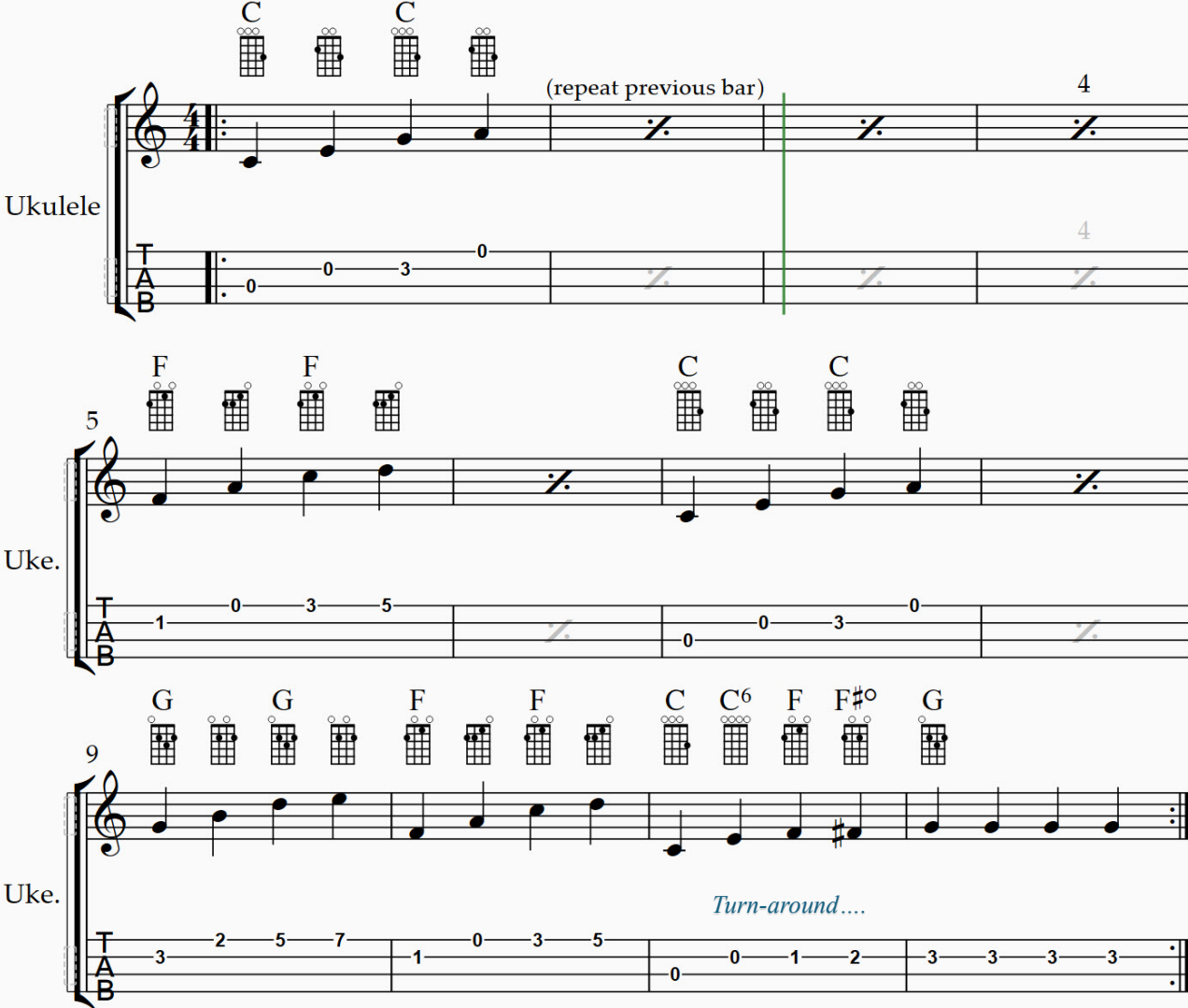
A **turn-around** is a pattern at the end of a section which leads back to the beginning or to another passage of music.

Let's vary the chord shapes by alternating between the major chord and the added 6th note.



(Note: Playing 4 bars of C chord on its own can sound a bit boring – we can always embellish the chords by adding different but related chord structures. More on this later.)

12 Bar Blues in C (3)



The score is divided into three systems, each with a treble clef staff and a ukulele staff. Chord diagrams are placed above the notes. The first system (bars 1-4) shows C and C6 chords. The second system (bars 5-8) shows F and C chords. The third system (bars 9-12) shows G, F, C, C6, F, F#, and G chords. A 'Turn-around....' is indicated at the end of the third system.

Play the chords with a *shuffle* – a Down Up strum in a rocking motion rather than straight equal beats.

Swing as a rhythmic style in Blues shuffle or boogie. It is not an even beat.

Let's vary the pattern a little.

12 Bar Blues in C (4)

The image shows a musical score for a 12-bar blues in C major, 4/4 time. It is divided into three systems, each with a treble clef staff and a four-string ukulele fretboard diagram. The first system (bars 1-4) features a C chord and a melody of quarter notes: C4, E4, G4, A4. The second system (bars 5-8) features an F chord (bar 5), a C chord (bar 7), and a melody of quarter notes: C4, E4, G4, A4. The third system (bars 9-12) features G, F, C, and G chords and a melody of quarter notes: C4, E4, G4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. A vertical green line is positioned between bars 4 and 5. The fretboard diagrams show fingerings: bar 1 (0-3-0-3), bar 5 (1-3-5-3), bar 9 (3-5-7-5), and bar 12 (0-0-1-2, 3-3-3).

Play the chords with a *shuffle* – C C6 – F F6 – G G6 etc.

Let's add some more spice by adding some transitions from C to F and from C to G.

12 Bar Blues in C (5)

Ukulele

C

transition from C to F

Uke.

5

F

C

transition from C to G

Uke.

9

G

F

C

G

Here is a simple Riff you can add in to the 12 Bar Blues.

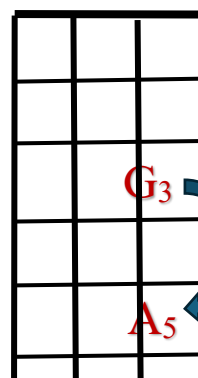
A riff is a short pattern of notes and often used as tools for improving melodies over a chord progression like the 12 bar blues. There are many riffs you can use and/or make up your own (as in this case, using the pentatonic scale notes only).

C Riff

Note that here we are playing most of the notes on **one string** – the second string. By placing your 1st finger on the 3rd fret G. This allows you to hammer-on using your 3rd finger on A(5th fret) while keeping the 1st finger pressed on the 3rd fret G.

Hammer-on is the technique of bringing a finger down sharply on the fingerboard behind a fret to play a note. Hammer-ons require at least two notes on the same string with an ascending pitch

The image shows musical notation for a C Riff. At the top left, there is a C chord diagram. Below it, a single staff of music shows a sequence of notes: G (3rd fret), A (5th fret), G (3rd fret), A (5th fret), G (3rd fret), A (5th fret), and G (3rd fret). Below the staff, a fretting diagram shows the sequence of frets: 0, 3, 5, 3, 5, 3, 0.



After playing the G using the 1st finger hammer-on your 3rd finger to make the A sound.

F Riff This should not pose any problems to work out. But this time the hammer on is from an open string A to the 3rd fret C using the 3rd finger.

The image shows musical notation for an F Riff. At the top left, there is an F chord diagram. Below it, a single staff of music shows a sequence of notes: F (5th fret), G (5th fret), A (5th fret), F (5th fret), G (5th fret), A (5th fret), and F (5th fret). Below the staff, a fretting diagram shows the sequence of frets: 1, 0, 3, 0, 3, 0, 1.

The final 4 bars will take a bit of extra practice (the hammer-on here will be using the 4th finger on D after the 1st finger plays B unless you can stretch your 3rd finger there):-

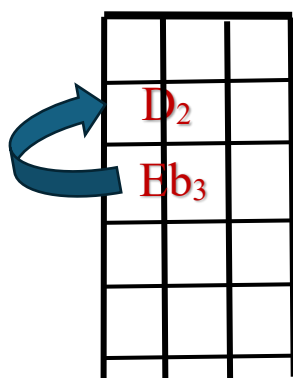
Pentatonic Riff over 12 Bar Blues in C

Once you can master this, feel free to play around with the notes or make up your own. Great to muck around with a friend or a backing track!

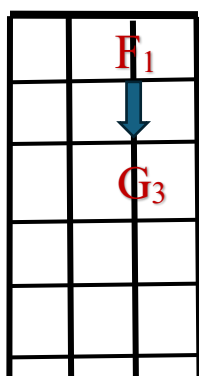
More useful techniques: -

The image shows a musical staff for ukulele in 4/4 time. The melody consists of three measures: 'The pull - off', 'The slide', and 'Bending'. The notes are D4, Eb4, and D4. The tablature below shows the fret numbers: 3-2-0 for the pull-off, 1-port-3 for the slide, and 7 for the bending. The word 'Ukulele' is written vertically on the left side of the staff.

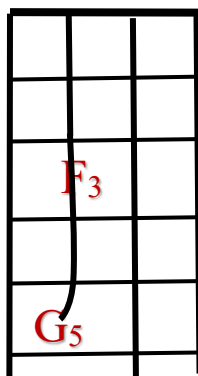
Pull- Off - Place both fingers on the notes, hold down the D while you pull-off the 3rd finger on the Eb by flicking to the side so that the D sounds.



Slide – slide your 1st finger from F up to G without lifting the finger off the fingerboard so the slide can be heard.



BEND. I've put G on the 3rd string so it's easier to bend the note by pushing it a little across the fingerboard towards you. Use your 3rd finger (it may help to have the 1st finger on the F below). The sound should bend and sound bluesy as the note stretches to a higher pitch!



Exciting times ahead. It's time to move onto the Blues scales!

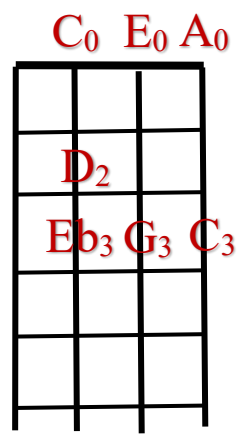
The C major blues scale.

note the E flat sign followed by the natural sign

Ukulele

C D Eb E F G A C

0 2 3 0 1 3 0 3



Note that the extra note is a flattened 3rd in the scale – the Eb followed by E. Eb can often be named D# - same note/ same position. We normally refer to it as a flattened 3rd as it gives us the blues feeling in the harmony (chord structures).

This is very similar to the pentatonic scale as the F (the 4th note) and the B (the 7th Note) have been omitted). **The Eb is the added note.**

8

D# is the same pitch and fingering as Eb

D# Eb

0 2 3 0 3 0 3 0 3 0 3 2 0

12 Major Bar Blues Shuffle in C

The image shows a musical score for a 12-bar blues shuffle in C major on ukulele. It is divided into three systems of four bars each. Each system includes a treble clef staff with a 4/4 time signature and a guitar-style tablature staff. Chord diagrams are provided above the treble staff for the first bar of each system: C, F, and G. The score includes specific performance instructions such as 'hammer-on', 'transition from C to F', 'transition from C to G', and 'slide 1st finger from A# to B'. The tablature uses numbers 0-5 and fingerings 1-5 to indicate fret positions and fingerings.

The C Major Blues scale builds upon the pentatonic foundation for improvisation. Play around with the notes and see what you can do – they will all fit over a C chord progression – try it with a friend or a backing track. *Have fun!*

The C minor blues scale.

Ukulele

C Eb F F# G Bb C

Also Gb - the flattened 5th note of the scale

T 0 3 1 2 3 1 3

A

B

C₀ Bb₁

F₁

F#/Gb₂

E_b G₃ C₃

8

F# is the same pitch and fingering as Gb

D# F# Bb Gb Eb

Uke.

As we go up the scale we use sharps #. Coming back down we use flats b.

T 0 3 1 2 3 1 3 1 3 2 1 3 0

A

B

A minor blues scale is often just referred to as a blues scale. A blues scale contains *blue notes*. *Blue notes* are flattened notes.

Blue notes in the scale above include the **flattened third (Eb)**, **flattened fifth (Gb)**, and **flattened seventh note (Bb)** of the C Blues scale, although the exact pitches can vary (*especially if bent- more on this later – see Techniques*)

Walking Bass Blues with flattened 7th Chords

Ukulele

Uke.

Uke.

introducing a II IV I progression

Why note double each note with a rocking rhythm CC EE GG AA BbBb AA GG EE and so on.

Strummers: Don't forget to shuffle the rhythm in twos as in the tip above - or add chord variations (see next page).

Walking Bass Blues with 6th & 7th Chords

Ukulele

C C⁶ C⁷ C⁶ C and so on...

Uke.

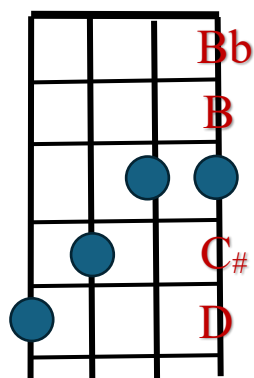
5 F F⁶ F⁷ F⁶ F and so on...

Uke.

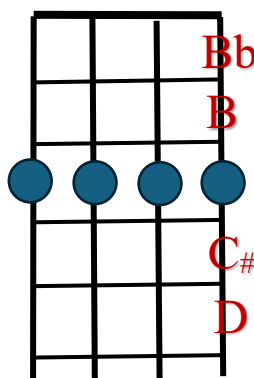
9 Dm⁷ Am⁷ Dm⁷ D⁷ G Am⁷ A^{#o} G⁷ C N.C. C G⁷

introducing a II IV I progression

There are many variations on chord shapes, we have only touched on a couple. Movable chords like C are useful, especially when changing key by moving the shape up and down the neck. The Cm⁷ is a very bluesy chord (minor chords contain a flattened 3rd in this case an Eb).



C=C chord



C=Cm chord

C minor blues on the 3rd string!

3rd Position Shift to 5th position

1st finger on Eb is the 3rd position

3rd finger for F is the 3rd position
(Move 1st finger up to F to go to 5th position)

2nd finger in the 5th position

3rd finger in the 5th position

C	
Eb	
F	
F#	Bb
G	
	C

Should you need the Bb – it's here

C is here if required (4th finger)

Stay in the **3rd position** for the C riff and the F riff – move up to the **5th position** for G and turn-around sections.

Let's play a Boogie Riff on one string only. See below. Look out for **repeated patterns** and **phrases** (for example – the lead-in notes are in red – the same phrase repeats over the 12 bars). **Stay in the 3rd position for the first 8 bars.**

Boogie in 12

C All played on the 3rd string

John Heyworth

Swing

C C6 C C6 C C6 etc...

Ukulele

Uke.

Uke.

Uke.

Now we're rock'n'rolling, swinging the night away and all that jazz!

The following pieces are for you to study and play. OR better still - make up your own or jam with a friend or two. Above all, have fun!!

USEFUL LINKS

How to Strum the 12-Bar Blues on Ukulele and Sound “Bluesy”

<https://youtu.be/24Kx4jMUoh4?si=YknJtPAIrh6ODTWX>

Learn the C Blues Scale on Ukulele to Prepare to Solo | Blues Week Part 2 of 4

https://youtu.be/fSGuD3QY6ow?si=g_b15wALh9RYcRsv

How to play hammer-ons on ukulele

<https://youtu.be/ewTJh0aMMw0?si=GIQ8TgvXCEhhJe15>

How to Pull-off on Ukulele

https://youtu.be/jRzdfupjqBM?si=zE6WpDjQl4mW7r_N

How to do bends on your ukulele!

<https://youtu.be/VwKhtOux6ik?si=kjre957MxLNqbVLK>

3 Blues Licks Every Ukulele Player Should Know!

<https://youtu.be/JLYjkkB6-6g?si=QZtE39XRtdESUJf2>

Boogie-woogie riff in C for ukulele

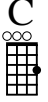
<https://youtu.be/kfuqoHNEIKg?si=SwxzcZnW-eIt4NVr>

Ukulele Trick Of The Week: #3 A Cool Blues Run in C

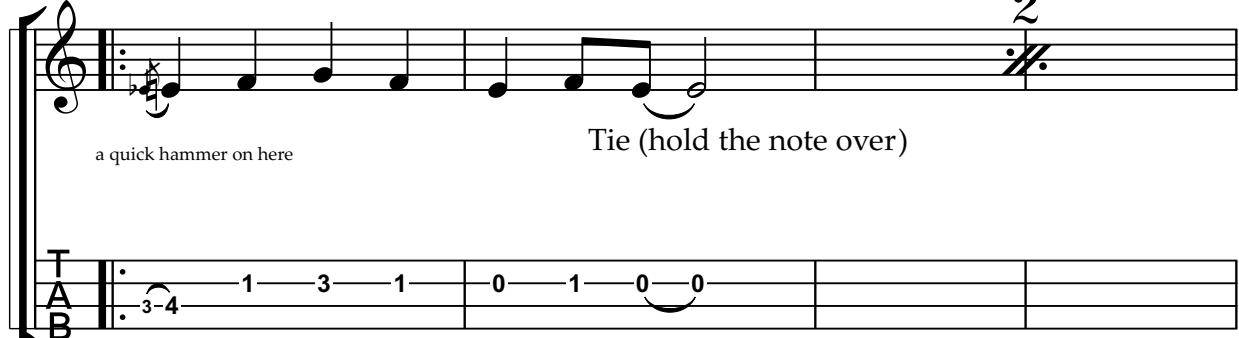
<https://youtu.be/QHmOjSbzhvw?si=cmhFpXWMoKPepG2z>

Boogie Woogie in C

JNH

Swing  C C6 C C6 C C6 etc...

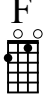
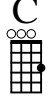
Ukulele



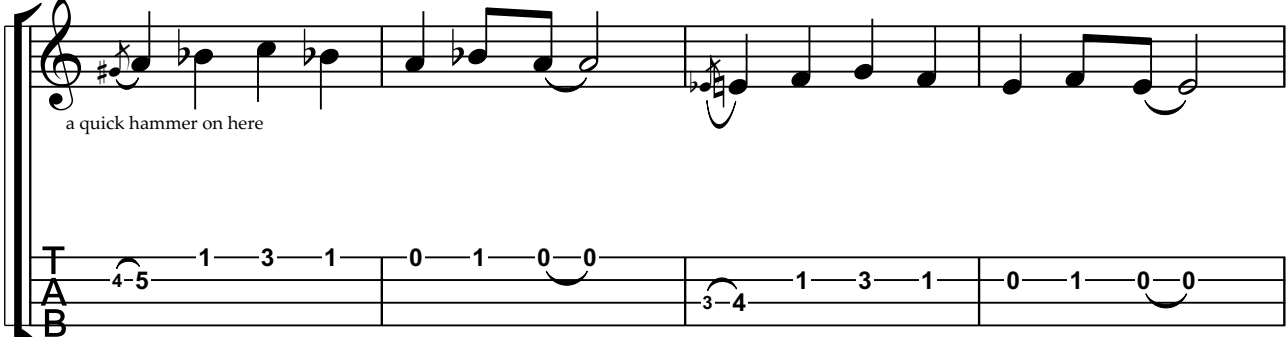
a quick hammer on here

Tie (hold the note over)

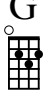
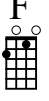


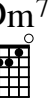
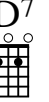
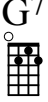
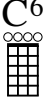
2

5  F F6 F F6 F F6 etc...  C C6 C C6 C C6 etc...

Uke.

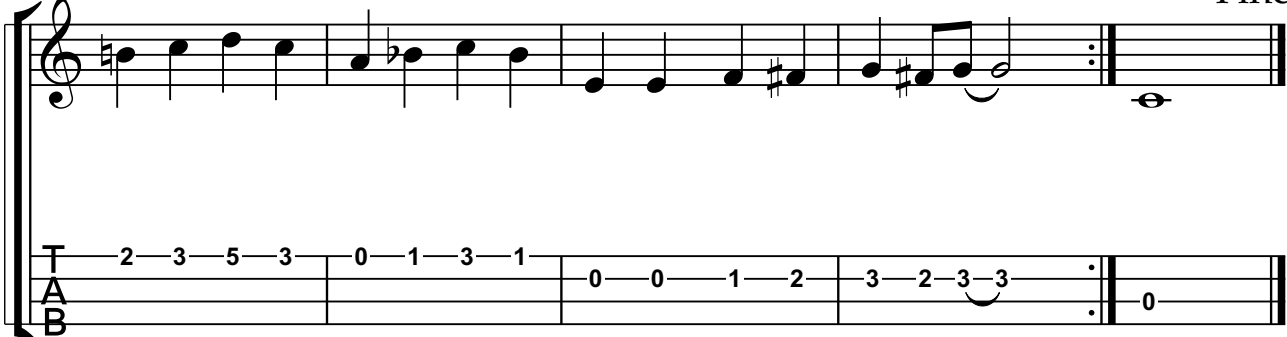


a quick hammer on here

9  G  F  C  Am⁷  Dm⁷  D⁷  G⁷  C⁶

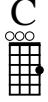
G G6 G G6 F F6 F F6 Fine

Uke.

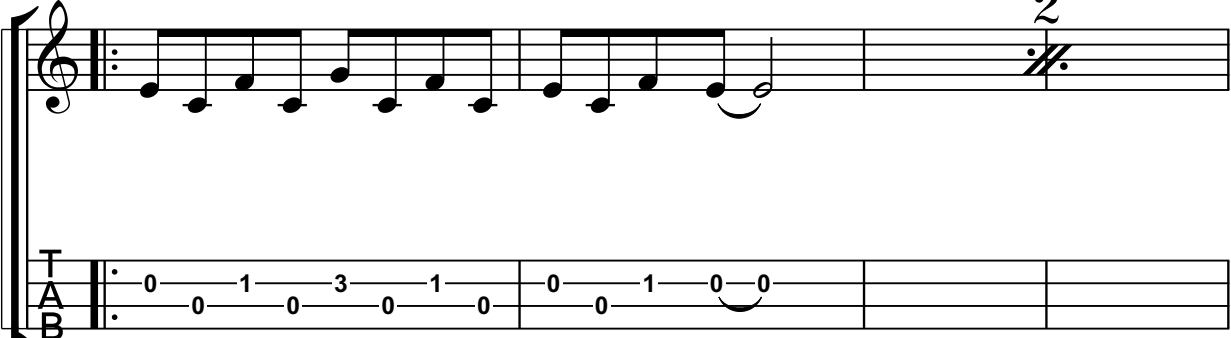


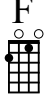
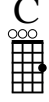
Boogie Woogie 2 in C

JNH

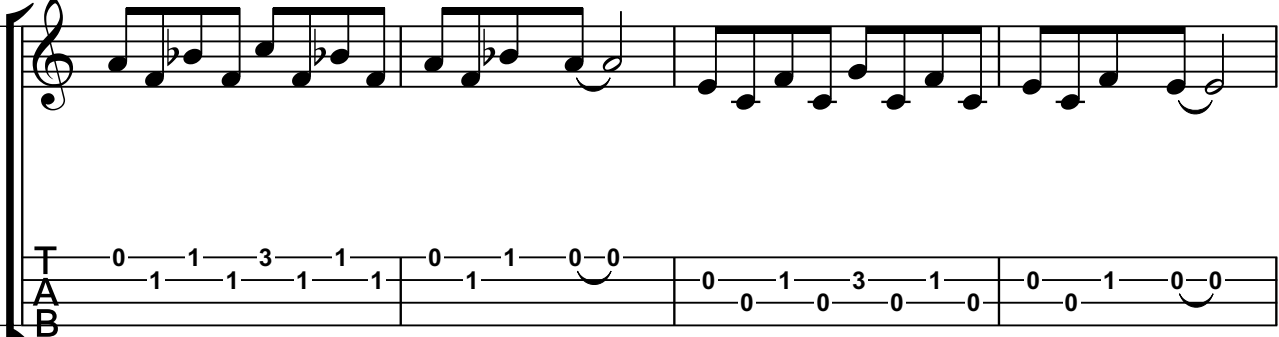
Swing  C C6 C C6 C C6 etc...

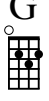
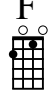
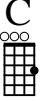

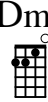
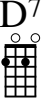
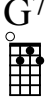

Ukulele



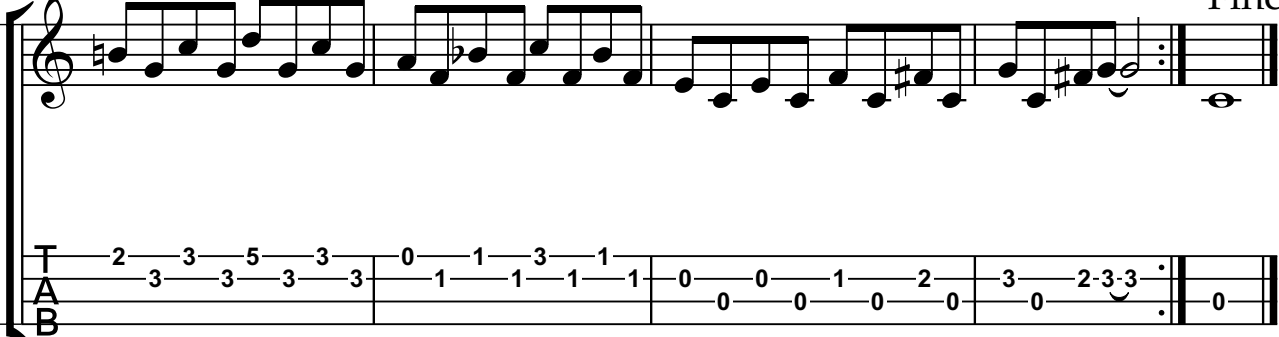
5  F F6 F F6 F F6 etc...  C C6 C C6 C C6 etc...

Uke.



9  G G6 G G6  F F6 F F6  C  Am⁷  Dm⁷  D⁷  G⁷  C⁶ Fine

Uke.



For You Blue

John Heyworth

Swing

C7

Ukulele

BEND

BEND wherever you feel it needs it

Uke.

5

F7

C7

Uke.

9

G7

F7

C7

Dm

G7

Dm


G7

C7

Fine

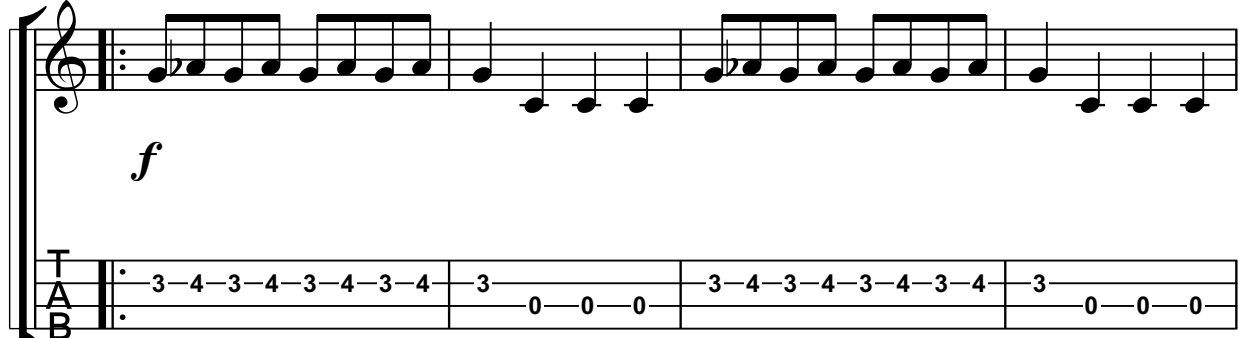
Lunar Rock


John Heyworth


A Cm7  3fr

Allegretto

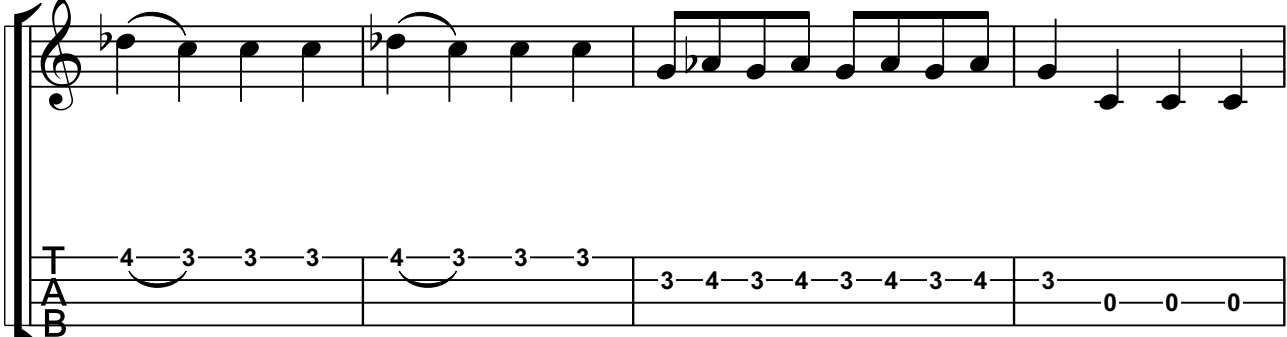
Ukulele *f*





Fm  5


Cm7  3fr

Uke.

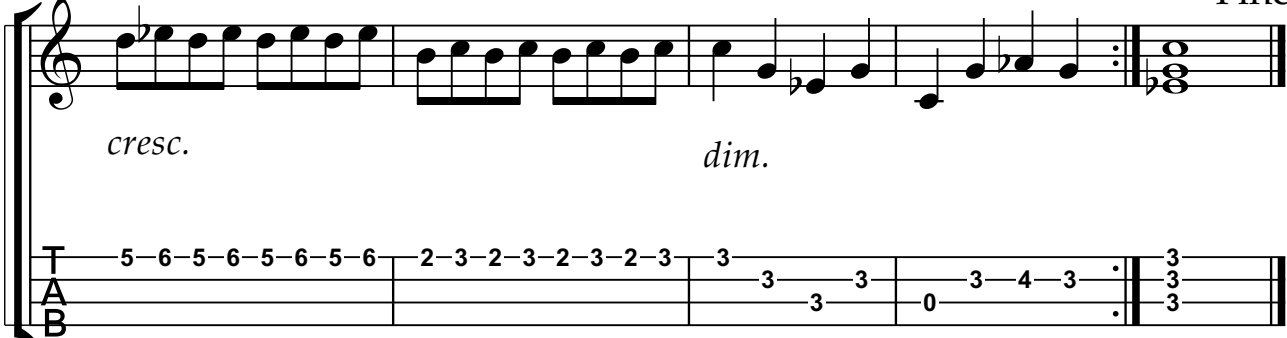


G7  9

Cm7  3fr

G7 

Uke. *cresc.* *dim.* Fine



Rocking Blues

JNH

Ukulele

C7

4

Uke.

F7

C7

Shift 1st finger to 6th position

Uke.

G7

F7

C7

Dm7

G7

Shift 1st finger to 8th position

6th position

Uke.

C

E \flat

G7

C

C7

FINE

FINE