

Strumming Notes

Southampton Ukulele Jam
Beginners and Improver Group

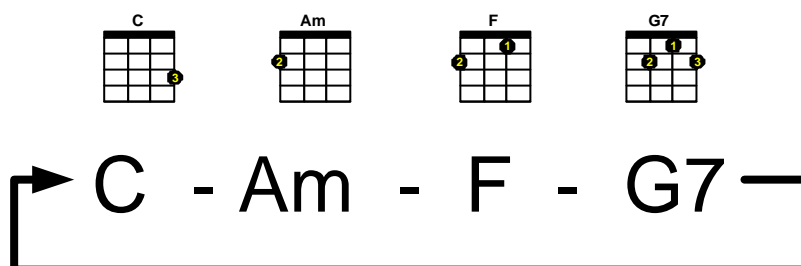
Why Practise Strumming?

If you listen to good ukulele players they have good control of their strumming technique and are able to switch easily between strumming patterns whilst keeping accurate time. This requires a lot of practise so that the strum patterns become natural.

Also, as a beginner, it can be difficult to work out how to play a song when practising at home with no one else to copy. Learning some basic strum patterns will give you a few options to try, one of which will normally fit most songs.

Practising:

A nice chord pattern to practise strumming with is C, Am, F, G7, C ...



It sounds pleasant and doesn't tax the mind too much so that you can concentrate on the right hand.

Typical strumming technique

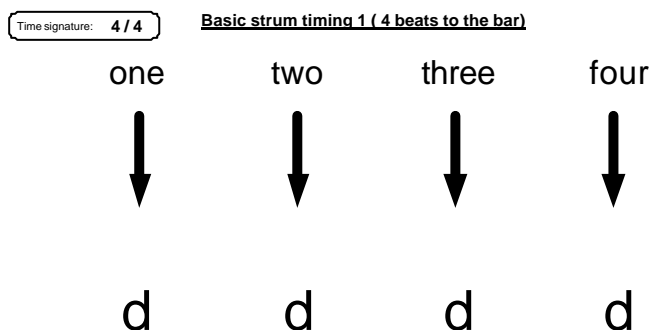
Strum with your index finger using the back of your fingernail for down strokes and the fleshy pad of your finger on the upstrokes.

Keep your finger and wrist flexible.

4/4 Time

Most of our songs are in 4/4 time.

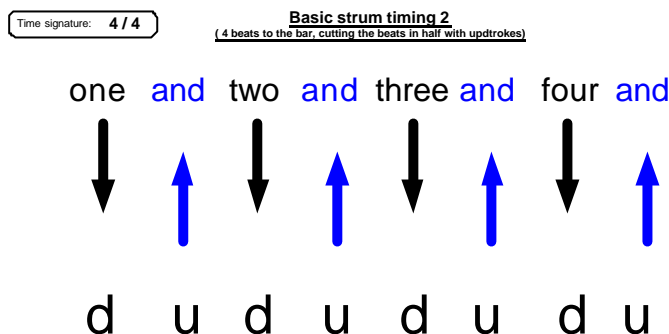
This means that there are 4 beats in the bar (a measure) and each beat lasts for a quarter of one full note.



To help keep time, it helps to count out loud 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4, and so on. Alternatively use of a metronome is very helpful.

Strumming on the off-beat

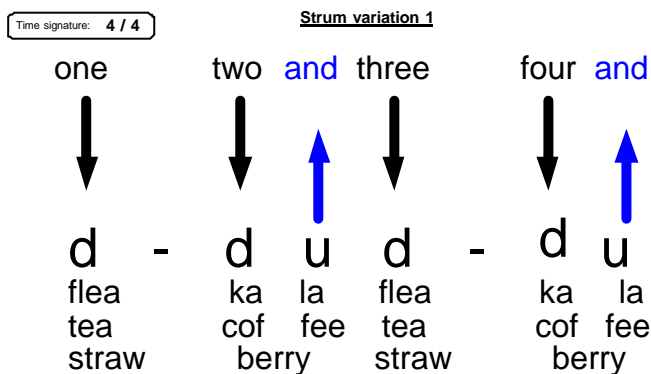
By adding in a strum on the upstroke we add in the off-beat:



This time counting 1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and ... will help to keep time.

The two strum patterns above are too uniform and lack “colour” so would be very boring as an accompaniment to a song. It is therefore desirable to break up the rhythm. A few commonly used patterns are shown below:

Strum Pattern 1

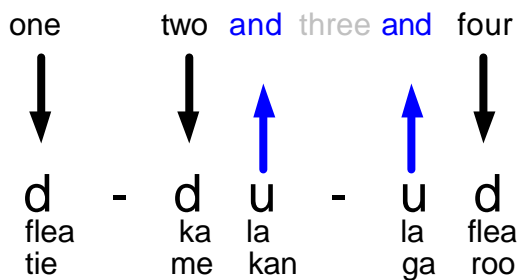


Saying the words underneath the diagram can be useful to indicate the rhythm of the strum. Three different options for words which can be used are shown.

Examples of songs which can be accompanied with this strum pattern are “Ring of Fire”, “Walk the line”, and “Valerie”.

Strum Pattern 2:

Time signature: 4 / 4

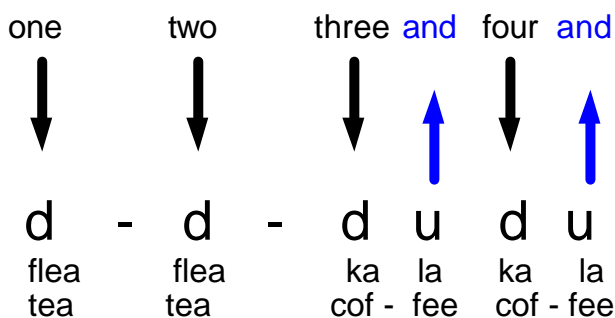
Strum variation 2

Again the words below the pattern give two different options for words that match the strum pattern in their natural timing.

Examples of songs which can be accompanied by this strumming pattern are “Sloop John B”, “Da Do Rom Ron”, Dylan’s “Don’t think twice”

Strum Pattern 3:

Time signature: 4 / 4

Strum variation 3

Can alternatively drop the last up stroke to play just 1, 2, 3 and, 4.

This pattern fits the same songs as Strum pattern 2 above.

Strumming Reference Material:

Ukulele Mike – “The Shuffle Strums”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59EPwfOey0U&playnext=1&list=PL5D436CA06BA652B8>

Some general information is linked from our Beginner’s Group page

<http://www.suj.btck.co.uk/Joinin/BeginnersandImproversGroup>

“How to Play Ukulele Strums”

<http://howtoplayukulele.com/how-to-play-ukulele-strums/>

It’s where most of the above information came from and there is a lot more very good information in this e-book. It currently costs \$17 which is about £12, but

and I would rate it as well worth it, *but see the EZ Folk link below first because this may have enough information for you.*

EZ Folk has some good information. See their general ukulele page:

<http://www.ezfolk.com/uke/>

and as we are particularly looking for strumming, see “Strumming Patterns for the Ukulele” by Richard Hefner: ***THIS IS VERY GOOD:***

<http://www.ezfolk.com/uke/Tutorials/Strumming/strumming.html>

and “Ukulele Strum Styles”:

http://www.ezfolk.com/uke/Tutorials/bill/uke_strums_bill/uke_strums_bill.htm

If you eventually want to move on to more advanced strums such as the “fan stroke”, the “thumb roll” and the “split stroke” then consider Steven Sproat’s DVD at his “Ukelounge” website

<http://ukelounge.com/>

I think that it explains some advanced strums quite well but unless you have a specific interest in more complex strums it’s probably not worth buying.

It claims “everything you need to know to progress as a Ukulele player.

Teaching the basic techniques, right up to skilful finger picking techniques”. I can’t argue that it does that but the amount of simple tutorial information isn’t adequate for a beginner, in my opinion.

Also of course lots of tutorials and examples can be found on YouTube, but if you are like me after an hour of looking at all sorts of very interesting stuff you will find that you have run out of time to do any practise!

Bill

Tuesday, 08 February 2011