

Ukulele Tips & Tricks

Establish the three basic rules for the group:

- **Take turns:** Everyone will have the chance to play. Teach Members to be respectful when you're teaching and when their classmates are asking questions/playing/singing.
 - For example: "When I'm teaching you a new chord or a new song, your ukuleles should be down and your eyes should be forward. There will be plenty of time to jam on the ukuleles during the lesson so I should hear no strumming while I'm teaching. The same respect goes for your classmates when they're playing, we're all going to be respectful and encouraging."
- **Tuning:** Only the leader will tune ukuleles. If Members play with the tuners on the head of the ukulele, ukuleles won't sound right or strings could snap = broken instrument.
 - If members want further explanation, use ukulele tuner to visually demonstrate how each string makes a specific sound by going through each G, C, E, and A strings.
 - Demonstrate to members how an in-tune ukulele should sound. Slowly strum down each string and the sound should resemble "My Dog Has Fleas"
- **Work Together:** Members should work with you as the instructor and each other. Encourage Members to help neighbor if they're struggling.
 - For example, while learning a chord, some members will have learned it quicker than others. Say, "If you've already mastered the *blank* chord, help someone in the group who is struggling."

Make the ukulele exciting!

- Play songs that engage the group
 - Include a song sheet (a piece of blank paper titled "Song Requests) for their individual song requests
- Work with Members one on one when possible
- Remember: Members love to strum and sing along

Review key concepts with members:

- Actively identifying strings, frets, holding, tuners, chords makes teaching the group a lot easier

Communicate your lesson objective:

- Set goals for each class and communicate those goals with Members so everybody is on board and feels encouraged to work towards each lesson's goals.

Play games & make it fun!

- Turn switching chords into a game
 - For example: say, "I'm going to count to 8 and every time I say '8' switch from C to Am."
- Turn finding frets into a game
 - For example: say "Who remembers frets? Who can show me the 3rd fret the fastest? 5th fret? 7th fret?"

- Remember: Frets are very important to review because if Members can easily identify them, chords become much easier to teach.
- Sing along with the Members! Members look to you for guidance and when you sing along with them, it increases their confidence.

Recognize Member Achievements:

- When a Member is doing something well or showing improvement, always let them know!
 - Complimenting Members increases their confidence as they continue with the ukulele.
- When group as a whole is doing well or showing improvement, have them perform for someone present at the club (director, team member, parent, volunteer, etc.)

Encourage Members who are struggling:

- When a Member is struggling, relate their struggle to your personal experience in learning the ukulele to make them feel better
 - For example say, "When I was learning the ukulele, I just couldn't play this one chord, but I kept practicing and practicing and now I can do it no problem. Just keep working at it and I know you'll get it."
- Work with the struggling Member one on one until they feel caught up and more confident playing the ukulele

General information on the ukulele:

- Tuning: Ukulele is tuned G C E A. Ukuleles go easily out of tune, allow at least 15 minutes to tune ukuleles before each session.
- Care: Ukuleles are wooden & fragile. They need protection against dropping and excessive heat. Young people need to be explicitly taught how to strum the instrument correctly without breaking strings (which can happen when Members pull on them).
- Holding: Ukulele is held close to body by the right forearm. The right hand will strum and the left hand will play notes and chords.
- Strumming: Fingernails of the first and second fingers on right hand or the right hand thumb are used to strum. Members can use a felt pick, but it is preferable that they use their fingers.
- Playing Notes: Strings must be pressed all the way to fingerboard. Members will complain about fingers hurting at first. Explain they'll develop callouses aka fingertips.