

## Strumming

Many people underestimate the importance of the right hand when playing their ukulele.

It's actually the right hand that provides the percussive rhythm, and without a regular beat, it can end up sounding pretty bad! You have probably heard someone clapping along to a song out of time, and will understand what I mean.

There are literally dozens of different strum patterns, and it can become quite confusing when people write something like "down, up, down, down, up, up" at the top of a song, because it contains no real instruction on the timing, and after all, there is no right or wrong strum pattern, the only problem is if you lose the beat and play 'out of time'.

Clapping along to a song you are trying to learn is a good way to get used to the timing, and the vast majority of songs will have either three or four beats to a bar. Over time you will be able to identify which is which.

### 4/4 or four beats to the bar.

Counting the beat itself is a pretty straightforward 1, 2, 3, 4, and if you are playing a single down stroke for each beat, it is all you need. I have used capital letters to indicate where optional emphasis (or to strum a little harder) on the beat can be added.

'D' or 'd' indicates a down stroke, and 'U' or 'u' for up strokes.

Count;	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Strum;	D	d	d	d	D	d	d	d

By adding 'and' in between beats, you can start to experiment with different strum patterns more easily.

Count;	1	2	3	&	4	&	1	2	3	&	4	&
Strum;	D	d	D	u	d	u	D	d	D	u	d	u

There are some advantages to going 'off the beat', the first example is for songs with a 'Reggae' feel to them. By playing only the '&' beats, you get that effect.

Count: 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &  
Strum: U U U U U U U U

If a song you are playing needs a bit of a 'swing' to it, you can slightly extend the length of the 'Down' strum, and shorten the 'up' to compensate. You can count this out with 1 & a 2 & a 3 & a 4 & a

C; 1 & a 2 & a 3 & a 4 & a 1 & a 2 & a 3 & a 4 & a  
S; D u D u D u D u D u D u D u D u

### 3/4 or three beats to the bar.

There's a little less counting involved, but some people find the adjustment to 3/4 a bit more challenging.

For the basic beat;

Count: 1 2 3 1 2 3 1 2 3  
Strum: D d d D d d D d d

By using the '&' as in the 4/4 examples;

Count: 1 2 & 3 & 1 2 & 3 & 1 2 & 3 &  
Strum: D d u d u D d u d u D d u d u

You can continue to experiment at home with different ways of playing 4/4 and 3/4 strum patterns, and there are many websites can provide resources to help with this. Just type 'ukulele strum patterns' in your search box.

George Formby often comes up when discussing strum patterns, particularly the 'split' stroke and 'triple' stroke. They are best discovered online, where there are literally dozens of video demonstrations, but be warned, they really do need LOTS of practice.