

# STRUM PATTERNS

Ukulele Tuesdays – Evergreen Library

November 6, 2018

1



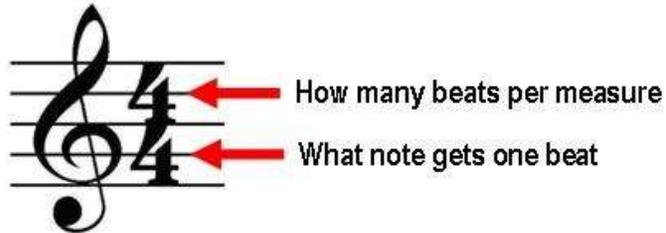
2

# PLAYING MUSIC IS MORE THAN JUST MEMORIZING A BUNCH OF CHORDS ON YOUR INSTRUMENT.

That's difficult. And takes a long time.

# TIME SIGNATURES

- A time signature tells you how many beats are in a measure
- Tells you how many beats per measure and which note gets one beat
- The top number tells you how many strums per line you need to make



# COMMON TIME SIGNATURES

## ■ Common Time

- 4/4 time signature
- 4 beats per measure
  - Counted as 4 *beats* and 4 *offbeats*:
    - “One and Two and Three and Four and....”
  - Sometimes as 8 counts:
    - “... Five, Six, Sev’n, Eight...”
- A lot of modern music is written in Common Time



## ■ Waltz Time

- 3/4 time signature
- 3 beats per measure
  - “ONE, two, three. ONE, two, three...”



# STRUMMING BASICS

1. Strumming is driven by the rhythm of the song
2. Keep your wrist loose
  - Strumming is not done at the elbow
3. Never stop your strumming hand
  - Even if you are not actually connecting with the strings, still “strum” your hand
4. Don't strum all the strings during every strum
  - Sometimes strum only the bass strings, sometimes only the treble strings

# STRUM PATTERNS

- Many, many types of strum patterns
- Typically you pick one that fits the music and your skill level
- Sometimes they are provided by the person who did the arrangement

# MUSICAL NOTATION

## Time Signature

(top number is strums per measure)

The image displays three musical staves in 4/4 time, each with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The first staff shows four measures of strumming with arrows indicating direction: down, down, up, down, down, up. The second staff shows the same notation with letters 'd' and 'u' above the strums. The third staff shows the same notation with '□' and '∇' above the strums.

## Shows:

1. On which the beat the strings are strummed. "Blanks" mean you don't strum the strings on that beat.
2. The direction of hand when physically strumming the strings.

# TABLATURE NOTATION

- Assumes 4/4 time unless otherwise stated
- Uses “D” or “d” for down strums and “U” or “u” for up strums
  - dudududu or DUDUDUDU
  - d d d d or D - D - D - D -
- Bold letters or capital letters mean strum harder on this strum
  - **D U D U D U D U** or D u D u D u D u
- “-” or “ ” (space) means no strum on that beat
- “x” means using a chop strum (muting the strings, but still striking them)

# PATTERN #1 – DOWN STROKES ONLY

**D – D – D – D –**  
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &  
↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

- Strum on the beat
- Very simple
- Emphasizes the beat

# PATTERN #2 – DOWN & UP STROKES

<b>D</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>U</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>U</b>
1	&	2	&	3	&	4	&
↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑	↓	↑

- Strum down on the beat and up on the off-beat
- Very simple, too
- Can strum hard on the down and light on the up to give some texture

# PATTERN #3 – MIXING IT UP

**D – D – D U D U**  
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &  
↓            ↓            ↓    ↑    ↓    ↑

- Strum down on the beat and up on the off-beat, but only during the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the measure
- Starting to get complicated

# ENDLESS OPTIONS...

**D - D U D - D U**  
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &  
↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑

**D - D U - U D U**  
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &  
↓ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↑

**D - - U D - - U**  
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &  
↓ ↑ ↓ ↑

**- U - U - U - U**  
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &  
↑ ↑ ↑ ↑

# PATTERN #4 – UKULELE PATTERNS

D – D U – U D U  
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &  
↓ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↑

- Common Hawaiian pattern

# PATTERN #5 – ‘OLAPA STRUM

Lead in strum at the beginning only

2 count phrase, repeated

U | D D D U | D D D –

& | 1 & 2 & | 3 & 4 &

Lead in strum repeated to continue

At the very end, don't play a lead in strum. Just let the Down ring

- Another common Hawaiian pattern
- Called the “await for me” strum
- 2 count phrase that repeats
- Starts on a “lead in” beat

# MORE HAWAIIIAN PATTERNS

Classic Strum

2 count phrase, repeated

**D** | **U DU D** | **D** | **UDU D**

& | 1 & 2 & | 3 & 4 &

↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ ↓

“Triplet” = when 3 notes are played when you’d expect only 2. Adds additional color to the rhythm

Another Strum

**D - D U - U D -**

1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &

↓ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↓

# LEARNING & PRACTICING

- Pick an easy chord (C Major) and don't change.
  - Focus on the pattern, not chord changes
  - At first, ignore emphasis strums, just do even strums until you get the rhythm down
- Pick one pattern and practice only it during a single session
  - In a later session, add a new pattern and practice only it
- Start *very, very slowly*.
  - Practice the pattern **cleanly and accurately**. It's about learning the pattern correctly and getting the muscle memory down, not the speed.
  - Don't increase the tempo until you can cleanly (without errors) do the pattern 15-20 times in a row.
- Use a metronome
- For those with musical training, consider writing the pattern on staff paper using quarter notes, eighth notes, etc...

# EXAMPLE 1: FOLSOM PRISON BLUES

## Verse 1

**C**

I hear the train a comin'

**C**

It's rollin' 'round the bend,

**C**

And I ain't seen the sunshine,

**C**

Since, I don't know when,

**F**

I'm stuck in Folsom Prison,

**F**

**C**

And time keeps draggin' on,

**C**

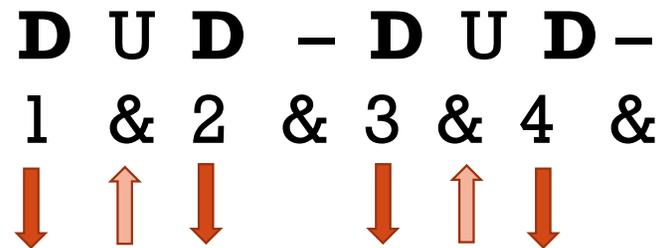
**G7**

But that train keeps a-rollin',

**G7**

**C**

On down to San Antone.



Chug-a-chug sounding strum pattern

# EXAMPLE 2: SOMEONE TO LAVA

## Verse

**C** A long long time ago, there was a volcano.  
**F** ...Living all alone... in the middle of the sea.  
**C** He sat high above his bay, watching all the couples play,  
**F** ...and wishing that, he had someone too.  
**C** And from his lava came, this song of hope that he sang out-loud everyday,  
**C** for years and years.

## Chorus

**F** I have a dream, I hope will come true,  
**G7** that you're here with me and I'm here with you  
**F** I wish that the earth, sea, the sky up above...  
**F** will send me someone to la-va

D – D U – U D U  
1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &  
↓ ↓ ↑ ↑ ↓ ↑

Common strum pattern

# RESOURCES

- 13 Most Useful Strums at Uke Hunt
  - <http://ukulelehunt.com/2011/06/29/ukulele-strumming-patterns/>
- 7 Essential Strumming Patterns at String Kick
  - <https://www.stringkick.com/blog-lessons/strumming-patterns>
- 20 Strum Patterns at Ukulele Tabs
  - <https://www.ukulele-tabs.com/strumming-patterns.html>
- 3 Essential Hawaiian Strum Patterns at Ukulele Magazine
  - <http://www.ukulelemag.com/stories/3-essential-hawaiian-ukulele-strums>



**QUESTIONS?**