

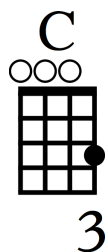
Lesson #4

By now, you should know how to tune your ukulele, how to hold your ukulele, and the best practices for strumming your ukulele.

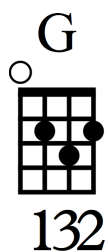
In this lesson, you learn:

- the most foundational strumming pattern for which all other strumming patterns are built
- what the terms **4/4**, **time signature**, **measure**, **quarter note**, and **tempo** mean
- how to keep steady and consistent timing
- a song: Mary Had a Little Lamb

You will need to know the following chords:



To play a C major chord, place your **ring finger** on the 3rd fret of the bottom string. The remaining strings ring completely open.



To play a G major chord, place your **middle finger** on the 2nd fret of the bottom string, your **ring finger** on the 3rd fret of the second string, and your **index finger** on the 2nd fret of the third string. The top string rings completely open.

Understanding Rhythm in Music

Before playing your first strumming pattern, it can be helpful to clarify some commonly thrown around musical terms and important concepts related to strumming and rhythm.

The most important thing to remember about strumming is that it is a form of rhythm. **Rhythm** is the beat or pulse in a song that gives it a certain feel or 'vibe'. Rhythm is founded on the basis of steady and consistent **tempo** or timing. You can have the fanciest strumming pattern, but if it's played out of time, it's worthless.

About Time Signatures

The first strumming pattern you learn in the pages ahead is in a **4/4 time signature**. A time signature is sometimes referred to as the **meter** of a song. The meter of the song divides the song up into small sections known as **measures** or **bars**.

There are many different kinds of time signatures. The most popular time signatures will be indicated at the beginning of a piece of music like this:

4	3	6
4	4	8

The number on the top represents **how many beats there are in the measure**. The number on the bottom represents **the kind of note the beat gets**. For now, we just want to pay attention to the top number.

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For example, in a **3/4 time signature**, there are three beats per measure and each beat gets a **quarter note**. This means you count: 1, 2, 3, 1, 2, 3, etc.

In a **6/8 time signature**, there are six beats per measure and each beat gets an **eighth note**. You count: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 1, 2, 3, etc.

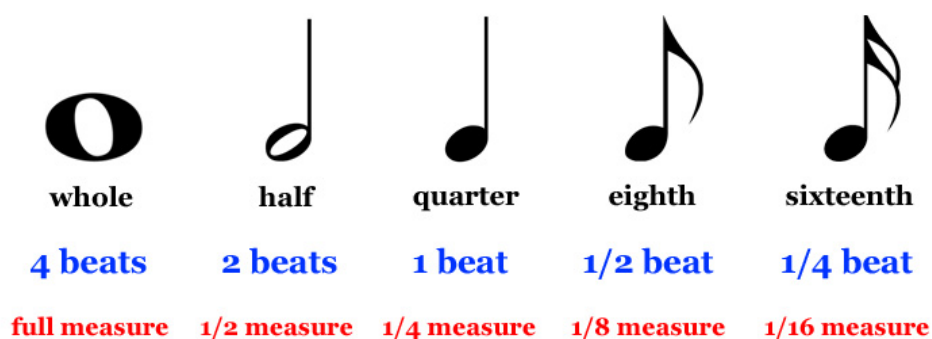
For the strumming pattern in this lesson, it is in a **4/4 time signature**. This means there is a count of four beats per measure and each beat gets a quarter note. As you might expect, you would count: 1, 2, 3, 4, 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.

As I mentioned above, for the purposes of this entire series of lessons, we're going to be focused on the top number – how many beats there are per measure. This is the number you count to keep time as you strum.

Note Lengths

It's not vital you retain and memorize all this information right now, but it will serve as a great reference in the future.

In 4/4 time signature, here are the lengths of different kinds of notes you would see in music notation.



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Whole Note

A whole note has a length of a whole measure. It's length in a 4/4 time signature is four beats. When you see a whole note, you let the note ring for the duration of an entire measure.

Half Note

A half note has a length of two beats, or half of the duration of a whole note. In 4/4 time, a half note has a duration of half the measure. When you see a half note, you let the note ring for two beats.

Quarter Note

A quarter note has a length of one beat. It's called a quarter note because it's length is a quarter of a whole note, and in 4/4 time, a quarter of a measure. The strumming patterns you learn will use a lot of quarter notes.

Eighth Note

When you divide a quarter note in half, you get two eighth notes. In 4/4 time signature, it's one-eighth of a measure. This is another note our strumming patterns will use a lot.

Sixteenth Note

When you go further and divide an eighth note in half, you get two sixteenth notes. There are four sixteenth notes in a quarter note.

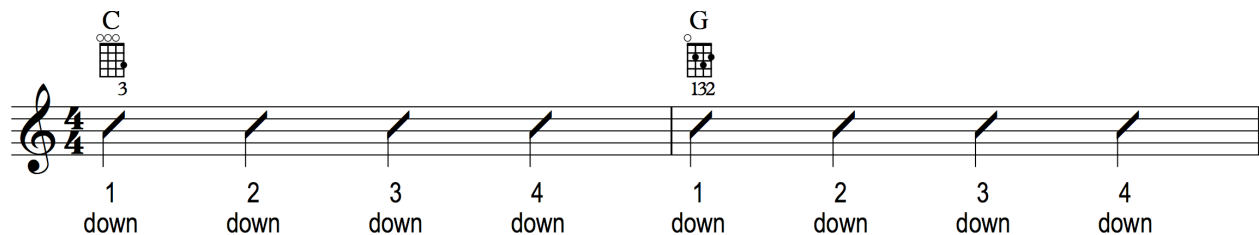
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Strumming Pattern #1

The following strumming pattern is the most important pattern you will ever learn. It's the most flexible and easiest strumming pattern to apply to any song. Even though it's an easy strumming pattern and it's not very fancy, it's highly effective and it's a strumming pattern you will use to build all of the other strumming patterns in this course.

To start, practice all down strums to a count of four. Because we are in 4/4 time, there are four beats per measure and each beat is represented by a quarter note. Each quarter note gets a down strum.

Switch from a C major to a G major chord.



As you practice, be intentional about lining up your strums to the count as closely as possible, so your strumming is even and consistent.

FREE TIP

If you find yourself pausing between chords, practice changing chords without strumming first. Simply change the chord fingerings. Your fingers need time and practice to retain the different chord positions to muscle memory. It will happen in time. Don't worry!



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Mary Had a Little Lamb

Surprisingly, with just these two chords you can play a lot of songs. Try your hand at playing 'Mary Had a Little Lamb'.

Ma - ry had a lit - tle lamb lit - tle lamb lit - tle lamb

C C G C

1 2 3 4 d d d d

5

Ma - ry had a lit - tle lamb whose fleece was white as snow

C C G C

d d d d d

'Mary Had a Little Lamb' chords

If you search for a song's chord chart on the internet, they are typically written with the lyrics of the song with chords above. If 'Mary Had a Little Lamb' was written as a chord chart, it would be written like so:

C G C
Mary had a little lamb, little lamb, little lamb
C G C
Mary had a little lamb whose fleece was white as snow

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Practice Objectives

Here are some things you should be practicing and focusing on before the next lesson:

- practice strumming pattern #1 and focus on lining up your strums as closely to the count as possible
- learn how to play “Mary Had a Little Lamb”
- work up to a point where you can change chords without hesitating or pausing--start slow first
- practice strumming pattern #1 but vary up what chords you are changing between (e.g. **C** to **F**, **F** to **Am**, **G** to **Dm**, **A** to **E7**, **F** to **C7**, etc.; use the [Ukulele Tricks' chord library](#) to look up these chords)

See you in the next lesson!