

Lesson #1

Welcome to the first lesson! Before we get started playing, we need to make sure we are all tuned up and ready to go.

It's really important to tune your ukulele every time you play it. Every ukulele holds tuning differently than others. As you play the ukulele, it will go out of tune. There's nothing that sounds worse than an out of tune ukulele!

In this lesson, we look at:

- how a ukulele is tuned
- how to tune your ukulele **by ear**
- what a chromatic tuner is and how it works
- some **alternative** ways a ukulele is tuned

How a Ukulele Is Tuned

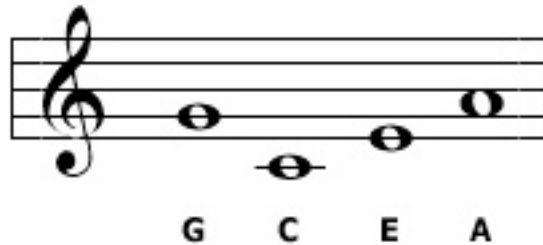
The most common ukulele tuning is known as **standard tuning**. Soprano, concert, and tenor ukuleles are tuned in standard tuning, sometimes referred to as **C-tuning**.



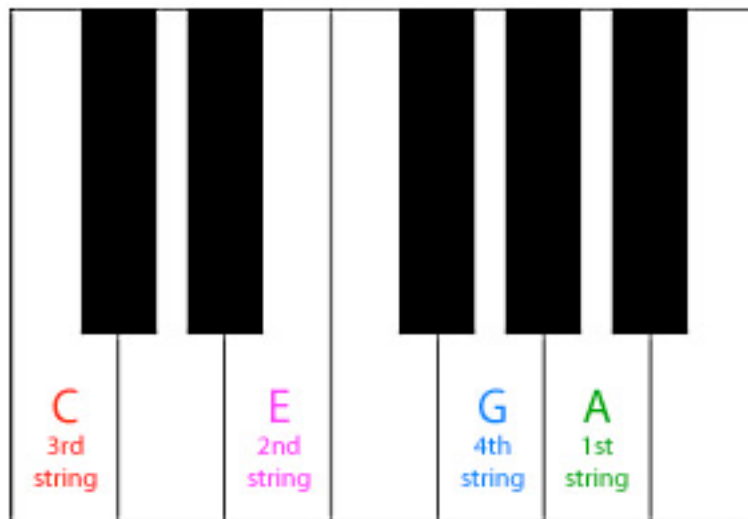
In the picture above, you see the notes of each string. The top string or fourth string of the ukulele is tuned to a **G**. The third string is tuned to a **C**. The second string is tuned to an **E**. The bottom, or first string, is tuned to an **A**.

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This most common way of tuning a ukulele is seen on the musical staff:



Or on the piano keys:



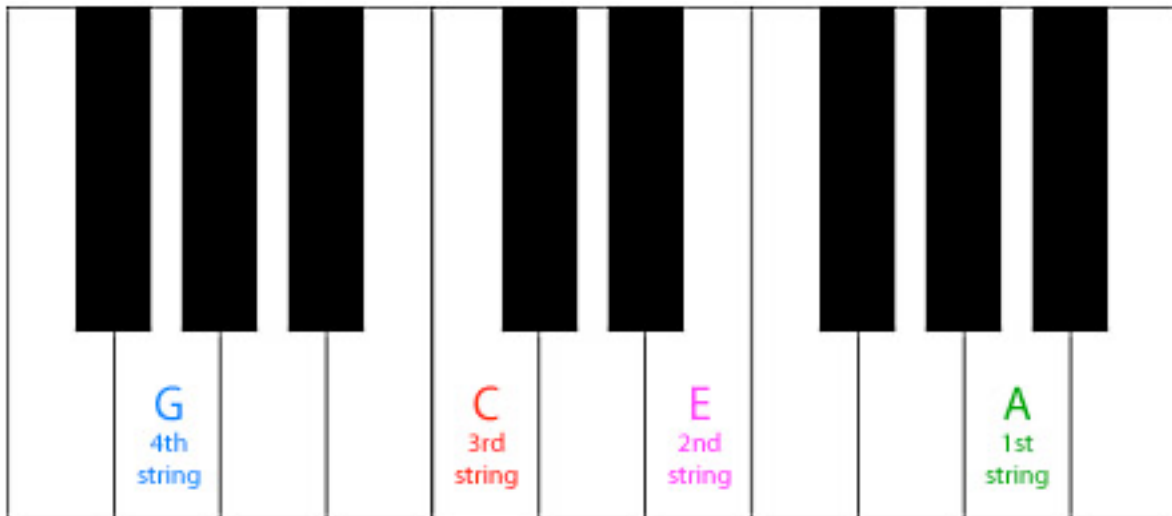
Standard Tuning: Reentrant vs. Linear

In standard tuning, the g-string is commonly tuned to the G note **above** the C and E strings, known as **reentrant tuning**. This tuning gives you the most even tone because the strings are kept in a smaller range of pitch. If you're used to playing guitar, the pitch of the strings on the ukulele don't go from lowest to highest in standard, reentrant tuning.

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However, some people tune the top g-string **down an octave**, while keeping the other strings tuned the same. This is known as **linear tuning**. In linear tuning, you get a broader range of notes available on the ukulele. Additionally, some might consider the sound of linear tuning to be a bit more open sounding.

See a picture of linear ukulele tuning demonstrated on piano keys:



If you decide to tune your ukulele to linear tuning, be sure you are using a set of strings that contain a low G string. If you try using a regular g-string and tune it down the octave, the string will be unable to hold tuning.

How to Tune Your Ukulele

There are two ways you can tune your ukulele: **by ear** or by using a **chromatic tuner**. I recommend using a chromatic tuner. Although some people have an extraordinary sense of pitch, a chromatic tuner will always give you the most accurate tuning.

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How to Tune by Ear

If you wish to tune by ear, you can use my [online ukulele tuner](#) as a reference. Simply play the note you want to tune from the ukulele tuner and then pluck that string on your ukulele.

As both sounds are ringing, if the note is out of tune, you should hear a wavy or warbly noise between the two sounds. Your goal is to turn the tuning pegs on your ukulele till that wavy or warbly sound between the two strings disappears. When this happens, you're in tune, or pretty close to being in tune.

How to Tune Using a Chromatic Tuner

The best thing to do is [buy a chromatic tuner](#). You can get one for less than \$20, like the one in the picture. A chromatic tuner is a device that automatically detects the pitch of your strings and gives you a reading so you can adjust your tuning to the right spot.



The tuner I use is a Korg CA-30, which I believe has been discontinued and replaced by the [Korg CA-40](#) (pictured above). If you have a smartphone, download a tuner app. I like to use ClearTune for the iPhone.

Alternative Ukulele Tunings

Here are some other ukulele tunings used by different ukulele players.

Baritone Ukulele Tuning (D-G-B-E) — This tuning is used on baritone ukuleles and sometimes even on tenor ukuleles. This

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ukulele tuning is equivalent to the tuning of the last four strings on a guitar. Sometimes this tuning is referred to as **G-tuning**.

Slack-key Tuning (g-C-E-G) — In this tuning, if you just strum the strings as open strings, you are strumming a C major chord, which makes this a very open tuning. The top g-string can be tuned either in reentrant or linear tuning, meaning you can either tune it to the G above middle C or down the octave.

English Tuning (a-D-F#-B) — Also considered as a **D-tuning**, this tuning has the same amount of intervals (the amount of notes between each string) as standard ukulele tuning, but every string is tuned up a whole step. This tuning is popular for soprano and banjo ukuleles. Some find this tuning to be a bit sweeter and brighter in tone.

Canadian Tuning (low A, D, F#, B) — Canadian tuning is nearly identical to English tuning except you tune the a-string down an octave. This tuning is popular for concert and tenor ukuleles.