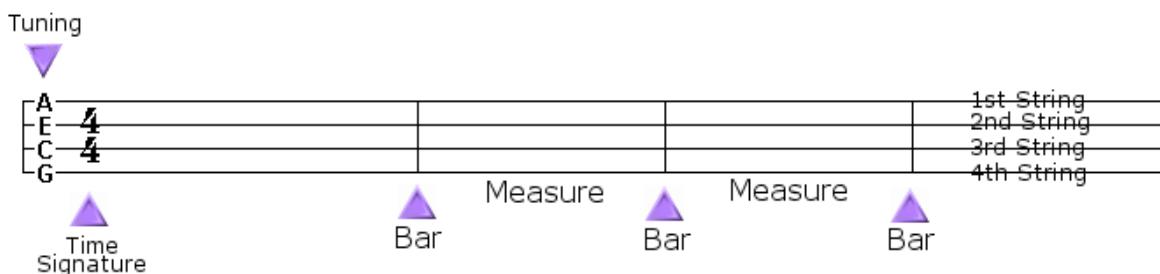
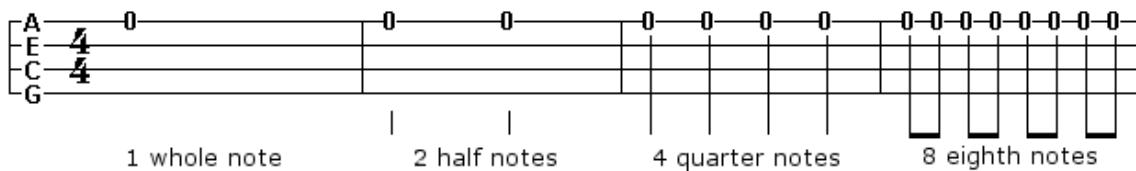


## HOW TO READ TABLATURE

Tablature provides an easy way to read and write music as it is played on the ukulele as well as other stringed instruments. It has similarities to regular written music (standard notation), but there are many differences also that make tablature much easier to understand. The tablature staff looks similar to standard notation, but instead of each line representing a particular note, each line represents a string on the ukulele. With a little practice this method provides a clear and immediate mental image of what you should be playing on the ukulele.

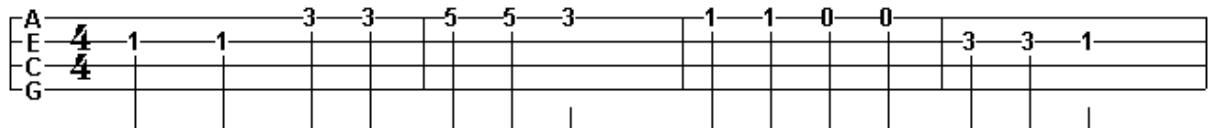


- **Tuning** -- At the very beginning of the tablature is a tuning reference. Most of the tablatures on this website are arranged in standard C tuning (GCEA).
- **Time Signature** -- Immediately following the tuning reference is the time signature. This tells you how many beats are in each measure and the type of note that receives one beat.
- **Bar** -- The bars divide the tablature into segments called measures.
- **Measure** -- A measure is the space between two bars. In this example in 4/4 time, each measure consists of 4 beats.
- **Strings** -- Each of the horizontal lines represents a string on the ukulele.



In 4/4 time (the most common timing) there are 4 beats in each measure. A **beat** is a regular and rhythmical unit of time. A beat can be fast or slow, depending on the speed of a song. If you tap your foot as you play a song, then each time you come down with your foot will be a beat. The example above shows the most commonly used notes. All of the notes are played on the first string open in this example.

- **Whole notes** -- In measure 1 there is one whole note. A whole note gets 4 beats, so if you play this note on the count of 1 you will hold it for an additional 3 beats (2, 3, and 4). Notice that a whole note does not have a stem descending from it.
- **Half notes** -- Measure 2 consists of two half notes. A half note gets 2 beats, so two half notes will fit into a measure. You can distinguish half notes by the short stem that descends below the line of tablature.
- **Quarter notes** -- Quarter notes are probably the most commonly used notes and they receive 1 beat. Measure 3 consists of four quarter notes, each of which receive 1 beat. You can tell these are quarter notes by the long stem that descends all the way from the bottom of the note to below the line of tablature.
- **Eighth notes** -- An eighth note receives a half beat and is usually (but not always) connected by the stem with a straight line to another eighth note. Measure 4 above shows 8 eighth notes, all connected in pairs. At times there will be eighth notes that are not in pairs, in which case a single eighth note will be designated by a small hook at the end of the stem. You should play two eighth notes in the same amount of time that you play one quarter note.
- **Dotted notes** -- If a dot follows a note the time value of that note is increased by 50%. For example a dotted half note would get 3 beats instead of 2. A dotted quarter note would have a value that is equivalent to a quarter note plus an eighth note, or 3 eighth notes.
- **3/4 Time** -- The second most commonly used timing for songs is 3/4 time, also called waltz time. In 3/4 time there are only three beats in each measure instead of four.



You already learned that each horizontal line represents one of the 4 ukulele strings.  
A number on one of those lines tells you which fret is being held as you play.

The example above shows the first four measures of the melody of “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” in the key of F. Here is a breakdown of what the tablature is telling you to play: Since you already know what this song sounds like it will help if you play along while reading this so you can hear it.

- Measure 1 -- On the first two notes you will hold down the 2nd string 1st fret. You know this because the number 1 is on the second line. The second line represents the 2nd string and the number 1 represents the 1st fret. Because of the long stem descending from the 1 you know that it is a quarter note, receiving 1 beat. The second note is a repeat of the first one: 2nd string 1st fret. On the third beat you will play the 1st string 3rd fret and on the count of 4 you repeat that same note. All of the notes in measure 1 are quarter notes, receiving 1 beat each.
- Measure 2 -- The first two notes in measure 2 are quarter notes: 1st string 5th fret. The next note in the measure is a half note (you can tell because of the short stem) and is the 1st string 3rd fret. Be sure to give the half note two beats.
- Measure 3 -- The third measure is very easy to play and should be easy to understand by looking at the tablature: the first two notes are played at the 1st string 1st fret and the last two notes are the first string open (the 0 means you don't hold any strings down). All of these notes are quarter notes.
- Measure 4 -- On the fourth measure you once again play the 2nd string, this time holding down the 3rd fret for the first two notes, then the 2nd string 1st fret for the final note. Notice that the first two notes get 1 beat and the final note gets 2 beats.

Some of the tabs you might see will contain two different lines of tab. There is a connecting line on the left and right ends so you will know that they are together. You can play either of the tabs, but you don't play them both at the same time. They could be played as a duet by two different players, but the main purpose of the two lines of tab is to provide a reference for the melody as well as the accompaniment in an easy-to-understand way.

In the example below, which is the first four measures of "Skip to My Lou," the top line provides the melody and lyrics while the bottom line provides the chords and a simple strum on each beat.

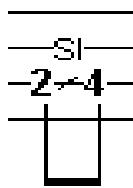
The image shows two lines of guitar tablature for the song "Skip to My Lou". The top line consists of two measures of melody and lyrics: "Lost my part-ner, what shall I do? Lost my part-ner, what shall I do?". The bottom line provides chords and a strumming pattern. Chord diagrams for F and C7 are shown above the tab. The strumming pattern is indicated by upward arrows under the strings.

- The simple strumming pattern on the bottom tab line is meant to reinforce the importance of a steady beat. While it's okay to play just the way that it is written, it will sound better if you will substitute more advanced strums as your playing progresses.
- The chord diagrams above the bottom line of tab shows the chords that you should be holding with your left hand. Hold the chord that is called for until a different chord is indicated. Notice also that the fret numbers where you are holding the chords are also written into the tab.
- Sometimes there will be fret numbers in the tab that are different than those in the chord diagram written above it. When that happens you should still hold the chord but modify it to conform to the tab.
- The "B" stands for brush and it shows you the direction that you should be strumming. Notice that the arrow goes in an upward direction you are actually strumming down, since the uke is held with the 1st string at the bottom and the 4th string at the top and the first line of tab is the 1st string.

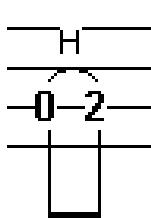
The example above is the first four measures of the fingerpicking arrangement of Shady Grove.

- Notice that underneath the notes you will see the proper right-hand fingers you should be using to play each note (T=Thumb, I=Index, M=Middle).
- The first pair of notes (open 1st string and 4th string 2nd fret) are played at the count of 1 (the first beat). The 1st string is played with the middle finger of the right hand and the 4th string is played by the right thumb.
- Notice that each of the measures is a combination of eighth notes and quarter notes and that the time value of each measure adds up to 1 whole note. Be sure that the eighth notes are played twice as fast as the quarter notes.
- As previously mentioned, if the notes in the tab are different than the notes in the designated chord, then you should play the notes in the tab instead. In the above example, when you play the first Am and G chord you will just hold those chords without having to modify them. However, when you go back to the Am chord you will start off holding the chord, but after the first four notes are played you then play the 1st string 3rd fret and also go up to the 5th and 7th frets. Notice also that the 4th string is played open during that time, which allows you to easily use one finger to slide up and then back down on the 1st string.

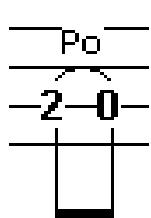
## Slurred Notes



Slide: A slide raises or lowers the pitch of an original note that is played, depending on which direction your sliding finger is moving. In this example use your middle finger to slide from the 2nd fret to the 4th fret on the 3rd string. The first note is played with your right hand, but the second note results from sliding to the 4th fret with your left hand.



Hammer-On: The hammer-on always raises the pitch of the note that is being played. As with all slurred notes, only the first note in the pair is actually played with the right hand. Ordinarily notes are played by fretting a note with your left hand then playing the note with your right hand, but with the hammer-on the procedure is reversed: First you play the open string then you hammer down on a fret to produce a second tone. You can also play a fretted string, and then hammer down on a higher fret of the same string with your 2nd, 3rd, or 4th finger. In the example on the left you play the 3rd string open then hammer down on the 3rd string 2nd fret.



Pull-Off: The pull-off always lowers the pitch of the note that is played, so it is basically the opposite of a hammer-on. To produce the pull-off you must play a fretted string, then forcefully pull your left finger down off the string. This causes a second note to be played. In the example on the left you should hold down the 3rd string 2nd fret and play the note, then pluck that same note with your left hand, thus producing the sound of the 3rd string open.