

Ukulele Lesson Nine for Stages Two and Three

This lesson works with chords previously introduced.

Objectives - students will:

- Learn to “read” the notes displayed on the four-line ukulele tablature, demonstrating this learning by finding and playing the notes on ukuleles.
- Play a simple tune on one string of the ukulele

Reference Curriculum Outcomes: Performing, Listening

MUS2.1 Sings, plays and moves to a range of music, demonstrating a basic knowledge of musical concepts.

- *plays music using body percussion, percussion instruments and other sound sources to explore and demonstrate the concepts of duration, tone colour, pitch, dynamics and structure*

MUS3.1 Sings, plays and moves to a range of music, individually and in groups, demonstrating a knowledge of musical concepts.

- *plays a variety of music, individually and in groups, using a range of vocal and instrumental sound sources to explore musical concepts*
- *explores aspects of musical concepts in singing, playing and moving activities to heighten musical understanding and perform music with a greater sense of style.*

MUS2.4 Identifies the use of musical concepts and musical symbols in a range of repertoire.

- *identifies basic musical features of the music that is performed and listened to, eg rhythm, tempo, pitch, structure, dynamics, tone colour*

MUS3.4 Identifies the use of musical concepts and symbols in a range of musical styles.

- *identifies the use of musical concepts and changes that occur in relation to music that they perform, compose and listen to, eg rhythm, tempo, pitch, structure, dynamics, tone colour and the changes that occur within the music*

Resources – ukuleles (pre-tuned), School Ukulele Orchestra (S.U.O.) Tuition Books or PDF presentation slides. Video archives for lesson nine. (See the class lesson section of www.school-ukulele-orchestra.net)

Other Preparation

It will be very helpful for the students if the teacher is able to demonstrate some melody playing in this lesson. It need not be complicated - the C scale and the “Mary Had A Little Lamb” exercise will be helpful models to demonstrate.

Time Allocation

Aim for up to 30 minutes of playing time. This lesson introduces new concepts in writing and reading music and new approaches to playing the ukulele. For many students, there can be initial confusion about how the lines and numbers relate to the instrument in their hands. Allow time for students to grasp the first exercises, those on the first and second strings (the A and E strings). Once these are grasped, most students will start to read the tablature with some level of independence.

Teaching and Learning Activities

- If needed, briefly review Positive Behaviour for Music Learning expectations that you have established for your class. (See downloadable PBL suggestions in the class lesson section of www.school-ukulele-orchestra.net)
- Singing together – *Start with singing a familiar song from your class repertoire. Perhaps students can request a song.*

Ukulele

- You might use the Ukulele Tuning Check video (or lesson slide directions) as an activity for students while ukuleles are distributed. This activity, with its focus on playing individual strings, is a good starting point for the learning in this lesson.
- You might want to pre-empt this lesson with a word about the “learning pit”. Students might feel confused at times in this lesson. This is part of learning something new. This confusion happens to everyone who tries something new and different. Sometimes we have to go deep into the “learning pit” as the way to amazing new skills and knowledge. Those who keep trying will get to the “ah-ha” moment, which feels great, and opens up all sorts of musical possibilities. While the ideas in this lesson might seem difficult, the playing will be easier than some of the chords that students have already learned.
- Today’s lessons introduce a way to read and write tunes for the ukulele. Notes on the ukulele are written in two ways: as standard notes and as tablature. (Slides, book page 48)
- Tablature is like a diagram of the fret board. The four lines represent the strings as viewed when you are holding your ukulele and looking down. The numbers represent the frets. Using the slide presentation, point to each TAB line and find the string that it represents.
- Starting with notes on the first string (the A string) draw students’ attention to the highlighted parts of the TAB and the photo. (Slide, book page 49) Which string is to be played? (1st, A string) What number is circled on the TAB? (Zero) How many zeros are there? (Three). This means we will play the open first string three times, then stop. Demonstrate this to students and have them play it back to you. Repeat and give feedback so students play this correctly.
- Move to the next picture (slide and book page 49). Draw students’ attention to the highlighted parts of the TAB and the photo. Which string is to be played? (1st, A string) What number is circled on the TAB? (Two) How many “twos” are there? (Three). This means we will hold the

first string at the second fret and play it three times, then stop. Demonstrate this to students and have them play it back to you. Repeat and give feedback so students play this correctly.

- Move to the next picture (slide and book page 50). Draw students' attention to the highlighted parts of the TAB and the photo. Which string is to be played? (1st, A string) What number is circled on the TAB? (Three) How many "threes" are there? (Three). This means we will hold the first string at the third fret and play it three times, then stop. Demonstrate this to students and have them play it back to you. Repeat and give feedback so students play this correctly.
- Using the video presentation, encourage students to put these notes together - playing 0 0 0, 2 2 2, 3 3 3, on the first string. The video draws attention to the importance of walking the fingers instead of sliding one finger. This will make a big difference in the ability to play smoothly in future. Students should focus on using walking fingers as soon as they have grasped the basics of reading the TAB. (*video P49 notes on the first string*)
- Moving to notes on the second string (the E string) draw students' attention to the highlighted parts of the TAB and the photo. (*Slide, book page 50*) Which string is to be played? (2nd, E string) What is the first number circled on the TAB? (Zero) How many zeros are there? (Three). This means we will play the open first string three times. What comes next? (Three "ones") This means we will hold the string at the 1st fret and play it three times. What comes next? (Three "threes") This means we will hold the string at the third fret and play it three times, then we will stop. Demonstrate this to students and have them play it back to you. Repeat and give feedback so students play this correctly. *It is likely that some students will need help to focus on which string they are playing for this exercise. It is also likely that once they grasp this, the tablature will "open up" for them. Experience suggests that this is a common "Ah-ha!" moment for students.*
- Moving to the notes on the third string (the C string) draw student's attention to the highlighted parts of the TAB and the photo. *It is likely that many students will read this TAB before you explain it. You might decide to allow this rather than hold the students back. Those who have grasped and are reading the TAB can assist those next to them by demonstrating these two notes.*
- Take a moment to assess the class progress. Are they ready to put this all together and try playing the C scale? If not, review the exercises already given. You might choose to encourage students to help each other find the notes.
- Moving forward, the next slides and the pictures in the book (*pages 51 to 53*) combine all these notes into a C scale. Using the pictures and teacher modelling, play through the scale notes one at a time. (*Video P51 C Scale*)
- As a final reading exercise to embed and confirm learning, have students try reading and playing "Mary Had A Little Lamb" from a given TAB. (*Slides, book page 54, video P54 Mary Had A Little Lamb TAB*)
- Have ukuleles collected or returned. Give feedback - including, hopefully, a lot of praise - for the effort put in with learning a whole new way of reading music. This has probably been a significant "learning pit" experience for some students and pushing through to the "ah-ha" is a great effort. If the "ah-ha" hasn't happened yet, that's ok, we'll give it another go soon.

Evaluation Points

Reflect on how the students performed in relation to the objectives:

- Learning to “read” the notes displayed on the four-line ukulele tablature, demonstrating this learning by finding and playing the notes on ukuleles.
- Playing a simple tune on one string of the ukulele.

How did students cope with the “learning pit” experience?

Did you observe the “ah-ha” moment occurring for students?

Were students able to assist each other in learning the TAB system?