

Playing the Uke with Ando

A COLOR **CHORD**INATED INTRODUCTION
TO PLAYING THE UKULELE



**Ando Anderson,
Music Teacher**

Acknowledgments

About fifteen years ago I was teaching guitar to a five-year-old boy who hadn't learned to read yet. Jacob was great at playing the first chords and singing the songs but had trouble practicing at home because, being unable to read the words, he didn't know where the chord changes came. Luckily for Jacob - and for me - his mom was a talented kindergarten teacher. The next time I came to teach, she had color highlighted the words of his song sheets to correspond with the chords. Using these sheets, Jacob was quickly able to play the correct chords as he tracked and sang the words. Since then, I've been using this technique to help beginners learn to play and sing. Even learners who can read well find the color coding of the lyrics to match the chords played very helpful.



This little ukulele book is made possible by the creativity and generosity of Jacob's mom, my friend Betha Howell.

In addition, my friend, John Elberfeld, has encouraged me, helping me realize that I could (with lots of help) come up with a worthy book. He helped me design a curriculum for beginning ukulele. He laid out, typed, helped edit, and found fun pics for this book. He recorded the associated videos. Thank you, John, for all the hard work and patience.

Thanks to my great ukulele group - the Stone Soup Ukes of Belfast, Maine. Y'all's enthusiasm carries me. And finally, thanks to my friend, Frets Halligan, who inspired me to teach ukulele in the first place.

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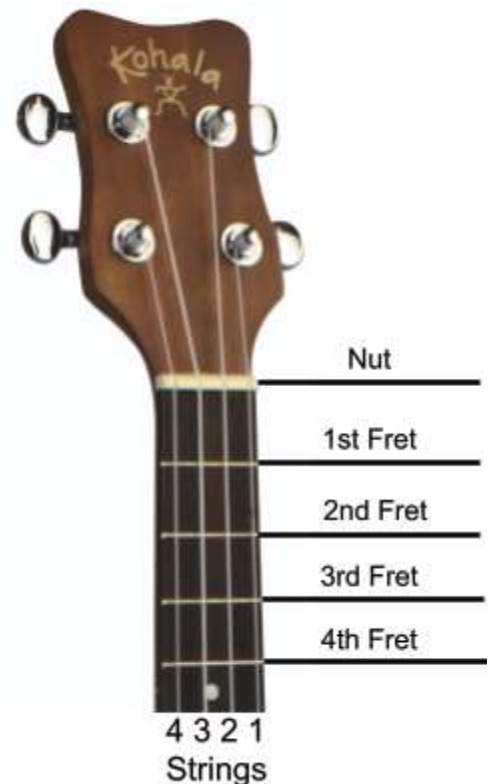
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Notes and Chords

The names of the strings are the names of the notes you hear when you pick the string. A note is a single tone played by itself. Picking just the 4th string will play the note **G**, for example. Two or more notes played together is called a chord. Today we will learn how to play two chords. As we learn these chords, I will refer to the string closest to the floor as the first string. The next string, just above the first string, is the second string, The fourth string, **G**, is closest to the ceiling. The metal strips under the strings are called frets. The first fret is closest to tuning pegs by your left hand. In the chord diagram the top, thick horizontal line represents the nut.

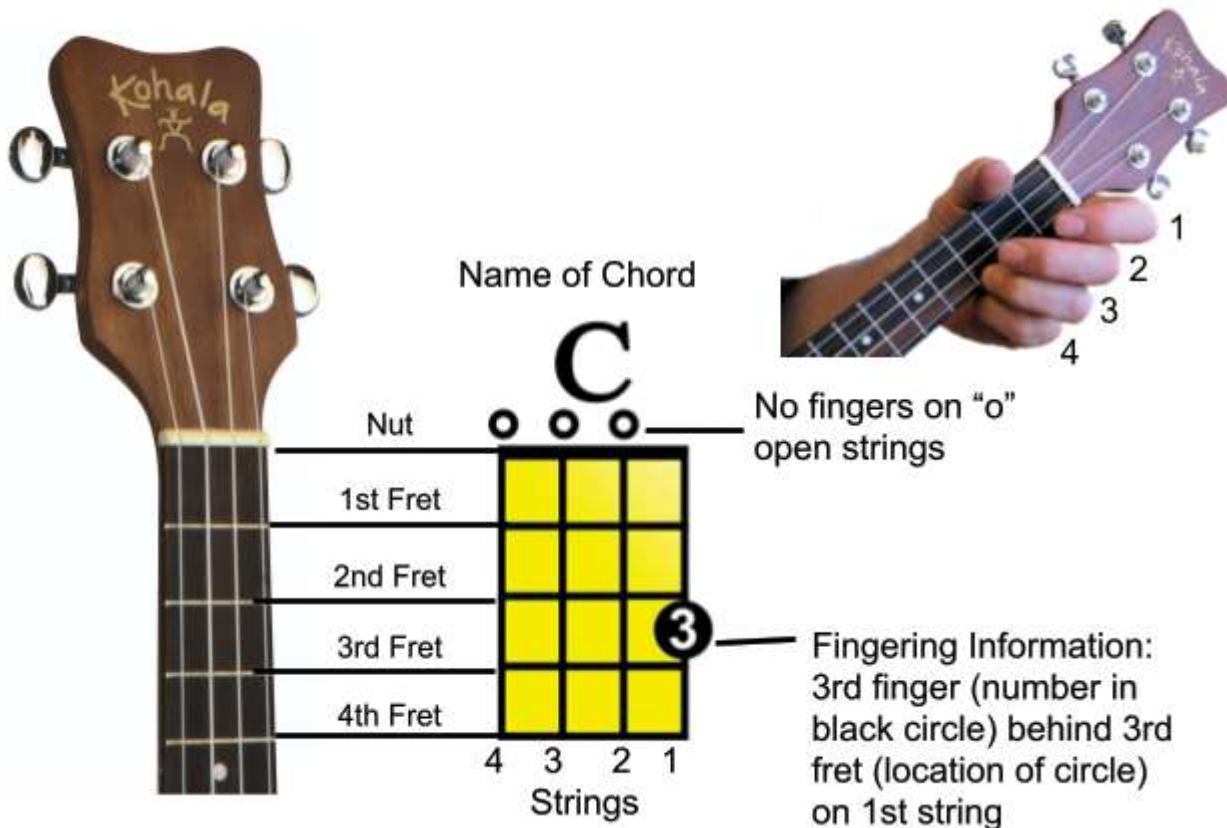


Finger Names

The diagram at the left labels the fingers on your left hand. Knowing the finger numbering system makes it easier to understand chord diagrams and written descriptions of chords.

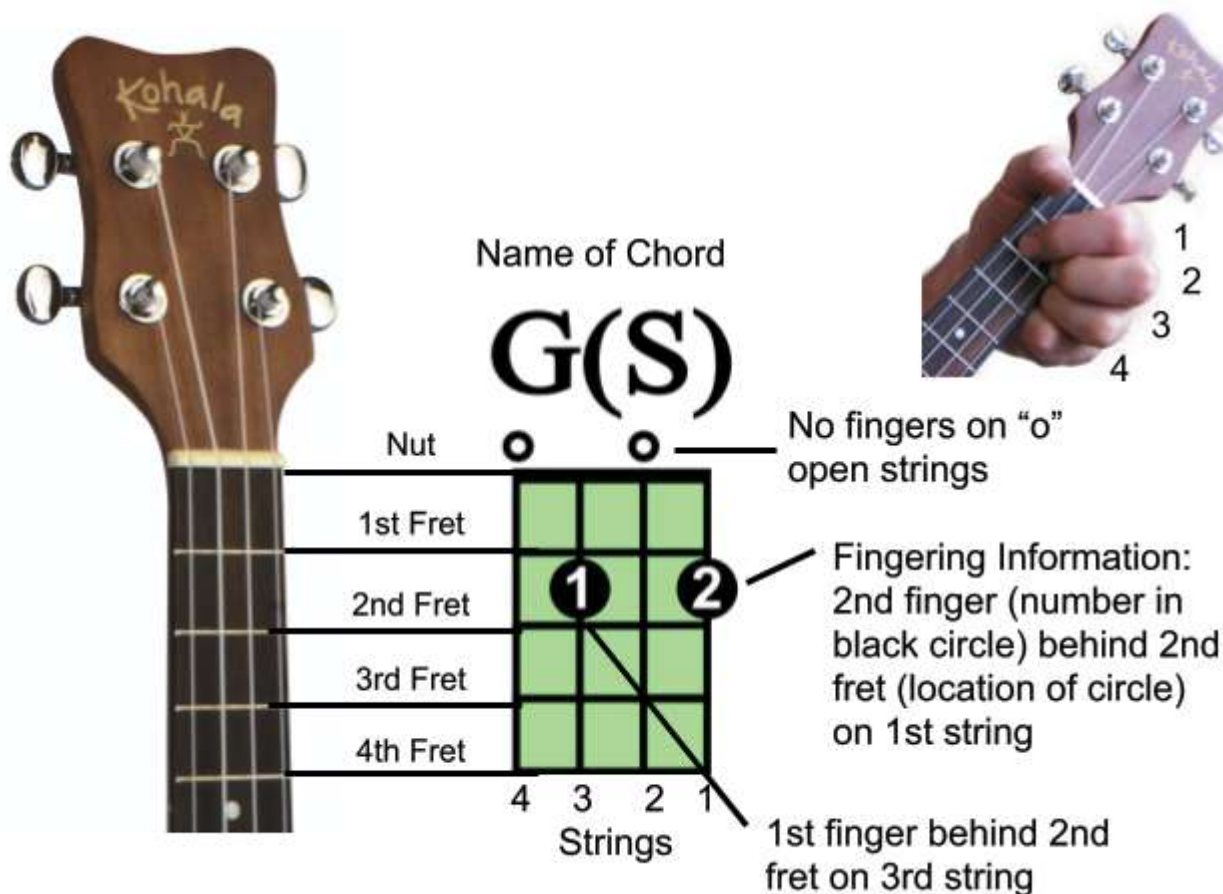
Your First Chords

Your first chord is **C**. You will play **C** by pressing the tip of your ring or third finger of your left hand a little to your left (looking down at your uke) of the third fret of the first string. To strum a **C** chord, open your right hand so your fingers brush across, or strum, all four strings. Press the first string down without touching the other strings so that all the notes sing as you play them.



The chord diagrams are a picture of the uke fretboard. *The vertical lines represent the strings with the line furthest to the right showing the first string-the string closest to the floor.* The horizontal lines represent the frets. The top dark line shows the nut, The white numbers in the black circle represent the fingers of the fretting hand: 1 corresponds to the first or index finger, 2 corresponds to the second or the middle finger and 3 corresponds to the third or ring finger.

Your second chord is the beginner **G** chord. You will press the tip of your middle or second finger of your left hand on the second fret of the first string. Then you will press the tip of your index or first finger on the second fret of the third string. Once again strum by opening the fist of your right hand quickly so all your fingers brush across all the strings. With practice, and as your fingers get stronger, you will be able to make all the notes sing clearly.



You will use the “Beginner **G**” or “Simple **G**” **G(S)** chord only until you build up the strength and dexterity you need to create the “Regular **G**” chord.

Watch: *How to Play the C and Simple G Chords* at AndoAnderson.com

Practice Hints

All successful musicians practice their skills.

When you practice, stay focused on what you are doing. Avoid distractions like TV, cell phones, and computers.

Try to practice a little bit daily. Small amounts of regular practice are the most efficient way to learn. Ten minutes for new beginners can be enough, but time should gradually increase as more material is learned.

Practice slowly enough so you know you are doing it correctly.

Listen. Let your ear determine if you are playing well.

As you work with new material, take the time to review previous material.

Try to start and end your practice with something fun. It's easier to make yourself practice music you like, and once your uke's in hand, it's not as hard to work on new, more challenging material.



Lesson 2: Your First Songs

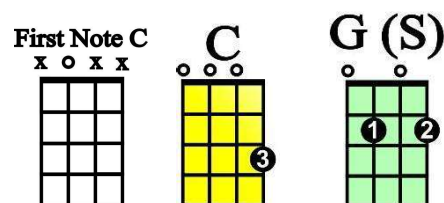
Buffalo Gals is a great song from the 1800s. As you sing *Buffalo Gals*, strum the indicated chord where the letter appears. For instance, in the first line play the **C** chord when you sing “Buffalo” and again when you sing “come”. In the second line strum **G** on the first “Come,” then **C** on the second “come.”

The chord diagrams at the right can remind you of the proper way to make the chords.

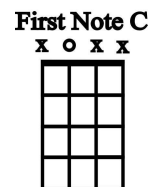
The color background of the lyrics is a reminder of which chord you should play. You should play the **C** chord, as shown at the right, when the lyrics are **yellow**. You play the **G** chord, as shown at the right, when the lyrics are **green**.

Buffalo Gals (Chorus)

C **C**
Buffalo gal won't you **come** out tonight,
G **C**
Come out tonight, **come** out tonight.
C **C**
Buffalo gal won't you **come** out tonight,
G **C**
And we'll **dance** by the light of the **moon**.



In addition to the chord charts there is also a **First Note Diagram** on each song. The first note you sing on *Buffalo Gals* is the note **C**. You play **C** by picking the open (no fingers touching) third string. The tone you hear is your starting note for the song.



Here are all the words to your first song, *Buffalo Gals*. Play the first note and listen to its sound. Using that note, start singing the song and at the same time strum the **C** chord on the word “Buffalo.” Continue singing and strum again on “come” and when the tune carries you to the second line, strum the **G** chord as you sing the second “come” (**green**). Next, strum the **C** chord on the next “come” (**yellow**). Play all the verses this way.

Buffalo Gals

Chorus:

C **C**
Buffalo gals won't you come out --tonight,

G **C**
Come out --tonight, come out --tonight.

C **C**
Buffalo gals won't you come out --tonight,

G **C**
And we'll dance by the light of the moon.

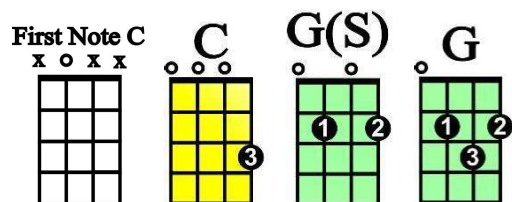
Verse 1:

C **C**
As I was walking down the street,

G **C**
Down the street, down the street.

C **C**
A pretty gal I chanced to meet,

G **C**
And she was fair to see.



Chorus:

C C
Buffalo gals won't you come out --tonight,
G C
Come out --tonight, come out --tonight.
C C
Buffalo gals won't you come out --tonight,
G C
And we'll dance by the light of the moon.

Verse 2:

C C
I danced with a gal with a hole in her stocking,
G C
and her knees was a-knockin' and her shoes was a-rockin'.
C C
I danced with a gal with a hole in her stocking,
G C
and we danced by the light of the moon.

Chorus:

C C
Buffalo gals won't you come out --tonight,
G C
Come out --tonight, come out --tonight.
C C
Buffalo gals won't you come out --tonight,
G C
And we'll dance by the light of the moon.



*Listen to me play Buffalo Gals on my website
AndoAnderson.com.*

Watch: How to Play Buffalo Gals

Listen to how I use the first note before I start singing. As you listen to me play follow the words on the page. How many strums do I play for each line of text? Also, try to play along with me. This will help you play the chords at the right time.

Your second song is an old American favorite, *Clementine*. Once again you will play the first note and sing it as you play and sing *Clementine*. **Strum the chords right where the chord symbols indicate.** (On *cavern*, *canyon*, *-vating*, *mine* in the first line, for example.) If you're unfamiliar with the song, listen to me play it at *AndoAnderson.com* and play and sing along. Watch: *How to Play Clementine*.

After you've played *Clementine* a bit, notice how the chords fall in relation to the words. Sometimes chords change in interesting places. What do you think?

Clementine

Verse 1:

C C C

In a cavern, in a canyon, excavating for a mine

G C G C

Dwelt a miner, forty-niner, and his daughter, Clementine.

Chorus:

C C C G

Oh my darling, oh my darling, oh my darling, Clementine.

G C G C

You are lost and gone forever. Dreadful sorry, Clementine.

Verse 2:

C C C G

Light she was and like a fairy, and her shoes were number nine.

G C G C

Herring boxes, without topses, sandals were for Clementine.

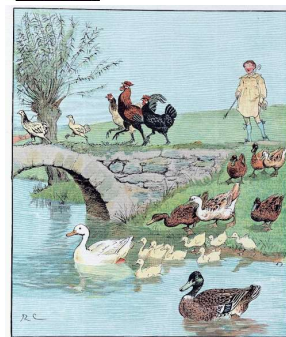
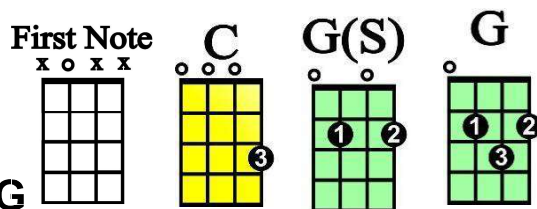
Chorus:

C C C G

Oh my darling, oh my darling, oh my darling, Clementine.

G C G C

You are lost and gone forever. Dreadful sorry, Clementine.



Verse 3:

C C C G
Drove she ducklings to the water, ev'ry morning just at nine.
G C G C
Hit her foot against a splinter. Fell in- to the foaming brine.

Chorus:

C C C G
Oh my darling, oh my darling, oh my darling, Clemen- tine.
G C G C
You are lost and gone for- ever. Dreadful sorry, Clemen- tine.

Verse 4:

C C C G
Ruby lips above the water, blowing bubbles, soft and fine,
G C G C
But, a- las, I was no swimmer, so I lost my Clemen- tine.

Chorus:

C C C G
Oh my darling, oh my darling, oh my darling, Clemen- tine.
G C G C
You are lost and gone for- ever. Dreadful sorry, Clemen- tine.

Verse 5:

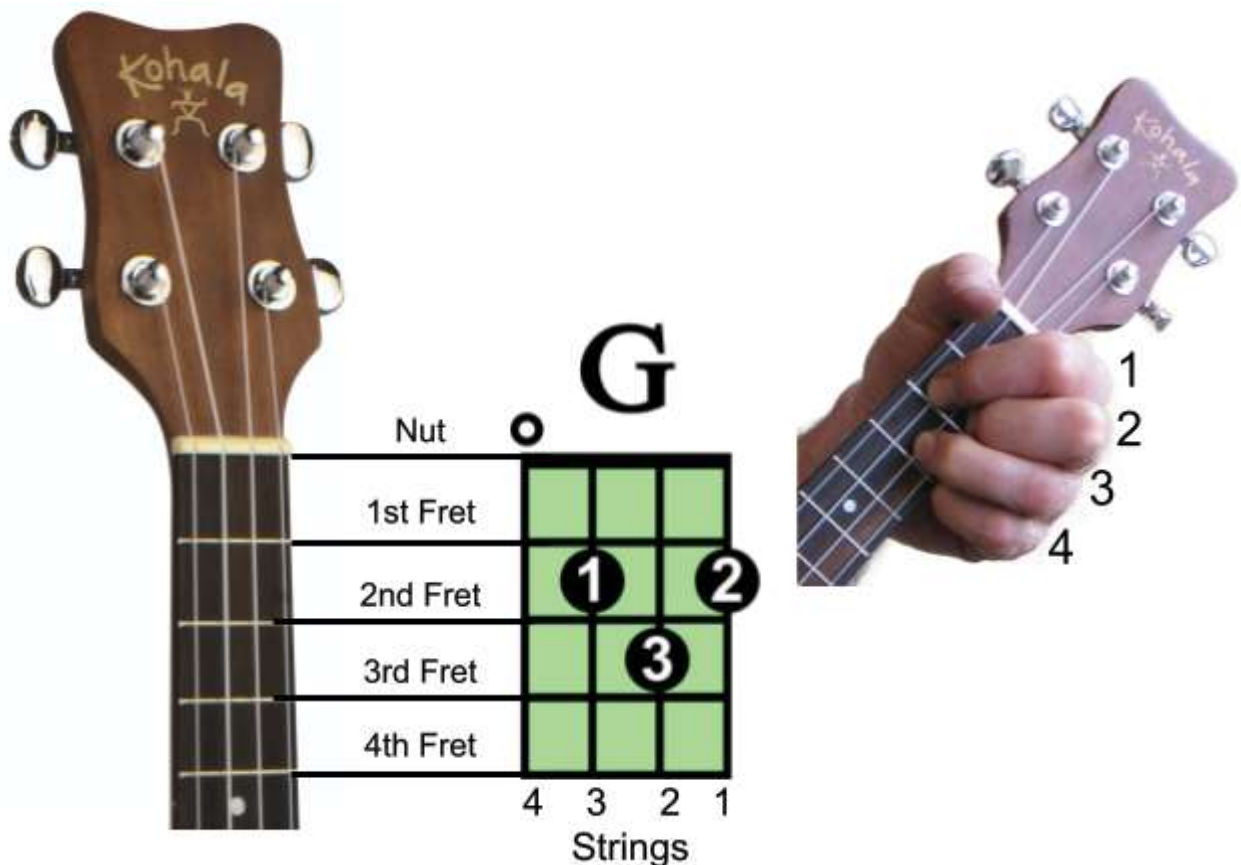
C C C G
How I missed her! How I missed her, how I missed my Clemen- tine,
G C G C
But I kissed her little sister, I for- got my Clemen- tine.

Chorus:

C C C G
Oh my darling, oh my darling, oh my darling, Clemen- tine.
G C G C
You are lost and gone for- ever. Dreadful sorry, Clemen- tine.

Lesson 3: Play the Regular G Chord

The regular **G** chord is played by placing your first finger (index finger) on the second fret of the third string, the second (middle) finger on the second fret of the first string, and the third (ring) finger on the third fret of the second string.



Watch: *How to Play the Regular G Chord* at AndoAnderson.com

Practice Changing Chords

When you first learn to play ukulele, the two hardest challenges often are:

Making the chords sound sweet, and moving from chord to chord quickly.

Now that you have learned the big kid **G** (regular **G**), I think it's a good idea to practice moving from the **C** to **G** and **G** to **C**

We'll begin the exercise by counting slowly and steadily 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4, and continue counting while tapping our foot with each number. This is called keeping a steady beat

Play the **C** on 1 and when you return to the 1 play the **G**. Each chord gets four beats or counts. This gives time for you to change chords on beats 2, 3, and 4.

Make sure your chords sing sweetly, each string ringing out. Practice counting 1,2,3,4 slowly, playing a chord when you say, "1" until you can change chords making sweet sounds. This can be hard. Be patient with yourself. This exercise is the quickest way to get better at chord changes that I know.

As this exercise gets easier you can play on beats 1 and 2, then on beats 1, 2, and 3; and finally on all four beats. **Exercise 4 uses a (*) to show when to strum a chord instead of writing the same letter over and over. We'll be using this designation for the rest of the book.**

Exercise 1:

C					G					C					G				
<u>1</u>	2	3	4		<u>1</u>	2	3	4		<u>1</u>	2	3	4		<u>1</u>	2	3	4	

Exercise 2:

C	C				G	G				C	C				G	G			
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	3	4		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	3	4		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	3	4		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	3	4	

Exercise 3:

C	C	C			G	G	G			C	C	C			G	G	G		
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	4		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	4		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	4		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	4	

Exercise 4:

C	*	*	*		G	*	*	*		C	*	*	*		G	*	*	*	
<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>		<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	

Watch: *Practice Changing C and G Chords* at AndoAnderson.com.

Polly Wolly Doodle

Verse 1

C * C *
Well I went down south for to see my gal

C * G *
Sing Polly Wolly Doodle all day.

G * G *
My Sal she is a spunky gal

G * C *
Sing Polly Wolly Doodle all day.

Chorus

C * C *
Fare thee well, Fare thee well,

C * G *
Fare thee well my fairy fay.

G * G *
For I'm going to Lou'siana for to see my Susyanna

G * C *
Sing Polly Wolly Doodle all day.

Verse 2

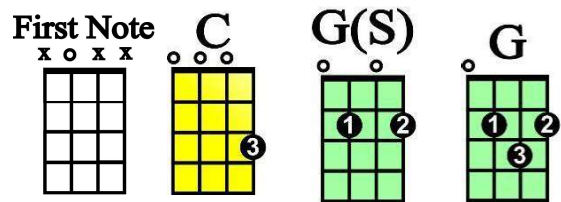
C * C *
I went to the river, I couldn't get across

C * G *
Sing Polly Wolly Doodle all day.

G * G *
I jumped on a gator, I thought it was a horse

G * C *
Sing Polly Wolly Doodle all day.

Sing the chorus here.



When you play the first line of *Polly Wolly Doodle*, play the C chord when you sing the word under the first C (went) and play the chord again when you sing the word under the star (*) (south.) Play C again on "see" and on "gal."

C * | C *
Well I went down south for to see my gal



Verse 3

C * C *

Oh a grasshopper sittin' on a railroad track

C * G *

Sing Polly Wolly Doodle all day.

G * G *

A picking his teeth with a carpet tack

G * C *

Sing Polly Wolly Doodle all day.

Sing the chorus here.

Verse 4

C * C *

Be- hind the barn down on my knees

C * G *

Sing Polly Wolly Doodle all day.

G * G *

I thought I heard the chicken sneeze

G * C *

Sing Polly Wolly Doodle all day.

Sing the chorus here.



Watch: *How to Play Polly Wolly Doodle* at AndoAnderson.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

My mother bought a ukulele on a family trip to Atlanta. The 7-hour drive was pretty stressful as three unruly bored brothers turned the backseat into a war zone. In addition to our battles this trip, we each learned to play “Five Foot Two” on the uke. My first experience with a stringed instrument! Of course we performed for Grandma, aunts, uncles, and cousins. That was over 50 years ago. Since then I've played guitar, upright bass, and uke in assorted bands and groups, mostly in Mississippi and Maine. Currently I live in Northport, Maine, where I teach preschool music and a comfortable schedule of private students. Plus I lead adult ukulele classes, ukulele groups, and organize ukulele picnics.

As a music teacher I've been thrilled to see the ukulele's growing popularity. Lots of beginning players, young and old, are experiencing the joys and challenges of playing this happy fun instrument. I'm writing this book to encourage anyone and everyone to try out the ukulele! Who knows? You may be the next YouTube sensation.

