

Ukulele Strumming Patterns:

The most awkward question I get asked is, “What’s the strumming pattern for this?” Because there’s no real answer to it. It’s not like a chord progression where there’s a right chord and a wrong chord. You can use different strumming patterns and it will still work. It’s an important skill to be able to pick your own strumming patterns.

Some Basics

Before you start strumming, go through these steps:

Step 1: Clap along with the song: If the singer was to shout, “Hey everybody, clap along,” what would you do? (Assuming you’re less surly than me and would just fold your arms and look moody.)

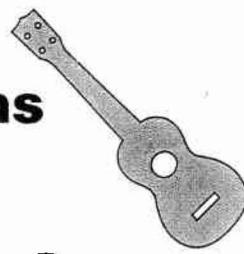
Step 2: Pretend you’re in The Ramones: If you were going to start the song by shouting one, two, three, four what would you do? Try counting through the song repeating that all the way (if counting to four doesn’t fit, try counting to three).

Step 3: Try a few strumming patterns: Try fitting a strumming pattern to the song. Fit them so the down strums in the pattern match with the numbers you count. So a dead simple pattern would be all down strums: strum down when you count one, when you count two, when you count three and when you count four.

4/4 Strumming Patterns

By far the most common time signature around is 4/4 (“four four”). If you can count along to a song, “one, two, three, four, one, two, three, four,” and it fits, try out these strumming patterns.

Beginner Lesson • Strum patterns



#1 - BASIC STRUM (4/4 TIME) (BALLAD)

D	D	D	D
/	/	/	/
1	2	3	4

#2 - COMMON STRUM (BASIC ROCK)

D-U	D-U	D-U	D-U
/	/	/	/
1-&	2-&	3-&	4-&

#3 - WALTZ TIME (3/4 TIME)

D	D	D
/	/	/
1	2	3

#4 - WALTZ VARIATION

D	D-U	D
/	/	/
1	2-&	3

#5 – MARCH/POLKA (2/4 TIME)

D	D
/	/
1	2

#6 - NASHVILLE

D	D-U	D-U	D-U
/	/	/	/
1	2-&	3-&	4-&

#7 - RAGTIME

D	D-U	D-U	D
/	/	/	/
1	2-&	3-&	4

Strong accent normally occurs on the first beat. Syncopation happens when the accent is placed on beats that are normally weak.