

— HOW TO — **BREAK IN NEW UKULELE STRINGS**



Picture this: you get your new ukulele out, tune it up to pitch, and play your first chord, only to find it is already out of tune! Have no fear – usually, there is nothing wrong with your ukulele or the tuners. You need to break-in your strings!

Ukuleles come pre-strung with nylon strings which have never been brought up to pitch! They will go out of tune immediately due to the elasticity of the nylon and the looseness of the knot holding it in place. Many players will keep re-tuning endlessly until the strings get broken in. This is an excellent exercise to practice. However, it may take 1-2 weeks for the strings to settle. What if you had to change your strings for a concert later that day, or if you have a full classroom set of ukuleles to tune?

Here is a simpler and faster way to get these new strings to settle in.

Step 1: Begin by tuning the ukulele up to *approximate* pitch.

For soprano, concert, and tenor ukuleles this is G, C, E, and A. Don't worry about fine-tuning. For now, as you will need to do this several times until the strings have stretched and settle in.

TIP: You might opt to use a peg winder to speed up this part of the process, such as:

[355409 On-Stage String Winder](#)

[500267 D'Addario Planet Waves DP0002 String Pro-Winder/Cutter](#)



Step 2: Stretch the Strings

Place the palm of your right hand on the bridge and wrap your fingers around a single string and pivot your fingers upward to apply upward pressure on the string gently.

IMPORTANT: Be sure to keep your palm on the bridge so that you are not pulling the bridge away from the body of the instrument. You only want to affect the string.

The objective here is to allow the string to stretch without creating unnecessary tension on the body and neck. This action will help lock the bridge knot. Repeat this step for each of the other 3 strings.



Step 3: Repeat Steps 1 and 2

Repeat the approximate tuning and lightly stretching steps until the strings hold their approximate pitch.

Step 4: Fine Tune Your Ukulele

Fine-tune your ukulele. I find using a clip-on digital tuner is the quickest and most accurate method. Most clip-on tuners pick up the tone from vibrations and will not be affected from outside noise, such as:

[354354 Snark SN6X Clip-on Ukulele Tuner](#)

[354515 D'Addario PW-CT-12 NS Mini Headstock Tuner](#)

TIP: It is better to fine tune a string by tuning UP to pitch. Tuning down to pitch requires loosening the peg and makes it possible for the string tension to get hung up at the friction points. If you tune sharp in error (higher than the desired pitch), I recommend loosening the peg and gently pulling on the string to remove any tension, then tuning back UP to pitch.

[Watch the video on YouTube here!](#)

Voilà! You are now in tune and ready to play. Happy Strumming.



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Sam Marchuk is an Education Consultant for West Music specializing in folk instruments and curriculum for the elementary classroom. He has been playing ukulele since 2005 and is an avid collector of vintage and contemporary ukulele models. As an Education Consultant, Sam assists with the selection and acquisition of instruments and curriculum with teachers across the U.S. He enjoys matching up players of all skill levels and classroom teachers with the right ukulele to fit their personality, style, and budget. Sam has demonstrated the potential of the of the ukulele at numerous state and national music education conferences, helped with the startup of ukulele programs across the U.S., and has taught beginning ukulele at the annual Strathmore Ukulele and Guitar Summit in Rockville, MD.