

## HOW TO READ UKULELE TABS

So far you have probably concentrated on reading chord boxes, this is now second nature. You have found out that unless you know how a song goes just having chord boxes doesn't really explain how to play it as you don't have a sense of the rhythm of the song. Other than learning to read music this will always be an issue. Fortunately the internet allows us to listen to examples of the song being played and interpret tempo, how to play the chords, when to change and how long we hold a chord for.

Assuming we are not going to learn to read music if we cannot already then there is another way for us to learn songs and that is something called Tablature (Tabs for short). Music Tablature is a simplified form of musical notation used for stringed instruments like the ukulele.

You can learn a new piece of music by using tab. Unlike a regular piece of music, tabs show exactly where to play the notes on the fretboard. Tab is the way that Riffs are set out within a song, we will learn about how to play them.

### These are some examples of tablature.

Music Tablature Basics

For the ukulele, in a piece of tablature you will see four lines:

```
A-----  
E-----  
C-----  
g-----
```

Each line represents a string on the ukulele. The top line represents the bottom string of the ukulele where the bottom line represents the top string of the ukulele. (I know its confusing but thats the universal protocol).

When you look at a piece of tab, you'll see numbers scattered across different "strings" or lines:

```
A-----3-----  
E-----0-----0-----  
C-----0-----0-----  
g-----0-----
```

Each number refers to a fret number.

For example in the piece of tab above, you would pluck the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret of the bottom string on the ukulele. As we read across the piece of tab, we see that we would then pluck the open E string, the second to bottom string. Then we would pluck the open C string, the second to top string. Then we pluck the open G string, the top string. And so on.....

## How are chords written in Music Tablature?

In a piece of tab, you might see all the numbers line up vertically:

```
A-----0-----2-----3-----0-----3-----2-----  
E-----1-----3-----0-----0-----2-----1-----  
C-----0-----2-----0-----0-----2-----2-----  
g-----2-----0-----0-----2-----2-----0-----
```

When you see this, this means you play a chord. In other words, you play all the notes vertically aligned together.

In the above example, we see the chords played from left to right: F,G,C,Am D7 and G7.

### Enhanced tab symbols

Once you have got to grips with tabs there are more techniques you will come across that you can use:

#### Hammer – ons

Hammer – ons are designated by an “h” symbol that separates the two notes.

```
A-----1-----  
E-----1-----  
C-----2h3-----  
g-----3-----
```

In this example, you would pluck the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret of the second to top string and then “hammer – on” to the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret.

#### Pull – offs

Pull – offs are designated by a “p” symbol that separates the two notes.

```
A-----3p2-----  
E-----3-----  
C-----2-----  
g-----0-----
```

In this example, you would pluck the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret of the bottom string and then “pull – off” to the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret

## Slides

Ascending slides are represented by the "/" symbol, while descending slides are represented by the "\" symbol.

A-----2/5-----

E-----3\2-----

C-----4-----

g-----

In this example, you would pluck the 2<sup>nd</sup> fret of the bottom string and slide up to the 5<sup>th</sup> fret. Then you would pluck the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret of the second to bottom string and slide down to the 2<sup>nd</sup> fretboard.

## Bends

Bends are represented by the "b" symbol. An "r" symbol will be used to indicate a bend that returns back to the original plucked note.

A-----5b6-----3-----

E-----3-----5b6r5-----3-----

C-----

g-----

In this example, you pluck the 5<sup>th</sup> fret of the bottom string and bend it to the 6<sup>th</sup> fret and hold the bend. Then, you would pluck the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret of the bottom string and then, 3<sup>rd</sup> fret of the second to bottom string.

Next on the same string, you would pluck the 5<sup>th</sup> fret of the second, bend up to the 6<sup>th</sup> fret and then, return the bend back to the 5<sup>th</sup> fret. Lastly, you would pluck the 3<sup>rd</sup> fret.

## The big Downside to Using Tablature

Reading Tab is a very intuitive way to learn a song. Particularly the melody of a song.

However, the big problem is that with tab you don't get a sense of the rhythm. Meaning. You don't know when to play the notes written on a piece of tab or how long to hold them in relation to other notes.

The best way to use tab is in combination with you ear. For example, you've heard a song you want to learn how to play on a ukulele and because you know how it sounds you can use the tab as an aid. Playing each of the tabs albeit slowly will reveal the tune, you can then speed up the tune as you become familiar with it. So there are downsides to both Chord boxes and tab but being able to use both will enhance your song learning.