

## *Hands on Music Making and Song Writing Using Ukuleles*

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I am a trainer for Guitars in the Classroom (GITC) and much of this presentaton is based on the GITC approach which is a developmental learning sequence, that is responsive to the stages- physical, cognitive and social-emotional- of child development.

We use open tunings, percussion first, harmonizing next and melodic playing later. Science has shown there is a strong link between early musical experiences with the steady beat, and successful language and reading development. Our approach honors this and we intentionally skip teaching scales and reading of standard notation until upper elementary grades when students have the fine motor and cognitive ability to embrace the ideas and skills. Integrating ukulele into your curriculum equals:

- Ease of playing
- Integrates easily with other classroom instruments and activities
- Facilitates enthusiastic singing
- Solo, partner and ensemble playing
- Composition
- An integral part of a standards aligned, general music program.
- Gateway to learning other string instruments
- Affordability
- An added bonus - parents and administrators love it!

| <b>Open C, Ukulele Tuning "Hawaiian"</b>   | <b>Open G Guitar Tuning</b>   |
|--|---|
| Key is C, Root and "Do" are C<br>This tuning stays in 1 octave.<br>Uke 4 to 1 (chest to lap location):<br>Sol Do Mi Sol<br>G C E G | Key is G, Root and "Do" are G<br>Guitar 6 to 1 (low to high pitches, chest to lap location)<br>Sol, Do, Sol, Do, Mi, Sol<br>D G D G B D |
| Standard Ukulele Tuning<br>G,C,E, A  | Standard Guitar Tuning<br>E,A,D,G,B,E   |

## About open tuning

This is an easy and accessible way to start playing. Easy and inclusive for all.

- All students must see success quickly. If they don't:
  - Some will give up
  - Some may cause trouble
  - Some may become disengaged - This hurts the class climate for all. Disengaged students will put a damper on the other students' enthusiasm. Not just for now but always.
- Play in a circle. Take me to enjoy the feel of the vibrations when you strum.
- Be hands on, place fingers and fix body and finger positions. Use stickers
- You can teach guitar and uke concurrently by capoing guitar at the 5th fret.

**Teach in a circle if possible** - Have students cover their belly button with the uke, and hug it with their strumming arm. Strum by pointing to self then floor, self floor.... When changing chords go around and fix everyone's fingers. Practice on and off. I strive for 100% success.

**Rest Position** - Ukes strings down on the child's lap. Part of the job of strummer is to sit quietly until they are ready to play.

**Pair/Share** - I teach (and we practice, a lot) the **5 L's** Lean in, Look into your partner's eyes, Lower your voice, listen, and learn together. Teach the students to fix each other's hand position and to watch and listen to their partner. Pick one partner to sing and the other to strum than trade.

**Strumming Stations** - A strumming station can be as simple as a child on each side of you playing with you or a line of 4 chairs for students to sit in and strum. When using the uke as a strumming station with game songs like, *Lucy Locket, you can rotate new students in and out effortlessly as the game progresses*. Once students are used to working in a strumming station you can integrate other instruments, percussion, keyboards or recorders.

## Be yourself and teach with your strengths.

I like games, especially with the little ones, so I teach lots of games where just a couple students can come sit by me and strum while the others sing and move. We rotate around and usually everyone gets a turn to strum. If we don't all get a chance to play, we always chant this reminder. *"If I don't play today, I will play another day."*

Some songs played with all open strings are: *Rain Rain Go Away, John the Rabbit, Lucy Locket, We are Dancing in the Forest, Peas Porridge Hot, Mousie Mousie, Doggie Doggie where's your bone, Charlie Over the Ocean, Are You Sleeping, Pass the Uke.*

## Thoughts on Teaching Tuning

Grade 3 and up can learn to tune with a clip on tuner. In my own music classes, I do the tuning most of the time. I have one or two students learn to tune with me at a time. Standing beside me, so we can do it together. I can get a whole class tuned very quickly by:

1. I have someone play the notes one at a time on a tuned ukulele.
2. I point to a student to play their notes one at a time back.
3. Class listens shows (thumbs up/down) or says (good or tune it).
4. When all ukes have been played, students who need their ukes tuned, bring up their ukes and we tune them.
5. This process is very quick and quiet once the students catch on.

**Strumming** - Strums are patterns. Each pattern has beats, directions for arrows, and a beat.

DOWN Strum, Steady Beat                      ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ (Ta Ta Ta Ta)

Down up strum,

steady beat or divided beat                      ↓ ↑ ↓ ↑ (Ta Ta Ta Ta)      ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ (- - - -  
-)

Shuffle Strum                                      ↓. ↑ ↓. ↑ (Tim-ri Tim-ri)

Bass Strum                                         B ↓ B ↓ (Ta Ta Ta Ta)

Bass Down Strum Bluegrass                      B ↓ B ↓ B ↓ B ↓ (- - - -)

Boom Chick-a Strum                              B. ↓ ↑ B. ↓ ↑ (Ta - Ta - ) or B. ↓. ↑ B. ↓ ↑ (Ta Tim-ri Ta  
Tim-ri)

**Changing chords** - Make a C shape with your chording hand. Fingers on the posts. Thumb on the back of the neck. Push down and play each string, have partners listen for the beautiful tone. If there are dead sounding notes the partner can easily spot the problem and help their friend fix it.

## Strategies for changing chords quickly - Use with chords you are learning

The image shows four musical staves in 4/4 time, each illustrating a different strategy for changing chords from C to F. Each staff consists of four measures. The first two measures are C, and the last two are F. The strategies are as follows:

- Staff 1: Quarter notes on the C line (C4) and F line (F4) with eighth-note strumming.
- Staff 2: Quarter notes on the C line (C4) and F line (F4) with eighth-note strumming.
- Staff 3: Quarter notes on the C line (C4) and F line (F4) with eighth-note strumming.
- Staff 4: Quarter notes on the C line (C4) and F line (F4) with eighth-note strumming.

**Songwriting** - can build literacy skills, music skills and interpersonal skills. It expands vocabulary and improves self expression. The songs children write, help reinforce their memory of lesson content. Expansive songwriting encourages them to drill down more deeply into the subject of the song and write about details. Songs can also retell stories. Children don't forget the verses they created, and often they will be bringing in verses they wrote on their own.

**Word Substitution Songs** are the easiest to do. Rewrite Happy Birthday by substituting any holiday for "Birthday"

**Parody Song Writing** - This works well as a Pair/Share or Small Group Activity .

1. Discuss 5 L's, consensus building, group dynamics.
2. Choose a familiar song to write new lyrics. Keep it Simple
3. Brainstorm for topics
4. Narrow down and choose a topic
5. List words or statements about the topic. Explore the senses and emotions. It's okay to go off tangentially . Students might end up with a better song.
6. Work into a song. Double Space your song, Practice, Rewrite.

**Blues Songs for Middle School** - Using open tuning, students can bar across the fretboard with their index finger and play open, 5th fret, 3rd fret, open. For a Muddy Waters or George Thorogood type of blues.

## SOME TYPES OF SONGS

### **MEMORIZATION SONGS**

“BINGO” is perfect for building memorization of sight word vocabulary and mastering spelling. You can apply any word between 3 and 7 letters long in the space of B-I-N-G-O simply by slowing down or speeding up the singing of the letters to fit the music. “*This Old Man*,” “and “*Old MacDonald*” are wonderful “add-on” songs that make perfect piggyback forms for building information in lists.

### **CONCEPT & DETAIL SONGS**

“*The Wheels on the Bus*” is another “add-on” song that is great for presenting a main topical idea in the first verse (ex: parts of a bus), then adding a new piece of information with each new verse. This song form gives you a new chance to expand the application of a topic by adding an example of where it occurs. “*The Bones in Your Body*” is an example of this application.

### **EXPLORING AN ENVIRONMENT WITH 5 SENSES**

“*I’m On My Way*,” works brilliantly for describing places (nice for social studies or field trip preparation). The refrain at the end of each verse unifies the descriptions, allowing students to describe in detail a place or even a time in history they are learning about.

### **MESSAGE SONGS & ANTHEMS**

Protest songs from the 60s help students express a firmly held belief while giving them a vital lesson in American social history- how people can change society with music...and did! “*We Shall Overcome*” is an easy piggyback form with a very encouraging melody that can be shaped to voice any message of hope and determination.

### **STORY SONGS**

“*Clementine*” may be the most popular story song to re-write on topic. There are already 2 versions in the songbook- one for Halloween and another for Thanksgiving. Story song allows students to delve deeply into a topic to express subject content in vivid detail. The chorus can be used to emphasize a salient point or theme. *Sweet Betsey from Pike* is another great example.

### **CALL & RESPONSE SONGS**

Call and response songs allow you to divide your class into two parts and each one can take a turn leading the song. There are a couple different styles. One form tells a long story and keeps singers engaged (“*A Bear in the Woods*,” “*Bill Grogan’s Goat*”). No matter what style you choose, call and response songs build singer confidence.

# 10 Lile Indians

Singing Note - 1st string open

Off

One lile two lile three lile Indians

1 finger On

Four lile five lile six lile indians

Off

Seven lile, eight lile, nine lile indians

1 finger on

Ten lile indian braves.

**Piggy back song writing activity:** Encourage students to write new lyrics to this song that allows them to count other kinds of objects, and count by 2's, 5's, 10's

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## The Planet Song

Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune then the very furthest one around Pluto the dwarf planet.

Could you do instruments or notes with this song?

**SONGWRITING & SINGING YOUR STORY**  
**With Mary Had a Little Lamb!**

This song form lets the student songwriter choose any story to re-tell in the proper order with plot points and details, opinions and supporting evidence in accordance with English Language Arts standards for grades one or two. Substitute your character for Mary.

***Beginning of the story***

**OFF**

\_\_\_\_\_ had/said/gave/went \_\_\_\_\_  
(Character's name) (Write a verb, then tell what the character did)

**ON**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Repeat what the character did)

**OFF**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Repeat what the character did again)

**OFF**

\_\_\_\_\_ had/said/gave/went \_\_\_\_\_  
(Character's name) (Write a verb, then tell what the character did)

**ON**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Write the outcome of this!)

**OFF**

**WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?**

*Middle of the story- write as many middle verses as you need to tell the story*

**OFF**

Next \_\_\_\_\_  
(A character's name) (Write what happened next)

**ON**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Repeat what happened next)

**OFF**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Repeat what happened next)

**OFF**

Next \_\_\_\_\_  
(A character's name) (Write what happened next)

**ON**

**OFF**



## Mrs. Boswell Has A First Grade Class

Use this song to learn how to spell your sight/spelling words

Written by Ms. Ginger Boswell, San Luis Rey Elementary School, Oceanside, CA May 2007

To the tune of B-I-N-G-O! ...And Bingo Was His Name-Oh

Capo: 5<sup>th</sup> fret

C  
OFF

1. - - Oh, Ms./Mr. \_\_\_\_\_

Has a \_\_\_\_\_ grade class, and

We can spell big words like

C (on) F note  
W - h - a-t, "WHAT!"

F note C  
W - h - a-t, "WHAT!"

C F note  
W - h - a-t, "WHAT!"

F note C  
We can spell - -WHAT

2. bec-a-u se

3. c-o-uld

4. t-h-a-t

5. wh-e-re

6. l-i-k-e

7. sch-oo-l

8. w-o-uld

9. w-h-y

10. peo-ple

11. h-a-ppy

12. fr-i-end

13. to-ge-th-er

# I am Ready

## OPEN TUNING

To the tune of "Are You Sleeping/Frere Jacques" New lyrics ©Jessica Anne Baron

TIME: 4/4 TEMPO: MODERATE STRUM DOWN UP 1<sup>ST</sup> SINGING NOTE: 3RD STRING OPEN

**Application:** Focus, Goal Setting, Visualization, Listening and Speaking Skills

**Recommendation:** Sing and strum this song at these times.

1. After a transition from a non-academic activity to an academic one. In this context, it prepares students to focus, listen and learn.
2. Before a quiz or test to lower the affective filter, increase breathing and oxygenation and reduce test-taking anxiety
3. Before a student performance to bring the students together in their focus and team process.

**OFF**

1. I am ready (*repeat*)

**OFF**

For success (*repeat*)

**OFF**

Listen for instructions (*repeat*)

**OFF ON OFF**

Do my best! (*repeat*)

**OFF**

3. I am ready (*repeat*)

**OFF**

Ready to shine (*repeat*)

**OFF**

Make strong choices (*repeat*)

**OFF ON OFF**

Eve-ry time! (*repeat*)

**OFF**

2. I am ready (*repeat*)

**OFF**

Ready to learn (*repeat*)

**OFF**

Raise my hand for help (*repeat*)

**OFF ON OFF**

Or to take my turn! (*repeat*)

**OFF**

4. I am ready (*repeat*)

**OFF**

To help my team (*repeat*)

**OFF**

When we work together (*repeat*)

**OFF ON OFF**

We're su- preme! (*repeat*)

Best Day Of My Life by the American Authors

Verse 1: OFF I had a dream so big and loud / I jumped so high I touched the clouds

ON  
Wo-o-o-o-o-o-oh, Wo-o-o-o-o-o-oh

OFF  
I stretched my hands out to the sky / We danced with Monsters through the night

ON  
Wo-o-o-o-o-o-oh, Wo-o-o-o-o-o-oh

Chorus ON  
I'm never gonna look back - whoa!

OFF  
Never gonna give it up - No- o!

ON  
Please don't wake me now ( STRUM 2-3-4)

OFF ON  
Oo-o-o-o-oh Oh! This is gonna be the best day of my life, my Li-i-i-i-i-ife

OFF ON  
Oo-o-o-o-oh Oh! This is gonna be the best day of my life, my Li-i-i-i-i-ife

**NOW YOU WRITE IT!**

Verse 2: OFF  
I \_\_\_\_\_

OFF  
I \_\_\_\_\_

ON  
Wo-o-o-o-o-o-oh, Wo-o-o-o-o-o-oh!

OFF  
I \_\_\_\_\_

OFF  
I \_\_\_\_\_

ON  
Wo-o-o-o-o-o-oh, Wo-o-o-o-o-o-oh

Repeat the Chorus (ABOVE)

Facilitate a class conversation about things have done that were super nice or very fun! You can include 4 student ideas in each verse. Each idea has to be expressed in a single sentence with a subject, a noun, and a past tense verb!  
  
Examples: I went with Marco to the zoo!  
  
I played with my dog at the beach!

# You Are My Sunshine (the GITC version)

Time: 4/4

Capo Uke: none

Strum: Down Strum

First Note: 4<sup>th</sup> string open

SONGFOR

**Application:** Identify likes, loves and feelings and use expressive language to share about them or to share your feelings with them. Write a class song containing everyone's special verses.

1. **C**  
You are my sunshine, my only sunshine
- F** **C**  
You make me happy when skies are gray.
- F** **C**  
I'm here to tell you how much I love you
- C** **G7** **C**  
More and more every day

## NOW YOU WRITE IT!

Who do YOU love? You are my \_\_\_\_\_ OR **What** do you love? \_\_\_\_\_  
(someone) (something)

Describe them/it with a word My \_\_\_\_\_  
(describing word) (someone or something)

How do you feel when see them? You make me \_\_\_\_\_ when skies are gray  
(feeling)

I'm here to tell you how much I love you

More and more every day.

## PUT IT ALL TOGETHER NOW!

2. **C**  
You are my \_\_\_\_\_, my \_\_\_\_\_
- F** **C**  
You make me \_\_\_\_\_ when skies are gray.
- F** **C**  
I'm here to tell you how much I love you
- C** **G7** **C**  
More and more every day