

10 Tips to Master the Ukulele



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Prologue

While this lesson is designed for the benefit of all learners, it will benefit the student who wants to see how far they can take their craft the most. If you implement these things in your playing, no matter where you are in your process, you will become a better Ukulele player. These skills will take you as far as time and discipline allow.

Tip #1

Focused practice is the number one tool to becoming a better player, focusing on where you want to go will make that progress exponentially faster. Envision where you want to go. What is the end game. Strumming some chords on the beach? Writing some songs? Playing chord melody style like the great Jake? Maybe joining a band? You don't have to limit yourself to just one thing, but a more clear and concise vision will help you arrive there much faster. All of these things take different skill sets, which means organizing the information can accelerate your ability to get where you want to go.

Tip #2

Don't avoid the difficult, embrace and attack it. Strumming is easier for you but fingerpicking is hard, you should practice fingerpicking. Sing like a bird but strum like a rock? Focus on strumming, rhythm and counting music. Turn weaknesses into things.

Tip #3

Play with other musicians and other instruments. You will learn more when you have less sonic responsibility. When you play ukulele you are responsible for all three elements of music, melody (the part people

sing), harmony (the chords) and rhythm (usually strumming or fingerpicking, but can be a riff as well). Now all of the sudden you are playing with a drummer, would you strum the lesson different? What about you are plying with another guitar playing strumming a guitar and a bass player, how can you add to that ensemble without taking away from it? When you have less overall responsibility you have an amazing space to try new creative things. Check out the two links I did below, one on jamming and one on playing ukulele with a guitar player.

How to jam with other musicians:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zS9kS24You0>

How to play Ukulele with guitar in 4 phases:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=de9yD-6kuUc>

Tip #4

You can't let other people's negativity affect your view of yourself. That is just a projection of their own lack of personal doubt that are putting on you. The Ukulele is an extremely empowering, gratifying, and life long activity that can enrich your life for literal decades. You can let someone else's negative words or energy derail that from you. You are capable of learning whatever you want if you do the work. There is nothing that the Ukulele can do that you can't if you do the work, and the reward would be life changing.

Tip #5

Avoid ruts. Burnt out on all the practice? Ruts come from two places, boredom or compliance. To avoid boredom remember that it is vital to play some songs you loved and fall in love with the instrument again. Not making any progress? Well, compliance will leave you there. To avoid this you you will have to try and learn something new. When you are learning something new though you still want to keep it light. Learn to enjoy the hard work, the best way to do so is to make the hard work fun. Need to learn theory? Do it studying a song you love. Want to be better at triplets? Work on a tasty blues turnaround with nice chromatic triplets at end.

Tip #6

Teach someone else. To be an effective Ukulele teacher you will have to be able to break ideas down into the smallest pieces possible. In learning to break down music into the smallest pieces possible you will speed up your ability to put it back together. When I eat a whale (like a chord melody version of Under the Bridge for example) I do it one bit at a time. One bar, one beat, one note. The best way to teach it is to break it down into those tiny pieces. Learning to break it down in those tiny pieces will benefit your own playing tremendously. Plus you make someone else happy, and who knows, you could make a life.

Under the Bridge - Red Hot Chili Peppers - Chord Melody Tutorial
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ig3aWDqeu24>

Tip #7

This one is simple but fundamental. Keep a Ukulele where you can see it. The easier it is to pick it up the more you will pick it up.

Tip #8

Mini practice gives big dividends. If you practice 20 minutes a day for 6 days a week you will play 2 hours a week, but not all 2 hours are created equally. For example if you played 2 days a week for one hour you will learn and retain much less. Your brain can only process so much information and spacing out the practice so much doesn't give you the possibility to reinforce what you are learning and make it permanent. Two tips to take it over the top. Turn the TV off, flip your phone over, give the kids to your husband or your wife for a half an hour or wait until they go to sleep. Giving the Ukulele your undivided attention frequently will develop a much stronger relationship, like any relationship!

Tip #9

Every song has something to offer. This is great to know for both songs you enjoy playing and songs you enjoy playing less. If you have been breaking songs down into their smaller pieces you will learn chord progressions, song arrangements (as in where to play the intro, verse, chorus, pre-chorus, etc,) riffs, scales, strum patterns. Note what is rare, note what is common, note what you like. This will benefit you in your own song writing, and even further down the road in developing your own style. As you progress you will be able to take a cover and give it your own personality, use these tools to identify songs you would enjoy to

learn or teach and you can even use these pieces that you have picked up in your own song writing.

Tip #10

Learn some blues. Before I played the Ukulele I didn't listen to blues music so I waited a year or so into my learning process to give it a try. Once I started learning the blues my playing exploded. In learning so you are doing your best to play something that already exists, and you try to get it as close to what you hear as possible. This is fundamental but the blues is completely different because it is fluid and improvised. Riffs, scales, turnaround, chord shapes, fingerpicking, hammer ons and pull offs, bends, vibrato, you aren't just learning to master these techniques, you are learning to use them fluidly. The blues teaches you how to pick up a ukulele and mix all these ideas freely. In addition to the blues is the best chord progression to learn how to solo over because the blues scale is the most forgiving. While learning to solo you really can't play a bad note, the scale sounds good over all the chords. It is also a great place to start to experiment with song writing and the best part. Lastly it is the most communicable! Millions of musicians know the 12 bar blues progression and are ready to jam and improvise with you. Changing ideas, solos and hot licks, and it is so much fun!

Check out the #10DayBluesChallenge Playlist if you don't know where to get started: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLttL4vHrsfLwLMLuteYplreXAAG4nYfr>

Epilogue

Incorporate the ideas into a more focused practice routine and you will get to where you want to go. You can do this, you just have to do it. Learn to love the hard work and you will have a friend for your entire life.