

(b) Exercises in ear training should be a regular part of the class. These should be carried on in a fun manner, as opposed to the old way of having students painfully attempt to match tones or identify intervals. Have the students play and sing a song they know, but have them learn the chords, too; give them a clue here and there, but let them rely on their ears, their own knowledge of chords, and generally get it all together by themselves. When a simple song has been learned by ear, rather than considering that an end, change the key and introduce transposing in a totally practical way without even mentioning the word "transposition" at first. A new song or two should be treated in this way every lesson (see 44 of **Classroom Ukulele Method**).

(c) Picking of melody by ear should be done at each lesson, and the students should be encouraged to do this at home, using the list at the back of **Classroom Ukulele Method**. If a student tries every day to play the melody of a familiar tune, within a few months he will begin to develop a skill for playing by ear. Having a good ear for music is something you learn, **it is not something you are born with**. With consistent proper practise ANYONE can develop a good ear.

Pacing

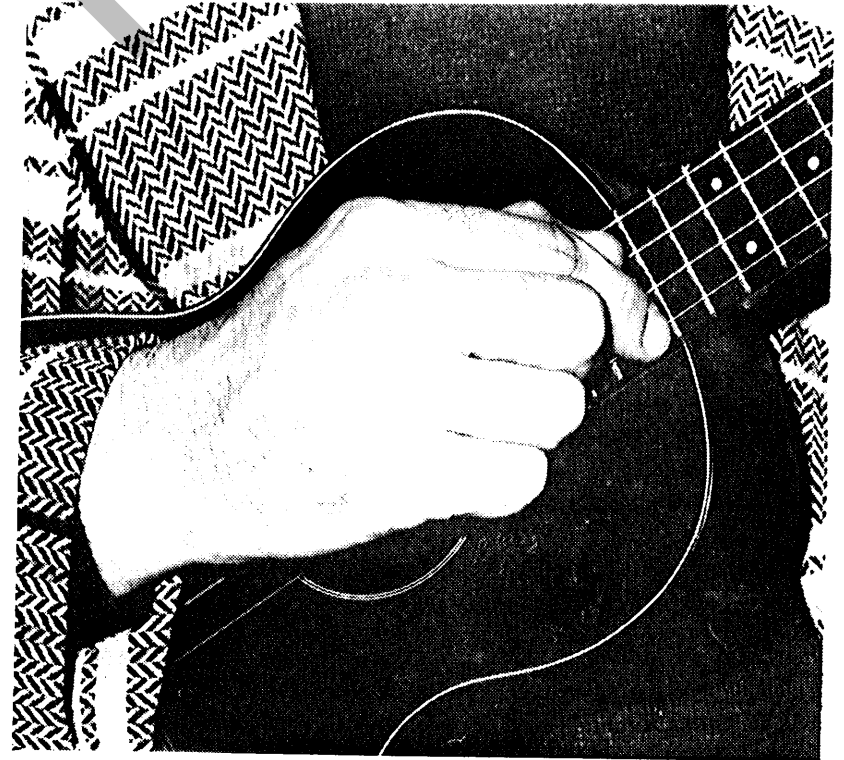
Pacing is the rate at which you change subjects within the framework of a class hour. It is the most important single principle in maintaining a good classroom learning situation. Many teachers do not change often enough. Here is an example for a forty-five minute lesson:

1. (5 minutes) Start the class by playing chords on the piano, calling out chord names, having students strum and change chords together.
2. (4 minutes) Do picking exercises based on scales and variations.

then change to the D7 chord, and back again to G when necessary. Tell your students that most songs start on the tonic or "key" chord and also end on the same chord.

By starting with simple songs using only two chords, a gradual but steady progression will take place as the student, through doing, develops the ability to tell when to change chords and the skill in knowing which chord to use. There is a description on page 44 (**Classroom Ukulele Method**) of how to play by ear, outlining some logical steps.

After you have used "Ezekiel" in this way, refer the students to page 5 of **Ukulele Encore** for reading, as well.



Beginning the up stroke.

Doing a skill five times is better than explaining it five times. Try to make the instructions brief and to the point, then follow them up with lots of playing. As I mention in "Rituals Give Students Security," if a routine is established for at least some of the class hour, a great deal of time can be saved without having to talk too much. This should be considered seriously, as many teachers suffer from this problem of talking too much in a ukulele lesson and not playing enough.

The other kind of talking in class is done by the students and is often disruptive. Students talk if they are allowed to. This must be determined by the teacher and must not be allowed to happen any time. If your class is well organized and interesting, there is little time for idle chatter.

Strumming As A Discipline Problem In Class

Do not allow your students (children or adults) to strum or pick while you are talking or demonstrating. This is a common occurrence in ukulele classes and is a contributing factor toward some of the failures. There is a great temptation for students to "fiddle around" with their instruments while a teacher is talking or giving a demonstration; but it really does ruin the class to have the unnecessary undercurrent. For this reason, it **must not** be ignored. You must stop it early if you hope to control it at all. I suggest that if you are extreme enough in your attitude toward this disruption, by stopping the very first offender and making an example of him, you will be able to control it. This is something that requires constant vigilance but is well worth the trouble. I take the instrument away for a few minutes, in the case of a second offender, until he realizes that I'm serious.



Correct left hand position (A⁷ chord)

LESSON 5 (Classroom Ukulele Method, page 10)

Here we have the first example of a principle I will suggest and recommend many times as a BASIC pedagogical procedure. Learning skills, like walking, talking, singing, swimming and playing by ear, should always start by **doing** and progress to understanding. (in other words, begin by rote.)

Have the students sing "Michael," while you accompany them on the uke, piano, or another instrument, until you are sure they have the tune and time correct. Then have them play the chords (single down strokes) and sing. After you have had some fun with this and have learned the new chord, F# minor, move to page 11, and using the knowledge gained through singing, try to pick the notes as they appear on the staff.

Although there is an explanation of note values at

LESSON 24 (*Classroom Ukulele Method, pages 36 and 37*)

This is actually an easy song and should be tried according to some of the suggestions on page 37.

Some time **after** your students can read fairly well (probably at the end of the first year or during the second year), I would suggest the introduction of a soft pick for tremolo picking. This technique creates a continuous sound which enables your group to play harmony; thus, orchestration is now possible.

I suggest a thin guitar pick or a "Ukulele Yes" pick. The pick should **not** be used as a substitute for the finger in the strum. The finger produces the proper sound, and a pick used for strumming produces a harsh sound.

There are several good examples for this kind of playing on the records

"Never on Sunday" on **Ukulele Yes!**

"Under the Double Eagle" **Ukuleles on Tour**

"Homesick Medley" on **Ukulele Magic.**

The Soft Pick Technique - How to Start

Hold the pick as shown in the illustration (picture #4). Strike the string down (▢) and up (∨) near the bridge of the instrument and well behind the sound hole. Play sixteen sixteenth notes slowly on each degree of a scale, up and down. This exercise should be done at each lesson and practised at home. As your students gain facility, increase the difficulty of the exercises.



2. The same, in thirds.



5. Etc.

8. Play your ukulele for the parents and show them what a great instrument it is. Plan your presentation carefully, and you will win their confidence. (Practise until you're sure it sounds good!)
9. Play a recording of a known ukulele group to show the parents where your program can lead in a few years.
10. Talk about ukuleles and cost of instruments, but **BE CAREFUL** – this should be last on your agenda. The parents are going to be most interested in how much this program is going to cost; so, since this is the topic of most interest, save it until the end! This way, you will have their attention for the whole meeting while you explain details and philosophy. By the time a financial discussion arises, if you have done the job properly, the parents will be only too happy to buy an instrument for their child.

REMEMBER: the parents and children are the ones getting the bargain here. You do not have to approach this in an apologetic way. You are doing them one of the biggest favors of their entire lives, and you should remember this. If you understand and believe this point of view, you will find people will respond to what you are doing with a positive attitude. If you do not believe in what you are doing, people will tend to be skeptical.

Choosing An Instrument

The instrument you choose should be sturdy, accurately in tune with itself, reasonably good sounding, and capable of staying in tune between school lessons. The strings should not be too high off the finger board, as this makes for slow playing and increases the chances of producing bad tones.