Tricky D, and rotten old E

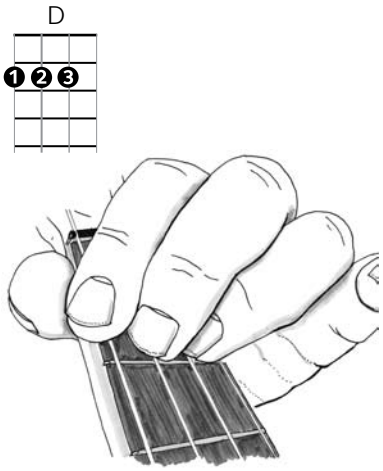
Some chords are intrinsically hard. On a C-tuned ukulele, D major and E major require you to cram a bunch of fingers together. At first this will seem impossible. "I can't play *that*!" is what everybody says the first time they try an E. "My fingers are too stubby/too weak/too big! It's impossible!"

Try to get someone to videotape you complaining in detail about how stupid the ukulele is and how useless you are. Then keep playing for six months, during which your fingers will toughen up and start to do what they're told. One day you'll catch yourself playing a D with three fingers, and wonder why you ever thought it was so difficult. This is when you should watch the video.

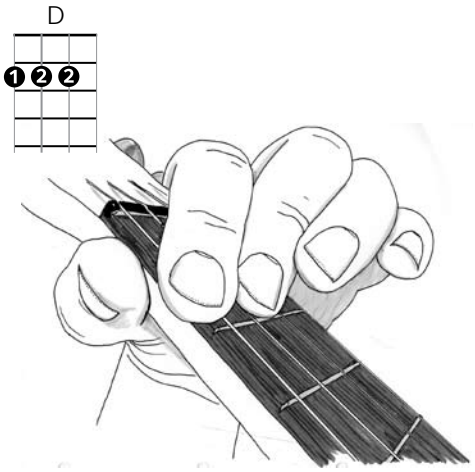
We quickly forget how fast we improve, and don't have enough faith in the power of practice.

Difficult chord? Ask:

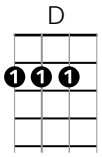
- Is there an **alternative** fingering? Look up an online chord finder, or try transposing nearby chords.
- Is there a closely-related chord I can **substitute**? Work down the chord chart and listen how variants like 7th and 6th work in the song.
- Am I just not **practising** enough?



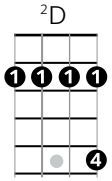
The classic D, with three fingers. If I can squish my enormous fingers together, you can too.



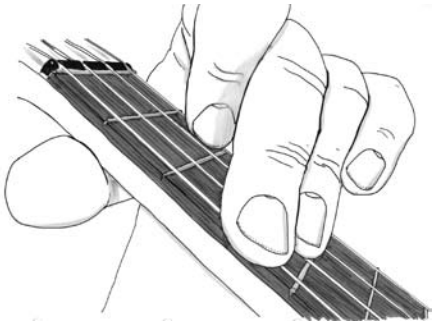
An alternative D with the middle finger squished over two strings.

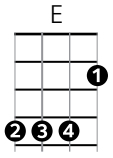


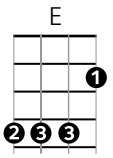
D with all three strings held by the forefinger. You need freakish double-jointedness to stay clear of the A string, but I've seen it done.



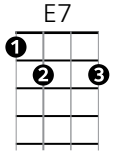
Here's second-position D: just C shifted up a couple of frets.



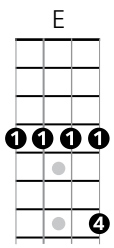




The problem with E is tucking the forefinger back so two or three other fingers can fit in.



It's also possible to play E7 instead of E major. This sounds best if the song is in the key of A (check to see if it starts or end with an A).



An easier E fingering. This is just C transposed up four frets (or the second-position D above, shifted up two).