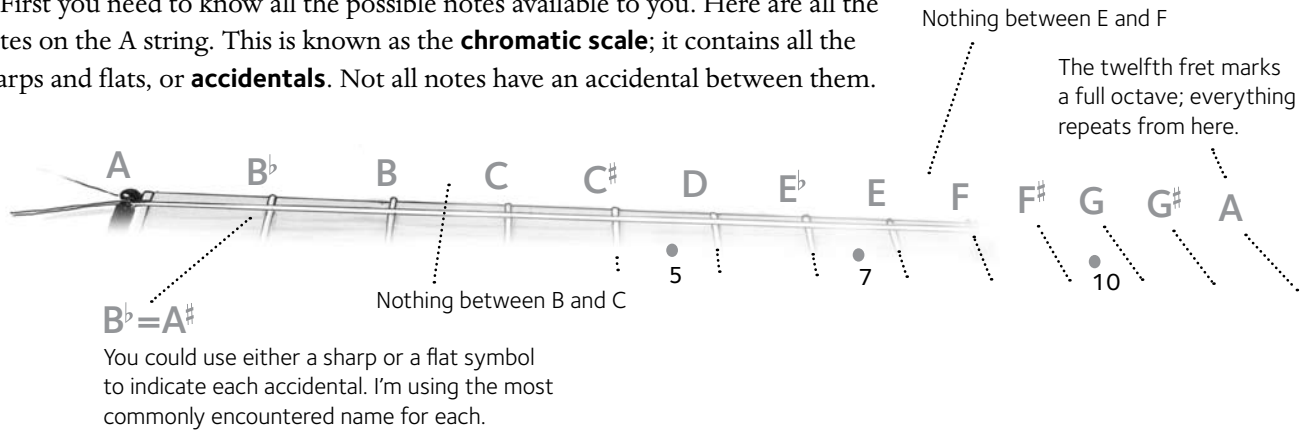


Scales do **not** suck

Oh no: scales. Everything deathly about learning an instrument summed up in one word. Well, scales are not all bad. They can tell you what the chords are for the key you're in, and which notes you can play if you need to improvise a section. And they're not all that difficult on the ukulele.

First you need to know all the possible notes available to you. Here are all the notes on the A string. This is known as the **chromatic scale**; it contains all the sharps and flats, or **accidentals**. Not all notes have an accidental between them.



What notes can I play in this key?

A scale is a subset of all the possible notes: those notes that sound good together. Collectively they're called a **key** and named after the first note in the scale. Most ukulele tunes use a major key: here's how to pick the right notes of a major key out of all the possibilities.

1. Start with the chromatic scale.

A B^b B C C[#] D E^b E F F[#] G G[#] A

2. From the first note of the scale (A, if you're figuring out A major), make the following jumps:

"Whole-whole-half; whole-whole-whole-half."

A B^b B C C[#] D E^b E F F[#] G G[#] A

3. Those notes are your major scale.

A B C[#] D E F[#] G[#] A

4. As an exercise, circle the notes in the scales of C major and G major. Check your answer against the scales on page 44.

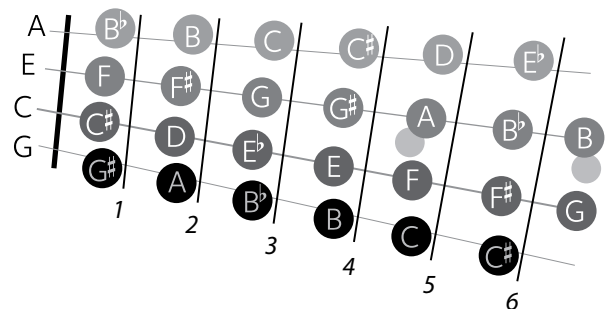
C C[#] D E^b E F F[#] G G[#] A B^b B C
G G[#] A B^b B C C[#] D E^b E F F[#] G

TIP
Finger a string at the 12th fret and see if it's truly an octave higher. If it's not, you may need to get the bridge of the ukulele moved.

— Peter Stephen Luthier, Lyttelton

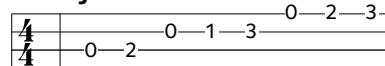
How do I improvise?

First, get familiar with the notes available on each string, at least up by the nut where most of the action happens.



Next, figure out the scale for the key you're in, and work out an easy-to-remember way of playing those notes (this is what the dreaded scales practice is all about). For example:

C major scale



(You don't really need the G string, but a low G string could add three notes to the scale by playing 0-2-4.)

All those notes are now available to you for improvising. When your uke group gives you a meaningful nod during the instrumental break, pick out a little tune using the notes of the scale you've practised. Everyone will be suitably impressed. And because your songbook only uses about three keys, there aren't many scales to learn.