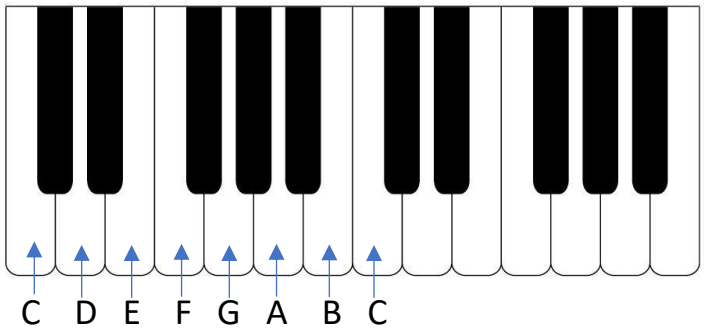
Understanding how chords are put together on Ukulele

The Musical alphabet

In the musical alphabet there are 7 letters in total: A B C D E F G.

When a scale is played it is played with 7 letters (referred to as notes), returning to the first letter at a higher pitch (octave higher).

Take the key of C for example this would go the format of C – D – E – F – G – A – B - C. This is known as the C scale. This corresponds to the white keys on a piano shown below



A scale consists of 8 notes, these notes are usually referred to in roman numerals as:

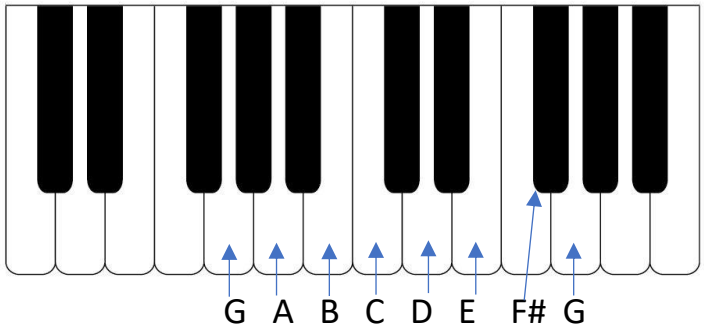
i – ii – iii – iv – v – vi – vii – viii – i.

As you move from note to note these are referred to as a tone. The exceptions to these are E to F and B to C. These are classed as semitones.

In every key, the scale follows the same pattern of:

i	ii	iii	iv	v	vi	vii	i
Root	Tone	Tone	Semitone	Tone	Tone	Tone	Semitone

Take the key of G. The scale in G would be G – A – B – C – D – E – F – G, but due to the change in position of the semi-tones these then move as follows:



You will now notice that the F has changed to a F#. This is called an F sharp and is created by moving a note one semi tone. This can be easily seen on a piano keyboard as this moves to a black key. If we move back a semitone then this becomes a flat (written as a b).

To Illustrate this the notes on the main scales are:

Root (i)	Tone (ii)	Tone (iii)	Semitone (iv)	Tone (v)	Tone (vi)	Tone (vii)	Semitone (i)
A	B	C#	D	E	F#	G#	A
B	C#	D#	E	F#	G#	A#	B
C	D	E	F	G	A	B	C
D	E	F#	G	A	B	C#	D
E	F#	G#	A	B	C#	D#	E
F	G	A	Bb	C	D	E	F
G	A	B	C	D	E	F#	G

Creating Chords

Now that we know how to create a correct scale, we can now look at creating chords. Chords are created by playing more than one note at any one time. A basic chord consists of the notes i – iii – v.

The first chord that everyone learns is that of C. To create a C, we use the i – iii – v notes which are C, E and G. But wait there are four strings on a ukulele, how does the fourth note come in?

The fourth note is usually a duplicate of another note in the chord. When we play a C chord we play from the top G – C – E – C, thus making a chord. When we play an F chord which is F – A – C, we add an additional A giving A – C – F – A.

Popular ukulele chords have the following notes

Chord	i	iii	v
C	C	E	G
F	F	A	C
G	G	B	D
D	D	F#	A
A	A	C#	E

Different type of chords

Major

These are the chords we have discussed. Use the i – iii – v notes in the scale.

Minor

Uses the i – minor iii (flattened) – v notes in the scale. A minor iii is 3 semitones from the root, so if we start with C and count three semitones (C#, D, Eb) we get the note Eb. This then makes the chord C – Eb – G.

Diminished

Uses the I – minor iii (flattened) – minor v (flattened) in the scale. In a C chord this would become C – Eb – Gb.

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This chord is creating by adding a flattened 7^{th} note to any other chord structure. In a C major chord, we have C – E – G played on ukulele as G – C – E – C. To create the seventh, we would add a flattened 7^{th} note which is Bb in the C scale. The chord we would then play on a ukulele would consist of G – C – E – Bb.