

Plectrum Tuning For Tenor Ukelele

Getting Started

In addition to the standard ukelele tuning, plectrum tuning for ukelele is a wonderful variant as you'll soon discover. To help get you started on your journey with plectrum tuning for ukelele, I've tried to answer some of the more common questions and also present you with a beginning road map for learning your chords. Most of my arrangements are built around chord structures and shapes. The more familiar you become with the chords in this tuning, the more comfortable you will become. Please make sure to check out the accompanying short video on my website (Plectrum Tuning) at www.sandyweltmanmusic.com
To further assist you, I also teach via Skype. If you are interested in setting up some lessons, please contact me at: harpmac@sbcglobal.net

What is “ Plectrum “ tuning for the tenor ukelele?

The plectrum tuning I use for ukelele originally derived from the 4-string “Plectrum Banjo” hence the name “Plectrum Tuning”. For more on the history of this tuning, please visit my website at www.sandyweltmanmusic.com

The plectrum tuning from lowest to highest is F-C-E-G. I tune the 1st and 4th strings down a whole step from the original tenor tuning of G-C-E-A. This is not a re-entrant tuning, but rather a linear tuning.

What are the advantages/disadvantages of using this tuning on the ukelele? In this tuning, the ukelele will resonate in a lower, warmer frequency. This is purely subjective, not better or worse. The harmonic (chord shapes and voicings) and melodic possibilities will obviously be different. The plectrum tuning does have a lot of fun chord/melody possibilities. One of the other things that I really enjoy about this tuning is the availability of some lower movable bass notes and voicings on the 4th string as you'll hear in many of my arrangements.

The obvious disadvantages are that if you already play in standard tuning you'll have to learn new chord shapes etc.. Although they are different, none of them are terribly hard. The standard tenor tuning of G-C-E-A is certainly a wonderful tuning with limitless possibilities as evidenced by all of the masterful arrangements that have been performed and composed on it. The plectrum tuning is just another very good option that works quite well. Neither is better or worse, just different.

Will this tuning work for a baritone ukelele?

The short answer is a resounding YES, and it sounds pretty good as well. Again, a very subjective thing. It all works proportionally by tuning the 1st and 4th strings down a whole step. If you are using the standard baritone tuning which is D-G-B-E, just tune the 4th string down to an C and tune the 1st string down to a D. You'll end up with C-G-B-D which is the plectrum tuning down a fourth degree from the plectrum tuning on the tenor.

Do I need a special set of strings for this tuning? The short answer is NO.

Because the plectrum tuning is close enough to the standard ukelele tuning, most strings will work. With that said, I've found a huge difference in the tone and playability using different sets and tensions of strings. My particular preference is for a tenor set with a bit higher tension as the first and fourth strings have been lowered a whole step. I like the sound of a wound nylon on both the 3rd and 4th strings and I like the tension and feel of fluorocarbon for the 1st and 2nd strings. The sets that I generally use for my tenors are put together and sold through Mya Moe Ukelele Company <https://www.myamoeukuleles.com> . SouthCoast Strings <http://www.southcoastukes.com/ukulele.htm> also has an amazing variety of high quality strings that I've also used and enjoy.

The Chords and Shapes

To get a much better understanding of this tuning requires learning a few different chord shapes and voicings. In the plectrum tuning, there are basically 3 chord shapes (positions) for a major chord. If you're just starting out on this tuning, I suggest taking a week or two to learn and assimilate the major, minor, flatted seventh and diminished seventh chord shapes that are used in the three shapes (positions) mentioned above. A good way to do that is by learning them first on a C, then an F and then a G. For instance, there are three different shapes to make a C major chord. Learn those shapes and where they are first. Next, learn how to make those same three shapes into a C minor chord shape. After that, learn them as a flatted seventh chord and finally as a diminished chord. Once you do that, go on to an F chord and do the same thing. It will be easier each time you do it with a new chord as you'll already know the shape, but it will just start on a different fret. I've arranged the chord diagrams below in this way to make it easier to follow.

Most of the chord shapes below are "closed" shapes meaning that all four strings are fretted somewhere. The closed chords are also called "moveable" because they can be moved proportionally up or down, for example C to C#. Some of the shapes will be "open" meaning that not all of the strings are fretted for that chord, but some of the strings will be open. These will be the easiest ones to play at first for obvious reasons.

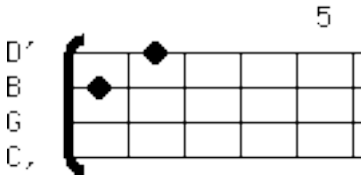
This is by no means a complete list of chords for plectrum tuning. There are many more variations of these and other chords, but the ones below are the most common ones to start out with. To learn more of your chords than pictured here, just google chords for plectrum banjo. As you proceed through my ukelele arrangements you'll soon begin to recognize many of these formations and/or variations of them. For the sake of clarity, I've labeled each of the three chord shapes as position 1, position 2 and position 3.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or to set up one one Skype lessons [**harpmac@sbcglobal.net**](mailto:harpmac@sbcglobal.net)).

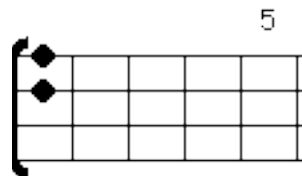
Have fun and don't forget to check out the accompanying video at [**www.sandyweltmanmusic.com**](http://www.sandyweltmanmusic.com)

*** Important Note-** Please disregard the letter names of the strings on the side of the chords below. Those are for the baritone and I can't change them on these diagrams. The correct **string names** for all of these chords are F-C-E-G (lowest to highest)

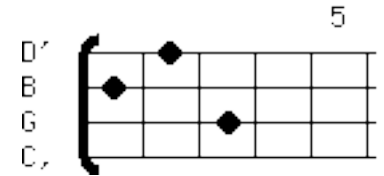
F Position 1 Chords



Major (open)

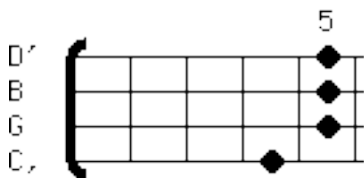


Minor (open)

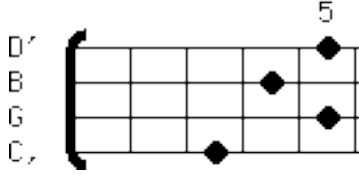


Seventh (open)

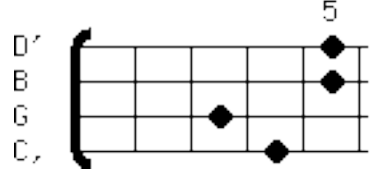
F Position 2 Chords



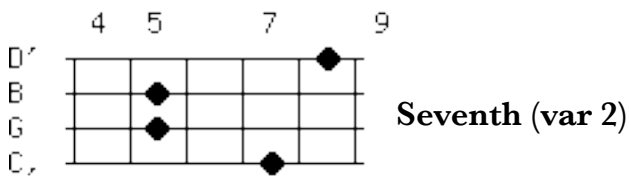
Major



Minor

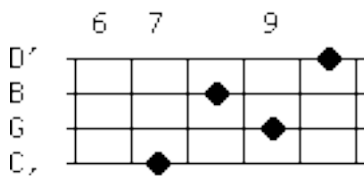


Seventh (var 1)

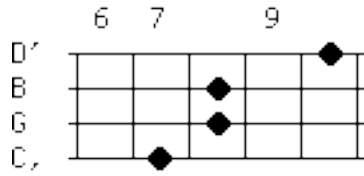


Seventh (var 2)

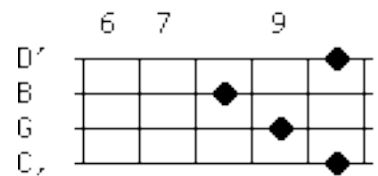
F Position 3 Chords



Major

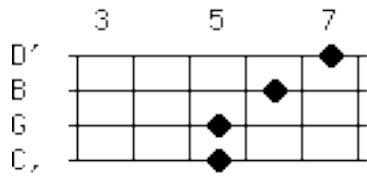


Minor

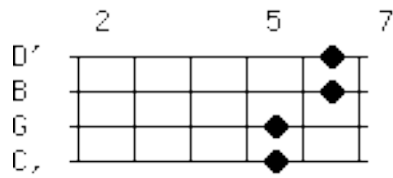


Seventh

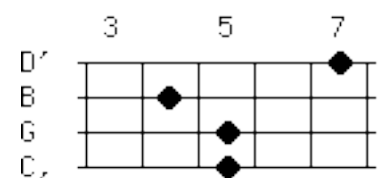
Bb Position 1 Chords



Major

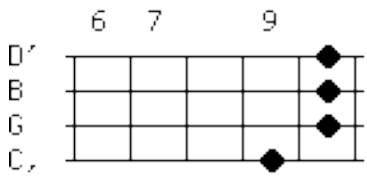


Minor

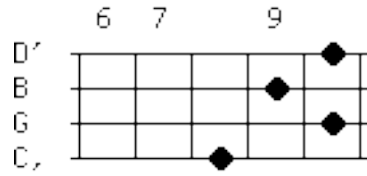


Seventh

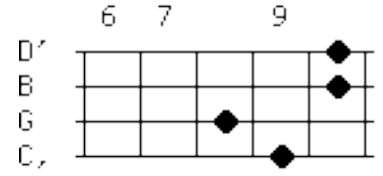
Bb Position 2 Chords



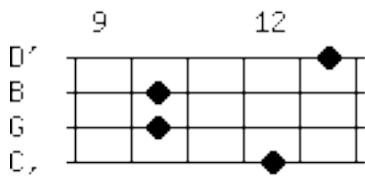
Major



Minor

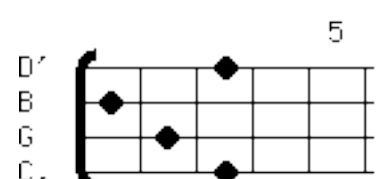
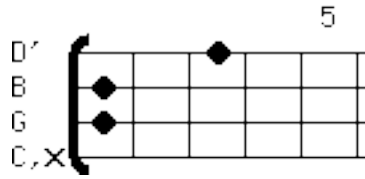
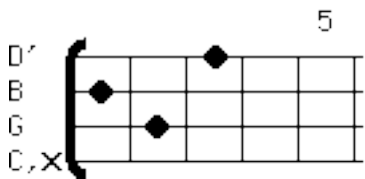


Seventh (var 1)



Seventh (var 2)

Bb Position 3 Chords

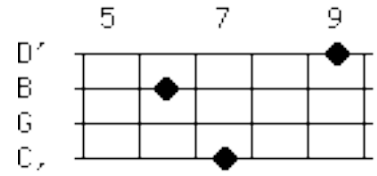
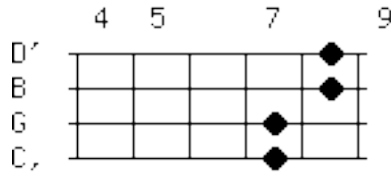
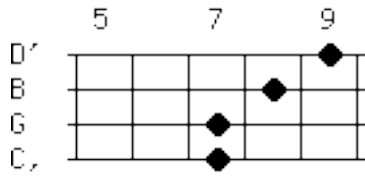


Major (open)

Minor (open)

Seventh

C Position 1 Chords

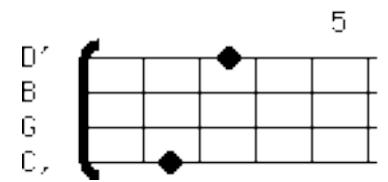
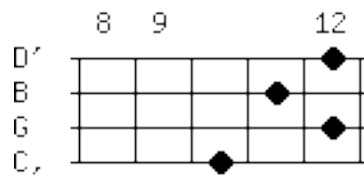
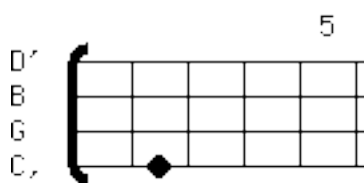


Major

Minor

Seventh (open)

C Position 2 Chords

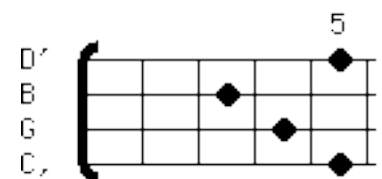
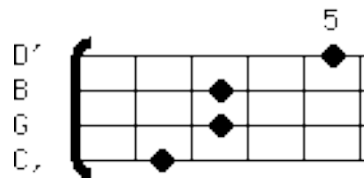
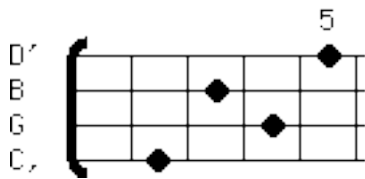


Major(open)

Minor

Seventh(open)

C Position 3 Chords

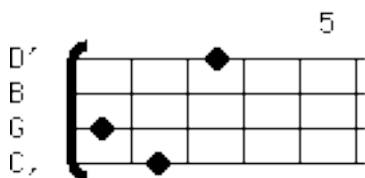


Major

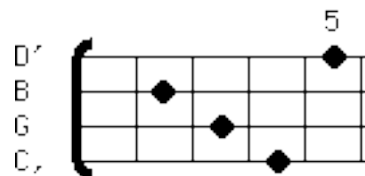
Minor

Seventh

Diminished Seventh Chords



Bb dim7(open)



C dim7

