

*Students can probably read this on their own.  
Just some background info and more friendly tone-setting.*

**Why play the uke?** I'm really amazed at how resilient this instrument is. It has seen several waves of popularity since being introduced to Hawaii from Portugal in the 1870s. (Actually, it was based on a Portugese instrument called the *machete*.) It first cropped up in the US in 1915, then surged right along until the Great Depression. Since then, it has reappeared over the decades through the efforts of George Formby, Arthur Godfrey, Tiny Tim, George Harrison and, more recently, "IZ" Kamakawiwo'ole and Jake Shimabukuro.

The beauty of the uke is that you can use it for the simplest chordal accompaniment, or you can learn to play it with maximum virtuosity. But the ukulele is, first and foremost, something to be played for *FUN*, whether you never learn more than a few simple chords, or whether you reach the point where you need to change phone numbers because that Jake Shimabukuro guy *just will not stop calling you*.

**What kinds of ukes are there?** The original ukulele, the little bitty one, is known as the *soprano* uke or standard uke. I can't seem to squeeze my huge fingertips between the frets of a soprano uke. The *concert* uke, which came along in the 1920s, is somewhat bigger and deeper in tone, and the *tenor* uke that followed was bigger and deeper still. I myself am the proud owner of a Kala solid spruce-top tenor ukulele.

The soprano, concert and tenor ukuleles are usually (not always) tuned the same way, and they are the subjects of this book. The baritone ukulele, yet again bigger and deeper, is tuned differently (lower) and is the subject of my *Baritone Ukulele From Scratch*.

Let's compare guitar, bari-ukes and ukes this way. Guitars have 6 strings. Take a guitar you don't need and *adios* the 2 strings that are lowest in pitch, that is, the 5th and 6th strings. What you have remaining is essentially a baritone ukulele: It shares the 4 highest-pitched strings of the guitar.

Now take this guitar and chew off the section of the neck that extends from the 5th fret (the frets are the metal cross-pieces) to the headstock, where the tuners are. This piece of junk is now analogous to a soprano-concert-tenor uke. *So the notes on the small ukulele start at the 5th fret of the guitar and baritone ukulele*. I suppose that, instead of destroying the guitar, you could simply affix a clamp, called a **capo**, to the 5th fret and get the same notes, but where's the challenge in that?

**What kind of ukulele should you have?** Well, you probably already have one if you've read this far along, and I hope it's a decent one. (My definition of "decent" is that it sounds nice enough and stays in tune. When we get to the section on tuning, we'll see how yours does.) If you *DON'T* have a uke yet, finger size matters. Tiny fingers have more choices, whereas mine are forever wedded to the tenor size. Other than that, do some research, ask some questions and be willing to spend at least, oh, maybe \$100.