



*Dedicated to putting ukuleles in  
the hands of our local youth*

# UKULELE CLUB LEADERS HANDBOOK

## ABSTRACT

A handbook to help teachers and ukulele club leaders start and maintain a successful ukulele program.

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## ***Ukes for School Leaders Handbook***

### ***Starting a Successful Ukulele Club***

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You have your Ukes for Schools ukuleles. Now what? You may be a classroom teacher, music specialist or volunteer, using the ukuleles during the school day or leading an after or before school ukulele club. This handbook covers aspects of: Starting a Club, Maintaining the Ukuleles, Age Groupings, Planning the Meetings, Choosing Music and Performance Opportunities. We hope this it helps you develop a successful ukulele program at your school.

**The three main ingredients for a successful club are:**

### **Enthusiasm, Flexibility, and Organization**

## **Starting A Club (Promoting, commitment, contracts)**

### ***Adult Leadership***

- Get approval first
- Engage an enthusiastic group leader
- Develop and adapt support systems and stay flexible
- Leverage parent involvement
- Start small with a few key people and enthusiastic students

When the club first starts you may be covering more than one position below yourself or with just a few people. Starting small will allow you to get a feel for what is needed in your particular situation/location. Once a good foundation is built you may want to expand your ukulele program.

Here are some key positions to consider:

School Principal (or if not a school, the organization's leader): Your first step is to get her support/buy-in for your program. (then invite him/her in often to hear the students play.)

Faculty Advisor: A teacher who can be the Leader or Coordinator's "go-to" person if neither the Leader nor Coordinator is a teacher at the school.

Leader: This person leads the club meetings and chooses the songs. She needs to be a skilled ukulele player and have general music knowledge.

Coordinator: This person takes care of the paperwork (Registration Forms, Borrowing Agreements, Attendance Rosters, name tags for desks and ukulele cases, etc.). She also communicates with the parents of the Club Members and school personnel about club activities. She might support the Club Leader by making copies of music, etc. She keeps a master copy of the music that is distributed. She needs to have good organizational and communication skills.

Volunteers: These people (parents or adults from the greater community) help with tuning up the ukuleles and checking in the club members prior to the club meeting. During the meeting they help individual members who are having trouble with their playing. They might also help maintain order in the room. They take direction from the Club Leader. (Follow your school's volunteer policy with regard to background checks.)

Parents of Players: Keep in close communication with them either through written notes or using email. Let parents know that the ukuleles their children are using have been donated by ***Ukes for Schools*** in partnership with The Strum Shop, 409 Vernon Street, Roseville, CA. Feel free to use the Ukes for Schools logo.

A warm relationship among the leader, volunteers and players is essential for a successful ukulele program. If this is not present, students will not join the club. So, choose your leader and volunteers carefully.

### ***Attracting Club Members***

As mentioned above, the club leadership is very important in attracting students to your club. Once you have a core group of students who are enthusiastic and having fun, others will want to join. The leader will need to strike a healthy balance between too much adult control and "anything goes." We have found that checking in with players formally about song selection and how the meetings are going has been helpful in keeping this balance.

You might want to put up flyers on campus or place an article in the school newspaper to attract club members and keep parents in loop about what the club is doing.

### ***Paperwork***

Ukulele Club Registration Agreement: This gives parents and students information about the club meetings, etc and expectations for student behavior. If the club is after school, parents need to pick their students up promptly. Parents sign this agreement.

Ukulele Roster: This tracks who has checked out which ukulele by number.

Ukulele Borrowing Agreement: This is a contract with the parent to keep the ukulele in good condition and return it at the end of the school year. Parents and students sign this agreement.

Sign-in Sheet: This is placed at the door of the club meeting room or a volunteer signs children in.

## **Managing the Ukuleles**

Each ukulele should be numbered. Keep a roster of who has borrowed which ukulele (attachment). We have included a sample agreement (attachment) that parents are required to sign if the players will be taking their ukuleles home. (Players will make much more progress, if they are allowed to play their ukuleles at home.

Decide how you will be storing the ukuleles in the classroom when they are not in use. You might want to have the students make ukulele hangers out of paracord. Each hanger will require 24" of paracord. You can find a tutorial on the *Ukes for Schools* Website or by contacting Debi Lenny.

At the end of the school year, examine each ukulele and have needed repairs done over the summer.

## **Club Members: Age Groupings**

- 3<sup>rd</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> grade is a good place to start
- 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> graders can handle advanced concepts

We have discovered that the 3<sup>rd</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> graders are most enthusiastic about beginning to play the ukulele and are able to learn in a group setting. With 6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> graders, the peer group is very important, so the Ukulele Club needs to be seen as “cool.” The students who started in our club as 3<sup>rd</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> graders, and are now 4<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> graders are playing with our intermediate group. If motivated, older students will be able to access ukulele tutorials on You Tube. (Know your school’s policy regarding media use.)

At our school all club members start in the beginning section of the club. When they know our 12 basic chords and can play the songs in the beginning songbooks (attached) they participate in an informal audition with the Club Leader or Organizer. After they have passed the audition, they move up to the intermediate group. Our intermediate group currently includes 3<sup>rd</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> graders and most of them are able to sight-read songs with basic chords, read tablature, play separate parts, solos, bar chords, and rudimentarily use movable chords. (Can you tell we’re proud of them?)

## **Planning the Club Meeting (*Club or class, student input*)**

- Have multiple groups to address varied skill levels
- Need a room, chairs, and music stands
- Projector and chalk/whiteboard may help
- Appropriate behavior and room management are essential

Players will need chairs and music stands. If there are desks in the room, we suggest that they use plastic bookstand that can be ordered on line at Staples Office Supply. We like this stand because it folds flat and can be clipped into a binder. We like this one because it clips into a binder. A projector can be used to display music and a whiteboard may be useful for displaying music, agendas, chord/strum diagrams, or tablature.

### ***Ukulele Tuning***

Ukuleles will need to be tuned at the beginning of each session. Encourage players to purchase their own tuners, if possible. This is a great job for volunteers as well as more advanced players.

### ***Resting Position***

An important aspect of the club meeting or class is to train club members to not play when instructions are being given. Club members can be asked to set their ukuleles down or show the leader “resting position.” Some club leaders use a microphone.

### ***Environment and Engagement***

A warm, welcoming and orderly environment will contribute to a successful program. The leader needs to maintain order while not being too strict. This can often be a challenge for a leader who doesn’t have teaching experience. In this case, if the leader needs help with student behavior, she should seek the support of a teacher or the school principal. Depending on the comfort level of the leader, she may need to talk directly to a student and her parent outside of the club meeting or ask a teacher or the principal to do so. (You will notice on the *Registration Agreement* that there is mention that a Club Member who is disruptive can be suspended from the Club.)

To keep players at various levels engaged, we have formed a variety of groups. Our beginning group meetings are structured and basic. For the older club members, we strive for a reasonable balance that incorporates advancement while still being “ukulele.” Our intermediate group meetings can include opportunities to perform, lead the group, and help each other in true ukulele fashion. A club meeting at any

level should be fun, and should embrace the social aspect of enjoying music with friends, while still teaching methods and concepts that can help advance skills.

Having a structure to your meetings is very helpful. Encourage students to arrive early to tune up. Play some familiar songs (often chosen by the students) as a warm up. Introduce a new song or a new aspect of a song the group is working on. End the club meeting with some type of closure and conclude with the students thanking the adults present for their help. “Goodbye and thank you Mrs. Volunteer.”

The length of your club meetings will depend on the age and attention span of your group as well as outside restrictions. Generally speaking, they should be from 25 to 45 minutes.

## **Music**

- *Ukes for Schools* has compiled a few songbooks for your use
- Play a variety of music and choose songs the players like
- Choose carefully—keep it rated “G”

### ***Beginning Group***

We have compiled three beginning songbooks. Traditional Songs with Chords contains nursery rhymes with simple chords. A Family Songbook contains sixteen “folk” songs. The Holidays and Celebrations songbook has a variety of songs to honor special occasions. We are happy to share these with you. All booklets contain songs that use what we consider to be the 12 basic chords. These song booklets are the size of a half sheet of paper so they can be kept inside an ukulele case. These song booklets can be accessed on The Strum shop website or by contacting Debi Lenny.

Along with these song booklets, the leader can provide songs or ask players to bring in songs that might be popular with the group and contain the 12 basic chords. This is often a hit-and-miss proposition as each groups’ likes and dislikes are different. Some songs that our players have enjoyed are: Lava, Day O, Ain’t Gonna Rain No More, When I’m Gone (The Cup Song), He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands, A Lion Sleeps Tonight, When the Saints go Marching in, The Garden Song, Feeling Groovy, On Top of Spaghetti, Puff the Magic Dragon. You might want to check out [www.DoctorUke.com](http://www.DoctorUke.com) for song sheets that have chord diagrams or by searching on the internet for a particular song.

If you will be distributing song sheets, each player will need a binder (alpha index tabs really help organization, too). Players should bring their music binders to club

meetings/class. Sheets of music passed out should be three-hole punched ahead of time.

### ***Intermediate/Older Group***

The Club Leader, will want to challenge this group and bring them music in a variety of styles, from classical to folk, pop, and blues. When Club Members ask for a certain song, be sure to preview it to make sure it is G rated and appropriate for the group in terms of difficulty. Be very conscious of the message the song lyrics contain. After you have previewed the songs, you will want to encourage Club Members to teach the group songs they have already mastered. Depending on the school's media policy, players can be encouraged to access tutorials on You Tube.

Songs we have found to be popular with this group are: Eight Days a Week, Riptide, Stand by Me, When I'm Gone (Cups), Count on Me, Shake it Off, Mean, Rock Around the Clock, Canon in D, Etude (in F), Fur Elise and Dona Nobis Pacem. Contact Debi Lenny to receive the songs you are not able to find on line.

### ***A Common Song***

We encourage you to teach the song, Little Uke, an adaptation of One Guitar by Willie Niles, to your players. Perhaps someday *Ukes for Schools* players for all our schools will come together and play it. You might want to check out this 5<sup>th</sup> grade class in Italy performing it. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TIJqak2YPzU&sns=em> A copy of the song is attached. After much consideration, we decided not to put this song in *The Family Songbook* because we thought that the mention of guns might offend some people. Although, the theme of the song is non-violence and promotes helping others.

## **Performance Opportunities**

- Preparing for a performance is motivating for players
- It is fun for your players and your community
- Players take pride in their accomplishments
- Families and friends enjoy seeing student perform
- It is a way to showcase your school

Preparing for a performance is a great motivator for improving playing skills and encouraging ukulele playing outside of the club meetings or class. Our club has held Winter and Spring Festivals that brought the ukulele club groups together. The festivals were held in the multi-purpose room in lieu of a club meeting. Club Members shared a song or two with each other and played a song together. Parents were invited and club members brought food and drink to share. It's a very good

idea to put a couple parents in charge of organizing, setting up and cleaning up the refreshments.

Coordinate, whenever possible, with the Music Department for including ukuleles in school concerts, and with the director(s) regarding music that is being learned and/or learned in music classes.

We have also played at the school-wide annual Harvest Festival and civic Art Festivals. The intermediate group led the school sing-a-long in December and all groups performed at a school assembly in May.

Taking your intermediate players into the community is a great way to showcase your school. Look around for Open Mic opportunities in local coffee cafes and pizza restaurants. *The Acoustic Den Café* in Roseville welcomes student musicians.

Performances have their own set of logistics to manage, including the following:

- Notification of parents and Club Members well in advance
- A “Green Room” (just like on TV where guests have a place to gather, tune up, warm up and store personal items like gig bags, backpacks, purses or other valuables)
- Plan for music stands and chairs, if needed (note, memorized music is an advantage)
- Arranging for/practicing with/testing amplification ahead of time if you plan to use it
- Kid-friendly refreshments

## Conclusion

We hope you find this handbook helpful. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Attachments:

Ukulele Borrowing Rooster

Ukulele Borrowing Contract

Sign-in Sheet

Registration Agreement

One Guitar (Little Uke) Song Sheet