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LESSON 2: READING TABLATURE

READING WHATLATURE?

Tablature, called *TAB* for short, is a system of writing music for fretted string instruments. It tells you what fret to play and what string to play it on.

The long horizontal lines represent the strings. The top line is the 1st string (A), and the bottom line is the 4th string (G). The numbers indicate which fret to play. Underneath the TAB you'll see a row of numbers that indicate which left-hand finger to use for each note. Try fingering the notes indicated below.

	1st string, 5th fret, 4th finger	2nd string, 3rd fret, 2nd finger	3rd string, 4th fret, 3rd finger	4th string, 2nd fret, 1st finger
1st String	A-5	E-3	C-4	G-2
4th String	G-4	C-2	F-3	B-1
	4	2	3	1

SUPER UKE TIP

The dots, or fret markers, on your ukulele neck will help you keep track of the frets (especially as you get up high on the neck). Dots are commonly found marking frets 5, 7, 10, and 12. Soprano ukes often have necks that join the body at the 12th fret, so this fret may not be marked. There are variations in the position markers used on ukes, so be sure to familiarize yourself with your own uke!

TAB is often attached to written music known as *standard music notation*, so the player will know how long the notes last and when they occur. Standard music notation is introduced in Chapter 3, and as you become accustomed to reading it, it will become more and more helpful. The following tune shows TAB and standard music notation. If you do not read music yet, do not panic. Just play the frets and strings indicated in a slow, steady rhythm, giving each note an equal amount of time. You may recognize the tune.



MARY HAD A BORDER COLLIE

5

Below are the chords for the traditional Hawaiian song “Wai O Ke Aniani (Crystal Water).” This song is in the key of G. It is popular with players of the *Hawaiian slack-key guitar* style, which involves special tunings and fingerstyle techniques and is sometimes accompanied by ukulele. Slack-key master Gabby Pahinui recorded this song in the 1940s, and many other artists have recorded it since then. “Wai O Ke Aniani” has different melodies for the verse and chorus but the chord progression is the same.

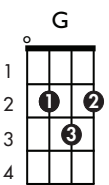
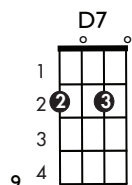
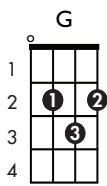
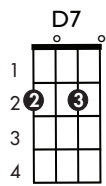
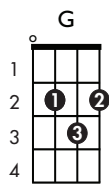
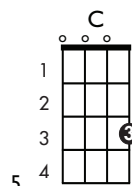
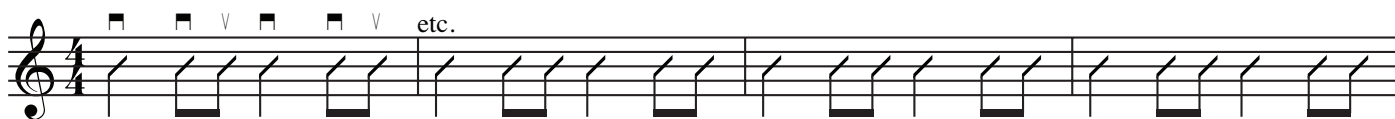
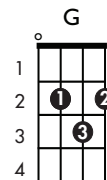
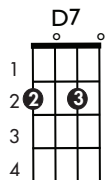
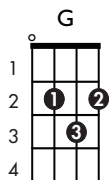
To get even more out of practicing this song, you can also try it with the alternate fingering of D7, or you can play either fingering of the D chord in place of the D7.



WAI O KE ANIANI (CRYSTAL WATER)

Key: G

Traditional Hawaiian



Israel “IZ” Kamakawiwo‘ole (1959–1997) was known to his fans as “Bruddah Iz.” He inspired new interest in ukulele music with his 1993 interpretation of “Over the Rainbow/What a Wonderful World,” which became a worldwide hit in the 2000s. In 1976, Iz co-founded the Makaha Sons of Ni‘ihau, a band focused on bringing traditional Hawaiian music to a modern audience. Iz was much beloved for his tenor voice and tireless devotion to preserving Hawaiian cultural memory and independence through music.



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