

Tab & How to read it

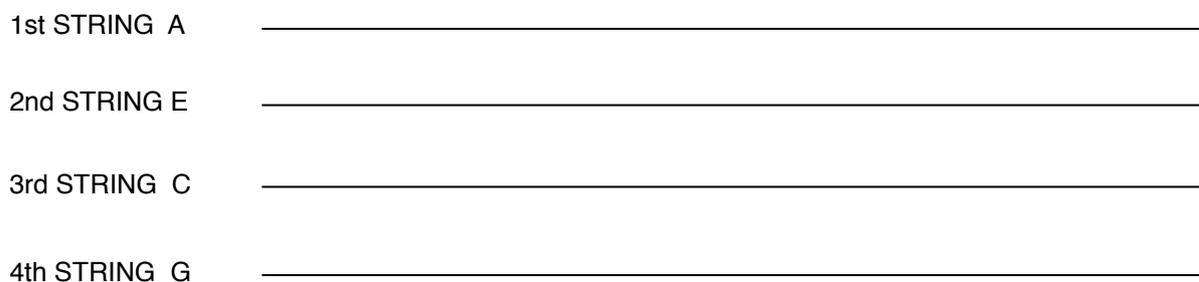
Background

Tablature, or tab, is an ancient form of musical notation which indicates fret positions and strings rather than musical pitches. This system has been used by fretted stringed instruments such as the lute, vihuela and guitar for hundreds of years. Tab is still used today to notate many styles of music including rock, pop, bluegrass, folk, ragtime and classical music.

How To Read Tab

Strings are represented by horizontal lines.

The ukulele has 4 strings so there are 4 lines.



Numbers are placed on the horizontal lines tell you which fret to hold down.

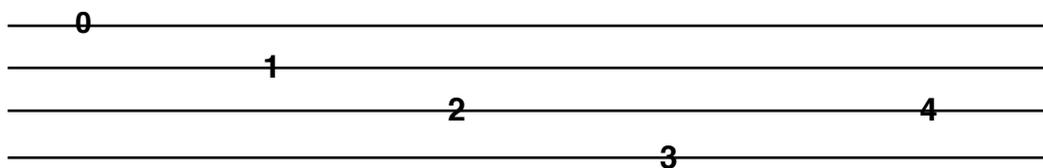
0 = open string

1 = 1st fret

2 = 2nd fret

3 = 3rd fret

4 = 4th fret etc



So, 0 placed on the 1st line tells you to play the open 1st string.

1 placed on the 2nd line indicates 1st fret 2nd string.

2 placed on the 3rd line indicates 2nd fret 3rd string.

3 placed on the 4th line indicates 3rd fret 4th string.

4 placed on the 3rd line indicates 4th fret 3rd string.

Rhythm and phrasing are established by dividing the horizontal lines into bars with vertical lines.

Bar Lines

Divide the notes into bars.

Double Bar Lines

Indicate the end of the piece.

The diagram shows a three-line ukulele tablature for strings T, A, and B. The time signature is 4/4. The first bar contains four crotchet notes: 0 on T, 0 on A, 0 on B, and 0 on B. The second bar contains two crotchet notes: 0 on T and 0 on A, with a curved line between them indicating they are tied. The third bar contains four crotchet notes: 1 on T, 1 on A, 0 on B, and 0 on B. The fourth bar contains four crotchet notes: 2 on T, 2 on A, 0 on B, and 0 on B. A double bar line is at the end of the fourth bar. Labels with arrows point to the time signature, bar lines, double bar lines, and crotchet beats. A text box explains the tied notes.

Ukulele

Time Signature

Bar Lines

Double Bar Lines

Crotchet beats

A curved line between 2 identical notes indicates the notes are tied. The 2nd note is held rather than played.

Time Signature

The top number of the time signature tells you how many beats are in each bar and the bottom number tells you what type of beats make up each bar. In 4/4 time there are 4 crotchet beats (or quarter notes) per bar. See the above example. There are many different time signatures and rhythmic values which I will explore in another article.

Example of lute tab

The image shows a musical score for voice and lute. The voice part is on a single staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The lyrics are "Go crys-tal tears, like to the morn-ing show'rs, And". The lute part is on a six-line staff with a C-clef (soprano clef) and a key signature of one sharp. The lute part consists of rhythmic notation and fret numbers (0-7) written on the lines.

VOICE

Go crys-tal tears, like to the morn-ing show'rs, And

LUTE