LIVE Ukulele WITH BRAD BORDESSA

How to Read Ukulele TABs: Visual Guide

TAB is a notation style that denotes **specific fretting locations** with a number and line coordinate system. It's usually **used for melody or complex chord arrangements.** By Brad Bordessa

Understanding the System

Ukulele tab is built with a simple line grid that looks like this:

```
A |------------------------| > A-string
E |------------------------| > E-string
C |------------------------| > C-string
G |------------------------| > G-string
```

The tab below tells you to **pick the 3rd fret on the A-string**

```
A |--3--|
E |-----|
C |-----|
G |-----|
```

Here's a C major scale in reverse: **Open strings**, played without a finger are shown with a `0`.

```
A |-3-2-0-----------|
E |-------3-1-0-----|
C |-------------2-0-|
G |-----------------|
```

Showing Chords

If there are more than one fret number in a vertical line, play the notes simultaneously. This is a C major chord strum:

```
A |--3--|
E |--0--|
C |--0--|
G |--0--|
```

Or you could show only three notes played simultaneously (don't play the A-string):

```
A |-----|
E |--0--|
C |--0--|
G |--0--|
```

Bar Lines

Oftentimes it's nice to break a tab into pieces via vertical bar lines (measures) like this:

```
A |-----|-----|
E |-----|-----|
C |-----|-----|
G |-----|-----|
```

Since tab by itself can't show timing, it's hard to place these precisely enough to stand in for **traditional measure lines**

Formatting Your Own Tabs

use a monospace font (I like Courier New) in any word editing software. Or use software intended for creation of chordsheets and tabs such as Songbook by Linkesoft and others.

Notating Articulations

```
A |-5h7-|-----|
E |-----|-----|
C |-----|-0h2-|
G |-----|-----|
```

"h" – Hammer-on

Use an "h" to show where a **hammer-on** connects two notes.

"p" – Pull-off

means you **pull-off** from one to the other.

```
A |-7p5-|-----|
E |-----|-----|
C |-----|-2p0-|
G |-----|-----|
```

"/" or "\" – Slide

Move from the first note to the second note via a **slide**.

```
A |-5/7-|-7\5-|-------|
E |-----|-----|-------|
C |-----|-----|-2/4\2-|
G |-----|-----|-------|
```

"b" – Bend and "r" – Release

Bend the string up so that it equals the pitch of the second note shown.

```
A |------|-7b8-|
E |-8b10-|-----|
C |------|-----|
G |------|-----|
```

You can also release a bend down to its starting point by adding an "r"

```
A |--------|-7b8r7-|
E |-8b10r8-|-------|
C |--------|-------|
G |--------|-------|
```

"~" – Vibrato

Vary the pitch of the note with the **vibrato** technique.

```
A |-----|
E |-~8~-|
C |-----|
G |-----|
```

"()" – Ghost Note

Play very softly.

```
A |-(3)-----|
E |-----(3)-|
C |---------|
G |---------|
```

"<>" – Harmonic (chevrons)

Chime a **natural harmonic** at the fret shown in angle brackets.

```
A |--<12>--|--<7>--|
E |--------|-------|
C |--------|-------|
G |--------|-------|
```

Artificial Harmonic

Fret the first note shown then chime an **artificial harmonic** over the fret shown in brackets.

```
A |---------|---------|
E |---------|--3<15>--|
C |--2<14>--|---------|
G |---------|---------|
```

Note Duration in Text Tab

- W – whole note
- H – half note
- Q – quarter note
- E – 8th note
- S – 16th note
- T – 32nd note
- X – 64th note
- a – acciaccatura
- + – note tied to previous
- . – dotted note
- .. – double dotted note
- Lowercase letters are played staccato

at a certain point, ask yourself, "Should I just be using Musescore instead?"

```
   a W          +H.       E E
|------------|-------------|
|-3s1--------|-(1)---------|
|------------|-----------2s|
|------------|-------------|
```

```
 E H..         +W          a
-------------|------------|---
-------------|------------|-1h
=4s2---------|-(2)--------|---
-------------|------------|---
```

https://liveukulele.com/tabs/how-to-read-tab/