

DR. UKE'S STRUMMING FOR BEGINNERS

There are different ways to strum, but I use, and teach, strumming down with the nail of the index finger and up with the skin (pad) of the index finger. If you are strumming with your right hand, turn the wrist to the right (clockwise). I call this the Rosokoff shift, and it allows full engagement of the fingernail with the strings. The flat of the nail should be pointing toward the floor, not to the left. If the orientation of the finger is proper, you should be able to picture laying the flat of the nail on the floor. Also, keep the fingers of the right hand spread and loose. The index finger should remain so loose, that it seems "floppy." Do not try to "stabilize" the index finger with the thumb, as if you're holding a guitar pick. Do not just move your hand, but move your forearm up and down, keeping your index finger "floppy."

Here's a video which illustrates a very good right hand technique. Note the position of her thumb, and how her index finger engages the strings. (She's not strumming on the side of the finger, as many beginners have a tendency to do):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TSbFDRAxC1A&feature=related>

Now that you know my preferred technique for strumming, the *basic* strum for any song is the following:

If the song is in 4/4 (in the beginning of any song, you'll see this on the staff-I also include the "time signature" on the songs on my website, right under the title), it means that the song has 4 beats per measure and that a quarter note gets one beat. All this means is that you count to 4 and count to 4 again, throughout the song. If it is 3/4, you count to 3 over and over again.

Instead of just counting to 4, I want you to count (slowly) "1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &, 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &, etc....., as you play. While you're counting, you strum down on the number and up on the "&". In other words, "down, up, down, up, down, up, down, up" corresponds to the "1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &". If it's in 3/4, it would be "1 & 2 & 3 &, 1 & 2 & 3 &".

One other thing: The speed of the strumming is set by my count in the beginning of each song. The speed of the "1234", or "123", or whatever the count is, determines how fast your downstrokes (numbers) should be.

I hope this is clear. Read this over very slowly, with a uke in hand, and be patient. Good luck!