

How to add a low G string on your ukulele

I recommend putting a low G string* on your ukulele if you're playing jazz standards or blues. Playing with the typical high G is adequate for playing jazz, but a low G will bring out a more true sound for the jazz chords. There are various ways to put a low G on your ukulele. Below are some suggestions.

The easiest way:

The path of least resistance is to take a new, normal set (GCEA) with the usual high G and rearrange them in order of thickness. This way the string designed to be the 3rd string, C, becomes the lowest 4th string, G. Then put the others on in the order of their thickness, with the thinnest, highest sounding string becoming the first string, A. (Note: If you try to do this with an old set that's already on your ukulele and you've already cut the excess off, some of the strings may not be long enough when you rearrange them.) Now that you've re-strung your instrument, you may want to take a small file and ever so slightly open up the 4th string groove on the nut because the thick string may be slightly too big for it. Do this *very carefully* because you don't want the groove to become too big or it might create a buzzing sound when you play!

Use a guitar string:

You can also choose to use a normal classical D or G guitar string (nylon or wound). They both are about the right size and fit easily on the uke. They're just longer, so you have to cut off the excess.

So experiment:

I usually take the easiest pathway and reverse a new set of GCEA strings. However, some of you may prefer a fatter string, in which case you might like the guitar string. You will get a better low string sound if you put on a significantly wider string, and the guitar string can provide that. It's all up to your personal choice.

What I use for my baritone ukulele when I use GCEA tuning:

For my YouTube videos I'm playing a baritone ukulele, but one strung with *extra-long* concert tuned strings (GCEA). The bari body gives more depth in sound for jazz, but the GCEA tuning allows me to play along with smaller ukes. I rearrange the order as described in the easy way discussed above so that I create a low G out of the set. In this instance, though it's important to get extra-long strings to accommodate the size of the baritone. You can order these special length strings online from various sources. One source I've used is www.elderly.com (look for: Aquila nylgut baritone uke set-C tuning)

FYI:

I also play a bari with normal DGBE tuning when I'm in the mood to hear the deeper, richer strings. I switch between the two instruments all the time.

* Lyle Ritz also uses low G on his sets for playing standards.