

Looking to improve your practice? Here are some ideas to help....

- a. Remember to hold the Uke properly – don't twist the fretboard towards you.
- b. Keep repeating things – to build up what's called muscle memory so you can do things without looking – this really impresses people.
- c. Don't rush things, Practise slowly to begin with and build up to speed.
- d. Break songs / notation down into sections – you don't have to do everything well at once
- e. Play with other people – it's much more fun and you can learn from each other. Join a class. It is great way to learn and you will meet like-minded people to share your joy, and frustrations with ... or form a band! That's how I learned.
- f. If you see someone playing something that impresses, go up after the gig and ask, "How did you do that?" Most musicians will take this as a compliment gladly share with you – but don't take up all their time – one simple thing at a time.
- g. Record yourself – you can hear where you can improve, and it will let you hear how much you've improved.
- h. Keep going during the periods when you don't seem to be improving. Learning music is like a long series of hitting upward slopes where you learn lots of things and improve so much – it's great followed by a long plateau where you seem to be not improving much at all. We have all been there BUT
- i. If your fingers, wrists, or hands start to ache then STOP and take a long break.

Looking at accessories which may help you:

- a. A battery tuner – apps are OK but not so good if there is background noise
- b. A chord book or "chord dictionary". You can also get apps for the phone or PC, and they are OK, but I haven't found a free one that shows you the correct fingers to use.
- c. A metronome – these keep the beat. When we reach a difficult bit of music, we tend to slow down sometimes not even noticing we do. A Metronome keeps a steady beat for you. You can get wooden, plastic ones and there are plenty of apps for phones or PC etc.
- d. A strap if you think you need one.
- e. A Capo – this is controversial. A capo is a bar placed behind a fret on the fretboard which helps you play a tune in a different key, say for someone singing, without having to learn a new set of chords for the same tune. Some purists say that you shouldn't need one – that you should learn all the chords. I disagree. I have seen capos used in high-falutin classical music as well as Spanish flamenco. A capo is not a substitute for learning all the chords though.
- f. Plectrums or Picks – i.e. bits of felt or plastic to strum with. You don't need one for a ukulele and they wear out nylon strings quicker and they sound harsh on a Uke and really clicky.