

UKE STRUMMING PATTERNS

The grids below show 'bars' of music divided into 4 beats (crochets) for each bar, where each beat is divided into 2 notes (quavers), making 8 notes to the bar. This is the most common timing for pop, rock and country songs. Count '1 and 2 and 3 and 4 and' etc. where the number is a down stroke and the 'and' is an up stroke. Start off slowly and gradually speed up as you learn each pattern.

Basic Shuffle 4/4 time

1 and	2 and	3 and	4 and
↓ ↑	↓ ↑	↓ ↑	↓ ↑
d u	d u	d u	d u

The very basic uke strum - down, up etc. Each 'note' or strum is of the same length, this is known as 'even time'.

Swing Shuffle 1 4/4 time

1 and	2 and	3 and	4 and
↓	↓ ↑	↓ ↑	↓ ↑
D	d u	d u	d u

Miss out the first 'and' and accent the first beat (in other words the note is longer) - this gives a syncopated skipping feel. Song: 'Why Don't You Love Me'

Swing Shuffle 2 4/4 time

1 and	2 and	3 and	4 and
↓	↓	↓ ↑	↓ ↑
d	D	d u	d u

Miss out the first 2 'and's, and then on bars 3 & 4 say the word 'chugga'. Accent the 2nd beat. One of the most common strum patterns, especially in folkie type songs. Song: 'Folsom Prison Blues'

Skip Shuffle 4/4 time

1 and	2 and	3 and	4 and
↓	↓	↓	↓ ↑
d	d	d	d u

Miss out the first 3 'and' s and then put a 'chugga' on bar 4. Song: Sweet Caroline.

Church Lick 01 4/4 time

1 and	2 and	3 and	4 and
↓	↓ ↑	↓	↓ ↑
d	d u	d	d u

Miss out the 'and's on bars 1 & 3. Song: 'You Are My Sunshine'

Church Lick 02 4/4 time

1 and	2 and	3 and	4 and
↓ ↑	↓	↓ ↑	↓
d u	d	d u	d

This is a variation on the Church Lick. The 2nd & 4th 'ands' are missed out.

Country Strum 4/4 time

1 and	2 and	3 and	4 and
↓ <i>Clip</i>	↓ ↑	↓ <i>Clip</i>	↓ ↑
d	d u	d	d u

'Clip' the strings on the down stroke for bars 1 & 3, it's not a full strum.
Song: 'Turn, Turn, Turn'

Calypso 4/4 time

1 and	2 and	3 and	4 and
↓	↓ ↑	↑	↓ ↑
d	d u	u	d u

Combines the 2 Church Licks.
Song: 'Jamaica Farewell'

Strums that have the emphasis on the 2nd and 4th beat.

Back Beat 4/4 time

1	2	3	4
↓ ↑	↓ ↑	↓ ↑	↓ ↑
d u	D u	d u	D u

Put the emphasis on the 2nd and 4th beat
Song: 'Heroes'

Reggae 4/4 time

1	2	3	4
↓ ↑	↓ ↑	↓ ↑	↓ ↑
d u	D u	d u	D u

Emphasise the 2nd and 4th beat. The dashed lines mean the strings are muted to give a percussive sound.
Song: '3 Little Birds'

Strums for songs in 3/4 time and 2/4 time

Basic Waltz 3/4 time

1	2	3
↓ <i>Thumb</i>	↓	↓
t	d	d

Use your thumb to play the G string on the first beat, followed by 2 down strokes.

Full Waltz 3/4 time

1	2	3
↓	↓ ↑	↓ ↑
d	d u	d u

A full down stroke on the first beat, followed by down, up, down, up.
Song: 'Mull Of Kintyre'

Polka 2/4 time

1	2
↓ <i>Clip</i>	↓
d	D

'Clip' the 1st beat and then accent the 2nd.
Song: 'Its All Over Now'

All these strumming patterns are meant only as guides. Practice them by all means but you don't have to follow them slavishly. Don't let them constrain your playing. It's much better to listen to the music and feel the rhythms that come naturally.

"First you master your instrument, then you master the music; then you forget about all that and just play." - Charlie Parker