

Tuning a Tenor Ukulele to a Baritone Ukulele

It's possible to tune a Tenor ukulele to Baritone tuning but before doing so, it's necessary to understand the tunings.

A traditional ukulele with standard tuning is:

G4 C4 E4 A4

The G string (G4) is therefore tuned higher than the adjacent C string and this is known as re-entrant tuning. Some people prefer to play with a low G and so fit a heavier G string and the tuning then becomes:

G3 C4 E4 A4

The numbers refer to the octaves (C > Bb) on a standard piano - C4 being the start of the 4th octave (lowest to highest).

A guitar which has 6 strings and tuned to standard pitch is:

E2 A2 D3 G3 B3 E4

A baritone ukulele with four strings is tuned to:

D3 G3 B3 E4

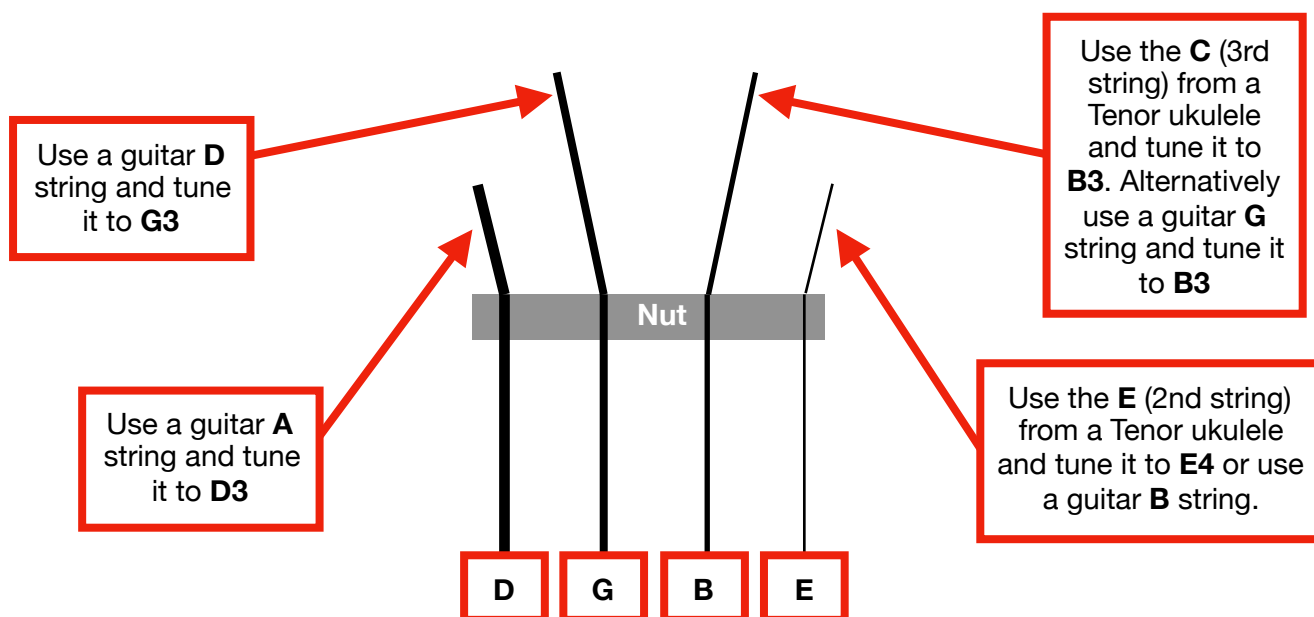
which is the same as the top four strings on a guitar.

Tuning a Tenor ukulele as a Baritone will require new strings but the question is, which strings. Special strings are now available at a price, but you can do it with classical guitar strings which, like ukulele strings, are nylon. Do NOT use steel guitar strings.

The 6th string on a guitar is intended to be tuned to E2 and is too heavy for a ukulele but the 5th string which would be tuned to A2 on a guitar can easily be tuned D3 on a Tenor ukulele as the 320mm scale length of a Tenor ukulele is about 50% of the scale length of a 650mm classical guitar. The difference in length compensates for the required 5 semitone rise in pitch.

The 4th guitar string is intended to be tuned to D3 and so can be used as the 3rd Baritone ukulele string which is tuned to G3. Another 5 semitone rise.

The 2nd (B3) and 1st (E4) Baritone ukulele strings can come from either standard Tenor ukulele 3rd (C4) and Tenor ukulele 2nd (A4) or from the 3rd (G3) and 2nd (B3) guitar strings.



There is a potential problem you'll have with the nut. The slots in the nut have been cut to suit the gauge of string intended to pass over it. Replacing that string with a heavier string will almost certainly require the slots to be enlarged. If the string does not slide through the slots easily, it will be difficult to tune as the string could get stuck in the slot. In the most extreme case, this could cause the string to break between the tuning machine and the nut. Special files are available to open up the nut slots, or consider buying another nut.

The saddle may also need adjusting if it has slots cut into it. If the saddle is slotted, generally the slots are very shallow and heavier strings probably won't cause a problem, but it needs to be checked.

Tuning a Baritone ukulele to a Tenor

This is much simpler. As a Baritone ukulele is tuned 5 semitones lower than a Tenor ukulele, placing a capo at the 5th fret of a Baritone ukulele will raise the pitch by 5 semitones and hence the instrument would be played as if it were a Tenor.

