

Frère Jacques in F

(page 15 of *Ukulele Basics*)

Introduction

Frère Jacques is one of the most widely known songs in the world, and it works brilliantly as a round. It is a traditional French song, but can also be sung in English and referred to as *Are you sleeping?* or *Brother John*.

Did you know?

- The tune was first published in 1811, and the words and music were first published together in 1869 in Paris.

Starting out on the carpet

- First, sing through the song together until everyone is familiar with the tune. Do the children know what the French words mean? It may help to teach the tune through call and response.
- Can everyone work out how many lines there are in the song?
- Now sing the song again, this time while playing the ukulele accompaniment. Ask the children to tell you which fingers are being used and where on the ukulele.
- Make your first two left-hand fingers into 'bunny ears' and then put them in place on the strings. Ask the children to make their own 'bunny ears' using their chord-making hand.
- Demonstrate how to play the F chord, stressing the importance of having 'ballerina fingers'; this will ensure that their fingers don't flop down onto the other strings.

Getting going with the ukuleles

- Practise playing the F chord before strumming the song. Ask everyone to get into pairs with the person next to them, taking it in turns to play the chord. Demonstrate the 'dead string' noise (track 9) and ask them to check for this when listening to their partner. Encourage them to take the 'Dead String Dodger' test (page 10) to fix the sound!
- Start strumming the F chord to a steady pulse, and ask everyone to join in. Once everyone has settled into the pulse, begin singing the song. Don't worry about plucking on 'din, dan, don' for the moment; this can be added later!
- Once secure with singing and playing, see if everyone can be silent after each 'don'. This will help develop a sense of rhythm and pulse as well as listening skills.

What next?

- If everyone is secure with singing and playing together, why not try it as a round? Follow the instructions on page 15 of the book. You will probably need to try this a few times, but it's great fun for everyone! Try playing it through four times and then stopping suddenly!
- Try replacing the strums on 'din, dan, don' with plucks, as shown in the book. Remember that you should keep your fingers in position. Very gifted groups may even be able to play the round with the plucks included!
- This song is a great choice for groups that are learning French. (English and French words are provided in the book.)
- Try adding other instruments such as chime bars or glockenspiels on 'din, dan, don'.
- You can also play this song in G (see page 18).