Consider there to be only three Major chord shapes F, C & A.

Begin by playing the 3 basic shapes of ukulele chords, F, C, and A. Then, start with the F shape F - next, move to the 5th fret, and play an F chord using the C shape. Then, play the A shape at the 8th fret for F again.

Roman numerals refer to fret number. The numbers on each finger position relate to the note’s position in the scale. In the case of F,

- F major scale: F G A Bb C D E F
- Numbered: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1

C major scale:
- C major scale: C D E F G A B C
- Numbered: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1

A major scale:
- A major scale: A B C# D E F# G# A
- Numbered: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1

The root note (1) is on string 2 for the F shape chord and string 3 for the C shape. It is found on both the 1st and 4th strings in the A shaped chord.

Use a bar behind the F, and move the F shape up to fret IV for A or to fret VII for C. Move C shape up to fret V for F and to fret IX for A. Move A shape up to fret III for C or to fret VIII for F.

What about the D shape? 5135
This is a modification of the C shape, playing the 5 note on the first string, 2 frets lower than the 513 on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th strings. Try at III fret for F.

Note the chord shape note sequences
- F=3513, C=5131, A=1351
- 513 is in both F and C shapes
Ukulele FCA with Passing Chords
Navigating between the major chord shapes F, C & A

Begin with the F shape F - play the F chord, then the 1 and 3 notes of the F scale together, on the 2nd and 4th strings, then the 2 notes connected by dotted lines on the 2nd and 4th strings - play the next two connected notes, then the third pair, leading you to fret V.

Play the C shape F at fret V, and continue to move up the fretboard playing the 1 and 3 notes now found on strings 3 and 2, then the paired notes as passing chords. These can be played in unison or in sequence (arpeggios). This now leads you to play the A shape F at fret VIII. Finally, play the paired notes up to fret XII where you bar it and play the F shape F again, this time with a bar.

The paired notes can help you find the location for the next chord shape for the same chord - they connect the 1 and 3 notes from the chord below to the 5 and 3 notes of the chord above. The paired notes in the 1 and 3 relationship are major thirds and minor thirds in the 5 - 3 relationship. See the interval module on ukeeducation.org for a deeper understanding.

Once you can remember how the passing chords fit, use this to move up the neck: Try starting with the A shape A and use the passing note positions to find the correct location for the F shape A (IV) and up to the C shape A (IX) – try coming back down the fretboard using the passing chords to find the next correct chord.

Then, likewise, begin with the C shape C and use the passing note positions (strings 2 and 3) to find the correct location for the A shape C (III) and up to the F shape C (VII). When beginning with the A shape A, the passing notes are on strings 1 and 3. These chord positions are shown on the other side of this sheet.

You can also use these passing chords to generate an intro – or turnaround for a song. Walk the pairs down from the XII fret and play the A shape F at the VIII. Then walk the pairs on strings 2 and 3 down from fret V to land on the C shape F. They could also be used to connect two locations for playing the same chord, especially while descending. They could also be used to connect two locations for playing the same chord, especially while descending. These also work well to create a new location and “voice” to play when soloing.

Remember, the numbers relate to the note’s position in the scale:
In the case of F

F major scale F G A Bb C D E F
Numbered: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1
F shape F chord is 3 5 1 3 = A C F A
C shape F chord is 5 1 3 1 = C F A F
A shape F chord is 1 3 5 1 = F A C F

To find the position of the next shape easier, you can play passing chords as you move between them (dotted lines)
The numbers relate to the note’s position in the scale.
For the key of C
C major scale C D E F G A B C
Numbered: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1
C shape C chord is 5 1 3 1 = G C E C

The 7th chord also known as the dominant 7th chord is made by adding a flatted 7 note – a Bb for the C scale as below:
C major scale C D E F G A B C
Numbered: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1
C Major chord = C E G
Dominant 7th chord = 1 3 5 b7
C 7th chord = C E G Bb
So, we need to fret the 1st fret of the 1st string, not the 3rd fret to make a C7

For the key of A
C major scale A B C# D E F# G# A
Numbered: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1
A shape A chord is 1 3 5 1 = A C# E A
A Major chord = A C# E
Dominant 7th chord = 1 3 5 b7
A 7th chord = A C# E G
So, we need to play the 4th string open, G not at the 2nd fret to make a A7

For the key of F:
F major scale F G A Bb C D E F
Numbered: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1
Major chord = 1 3 5
F Major chord = F A C
F shape F chord is 3 5 1 3 = A C F A
F Major chord = F A C
Dominant 7th chord = 1 3 5 b7
F 7th chord = F A C Eb
We will need to move the 5 up to the b7 and the 3 up to the 5, F7 shape

The charts above show how the chord varies as you move up the neck – Roman numerals indicate the fret position. Look to the position of the 1 note in the chord to see the location of the root, found on:
the 1st string in the A7 shape
the 2nd string in the F7 shape
the 3rd string in the C7 shape.

Try playing some I7 IV7 V7 progressions – used most often in blues songs – 4 bars each letter:
C7 F7 C7 C7    F7 F7 C7 C7    G7 F7 C7 G7
G7 C7 D7
C7 (nut) F7 (I) G7(III) or C7 (III) F7 (V) G7 (VII)
The minor chord is made by flattening the 3rd note. In the key of G:
- G major scale: G A B C D E F# G
- Numbered: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1
- Major chord = 1 3 5
- G major chord = G B D
- G minor chord = G Bb D
- Minor chord = 1 b3 5

For the key of D
- D major scale: D E F# G A B C# D
- Numbered: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1
- Major chord = 1 3 5
- D major chord = D F# A
- D minor chord = D F A
- Minor chord = 1 b3 5

For the key of A
- A major scale: A B C# D E F# G# A
- Numbered: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1
- Minor chord = 1, b3, 5
- A major chord = A, C#, E
- A minor chord = A C E

The minor 7th chord is made by adding a flatted 7 and flatted 3rd.
- C major scale: C D E F G A B C
- Numbered: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1
- C major chord = C E G
- C minor chord = C Eb G
- Minor 7th chord = 1 b3 5 b7
- Cm 7th chord = C Eb G Bb

For the key of D
- D major scale: D E F# G A B C# D
- Numbered: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 1
- Major chord = 1 3 5
- D major chord = D F# A
- D minor chord = D F A
- Minor chord = 1 b3 5
- D minor 7th chord = 1 b3 5 b7