

I have now built five Stewmac uke kits and have revised my construction strategy. Here are the key steps:

1. Glue in the neck and tail blocks as per instructions. After clamping these blocks, immediately glue in the linings for the back.
2. When glue has set, take uke out of mould, flip it over and replace in mould.
3. Glue in soundboard linings.
4. When the glue has set, sand soundboard linings flat.
5. Flip uke over and replace it in the mould.
6. Trim sides to back linings using a sharp knife, sand sides and back linings flat.
7. Sand and shape back braces.
8. Cut notches in the back linings for the back braces.
9. Trim back braces and glue them to the uke body, with the ends in the notches cut in the back linings.
10. When the glue has dried, sand back brace ends flush with the linings.
11. Glue back to the body and back braces using rubber bands as per instructions.
12. Trim the back profile to the uke shape using a sharp knife and sandpaper.
13. Turn uke over (soundboard side up). Clean any glue residue from back liners etc.
14. Apply label to inside of back of uke.
15. Cut notches in the soundboard linings for the soundboard braces.
16. Sand and shape soundboard braces and glue them to the uke body, with the ends in the notches cut in the soundboard linings.
17. When the glue is dry, sand soundboard braces so they are flat and in the same plane as the body.
18. Mark centre line on top of soundboard. Insert sound hole trim to sound board and sand flat.
19. Glue bridge support to underside of soundboard.
20. Glue sound board to uke body and soundboard braces. Ensure that sound hole is centred on uke body.
21. Trim the soundboard profile to the uke shape using a sharp knife and sandpaper.
22. Sand neck to smooth profile, but do not trim the width of the neck.
23. Mark centreline on the top of the neck. This should extend right to the nut position.
24. Clamp uke body (soundboard up) to bench (use a towel underneath to allow for curvature in the back and to raise the body slightly – enough to get the neck with extended heel to butt up flush at the top)
25. Place neck in heavy bench top vice (see picture) and place at body, ensuring that centre lines of uke body and neck are in line, the tops of the body and neck are aligned and the neck is not twisted.
26. Mark neck sides on body. Slide neck away and mask uke body and neck edges at the join to prevent glue spread. Apply thick epoxy glue e.g. araldite to the join area. This glue sets more slowly than titebond, giving more time to get alignment right, and has better gap filling properties.
27. Slide neck up to body again and push neck in vice against the uke body to get clamping pressure (no rubber bands or clamps are needed!) Again, make sure that centrelines line up and that the neck is not twisted. Also ensure that the neck is level with or tilted up very slightly in relation to the body. It should not be tilted down.
28. Rub down the join either side of the neck to remove excess glue and remove masking tape.
29. When glue has set, sand top of join of neck and body flat. Do not sand off centreline on uke body more than 1.5 cms from neck end. Do not sand centreline off neck at the nut end.
30. Fit frets to fretboard as per Stewmac instructions. Mark centre of fretboard at nut end
31. Glue fretboard to neck and uke, using titebond, lining up the fretboard and neck centre marks at the nut end and the fretboard point with the body centreline.
32. Trim and sand neck to the fretboard width.
33. Follow Stewmac instructions to complete uke!

