

**Violin and Viola Practice Made Easy - Tools and Tips for Efficient
Repertoire and Technique Learning
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The presentation aims to provide quick and efficient ways to maximize the learning curve for repertoire, etudes, double- stops and scales.

There are many ways to practice more efficiently and establish practice patterns leading to a permanent and solid technique, while preserving the physical health of the performer.

The presentation will offer practical exercises, tools and methods of practice geared for specific technical desired results.

Several stages of learning any piece of repertoire will accompany fingering charts for two and three octave scales.

Members in attendance are encouraged to bring their instruments if desired.

Practice Stages for Violin/Viola learning new repertoire

Pick one phrase at the time and do the following 3 stages, after choosing the bowings and fingerings.

STAGE 1

- One note per bow
- No rhythm
- No vibrato
- **Full ringing tone**

PRACTICE YOUR SHIFTS HERE

STAGE 2:

- Add rhythm
- No slurs/articulations
- No vibrato
- **Full ringing tone**

STAGE 3:

- As written, slow
- No vibrato
- Increase the tempo gradually with the metronome (usually about 5 units at the time)

Why full ringing tone?

Full ringing tone means focused sound, and it increases the commitment and concentration for each note we produce. That type of focus will produce “adrenaline” (well, let’s call it that for now) and in turn, it will help us memorize and retain so much more.

Too often, a soft, eerie sound used for hours on end will cause a non-ideal intonation, will make performers lose focus, interest, and even get sleepy. Sound familiar? ☺

Practicing double-stops shortcut, violin/viola

Thirds:

1. Bass note/Upper note – Bass note/Upper note (for each double stop, separately) (Listen for “Tartini sounds” – complementary sounds)
2. Prepare mentally, *take your time*, then place both fingers down for the first double stop. Move on to the next one and do the same. Have I mentioned “*take your time*”? Why: the brain will only remember that both fingers went down at the same time, not the time it took. Also, the time will get significantly shorter with repetition.
3. Slur the first double stop to the second one, and go back and forth, slurring. Move on to the second double-stop, slurring it back and forth to the third double stop. Move on as such: 1-2, 2-1; 2-3, 3-2; 3-4, 4-3: etc. This way, we will get to all double stops, as opposed to the more usual practice: 1-2, 3-4, 4-5, etc.

Sixths:

Same general practice methods as above, and then:

In order to slur the sixths with better success and not hear the pair of fingers lifting and dropping again, place the moving finger on a fifth, then add the upper note. Slur back and forth (playing example here)

Octaves:

Same general practice methods and above, and then:

Only one finger “corrects” the intonation for octaves, so pick either the pinky or the index finger to “lead”. There are two general schools of thought, one passionately supporting the index as leading finger, and the other one supporting the pinky as the leading finger. My personal take is they both are right, and because we are all built differently and our brains also work differently, I do not impose on my students one or the other. (The index finger school quotes the strength of the index finger and the bigger tip, while the pinky finger school quotes the higher number of projections on the brain for the index and thus correcting faster.)

Once the debate over the schools is solved for each individual, practice with both fingers on the strings in octaves, but the non-leading finger will not be pushed down completely, nor will the bow touch the string during this practice mode. The only string that will be played will be the one with the leading finger.

Tenths:

Same general practice methods and above, and then:

Take more breaks, more often. Stretch the hand (example of developing a more open hand here) Place the thumb in between the two notes, not in front of the index finger – it will open the hand for a much easier reach.

Right Elbow Position/Angle for Each String Violin/Viola

Face a mirror holding the violin/viola, so the scroll is pointing to the center-left of the mirror. In other words your chest should be parallel (face-to-face) to the mirror.

Place the bow in the middle (mark the middle of the stick with chalk, it will not hurt the varnish).

Make sure that with the bow in the middle, after you chose your string, there is one plane between the string, the bow stick, and the elbow (forearm and arm). In other words, if I place a sheet of paper over your elbow/forearm/arm – it will be a straight, smooth, uninterrupted plane.

Move with the bow in its middle between the strings, controlling the motion (strings crossing) from the right elbow. Get used to the up-and-down elbow motion as you hit each string, back and forth. Imagine a rolling coaster or a wing as you repeat this motion.

WHY CONTROL THE ELBOW ANGLE?

Frequently, the violinists/violists tend to break the weight that ideally would go uninterrupted from the shoulder/elbow (forearm and arm) to the index finger and to the bow stick and string. Breaking the weight happens because of a low elbow, putting the brunt of the arm/shoulder weight to the wrist. In time, beside the technical limits that causes, there will be injury to the right wrist. *Let's not do that* 😊

Shifting Shortcut for Violin and Viola

Main Principles

1. Always practice each shift up and down (both directions)
2. Always practice your shifts slurred (it prevents hopping from a note to the other)

“Law” of Shifting

ALWAYS SHIFT ON THE FINGER YOU ARE ON, TO THE FINAL POSITION – THEN YOU PLACE DOWN THE FINAL FINGER. SAME “LAW” APPLIES COMING BACK.

Examples:

The image shows two musical staves illustrating shifting techniques. The top staff is in treble clef, 12/4 time, and contains a sequence of notes with fingerings: 3 4 3 3, 4 4 4 3 2 3, 2 2 3 3 3 2. The bottom staff is in bass clef, 12/4 time, and contains a sequence of notes with fingerings: 5, 2 3, 2 2 3 3 3 2 2 3 2 2, 3 3 3 2. A blue water drop icon is placed below the bottom staff.

Three-Octave Major Scales “Cheat-Sheet”, Violin/Viola

G/C Major:

↑0123012301212341212344

↓4432143210321032103210

A flat, A/D flat, D Major:

↑1234123412123412121234

↓4432132121432143214321

All the major scales beginning with B flat/E flat Major start on 2nd finger and have the same fingering:

Violin Major Scales beginning with 2nd finger:

B flat, B, C, D flat, D, E flat, E, F, F sharp

Viola Major Scales beginning with 2nd finger:

E flat, E, F, G flat, G, A flat, A, B flat, B, C, C sharp

The fingerings for all of them, both violin and viola:

↑234123412**1**23412**1**2344

↓44321**3**21**3**2143214321432

NOTES:

Each shift is marked in **bold**.

The tonic (first and last note of the scale) IS REPEATED – the descending scales repeats the top note.

Three-Octave Minor (Melodic) Scales “Cheat-Sheet”, Violin/Viola

G/C Minor:

↑01230123012**1**23412**1**2344

↓432**3**21**3**214321432143210

A/D flat, A, D Minor:

↑1234123412**1**23412**1**21234

↓432**3**21**4**321432143214321

All the major scales beginning with B flat/E flat Minor start on 2nd finger and have the same fingering:

Violin Minor Scales beginning with 2nd finger:

B flat, B, C, D flat, D, E flat, E, F, F sharp

Viola Minor Scales beginning with 2nd finger:

E flat, E, F, G flat, G, A flat, A, B flat, B, C, C sharp

The fingerings for all of them, both violin and viola:

↑234123412**1**23412**1**212344

↓432**3**21**3**21**2**143214321432

NOTES:

Each shift is marked in **bold**.

The tonic (first and last note of the scale) IS REPEATED – the descending scales repeats the top note.

Two-Octave Major Scales “Cheat-Sheet”, Violin/Viola

G/C Major:

↑012301230**1**230**1**2

↓**2**103**2**103**2**103**2**10

A flat, A/D flat, D Major:

↑123**4**123**4**1234123

↓**3**214**3**214**3**214**3**21

All the major scales beginning with B flat/E flat Major start on 2nd finger and have the same fingering/pattern:

Violin Major Scales beginning with 2nd finger:

B flat, B, C, D flat, D, E flat, E, F, F sharp

Viola Major Scales beginning with 2nd finger:

E flat, E, F, G flat, G, A flat, A, B flat, B, C, C sharp

The fingerings for all of them, both violin and viola, all in fixed position:

↑23**4**123**4**123**4**123**4**

↓**4**321**4**321**4**321**4**32

NOTES:

Each half-step is marked in *bold and italic*.

The tonic (first and last note of the scale) **is repeated** – the descending scale starts again with the tonic.