

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

FOR STRINGS

A COMPREHENSIVE STRING METHOD

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ARRANGEMENTS BY JOHN HIGGINS

CONGRATULATIONS! You have made one of the most rewarding decisions in your life by joining the orchestra. The key to succeeding with *Essential Elements for Strings* is your commitment to daily practice. Each time you learn a new note, count a new rhythm, or play a melody with a friend, you become a more accomplished musician. As you continue to develop your skills, you will become increasingly aware of an abundance of opportunities that are available in the future. Musicians can teach, perform, conduct, or compose. No matter what profession you choose there are always opportunities available to you. You can play in community, civic, or church orchestras, attend concerts, and become a supporter of the arts. Whether you choose music as a vocation or avocation, we hope it will become an important part of your life. We are thrilled to welcome you to our orchestra family and wish you the very best for a lifetime of musical success.

The string family includes the violin, viola, violoncello, and the double bass. The early ancestors of the string family were the Arabian rebab and rebec, popular during the 14th–16th centuries. The viola is the oldest of the modern string instruments, and the word “viola” was used to describe many different string instruments until the 18th century. Today’s violas look like violins, though they are larger and longer.

The sound of the viola includes notes lower than the violin and has a particular mellow quality that is darker and richer. The viola is often referred to as the alto voice of the orchestra. Antonio Stradivari, and the Guarneri and Guadagnini families were famous instrument makers from the 17th and 18th centuries, and their violas are still in use today.

Many important composers have been violists, including Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Paul Hindemith. Other composers known for their viola compositions include Hector Berlioz, Ernest Bloch, and Bela Bartok. Famous viola performers include Walter Trampler, Lionel Tertis, Donald McGinnis, and William Primrose.

HISTORY OF THE VIOLA

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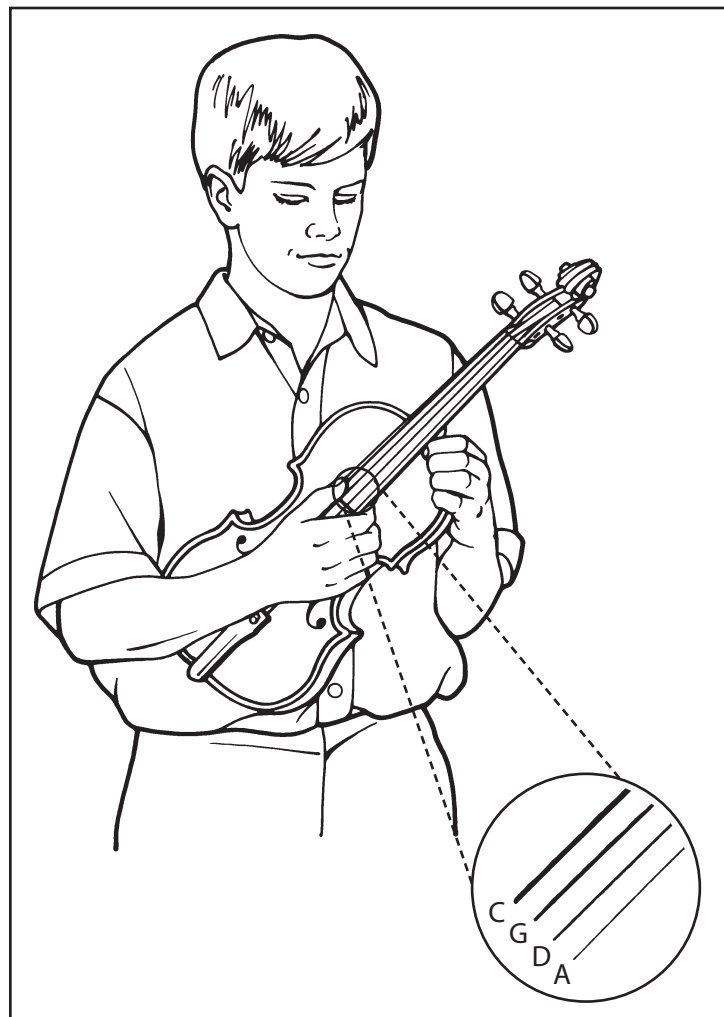
HOLDING YOUR INSTRUMENT

The best way to learn to play your instrument is to practice one skill at a time. Repeat each step until you are comfortable demonstrating it for your teacher and classmates.

Many viola players begin by playing their instrument in guitar position. As you learn the basics, your teacher will help you change to shoulder position.

Guitar Position

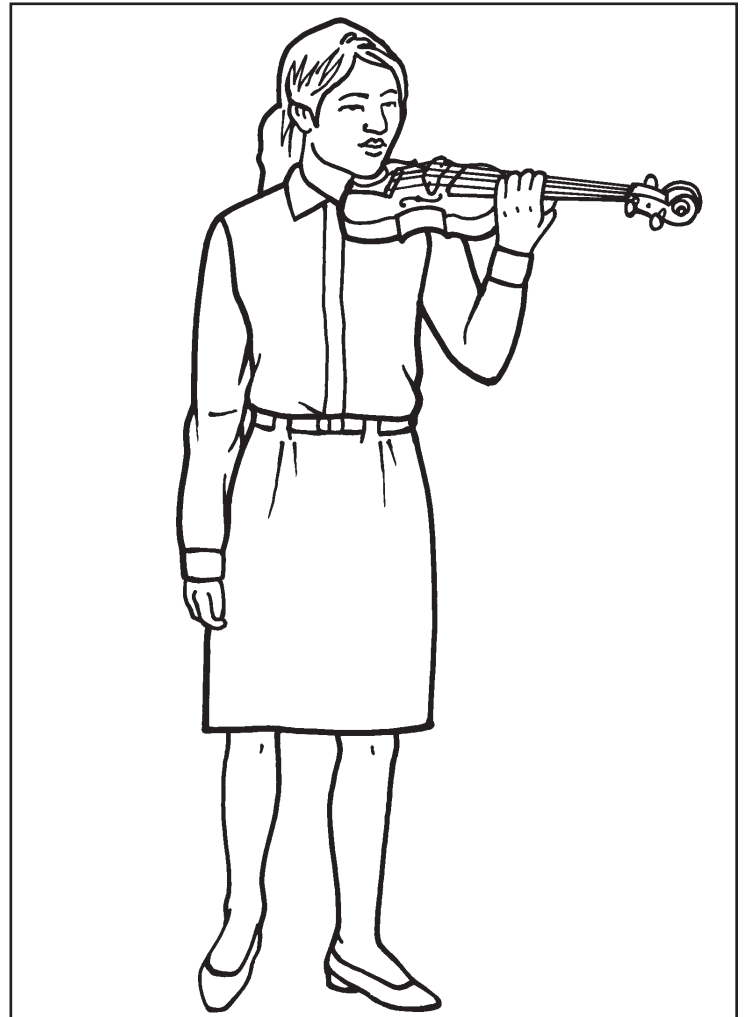
- Step 1** Place the instrument case flat on the floor with the handle facing you. Open the case and lift the instrument up by the neck. Identify all parts of the viola.
- Step 2** Cradle the viola under your right arm. Raise the scroll to shoulder height. Be sure the back of the viola is flat against your stomach.
- Step 3** Identify the letter names of each string: C (lowest pitch), G, D, A.
- Step 4** Raise your right thumb over the strings while continuing to hold the instrument. Pluck the strings as directed by your teacher. Plucking the strings is called *pizzicato*, and is abbreviated *pizz.*



Guitar Position

Shoulder Position

- Step 1** (*Standing*) – Stand with feet about a shoulder's width apart. (*Sitting*) – Sit on the front part of the chair.
- Step 2** Turn your left foot to the 10 o'clock position. Slide your right foot back. Adjust your position to place more weight on your left foot.
- Step 3** Hold your instrument at eye level parallel to the floor. Curve your left hand around the upper bout. Find the end button with your right hand.
- Step 4** Bring the instrument down to your shoulder. The end button should be near the middle of your neck. Turn your head slightly to the left, and place your jaw on the chin rest. Be sure the scroll does not point toward the floor.



Shoulder Position

Beat = The *Pulse* of Music

The **beat** in music should be very steady, just like your pulse.

Quarter Note = 1 Beat of Sound

Notes tell us how high or low to play, and how long to play.

Quarter Rest = 1 Beat of Silence

Rests tell us to count silent beats.

Music Staff

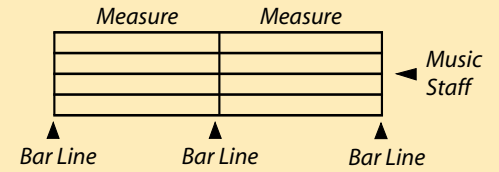
The **music staff** has 5 lines and 4 spaces.

Bar Lines

Bar lines divide the music staff into **measures**.

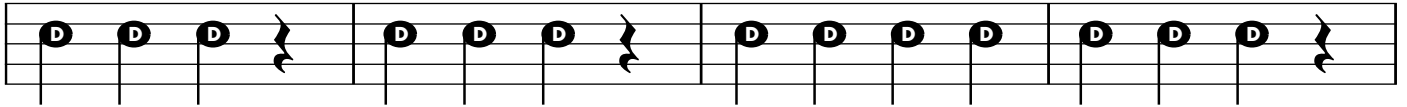
Measures

The **measures** on this page have four beats each.

**1. TUNING TRACK** *Wait quietly for your teacher to tune your instrument.***2. LET'S PLAY "OPEN D"**

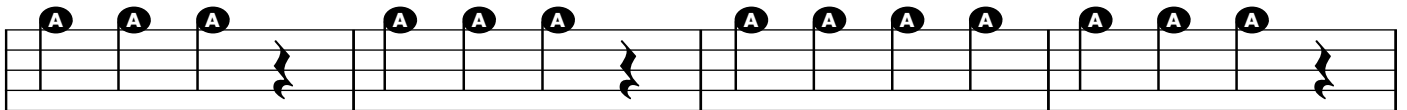
Pizzicato (pizz.)  *Pluck the strings*

0  *Open string*

D**3. LET'S PLAY "OPEN A"**

pizz.

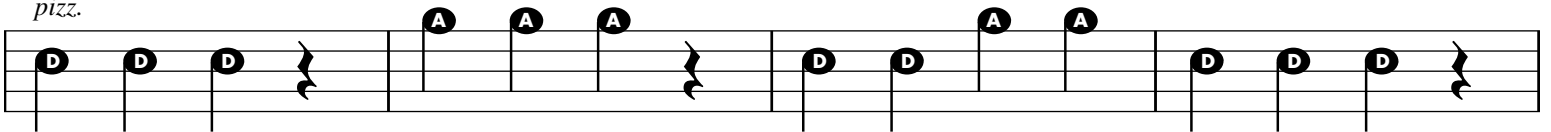
0

A

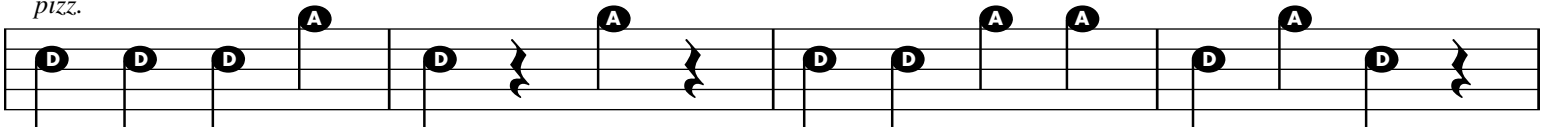
Keep a steady beat.

4. TWO'S A TEAM

pizz.

**5. AT PIERROT'S DOOR** *The melody is on your CD.*

pizz.

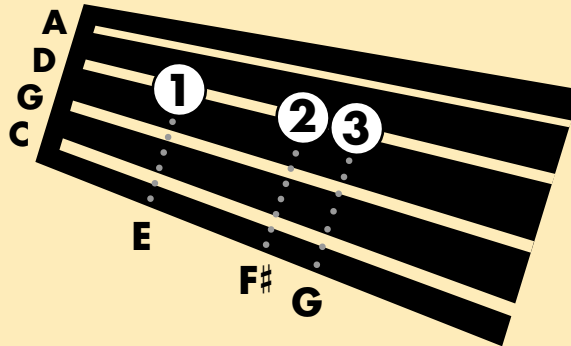
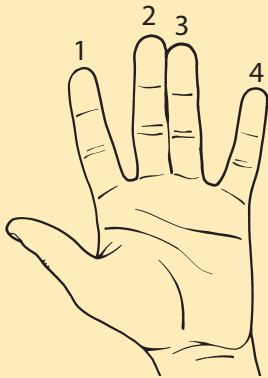


SHAPING THE LEFT HAND

D STRING NOTES

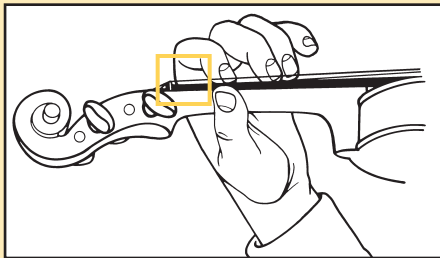
Step 1 Shape your left hand as shown.
Be certain your palm faces you.

0 = Open string
1 = 1st finger
2 = 2nd finger
3 = 3rd finger
4 = 4th finger

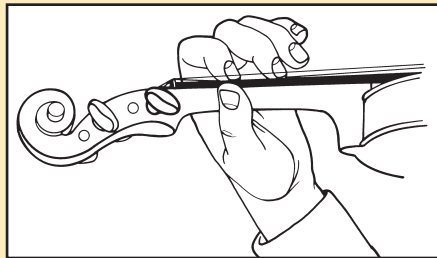


Step 2 Bring your hand to the fingerboard. Place your fingers on the D string, keeping your hand shaped as shown below.
Be sure your first finger forms a square with the fingerboard, and your wrist is relaxed and straight.

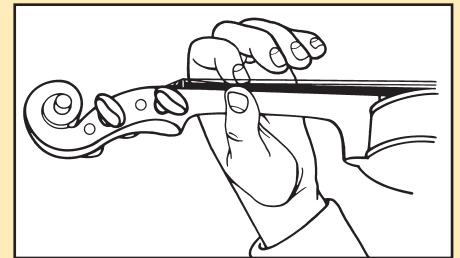
G is played with 3 fingers on the D string.



F# is played with 2 fingers on the D string.



E is played with 1 finger on the D string.

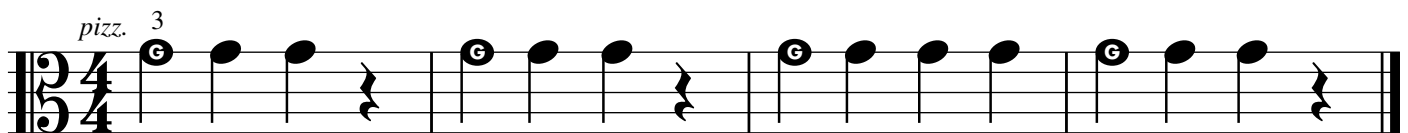


Listening Skills

Play what your teacher plays. Listen carefully.

10. LET'S READ "G" Start memorizing the note names.

G



THEORY

Sharp #

A **sharp** raises the sound of notes and remains in effect for the entire measure.
Notes without sharps are called **natural** notes.

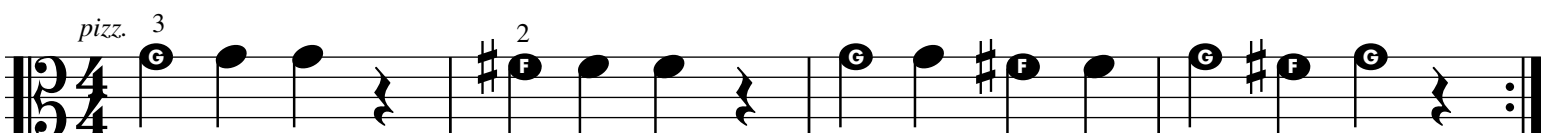
11. LET'S READ "F#" (F-sharp)

F#



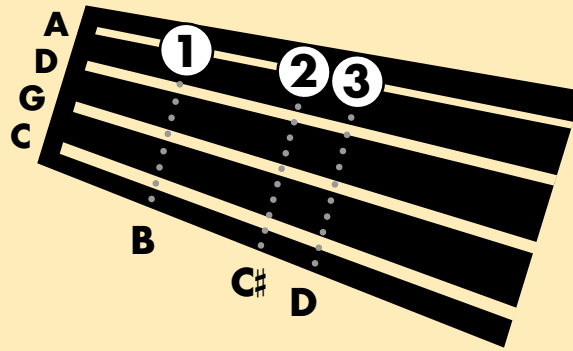
▲ Play all F#'s. Sharps apply to the entire measure.

12. LIFT OFF

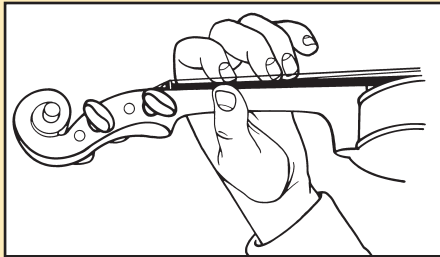


✓ Is your left hand shaped as shown in the diagrams above?

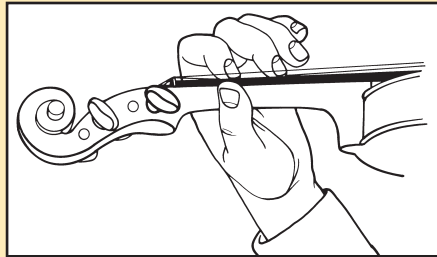
A STRING NOTES



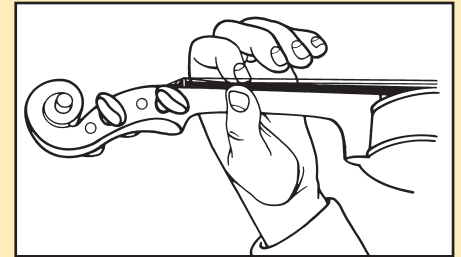
D is played with 3 fingers on the A string.



C# is played with 2 fingers on the A string.



B is played with 1 finger on the A string.

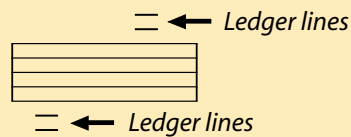


Listening Skills

Play what your teacher plays. Listen carefully.

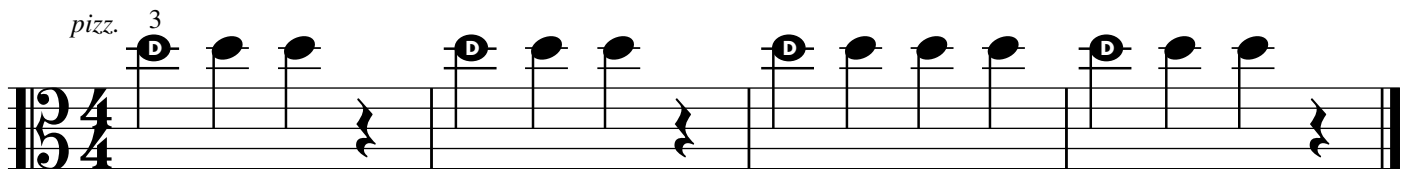
THEORY

Ledger Lines

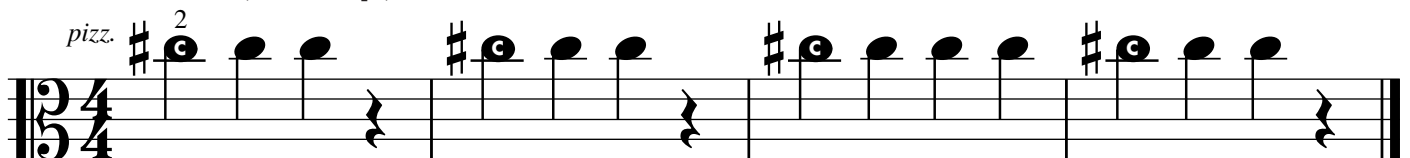


Ledger lines extend the music staff higher or lower.

23. LET'S READ "D"

D

24. LET'S READ "C#" (C-sharp)

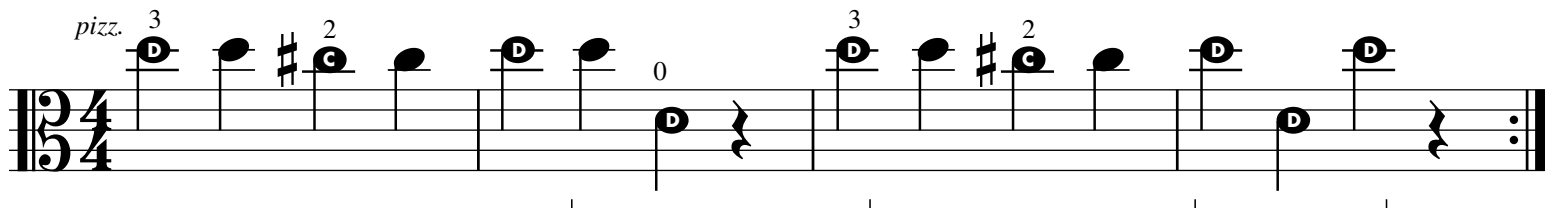
C#

▲ Play all C#'s. Sharps apply to the entire measure.

25. TAKE OFF



26. CARIBBEAN ISLAND



Practice BOW BUILDERS ONE, TWO, and THREE daily.

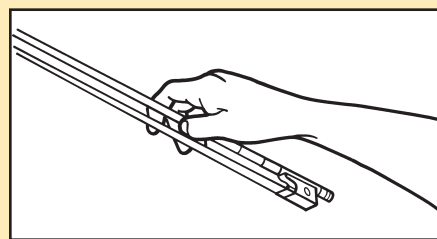
Step 1 Identify all parts of the bow (see page 2). Hold the bow in your left hand near the tip with the frog pointing to the right.

Step 2 Put your right thumb and 2nd finger on the bow stick near the middle of the bow.

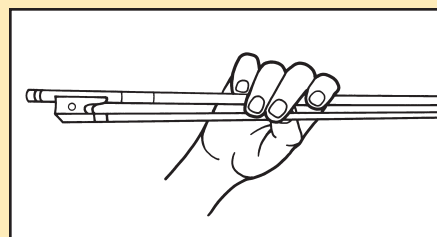
Step 3 Shape your right hand on the bow stick, as shown.

Step 4 Turn your right hand over, and be sure your thumb and fingers are curved.

Step 5 Hold the bow and repeat the exercises on page 8.



Balancing The Bow

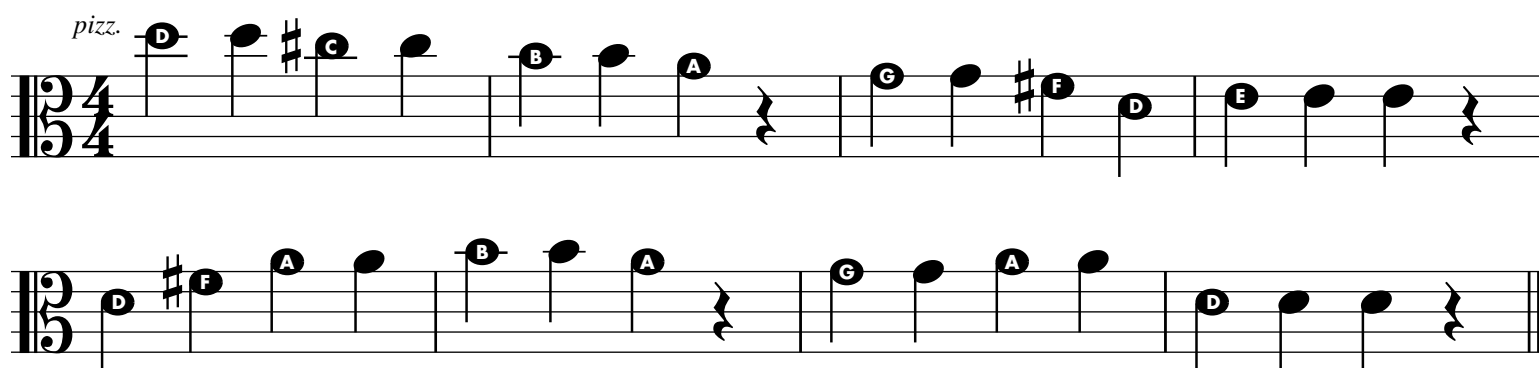


Early Bow Hold

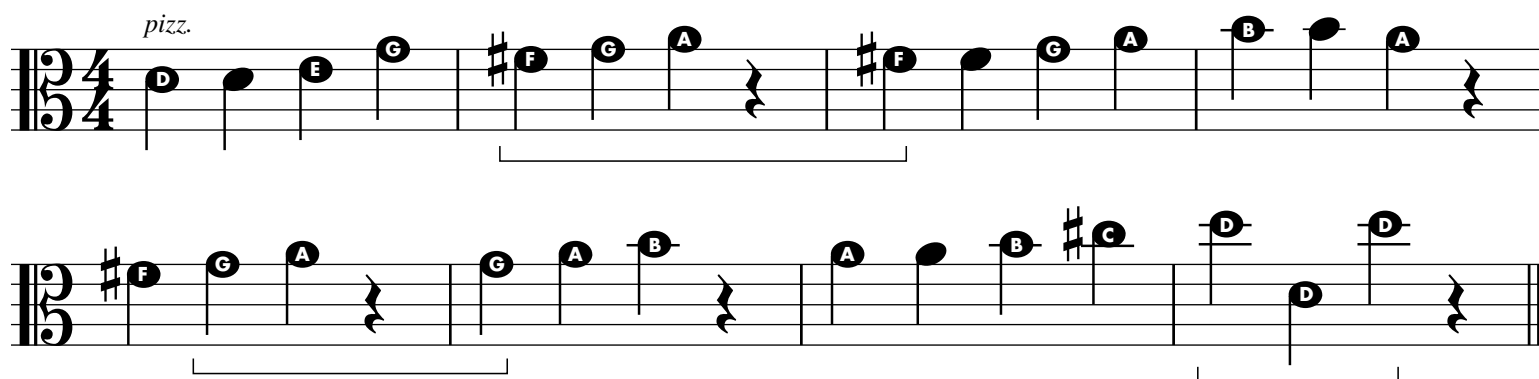


Alert Do not place your bow on the instrument until instructed to do so by your teacher.

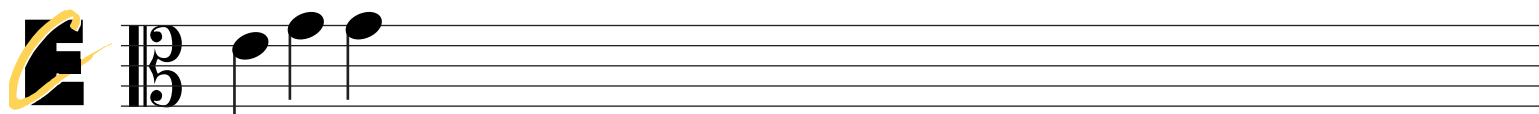
33. SONG FOR CHRISTINE



34. NATALIE'S ROSE *Remember to count.*



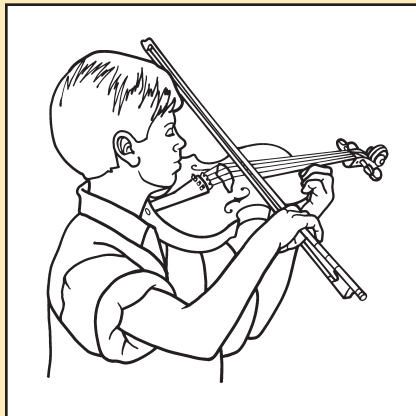
35. ESSENTIAL CREATIVITY



Example **E G G**

BOW BUILDER SIX

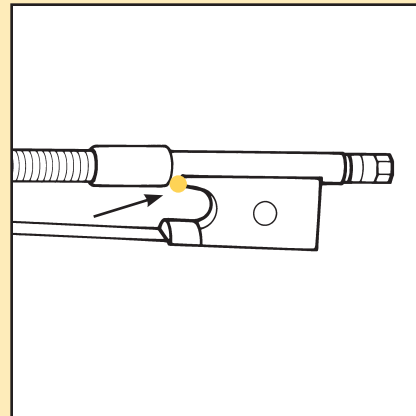
Let's Bow!



Early Bow Hold



Regular Bow Hold



Thumb Placement

Step 1 Hold the instrument with your left hand on the upper bout as illustrated.

Step 2 Hold the bow at the balance point (Early Bow Hold). Your right elbow should be slightly lower than your hand.

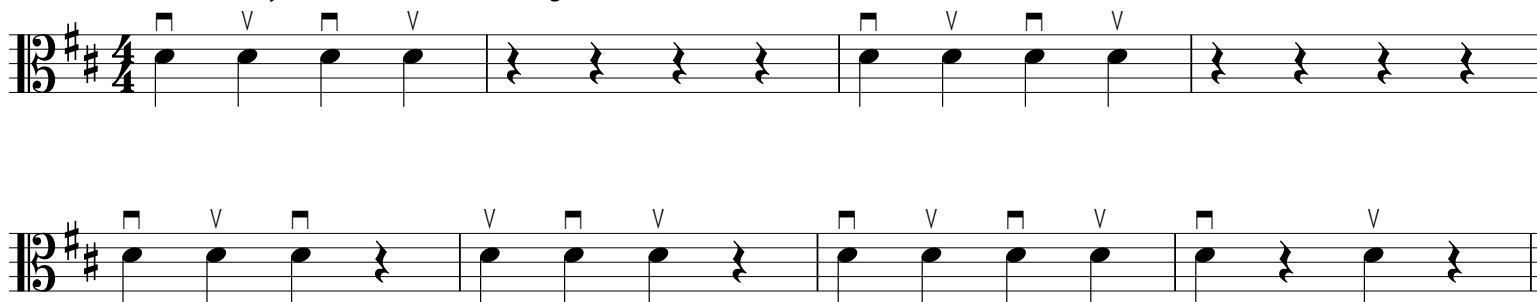
Your teacher will suggest when to begin moving your bow hand toward the frog, as shown in the Regular Bow Hold illustration. The tip of your thumb will move to the place on the stick where it touches the frog.

Listening Skills

Play what your teacher plays. Listen carefully. Your tone should be smooth and even.

47. BOW ON THE D STRING

arco ▶ Play with the bow on the string.



48. BOW ON THE A STRING

