

2 HOLDING THE VIOLIN AND PLAYING PIZZICATO

IN THIS CHAPTER you'll learn how to support your violin comfortably on your shoulder using the weight of your head. You'll also play your first notes on the violin, using pizzicato. Refer back to this chapter at the beginning of every practice session, until holding the violin feels natural and easy.

Posture and relaxation

A relaxed posture and secure violin position are the foundations of a good technique, and will help you avoid strain or injury.

Exercise 1: Basic posture

Before you pick up your violin, stand with your feet hip-width apart, your shoulders relaxed and open, your head facing forward, and your arms hanging loosely by your sides. Imagine there's a piece of string attached to the top of your head that's pulling you up towards the ceiling. Breathe in and out slowly and deeply a few times from your abdomen. When you breathe out, imagine your shoulder blades sliding down your back as your shoulders drop. Let your arms, hands, and fingers become heavy and relaxed. It's usually best to practise the violin standing up, at least to start with, but if you prefer to sit down, use a chair without arms and sit towards the front of the seat with both feet on the floor.

Exercise 2: Relaxation

This exercise can be done with or without the violin. Keep your feet hip-width apart on the floor and return to a centred, balanced posture when you've finished.

- Check that your knees are relaxed by gently bouncing up and down on the spot.
- Shift your body weight from one foot to the other.
- Make big, swaying movements with your hips, from left to right and around in circles.

Putting the shoulder rest on the violin

The shoulder rest should fill the space between your jaw and shoulder so that your posture is basically the same with and without the instrument. The position of the shoulder rest on the violin can make a big difference to how comfortable it feels. Start with the position shown opposite and make adjustments as necessary until it feels right for you. If you can change the height of the shoulder rest, start with the lowest position and adjust each side little by little until it feels comfortable. You'll probably find that the E-string side needs to be slightly higher than the G-string side. If you can't get the shoulder rest to feel comfortable, it may be worth trying a different model.



Exercise 1: Word rhythms

Say the word rhythms below while clapping a steady 2/4 crotchet pulse. Can you hear that the words are made up of long and short sounds? These are crotchets and quavers. There is a demo on the website.

- Cream cakes and toffee sauce.
- Cup of tea, cup of coffee.
- Summer breeze, autumn leaves.
- Hurry, hurry, don't be late!

Quaver/eighth-note



A quaver is half the duration of a crotchet.
Groups of quavers are joined together by a beam.

Exercise 2: Tea or Coffee?

- Clap a steady crotchet pulse with your metronome set to ♩ = 72.
- Say 'tea' for each crotchet and 'coffee' for each pair of quavers.
- Then play the rhythms pizzicato on your violin, with your thumb resting against the fingerboard. There is a demo on the website.

Four crotchet beats per bar:

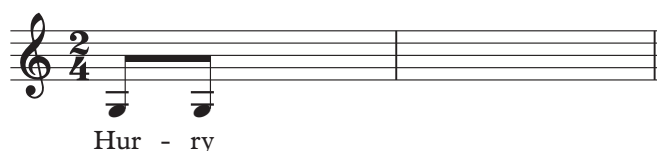
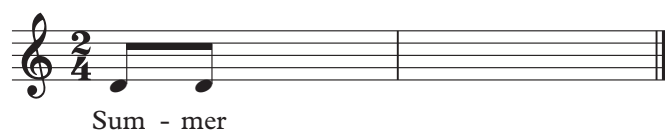
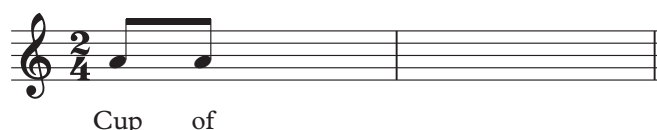


Three crotchet beats per bar:



Exercise 3: Writing out word rhythms

Write out the word rhythms from Exercise 1 in 2/4 time, using crotchets and quavers. The beginning of each one is done for you. Choose any open-string notes you like to finish them off, then play them pizzicato.



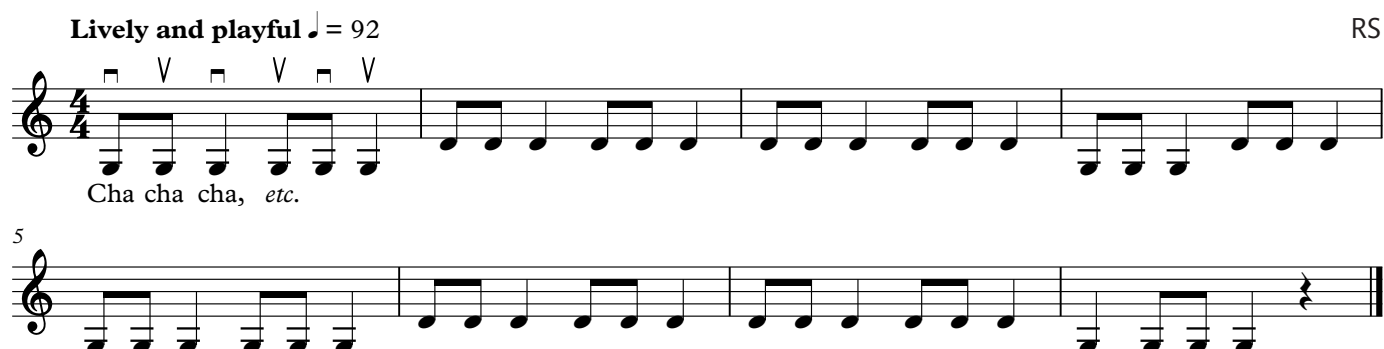
TECHNICAL TIP

As a beginner it is difficult to be objective about your sound when there's so much else to think about. Try recording yourself when you play—you'll learn a lot by doing this. If you don't like how it sounds, try to work out why—make a change and try again.

Cha cha cha Track 15

You played a pizzicato version of this piece in Chapter 3. Now try playing it in the upper half of the bow.

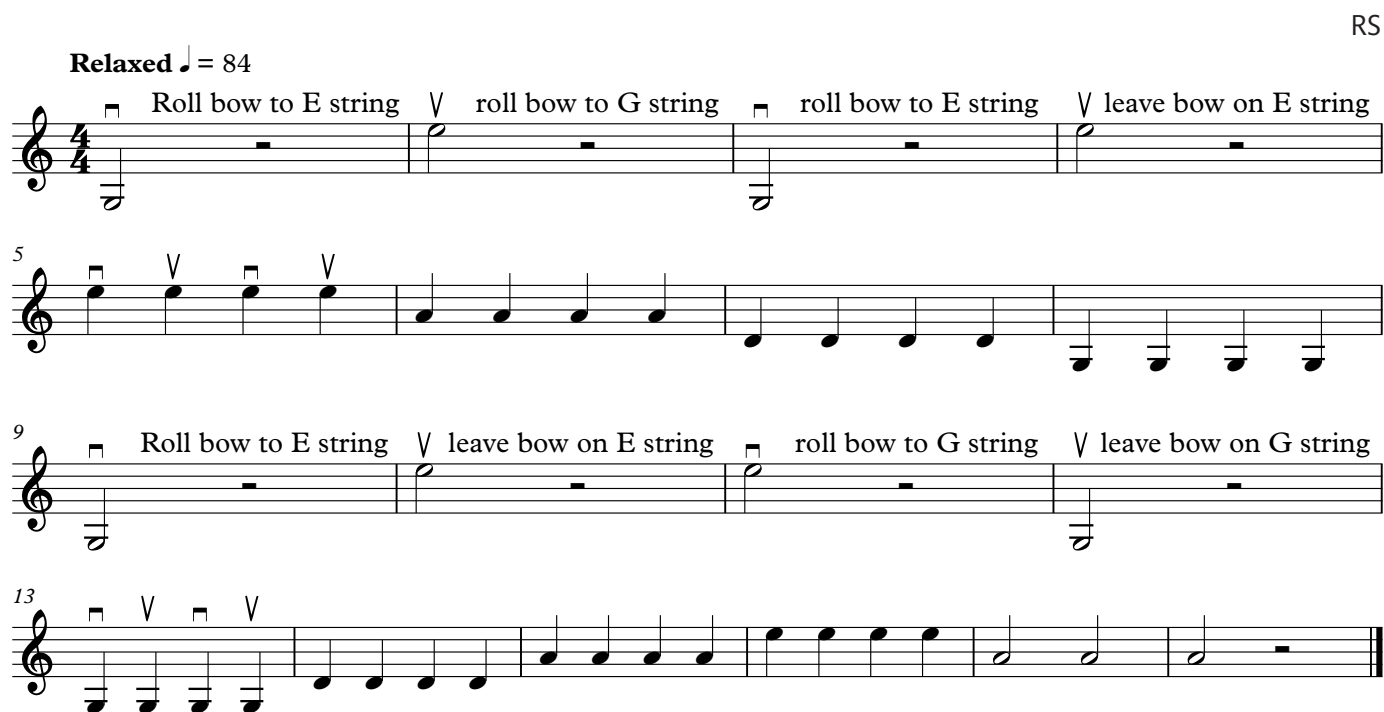
Lively and playful ♩ = 92 RS



Roll & Rock Track 16

Play this piece in the upper half of the bow, starting on a down-bow at the square position. In bars 1–4, 9–10, and 11–12, stop the bow on the string after the minim and roll it silently over the strings during the rest. Move your whole arm as a unit when changing strings in bars 5–8 and 13–17, keeping your elbow level with your bowing hand. Use slower bow-strokes on the minims and faster strokes on the crotchets.

Relaxed ♩ = 84 RS



Pachelbel's Canon



Track 24

You've already played a simpler version of this famous piece on page 32. Now focus on making the notes join together smoothly and playing with the minimum pressure on your 1st finger.

Johann Pachelbel (1653–1706)

Violin part: RS

Sostenuto ♩ = 63

Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring



Track 25

This is one of J. S. Bach's best-known compositions. Notice that the accompaniment plays a group of three notes for every crotchet that you play.

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750)

Violin part: RS

Moderato ♩ = 60

TRY...

Try playing 'Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring' a perfect 5th higher, starting on open D. This is called **transposing**. Notice that the fingering pattern is exactly the same in the two versions. There is a backing track on the website.

Habañera from Carmen



Track 26

Play this piece with a confident sound. The lines above the music mean that you should leave your finger down on the string. When you do this, make sure your finger is positioned so that it doesn't touch the string above. The last note is played pizzicato while holding the bow—extend your right-hand 1st finger to pluck the string. 'Allegretto' indicates a tempo slightly slower than 'allegro'.

Georges Bizet (1838–75)

Violin part: RS

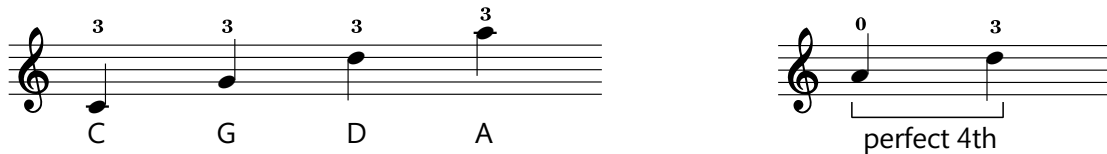
Allegretto ♩ = 72

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MORE ON THE 3RD FINGER

YOU'RE ALREADY FAMILIAR with playing 3rd-finger octaves to tune your hand (pages 44–45). In this chapter you'll play with the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd fingers on all the strings.

3rd-finger notes



On each string, the 3rd-finger note you'll play is an interval of a perfect 4th above the open string.

TECHNICAL TIP

Take care not to let your 4th finger curl up against your hand or hide under the fingerboard when you play with the 3rd finger. Your fingers should hover over the strings, ready to play.

Exercise 1: Singing and playing a perfect 4th

- Sing or whistle the beginning of 'Here comes the bride', starting on a D. The second note is a perfect 4th above the starting note. Play the first four notes of the tune, starting on open D. Repeat on the other strings using the same fingering.
- Now sing the beginning of the *Eastenders* theme tune. The first four notes go stepwise up to a perfect 4th above the starting note. Play the first four notes, starting on open D. Repeat on the other strings using the same fingering.

Exercise 2: 3rd-finger warm-up

- Play the following exercise slowly at first, with separate bows, then speed it up and add the slurs.
- To start with, leave your 1st and 2nd fingers down on the string where shown.
- Then repeat the exercise, this time lifting your 1st and 2nd fingers away from the strings after you've finished using them, so that you have only one finger down on the string at a time. Remember to keep unused fingers as close to the strings as possible.
- Repeat on the other strings, using the same fingering.
- Listen out for the 'ringing' sound when you play the 3rd-finger notes on the D, A, and E strings—it's a very helpful guide for intonation (see page 44).



Tied notes



A tie is a curved line that connects two notes of the same pitch, joining them together to make a single, longer note with a duration equal to the sum of the individual note values. Ties can occur within a bar, or across a barline. Take care not to confuse ties with slurs, which connect notes of different pitches.

Exercise: Clapping tied notes



With your metronome set to ♩ = 112, clap the rhythms below while counting the crotchet pulse out loud. Count the beats in brackets, but don't clap on them!

♩ = 112

Metronome:

Count: 1 (2) (3) (1) (2) 3 1 2 (3) (1) 2 (3) 1 2 3 (1) (2) (3)

Clap:

1 (2) (3) (4) (1) 2 3 (4) 1 2 3 (4) (1) (2) (3) 4 1 (2) (3) 4 (1) (2) (3) (4)

Botany Bay Track 54

This piece starts on an upbeat on the third beat of the bar, so count two crotchet beats before you start. Look out for the tied note at the end.

Australian trad.

Nautically ♩ = 100

mp

Fare - well to old Eng - land for ev - er. Fare -

- well to my rum culls as well. Fare - well to the well-known Old

Bai - ley, Where I used for to cut such a swell.

Scarborough Fair



Track 74

This piece uses low 2nd fingers on the G and D strings. What are the names of these notes?

English trad.

Gently ♩ = 116

mf

2/2 time signature



A 2/2 time signature means you should count two minim beats per bar (the lower 2 indicates a minim beat). It often suggests a fairly quick, march-like tempo.

Die Hoffnung



Track 75

This piece uses low 2nd fingers on the A and E strings. What are the names of these notes? 'Etwas geschwind' means 'quite quick' in German, and the title translates as 'The Hope'.

Franz Schubert (1797–1828)

Etwas geschwind ♩ = 96

mf

mp

cresc.

f

Tenuto



A line over or under a note indicates that it should be played 'tenuto', meaning 'held'. Slightly emphasize the note by using a heavier and/or faster bow-stroke. The tenuto mark shouldn't be confused with the line used to indicate hooked or linked bowing.

