

**Teaching the First Day of Violin and Viola Class:
Setting Students up for Success**

**CMEA Bay Section
Friday, January 7
1:30pm**

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What are your goals for the first day of class?

What do you want your students to think, feel, know, and be able to do at the end of the first class?

Some of my goals are:

1. Instrument respect, care, and routine
2. Students can respond to instrument parts
3. Learn rest position and playing position
4. Excellent Posture and Position
5. Learn how to hold the bow
6. Learn how to play with the bow (Bow to instrument)
7. Learn the string names
8. Learning can be fun
9. Students **sing and play**, including Hot Cross Buns
10. Set expectations (Musical and Behavioral)
11. Set the tone for helpful, comfortable place for learning, which yields lots of success!!! (An environment conducive to learning that respects everyone as individuals but values the community of learners and music-makers who work together to learn to play better.)

Written another way:

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. **Respond to names of instrument parts** (scroll, fingerboard, neck, tuning pegs and fine tuners, string names, bridge, chin rest, f holes, etc.)
2. Take **care of instrument**
3. Hold instrument in **rest position**
4. Hold instruments in **playing position** with excellent posture and position
5. **Sing in tune**
 - a. open strings
 - b. Hot Cross Buns with words and finger numbers or Mi, Re, Do
6. **Pizz. open strings together while singing**
7. **Put fingers on fingerboard in first position**
8. **Hold bow**
9. **Silently land bow** on string half way between bridge and fingerboard
10. **Play Hot Cross Buns** with excellent posture, position, with excellent tone, intonation, rhythm, and together.
11. **Play and sing together** (ensemble playing--begin with a single cue)

Students will learn:

- Classroom procedures
- Musical expectations
- Behavior expectations

Materials:

- Finger markers of some sort
- Sponges or shoulder rests for violinists and violists
- (Rock stops, straps, etc. for cellists and bassists)
- Packet of information:
 - instrument care
 - string names/levels
 - posture and position
 - some kind of musical notation
 - practice sheet suggestions to send home with students

How I teach.

Students sit in chairs in a semi-circle with case closed, flat on the ground, with case clasps facing them.

Parts of the Violin

Scroll, “to point towards me”

Tuning pegs and fine tuners, “We will learn to use these later.”

4 Strings: Pizz and name: Eency-weency “E” (violin)

Awesome “A”

Dawgawn “D” (Dinosaur “D,” Dragon “D,” Etc.)

Giant “G”

Colossal “C” (viola)

Fingerboard, for your fingers to dance on top of

Neck, to gently lift your instrument

Bridge, to protect because it is not glued in place but it holds ____ tons of pressure from the string tension

Chin rest, for your _____ “Actually, we’ll use the side of the jaw.”

Button

Back (where shoulder rest/sponge goes)

F Holes—sound comes out of these

Open case. Lift violin by neck and button. Stand up.

Rest Position, Wave right hand to wall, violin under right arm with string facing the wall, arm protects the bridge

Playing Position

Hold violin in front of you (scroll on top and button facing floor)

Hold violin sideways (scroll to left and button towards right wall)

Lift over your head

Sway like a palm tree until you find your center of balance

Bring down onto left shoulder

(“Even though I don’t want a whole class of arrogant students, we’ll just pretend”...)

Sniff a sniff of arrogance, turn your head in disgust, and drop the side of your jaw/chin in the chin rest.

Move feet/body until the scroll is pointing at me. Return to rest position. Repeat.

3rd time: swing arm underneath the violin so you strum strings with pinky

4th time: fingers dance on the fingerboard

5th time: Have a student lead

6th time: Have student lead and then, make L with thumb and first finger.

Thumb against fingerboard.

First finger reaches to farthest string. Sing and pluck G 4 times.

Relax arm and finger to next string. Sing and pluck (D, A, E) 4 times.

“What do you hear?” (Silently lay violin in case.) Have students do that. If noise, have them do it again.
(Respect for instrument)

Show Students Parts of the Bow

Frog, tip, hairs, stick, screw

Students gently remove bow from case. Turn screw six half turns to right until stick and hairs are pencil width apart.

Bow Hold

Pick bow up at balance point with left hand, frog facing right
 Tighten screw until hairs are a pen or pencil's width away from stick
 Left arm in front of body
 Lightly grab your arm with right hand (thumb underneath arm)
 Look at the spaces between your fingers
 Slide second knuckle of fingers over hand and onto stick over the frog
 Thumb is bent and under frog. It won't always live there but just for now.
 Poem: Four little frogs swimming in the pool,
 The little one gets out and sits on the stool.
 Click your pinky
 Tip up, click pinky again

Modified playing position.

Begin with instrument at your right side, left hand on fingerboard, right hand holding bow, tip towards ceiling, use side of hand above wrists for a two handed up and over head, onto left shoulder.
 Point tip of bow toward ceiling, double check bow hold.

Bow to Violin

Landing silently half way between the bridge and fingerboard on the ____ string.
 Relax your shoulder and arm.
 Push and pull.
 Repeat on each strings.
 Rest position.

Left Hand Playing Position

Fleshy part of thumb above last knuckle feels the seam between fingerboard and neck across from first finger.
 Fleshy part of the side of the index finger above last knuckle against neck near nut.
 Placing fingers on fingerboard & finger numbers—1, 2, 3, 4. Pluck four times each while singing the finger numbers. Open, open, open, open, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 2, 2, 2, 3, 3, 3, 3, 4, 4, 4, 4
 Repeat on one or more strings

Teaching Rote Song: Hot Cross Buns

Sing with words
 Sing with finger numbers
 Place fingers on the fingerboard/pizzicato
 Play Hot Cross Buns with verbal reminders
 Walk up: 0 1 2 2.
 Sing, 2 (Lift up your 2) 1 (Lift up your 1) 0 (put your 1 and 2 down)
 Playing position pizz and sing
 Add bow and repeat modified playing position, bow to violin, set left hand, walk up, you sing/they play steps

Review Instrument care:

Loosen bow, rosin bow, keep in safe place—never leave in car or in front of heater or air conditioner, etc.

Tell students practice expectations and give concrete suggestions for how to achieve them:

Find a quiet place to practice,
 Find a consistent time to practice (1/2 before or after dinner?),
 Review what to practice and give handouts with expectations.

Example of notation I sent home without explanation.

Hot Cross 'Buns

The image displays four staves of handwritten musical notation for the song "Hot Cross 'Buns". Each staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#). The first staff is in C major (indicated by a 'C' time signature) and uses a simplified notation system with numbers 1, 2, and 0, and a dash for a whole note. The second staff is also in C major and uses a similar simplified notation system, including circles for half notes and numbers for quarter notes. The third staff is in G major (indicated by a 'G' time signature) and uses standard musical notation with half notes and quarter notes. The fourth staff is also in G major and uses standard musical notation, featuring eighth notes and quarter notes. The notation is handwritten and appears to be a student's attempt at musical notation.

Instrument Care

1. When packing up: 1. Loosen bow, 2. Make sure the bow is held in place in case. Take shoulder rest off. Fit in case, if you can, or bring with you. Clasp or zip your case shut.

2. Storing Instrument: keep in safe place—never leave in car or in front of heater or air conditioner!

Practice Expectations

- Find a quiet place to practice
- Find a consistent time to practice (1/2 before or after dinner?),
- Review what we learned in class:
 - Rest position
 - Playing position
 - Bow hold
 - Bringing bow to instrument
 - click your pinky and bend your thumb,
 - land silently half way between the bridge and fingerboard,
 - relax your shoulder and arm, push and pull.
 - Repeat on each string.
 - Left hand fingers on fingerboard
 - Hot Cross Buns. Look at handout with reminders about each of these practice items
 - Also, do one of these a day:

1. Show a family member or friend rest position and playing position. Teach them how and take a picture.
2. Show a family member or friend how to hold the bow, modified playing position, how to bring the bow to the string, and how to push and pull the bow on one string. Teach them how and take pictures/video.
3. Show a family member or friend playing position, the name of the four strings and pluck (pizz.) each string four times while singing the name, rest position. Teach them to do it and submit a video.
4. Show a family member or friend playing position, how to bring your left-hand fingers to the fingerboard, pizzicato (pluck) four times each: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4. Submit a video.
5. Perform Hot Cross Buns for a family member or friend and submit a video.

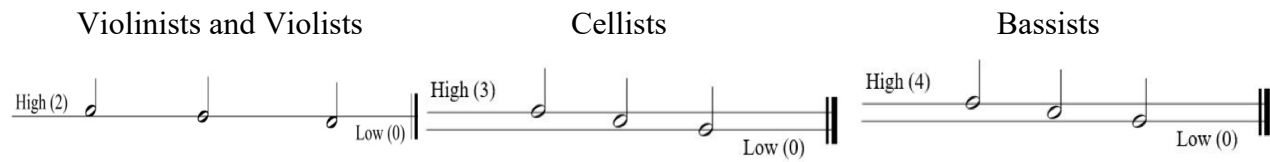
Student Name:				
2 Pics: Rest and Playing Position	4 Pics or video: Bow hold...pull/push bow	Vid: Sing and pizz open strings	Vid: Teach Left hand notes and pizz.	Video: Hot Cross Buns

- **Pic = Picture, Vid = Video**

When practicing, think about the checklist before you play:

- Land silently half way between the bridge and fingerboard
- Click Pinky (Relax shoulder and arm) (Violin and Viola)
- Pet Frog
- Bend Thumb
- Left elbow hangs toward floor
 - Neck sits on top of fleshy side of finger above biggest knuckle and thumb sits across
 - Thumb feels seam fingerboard and neck
- Put Egg in Place
- Knuckles **over/above** strings

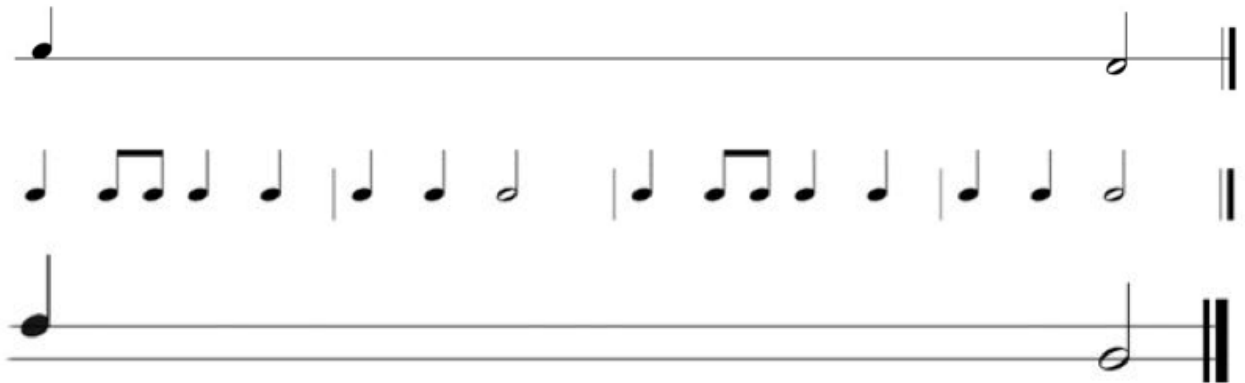
Example of a Beginning Composition for Strings (Use to introduce notation but not on first day.)



ASSIGNMENT: For today's composition, you can use:

1. Three pitches (high, medium, and low)
(Mi, Re, Do)
2. Begin on high (Mi).
3. Last note of the second measure is medium (Re).
4. Last note of composition is low (Do).
5. Either give all students the same rhythm that you provide or have the students work together to determine a rhythm, just using quarter, half, and eighth notes.

Create your
own Rhythm:



Then, we learn to play the student compositions with this procedure:

1. **Say** the rhythm
2. **Sing** letter names until you can sing them in rhythm
3. With letter names and/or finger numbers, **sing and pizz. in rest position**
4. **Sing and pizz. in playing position**
5. **Play with the bow**

Improvisation Explorations

- Teacher Initiated Echo patterns
- Student Initiated Echo patterns
- Conversation (Rhythmic or Melodic Antecedent/Consequence)
- Begin with a tune you know
 - Add Embellishments (upper neighbor tones, passing tones, etc.)
 - Play beginning together and then improvise for the second half of each phrase (example, Twinkle)
- Cover songs--replication and composition
- Pentatonic scale in different meters
- Teach tonic and dominant notes by ear and help improvise or compose with harmonies