

Refined Details and Mindset in String Pedagogy:

Practical Techniques for Violin Ensembles

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Core Ideas

1. **Simplify the complex**
 2. **Think in reverse (backward design)**
 3. **Focus on essentials**
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Introduction

Question 1: Can We Practice the Violin Without the Violin?

Why it works

- Reduces overload: no intonation, no sound, no bow pressure.
- Students focus on **movement, coordination, mental imagery**.

Evidence

Dr. Gabrielle Wulf (UNLV):

External focus + imagery → better accuracy, retention, movement quality.

Judd & Thorndike imagery studies:

Mental practice improves performance 20–30%.

Richardson Free-Throw Study (1967):

Imagery-only group → **23% improvement**

Physical practice group → **24%**

No-practice group → **0%**

→ **Practicing without the violin is an evidence-based shortcut.**
Perfect for full-group, noise-free training.

Part 1. Violin Holding & Left-Hand Training

Posture

- Natural spine curves
- Head centered (≈8–12 lbs) → relaxed muscles
- When head shifts, tension increases → posture & bow problems

Question 2: Is holding a violin a natural body position, or is it awkward?

Game 1 : 1–2–3 Freeze (Violin Hold)

Game 2 — Tiger's Paws (Finger Shape)

Game 3 — Finger Bowing Game (1–4)

Game 4 — Finger Target Game

Game 5 — Grab–Release Game

Recommended Exercise: *Henry Schradieck, School of Violin Technics, Op. 1 No. 1

Shifting

Game 6 — In- and- Out

Part 2: Bow Technique

Question 3: Who Is Holding the Bow?

Game 7 — Weight Transfer Game

Game 8 — Jellyfish Game

Game 9 — Spider-Legs Game

Game 10 — Seesaw (pinky)

Game 11 — Pinky-Balance Game

Game 12 — Double-Circle Retake Game

Game 13 — Air Bow Path (Positions 1–2–3)

Game 14 — Butterfly Game

Game 15 — Dotted Rhythm Bow Game

Recommended Exercise: Simon Fischer — *Warming Up for Violin*
(Advanced but full of ideas; take the parts as needed)

Part 3: About the Mindset

Question 4: Can Every Child Learn? — And What Makes It Possible?

Method 1: Key Missing Element: Kaizen (改善)

Forgetting Curve (Ebbinghaus)

We forget **70%** of new information in 24 hours without repetition.

→ **Children succeed when small things are repeated often.**

Solution: Kaizen inside rehearsal

Method 2: Teaching for Understanding & Backward Design (TfU & UbD)

TfU (Harvard Project Zero) — Four Questions

1. What should students understand?
2. What thinking shows that understanding?
3. What performances demonstrate it?
4. How do we support it?

UbD (Wiggins & McTighe)

Start from the desired outcome

Work backwards

Question 5: What matters most in violin education?

For example:

***Multisensory learning** (hearing, touch, balance, memory)

****Creativity**

Research Evidence

NIH-supported USC studies:

Musical training strengthens networks for language, attention, and executive function.

NEA reports:

Music improves focus, language development, visuospatial reasoning.

NSF studies on jazz improvisers:

Show specific brain patterns linked to creativity.

Everyone Can Participate (Dong Grand Song Model)

Comparison: Dong Ethnic Grand Song Choir vs. String Orchestra

Category	Dong Grand Song Choir	String Orchestra
Participation	Everyone sings at their own level	Students play parts matched to level
Texture	Simple + complex lines layered together	Simplified + advanced parts coexist
Performer Role	Every voice is essential	Every part contributes to ensemble
Philosophy	Inclusive; participation over perfection	Inclusive; growth and teamwork focused

Question 6: How to Be Irreplaceable in the Age of AI

Harvard (Kegan):

“People grow through relationship—not information.”

Stanford (Darling-Hammond):

“Learning happens through connectedness, trust, belonging.”

OECD Future-Skill List:

empathy, creativity, collaboration, judgment, emotional connection

Coda

We are not just teaching instruments.

We are shaping memories, community, and children’s lives.