

TEEN STRINGS

IDEAS, NEWS & FUN FOR STUDENTS OF VIOLIN, VIOLA, CELLO, BASS & FIDDLE

TIP SHEET № 6

PUT SOME BOUNCE IN YOUR BOW

Mastering Spiccato: Find your bow's bounce point, which is usually the balance point—the spot where the bow hangs horizontally when you're holding it from above, between your thumb and a finger.

It's not in the middle of the bow, more like a third of the way from the frog. Remember that spot—it's where you'll want to make contact with the string. Start with your bow lightly on the string, right at the bounce point. Begin playing short strokes, generated at the shoulder, with a

relaxed forearm and hand. Next, focus on creating a sweeping "U" figure with your right hand. This movement should not take your bow too far off the string, but it should give it a little lift.

The weight of the bow should be used to drive the stroke and simply let gravity do its job. Gradually do this faster and faster until you get to the point where the bow is staying a little closer to the string and you're just easing into it.

If the setup is correct, especially in the right hand, the bow should bounce by itself.



CALM YOUR COMPETITION NERVES



The Dover Quartet, grand-prize winner and recipient of all three special prizes at the 2013 Banff International String Quartet Competition.

Don't cram in practice at the last minute. "If you feel confident that you've prepared as well as you can, there's no pressure at the event itself to practice eight hours a day," says **Camden Shaw**, cellist of the **Dover Quartet**.

"You should arrive feeling that all the hard work is done already." Keep your world at the competition small and simple. "Get lots of sleep, rehearse very efficiently, and mainly focus on the upcoming round; [don't] worry about what comes after that," Shaw says.

Put Your Recorders On

When the lesson is over, it's gone—unless you record it. Today's digital recorders make it easier than ever to capture and save that gem of an insight or to play along later with your teacher's wonderful interpretation of that new passage. **The best way to get better is to listen to yourself.**

What you hear in your mind's ear and what's actually coming out of your instrument can be just a little bit different—or worlds apart! Recordings hold up an honest mirror to your ear.



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4 WAYS TO START & SUSTAIN A DAILY PRACTICE REGIMEN

Practice can seem like an overwhelming experience. And the notion of committing to a daily regimen is downright daunting. Take a deep breath. Relax. By mastering a few organizational skills, you can develop an effective practice regimen with results that will make you a better string player.

1. Create the Right Environment for Practice

Your practice environment sets the stage for your practice success. A simple, quiet space with no distractions is perfect for some students. Others might feel like they are being sent to their rooms for punishment, and might be more of a communal space practitioner. Create a safe place where your instrument can be ready to go, either resting in its open case on a shelf or table, hanging from the wall on an instrument hanger, or sitting on an instrument stand. Keep everything you need for practicing close at hand, including your rosin, stand, music, and a pencil.



Shifts, string changes, and phrases with accidentals are often areas that need extra attention. For the first few days, practice only the notes within these parentheses. Discover what the root issues really are in each case and master them.

3. Keep Up the Momentum

If you find yourself getting bored with the music you're playing, it's a sure sign that you need to add some feeling. Assess the mood, imagine a story line, and then find ways to make your rendition of the music tell the story. A good storyteller never gets bored.

4. Mirror, Mirror

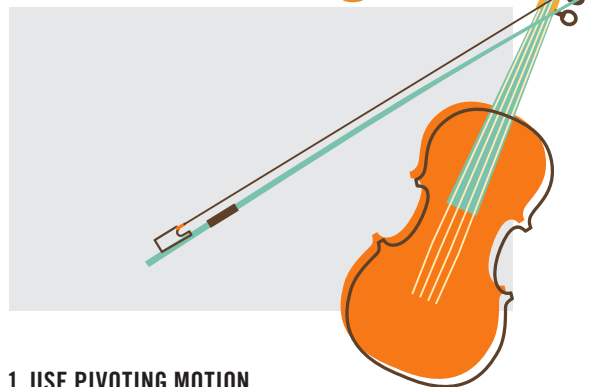
Playing in front of a mirror will not only help you identify and address postural and technical issues, it will also help inspire you to become the musician you eventually want to look and sound like.

—Laurel Thomsen

2. Maximize Your Practice Benefits

Learn to isolate issues. Ideally, when you first begin learning a new piece, étude, or exercise, although it could be at any time, go through your sheet music and mark all the challenging spots with parentheses.

How to Build Agility in Your Bowing Hand



1. USE PIVOTING MOTION

Hold the bow parallel to the floor and practice rocking it back and forth over the fulcrum, your thumb, using your index finger and pinky finger. After you develop a feel for these different types of motions, you're ready to build finger strength, dexterity, and flexibility with the following additional exercise.

2. THE 'CRAWLING' EXERCISE

Those who have been playing since childhood may remember the "crawling" exercise: hold the bow vertically and "crawl"—or inch—your fingers up to the tip and back down to the frog. This crawling exercise is particularly good for strengthening and improving flexibility in the fingers.

Confidence Is Key

"Confidence is having the experience of performing before you actually perform. This may sound like a Catch-22, but there are ways to create the background. 'If you have done it before, you can do it again,' is a mantra that I use regularly—and one that, along with relaxation and consistency, allows me to walk onstage and really have a great time. A big mistake that I used to make was not putting it all together: in other words, not 'practicing performing.' Having done the aforementioned work is great, and completely necessary. But it's like having all sorts of pretty patches, yet no quilt—you still have to sew it all together."

—Lara St. John

Did You Know?

Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 5, Op. 67's notorious four-note opening "dit-dit-dit-dah" has been used and referenced throughout history in many iterations.

After World War II, Symphony No. 5 was often referred to as the "Victory Symphony"—"V" is the Roman character for the number five,

and "V for Victory" was a popular battle cry for the Allies.

It is also alleged, nearly 30 years later, that the symphony influenced the development of the Morse Code—the rhythm of the opening four notes ("dit-dit-dit-dah") was used to represent the letter "V."

