

# TEEN STRINGS

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

Tip Sheet № 7

## 6 EASY STEPS TO MASTER THE CHOP ON THE VIOLIN



### 1 Forget Everything You Know About Your Bow Hold

Learning to do the chop begins with changing your bow hold. Start with your "classical" hold and (gasp!) **straighten your thumb so that the bow rocks out toward the joints closest to your fingertips.**

### 2 Focus on the Wrist Motion

The primary motion for the chop is in the wrist. Once you have your new bow hold, lightly cover your strings with your left hand to dampen them. **Hover the bow above the strings right near the frog and practice simply tapping your bow up and down as if you were waving good-bye to someone.**

### 3 Now Isolate the 'Chop'

**Between the weight of your bow and hand it doesn't take much to get a sound.** Start with a relaxed drop and give it a little more force only as necessary for the volume you want. Once the bow lands, let it "glue" momentarily to the strings, similar to the preparation you'd need if you were about to start a martelé stroke.

### 4 Stop Worrying About the Bow Angle

When doing the chop, **a bow that is not**

**perpendicular will tend to naturally slide a bit more, creating a fuller chop sound with less effort.** An angled bow also facilitates a flatter, more mobile wrist position and a lower, more relaxed elbow position.

### 5 Now, Add the 'Pinch' Aspect of the Technique

The motion is vertical, but **as the bow peels off the string, you'll hear the slightly higher-pitched resonance of the "pinch" that creates the chop's melodic potential.** If you didn't get much sound, try peeling the bow off the strings slightly to the left, as if you were doing a tiny up bow. If that doesn't do it, make sure you have enough rosin on your bow.

### 6 Get Rhythm

Once you have consistent sound, rhythm, and mechanics, **you can begin to vary your rhythm by adding louder chops and softer chops.** For the louder ones, simply raise your hand higher off the strings, strike with more force, and peel off more decisively.

Try moving slightly back and forth along the length of the string. This helps to create slight tone variations, leading to a more musical sound.

—Laurel Thomsen

## IT'S ALL IN YOUR HEAD



**T**here is no question that you need to excel at both reading and listening to memorize music well. String players have specific issues that make memorization more complicated, like shifting, bow distribution, and positioning. Fortunately, focused practice is somewhat magical in that approximately 90 percent ends up being memorized. The mind naturally retains many musical elements.

Most basic fingerings and patterns match the hundreds of études that filled the practice time of your early years. When a measure turns out to be an anomaly, catch the glitch by slowing down the brain.

Find the note on which the variation hinges, and concentrate more intensely on that change. If you make a mistake, when you repeat the section, you should think only of the mistake. The notes that have been played correctly don't need as much concentration. A mistake has deep roots, and music's many distractions can prevent the necessary concentration to root out a long-ingrained error.

—Paul Stein



# 3 Ways to Improve Your Shifting Skills

**T**o improve your accuracy, a good place to start is with a variety of études—they give you the opportunity to explore shifting, but it will take imagination and experimentation to capture the feeling. Explore these three organic concepts that define shifting and make it feel more natural.

## Note Your Place in Space

Rather than “pushing” the finger up the fingerboard, imagine the distance, or spread, between the “end points” of the shifting cycle. One of our lesser-known senses is the ability to know where something is in space. This sense (it even has a name: proprioception) is quite handy when you simply want to connect two notes while shifting.

Measure carefully with whole steps and half steps. Practice slowly only a couple of times, so that you don't feel rushed.

## Dig into the Strings

How you move your bow can either help or hinder your shifting. The much-feared “bump in the road” (when the bow jumps up at the moment of shifting) can be smoothed over by “burrowing” into the string. Let the bow move a little faster than usual and apply just enough pressure to compensate for the bow's unwanted reaction to what the left hand is doing.

## Find Your Target

Shifting down is a little more complicated than shifting up, but a slight “shift” in mental gears will make the process

easier (walking backward feels quite different from walking forward). To achieve the same security that shifting up gives you, try this thought exercise: before shifting down, create a visual sense of where the new note is by setting up a “ladder” from the first finger up to the note. For example, if you're shifting down to third position, create the ladder from first position. Once you can pinpoint where the shifting target is, channel the childhood game of hopscotch. Jump from one position to another. The distance is now streamlined and defined, and the music's rhythm sets the parameters.

—PS

## So DOPE! How to Fix Slipping or Stuck Pegs

**E**very string player has encountered a peg that refuses to tune up that last quarter-step to pitch, or won't turn at all. I once saw a violinist crack his instrument's scroll nearly in half when the A string un-tuned for the sixth or seventh time. He reached up, drove the peg in hard as he twisted, and the poor scroll burst apart. Take a close look at the peg holes: There should be no gaps, and no oval over-rounding where the shaft of the peg goes into the wall of the scroll. You can get a little tube of peg compound, known colloquially as peg dope, which helps a stuck peg spin and a slipping peg hold. But only use peg dope, and be sparing with it. There's only so much gunk that a peg shaft can handle before it loses control. If your peg troubles continue, bring your instrument to a luthier.

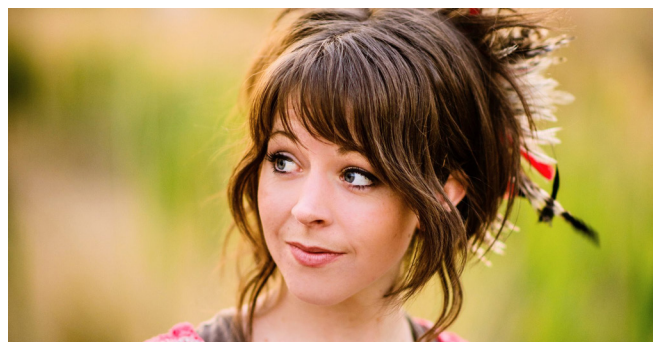
—Christopher Jacoby

## How to Be a YouTube Success

**“B**e prepared to work really really hard. I don't know any YouTuber who is successful who doesn't work their tail off. You have to be super passionate about it because people can sense authenticity. And also you have to be super passionate about it because you have to do it for free for a really long time.

“Collaborations are what really gave me my big start. Don't shoot for the stars. Just find people within your sphere that you can collaborate with and share fans. The cool thing about YouTube is once you're part of that community it's ‘I help you, you help me, we all rise.’”

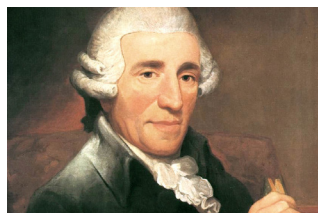
—Lindsey Stirling



## Did You Know?

Composer **Joseph Haydn**'s skull was stolen from his grave by Joseph Carl Rosenbaum and Johann Nepomuk Peter. The pair shared an interest in phrenology, a scientific movement, now discredited, that associated mental capacity with cranial anatomy. They dissected Haydn's skull and concluded that the music

portion of his brain was fully developed. Following the examination, Peter decided to keep the skull for his private collection. Years later, Haydn's body was exhumed and discovered to have no



skull. After several failed attempts to locate it, a substitute skull was placed within the tomb. In 1954, Haydn's skull was finally located, and now two skulls remain in his tomb.