

Right Hand - Bow Hold



Bow - Principles

- Develop a comfortable, relaxed bow hold
- Always move bow at right angles to the fiddle
- Pull the bow, rather than push it
- The fiddle is the voice of music, while the bow is the tongue (Stobbe)

Grip

- Make a “C” with thumb and fingers of right hand
- Place thumb against the bump between the grip and the frog
- Keep thumb joints flexed, never hyper-extended
- Hyper-extension of the thumb causes wrist tension (common problem)

Middle Finger

- Place on top of the bow - between first and second joints
- First joint opposite the thumb - as a pivot point

Ring Finger

- Place beside the second finger
- Tip should touch the “eye” of the bow

Index Finger

- Rotate wrist so that back of hand faces more towards the tip of the bow
- Place index finger on the bow between the first and second joints
- Separated from the second finger
- Used to increase pressure on the bow

Little Finger

- Place fingertip on the bow
- Keep finger joints flexed
- Used to decrease pressure on the bow

Bow Rotation

- Roll the bow in the fingers so that there is more pressure on the side nearest the bridge
- Gives hair a better grip on the string and helps loosen the wrist

Exercise: Straight Line

- Find a straight line on the floor or table
- Hold bow horizontally at waist height
- Draw bow back and forth along the straight line
- Watch how the right wrist moves
- Keep the fingers relaxed, check bow hold frequently

Exercise: Mirror

- Practice bowing in front of a mirror
- If bow movement looks good, it probably is good

Exercise: Paintbrush

- Move hand on table surface, as though it was a paint brush
- Notice how the wrist flexes and extends

Exercise: Wiggle String

- Place the bow on the D string
- Let weight of arm rest on the bow
- Wiggle the string without making a sound
- Demonstrates how much pressure is needed on bow

Exercise: Scratch

- Place bow on the D string, with lots of arm weight
- Move the bow very slowly - gives a scratchy sound
- Then move the bow more rapidly - the sound is smoother

Exercise: Down Bow

- Symbol - looks like a staple with tips down
- Draw the bow to the tip
- Extend the wrist to begin the movement
- Motion occurs at the elbow, not the shoulder
- Right hand moves away from the body

Exercise: Up Bow

- Symbol - looks like a "V" with tips up
- Draw the bow from the tip to the middle
- Flex the wrist to begin the movement

Exercise: Open String Cycle

- Play each string in turn (G-D-A-E, E-A-D-G)
- Move from the tip to middle or middle to tip on each stroke
- Make each string sound cleanly
- String to string movement occurs at the shoulder
- This is a “motor memory” skill - needs practice

Exercise: String Crossing (Rocking)

- Play an up and down bow on E string
- Rock over to the A string and repeat
- Repeat for D-A and G-D combination
- Repeat with a single stroke on each string
- This is a “motor memory” skill - needs practice

Exercise: Toilet Paper Roll

- One student plays the fiddle - open strings
- Another slides a toilet paper roll over the bow
- Encourages straight bow movement

Exercise: Isolate Lower Arm

- Place right elbow against a wall, then bow open strings
- Encourages use of lower arm and wrist
- Variation: hold small pillow under arm
- Variation: place upper arm against the back of a chair

Exercise: Isolate Wrist

- Cross left leg over right leg
- Place right forearm on left thigh
- Practice bow movement
- Variation: use edge of a table

Exercise: Ride A Horse

- Pretend you are holding a horse’s reins
- Flop your wrists as you gallop along
- Goal: loosen wrist joints

Exercise: Spider Pushups

- Place finger tips on a table
- Flex all five finger joints, including the thumb
- Goal: loosen finger joints