

Arts Assessment For Learning

MUSIC — 3-5TH GRADES

HOW TO & TIPS: BEGINNING STRINGS TECHNIQUE

Step 1: How to Hold the Violin

- Students will begin by putting the violin out in front of them with the scroll at the top, turning it upside down, and putting it on their shoulder.
- Students will be advised to keep the violin parallel to the floor, with their scroll facing forward.
- Students will then make a backwards “L” with their right hand and place their right thumb on the edge of the fingerboard, plucking with their pointer finger. Students will identify the D and A strings, and practice plucking various four beat patterns.
- The students will be given many opportunities to practice this step.

Step 2: Simple Rhythm and Bowing Practice

- Students will begin practicing examples 1-9 in *Essential Elements for Strings* Book 1.
- Students will be advised to practice the rhythm by saying the words ‘quart’ for quarter notes and “shh” for rests.
- Students will be advised to remember looking at the book, instead of their fingers on the violin.
- Students will sing the D and A patterns with the correct rhythm and then play it on the violin.
- Students will be given many opportunities to practice these examples.

Step 3: What is a Rubric!?

- The teacher will pass out the “D and A String Peer Assessment Rubric” with attached descriptive feedback prompts.
- The teacher will introduce the rubric to the students by asking the following questions:
 - What is a rubric?

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- What can a rubric be used for?
- How can rubrics help us improve our violin playing?

Step 4: Determining the Rubric Criteria Levels

- The teacher will focus on the rhythm portion of the rubric and explain each level for the criteria.
- Students will read the criteria for “Take A Bow,” the teacher will demonstrate what the “Take A Bow” level would look and sound like by playing an example on the violin.
- The teacher will ask a student to read the “Standing Ovation” level and ask, “What is the difference between the ‘Take a Bow’ and ‘Standing Ovation’?”
- The teacher will then demonstrate the ‘Standing Ovation’ level by playing an example on the violin.
- A student will read the ‘Applause’ level, and ask the difference between ‘Applause’ and ‘Standing Ovation’, the teacher will demonstrate by playing an example on the violin.
- A student will read ‘Smiles and Nods’ and ask the difference between ‘Smiles and Nods’ and ‘Applause’.
- The teacher will demonstrate ‘Smiles and Nods’ by playing an example on the violin.
- The teacher will play an example of a level and ask students to decide the level that was demonstrated.

Step 5: Peer Assessment of Rhythm Criteria

- Students will be given the opportunity to work with a partner to play an example, only using the rhythm criteria.
- Students will decide who will play first, and who will be watching.
- The first partner will play a specific example from *Essential Elements for Strings* Book 1 while the other partner observes.
- After they are finished playing, the person watching will circle one of the levels on the rubric that best matched what their partner played.

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- The students will then be given an opportunity to discuss why they circled that level.
- After discussing, the students will play the example again, and try to fix what their mistakes based on what their partner discussed with them. The partners will then switch.
- The person who was watching will now play, and the person who played will now watch.
- The students will play the same example, the person watching will circle the level and discuss why they picked that level.
- Students will be given an opportunity to play again and fix their mistakes.

Step 6: D & A String Criteria

- The teacher will review the D and A string criteria.
- A student will read the “Take A Bow” level and the teacher will demonstrate what “Take A Bow” looks like while playing the example.
- A student will read the “Standing Ovation” level and ask the differences between the two. The teacher will demonstrate the level.
- The students will read the ‘Applause’ level and ask what the difference is between ‘Applause’ and ‘Standing Ovation’, and demonstrate what ‘Applause’ looks like while playing the violin.
- Students will read ‘Smiles and Nods’ and define the difference between ‘Smiles and Nods’ and the other levels. The teacher will demonstrate this level.
- The teacher will play an example of a level and ask students to decide the level that was demonstrated.

Step 6: Peer Assessment of D & A String Criteria

- Students will go back to their partners.
- Students will only be focusing on the D and A String criteria.
- One partner will play while the other watches.
- After playing, the partner will circle the level that best fits their partners playing. Students will discuss and be given an opportunity to play again to fix their mistakes.
- The students will switch roles.

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Step 7: Peer Feedback

- After all students have played, they will be given the opportunity to put their comments in writing.
- Each partner will write something that their partner did well while playing the example and one thing they can work on.

Step 8: New Notes - E, F#, and G

- Students will begin to learn how to use their left hands to finger new notes on the violin.
- Students will learn how to finger the notes E, F# and G in addition to open D and A.
- Students will be given multiple opportunities to practice the examples from *Essential Elements for Strings* Book 1.

Step 9: Fingering Criteria

- The teacher will introduce the rhythm criteria from the rubric, “Fingering on the D String” with attached descriptive feedback.
- This criterion is the same as the criteria from step 4 and should be introduced the same way.

Step 10: Peer Assessment of Fingering Criteria

- The students will work in groups to play example number 15 from *Essential Elements for Strings* Book 1.
- Students will work with a partner to play the example one at a time. Students will follow the same protocol used in step 5.

Step 11: Left Hand Technique Criteria

- The teacher will introduce the new criteria “Left Hand Technique” the teacher will introduce the criteria through the same protocol used in step 4.

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