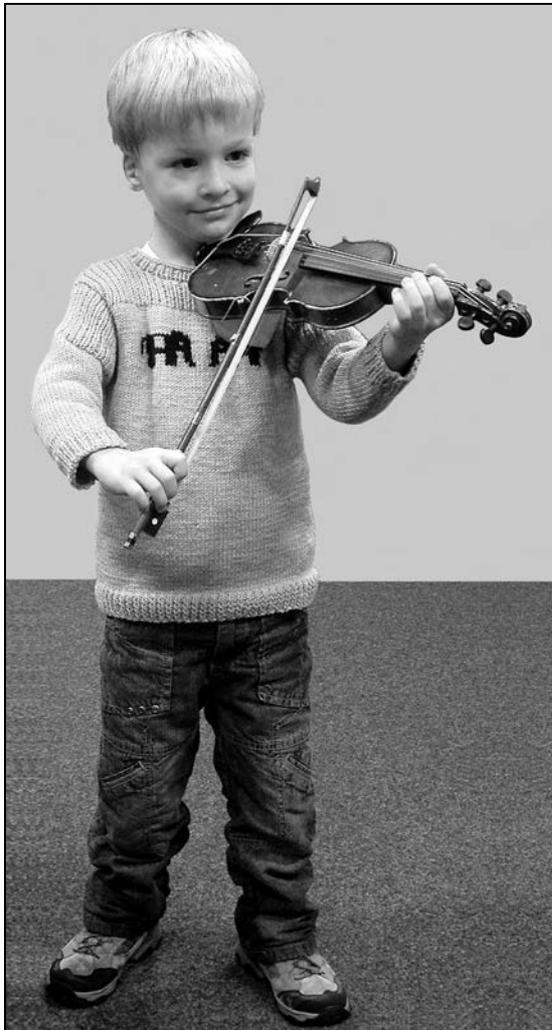


Introductory Lessons for Beginners

The first ten teaching Steps for a young violin student



1. Positioning the feet and bowing
2. Holding the bow
3. Holding the violin
4. First Twinkle Rhythm
5. String crossing from E to A & Rhythm on A
6. Left hand posture & positioning the fingers.
7. Preparation technique & the rhythm with three fingers.
8. Expanding the tonal range
9. The first Twinkle variation
10. We all play the Twinkle variation and the theme



Step No. 1

Positioning the feet and bowing



Rest Position

Both feet are placed beside each other (see below: broken line). The violin rests under the right arm. The bow is held with the right hand. The tip points downwards.

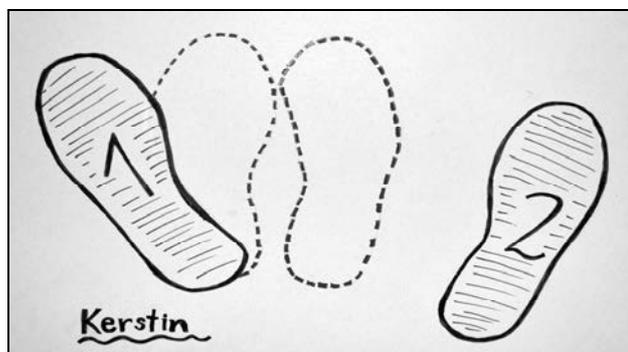
Playing Position

Both feet are placed in a v-position. The right foot (no. 2) stands slightly behind the left one.

Bowing

The child resumes the rest position and tries to bow accurately. Children often count to three and then return to the upright position.

A properly performed bow is easily learned and gives the child an immediate confirmation through the applause of the others. From the very beginning the child feels that playing the violin provides enjoyment for him and others.



There is a sense of achievement before the first note has even been played. This way the child is prepared to control and correctly exercise motions step by step. For the moment we are talking about a relatively large body movement. Later on the necessary movements for playing the violin become increasingly smaller and more precise.

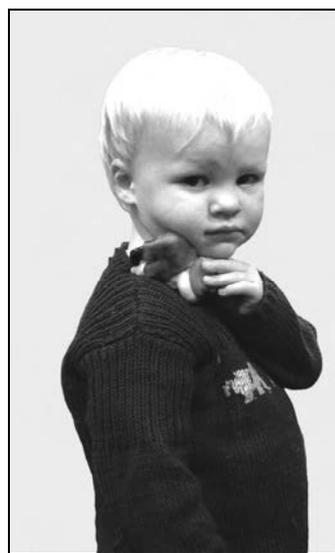
Step No. 2

Holding the violin



1. The child places its left hand on the right shoulder. This exercise is called the “bird’s nest” since we can imagine that a little bird lives in the crook of the arm.

Often we place a small stuffed animal or a doll in the crook so that the child can remember this exercise well.



For some children this exercise becomes easier if the animal is placed on the right shoulder.

Now the child slightly turns its head to the left so that it can just see the shoulder. Many children turn their entire bodies as they cannot turn their heads separately. This isolated movement *with the head* only must be practised.



2. Now the teacher or mother can place the violin on the shoulder from the top left. The student sees his violin come flying (he must turn his head up and to the left.) After the landing his head drops again. It is important that his head does not turn sideways so that he doesn’t “put it to sleep”.
3. After the child can hold the violin with head and shoulder only, he may place his left hand on the violin or the finger board.

*The golden rule
for a good violin and body posture is:
Nose, scroll, left elbow and left foot
should point approximately in one direction.*

Step No. 3

Holding the bow

Making a “fox” as a preliminary exercise for beginners

Exercise A

The tip of the thumb touches the first segment of the middle finger. Together they form a “fox snout”. It should be round. The first finger and the little finger stick up like the ears of a fox.

Exercise B

The snout is opened just slightly and we carefully put a pencil in it. Thereby the fingers should not move.

Exercise C

The “ears” can now relax. The first “ear” (first finger) is placed around the stick. The point of contact is about the middle segment. The second “ear” (little finger) is placed rounded on the stick. The little finger is the only one honoured to be on the stick and should be placed just slightly towards the inside.



Positioning the bow for beginners

During the next weeks and months the parents and the teacher should repeatedly check to see that the little finger is in the correct position.

Many amusing exercises will help to stabilize the grip on the bow and at the same time make it more flexible.

Mistakes frequently made:

Collapsed little finger and thumb, collapsed knuckle of the first finger, stiff fingers (roof like position). An incorrect bow grip can be the reason for weak bow control.

Step No. 4

First Twinkle Rhythm

The E string position

Observe the following points:

- Foot position
- Body posture
- Head position
- Violin position
- Holding the bow
- Relaxed position of the right arm and shoulder
- Placing the bow at the lower stripe
- Point of contact

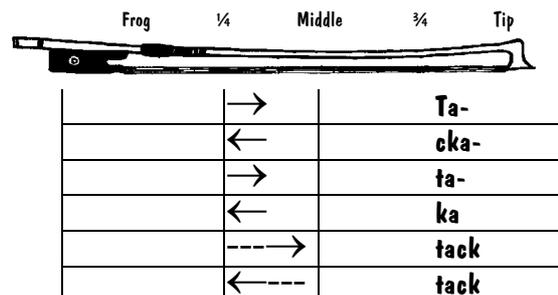
Now we can commence with our first song. It's called:

Rhythm on E

It is composed of two changing elements: the rhythm of the 1st. variation on the E string and a rest. With this song the basic principle for the preparation technique is introduced which we will look at more closely in Step No. 7. The song has an introduction and a postlude. During the postlude the teacher speaks the words: "Make a bow!" The child places his violin under his arm and bows.

Bow division

For the first songs, the teacher should place two different-colored stripes on the stick of the child's bow. **The higher stripe** should be placed **in the middle** and **the lower stripe at the balance point** (approx. $\frac{1}{4}$ -point) of the bow. Here, the bow is illustrated as seen by your parents while you play.



For the eighth notes (**tack tack**) we should use all of the bow between the stripes and for the sixteenth notes (**ta-ka-ta-ka**) only half as much.

The following points should be observed:

- Clear distinction between the two bowings
- Good bow division
- Full, clear sound
- Correct angle of the bow
- Clear rhythm

Step No. 5

String crossing from E to A & Rhythm on A

The silent cradle

The child places the bow at the lower stripe on the E string and attempts to move silently to the A- and back to the E string. Should the child produce a noise during this exercise it could easily happen that “the baby in the cradle wakes up”. Hence the movements should remain small. It is important that the weight of the arm is conveyed in such manner that good string contact remains and the relaxed right arm position changes only slightly.

Rhythm on A

Our second song (the rhythm on E is simply played a fifth lower) at first usually causes substantial problems for the child. Not deliberately they touch two strings. It will help if the child looks at the contact point of the bow.

Simultaneously his hearing capabilities will be trained.

Rhythm on E and A

If the A and B exercises have been thoroughly prepared the third song should seem very easy. We will play the first Twinkle Rhythm alternately on the E and A strings. Between each rhythm two quarter rests are placed.



Step No. 7

The preparatory technique and the rhythm with three fingers

The preparatory technique

The child should become accustomed to exercising left and right hand tasks quickly, controlling and coordinating the movements of both hands. Our practise model consists of the twinkle rhythm and two quarter notes. During the rest the teacher speaks the words **Ready-Play**. It is important that these words are spoken rhythmically so that the child learns to feel the basic beat. At the word **Ready** the fingers of the left hand are placed on or lifted off the fingerboard and the word **Play** is for string crossings. This means:

Ready is for the left and play for the right hand

To begin with, let's practice this technique using the rhythm with three fingers. At first we can be content if the child watches out for the rests. However the movements should become increasingly more and more precise after each of the above mentioned words.

Rhythm with three fingers

This song also has an introduction and a postlude. During the introduction when the word *one-two-three* are heard, the child very gently places the first three fingers on the A string. This means that the fingers sneaks to their places like little elves.

Now we can start! The child plays the Twinkle-Rhythm on the note **D**. Then the teacher speaks the words **Ready-Play** and at the word **Ready** the third finger immediately "jumps" into the air and the child plays the rhythm on the note **C#**.

This exercise is to be continued accordingly. Every time the word **Ready** is spoken, the playing finger jumps into the air. During the postlude after the words "*Make a bow*" the child places his violin under the arm and bows.

Step No. 8

Expanding the tonal range

Now we would like to expand the tonal range to six notes.

Here are two exercises for this purpose:

- The first one is easy for the children. It's called "*Rhythm on e and one*". The Twinkle-Rhythm is played on the open E-string then follows, as always, a rest during which we say the words **Ready-Play**. At the word **Ready** the first finger is placed on the E-string on the note **F#**. Alternately E0 / E1 (**E/F#**) is repeated several times.
- With the rhythm of the first Variation E0 / A123 (**E / D**) are played alternately. This tone combination is the most difficult in our little Twinkle-song. Of course there is always a rest between the two notes during which we speak the words **Ready-Play**. In the first measure, at the word **Ready** the first three fingers of the left hand are placed one after the other without pressure as quickly as possible. This is already the first velocity exercise. In the second measure all fingers are lifted quickly and simultaneously. At the word **Play** the bow is moved from the E to the A string and in the second measure from the A to the E string. We want to develop quick reflexes from the very beginning.

The following points should be considered:

- Left before right**
(The fingers of the left hand must already be in place before the bow can be drawn.)
- Good left hand posture and correct finger positioning**
- Point of contact**
- Clear rhythm**
(Important is the exact observation of quarter rests)
- Good bow division** (♩ = full length, ♪ = half length)
- A full clear sound**

Step No. 9

The first "Twinkle" Variation

This song is divided into three sections. Here are some amusing words for the first Variation to help clarify the structure:

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Part A (mm. 1-4): | A0: Ball O' Fur is my cat; E0: He's a furry grey cat, E1: And he is a fat cat, E0: 'cause he eats tomatoes, | A3: pickles and potatoes A2: cantaloupe and Fritos A1: each day he gets fatter A0: but it doesn't matter! |  |
| Part B (mm. 5-8): | E0: On the Kreisler Highway A3: Bowing with a straight bow A2: Bowing with my elbow A1: See my car can go! Go! | E0: On the Kreisler Highway A3: Bowing with a straight bow A2: Bowing with my elbow A1: See my car can go! Go! |  |
| Part C (mm. 4-8 = 9-12): | A0: Ball O' Fur is my cat; E0: He's a furry grey cat, ... | |  |

Let's start with only part A. Here we can find all the preliminary exercises for *Twinkle*:

1. Rhythm on E
2. Rhythm on A
3. rhythm on E and A
4. Rhythm with three fingers
5. Rhythm on E and 1
6. Rhythm on E and 3

We will of course incorporate the Introductory Technique while working on the Twinkle variation. This means we place two quarter rests between the notes during which we speak the words *Ready-Play*. At the word *Ready* the fingers of the left hand are placed on or lifted from the string and at the word *Play* the string crossing occurs.

When the student has mastered these preliminary exercises well, **the rests can be shortened.**

- a) *Ready-Play* with two eighth rests
- b) *Ready-Play* with two sixteenth rests
- c) Without rests, just a mental preparation

Soon the child will be able to play the first variation without rests. However with one **exception**. When the difficult change occurs from the open E string to A 3, a short pause will be necessary until the little fingers find the correct spot quickly enough.

Step No. 10

All the Twinkle variations and the theme

Variations- B/C/D/E

In the same way we learned the rhythm for the first variation we will continue with the rest of the rhythms.

With the bow held vertically the children draw the Twinkle rhythms of the Var. B,C,D and E in the air and sing the rhythm-verse. The piano accompanies the singing and the motions. Two quarter rests are inserted between each rhythm. The teacher speaks the **Ready-Play** words during the rests. Then the new rhythm is played on the E and A strings. Now the entire variation is performed with **Ready-Play**. For the variations B/C/D/E the following must be observed:

All twinkle rhythms are to be played *between the two stripes*.

The **sixteenths** are to be played with half of the length that the **eighths** (whole bow) are played. (*The space between the stripes is considered the whole bow.*)

All sixteenths are to be played **detaché**.

All eighths shall be drawn quickly and stopped abruptly. The **martelé** is being prepared here.

Consider the following points:

- Clear distinction between the two bowings
- Correct angle of the bow
- Good bow division
(♩ = full bow, ♪ = half bow)
- Clear rhythm
- Full clear sound.

The Theme

The theme should be played with a soft sound. We call this the bell sound. The notes should end gently and soft like a bell. We want to listen for the resonance. The bow remains on the string the whole time. We stay between the two stripes. Later on the child can use more bow. It is imperative however to use the whole bow for the quarter and the half notes. This now means that we are playing with two different bow speeds.

Pre-Twinkle Box Violin and Bow

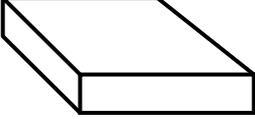
Preparing the young child for success

Unlike traditional methods, Suzuki teachers do not start instruction immediately on the instrument but prepare children for holding and moving with the instrument using the foot chart and the box violin.

In addition, listening is key to success. Reading music is not done while playing the instrument but occurs only after the child is able to play with feeling from memory.

In this way, the child learns to play less mechanically and more musically.



| Box Sizes | 1/16 | 1/8 | 1/4 | 1/2 |  |
|-----------|--------|--------|-------|-------|---|
| Length | 12 cm | 13 cm | 14 cm | 15 cm | |
| Width | 13 cm | 14 cm | 16 cm | 18 cm | |
| Height | 4-5 cm | 4-5 cm | 5 cm | 6 cm | |

