

NORTH TEXAS SCHOOL OF TALENT EDUCATION

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Teaching Vibrato to Children

Vibrato is a fundamental technique in violin playing that enhances a beautiful tone quality and is a key element in creating musical style. Teaching vibrato to children requires preparation, repetition of vibrato exercises over time, assistance from the parents, and integration into the repertoire. When a student begins to incorporate vibrato into their performance, the quality of sound is forever transformed!

- Conditions for vibrato readiness are established.
- Introduce the vibrato rhythms (*cheese, pizza, pepperoni*) with the egg shaker.
- Get students comfortable performing the rhythms with the metronome ($J = 60$)
- Introduce exercises for developing flexibility in the distal joint.
- Incorporate other movement exercises, both with and without the instrument.
- Using guided awareness, prepare the cooperation between the finger and wrist. Teach the parent how to guide this at home.
- As preparation for Dr. Suzuki's "**two-tone vibrato exercise**," the students first learn to perform one oscillation per bow, and then two.
- Set up the entire "**two-tone vibrato exercise**" using the vibrato rhythms and the metronome. The journey, over many months, is from $J = 60$ to $J = 200$.
- Vibrato exercises can also be practiced away from the metronome, in a more musical setting. Introduce Kerstin Wartberg's exercises *Ghost Tones*, and *The Little Ghost*.
- Begin incorporating vibrato attempts into repertoire, beginning with longer notes in review pieces.

Book 3 is an excellent time to study vibrato in depth. The pieces in Book 3 are transformed with vibrato. New layers of expression become possible, artistry develops, and a student's sound becomes their own. A well-developed vibrato ready for use in the concertos of Book 4 is an important goal.

Vibrato Readiness

1. Excellent violin / viola hold.
2. Hand-frame fully developed, with fingers on the inside-corners.
3. Two – point contact.
4. Lighten weight of finger on string.
5. Use of independent fingers.
6. Vibrato motion should be parallel to the strings (ear to E-string peg).
7. Distal joint flexibility, relaxed thenar muscle, wrist motion.
8. Vibrate on selected long notes first (Book 2 & 3).
9. Model vibrato from the very beginning.
10. Listen (not watch) to evaluate students' vibrato abilities.