## Square and extended

The terms 'square' and 'extended' describe the shape of the finger when it is placed on the string. In the square shape (e.g. $1^{\text {st }}$ finger Bb on the A string) the angle between the nail joint and the middle joint is closer to a right-angle than when the finger is 'extended'. In the extended shape (e.g. $1^{\text {st }}$ finger B natural) the finger is straighter from the nail joint to the middle joint (though still curved).
The square does not have to be a perfect right-angle - it may often be $45^{\circ}$ - but is simply more 'square' than the extended shape. This particularly applies to the $4^{\text {th }}$ finger, which is never as square as the others. Whether a finger is square or extended depends on the position, and on what the surrounding notes are.
In Example 1 the second finger moves from square ( $\square$ ) to extended ( $\diamond$ ), the hand staying in one position. During the semiquavers G-A (bar 2) the $2^{\text {nd }}$ finger moves back to the square shape ready for the C natural.


In Example 2 the $2^{\text {nd }}$ finger returns to the square shape (bar two). Keeping the finger too extended and slightly moving the hand back to place the finger in tune on the G natural is a common cause of tension. In the third bar the $2^{\text {nd }}$ and $3^{\text {rd }}$ fingers move from square to extended. A common fault is to keep the fingers too square, partly shifting up instead of moving the finger alone. This results in severe intonation problems because the hand is no longer in any particular position. In this case the last G natural would be too sharp even if the finger did move back from extended to square.


## EXERCISES (for violin or viola)

Exercise 1. This exercise exaggerates the change from square to extended. Keep the hand still without shifting and only move the fingers, with the knuckle joints remaining relaxed and soft. Release the string a little during the movement from one note to another. Also play the same sequence on the other strings.


Exercise 2. $\square=$ Square finger $\diamond=$ Extended finger. Repeat each bar several times. First two lines: keep the hand still, resting it on the finger that plays the second and fourth notes. Move the other finger from square to extended. Last two lines: feel the hand position resting on the finger that plays the first and third notes (hold this finger down), moving only the other finger not the hand. Also play on the other strings.


Exercise 3. Keep the hand still and only change the shape of the fingers. Also play on the other strings.


Exercise 4. Keep the hand still and only change the shape of the fingers. Continue up to $5^{\text {th }}$ or $6^{\text {th }}$ position.


Next month's BASICS looks at chord playing, with two exercises for smooth string crossings.

