

Chords: smooth pivoting

Pivoting is the movement of the bow *around* the string, i.e. at the same time as sustaining a stroke up or down on one string, pivoting gradually brings the bow closer to an adjacent string.

Pivoting is an example of *technical* timing as opposed to *musical* timing. (Musical timing is when you want the sound to begin, technical timing is often before. Gripping the string before a martelé is an example of technical timing, as opposed to the musical timing of actually playing the stroke.) To pivot smoothly, the bow must always begin to move towards the next string before you want to play it. The later the pivot, the faster it has to move. Smooth, well-timed pivoting is one of the most important aspects of bow technique, enabling seamless string crossings without accent or disturbance. Pivots are essential in chord playing, joining together the bottom and top half of the chord to create one, unbroken sound.

You can see clearly how smooth or sudden the pivot is by standing with the violin or viola at right-angles to a mirror.

Exercise 1. Play through the chord sequence using the five progressive variations.

The exercise begins with a chord sequence in G major: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5, G5. Below this, five variations of pivoting are shown, numbered 1 through 5. Variation 1 is marked with a tempo of $\text{♩} = 72$ and dynamics of *f sostenuto*. Each variation shows a different way of moving the bow across the strings to connect the notes of the chord sequence smoothly. The first variation is a simple, slow pivot. The subsequent variations show increasing complexity and speed, with some variations including slurs and accents. Each variation ends with "etc." to indicate it can be repeated.

Exercise 2. Play through the chord sequence using the eight progressive variations.

The exercise begins with a chord sequence in G major: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F#5, G5. Below this, eight variations of pivoting are shown, numbered 1 through 8. Each variation shows a different way of moving the bow across the strings to connect the notes of the chord sequence smoothly. The variations are more complex and faster than those in Exercise 1, with some variations including slurs and accents. Each variation ends with "etc." to indicate it can be repeated.