

# Widening at the base joints

It is easier to play tenths if you position the hand on the fourth finger and reach back to the first (rather than basing the hand on the first finger and stretching up to the fourth), because in reaching back you automatically widen and open the hand at the base joints. The same principle of widening the hand at the base joints applies to ordinary left hand use as well.

In first position, small hands need to be based more on the second finger, with the first finger reaching down a little and the third and fourth fingers reaching up. Large hands can be based on the first finger with the third and fourth fingers still able to reach their notes easily. But whatever the size of the hand, widening at the base joints makes the fingers more upright and allows the most natural finger movement.

## Exercise 1

In each bar balance the hand on the fourth finger. The more the *tip* of the fourth finger touches the string, the more curved the finger is; the more of the *pad* touches the string, the straighter it is. For the purposes of the exercise make sure of the following:

- 1 Place the fourth finger more on its tip than its pad, keeping it in a rounded shape. It is most important (in this exercise) not to change the shape or angle of the fourth finger as you use the third finger.
- 2 Reach back with the third finger by widening at the base joints between the third and fourth fingers. Keep the base joint of the fourth finger close to the level of the fingerboard (or even a little below if the fingers are long).
- 3 Keep the thumb opposite the second finger (not as a rule, but in this exercise).
- 4 Keep the entire hand soft and relaxed, playing with a loose vibrato. (Do not clamp the hand against the shoulder of the violin.)

Very slow

Play on each string.

## Exercise 2

As well as helping to reach back from the fourth finger, this exercise is also good for keeping the fingers above the strings, instead of pulling them back too far away from the fingerboard.

In these Ševčík-type patterns, hold the fourth finger down on the string without playing it. Position the hand to favour the fourth finger, so that it is curved, relaxed and comfortable.

Play each bar in crotchets, quavers and semiquavers, playing with the metronome at  $\text{♩} = 60-72$ .

**Example**  
0 1 2 3



**Note patterns**



- At each speed, drop fingers on to the string *as late as possible*. The finger action should be *fast* rather than *heavy*. Lift off very fast, at the last possible moment.
- Wherever possible, lightly hold fingers down on the string.
- Also play the patterns on the D string, holding down the fourth finger on the G string, and on the E string, holding down the fourth finger on the A string.

## Exercise 3

- Hold the fourth finger down without playing it.
- Position the hand to favour the fourth finger. Reach the fingers back to the lower notes by widening the hand at the base joints.
- It is most important (in this exercise) not to changing the shape or angle of the fourth finger as you use the other fingers.



### Rhythm variations

$\text{♩} = 60-72$



Tremolo

Also play on the G-D and A-E strings.

Next month's BASICS features exercises for improving semitone shifts.