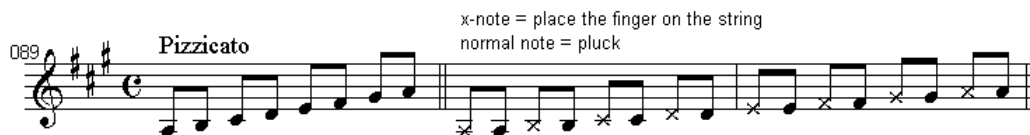


Good co-ordination

An open string vibrates between the nut and the bridge. When a finger is put down, shortening the string length, it is in effect a ‘movable nut’. The string length must be properly stopped by the finger before the bow moves. Therefore the rule is that the fingers always lead and the bow follows.

If the finger is late stopping the string, and the bow has already begun to move, the note begins with ‘fuzz’ and lacks clarity. A graphic way to illustrate perfect co-ordination is to play a few notes pizzicato. It is instinctive to stop the notes before plucking the string, even at a rapid tempo.



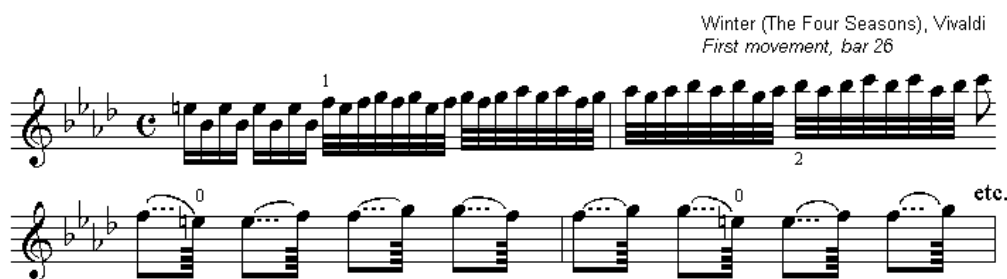
The bow may easily get ahead of the fingers in a fast passage because bowing actions are often more straightforward than finger actions. The bow may simply be moving up and down on the same string while the left fingers have many complex actions to perform — changing shape from note to note, dropping from different heights, some being placed early on the string, some being placed after shifts, and so on.

Co-ordination practice

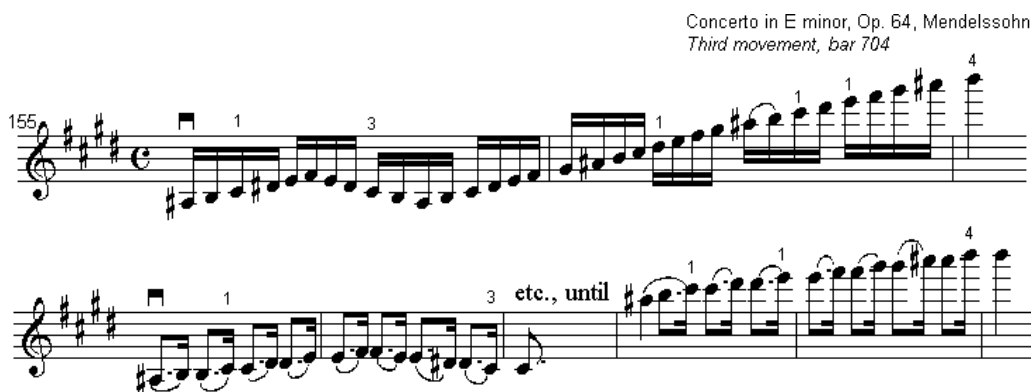
When co-ordination is not perfect, it is nearly always that the finger is a fraction late, after the bow. Improve co-ordination by placing the fingers a fraction of a second too early, before the bow.

Example 1

Begin at a slow tempo, playing the dots as long as possible and the short notes as short as possible. Gradually increase the tempo until the dotted pattern is as fast as it can practically be played, always feeling the fingers a fraction ahead of the bow.



Example 2



Example 3

This method of placing the fingers slightly too early works just as well with slurred notes:

Violin Concerto in D, Tchaikowski
First movement, bar 57

036 *f*

087 *f*

Example 4

Concerto in G major, K216, Mozart
First movement, bar 106

154 *f*

Off-the-string passages

Off-the-string passages also benefit from this type of practice. There are two ways to do it:

- 1 Do the co-ordination practice with the stroke on the string, not off. Practise the same as Examples 1 and 2 above.
- 2 Practise the stroke off the string, placing the fingers in a syncopated rhythm between the bow strokes. Start at a slow tempo and speed up as before.

Sonata in E minor, K304, Mozart
First movement, bar 8

157 *f*

158 *f*

This is an extremely effective practice technique that brings instantaneous and long-lasting results. Furthermore, practicing individual passages like this noticeably improves co-ordination throughout all the rest of your playing. Try it for yourself and see!

Next month's Basics: how to practice the passages of tenths in the Bruch G minor Violin Concerto.