

# Tone-semitones in blocks

Thinking of each note or finger in relationship to other notes or fingers – rather than seeing each note in isolation – is one of the most important aspects of intonation. Checking notes against each other is one way in which this applies, for example tuning any stopped  $A^{\flat}$  to the open A, or feeling  $F^{\sharp}$  as the ‘leading note’ to  $G^{\flat}$ . Another way in which it applies is in playing *intervals* between notes rather than the notes themselves (do not play  $D^{\flat}$ , and then  $F^{\sharp}$  - play a *major third*). Here we are concerned with feeling the four fingers in tone-semitone patterns, for example tone-tone-semitone, or tone-semitone-tone, and so on.

## Example 1.

Violin Concerto no. 3 in G, K216, Mozart  
First movement, bar 78

Basing this two-octave scale on a first finger  $C^{\flat}$ , the tone-semitone patterns are:

Tone Tone Tone      Tone Tone Tone      Tone Tone Semitone      Tone Tone Semitone

To practise play the first finger on its own, and then place the other fingers on the string together, at the same time, in ‘blocks’. (The only fingers that will actually sound will therefore be the first and fourth fingers, the second and third being placed silently.) Afterwards the passage will feel more secure, the hand and fingers falling immediately into each new tone-semitone ‘setting’ without hesitation. Keep the first finger held down on the string as marked:

(Lower two fingers silent)

## Example 2.

Violin Concerto in E minor, op. 64, Mendelssohn  
First movement, bar 36

When a group of notes is not in consecutive order like a scale, make the tone-semitone pattern clear by rearranging the fingers in the order 1 – 2 – 3 – 4. Here, the groups within brackets fall into the following tone-semitone patterns:

Tone-semitone-tone      Semitone-tone-tone      Tone-tone-semitone      Semitone-tone-semitone      Tone-semitone-tone

Having played the first finger place the 2nd, 3rd and 4th fingers on the string at the same time (so that you actually play only the top note). Put the fingers down in-tune, in their correct tone-semitone patterns. Then play the four notes descending to check that they are in tune:

Also strengthen the feel of each tone-semitone group by playing lightly and quickly as follows:

**Example 3.**

Violin Concerto no. 7 in A minor, op. 9, Rode  
First movement, bar 63

The groups of notes in brackets fall into the following tone-semitone patterns:

Place the fingers together in blocks as in Example 2:

**Example 4.**

Winter (The Four Seasons), op. 8 no. 4, Vivaldi  
Third movement

- Place the notes in brackets silently on the string, in tune. Place 4 – 3 – 2 together first, and then place the first finger (so that then all four fingers are on the string).
- Then play the notes fast, like grace-notes, stopping on the first finger.
- Keep the first finger down on the string each time until just before it is next needed.