Chromatic glissando

Speed of glissando

The first step is to find the correct speed of the glissando: play an ordinary, smooth glissando without individual semitones.

Play strictly in time, sliding so that you pass – without stopping – the first note of each group of four exactly on each beat. In this example count: 3 - 4 - 1 - 2 - 3 (the first ‘3’ being the A# which is the third note of the run).

Building the run in groups

Having found the speed of the slide, the next step is to slide in stages – still without the individual semitones – working from the bottom up:

Also work in stages from the top down, stopping exactly in tune on the first note of each last beat:
Then play the individual semitones, again working in stages from the bottom up:

Also start at the top and work down in stages, always arriving exactly in tune on the first note of each beat:

Sometimes the groups may work better in groups of three:

Another way to establish the groups is to practise with accents:

Use an ordinary fingering as a model

Each note in a chromatic glissando should sound as clear as in a fingered chromatic run. Use an ordinary chromatic fingering as a model, to highlight any blurring in the glissando.

Alternate the following until they sound identical:

Next month’s BASICS explores bow division