

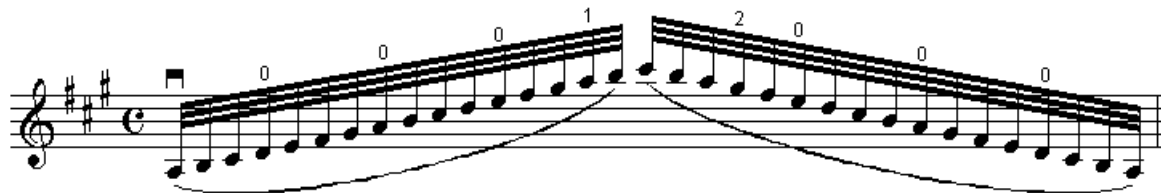
Fast passages

Moving fingers in 'blocks'

Playing at a slow tempo you can raise and drop each finger as an individual action. As the playing gets faster, at some point a speed limit is reached making it more difficult to direct each action individually.

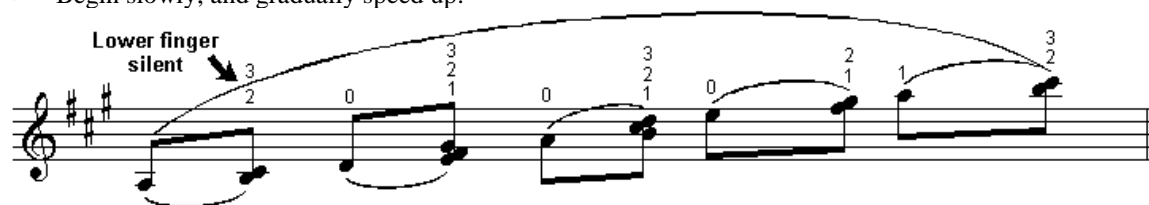
To play faster, raise or drop groups of fingers together, in a fan-like shape. The fingers all move at the same time as one single action, but touch or leave the string one after another. In most cases you need a combination of individual finger actions and blocks; in the very fastest playing you can use blocks almost exclusively.

1
Example

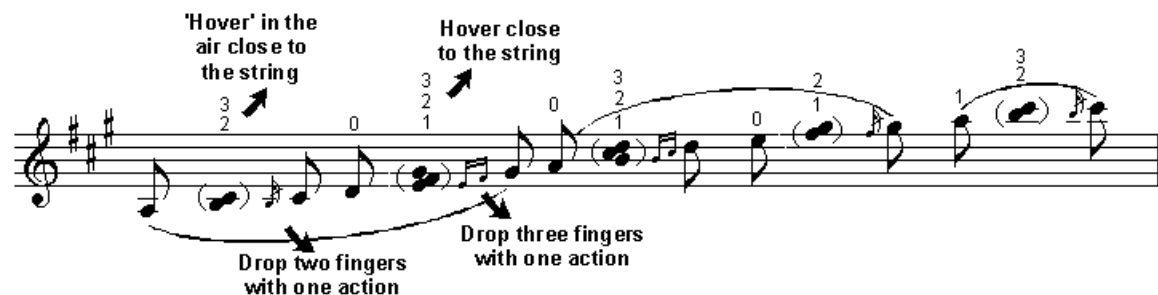


Ascending

- First clarify the tone-semitone pattern of the fingers by dropping them on to the string together. This is like playing a double or triple stop on one string, so that the upper finger is the only one that you actually play, the lower fingers on the string remaining silent. Drop the fingers together as one action.
- Begin slowly, and gradually speed up:



- Then, before dropping the fingers arrange the tips so that the lowest finger is closest to the string, the highest finger furthest from the string. 'Hover' the fingers above the string.
- Drop them together as before, one action bringing both fingers towards the string at the same time. Because the lower finger starts off nearer the string than the upper finger, it contacts the string an instant before the upper finger and the two notes sound very fast:



Descending

- Before lifting arrange all the fingers on the string.
- Lift the fingers off the string together as one action.
- Lift the fingers at a slight angle so that the upper fingers leave the string a fraction before the lower fingers.



2

Example

Timing the finger and bow for fast playing

The muscular strength, energy or effort of playing need not increase as the tempo of the notes increases. To play two notes very fast, or to play them less fast, often requires exactly the same finger action. It is simply a matter of timing the finger with the beginning of the bow stroke, not of working harder.

3

Example

- (1) In the first bar, the third finger drops on to the string long after the bow begins to play the first finger B. In the second bar, the third finger waits only half as long before dropping, and so on. By the fifth bar, the third finger drops an instant after the bow begins to move. In each case the speed and energy of the third finger is exactly the same. The difference in the speed of each pair of notes lies only in *when* the finger drops.
- (2) Raising a finger works in the same way. In the first bar the third finger lifts off the string long after the bow begins to play the third finger D. By the fifth bar the third finger lifts off an instant after the bow begins to move, the speed of the finger action remaining the same.

4

Example

- Exaggerate the timing of the notes marked '+' by dropping or raising the fingers almost at the same moment as the beginning of the bow stroke.

- (1) Place the fingers at the same time, as though playing a double stop on one string.
- (2) Drop the finger so soon after the beginning of the bow stroke that the grace note is only just audible.

Next month's BASICS returns to the left hand with exercises for extending the reach of the fingers.