

# Smooth bowing

## Smooth connections

In smooth ('simple') *détaché* strokes the bow speed and pressure are even, and the strokes are connected to each other seamlessly without a break or alteration in the sound. In accented *détaché* the bow speed is fast–slow and the pressure is heavy–light.

To make a smooth bow change in simple *détaché*:

- 1 Very slightly slow down the bow an instant before the bow changes direction
- 2 At the same time very slightly lighten the pressure.

The factors that most commonly disturb the bow change are 1) suddenly increasing the bow speed just before changing direction, and 2) lightening the bow excessively (at the point) or overpressing (at the heel).

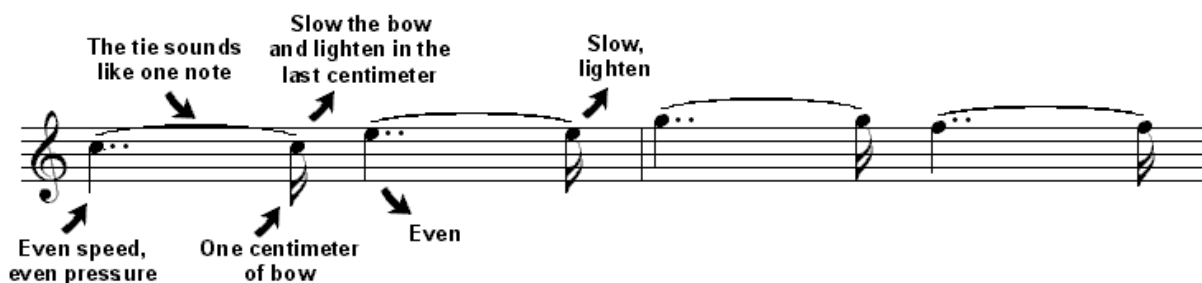
The way a playground swing slows to a halt before changing direction provides a useful image for the bow change. The difference is that having changed direction the swing starts off slowly and gathers speed gradually, whereas the bow moves at full speed at the very beginning of moving in the new direction.

- Practise the bow changes by pausing briefly just before the bow changes direction.
- See how slowly you can move the bow, while still sustaining the tone solidly, in the very last centimeter before you move in the other direction.

Example



- Begin slowly, playing in the upper half. Imagine that although each note sounds like a minim, it is actually a double-dotted crotchet tied to a semiquaver.
- At the last moment before finishing the stroke, at the very end of the semiquaver, infinitesimally slow and lighten the bow.



The effect to the listener should be of the smoothest, most seamless bow change imaginable, with absolutely no break in the tone between the strokes.

Example



Slurred phrases can be treated in exactly the same way:

Example

Sonata no. 1 in G, op. 78, Brahms  
Third movement

### Using slurs as a model

The string stops vibrating for an instant when the bow changes direction (play separate bows on the open G and look at the string in the middle), so four crotchets played with separate bows will never sound like a semibreve. However, you can often create the illusion of a continuous tone through the bow change, resulting in a seamless connection, especially if the note changes at the same time as the bow.

This depends very much on good co-ordination, since many impurities of tone at the bow change are due the finger being late more than anything to do with the bow.

- Use slurs as a model for a perfect *legato* in separate-bow strokes.
- Practise a phrase slurred, and then try to make exactly the same tone with separate bows.

Example

Sonata in E minor, K304, Mozart  
First movement

Example

Violin Concerto no. 2 in G, Haydn  
First movement