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## BASICS

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# Square and extended

One of the single most important requirements for playing in tune is that the left hand and fingers remain free and flexible, the fingers changing shape from note to note. The terms 'square' and 'extended' describe different shapes of the finger when it is sitting in place on the string.

When the finger is square (Figure 1) the angle at the nail joint is closer to a right-angle than when the finger is extended (Figure 2). It does not have to be a perfect right angle but is simply more 'square' than the extended shape. In higher positions the difference between square and extended is much less than in 1st position.

The shape of each finger is always different depending on the build of the hand and the specific pattern of notes. Depending on the passage and the hand, the normal placements in 1st position (A string), are:

**First finger B<sup>b</sup>** – Square

**First finger B** – Extended

**First finger B<sup>#</sup>** – Very extended

**Second finger C<sup>b</sup>** – Very square

**Second finger C** – Square

**Second finger C<sup>#</sup>** – Extended

**Third finger D<sup>b</sup>** – Very square

**Third finger D** – Square

**Third finger D<sup>#</sup>** – Extended

**Fourth finger E<sup>b</sup>** – Square

**Fourth finger E** – Extended

**Fourth finger E<sup>#</sup>** – Very extended

### PHOTO

**Third finger D, A string, square shape**

*Caption: Third finger D, A string, square shape*

Figure 1

### PHOTO

**Third finger D<sup>#</sup>, extended shape**

*Caption: Third finger D<sup>#</sup>, extended shape*

Figure 2

- When building or polishing a passage, plan the shape of certain fingers consciously.
- At each of the notes marked with a pause, stop for a moment and consider the shape of the finger, making any adjustments as necessary.

In the following examples    □ = square    ◇ = extended

# BASICS

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

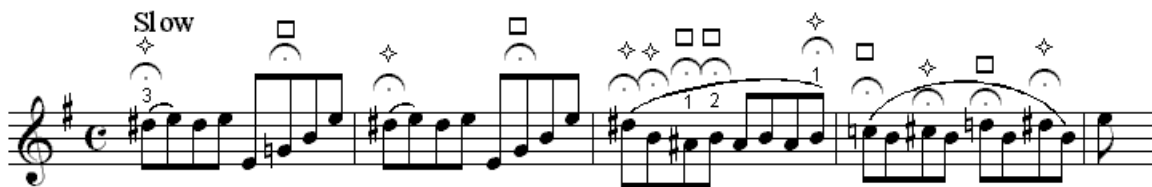


Example

In the first bar of Example 1 make sure that after the extended third finger D<sup>#</sup> the third finger is square enough on the following G.

There are two ways to play the second bar: with a big hand you can stay in first position and move the fingers from square to extended as shown below; with a smaller hand you may wish to shift the whole hand down to half position on the A<sup>#</sup>.

In the fourth bar the first finger should be held down on the string. The fingers are forced to change shape from square to extended.



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No. 29



Example

In Example 2 the interval between the first and third finger changes from minor to major. Care must be taken not to play the major thirds too flat after the minor thirds. Practise slowly:



Sonata in A minor, op. 105, Schumann  
Third movement



Example

If the fingers do not change shape enough, or quickly enough, the hand may make a partial 'shift' which can then throw all the following notes out of tune. If the G<sup>#</sup> in the first bar of Example 3 is played with a square finger, the following B<sup>b</sup> is likely to be too sharp. Neither should the hand 'follow' the extending finger.

In the second bar all the fingers are comfortably square. In the third bar it is important that the extended second finger does not encourage the fourth finger to play too sharp. The second finger C<sup>#</sup> must not bring the hand up with it, otherwise the square G at the beginning of the next bar will again be too sharp.

The essential point is to train the hand to remain stable and in one position, the fingers adjusting for the individual notes, wherever possible, rather than the hand.