

BASICS

Tone–semitone groups (1)

This simple exercise provides an easy way to improve intonation quickly. Use it either as a powerful building exercise, or as part of your regular warm-up routine.

- Take various tone-semitone groups (e.g. semitone-tone-tone fingered 1–2–3–4), and play the group up the string, a semitone higher each time, as far as an octave or more.
- Leave the first finger lightly down on the string throughout the entire exercise.
- Constantly check G's, D's, A's and E's with the open strings. Also check groups of notes by playing them in first position, and then finding the same pitches in the correct position.

Begin with the groups that contain one semitone. T–T–S, T–S–T, and S–T–T:

Tone-tone-semitone

Example

Tone-semitone-tone

Example

Semitone-tone-tone

Example

Two other important groups to practise are T–T–T and S–T–S:

Semitone-tone-semitone

Example

BASICS

Tone-tone-tone

Example $\flat\flat$

Also practise groups that include a minor third, as in the common fourth finger extension:

Tone - tone - minor third

Example

The fourth finger extension feels different when it follows a semitone between the second and third fingers:

Tone - semitone - minor third

Example

Many players find a minor third between the second and third fingers to be the least natural or comfortable:

Semitone - minor third - semitone

Example

- Play each sequence on each string.

After a small amount of practice you will notice a great feeling of reliability and extra confidence in the left hand. Next month's Basics looks at how tone–semitone patterns also feature in double stops.