

BASICS

Tuning the hand (2)

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

Thinking of patterns of tones and semitones in the finger spacing applies as much to double stops as to single note patterns. It is very helpful for intonation and agility if you concentrate on one pattern at a time – tone–tone–semitone, tone–tone–tone etc., and practise in one go all the double stops created by that pattern. After concentrating on each finger pattern, all the double stops become mentally much clearer and therefore less daunting.

The five most common and useful patterns to practise are:

Semitone–tone–tone (Example 1)

Tone–semitone–tone (Example 2)

Tone–tone–tone (Example 3)

Semitone–tone–semitone (Example 4)

Tone–tone–semitone (Example 5)

Try playing a scale (or other passage) in double stops. Then practise the following tone–semitone patterns for ten minutes, and then play the scale again. You may find that it has improved far more than if you had practised the scale itself for ten minutes.

Semitone–tone–tone

The exercise has been written out six times, each time a semitone higher. Continue higher up the string if possible:

Example

Example 1: Semitone–tone–tone pattern on the first string. The notation shows three measures of double stops on a single staff. The first measure has fingerings: 2/1, 3/2, 4/3. The second measure has fingerings: 1/2, 2/3, 3/4. The third measure has fingerings: 1/3, 2/4. The pattern is repeated in three different keys: D major, E major, and F# major. The text "Same fingerings" is written above the second measure.

Play the same pattern on the other strings, continuing up to fourth position or higher:

Example 2: Tone–semitone–tone pattern on the first string. The notation shows three measures of double stops on a single staff. The first measure has fingerings: 2/1, 3/2, 4/3. The second measure has fingerings: 1/2, 2/3, 3/4. The third measure has fingerings: 1/3, 2/4. The pattern is repeated in three different keys: D major, E major, and F# major. The text "Same fingerings" is written above the second measure. The notation ends with "etc." on both the first and second staves.

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Another approach is to play all the different intervals across the strings, moving up a semitone at a time:

Tone–semitone–tone

Example ♩

2 3 4 1 2 3 1 2 Same fingerings
1 2 3 2 3 4 3 4

etc.

Play the patterns in reverse:

Tone-tone-tone

Example

4 3 2 3 2 1 2 1 Same fingerings
3 2 1 4 3 2 4 3

etc.

Or take one interval at a time and play it across the strings:

Semitone–tone–semitone

Example

2 3 4 Same fingerings 2
1 2 3 1

etc.

1 2 3 1
2 3 4 2

etc.

1 2 1
3 4 3

etc.

After playing slowly you may wish to make up variations such as the following:

Tone–tone–semitone

Example ♩

2 3 4 3 1 2 3 2 1 2
1 2 3 2 2 3 4 3 3 4

etc.