
BASICS

Extensions (1)

The important thing in playing fourth finger extensions is to widen the hand at the base joints. If instead the hand contracts, and the finger *stretches* up to its note, it may be difficult to reach the note and the hand may become tense.

The key to widening at the base joints is to base the hand more on the upper fingers and reach back to the lower fingers, rather than basing the hand on the lower fingers and stretching to the upper fingers.

Tenths provide a clear example of the principle. In the beginning, tenths feel easier if you place the fourth finger alone and then reach back with the first finger, rather than beginning on the first finger and stretching up to the fourth. When you reach back the hand automatically widens at the base joints (the space between the knuckles increases), particularly between the first and second fingers.

Play the extension in reverse

To get the feeling of opening the hand, always first balance the hand on the upper finger and reach back.

- 1 Play the extension in reverse: begin on the fourth finger and reach back.
- 2 Memorise the feeling of openness in the hand.
- 3 Find the same feeling when playing the extension as written.

Example

42 Etudes ou caprices, Kreutzer
No. 26

Position the hand to favour the 4th finger

Recapture the same open feeling as in (1)

Reach back with the 1st finger

Example

Sonata, op. 27 no. 2, ('Obsession'), Ysaye
First movement

mf *cresc.*

It is often helpful to devise little exercise patterns based on a particular passage, to encourage a good hand position and a feeling of reaching back:

Balance the hand on the 4th finger

Reach back with the 1st finger

sim.

BASICS

- Feel the hand position favouring the fourth finger; alter the shape of the fourth finger as little as possible as you reach back with the first finger to the tenths.

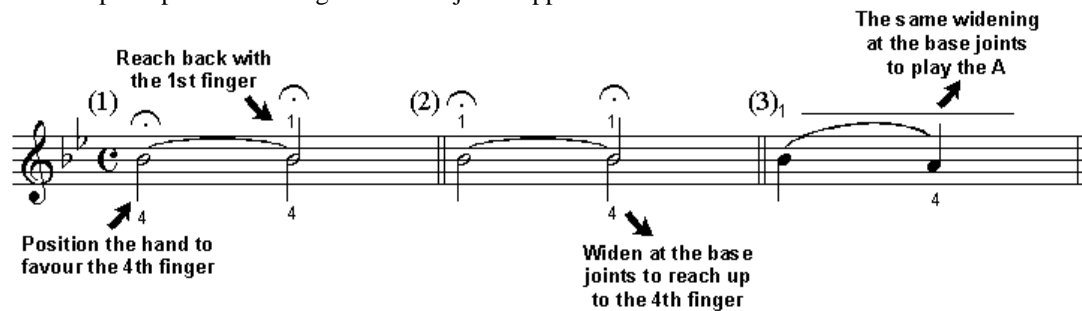
Practise extending further than necessary

One way to make a 'stretch' feel easier is to practise reaching the finger forwards an even bigger distance. For example, extend the reach of the fourth finger by playing it a semitone higher than written. Having learnt how to release and widen the hand to play this higher note, the correct note feels much closer.



Example

In Example 3, playing down from a first finger B \flat to a fourth finger A is not really an extension, but the same principle of widening at the base joints applies.



- (1) Practising a fourth finger B-flat instead of A, start in reverse: place the fourth finger, making sure that the finger is curved, relaxed and comfortable, and then reach back with the first finger. Open the space between the first and second fingers.
- (2) Then play it the right way round: reach up to the fourth finger B-flat from the first finger, the hand and fingers ending up in exactly the same shape as when reaching back from the fourth finger.
- (3) Then play the correct note A with the same opening and widening at the base joints as when reaching up to the B-flat.

24 Etudes and Caprices, op. 35, Dont
No. 3



Example

Many players strain to reach a fourth finger D-sharp on the G string. The single most important thing to maintain at all times is a soft, pliable, relaxed, giving hand.

- (1) Aiming for an E instead of a D-sharp, start in reverse: place the fourth finger E, and then reach back with the second finger F-sharp.
- (2) Practise reaching up to an E. If your hand is small you may not be able to reach the E, but just from trying to reach it the D-sharp will feel much nearer and easier to reach afterwards.

Hold down the second finger as marked to stabilise the hand while reaching up with the fourth finger.