# BASICS

# Groups

Playing at slower speeds you can direct each note with an individual mental command. As the playing gets faster, at some point you reach a speed limit where it is impossible to direct each action individually.

To play faster, combine groups of notes into one 'unit', with all the notes in that unit played together under one mental command. The number of notes, or the type of note-pattern, depends on the specific passage. In general the faster the passage the larger the group of notes seemingly under one command.

- Practise in beat groups, with a short pause between each.

- By using repetition, develop the feeling that each group of notes is one, single action, made with one mental command.

- Gradually speed up using a metronome. Begin at a moderate speed and increase to as fast a tempo as possible.

Winter (The Four Seasons), op. 8 no. 4, Vivaldi
First movement

Example



- Begin with groups of four notes:
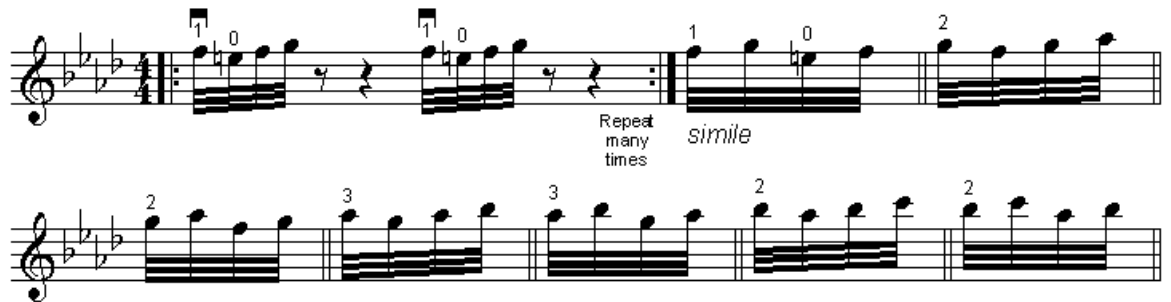


- Repeat each group many times so that the actions of playing the individual notes merge into one. Finally, instead of many individual actions, it feels as if one single action plays all the notes of the group together.

- Then build groups of eight notes, all of which can be played as 'one action' under one mental command:
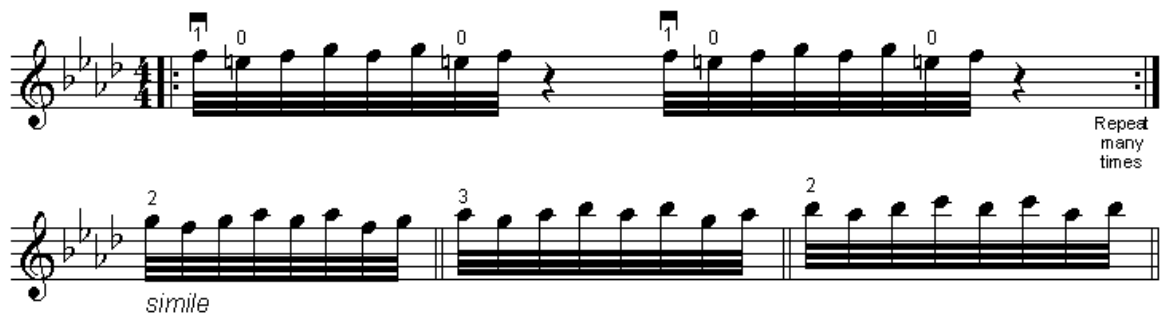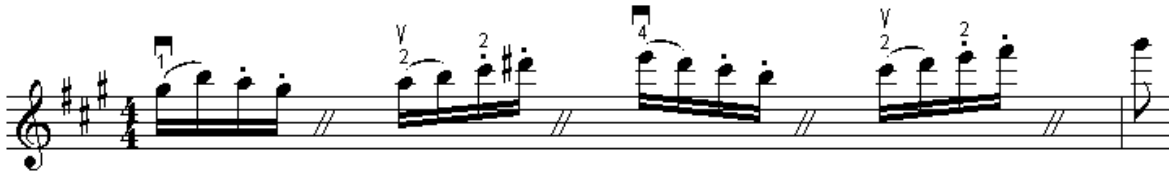
# BASICS

Example

A simple way to find the feeling of 'several notes one action' is simply to pause slightly between the groups, otherwise playing in tempo:



In a typical Mozart pattern like this (two slurred, two separate), the third and fourth notes of each beat are like an up-beat to the next slurred notes. Therefore you could also practise the groups as follows:



To build continuity it is often helpful if you carry on into the first note of the next group:



Repeat many times    *simile*
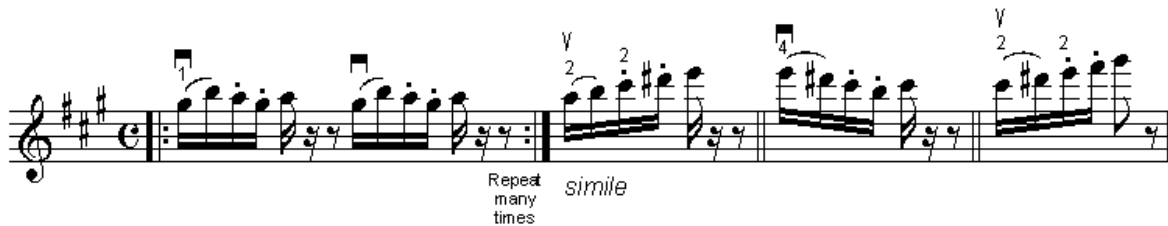
The principle of playing two or more notes with one command naturally applies throughout almost all playing, not just fast playing, and is one of the single most important aspects of technique and music making. It is like speaking fluently in phrases and sentences, with stresses on particular syllables or words, as opposed to pronouncing each syllable or word one at a time.

Sonata no. 1 in G, op. 78, Brahms
*First movement*
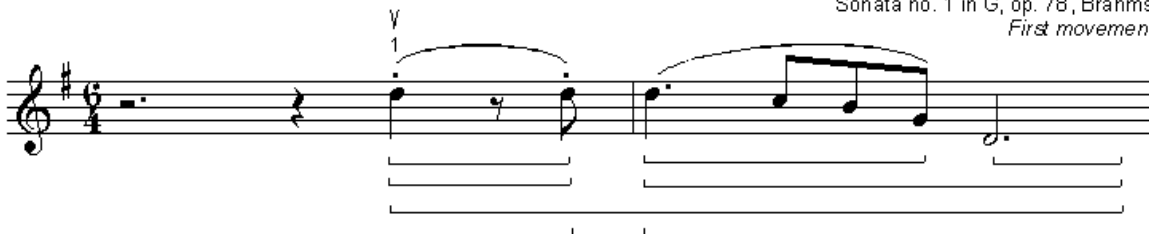


Example

Musically this phrase may be one single gesture or statement, and it may eventually bind together into a feeling of one overall 'action'; but technically there can be a feeling of three actions or two actions, with other connections of actions existing at the same time, e.g. the second up-beat D belongs so much to the next bar that those two bow strokes may feel like one action, and so on.

Various technical factors affect whether the individual actions can be united. For example, in the first note of the second bar the bow hair must be very close to the D string. Otherwise it has to pivot too far to reach the C on the D string, and this over-large movement can then break up the line. Similarly the bow hair must be very close to the G string while playing the quaver G in order to cross to the last note seamlessly.