
BASICS

Bow hand (2)

Exercises to keep the fingers and hand free, active and mobile take seconds to do and serve many purposes. They can form part of the daily warm-up routine; they are excellent for helping beginning or advanced players find a natural, instinctive and comfortable use of the bow; they are also a quick and effective way to 'service' your bow arm periodically in order to maintain your playing and avoid falling into bad habits.

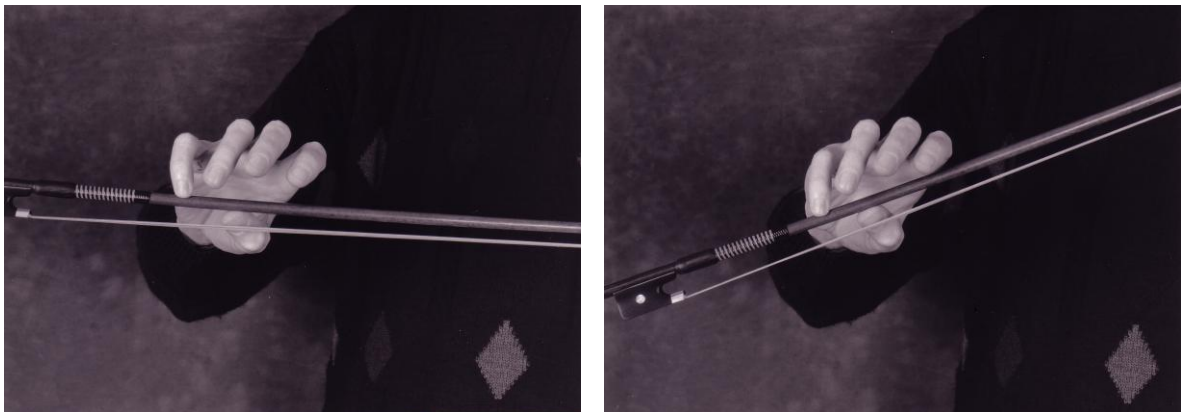
Exercise 1

- 1 The job of the fourth finger is to balance the bow. Without the violin, hold the bow with only the thumb and fourth finger, just below the point-of-balance (Fig. 1a).

Make sure the fourth finger is directly on top of the stick (not always, but in this exercise). Feel the bow gently pushing up into the fourth finger. It is important to point the bow slightly more towards the left shoulder, as it does during normal playing.

- 2 Move the point of the bow up by pushing down with the little finger (Fig. 1b); then let the point down again to the starting position (Fig. 1a). Keep the forearm still and use only the finger to move the bow. Repeat this a few times in a continuous motion.
- 3 Move the hand down a few centimetres closer to the frog and repeat, noticing the extra weight going into the little finger. Continue, each time a little closer to the frog, until the hand is in its usual position. Here, the feeling of weight pushing up into the little finger is considerable.

Fig 1



Exercise 2

Without the violin, hold the bow in playing position. Point the bow slightly more towards the left shoulder. Keep the thumb curved and relaxed. Keep the fourth finger curved throughout.

- 1 Begin the exercise holding the bow at the point-of-balance.
- 2 Slowly rotate the hand clockwise so that the palm of the hand faces the ceiling, the bow points to the right, and the hair is above the wood.
- 3 Make a sudden, fast, anti-clockwise movement back to the bow's normal position. (Remember to point the bow somewhat towards your left shoulder.)

Make the movement so quickly that you can hear the 'swish' of air rushing between the hairs. Feel all the weight of the bow going into the little finger.

- 4 Move the hand a few centimetres nearer to the heel and repeat. Continue gradually moving closer to the heel until you are holding the bow in the usual position.

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Exercise 3

Hold the bow pointing up vertically. Move the tip of the bow in circles using *only the fingers*.

Help to isolate the finger movement by holding your right hand with your left (Fig. 2). Put the left thumb in the palm of the hand, the fingers on the back of the hand.

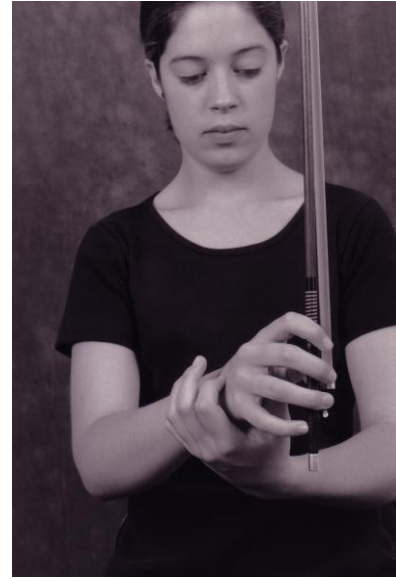


Fig 2

Exercise 4

Hold the forearm near the wrist with the left hand (Fig. 3).

- 1 Start with the forearm and hand in a straight line. Then lower the hand from the wrist, below the level of the forearm, to make a 'high' wrist (Fig. 3a). Return to the straight line again, and repeat several times in a continuous motion.
- 2 Raise the hand above the level of the forearm to make a 'low' wrist (Fig. 3b). Return to the straight line again, and repeat several times.
- 3 Move the hand from side to side, keeping the forearm and hand parallel to the floor. Swing the point of the bow towards the shoulder by moving the hand to the left, and away again by moving it to the right.
- 4 Combine the vertical and horizontal movements to make circles. Curve the fingers and thumb as the hand moves up, straighten as the hand moves down. Try to keep the bow parallel with the floor throughout.



Fig 3

Exercise 5

- Play slow whole bows on one string. Slowly bend and straighten the thumb and fourth finger ten or twelve times in each bow.
- Feel the thumb and the fourth finger move together. When one bends, the other bends; when one straightens, the other straightens.



Fig 4