

---

## BASICS

---

# Holding the violin

### Using a shoulder rest

If you use a shoulder rest, the left end of it should not sit too close to the edge of the shoulder, since this can cause immobility and tension in the left upper arm (Example 1). Instead, position the rest as close in towards the neck as you can (Example 2).

Nor should the shoulder rest be positioned too low (too far down on to the top of the chest), since this can cause the violin to be far too tilted (Example 3), as well as causing the shoulders to pull in and the back to stoop forward. Instead, position the shoulder rest higher on the shoulder (Example 4).



Example 1: The shoulder rest is too close to the edge of the shoulder



Example 2: Position the shoulder rest closer in to the neck



Example 3: The shoulder rest is too low down on the top of the chest



Example 4: Position the shoulder rest higher on the shoulder

### No need to press

It is essential that you do not press down hard into the chin rest, or clamp the violin hard between the chin and shoulder. Pressing is a sure way to create tension which will spread from the neck, upper back and shoulders down into the arms. Instead, simply relax the weight of the head into the chin rest. There is no need to press your chin down – the head is an extremely heavy object on its own.

See how little weight you need, leaning into the chin rest, to support the violin. Hold the violin between two fingers (Example 5). To support the violin, all you need is the finger on top of the chin rest. The violin seems to push up against that finger.

---

# BASICS

---

Then find the same feeling with the violin sitting on your shoulder, but still using the finger to prevent the violin from falling (Example 6). Again, the violin seems to push up against the finger.

Then, holding the violin normally, use the weight of the head alone to sit on the chin rest and resist the upward direction of the chin rest.



Example 5: The violin pushes up into the first finger



Example 6: Note how little you have to do to support the violin

## Mind the gap

Do not allow any space between the violin and the neck. If you hold the violin as shown in Example 7, you have to press down hard to hold the violin. There is an immediate feeling of strain and tension in the muscles in the neck and shoulders.

Think of a nut-cracker, or a pair of scissors: the laws of leverage dictate that the closer in to the centre the two levers connect, the more force they can exert. Hold the violin well in to the neck (Example 8), though of course without any hint of pressing it in.



Example 7: Make sure you cannot see any light between the violin and the neck



Example 8: Make sure you cannot see any light between the violin and the neck

## Traditional instructions

The traditional, age-old advice is that the nose should be in a line with the strings; also, that you should look at the contact-point of the bow with the string, or look at a place in the air, slightly above and beyond the scroll. However, while some players are comfortable in that position, others prefer a position where the strings and the nose form a 'V' shape.

Everything should always be mobile, forever changing and adjusting to the demands of the moment rather than being 'fixed' in one position. Allow a range of head positions, from looking down the strings, to rotating the head to the right while bringing the left ear close to the strings (in order to hear the sound very closely).