

BASICS

⑤ = near the fingerboard, ① = near the bridge

Two staves of musical notation showing a scale exercise. The first staff starts with a circled 5 (near the fingerboard) and ends with a circled 2 (near the bridge). The second staff starts with a circled 2 (near the bridge) and ends with a circled 5 (near the fingerboard). Dynamics are indicated as *p*, *mf*, *f*, *ff*, *ff*, *f*, *mf*, and *p*. Fingerings are shown above the notes.

Working into and out of the bridge is an excellent way to improve tone production. See how good your ordinary scale sounds afterwards:

Two staves of musical notation showing a scale exercise. The first staff starts with a circled 5 (near the fingerboard) and ends with a circled 1 (near the bridge). The second staff starts with a circled 1 (near the bridge) and ends with a circled 4 (near the bridge). Dynamics are indicated as *p*, *mf*, *f*, *ff*, *ff*, *f*, *mf*, and *p*. Fingerings are shown above the notes. Dynamic markings are placed below the notes.

Octaves

One of the most important elements of a good left hand in playing octaves is that the entire hand is free of tension. One of the chief causes of tension comes from not releasing between octaves, which is like trying to move without first taking the brakes off. When playing from one octave to another, the fingers fractionally release the string.

In this simple exercise keep both fingers of the octave down on the string throughout, but play only the printed notes. The x-note in the third beat of each bar means to 'ghost' into the next stopped note. Use a tiny amount of bow and no bow pressure so that there is barely any sound, and release the string with the left finger as you move. See the string itself rise upwards as you release it.

Four staves of musical notation showing an octave exercise. The first staff has a circled 5 (near the fingerboard) and a circled 1 (near the bridge). The second staff has a circled 1 (near the bridge) and a circled 4 (near the bridge). The third staff has a circled 4 (near the bridge) and a circled 1 (near the bridge). The fourth staff has a circled 1 (near the bridge) and a circled 4 (near the bridge). An arrow points to the first note of the first staff with the instruction "Slow the bow and release the string".

As you release the strings (having used minimum finger pressure in the first place – just enough to stop the string cleanly), feel the entire hand release. Allow it to soften across the base joints, and in the opposition between the thumb and the fingers; feel a softening in the wrist, and a 'letting go' in the upper arm and shoulder. Then recapture the same sensations of release between the notes when you play the octaves normally.