

# Soundpoint practice

Soundpoints	
5	Fingerboard
3	Centre point
1	Bridge

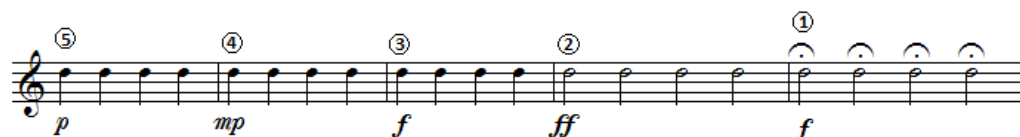
Divide the playing area between the bridge and the fingerboard into five points of contact or soundpoints: (1) Near the bridge; (2) in the neighbourhood of the bridge; (3) at the centre point; (4) in the neighbourhood of the fingerboard; (5) at the fingerboard.

Everything about artistic tone production comes down to the player's musical and physical enjoyment of finding the correct proportions of bow-speed and bow-pressure, which are different at each distance from the bridge. Although the tension of the string is the same throughout its length, at the fingerboard it feels soft and responds to the slightest weight from the bow or the plucking finger, while nearer to the bridge it feels harder or less yielding. So in the most general terms, playing nearer to the bridge requires more weight and less bow – which is the same as saying slower bow-speed – than the same notes played further from the bridge.

Each string's thickness and overall tension are different from those of its neighbour, so the balances of weight and speed to play third-finger C on the G string on soundpoint 3 will not work when you cross the same finger over to the D string; and the higher the note – which means the shorter the string – the less weight it can take before its vibrations are inhibited and crushed. But whatever the string or string-length, and whatever the distance of the bow from the bridge, there is a measure of combined [is 'combined' really necessary?] speed and weight that produces the purest tone.

## Exercise 1

The starting point for all work on tone is to experiment with single notes played at different distances from the bridge in turn. On each soundpoint simply try bowing a fraction more lightly, more heavily, faster or slower, until you are satisfied that the tone is even and pure and the string is vibrating at its fullest, as though you are a chef experimenting with ingredients or an artist mixing colours to create new shades.



This is the most illuminating practice method when applied to phrases or whole passages. Learn how to play them successfully on solely one soundpoint at a time, regardless of where the bow will actually be playing in the end. In most cases it is not practical to include soundpoint 1 and it can be omitted.

## Exercise 2

Normally you might play nearer to the bridge as you move to a higher string in an arpeggio. But for the purposes of this exercise keep the bow on one soundpoint and find the balances of speed and pressure that produce a pure and ringing tone:



## Exercise 3

Change soundpoint on each bow-stroke:



### Exercise 4

Before playing through, repeat each two-bar stage until every note is pure and ringing:

Exercise 4 consists of three staves of music. The first staff has four measures with fingerings 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4. Below the first two measures are the instructions "Little bow" and "More", and below the last two measures is "Less". There are also "4" markings under the first and last measures. The second staff has four measures with fingerings 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2. The third staff has four measures with fingerings 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4. Each staff has a "4" marking under the first measure.

### Exercise 5

In this exercise keep the bow almost on the level of a double-stop so that when playing on the G string the bow is close to touching the D string, and close to the G string when playing on the D:

Exercise 5 consists of three staves of music. The first staff has four measures with fingerings 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4. Above the first two measures are the instructions "Less bow" and "More bow", and above the last two measures is "Less bow". There are also "4" markings under the first and last measures. The second staff has four measures with fingerings 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4. The third staff has four measures with fingerings 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, 2, 3, 4. Each staff has a "4" marking under the first measure.

### Exercise 6

This useful finger-sequence covers every possibility of playing from one finger to another:

Exercise 6 consists of two staves of music. The first staff has four measures with fingerings 5, 4, 3, 2. The second staff has four measures with fingerings 1, 2, 3, 4. Dynamics are indicated below each measure: *pp*, *p*, *mf*, *f* for the first staff, and *ff*, *f*, *mf*, *p* for the second staff.

Alternatively, try the same idea on etudes such as Kreutzer No. 2:

Exercise 6 consists of two staves of music. The first staff has four measures with fingerings 5, 4, 3, 2. The second staff has four measures with fingerings 2, 3, 4, 5. Dynamics are indicated below each measure: *pp*, *p*, *f*, *ff* for the first staff, and *ff*, *f*, *p*, *pp* for the second staff.