



# Beginner's Toolkit: Viola

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## 0:34 Tightening the Bow

- Use enough tension but not too much tension
- Try putting a pencil between the hair and stick and tighten to the point where it falls
- Do NOT tighten the bow too much
  - Keep the curve of the stick
  - Perfect bow tension prevents too much hand tension

## 1:24 Applying Bow Rosin

- Try playing the Viola BEFORE applying rosin
  - If it grips the string correctly and sounds good, do NOT apply more rosin
- If you need more rosin, only use a few strokes back and forth on the bow
  - Do NOT use too much: too much rosin can choke the sound and volume
- Always loosen the bow to put it back in the case

## 2:27 Tuning the Viola

- Fine tuners are located on the tail piece
- Tuning pegs are at the top with the peg box
  - Pegs help get in the general vicinity of the pitch
  - Pulling a peg away from the Viola makes the pitch more sharp (higher)
  - Pulling a peg toward the Viola makes the pitch more flat (lower)
  - Always press the peg into the opposite side of the peg box while turning

## 3:45 Preventing Stuck Pegs

- Stuck Pegs often occur in the summer, while loose pegs occur in the winter
- Find great Viola accessories at [Monaco's Violin Shop](#)
  - Use Peg Dope to help lubricate in the summer, when humid
  - Use Peg Drops to prevent slipping during the winter, when dry
- Keep the Viola in as consistent temperatures as possible
  - Do NOT leave the Viola in a car or severe cold

## 5:19 Holding the Viola While Standing

- Keep the Viola parallel to ground
- Keep the scroll going straight forward
- Keep the right elbow going straight down to the ground or a little to the right for lower strings or higher positions
- Keep your finger nails short
  - Use only the pads of your fingers to touch the strings
- Keep your shoulders back and stand straight

### **7:20 Sitting Posture**

- Keep your back straight and shoulders back
- Sit toward the end of your chair
- Keep the Viola to the side, like standing
  - Do NOT bring the Viola straight in front
- If comfortable, put the right foot back and to the side of your chair
  - The famous violist William Primrose recommended this too (look him up!)
- Try turning the chair to see the conductor or colleagues, if needed

### **9:46 Correct Bow Position**

- Think of the bow always traveling parallel to the bridge
- The best sound should be in the middle of the fingerboard and bridge
- For playing softer, try playing more over the finger board and with less right hand pressure
- Ponticello means to play near the bridge, making a glassy kind of sound

### **11:16 Holding the Bow**

- Hold the bow between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> upper knuckles on the pointer finger, not near the palm
- Let the other fingers fall over the stick
- Rest the pinky on the back side of the stick
- Bend the thumb to touch the upper part of the frog
- Keep the fingers down on the bow to help dig in and get a good sound
  - The Violin speaks easier and allows for a lighter bow hold, but the Viola requires a stronger hold

### **12:33 Correct Bowing**

- Play parallel to the bridge
- When bowing, start by curving in the frog with a higher wrist, then straighten out in the middle, and finally, at the tip of the bow, push out with the elbow
  - Avoid pulling your elbow and bow backward
  - Open the elbow hinge for the correct motion
- Use a mirror to study the bow position by playing, freezing, and analyzing
- Adjust correctly and then continue playing