

University of Wyoming String Project

Curriculum Goals for 1st and 2nd year students

First year goals

Basic position

- Excellent playing position (violins and violas standing)
- Instrument well supported and secure
- Freedom of movement, naturalness, relaxation
 - Body weight is balanced and shifts easily in response to movement
 - Shoulders are relaxed and low
 - Neck and arms are free and swing easily in playing position
 - Weight of head supports the instrument without squeezing, left hand assists also without squeezing (violin/viola)

Left hand skills

- Good basic left hand position
- Relaxed left hand, loose left thumb, without squeezing
- Correct hand and thumb height (“Magic X” placement)
- Wrist is back and open (violin/viola)
- Elbow is at the appropriate height, wrist straight (cello/bass)
- D-major finger pattern on D and A strings, including 4th finger for violin/viola
- Introduce C-natural and F-natural with second finger
- Excellent intonation
- Beginning vibrato motion in rest position and playing position

Bow arm skills

- Good basic bow hand
 - Thumb on silver ring
 - All fingers curved (especially 4th finger)
 - Relaxed, bent thumb
- Excellent bow arm motions
 - Upper half on violin and viola, middle third on cello and bass
 - Use of the whole bow
 - Good use of arm weight
 - Free forearm motions
 - Flexible wrist motions
 - Flexible finger motions
 - Appropriate upper arm motions in the lower half
- Strong, good quality sound in martelé, détaché and legato bow strokes

Music reading skills

- Rote learning and audiation skills (“ear to hand” approach)
- Using Kodály syllables can read 16th, 8th quarter note, half note and dotted half note rhythms in any combination
- Knows the names of notes under the fingers
- Understands concept of higher and lower on the staff and on the fingerboard
- Can track music on the staff as it’s being played
- Can identify notes on the staff with note name, finger number and location on the instrument on the D and A strings
- Pitch and rhythm sight reading and tracking skills in D major

Musical skills

- Excellent sense of pitch with lots of singing
 - An ability match pitches with their voice
 - The ability to match and adjust pitch with their left hand
- Excellent sense of pulse, understanding concepts of pulse and rhythm
 - Can walk and conduct a steady beat
 - Can clap, speak and play rhythms to a steady pulse
- Good quality sound and a connection to their tone
- Form: an understanding of the form of all pieces
- Basic dynamics
- Develop good practice habits

Second year goals

Basic Position

- Reinforce 1st year goals

Left hand

- Wrist out and open (violin/viola); elbow appropriately balanced, wrist straight (cello/bass)
- Loose thumb with correct “magic X” location
- “Tunneling” over higher strings and keeping fingers down during string crossings
- Independent fingers, especially before “low 2” for violins/ violas and in anticipation of extensions for cellos
- 4th finger for violins and violas
- C natural and F natural with 2nd fingers
- Introduce forward and backward extensions for cellos
- Shifts for cellos
- Raised 3rd finger for violins and violas
- Lowered 1st finger for violins and violas
- Intonation skills, emphasizing sympathetic vibrations
- Introduce basic shifting skills for all instruments
- Use of 2nd and 3rd positions for cellos; 2nd and half positions for basses
- Basic vibrato motions, vibrato exercises

Bow arm and hand

- Switch thumb to “adult” placement
- Slurs
- Use of the whole bow, especially the lower half
- Better use of arm weight
- Martelé, détaché and legato strokes refined
- Introduce spiccato bow stroke
- Excellent forearm, upper arm and wrist motions
- More sophisticated bow distribution and varying bow speed

Music reading skills

- Continue developing audiation skills (eye to ear to hand)
- Rhythms from 16th to whole notes, including dotted rhythms and triplets
- Identifying notes on the staff on all string and the ability to find them on their instruments
- Further development “read and play” skills

Musical skills

- Two-part and ensemble music
- More sophisticated use of dynamics
- Awareness of relation between contact point, bow speed, weight and tone
- Form: an understanding of the form of all pieces