

Teaching Vibrato with Ease

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Vibrato is one of the most expressive and individual elements of every violinist's playing. But often times, it can be one of most misunderstood and difficult concepts to teach. Here are some techniques and methods to develop a healthy and successful vibrato.

Principles of tension-free setup:

- Violin balanced between collarbone and left hand
- Loose neck/no excess pressure from head
- Relaxed shoulders

Violin and Student Set-up:

- High-dot
- Magic X

Left hand set-up:

- Tapping over the high-dot
- The use of “Magic X” to demonstrate the proper positioning of the hand
- Slides on the “Magic X”

Magic X is too high



Magic X is too low



Three Types of Vibrato

- Finger
- Hand/wrist
- Arm

Pre-Vibrato exercises:

- Shaking a Tic-Tac box
- Swinging Pizz—releases the left shoulder
- Rest position wiggles
- Finger flops
- Peg-Knockers
- Mountains and plains
- Ghosts Slides
- String polishing
- Teacher Wiggles

Hand/Wrist Vibrato	Arm Vibrato	Finger Vibrato
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shaking a Tic-Tac box• Peg-Knockers• Fourth position isolation exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ghosts Slides• String polishing• Fourth position isolation exercise	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finger flops• Mountains and plains• Teacher Wiggles

Using the Bow with Vibrato:

- “Mirror Motion” Problem
- Playing an open string while sliding on the magic X
- Playing an open string while vibrating on another string

Isolation Exercises—“Wiggle”:

- 4th position
- Heel of hand resting on upper bout of violin
- Start with the knuckle square/bent
- Release the finger, rock back
- Rock back once, pause, reset the finger, repeat
- Start with 1 per bow, then 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6

With Metronome at 60

- 2 beats per bow
- Start with 1 wiggle per beat, continue through 6

Common problems with Isolation exercises:

- Student will slide the finger, rather than rocking on it
- Excess tension or excess motion in thumb
- Magic X is too low