

VIOLIN AND VIOLA BOWHOLD NOTES

Dr David Milsom, 2014

These notes help to explain a simple way of constructing a correct bowhold. If you have started with a different teacher you may have been taught something else, but this is what I need you to do from now on!

PARENTS / CARERS / HELPERS: please supervise your children here. There's a limit to how easy this subject can be to describe, and what is needed in addition is a very careful and precise approach. Make sure the learner follows the steps exactly!

N.B. Use the accompanying photographs 'Violin-Viola Bowhold' with these notes

First, practise making the right shape with your right hand...

1. Hold your hand in front of you (picture 1). Make a circle between thumb and second finger, as shown.
2. Bring all of the other fingers round in order to make a kind of tunnel shape (picture 2).
3. Now, pick up a pencil with the tips of your fingers (picture 3). Make sure all of the fingers curve round, still, and that thumb and second finger are opposite, like step 2.
4. Then, slide all fingers around the pencil so only the tip of the little finger sits on top. You should 'poke' a space between the fingers as well so they aren't all squashed up (picture 4).

Now, transfer this to holding the bow itself...

5. Stand the bow on its hair so it stands up on its own, on a table top.
6. Go through steps 1 and 2, but now transfer to bow not pencil. The thumb and second finger should fit in the little space between thumb leather and frog mechanism (the black part hanging down off the stick – see picture 5, 'a'); the little finger should sit above the end of the black mechanism (picture 5 – labelled 'b'); whilst the index finger should sit somewhere on the silver binding, if care is taken to space the fingers out as described in step 4.

It is normal for the young child to find this very difficult, and for the bowhold to 'slip' a bit at first... but, like any skill, it will improve upon patient and diligent practise, enabled by careful repetition and calm, enthusiastic praise. Supervision and help at home are vital, of course... Teachers have many things to think about in the lessons!