

## Choosing a violin

You will need to find a cheerful music shop that you trust. Go there, and ask their advice. If you have a teacher, he/she will probably tell you what to do. **Don't buy from the internet** unless you know - really know - what you are doing. **Don't buy from Ebay** unless you really really *really* know what you are doing.

How much should you spend? For a beginner, a good way to start is to find the cheapest violin available (at the time of writing the cheapest is about GBP £60 / US \$100) - **but don't buy one!** A really cheap violin will be more difficult to play and less satisfying to hear: cheap instruments are probably the prime reason for people giving up.

There's a kind of geometric progression that applies to most musical instruments - and indeed other things - like cars maybe.

All other things being equal, a £200 violin will be twice as good as a £100 violin. A £1000 violin will be considerably better than a £500 violin. But the difference between a £50,000 violin and a £100,000 violin will be imperceptible to the ordinary person.\*

So budget to buy a violin at **double** the cheapest price you have found - ie as of now, GBP £120 / US \$200. Spend more if you can.

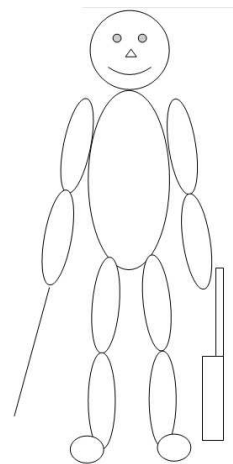
*\* This principle is not infallible. It ignores the fact that two £200 violins will be different from each other! But it helps.*

## Holding the violin

**Don't** try to support the violin just with shoulder and jaw. You will almost certainly clamp down rigidly and your entire upper body will be in tension. This can lead to physical problems which may take you years to correct.

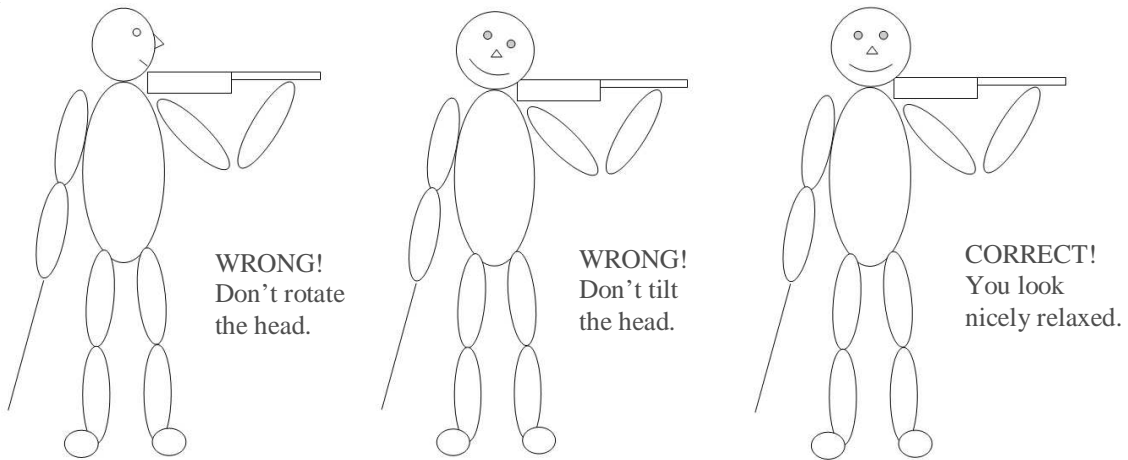
Here's a starting position:

Stand facing straight ahead, arms down by sides, violin in left hand, bow in right, feet slightly apart. Relax (take three deep breaths. Hunch your shoulders and drop them - repeat three times).



That's it. Nice and relaxed.

Stay facing straight ahead - don't move your head up or down or to left or right. Lift the violin/viola into position against your neck; put your left hand under the body of the violin/viola to support it.



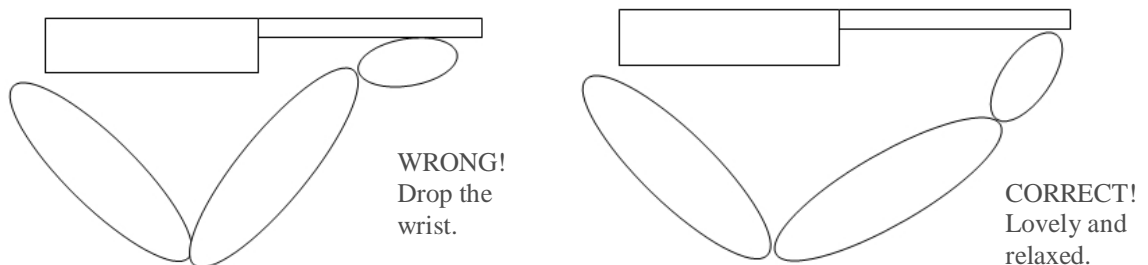
Turn your head left and right. It should be completely free to move. Keep facing forward. Don't turn to look at your left hand, or tilt your head to the left (you see this a LOT! Try it without the violin and feel what it does to your neck muscles!).

If you have the correct chin rest/shoulder rest setup (every person is different) you should now be able to tilt your head slightly forward so that the violin balances on your shoulder with a little support from the left hand. **DO NOT CLAMP DOWN** with your chin.

You need only grip with your chin - if ever - when sliding from a higher position to a lower one. Make sure you relax again after.

With the instrument balanced correctly, your left hand should now be able to move freely up and down the fingerboard, just giving a little support to the violin neck. If not, then your chin rest/shoulder rest setup is wrong. Go to a music shop and ask to try lots of combinations. Experiment until you can support the instrument without tension. Remember - head up, facing forward; shoulders relaxed.

Make sure your left wrist is down, not up (ie wrist bent AWAY from the neck, not towards).



Tension is the enemy. Start out with a bad position and you may never lose it.