

Looking after your fiddle

Always keep your fiddle in its case. Before putting it away, always

- * loosen your bow
- * clean down the violin and bow of any dust or rosin with a duster
- * wipe the back of the neck where your hands have been
(the acid in your hands attacks the varnish)

Putting on the shoulder rest:

(NB: This is a Viva rest: there are many other types)

Hold the neck of the fiddle in your right hand, face down

Hold the shoulder rest in your left hand, curve to the right

Tuck the feet over the edge of the violin nearest your tummy



Hold the violin and feet against your tummy so it doesn't move

With your left hand, hold the other end of the shoulder rest

Hook the feet over the far side of the violin



The finished position:



The bow

After playing you should always release all the tension from the bow, such that the hairs hang loose. Here is a bow untightened:



Before playing, you need to put the bow under tension by winding the knob on the end. Here is a bow correctly tensioned for playing:



Notice that there is still a good bend in the bow. Do not attempt to 'straighten it out'. It should NEVER look like this:

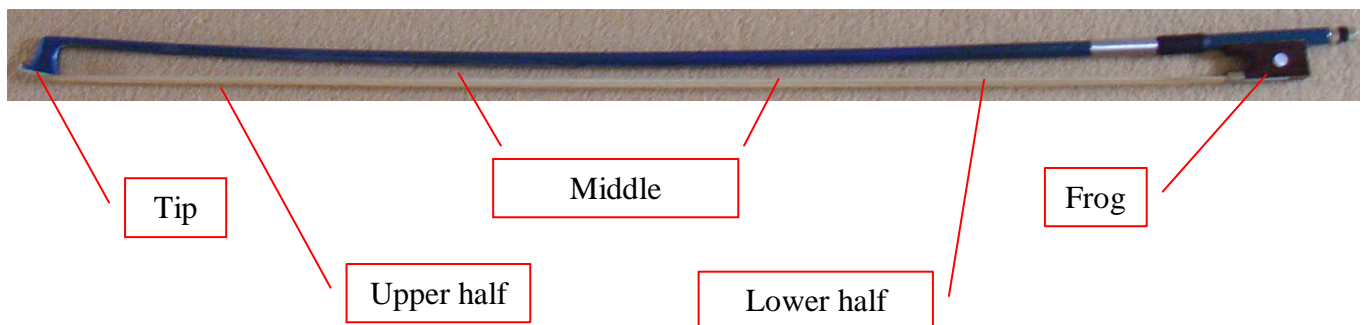


After tightening it and before playing, rosin the hairs. Unless the bow hair is very new, you need only rub the rosin up and down the bow hair three or four times.

(NB This is Dominant rosin. There are many different kinds, and despite the makers' claims, they are all much of a muchness!)



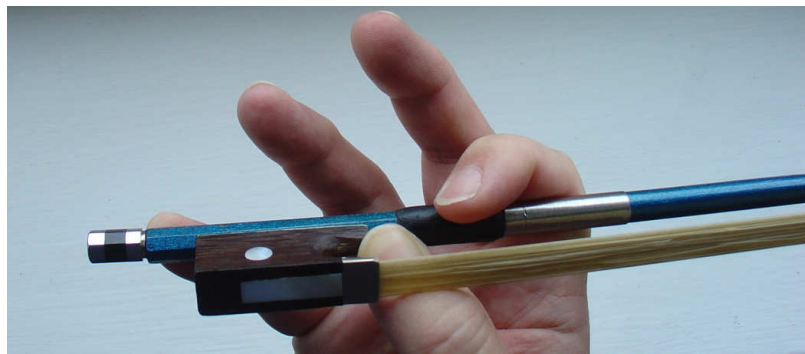
The parts of the bow have names. The pointy end is called the tip, and the winding end is called the frog. The bit near the tip is called the upper half, the bit near the frog the lower half, and the middle is called... erm, the middle.



The bow hold

How you hold the bow is crucial in getting a good sound, so it's worth working on this to get it right.

Take the frog in your right hand with your fingers spread out along the stick. Put your thumb under the stick, just ahead of the frog. Tuck your first (pointer) finger over the stick so the stick nestles in the first joint (near the palm, not near the finger tip). Stretch out the little finger to rest on the end of the stick just ahead of the winder.

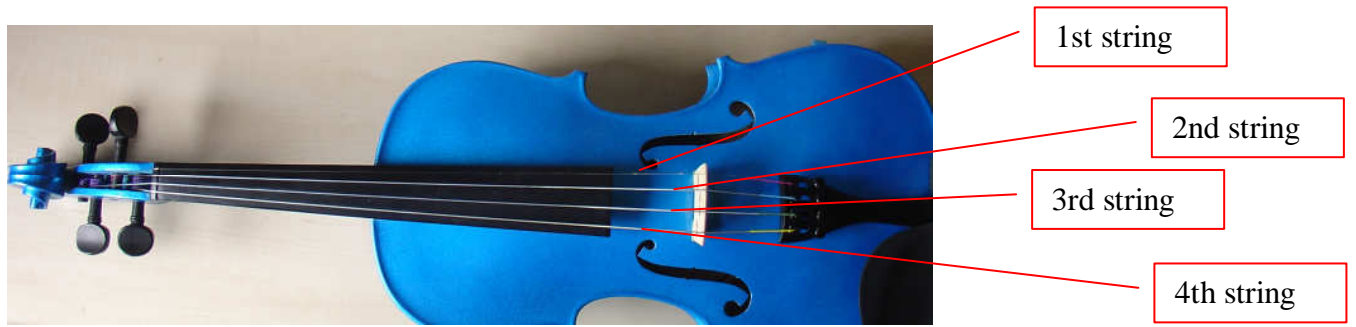


Relax your hand. In this position, the bow should be absolutely firm without your having to grip hard. You should be able to wave the bow around in any direction without dropping it. Now simply rest the middle two fingers on the stick: they play no part in gripping - they just add weight.



Tuning

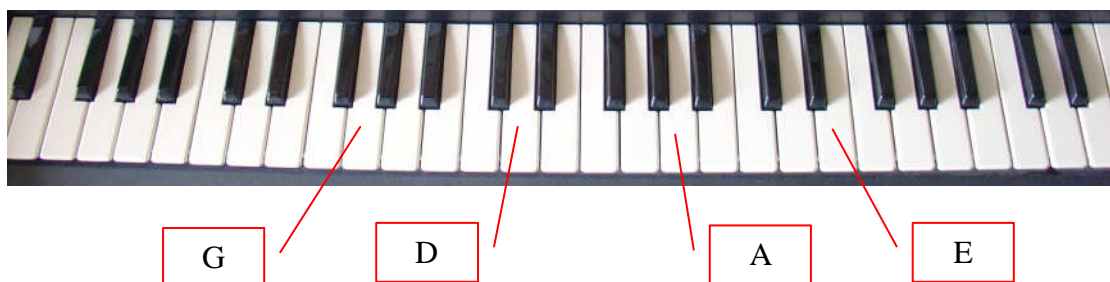
We count the strings from the thinnest one to the thickest.



And they are tuned to the following note names:

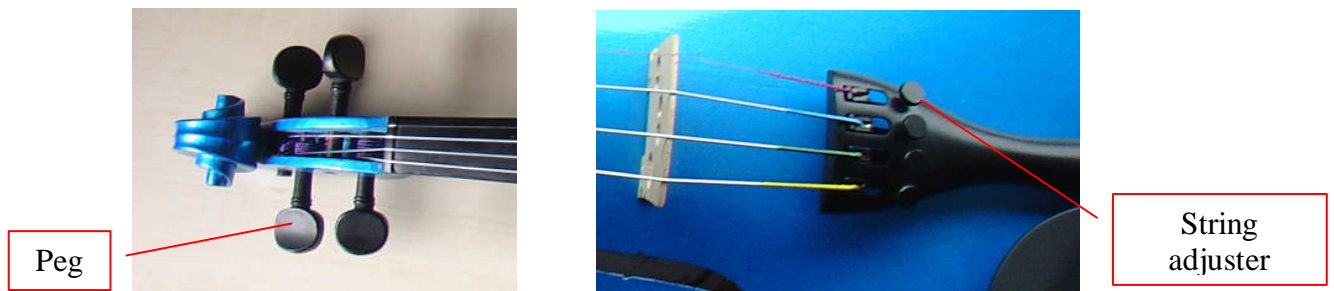


You can tune them to the piano like this:



Or use a tuning fork tuned to A. When the orchestra tunes up, it is to the A. You can also get pitch pipes: they're OK for beginners, but a bit naff.

To tune the fiddle we adjust the pegs and/or string adjusters:



This is trickier than it seems, so if you're an absolute beginner you might want to let your teacher do it at first.