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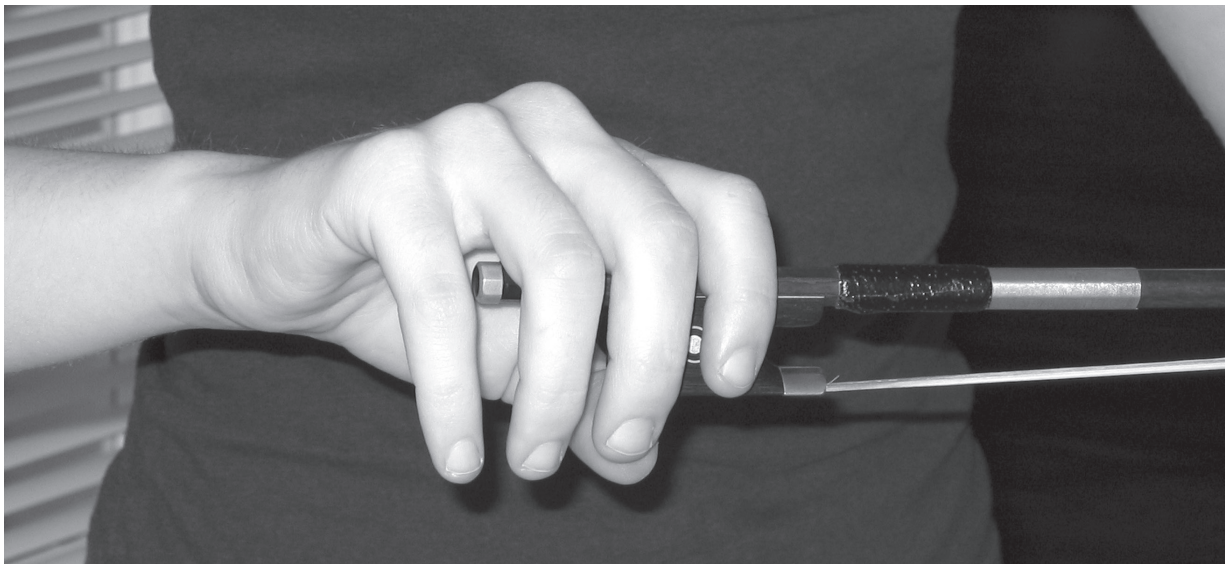
Raise the hand and forearm from the shoulder; keep the same position, except for bending the elbow and slightly rotating the hand counter-clockwise.



The relaxed fingers on the level arm are naturally rounded, as before.

Holding the bow

Rather than have the student attempt to grab the bow, the teacher should slide the bow into the student's hand. Holding the bow and standing in front of the student, slide the screw of the bow under the middle knuckle of the index finger and continue until the bow is in the correct position under the little finger. The teacher should adjust the bow to the student's hand.



The fingers are prepared to receive the bow.

Reinforcing basic support for shifting and vibrato

Shifting and vibrato are the two skills whose introduction is perhaps most characteristic of the intermediate stage. Before these skills can be developed, we must be able to support the viola in a relaxed, flexible way. Correct shifting and vibrato are impossible if the left thumb is clutching the neck of the viola, the fingers are pressing too heavily on the strings, or any part of the body is tense.

In refining the specifics of holding the viola, we should actually begin with posture. The fundamental requirement of good posture is *balance*. Whether standing or sitting, balancing the weight of each part of the body upon that part which is below it will result in the greatest possible relaxation and freedom of motion.

We can check body balance from the feet upward. If standing, feet should be apart, ankles relaxed, knees unlocked, pelvis balanced on both legs, torso flexible, shoulders and neck relaxed, and head balanced on the spine.

¶ Practice tip: A natural orientation of the head and shoulders allows the neck to be relaxed and permits easy balancing movements of the head and body in response to, and sometimes in anticipation of, actions such as bow changes, string changes, shifts, and vibrato.

If the head faces somewhat toward the viola, it makes sense for the feet—and chair, if sitting—to be pointed correspondingly toward the right in order for us to see the music without twisting the upper body and thrusting the left shoulder forward, inviting neck, shoulder, and back pain.



1) Chair facing stand, left shoulder thrust forward; 2) chair turned to the right