



Starting Your Strings: It's All About the Beginning

Bob Phillips

Prerequisites

- Recruited an appropriate number of students
- Proper instrument guidance
- Teaching space set-up for success
- Access to appropriate educational materials and resources

How to Start a Class with Activity

- Warm up the body
- Focus students' attention
- Use group dynamics
- Start on time with activity
- The use of student leaders can create time for you to tune.
- *Movement to Music*, by James Froseth and Phyllis Wiekart, GIA Publications
- *John Feierabend*, GIA Publications, *Marguerite Wilder*, GIA Publications

Positions - Sitting/standing, Instrument placement, Left hand, Right hand

- Sitting and standing
- Provide checkpoints for each instrument for self-evaluation
- Use analogy and careful modeling
- Use a number system to structure the set-up steps
- Cello/bass chairs and endpins
- Force the behavior with group dynamics and motions

Placing the Left Hand

- Use buddy teaching and student leaders
- Visual recognition of the position – imitation
- Hand movement games -precursors to vibrato and shifting
- Mapping the fingerboard (hand fames vs. finger movement)

Fingering Notes and Plucking the D Major Tetrachord and D Major Scale

- Find notes, provide references- aural and visual, model
- Frame the hand first with all fingers down – bass starts on open
- Come down tetrachord first but beware of subtraction concepts

Shaping the Bow Hand

- Breakdown the components and label complex motions with familiar names
- Gives students checkpoints to feel
- Going from wrong to right
- Pencils, tubes, smoothie straws and 1st fingers

Finger Functions

- Aussie finger - the finger down under
- Best Buddy finger - friends forever
- Going along for the ride - the assistant finger
- Lean on me - 1st among fingers
- Point-counter point - fourth fingers rock and tetter totter

Where It All Goes Bad (picking up the bow, the forgotten step)

- Two hands - one bow
- One hand - point up

- Picking up the bow - stands and laps
- Balancing the hand - 2nd/3rd finger, vertical bow crawls, horizontal bow crawls, see-saw

Moving the bow

- Picking up the bow with good position
- Placing the bow
- Prepare the hand and arm for bow motions
- Wrong-to-right motion learning sequence
- Use of props to aid learning: dowels, straw, and tubes
- Changing bow direction
- Giving students checkpoints to feel (row, row, row your bow)
- Breakdown the components and label complex motions with familiar names
- Directions changes

Beginning String Crossings

- Hooking the bow with little finger
- Using the bridge as a guide
- Teeter-toter with two hand on a strings
- Tube crossings - pvc pipe and rubber bands

Bowing Lanes

- Starting lanes - mf lane, F lane, p lane
- Intermediate lanes - mp lane, pp lane, FF lane

Bow Weight

- Starting weights - mf medium heavy, F heavy, p light
- Intermediate weights - pm medium light, pp very light, FF very heavy

Bow Speed

- Starting speeds- mf medium slow, F slow, p fast
- Intermediate speeds - mp medium fast, pp very fast, FF very slow

Teaching Tunes/Aural Skills

- Play tunes! It's why student want to play
- Sing, sing, sing
- Accompaniment/media
- Teacher accompaniment - piano, guitar, uke
- Student accompaniment - 1, 4, 5 chords
- Modeling on all instruments, even bass
- Memorize tunes/learn by ear
- Create a repertoire of performable tunes
- Perform, perform, perform (in class, hallways, offices, home)
- String Ranger, Frere Rocka, Memory Games (fill in missing bar), Fill In Missing Note

Going from Rote to Note – Developing Literacy

- Look and say/play echoes using flash cards - group response - individualize and evaluate
- Non-stop flash cards
- Rhythms, notes, patterns

Resources

www.phillipsfiddlers.com - look at the handouts and download free mp3 backgrounds for rhythm flashcards

Gillespie and Phillips, distributed by Shar Products, [String Clinics to Go: Getting Started](#),

Goodrich and Wagner, published by ASTA, [Getting It Right From the Start](#)

Hamann and Gillespie, Oxford University Press, [Strategies for Teaching Strings: Building a Successful String and Orchestra Program](#)

Phillips, Boonshaft and Sheldon, [Sound Innovations Book 1 and 2](#), Phillips and Moss, [Sound Development Intermediate and Advanced](#)

Applebaum, Samuel: [The Art and Science of Violin Playing](#)

Fischer, Simon: [Basics](#)

Galamian, Ivan, Afterword Elizabeth Green: [Principles of Violin Playing and Teaching](#)

Leland, Valborg: [The Dounis Principles of Violin Playing](#)

www.phillipsfiddlers.com