

Violin — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into a daily practice system. It gives you setup checklists, a tuning log, intonation drills, a finger-placement map, and a repertoire tracker so you can see your technique improving week by week. Work through one section per module, doing every drill on the instrument and filling in the logs as you go. By the end you will have a documented routine, a record of your tuning and intonation, and a list of melodies you can play in tune.

Setting Up and Holding the Violin

Confirm your size and setup, build the hold, and lock in the rosin and care habits that protect the instrument.

Worksheet: Sizing and Instrument Inventory

Fill this in once when you get your violin, and revisit it if you grow into a new size or change instruments. It records the facts you will be asked for at lessons, rentals, and repairs.

Arm-length measurement (cm) and resulting size (4/4, 3/4, 1/2, etc.)

Does the palm cup the scroll with the arm fully extended? (yes or no)

String brand currently fitted (e.g. Dominant, Prelude, Tonica)

Number of fine tuners on the tailpiece

Shoulder rest model and current height setting

Chin rest type (center or side mounted)

Rosin type (light or dark) and date opened

Exercise: The No-Hands Hold Test

Build the violin hold and confirm it is balanced and tension-free before you add the left hand. Do this in front of a mirror so you can check both shoulders are level. Repeat daily for the first two weeks.

- Place the violin on your collarbone, settle the weight of your jaw onto the chin rest, and drop your left arm completely. Can the violin stay put for ten seconds with no left hand?

- Check in the mirror: are both shoulders at the same height, or is the left one creeping up? If it rises, raise the shoulder rest.

- From the balanced hold, bring the left hand up to the neck without gripping. Does the violin still feel supported by the chin and collarbone, not the hand?

Checklist: Daily Setup and Care Checklist

- Tightened the bow until a pencil fits between hair and stick at the middle
- Applied three rosin strokes (five if the bow is new)
- Confirmed shoulder rest is clipped on and at the right height
- Checked posture in a mirror: feet shoulder-width, shoulders level
- After playing, wiped rosin dust off strings and the violin top
- Loosened the bow before returning it to the case
- Checked case humidity is in the 40 to 60 percent range

The Bow Arm and Tone Production

Form a relaxed bow hold, draw long straight strokes, and diagnose and fix common tone problems.

Exercise: Build-and-Release the Bow Hold

Train the hand to find its relaxed bow-hold shape automatically. Do ten build-and-release repetitions before every practice session, away from the string, then with the bow on an open string.

- Let the right hand hang loose, notice its natural curve, then build the hold: bent thumb at the frog corner, middle fingers draped, index on the side of the stick, curved pinky on top.
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- Wiggle all four fingers to confirm they are loose and springy, then drop the hold completely and rebuild it.
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- Check the thumb specifically: is it bent and acting as a spring, or has it collapsed into a locked straight position?

Worksheet: Tone Troubleshooting Log

When a note sounds bad, do not just push through. Stop, identify the symptom, and write the cause and the fix. Keeping this log turns ugly notes into fast, repeatable corrections.

Symptom heard (scratchy, thin/glassy, whistling, squeak on string change)

String it happened on (G, D, A, or E)

Likely cause (too much pressure, too little weight, too close to bridge, crossed with hand not arm)

Correction applied (reduce weight, move contact point, increase bow speed, cross from elbow)

Did the fix work? (yes or no)

Exercise: Long-Tone and String-Crossing Drills

These two drills build bow control faster than anything else. Spend five minutes on them at the start of bow practice. Use a mirror to keep the bow parallel to the bridge.

- Long tone: bow one open string for a full eight counts, keeping the tone identical from frog to tip with no change in volume or scratch. Do this on all four strings.
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- Elbow staircase: bow G, then D, then A, then E, letting only the upper arm and elbow raise and lower to set each string's level. Keep the bow moving smoothly through each change.
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- Contact-point test: on the open A, bow once near the bridge with more weight, then once near the fingerboard with less, and note how the tone changes.
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Checklist: Clean Bow Stroke Checklist

- Bow stayed parallel to the bridge for the whole stroke
- Hair was flat, full width contacting the string
- Used the full length of the bow, frog to tip, with no rushing at the ends
- Sound came from arm weight, not a squeezing hand
- Contact point stayed about one third from bridge to fingerboard
- String changes came from the elbow, not a twisting wrist

The Left Hand and First Position

Set the left-hand frame, place fingers accurately, and build the D and A major scales in tune.

Worksheet: First-Position Finger Map

Fill in the note that each finger produces on each string in first position. Completing this from memory, then checking it on a tuner, cements the map that all of your reading and playing depends on.

G string: open, 1st finger, 2nd finger, 3rd finger, 4th finger notes

D string: open, 1st finger, 2nd finger, 3rd finger, 4th finger notes

A string: open, 1st finger, 2nd finger, 3rd finger, 4th finger notes

E string: open, 1st finger, 2nd finger, 3rd finger, 4th finger notes

Which 3rd-finger notes match an open string and ring sympathetically?

Exercise: Intonation Drill with the Sympathetic Ring

Train your ear to find true pitch using the violin's own resonance. Tune the instrument first; tapes and ear training are useless on an out-of-tune violin. Spend five minutes a day on this.

- Play third-finger D on the A string. Adjust the finger by tiny amounts until the open D string rings along with it, the sign the note is perfectly in tune.

- Play first-finger B on the A string, then check it against a tuner. Is it sharp, flat, or in tune? Move the finger and listen for the change.

- Play the same note ten times, lifting and replacing the finger each time, trying to land it in tune on the first try without adjusting.

Exercise: D Major and A Major Scale Practice

Build both one-octave scales as your daily warm-up. Start slow with one full bow per note, then add the metronome. Log your comfortable tempo in the practice tracker template.

- Play the D major scale slowly, one full bow per note, ascending and descending: open D, E, F-sharp, G, then open A, B, C-sharp, D.

- Play A major with the identical finger pattern starting on the open A and crossing to the E string. Notice the spacing is the same as D major.

- Set a metronome to 60 beats per minute and play D major one note per beat, only speeding up when every note is in tune.

Checklist: Left-Hand Health Checklist

- [] Thumb sits opposite the first finger with light contact, no squeeze
- [] Fingers curve and drop on their tips, with short nails
- [] Wrist is straight, not caved in toward the neck
- [] Pressing only firmly enough to make the note ring clear
- [] The violin is held by the chin and collarbone, not propped by the hand
- [] Lower fingers stay down where the pattern allows, keeping the hand stable

Tuning, Reading, and Your First Melodies

Tune reliably, read first-position notes on the staff, and learn your first recognizable tunes with a steady pulse.

Exercise: Daily Tuning Routine

Tune before every session, always starting from the A string. Use the tuning log template to record how far each string had drifted, which reveals whether your pegs are slipping or your room is too dry.

- Clip on a tuner set to A 440, bow the open A, and bring it into tune with the fine tuner first, the peg only for large changes.

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- Tune D, then G, then E in turn, pushing each peg gently inward as you turn so it grips and holds.

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- Bow two adjacent strings together and listen for the pulsing beat. Adjust until the beat disappears and the perfect fifth rings clean.

Worksheet: Note-Reading Self-Quiz

Test that you can turn a written note into a string and finger without hesitation. Write the answer for each, then verify on the violin. Repeat with new notes until it is instant.

Note on the bottom line of the staff (E): which string and finger?

Note in the second space from the bottom (A): which string and finger?

Note on the middle line (B): which string and finger?

Note in the top space (E5): which string and finger?

Treble-clef line and space mnemonics you are using

Exercise: Learn a New Melody, Layer by Layer

Use this six-step method to learn any beginner tune cleanly. Apply it to one piece at a time and log it in the repertoire tracker. Keep a steady pulse above raw speed.

- Choose a piece (Hot Cross Buns, Twinkle, Lightly Row, Mary Had a Little Lamb, or Ode to Joy) and say all the note names out loud first.

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- Finger the notes silently with no bow, then pluck them pizzicato to check the pitches, then add the bow one note per stroke.

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- Add the real rhythm with a metronome at 60 to 72 beats per minute, and only raise the tempo after three clean run-throughs in a row.
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Checklist: Performance-Ready Checklist for a Tune

- Violin tuned and checked against a tuner before playing
- Every note in tune, confirmed against open-string ring or a tuner
- Steady pulse maintained with a metronome, no rushing or stumbling
- Bow stays straight and the tone is clean throughout
- Played the full piece three times in a row with no mistakes
- Recorded yourself once and listened back for pitch and rhythm

Your Action Plan

1. Confirm your violin is the correct size using the arm-length test and complete the instrument inventory worksheet
2. Establish the no-hands hold and a level-shouldered posture, checked daily in a mirror for two weeks
3. Make rosin-and-tighten before and wipe-down-and-loosen after a fixed ritual around every practice session
4. Spend the first five minutes of each session on the build-and-release bow hold and long-tone drills
5. Tune the violin from the A string at the start of every session and record drift in the tuning log
6. Place finger tapes for first, second, and third fingers, then train intonation against the sympathetic ring
7. Practice the D major and A major one-octave scales daily, raising the metronome tempo only when in tune
8. Do five minutes of note-reading flashcards a day until written notes map instantly to string and finger
9. Learn one beginner melody at a time with the six-step layered method and log it in the repertoire tracker
10. Record yourself playing each finished tune and review the recording for pitch, rhythm, and tone

