

# **I. Introductory Body Position Principles**

## **Upper strings:**

- A. The body is lengthened and free. The head should be poised on the neck without tension, allowing the body to easily assume its full length
- B. Balance of the body is supported by the position of the feet: left foot slightly ahead of the right foot and turned to the left.

## **Low strings:**

- A. Body is balanced. The body is not twisted. Cello: the body is not leaning backward or sideways.
- B. Body is lengthened. The head is poised and balanced on the neck without tension. Cello: student's seat and feet form a tripod of support which enables the student to stand quickly and easily. Bass: body is not crouched or stiffened over the bass.
- C. Cello: the height of the chair allows the tops of the student's legs to be almost parallel to the floor. The seat portion of the chair should be flat. However, it is also acceptable for the front of the chair to angle slightly toward the floor.
- D. Bass: the height of the bass stool should permit the left foot to rest comfortably on a rung of the stool and allow the right foot to be flat on the floor with a slight curve (bend) of the knee.
- E. Cello: the student should sit on the front half of the chair. This prevents the student from becoming rigid or collapsed against the back of the chair. Bass: the student should place sitting bones on the stool. Student should sit on stool comfortably without the instrument.
- F. Cello: the student's feet are flat on the floor and spaced far enough apart to accommodate the width of the cello. Bass: sitting position involves the left foot on the top rung of the stool and right foot flat on the floor, spaced far enough apart for the width of the bass.
- G. Motion: body weight more on the left side of the body when the bow is at the frog; as the bow travels to the tip, the body weight gradually transfers to the right.

# Body Position Teaching Strategies

## 1. "Grow an Inch"

Flop over like a puppet with slack strings. Pull up on the invisible string at the top of the head to lengthen and align body

Use the marionette analogy for other parts of body to be sure they are relaxed and loose

## 2. "Ten to Two o'clock Feet"

Position feet so that the left foot is half a step forward and the two toes are pointing to ten minutes to two.

## 3. Balance Game

Gently push students by the shoulder to see if they are well balanced and able to spring right back

### 1. "Jack in the Box"

(cello)

Call out "Jack in the box!" and have cello students spring to their feet without having to move them – legs not wrapped around chair legs, feet flat on the floor

### 2. Foot Shuffle

(cello)

Have students slide their feet back and forth to remind them to keep their feet flat on the floor

## **Instrument Position Teaching Strategies**

### **A. "Two-Handed Lift"**

Take violin or viola from rest position with left hand on upper bout, right hand on other end with index finger on end button  
Hold in front of face like a tray  
Raise up over left shoulder  
Feel the left shoulder, collar bone, neck, and jaw where the instrument will touch  
Lower instrument gently to the correct position  
Turn head and place jaw on chinrest keeping head upright

### **B. Kendall "Numbers Game"**

1. Hold instrument at arms length by the bout with scroll pointing to ceiling and strings facing away from player
2. Rotate instrument 90 degrees so scroll points to floor
3. Bring instrument down to shoulder
4. Turn head and place jaw on chinrest keeping head upright

### **C. Rolland "Statue of Liberty"**

Take instrument out from rest position and hold in the air like the Statue of Liberty  
Turn and place on shoulder, placing jaw on chinrest keeping head upright

### **C. Instrument Take Away**

Walk up to student and remove instrument to see if the body is still correctly aligned

### **E. Nose-Bridge-Scroll Alignment**

When the violin or viola is in correct playing position, the nose, bridge, and scroll should all form a straight line and should all be positioned over the left foot.

### **F. End Pin Height**

Cellos should adjust the end pin so that the lower bouts of the instrument are inside the level of the knees and the C peg is next to the left ear  
Basses should adjust the end pin so that the nut is the level of the player's temple

## **Basic Instrument position adjustment**

Cello comes halfway up player's chest, lower bouts by the knees, C pegs next to the left ear – cello must lean slightly to the left to avoid interfering with the player's upright posture. The cello must accommodate the player rather than the reverse. The neck of the cello should be one fist width from the player's neck and four fingers width from the player's shoulder

Bass leans in to the player so that the nut is level with the player's temple, the end of the fingerboard is slightly higher than the player's right hand. The neck of the

bass should be two fist widths from the player's neck and the rim of the bass should touch the player's stomach midway between the hip bone and the belly button.

Both instruments must have the security of an end pin stop to prevent slipping on a tile or wood floor.

#### **H. "Rock and Roll"**

Place both hands on top of instrument and gently rock back and forth to get a good balance and be comfortable with the instrument

#### **I. "Bear Hug"**

Wrap both arms around cello (or bass) and hug it while balancing back and forth on chair (or stool)

#### **J. "Up and Light"**

Gently pull the cello or bass away from the player to see that their body position and alignment are correct and that there is no squeezing of the instrument with knees or anywhere else

#### **K. "Puppet Shoulders"**

Have students pull shoulders up as if by puppet strings and then allow them to drop down in a relaxed position

#### **L. "Head Pivot"**

Turn head from side to side to check for and remove any obstructions caused by the peg box or scroll of instrument

#### **M. Check Points**

Check body alignment by looking at the student from the back. There should be a straight line from the top of the head to the end of the spine and the shoulders should be level

### **Instrument Position – Upper strings**

#### **A. Checkpoints:**

1. Body remains lengthened when the instrument is brought to the body.
2. Center line of the back of the instrument rests near the shoulder
3. Instrument supported by shoulder and collarbone, and gently stabilized by the left hand; elbow is moveable
1. Button of instrument positioned slightly left of the Adam's apple or center of neck
2. Mandible or jaw bone rests on chinrest; nose pointing toward scroll

3. Instrument generally parallel to the floor when left hand is in lower position
4. Scroll and left elbow over left foot
5. Knees and legs are flexible to react to bow stroke

### **Instrument Position – Low strings**

#### **A. Cello Checkpoints**

1. The instrument touches the chest and is surrounded by the body
2. The knees gently cradle the instrument.
3. The endpin is adjusted so that:
  - a. the bottom of the scroll is normally one to three inches from the top of the student's shoulder
  - b. the C peg is located in line with the back of the student's neck
4. The cello is slightly slanted to the student's left. The line of the strings crosses the axis of the body at a slight angle.
5. The cello is tilted slightly so that it is possible to bow on both the A string and the C string without hitting the legs.

#### **B. Bass Checkpoints**

##### **1. Standing**

- a. the right back edge of the bass should rest on the player's left groin
- b. the instrument should be balanced by the body: only the floor and the groin should support the bass
- c. the pitch "A" on the G string should be over the left shoulder at eye level
- d. the bass should rest against the abdomen at an angle with no further left hand support needed
- e. the inside of the left knee should touch the back of the bass
- f. the hips and legs should be flexible

##### **2. Sitting**

- a. both feet should support the bass: the right foot by the floor and the left foot by the rung of the stool

- b. the instrument should lean into the center of the body,  
resting on the left thigh
- c. both pelvic bones should be on the stool
- d. the hip and legs should be flexible