

Chromatic Alterations

Violin/Viola:

Definition: Non-D major finger spacing

Prerequisite: D major tetrachord hand shape established with independence and flexibility of all fingers

Release thumb

Learn other first position patterns: Close 1-2, close 3-4, all whole steps

Easiest chromatic scale finger pattern: 1-1 2-2 3 4 0 1-1 2-2 3

Key order: D, G, C (typical keys during first year of instruction), F, d, B-flat, g, a, e (typical keys during second year of instruction)

Cello/Bass:

A. Cello: Extensions

1. Normally cellists maintain the distance of a half step between all fingers so that the left hand encompasses the interval of a minor third. This interval may be increased to a major third by extending the first finger backward, forming a whole step between the first and second fingers. This backward extension is useful when playing patterns such as the B-flat major scale. The first finger extends backward to play E-flat and B-flat.
2. A slightly different instance of extension is found on a D major scale beginning on the C string. After playing D, the first finger extends as the hand and arm shift up a half step, again forming a whole step between the first and second fingers while making F-sharp available to the fourth finger. This pattern is continued on the next string to form C-sharp and on to complete the scale.
1. The thumb moves with the hand to remain behind the second finger.
2. When a half step shift accompanies the extension, the entire forearm moves with the hand.

B. Bass

1. Normally the bass hand maintains a half-step between first and second fingers and between second and fourth fingers. The entire hand forms a major second. Chromatics are accomplished by shifting between positions
2. Extension motions are beginning to appear in contemporary bass pedagogy: an extension with the bass hand means to pivot up or back by a half step.

Chromatic Alteration Teaching Strategies

A. Prerequisites for Non D Major finger spacings

Students play well in tune in D Major finger pattern

Hand position and finger placements is well established

Students know and can play easily a number of pieces in D major

B. Anchor and Slide

Anchor one finger on the fingerboard and slide the others back and forth.

Can anchor any finger and slide different combinations

C. Anchor and Tap

Same as above except tap the other fingers in different positions on the fingerboard instead of sliding from place to place

D. Finger Patterns – upper strings

1. Close 2-3

2. Close 1-2

3. Close 3-4

4. All whole steps

E. Cello Extensions

Backward

Leave fingers 2, 3, and 4 on the string and extend the index finger back by lifting and pointing to ear before replacing on string one-half step lower in a lengthened and straightened position. Finger will contact fingerboard slightly on its side

Forward

Leave first finger on the string and move the rest of the hand, including the thumb forward on the fingerboard, straightening and extending the index finger to maintain contact with the string. Replace other fingers and thumb one-half step farther down the fingerboard

F. "Open and Close the Gate"

Hold left hand in front of face, shaped as if playing. Hold index finger by the tip and swing open like a farm gate, noticing finger is straight and extended. Swing shut again by returning finger to original position

G. "Face Extensions"

Place left hand fingers on face -index finger on nose, second finger on lower lip, other two fingers on chin, thumb on side of lower jaw and open mouth widely, moving fingers apart in the extension position. Close mouth to return to normal.

A. Bass Shifting/Pivots

1. Fingerboard Geography – because of the variety of ways to call positions on the bass, it works well in a school setting to tell student the name of the note under the first finger. The bass can play one whole step from the first to the fourth finger. By moving the first finger to another note, the player can cover more notes on the same string.
2. Pivots are accomplished by moving the hand back and forth on the axis of the thumb. The thumb does not move for a pivot, but the hand action gives one half step more to the hand in any one position
3. Pivots are not distinguishable from shifts from the front as only the position of the thumb shows the difference. Therefore, to observe correct form on a pivot, the teacher must stand behind the player and watch the thumb
4. Bass players learn both shifts and pivots earlier than the other players because of the necessity of getting around. The other sections can respect this and be patient while the basses learn what they need to know to shift and to pivot. This requires teamwork and other players must know that eventually they will have times when it is necessary for the basses to wait for them

B. One string tetrachords

Play four-note scale fragments on each of the four strings using all available finger patterns. See hand-out for details.

C. Scales

Order for learning scales in string class: D major, G major, C major, F major, Bb Major, A Major, E Major, B minor, E minor, A minor, D minor, G minor, F# minor, Etc.

K. Altering pitches of familiar songs

Changing major to minor, minor to major, lowering or raising certain notes, etc.

D. Additional practice/Checkpoints

Special etudes that use a particular key or finger pattern

Watch for half steps that touch one another in violin and viola, correct extensions and pivots on cello and bass respectively. Cello and bass can be monitored effectively from the back for forward extensions or pivots so the teacher can see if their arms, thumbs, etc. are doing what they should