

# Beginner's Guide to Violin



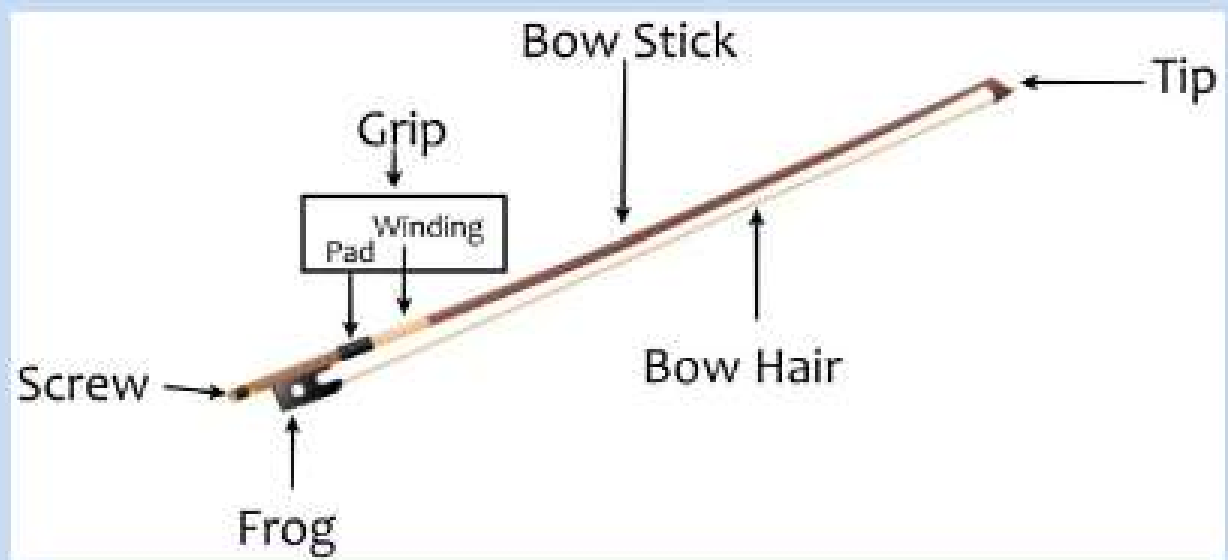
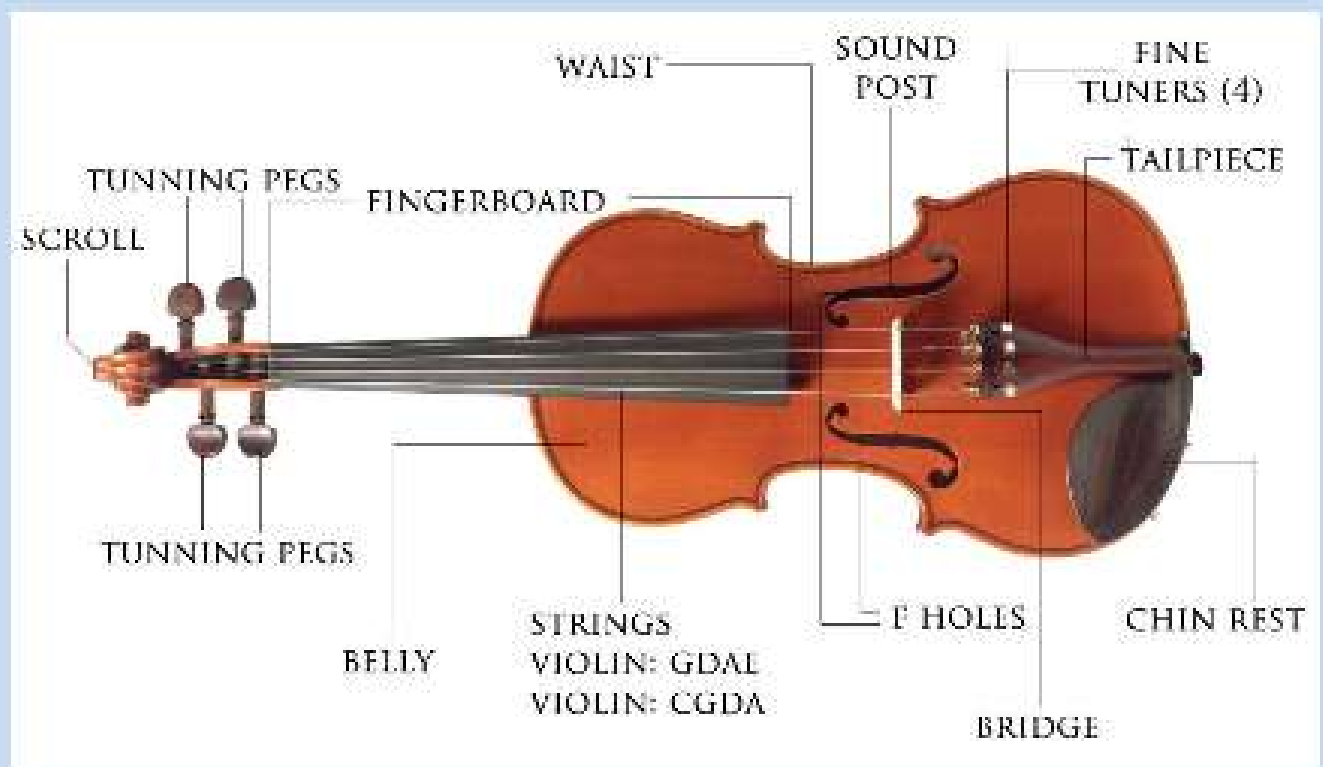
## What is the difference between a violin and a fiddle?

The difference is in the specifics, a violin IS a fiddle, but a fiddle IS NOT NECESSARILY a violin. This is the same as saying a man IS a mammal, but a mammal IS NOT NECESSARILY a man. In other words any string instrument played with a bow can be called a fiddle.

However, most often “fiddle” means the style of music played on the violin such as Irish-Scottish-French traditional music. These kinds of fiddles typically have some small physical differences from violins:

- A flatter bridge allows for easier chord playing
- Lower string action allows for easier and quicker fingering
- Some fiddles may include a pickup to plug into amps for shows

# Parts of a Violin



# Violin Sizing



Violin size is determined by arm length, but there is no 100% sure way to know which size fits best without actually being sized in a music store or by a professional.

Violins 1/10 and under are not as commonly in stock at music stores since they are sized for very young children, and many times it is a better investment to wait until the child is a little older and/or mature.

# Important Accessories

Bow: All violins should already come with a bow, make sure to ask if you don't see one. The bow moves across the strings to make sound.

Shoulder rest: This attaches to the edge of the back of the violin with "feet". It provides much needed support for the player to have correct posture.



Rosin: This is extremely important because it provides friction between the bow and strings to make sound.



Extra Strings: Although you'll only need to replace the strings about once a year when starting out, it's always a good idea to have some spares handy. Prelude and Red Label are good brands to trust.

Cleaning cloth: A simple cleaning cloth takes off fingerprints and dust.

# Instrument Accessories

Humidifier: The violin wood absorbs and releases moisture as humidity levels change in the surrounding air. Dry air causes wood to release moisture which causes it to shrink ever so slightly which can lead to cracks and expensive repair bills. Bow hair shrinks in dry air which can affect sound quality, cause the bow to warp, or could even result in the bow tip breaking. Purchasing a humidifier will protect the violin for years to come.

Tuner: A chromatic tuner is necessary to keep your violin in playing condition. A tuner aimed at guitars can work, but tuners made specifically for violins will attach much better.

Metronome: Most players (not just beginners) have a natural tendency to speed up when they play. Without a stable beat, most people will simply play faster and faster. Not being able to keep time is the sign of job not well done. A simple metronome will help you practice better and eventually play without it.

Music Stand: A music stand makes your sheet music higher and easy to see. Otherwise, you have to lean over a table or bed which leads to back/neck pain and bad posture.

## Violin Care

1. The violin wood expands when it's hot and contracts when it's cold, so always keep it in a cool place. **NEVER LEAVE YOUR VIOLIN IN YOUR CAR** regardless of time of year. In fact, you should treat your instrument like a person or even a pet.
2. Always keep the violin in its case when you're not playing. This will help protect from temperature changes, and will protect it from getting scratched, chipped, or bent.
3. Always set down the violin string-side up even if it's zipped up inside your case! Don't set anything on top of the violin (even if it's in its case). The reason is that the strings exert a lot of pressure on the instrument through the bridge, and any more pressure increases the chances of damage.

## Bows and Rosin

1. Be careful not to touch the bow's horsehair. Horsehair is sensitive to the oils on your hands and it will ruin it very quickly, making it dirty and slick.
2. The tip of bows will shatter if hit just right. Be careful. It's not a sword, it's a bow.
3. Always loosen the bow when not being used. If you don't, then the tension causes the bow stick to warp over time, losing its slightly arched shape.
4. Generally, the darker the color, the softer and stickier. A harder-feeling (lighter) rosin is easier to clean than stickier ones. But the sound is not as good as the darker, softer rosins.
5. A bow won't make a sound until you put rosin on it. To start a new rosin block, take the end of the bow (screw) and scratch the smooth surface to release some rosin dust. Be careful not to break it. Then rub the rosin against the horsehair with slow, small motions from frog to tip, until the bow will make a sound against the strings.



## Cleaning

1. Wipe rosin off the strings and violin after every use. Any rosin dust left on the strings or over the body of your violin can cause it to be sticky/dirty.
2. Never use furniture polish, water, or wood cleaner on your violin. It will weaken the glue, or ruin the acoustics of the violin. A special polish is used for violins but it is rarely needed.

## Before Playing

1. Always check the bridge's alignment that it's sitting straight horizontally and vertically. To fix it, carefully adjust the bridge and make sure that the bridge's feet are flat against the surface of the violin. Remember, if the violin bridge falls, the sound post inside the violin may fall as well. Don't forget to loosen your strings slightly before you move your bridge.



2. Check your violins intonation with your tuner. If the string is a complete letter note away from the goal (ex. it's G instead of A), then very carefully turn the pegs slightly. If the string is only a half step or a little away from the goal (ex. G# instead of A) then try the fine tuners first to tune.

## After Playing

1. Always remove the shoulder rest before storing your violin in its case, and make sure that your zippers, latches, or other closers are fastened securely before picking up your case.
2. Remember to loosen the bow before placing in the case. Lefty loosey, righty tighty!
3. Dust the rosin off the strings and violin before placing in case. If your case came with a blanket, cover your violin.