

FiddleHed
and
FiddleGeek
present

Playing
with Ease

PLAYING WITH EASE

This pamphlet outlines how to play with ease.

It doesn't teach you how to hold your bow,
it helps you use the bowhold you already have
in a more relaxed manner.

It doesn't teach you how to move the bow,
it helps you get a great sound more naturally.

It doesn't teach you how to hold the fiddle,
it helps you press the strings and play in tune
with less effort and strain.

You'll want a pencil with sides (not a round pencil)
and a highlighter or chunky marker for these
exercises.

LET'S GET STARTED!

The Bow Hand

We used to talk about bowgrips. Now the language is bowholds. But neither is really accurate.

What we really want is a **bow balance**--however we arrange our fingers and thumb on the bow, the ideal is a relaxed, balanced position. Our default should feel restful, holding only when we lift the bow from the strings.

1. Arrange your fingers **on your arm** the way you usually hold the bow. **Increase the firmness** of that hold. Then **increase it more!**
2. **Relax** your hold gradually to return to the original firmness. Then **relax it more...and even more!**
3. Repeat the process **holding a pencil** with edges (hexagonal pencil). At the end of step 2 you should be able to use your free hand to slide the pencil back and forth.
4. Repeat the process **on your bow**. Hold the **bowstick** with your **free hand** to support the weight. Then **rest the bow on the strings**. Rest your hand on the bow, with natural sleepy arm weight on the strings.
5. Now set the **bow in motion!** If it grunts and creaks, **press up with your thumb** to relieve the weight without tensing your arm. If it gets weak and whispery, let even **more natural arm weight** onto the string through your **index/pointer finger**.

The Bow's Path

When we're playing, our eyes can't tell whether our bow is moving along a straight path. We're too close, and one eye is behind or above the other, warping the view.

Luckily, the **string's vibrations** urge the bow in a naturally **straight path**. All we have to do is not get in the way!

Starting with a **bow balance** (see page 2) will help. Then it's easier to ride the string.

If you feel the bow **swish**, just let it! It's finding the straight path. **Don't fight it**--it knows best.

This often works to **find a starting angle** for your bow:

1. Put your bow on the string at the frog
2. Lift your index/pointer finger
3. Tap pinky repeatedly until the bow stops swinging.

For more exercises to teach your arm the bow's path, visit <https://ruthviolin.weebly.com/resources.html> and scroll down to the Book of Games.

The Fiddle Hand

Depending on how you hold the fiddle, some of these tips may be less practical than others. Take what you can use!

We can **control our finger placement** best when we're not using our hand to hold the fiddle.

1. Experiment with **balancing a highlighter** or chunky marker between the base knuckle of your index/pointer finger and the bone in the bend of your thumb.
2. Balance the **neck of your fiddle** in your hand this same way. Wiggle your fingers. Wave at your thumb.
3. Swing your **base knuckles** at the back of the hand **over the fingerboard**. Your elbow may move. If anything twinges or pulls, STOP and work with someone in person to figure out what's going on.
4. **Keep your thumb loose**. Check this by tapping your thumb bone against the fiddle neck.

If you can maintain this position, your fingers will feel **fast and free!** Reinforce it by playing the "Bottles of Beer" game on the next page.

BOTTLES OF BEER



**Four bottles of beer
on the wall,**

Four bottles of beer,

Take one down...

pass it around...

**Three bottles of
beer on the wall!**



**Three bottles of
beer on the wall,**

**Three bottles of
beer...**



FiddleHed

FiddleHed is Jason Kleinberg.
Find him on YouTube and here:

<https://fiddlehed.com>



FiddleGeek

FiddleGeek is Ruth Roland.
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Subject line: LIST