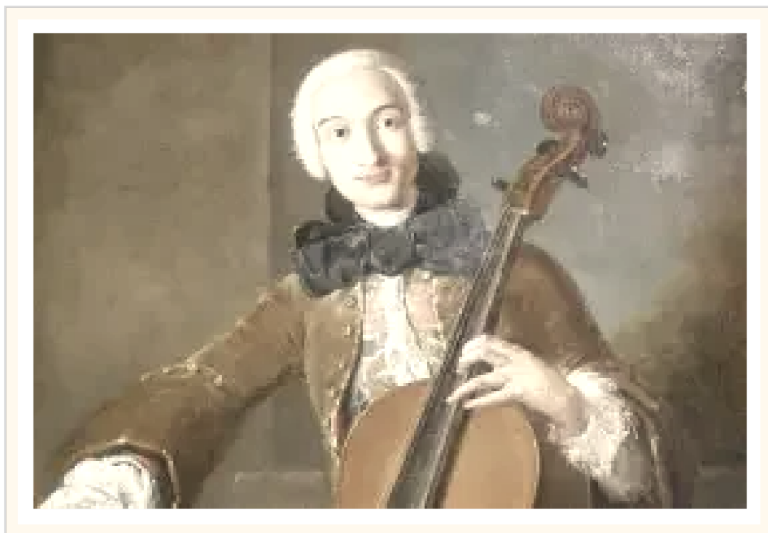


ABSOLUTE BEGINNER · YOUR FIRST TERM

Cello Pack

Six short lessons for someone who has just opened the case: the parts of the cello and bow, how to sit and hold them, the four open strings on the bass stave, your first fingers, how long notes last, and the marks that tell the bow what to do. A test paper and answers at the back.

Every cellist you have ever heard once played their first open string.



Wikimedia Commons

Luigi Boccherini

A cellist and composer who put the cello at the heart of hundreds of pieces. He had his first cello lessons from his father as a small boy.

How this pack works

Every lesson has two pages. The first one teaches; the second has exercises to write straight onto the page. Lessons one and two are about you and your instrument, three to six about reading music. Keep your cello nearby — and when this pack and your teacher disagree, your teacher wins.

01	Meet the cello and bow	Pages 3–4
02	Sitting, holding, and the bow hold	Pages 5–6
03	The four open strings	Pages 7–8
04	First fingers on the D and A strings	Pages 9–10
05	How long notes last	Pages 11–12
06	Bowing marks, and your first tune	Pages 13–14
—	Test paper, then the answer key	Pages 15–16

TRACK YOUR PROGRESS

	Lesson read on	Tried on the cello on
Lesson one	_____	_____
Lesson two	_____	_____
Lesson three	_____	_____
Lesson four	_____	_____
Lesson five	_____	_____
Lesson six	_____	_____

WHAT YOU NEED

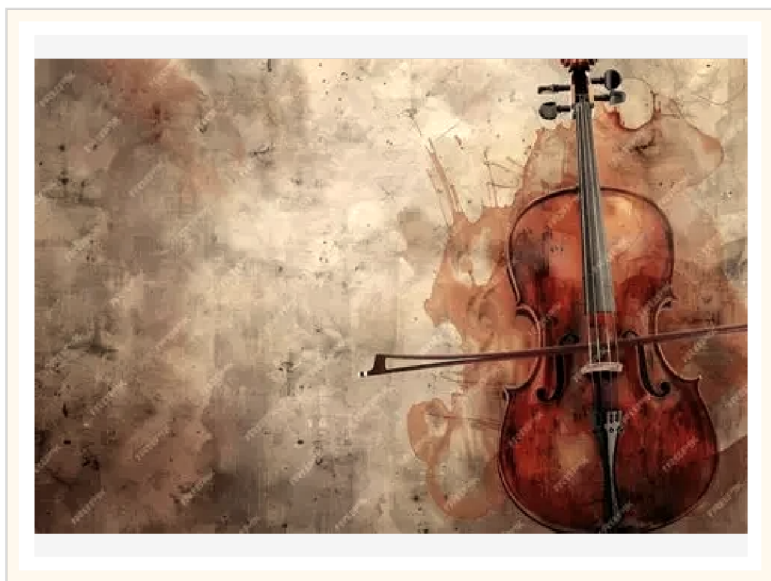
A cello and bow that fit you — sizes run from quarter to full, so let a teacher or string shop measure you. A chair with no arms, a rockstop or endpin strap, rosin, a soft cloth and a pencil.

WHEN YOU FINISH

Try the test paper on page 15 without looking back, then mark it with the key on page 16. After that, the theory packs take your note reading further.

Meet the cello and bow

A cello is a large hollow wooden box with four strings stretched over it, played sitting down; the bow is horsehair on a stick. Learn the names now — your teacher will use them in every lesson.



Find each part on your own cello as you read.

LOOKING AFTER IT

Loosen the bow hair when you put it away. Push the endpin in before you carry the cello or lay it on its side. Never touch the hair, and keep the case away from heaters and hot cars.

ROSIN

Hard tree resin. New hair makes no sound until rosined; after that, a few slow strokes before practice is plenty.

The cello

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1 Scroll — the carved curl at the very top</p> <p>2 Pegs — four wooden pegs that tighten or loosen each string</p> <p>3 Nut — the small ridge the strings cross as they leave the pegbox</p> <p>4 Fingerboard — the long black strip your fingers press on</p> <p>5 Body — the hollow box — the front is the belly, then the back and the ribs</p> | <p>6 f-holes — two holes shaped like an f; the sound comes out here</p> <p>7 Bridge — thin wood standing on the belly, holding the strings up. It is held by the strings alone, never glued</p> <p>8 Fine tuners — small screws on the tailpiece for tiny tuning changes</p> <p>9 Tailpiece — holds the strings at the bottom end</p> <p>10 Endpin — the metal spike at the bottom that slides out and rests on the floor</p> |
|--|--|

The bow

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>11 Tip — the pointed far end</p> <p>12 Stick — the long wooden or carbon part, gently curved</p> <p>13 Hair — the ribbon of horsehair that touches the string</p> | <p>14 Frog — the block at the end you hold</p> <p>15 Screw — turn it to tighten or loosen the hair</p> |
|---|--|

Name that part

1 Write the name of the part that does each job.

- | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-------|---|--------------------------------------|-------|
| a | Where the sound comes out | _____ | e | Where your fingers press the strings | _____ |
| b | Turn it to tighten the bow hair | _____ | f | The block of the bow you hold | _____ |
| c | Holds the strings up off the belly | _____ | g | The spike that rests on the floor | _____ |
| d | Small screws for tiny tuning changes | _____ | h | The carved curl at the top | _____ |

2 True or false? Circle T or F.

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| a | The bridge is glued to the cello. | T | F |
| b | Touching the bow hair with your fingers makes it slippery. | T | F |
| c | Loosen the bow hair when you put the bow away. | T | F |
| d | Turn the pegs yourself whenever a string sounds wrong. | T | F |
| e | Rosin helps the hair grip the string. | T | F |
| f | Leave the endpin pulled out when you carry the cello. | T | F |

3 Why do cellists loosen the bow hair after playing?

4 Ask your teacher, then fill in.

- | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|-------|---|------------------------|-------|
| a | My cello size is | _____ | c | My teacher's name | _____ |
| b | My bow stick is made of | _____ | d | My first lesson was on | _____ |

Sitting, holding, and the bow hold

A good sound starts before you play a note. Build your set-up in this order every time, slowly, until it happens without thinking. Your teacher may change a detail to suit you — follow them.

Sitting

- 1 Sit on the front half of a chair with no arms.
- 2 Feet flat on the floor, a little wider apart than your knees.
- 3 Tall back, loose shoulders — no leaning forward over the cello.
- 4 Music stand at eye level, so you look ahead, not down.

Holding the cello

- 1 Pull out the endpin so the C-string peg sits near your left ear. Your teacher will help you set the length.
- 2 Place the endpin in a rockstop on the floor in front of you.
- 3 Lean the cello back so its top edge rests lightly on your chest.
- 4 Let your knees touch its lower sides — resting, never gripping.
- 5 Left hand: thumb soft behind the neck, fingers curved over the strings, elbow up.

The bow hold

- 1 Bend your thumb and put its tip on the stick, where it meets the frog.
- 2 Let your fingers hang over the stick, middle finger opposite the thumb.
- 3 Your first finger rests on the stick at its middle joint.
- 4 Your little finger curves over the stick like the others — it does not stand on top.
- 5 Soft, round and heavy — let the weight of your arm sink into the string.

WHERE THE BOW GOES

About halfway between the bridge and the end of the fingerboard, with the bow parallel to the bridge. Pulling a straight bow is the whole trick of a clean sound — practise in front of a mirror.

DOWN AND UP

Pulling the bow from the frog towards the tip is a *down bow*. Pushing it back from the tip to the frog is an *up bow*. You will see their signs in lesson six.

Four things that go wrong, and the fix

Gripping the cello with your knees	It stands on the endpin — let your knees just rest.
Left elbow hanging down by your side	Lift it so your arm makes a gentle curve.
Bow thumb straight and stiff	Bend it, tip on the stick.
Endpin slipping across the floor	Use a rockstop or endpin strap.

Set-up check

1 Put these steps in order. Write 1 to 5 in the boxes.

- Let your knees rest against the sides of the cello.
- Sit on the front half of the chair, feet flat.
- Lean the cello back against your chest.
- Place the endpin in the rockstop.
- Bring up your left hand, elbow up.

2 What should each player change?

a Ali's bow thumb is straight and stiff.

b Maya's left elbow hangs down by her side.

c Leo's bow slants across the strings, drifting up towards the fingerboard.

d Priya is hunched forward, curled over the top of the cello.

3 A week of set-up checks. Look in a mirror before you practise and tick each one you get right.

CHECK	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Front of the chair, feet flat							
Endpin in the rockstop							
Cello resting on the chest							
Knees resting, not gripping							
Left elbow up							
Bow thumb bent							
Bow parallel to the bridge							

The four open strings

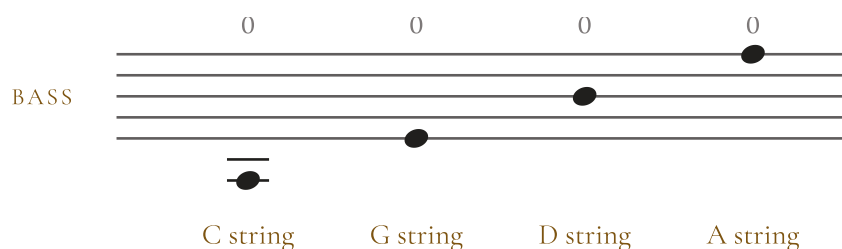
Your cello has four strings. From the lowest and thickest to the highest and thinnest they are C, G, D and A. Played with no finger down, each one is an *open string* – and the finger number for open is 0.

First, the bass stave

Cello music is written on the bass stave. Its five lines, from the bottom, are G B D F A – *Good Boys Deserve Fudge Always*. The four spaces are A C E G – *All Cows Eat Grass*. Notes lower than the stave borrow short extra lines called *ledger lines*.



Where the open strings are written



C sits on the second ledger line below the stave; G is on the bottom line; D is on the middle line; A is on the top line. Low to high: **Cats Go Down Alleys**.

TUNED IN FIFTHS

Count up five letters from any string and you reach the next: C d e f G, G a b c D, D e f g A. Cellists tune the A string first, then the others from it.

PIZZICATO FIRST

Many beginners pluck before they bow. Rest your right thumb on the side of the fingerboard and pluck with the pad of your first finger. The music says *pizz.*; *arco* means pick up the bow again.

Open strings

- 1 Write the four open strings, lowest first.

- 2 Name each note. Every one is an open string.

BASS

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

- 3 Answer in one word, letter or number.

- a Which string is the thickest?
 b Which string lies between G and A?
 c Which string do cellists tune first?
 d What finger number means an open string?
 e Which open string is written on the top line?
 f Which one sits on the second ledger line below?

- 4 Write each open string on the staff, above its letter. Use ledger lines where you need them.

BASS

A D G C

- 5 Pluck each open string, pizzicato, and say its name out loud as you do. Tick when you can do all four with your eyes shut.

☐ C ☐ G ☐ D ☐ A

First fingers on the D and A strings

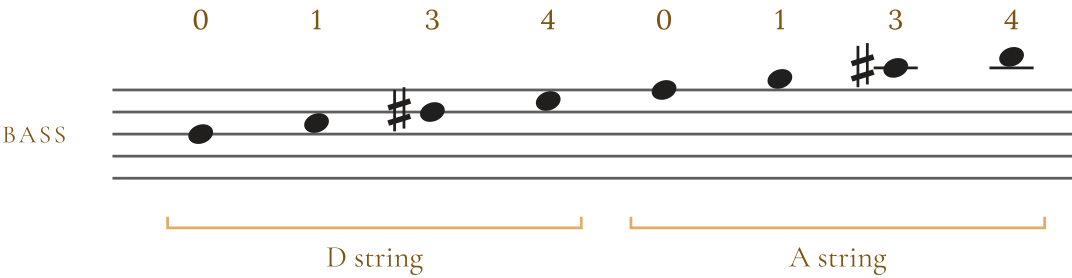
Put a finger down and the string gets shorter, so the note gets higher. Cellists number the fingers of the left hand, and the numbers are printed above or below the notes.

O Open string	I First finger	2 Middle finger	3 Ring finger	4 Little finger
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The thumb has no number – it stays soft behind the neck, roughly opposite finger 2.

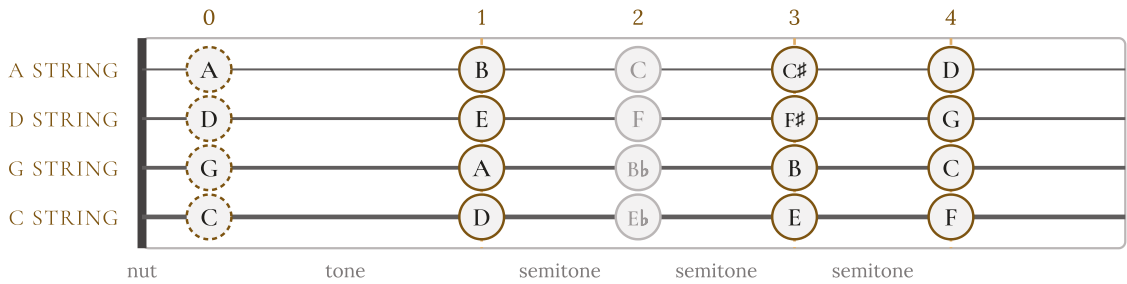
The first finger pattern

On the D and A strings, fingers 0 1 3 4 give four notes each. Together they make the scale of D major – the first scale most cellists learn.



The fingerboard, all four strings

On the cello, fingers 1, 2, 3 and 4 each sit a semitone apart. Dashed lines show where beginner tapes usually go; finger 2 is greyed because this first pattern leaves it out. Finger 4 plays the same note as the open string below – G on the D string matches the open G.



ONE FINGER PER SEMITONE

Open to 1 is a *tone*, and 1 to 3 is another tone. 3 to 4 is a *semitone*, the smallest step. That is why finger 3 plays F# on the D string and C# on the A string – the sharp sign # raises a note by a semitone.

SAY IT, THEN PLAY IT

Before each note, say three things: its name, its finger, its string – “F sharp, three, D”. Keep finger 2 relaxed and hovering, ready for later.

Name, finger, string

- 1 For each note, write its name, its finger number and its string. Use the first finger pattern.

BASS

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Note								
Finger								
String								

- 2 Which note does each finger make?

a D string, finger 1

d A string, open

b D string, finger 3

e D string, finger 4

c A string, finger 3

f A string, finger 4

- 3 Answer these.

a Which finger does this first pattern leave out?

b What does a sharp sign do to a note?

c Finger 4 on the D string matches which open string?

d How far apart are fingers 3 and 4?

- 4 Play the D major scale slowly on your cello, saying each note's name, finger and string. Tick when it sounds in tune.

☐

Going up

☐

Coming down

☐

Up and down, no stops

How long notes last

Where a note sits tells you *which* note to play. Its shape tells you *how long* to play it, counted in steady beats — like footsteps.

The note shapes

	Semibreve — an empty oval, no stem	4 beats
	Dotted minim — the dot adds half again	3 beats
	Minim — an empty oval with a stem	2 beats
	Crotchet — filled in, with a stem	1 beat
	Quavers — two to a beat, joined by a beam	$\frac{1}{2}$ beat each

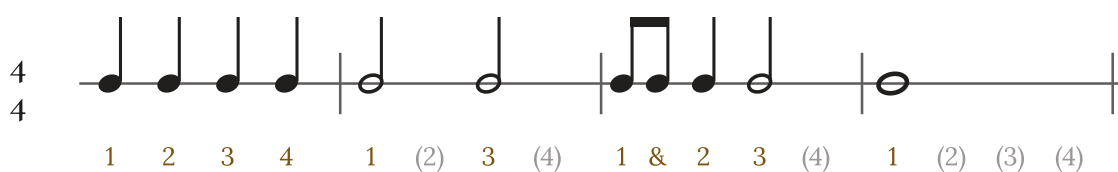
In 4/4 time

The time signature **4/4** at the start means four crotchet beats in every bar. Barlines divide the music into bars; a double barline marks the end.

Count out loud, steadily, and keep counting through long notes — the beats you hold are shown in brackets below. Two quavers share one beat: say “1 &”.

Every note value has a matching *rest* — a silence of the same length. You still count through a rest.

Counting four bars



LONG NOTES, SLOW BOW

A note's length is how long the bow keeps moving. A semibreve can use the whole bow, drawn slowly; crotchets use a shorter stroke in the middle of the bow. Plan your bow before you start.

TRY IT NOW

Clap the four bars above while counting aloud. Then play them on the open D string — one bow for each note, changing direction every time.

Counting beats

1 Note sums. How many crotchet beats in total?

a minim + crotchet

d dotted minim + crotchet

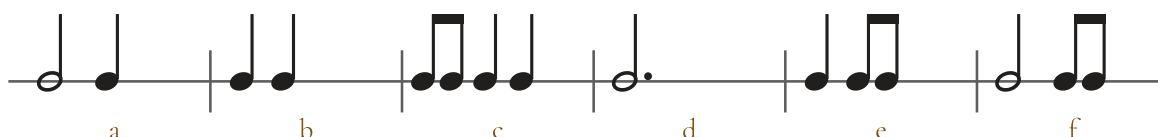
b one semibreve

e minim + minim + crotchet

c two quavers

f crotchet rest + minim

2 Each bar should hold four beats, but every one here is short. Write how many beats it has, then the one note that would finish it.



Beats

Beats

Beats

Beats

Beats

Beats

Add a

Add a

Add a

Add a

Add a

Add a

3 Write the counting under each note – 1, 2, 3, 4, with & for the second quaver and brackets for held beats.



4 Answer these.

a Which note needs the longest, slowest bow? _____

b How many crotchet beats fill a bar of 4/4? _____

c How many quavers make a minim? _____

Bowing marks, and your first tune

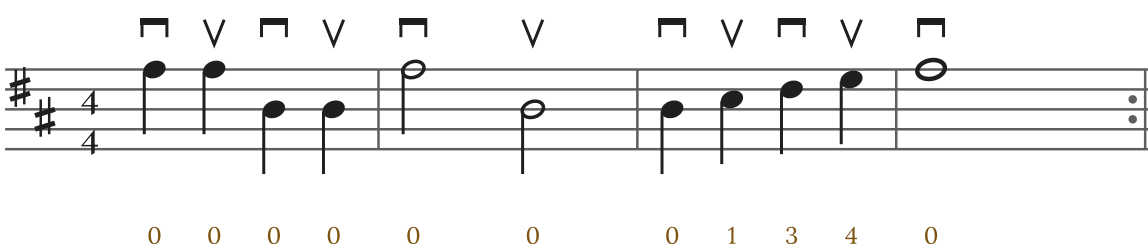
Cello music carries extra signs that tell the bow what to do. Unless a mark says otherwise, the bow changes direction on every new note — and most tunes start with a down bow.

	Down bow	Pull the bow, frog towards tip.
	Up bow	Push the bow, tip towards frog.
	Slur	A curved line over or under different notes: play them in one bow.
	Bow lift	Lift the bow off the string and bring it back to where you started.
<i>pizz.</i>	Pizzicato	Pluck the string with your finger.
<i>arco</i>	Arco	Play with the bow again.
<i>f</i>	Forte	Loud — more weight into the string, more bow.
<i>p</i>	Piano	Soft — lighter weight, less bow.
	Repeat	Go back and play the passage again.

A warm-up, fully marked

Bow signs sit above the stave, finger numbers below. The two sharps at the start are the *key signature* of D major: every F and every C in the piece is sharp.

BASS



0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1 3 4 0

READ BEFORE YOU PLAY

Look at the time signature and count one bar out loud. Find the bow signs. Then play slowly — a clean, straight bow is worth more than speed.

Mark it up

1 Name each sign.

A  _____	B  _____	C  _____	D  _____	E  _____	F  _____
---	---	---	---	---	---

2 *Hot Cross Buns*, a traditional tune. Bar 1 is marked. Following the rule that each new note changes the bow, write a down-bow or up-bow sign above every note in bars 2 to 4.

BASS



3 1 0

3 Now write the finger number under every note in bars 2 to 4.

4 Answer these.

- | | | |
|---|--|-------|
| a | Is a down bow a push or a pull? | _____ |
| b | What does <i>arco</i> tell you to do? | _____ |
| c | Two notes under a slur take how many bows? | _____ |
| d | Unmarked tunes usually start on which bow? | _____ |

5 Play *Hot Cross Buns* with the bowings you wrote. Tick when you can play it without stopping.

☐ Plucked, pizz. ☐ Bowed, slowly ☐ Bowed, no stops

Show what you know

Name _____ Score _____ / 30

QUESTION 1 · PARTS

5 marks

- a The carved curl at the top _____
- b Small screws for tiny tuning _____
- c Holds the strings off the belly _____
- d The block of the bow you hold _____
- e The spike that rests on the floor _____

QUESTION 2 · HOLDING

5 marks

- a Sit on the front half of the chair. T F
- b The bow thumb should be straight. T F
- c The endpin goes in a rockstop. T F
- d Play with the bow right beside the scroll. T F
- e Grip the cello tightly with your knees. T F

QUESTION 3 · OPEN STRINGS

5 marks

- a The four open strings, lowest first
- b Which is the thinnest string? _____

QUESTION 4 · NOTES AND FINGERS

5 marks

One mark for each note with its name, finger and string all correct.

BASS

a _____

b _____

c _____

d _____

e _____

QUESTION 5 · NOTE VALUES

5 marks

- a a minim
- b 2 crotchets + minim
- c a semibreve
- d two quavers
- e a dotted minim

QUESTION 6 · SIGNS

5 marks

a _____

b _____

c _____

d _____

e _____

Answers

LESSON ONE · THE PARTS

1 a f-holes · b screw · c bridge · d fine tuners · e fingerboard · f frog · g endpin · h scroll.

2 a F · b T · c T · d F — big tuning changes are your teacher's job; small ones go on the fine tuners · e T · f F — push it in first.

3 So the stick keeps its curve and the hair does not stretch.

4 Your own answers.

LESSON TWO · SET-UP

1 In the order printed: 4, 1, 3, 2, 5.

2 a Bend the thumb, tip on the stick by the frog · b Lift the elbow so the arm makes a gentle curve · c Keep the bow parallel to the bridge, halfway between bridge and fingerboard · d Sit tall and let the cello lean back to you.

3 Your own ticks.

LESSON THREE · OPEN STRINGS

1 C G D A.

2 D A C A G D C G.

3 a C · b D · c A · d 0 · e A · f C.

4 A on the top line · D on the middle line · G on the bottom line · C on the second ledger line below.

LESSON FOUR · FINGERS

1 1 F#, 3, D · 2 B, 1, A · 3 G, 4, D · 4 D, 4, A · 5 E, 1, D · 6 C#, 3, A · 7 A, 0, A · 8 D, 0, D.

2 a E · b F# · c C# · d A · e G · f D.

3 a 2 · b Raises it by a semitone · c G · d A semitone.

LESSON FIVE · NOTE VALUES

1 a 3 · b 4 · c 1 · d 4 · e 5 · f 3.

2 a 3, crotchet · b 2, minim · c 3, crotchet · d 3, crotchet · e 2, minim · f 3, crotchet.

3 1 · 2 & · 3 (4) | 1 (2 3) · 4.

4 a Semibreve · b 4 · c 4.

LESSON SIX · BOWING

1 A down bow · B up bow · C slur · D bow lift · E repeat · F forte.

2 Bar 2: up, down, up · bar 3: down, up, down, up, down, up, down, up · bar 4: down, up, down.

3 Bar 2: 3 1 0 · bar 3: 0 0 0 1 1 1 1 · bar 4: 3 1 0.

4 a A pull · b Play with the bow again · c One · d Down bow.

TEST PAPER · 30 MARKS

Q1 a scroll · b fine tuners · c bridge · d frog · e endpin.

Q2 a T · b F · c T · d F · e F.

Q3 a C G D A, one mark each · b A.

Q4 a E, 1, D · b A, 0, A · c C#, 3, A · d G, 4, D · e B, 1, A.

Q5 a 2 · b 4 · c 4 · d 1 · e 3.

Q6 a down bow · b up bow · c slur · d forte · e repeat.

25 or more — you are ready for real pieces; try the Beginner Theory Pack next. **Under 25** — go back to the lessons where you lost marks, then try again next week.