

ABSOLUTE BEGINNER · YOUR FIRST TERM

Violin Pack

Six short lessons for someone who has just opened the case: the parts of the violin and bow, how to stand and hold them, the four open strings, 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 violinist you have ever heard once played their first open string.



Wikimedia Commons

Niccolò Paganini

The most famous violinist of his age, and a composer who wrote music only he could play. He started as a small boy with a small violin and a lot of patient practice.

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 violin nearby – and when this pack and your teacher disagree, your teacher wins.

01	Meet the violin and bow	Pages 3–4
02	Standing, holding, and the bow hold	Pages 5–6
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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 violin on
Lesson one	_____	_____
Lesson two	_____	_____
Lesson three	_____	_____
Lesson four	_____	_____
Lesson five	_____	_____
Lesson six	_____	_____

WHAT YOU NEED

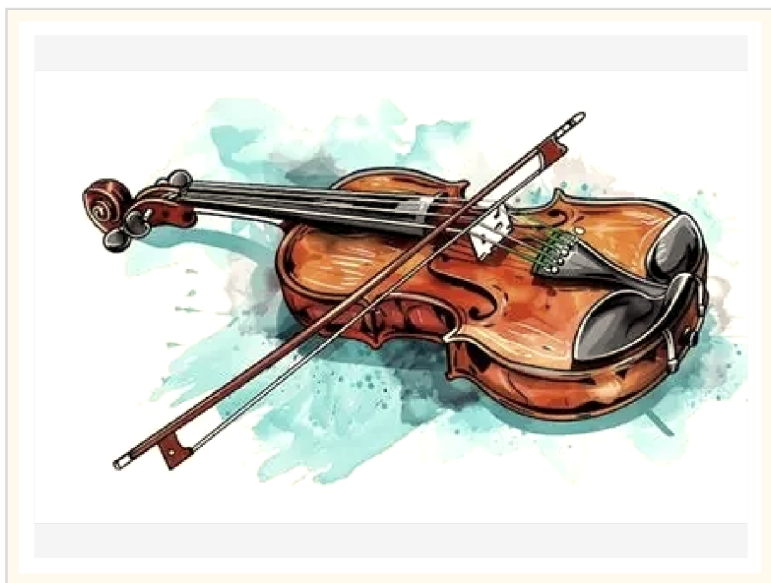
A violin and bow that fit you — sizes run from tiny to full, so let a teacher or string shop measure you. Rosin, a soft cloth, a pencil, and a shoulder rest or sponge if your teacher uses one.

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 Beginner Theory Pack takes your note reading further.

Meet the violin and bow

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



LOOKING AFTER IT

Loosen the bow hair when you put it away. Wipe rosin dust off with a soft cloth. Never touch the hair, and never leave the case in a hot car or by a heater.

ROSIN

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

Find each part on your own violin as you read.

The violin

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1 Scroll — the carved curl at the very top</p> | <p>6 f-holes — two holes shaped like an f; the sound comes out here</p> |
| <p>2 Pegs — four wooden pegs that tighten or loosen each string</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>3 Nut — the small ridge the strings cross as they leave the pegbox</p> | <p>8 Fine tuners — small screws on the tailpiece for tiny tuning changes — often only on the E string</p> |
| <p>4 Fingerboard — the long black strip your fingers press on</p> | <p>9 Tailpiece — holds the strings at the bottom end</p> |
| <p>5 Body — the hollow box — the front is the belly, then the back and the ribs</p> | <p>10 Chinrest — where your jaw rests</p> |

The bow

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>11 Tip — the pointed far end</p> | <p>14 Frog — the block at the end you hold</p> |
| <p>12 Stick — the long wooden or carbon part, gently curved</p> | <p>15 Screw — turn it to tighten or loosen the hair</p> |
| <p>13 Hair — the ribbon of horsehair that touches the string</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 | Where your jaw rests | _____ |
| 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 violin. | 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 | A violin left in a hot car will come to no harm. | T | F |

3 Why do violinists loosen the bow hair after playing?

4 Ask your teacher, then fill in.

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

Standing, 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.

Standing

- 1 Feet about shoulder-width apart, weight even on both.
- 2 Knees soft, never locked.
- 3 Tall back, loose shoulders — nothing lifted up towards your ears.
- 4 Music stand at eye level, so you look ahead, not down.

Holding the violin

- 1 Start in rest position: violin tucked under your right arm.
- 2 Lift it with your left hand and lay it on your left collarbone.
- 3 Turn your head a little left and let your jaw rest on the chinrest — heavy, not squeezing.
- 4 The violin points out to your left, scroll about level with your chin.
- 5 Left wrist straight; thumb soft beside the neck, with a small gap under the neck.

The bow hold

- 1 Bend your thumb and put its tip on the stick, just in front of the frog.
- 2 Drape your two middle fingers over the stick, opposite the thumb.
- 3 Rest your first finger on the stick at its middle joint.
- 4 Curve your little finger and stand its tip on top of the stick.
- 5 Everything soft and round — no straight, locked joints.

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

Squeezing the chinrest with your jaw Let the weight of your head do the work.

Left wrist bent back, palm flat on the neck Straighten the wrist and leave a small gap.

Bow thumb straight and stiff Bend it, tip on the stick.

Little finger lying flat on the stick Curve it back up onto its tip.

Set-up check

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

- Let your jaw rest on the chinrest.
- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart.
- Lay the violin on your left collarbone.
- Hold the violin in rest position under your right arm.
- Check your left wrist is straight.

2 What should each player change?

a Ali's bow thumb is straight and stiff.

b Maya's left palm is pressed flat against the neck.

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

d Priya's shoulders are up near her ears.

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

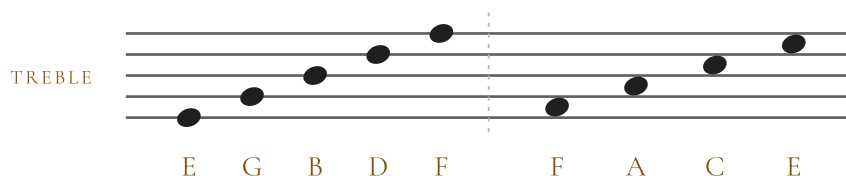
CHECK	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
Feet apart, knees soft							
Violin on the left collarbone							
Jaw resting, not squeezing							
Left wrist straight							
Bow thumb bent							
Little finger curved on top							
Bow parallel to the bridge							

The four open strings

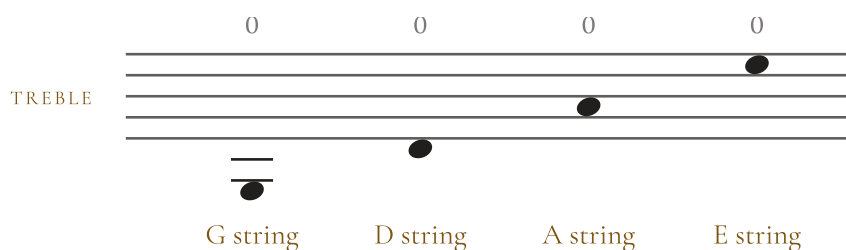
Your violin has four strings. From the lowest and thickest to the highest and thinnest they are G, D, A and E. Played with no finger down, each one is an *open string* – and the finger number for open is 0.

First, the stave

Violin music is written on the treble stave. Its five lines, from the bottom, are E G B D F – *Every Good Boy Deserves Fruit*. The four spaces spell FACE. Notes lower than the stave borrow short extra lines called *ledger lines*.



Where the open strings are written



G hangs below two ledger lines; D sits just under the stave; A is in the second space; E is in the top space. Low to high: **Good Dogs Always Eat**.

TUNED IN FIFTHS

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

PIZZICATO FIRST

Many beginners pluck before they bow. Rest your right thumb on the corner 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.

TREBLE

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 D and E?
- c Which string do violinists tune first?
- d What finger number means an open string?
- e Which open string is written in the top space?
- f Which one hangs below two ledger lines?

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

TREBLE

E A D G

- 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.

☐ G ☐ D ☐ A ☐ E

First fingers on the D and A strings

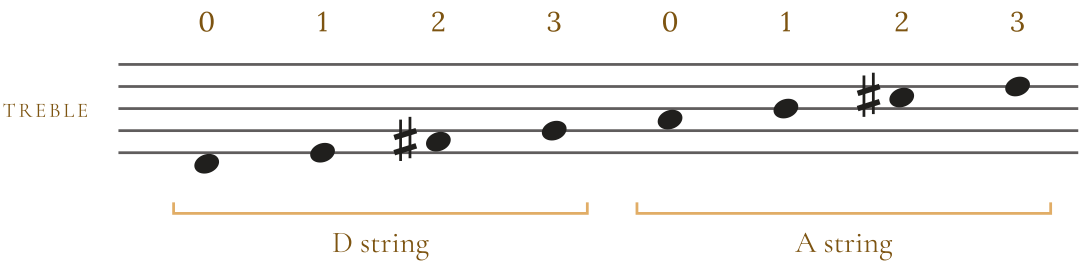
Put a finger down and the string gets shorter, so the note gets higher – one letter for each finger. Violinists number the fingers of the left hand, and the numbers are printed above the notes.

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.

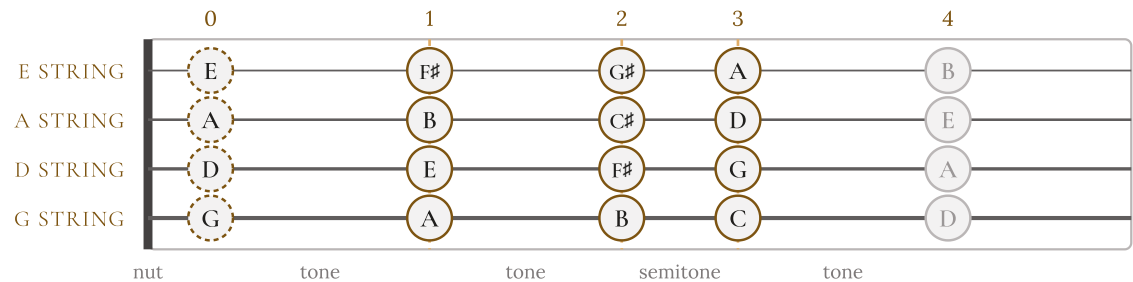
The first finger pattern

On the D and A strings, fingers 0 1 2 3 give four notes each. Together they make the scale of D major – the first scale most violinists learn.



The fingerboard, all four strings

The same pattern works on every string. Dashed lines show where beginner tapes usually go; finger 4 plays the same note as the next open string up.



GAPS AND TOUCHES

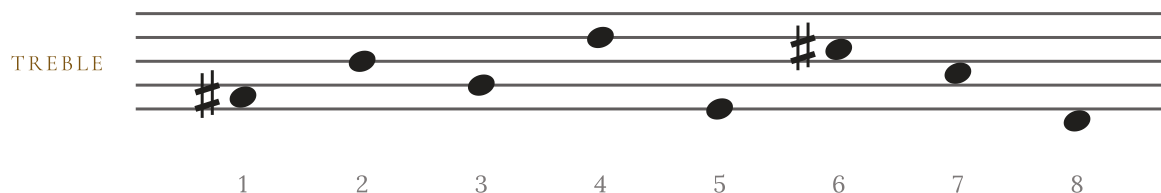
Between 0–1 and 1–2 leave a finger-width gap: a *tone*. Fingers 2 and 3 touch: a *semitone*, the smallest step. That is why finger 2 plays F# on the D string and C# on the A string – the sharp sign # raises a note by a semitone.

SAY IT, THEN PLAY IT

Before each note, say three things: its name, its finger, its string – “F sharp, two, D”. Many teachers stick thin tapes on the fingerboard to show where 1, 2 and 3 go.

Name, finger, string

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



	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 2

c A string, finger 2

f A string, finger 3

- 3 Answer these.

a In this pattern, which two fingers touch?

b What does a sharp sign do to a note?

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

d Which finger has no number?

- 4 Play the D major scale slowly on your violin, 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

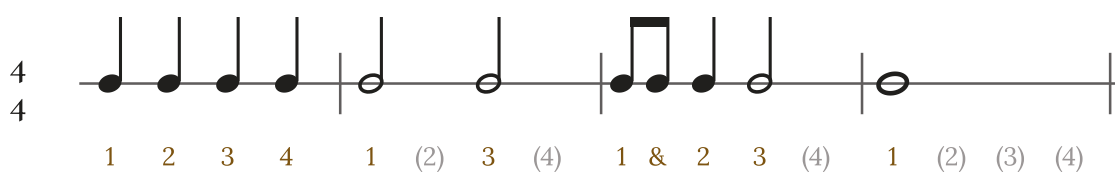
In 4/4 time

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 A 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

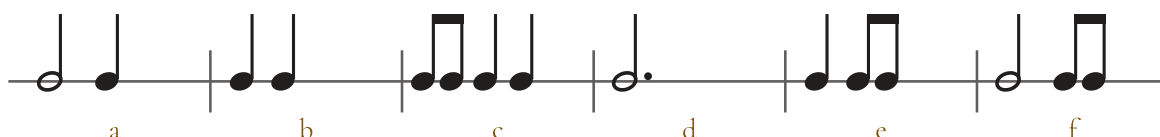
b one semibreve

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

Violin 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.

TREBLE



0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1 2 3 0

READ BEFORE YOU PLAY

Look at the time signature and count one bar out loud. Find the bow signs and the slurs. 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.

TREBLE



2 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 *arco* 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 What is rubbed on the hair _____

QUESTION 2 · HOLDING

5 marks

- a The violin rests on the left collarbone. T F
- b The bow thumb should be straight. T F
- c The little finger stands curved on the stick. T F
- d Play with the bow right beside the scroll. T F
- e Squeeze the chinrest hard with your jaw. T F

QUESTION 3 · OPEN STRINGS

5 marks

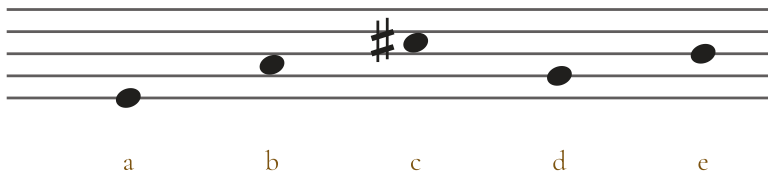
- a The four open strings, lowest first
- b Which is the thinnest string? _____

QUESTION 4 · NOTES AND FINGERS

5 marks

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

TREBLE



- 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 chinrest · 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.
- 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 Straighten the wrist and leave a small gap under the neck · c Keep the bow parallel to the bridge, halfway between bridge and fingerboard · d Let the shoulders drop and stand tall.
- 3 Your own ticks.

LESSON THREE · OPEN STRINGS

- 1 G D A E.
- 2 D A G E A E D G.
- 3 a G · b A · c A · d 0 · e E · f G.
- 4 E in the top space · A in the second space · D in the space just below the stave · G hanging below two ledger lines.

LESSON FOUR · FINGERS

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

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

- 3 a 2 and 3 · b Raises it by a semitone · c A · d The thumb.

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: 2 1 0 · bar 3: 0 0 0 0 1 1 1 1 · bar 4: 2 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 rosin.
- Q2 a T · b F · c T · d F · e F.
- Q3 a G D A E, one mark each · b E.
- Q4 a E, 1, D · b A, 0, A · c C#, 2, A · d G, 3, 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.