



SUZUKI STUDENT

&

Parent Handbook



SUZUKI STUDENT & Parent Handbook

This handbook belongs to:

Official home teacher who assists, supports, and applauds!!

Suzuki Student



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Dear Parents,

You are to be commended for making the decision to have your child study the Suzuki Method, or, more precisely, for making the decision to allow the Suzuki Method to become part of your family life! This should be one of the most rewarding and positive experiences you will share with your child, and, I believe it can be a factor in strengthening the parent-child bond, thereby creating a new interest to be shared by the whole family.

Remember, too, that in today's bustling homes, many children are so busy doing lots of different things that they rarely have the opportunity to develop real skill at anything. Skill leads to competence, which leads to a sense of pride in doing something well. Anything worth investing time in is worth doing well. It is my suggestion that you limit your child's activities, remembering that: 1) Music is something that can be done throughout one's life. 2) Music study has a positive correlation with academic achievement and 3) Studying Music has the potential to develop an appreciation for beauty, an inner voice, and the capacity to feel on an aesthetic way.

Parents have the responsibility to create an atmosphere conducive to learning. A few suggestions are:

1. Play the Suzuki recordings at least twice a day. Before long, you will notice your child humming the melodies. Children enjoy repetition and will not tire of hearing the same music unless they feel that their parents are bored or irritated. Each time your child hears the recording, it will make the playing of that particular piece easier. S/he should be thoroughly familiar with the melodic line of each piece, and be able to sing it, before attempting to learn it. Making up silly words to each piece is fun, and an added learning tool. These recordings, then, can be sung to, listened to, moved to, at home, or while running those tiresome errands.
2. If you have a favorite music that you like, sing it, play it, listen to it and enjoy! Your child is watching you and learning to appreciate the things that you do. Dr. Suzuki recommended familiarizing infants from birth with one specific piece and then gradually enlarging his/her recognition repertoire. Songs from your native country, songs your parents sang to you, songs your child learns in school are all wonderful additions to the Suzuki CD's. Singing is also the greatest tool in developing your child's musical ear.
3. Try to expose your child to live performances, too. If your child can sit quietly for an entire concert, you might try attending a performance of an orchestra or a chamber music group, or even an opera. If your child cannot sit through an entire concert, go for half, and leave at intermission. Concerts are motivational, educational, and inspirational for children, and help them develop self-control and an appreciation for music.

4. Keep it friendly!!! This is the most difficult thing for most parents. We live in a competitive society, and we, as parents, want our children to excel. Do you remember when your child was a baby and said his/her first word? What would the result have been if those first attempts were met with disapproval or indifference? We know that a baby placed in the type of environment just described will fail to thrive, adapt socially, or in extreme cases, survive. Can you imagine thinking that your child was two weeks behind the national norm for saying his/her first word, or that the word [according to authorities] should have been “ma ma” or “da da” instead of “shoe”? As parents, we were not concerned with such things then, nor should we be now. The quality and consistency of daily practice will be reflected in the progress of your child, which helps him/her make a strong connection between effort and outcome – another positive by-product.

Learning a string instrument via the Suzuki Method is much like learning a language, and the same excitement and encouragement we felt upon hearing the first word MUST be present! We are not on a time line or in competition with any one else, we are just having a positive, creative, supportive experience with our child each day. “You only practice on the days you eat” was a favorite saying of Dr. Suzuki. That, combined with another of his famous statements, “What is not found in the environment will not develop in our children”, makes a powerful statement to all of us who teach and parent! The challenge is to make the best of both and constantly work at it.

5. For some parents, it is difficult to be the teacher at home all week and not want to help out during the formal lesson. Please do not interfere with the private lesson at all. If you can’t stand it, jot down your thoughts and call/email your teacher after the lesson is over. If your child is trying to attend to his/her instrument, the teacher and you, progress will slow down considerably and confusion will be the natural result. When in lessons, take notes, and try to think how much more pleasant this is than fighting rush hour traffic! Sit, relax and enjoy your child’s efforts.

Remember, it is not our aim to produce a concert artist as it is to help a child grow into an adult who possesses self confidence, self discipline, altruism, mental discipline, and the ability to appreciate on an aesthetic level - these are the rewards!

Thank you!!!

Letter to Parents, by Susan Kempter (with little adaptations by Marcos Kreutzer)



The Suzuki method



The Mother Tongue Method

1. The “Mother-Tongue Approach”

Dr. Suzuki watched how accurately and quickly a child learns his language. In his observations he decided to start a school that taught a child to learn how to play the violin in the same way he learns his language. The success of his approach is seen throughout the world now.

Some Dr. Suzuki’s observations are:

- All Japanese children speak Japanese.
- A person has a 100% success rate in learning his native language.
- The process for language learning can be applied to music and other subjects.

“Oh – why, Japanese children can all speak Japanese! The thought suddenly struck me with amazement... Does that not show a startling talent? How, by what means does this come about?”¹

2. The Law of Ability

Dr. Suzuki concluded that talent – musical or not – is not inborn; any person has the ability to learn and through this assumption the ability should be nurtured by a positive environment in order to produce positive results. Environment, not genetics, is the key. This he called “The Law of Ability”.



¹ Shinichi Suzuki in Nurtured by Love, p.1

3. Environmental Learning

3.1 Listening

Since they are born – and even before that – children are surrounded by words. It does not take long for them to understand that language is an essential attribute to all that surround them. Babies and young children must hear words and sentences as part of their daily life in order to, later, being able to communicate and function well in society.

We do not wait to present language until a child is able to understand all the processes of speaking. We start talking to them from birth on despite the fact that the baby will not reply at all.

"The baby is born. Does he start to say 'Mama' the next day? For months he just listens."

Shinichi Suzuki

3.2 Positive environment

As a baby produces its first babble in attempt to say something, no parent will say: "No. You are not saying this correctly. Say it again." The child's efforts are welcomed with lots of encouragement and praise.

3.3 Repetition and accumulation

During the process of learning to speak, children repeat the same words over and over; in fact, they actually delight in repeating. Only through frequent repetition they will be proficient in the use of language.

Once a sound is learned, it will not be discarded. The very simple, almost primitive, sound will be infinitely repeated and gradually refined so that language becomes more expressive, more sophisticated.

4. Home teacher

Parents are the most influential factor in a child's development. They play a major role not only in the child's language learning process but also in the construction of their values and character.

The Suzuki Method

1. Listening

Why?

- It is a method of learning that is not dependent on visual symbols.
- It creates an aural model in the child's ear.
- It makes self-correcting possible for student.
- Student is able to concentrate on one single task at a time.
- Student will know a new piece a long time before attempting to play it.
- It makes the process of understanding intonation easier.

What?

- The Suzuki CD's
- Any other good music
- Orchestra concerts, recitals

How?

- As background music
- Active listening
 - Listen for specific things in the music (instruments, phrases, etc.)
 - Sing with the music
 - Make a drawing of what you hear
 - Move with the music
 - Follow the music in the score (for older students)

"Listening until we remember is not enough. We must listen until we cannot forget"

Shinichi Suzuki

2. Practice environment

Parents must provide positive feedback:

- Be honest
- Be specific
- Give feedback immediately after task
- Encourage the effort, praise the achievement
- Be enthusiastic

The parent's attitudes are directly linked to the child's success. Parents must show:

- Belief in the child
- Appreciation of each step, no matter the size
- Discipline with love
- Sensitivity to each child's response to praise

3. Small steps

- Divide new skills into smaller units
- Units must be small enough so the student is always successful
- Never teach a new skill if the child still needs to think about how to do the first one

4. Common repertoire

- Makes group lessons possible
- Works as an international language
- Motivates the student by setting definite goals
- Technical and musical skill are covered in a step-by-step progression

5. Review

Why?

- Develops fluency
- Maintain an active repertoire
- In reviewing the repertoire, students can learn new, more advanced, skills
- Provides ensemble opportunities

Tools

- Review systems
- Group lessons
- Public and family concerts

Elements of the Suzuki Approach

Compilation of points from Joanne Bath and
students of the East Carolina University
Suzuki Program

Parent Responsibilities

- Attend all lessons: If not possible, record by cassette or video.
- If you are able to video tape the private lesson, it is highly recommended!
- Take notes during lesson and/or tape record it.
- Learning to play the twinkles along with your child – also highly recommended (this is one of the best ways to truly understand what they go through).
- Encourage, Support and praise the child's efforts.
- Teach the child six days a week.

General aspects of Suzuki

- Daily listening to recordings.
- Review.
- Internalize before playing.
- Group lessons.
- Mother Tongue" approaches.
- Observation of others.
- Learn by ear.
- Character first, ability second.
- Daily consistent practice.
- Success in other areas though the ability of playing the violin.
- Positive environment: Praise, support.
- Step-by-step mastery: small steps.
- Goal: To encourage a desire to learn.
- Compete only with oneself: no competition.
- Individual pace: Begin where child can succeed.
- Reasonable expectations in practicing and accomplishments.
- Take problems to their simplest element.
- Suzuki triangle: child, teacher, parent.



Suzuki Literature

Parents must read at least one of these:

Suzuki, Shinichi. Ability Development From Age Zero. Translated by Mary Louise Nagata. Warner Bros. Publications, 1981. ISBN-10: 0874875803

Suzuki, Shinichi. Nurtured by Love. Translated by Waltraud Suzuki. Second edition. Summy-Birchard Inc., 1983. ISBN-10: 0874875846

All these books offer several ideas on practice and motivation (for both parents and kids!!!).

Slone, Kay C. They're Rarely Too Young... and Never Too Old "To Twinkle": Teaching Insights Into the World of Beginning Suzuki Violin. 3rd Edition. Shar Publication: 1988. ASIN: B00071K7NM

Starr, William. The Suzuki Violinist. Revised edition. Summy-Birchard Inc., 2000. ISBN-10: 0874876052

Starr, William and Constance. To Learn With Love: A Companion for Suzuki Parents. Suzuki Method International, 1983. ISBN-10: 0874876060



Being a Suzuki parent



To Be a Suzuki Parent

The purpose of this page is to explain exactly what a Suzuki parent does in & out of lessons.

1. One of the aspects that come with Suzuki Lessons is that you spend more time with your child. You both can enjoy and grow in your relationship better through music. These times together will include exploring the areas of mutual learning, home practice, attending private and group lessons.
2. The parent and student relationship is pleasant yet disciplined. This is not only a study on the techniques of an instrument, but also a philosophy and a program of education.

The Parent's role involves these four things:

1. Learning the fundamentals of playing the instrument and how to care for it.
2. Do the assigned and preparatory homework: i.e. read about the Suzuki method (see suggested literature), observe other students' lessons...
3. Play the recordings at home daily.
4. Help to create a musical, supportive and encouraging environment for your child.

Please remember a Suzuki parent need not be a trained musician. Please ask me questions when they arise. We are both learning in this process and I am here to help. Remember that the goal is to build acceptable relationships for the sake of the child's growth and development.

A typical Practice Session for a Pre-Twinkler*

(Should be repeated two/three times each day)

Choose 4-5 activities/session

- a) Review parts of the violin, using the picture in your parent pack and/or your violin
- b) Picture/Rhythm cards: say the rhythms while tapping anything (spoons on pans, pencils on a notepad, sticks on a box, etc), scrub the rhythms, play them in the air with your bow/stick (hand in front of belly button and beginning with a downward stroke).
- c) Find Rest/Playing position: on parent, on child, with eyes open, with eyes close, under a sheet, etc.
- d) Place feet in playing position... heels under hips and belly button centered... sway like a tree... pretend to be the Whopping Willow on Harry Potter, and bend over without losing balance... put a sheet over your child's head and see if they can make scary gestures with out falling over... find rest and playing position with eyes close.
- e) Sit criss-cross and, with the stick in the best bow hold the child can make, and holding it in the vertical position, "draw" large shapes with the tip of the bow, then draw the same shapes with the frog... check the bow hold after each shape.
- f) Sing your own words for Twinkle... the sillier the better!!
- g) Sing/hum with the Suzuki CD or any other music
- h) Place feet in rest position [closer together than playing position] and practice bowing: "Are my shoes tied? Yes, they are!!"
- i) Place the box/violin on shoulder using "belly up"
- j) Make several bow holds. Check that fingers are soft, separate and curved – especially the pinky and thumb bump. In class, you will learn several different ways to make a bow hold; use the one that is easier for your child
- k) Stand quietly – even quiet eyes – during a Twinkle variation... more advanced, to two or more variations
- l) Listen carefully to Twinkle. It consists of four separate parts, called "A B B A"... see if you can identify each of the four parts
- m) Sing "Eek Eek Eek"... take turns plucking the strings.
- n) Belly Button Rhythms to your own [silly] rhythms; always begin the first stroke going down towards the floor
- o) Identify "violin hand" and "Bow hand" ... hands behind back and bring out correct one when asked for... pretend to make a perfect playing position with a pretend instrument, demonstrating a finger tunnel and a beautiful bow hold
- p) Don't forget that humor adds a lot to your child's education. Find something funny to do every so often... use your imagination!!

* By Susan Kempter. Used with permission.

How to make the most of Suzuki Education for your child

1. Listening daily to the assigned music.
2. Continue to provide rich listening experiences as your child becomes more skilled.
3. Practice daily.
4. Show that you value your child's violin time, i.e. how you respect the practice time or plan special music trips.
5. Take notes at your child's lessons.
6. Video tape or tape record your child's lessons if necessary.
7. Trust & follow the teacher's instructions carefully.
8. Remember Suzuki's rule: "One teacher at a time, please." Don't interfere during the lesson.
9. Include review as a part of daily practice.
10. Appreciate each small success.
11. Do not compare your child with others.
12. Make music a part of your family's life.

The typical Child at Age 3-4

- Comes with a perpetual charge of energy.
- Needs simple, clear directions.
- May be socially naive.
- Keep activities short, simple and varied.
- Short memory.
- Person of few words.
- Learning to cut, paste and draw.
- Uses clothing as costume, handkerchief and towel.
- Knees also used for sitting and walking.
- Seat is like new (hardly ever used).
- Runs for pure enjoyment.



Suzuki Group Class

Ideas taken from Carolyn Meyer

1. Attend group lessons regularly with your child to maintain enthusiasm.
2. Take care of your child's snack/bathroom needs before the lesson. Don't forget to make a "fingernail check" and no gum.
3. Arrive 10 minutes early for tuning. If you are on time you are late!
4. Please make sure you watch younger siblings. They may attend, but not disrupt class. Sit near the exit and out of the group's direct line of vision.
5. Help your child prepare – rosin bow, shoulder rest, foot chart...
6. There will be different levels in the group. You will have time to preview & review pieces as well as skills. Write down the ideas for helpful home practice tips.
7. Be understanding if your beginner wants to watch rather than participate. Your child will join the group in his/her own time.
8. Watch and listen to the teacher. Your example will teach your child concert manners. Your interest, enthusiasm and enjoyment are contagious!
9. Visit with the others after the lesson. Do something social afterward with some of the people from your group class!
10. Do not give your child hints & reminders during group. Your child needs to keep their attention on the teacher. You are showing respect for the teacher when you let the teacher do his/her job.
11. If the teacher invites parent participation respond completely. Native American proverb: Tell, & I will forget. Show me, & I may not remember. Involve me, & I will understand.
12. Your child will learn ensemble skills. How to start, stay and stop with others; how to follow a leader, be a leader. If you feel your child made a lot of mistakes in group, silently resolve to practice more thoroughly with the child at home.

13. Show interest in the other children, but not compare them directly with your child. “A competitive child is happy when he wins. A cooperative child is happy when he does his very best.” (Holt)
14. Praise what your child accomplished at the group lesson. Enjoy every step of the way together!

Abilities Developed Through Music Study

Listening	Performance
Observing	Discipline
Imitating	Perseverance
Memorization	Sensitivity to feelings
Concentration	Sensitivity to emotions



Instrument Rentals and supplies

- **The Hochstein School**
50 N. Plymouth Avenue
Rochester, NY 1614
585-454-4596
Limited Strings, Woodwinds & Brass
- **The String House**
1531 Monroe Ave
Rochester, NY 14618
585-442-9272
www.thestringhouse.com
Violins, Violas & Cellos
- **Stringed Instrument Services**
52 North Main St
Fairport, NY 14450
585-377-4360
www.stringedinstrumentservices.com
Violins, Violas, Cellos, String Basses
- **Sullivan Violins**
3300 Monroe Ave. Suite 215
Rochester, NY 14618
585-325-7250
www.sullivanviolins.com
Violins, Violas & Cellos



Being a Suzuki Student



Getting Organized

Necessary supplies needed:

1. 3-ring binder for “Parent Handbook” and notes from lesson. Create a section in the notebook for student’s assignments.
2. Shoulder sponge or shoulder rest, sized to the student (ask your private teacher what is the best option).
3. Box violin/cello.
4. Beginner bow (dowel rod) to use with box.
5. File folder (cardboard pizza circle) for Footchart.
6. Bag for music and other materials.
7. Suzuki Book and CD (according to the instrument your child is learning)

The Suzuki Books can be purchased in one of the music stores listed in page 20 of this handbook or you can buy them online. Here are some suggestions on where to go if you decide to buy your Books online:

- <http://www.sharmusic.com/>
- <http://www.swstrings.com/>
- <http://www.johnsonstring.com/>



Constructing a Box Violin

This is a joint parent/child project. Make it exciting!

You will need:

- Small flat box (i.e. granola bar box)
- Packing tape & glue
- Paint stir stick (from Lowe's/Home Depot)
- Contact paper/decorations/stickers...
- Scissors
- Two rubber bands or one big one

1. The table below correlates box dimensions to violin sizes. Cut box pieces to specified measurements: repair them with tape so that they fit together.
2. Install the paint stir stick on the shorter dimension of the box. Cut a two-inch slit along the edge and insert the stick all the way to the bottom of the box. Glue & tape the stick inside so that it will be strongly attached to the box. The top of the box is the side the stick is laying on.
3. Tape the box together.
4. Cover the box with anything that you think will reflect your child! Stickers, craft ideas... Make it special. Put the rubber bands around the box length-wise.
5. Put it in a sturdy bag with handles, which you can carry to class.

Violin Size	Box Width	Box Length	Box Thickness
1/16	5 inches	4 ½ inches	Between ½ and 1 inch
1/10	5 ½ inches	5 inches	Between ½ and 1 inch
1/8	6 inches	5 ½ inches	Between ½ and 1 inch
1/4	6 ½ inches	6 inches	1 inch
1/2	7 inches	6 ½ inches	1 inch
3/4	7 ½ inches	7 inches	1 inch

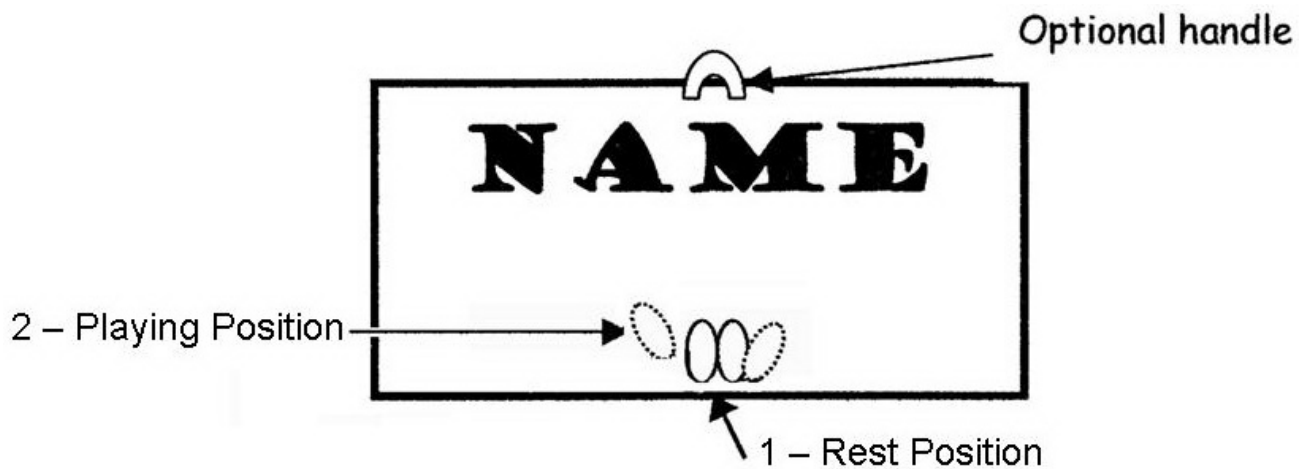
Violin Footchart

Violin Footcharts help the child (and parent) to identify where and how. Below is a simple template illustrating the most basic features:

- position for the feet (your teacher will do this for you)
- Name of the student – cut out or color
- Handle (optional)

1. Additional features might include:

- Cut-outs representative of the child's interests.
 - Musical symbols.
 - Date of the child's birthday.
 - Colorful sticker added by the *home teacher* after each practice.
2. Students will use this foot chart all year at home & in class: laminating reduces wear & tear.
3. Foot position helps the student grow roots, centering the feet under a very active upper body and involving coordination of the whole body.



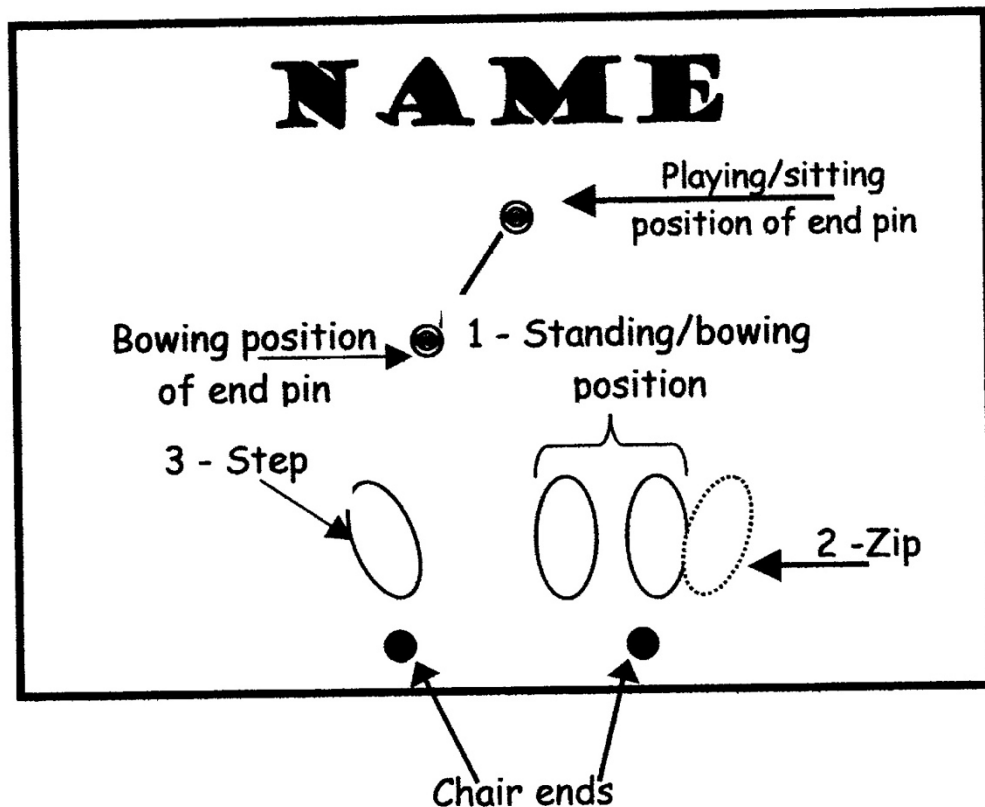
Cello Footchart

Cello Footcharts help the child (and parent) to identify where and how. Below is a simple template illustrating the most basic features:

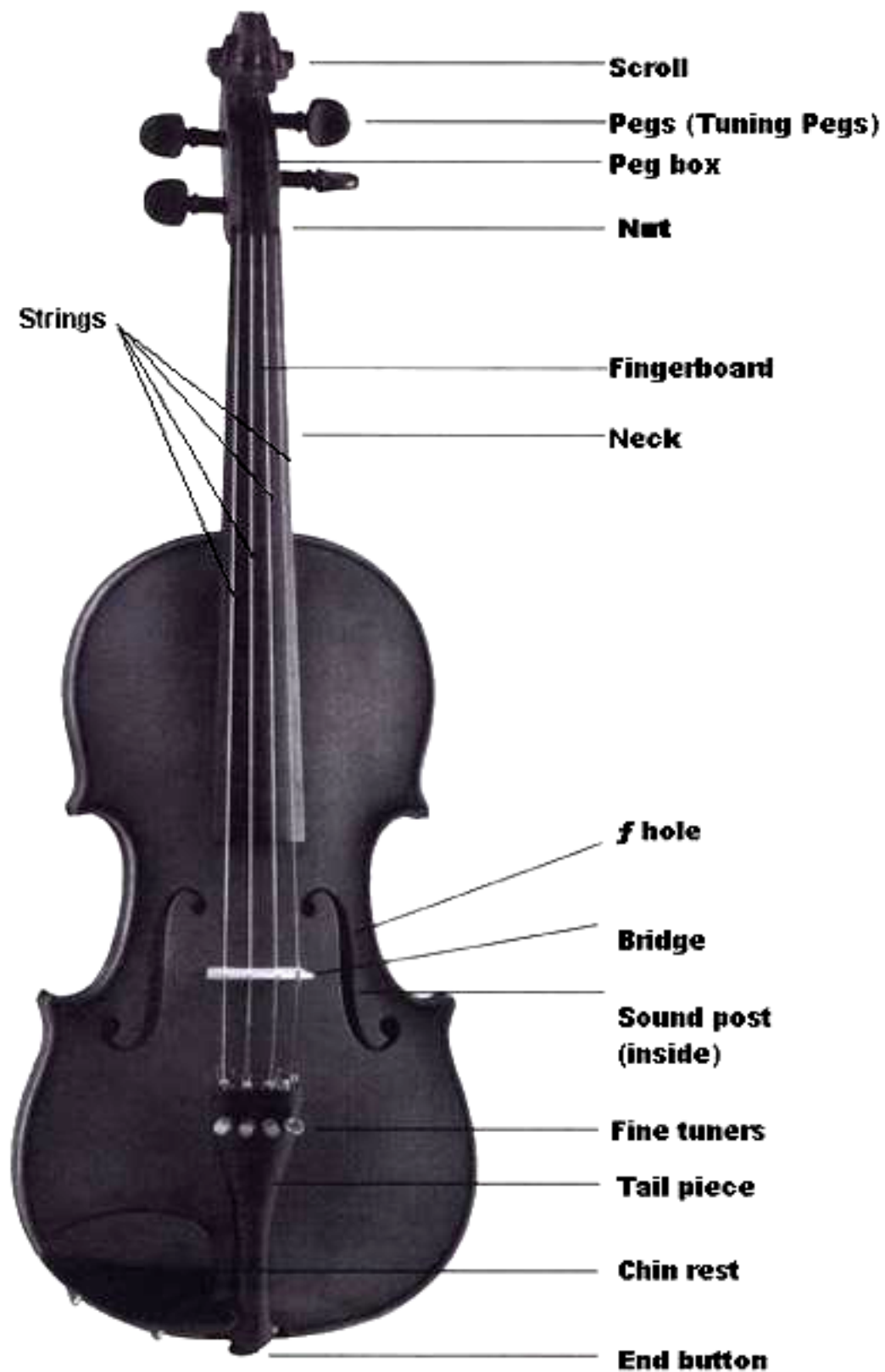
- 1-2-3 position for the feet (your teacher will do this for you)
- Name of the student – cut out or color

1. Feet position:

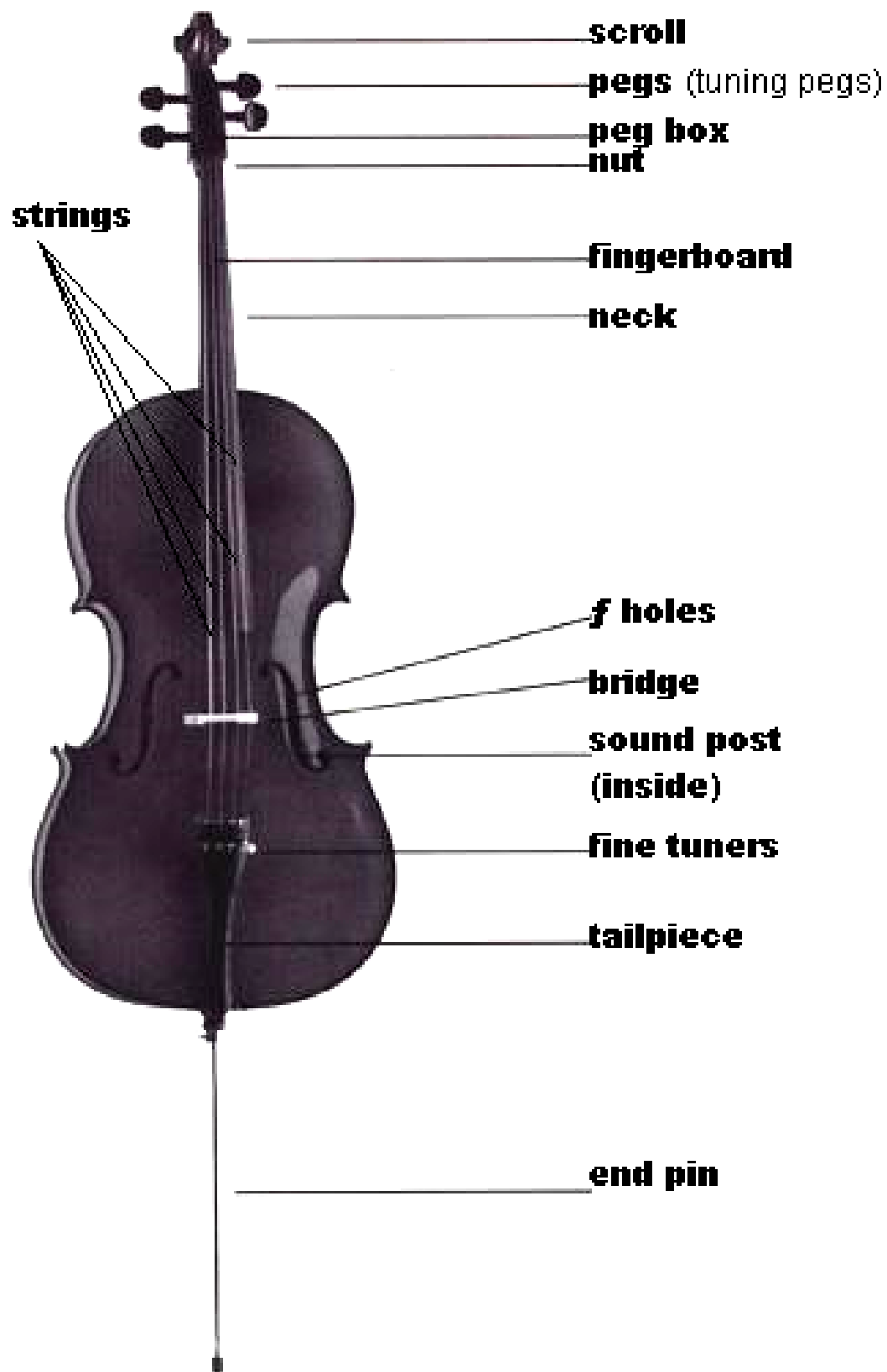
- Standing Position – feet together, toes pointing forward. Cello is positioned slightly to the left so you can bow easily.
- Zip & Step Position – right foot slight turns out while left foot steps out. Feet will be approximately the width of the chair legs.
- Sitting Position – After you step will sit on your chair and move the end pin out so the cello rests comfortably on your body.

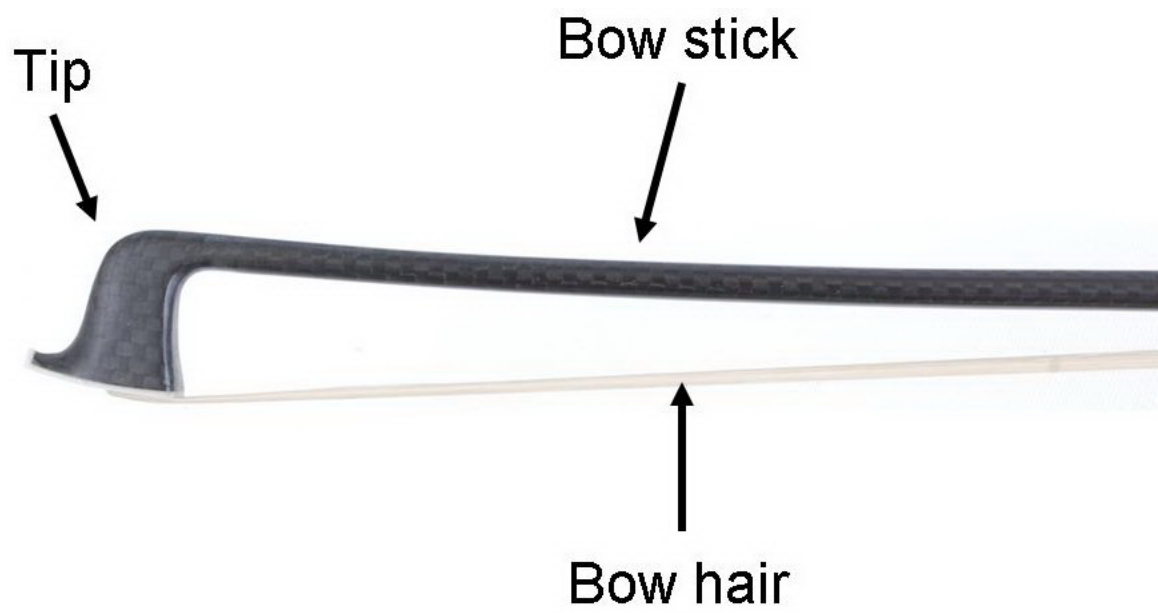
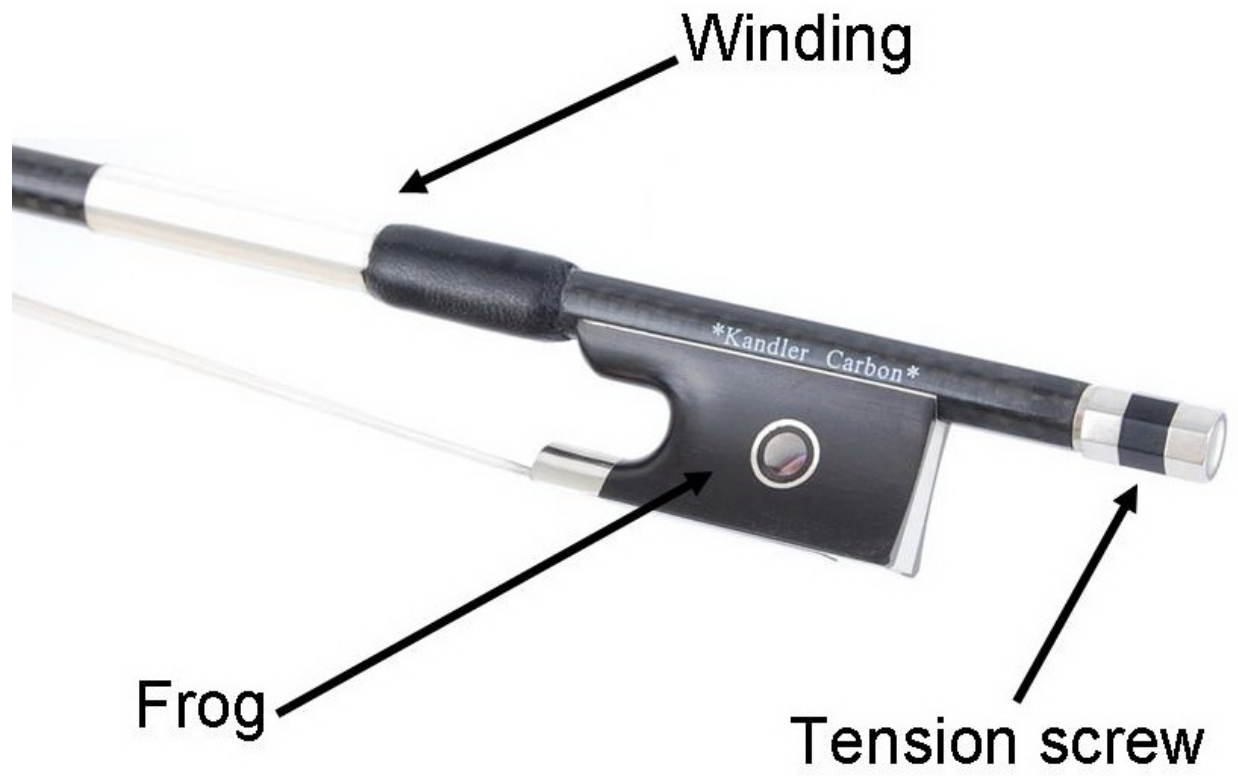


THE VIOLIN



THE CELLO





Taking care of your instrument

- Handle with care!!! Your instrument is made of breakable wooden parts, so repairs can be expensive and time-consuming.
- Do not let anyone play your instrument unless it is your teacher or an experienced player you trust.
- Always store your instrument safely in the case when you are not playing it.
- When you sit the cello down on your side, be sure to put the end pin back so you don't trip over it.
- Never drag the side of your cello on the floor as you put it down or pick it up. This will avoid damage to the edges.
- When carrying your instrument, be sure not to bump it on doorways, chairs, etc.
- Keep your instrument clean! After playing, wipe off the rosin dust, smudges, fingerprints, etc., with a soft clean cloth. Always wash your hands before playing your instrument.
- Do not let your instrument get too hot or too cold. If the temperature is uncomfortable for you, it is also bad for your instrument. For example, never leave it in a car on a hot or cold day.
- Allow only an experienced repair person to fix your instrument.
- Make sure your bridge is lined up correctly and standing straight at all times. If it gets out of place, ask your teacher to straighten it for you.

Taking care of your bow

- Handle with care!!! Your bow can easily be broken if you drop it, step on it, etc. Just as your instrument, repairs can be expensive and time-consuming.
- Be sure you remove your bow before you take the bag of your instrument. Always put your bow back in the bag after the bag is on your cello.
- Keep your bow clean. Wash your hands before playing and wipe rosin and smudges off your bow stick after playing.
- Avoid touching the bow hair. Dirt and skin oils will ruin the hair.
- Rosin your bow hair regularly. Have your teacher check to see if you are using too much or not enough.

Pre-Twinkle songs

Greeting song

I am happy you have come
I hope we'll have lots of fun
We are happy to show you
All the things that we can do
Squeeze three times for vi-o-lin
And we're ready to begin

Rest Position song

Rest position, feet in line
Scroll in front, that's mighty fine
Check your bridge, 'cause it should be
Peeking out at you and me
Now it's time to take a bow
Echi, ne, and son is how
(1) (2) (3)

Parts of violin, melody of **Lightly Row**, by Susan Kempter

This is my violin; this is where I put my chin
E, A, D, G are the four strings and the F-holes let it ring
Here's the front and here's the back; if I drop it, it might crack;
So I hold it close beside me, rest position now you see

Button here, tailpiece there, bridge and fingerboard right here
Pegs help keep my strings in tune; peg box holds the pegs so firm
Mr. Scroll is dressed his best, looking down on all the rest
Here's the bow, and now I show you
Rest position, one, two, three [1-violin, 2-bow, 3-stand up straight]

Ant song, from Mimi Zweig & Indiana University

Eek Eek Eek... all the little
Ants Ants Ants... they are going
Down Down Down... way into the
Ground Ground Ground

Ant song (viola and cello version)

Ants Ants Ants... they are going
Down Down Down... way into the
Ground Ground Ground... all the way to
China China China

Up like a Rocket, origin unknown. Make sure that the bow is held vertically!

Up like a rocket
Down like the rain
Back and forth like a choo choo train
Round and round like the great, big sun
Up on top
Check your pinkie and thumb

Listen to the bird tweet, Kempter Studio

Listen to the bird tweet
Singing with his bird beak
Perched upon his bird feet
Waiting for his bird treat
... WORMS!!!

Quiet Goes the Itty bitty Mousie, Kempter Studio

Quiet goes the itty bitty mousie
Creeping in the itty bitty housie

Seagull, Seagull, E.H. Jones

Seagull, Seagull
Swoop and soar
From the ocean
To the shore

Mrs. Piggy, Kempter Studio

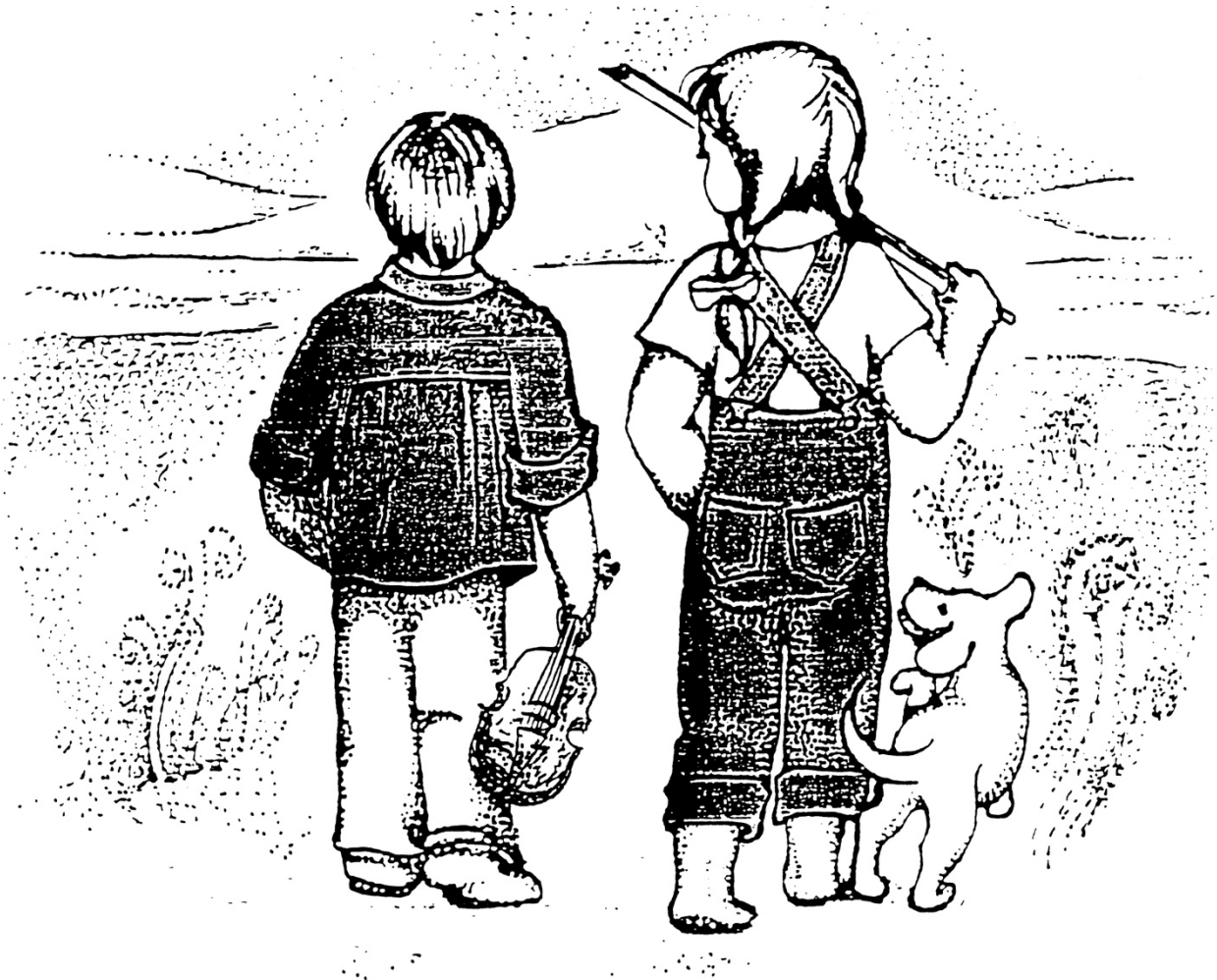
Mrs. Piggy
Goes to town and
Mrs. Piggy
Comes back home

Flower Song, Marilyn O'Boyle

See the pretty flowers
Growing in the garden
See the pretty flowers
Red, and green, and yellow

Monkey Song, Marilyn O'Boyle

See the funny monkey
Climbing up the ladder
Each step takes him higher
Now he's on the top step
Oh! He looks around him
And decides to come down
Each step takes him lower
Safe and happy monkey



*“Childhood Should Be
A Journey . . . Not A Race”*