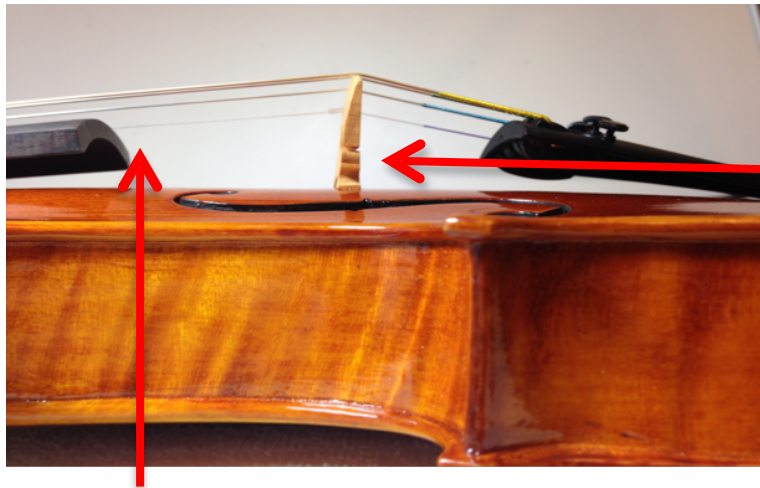


Welcome

Choosing your first violin can be a daunting task, especially for a child where it is likely that a smaller sized instrument will be needed. Here are our tips for making a good choice:

- Ask your teacher what size you need. They will measure an instrument against your arm reach and advise. They may be able to recommend a supplier.
- If possible, buy from a music shop where you can see and handle the instruments and talk to the shop owner.
- If you are buying online, try to buy from a seller who offers 'set-up' of the instrument OR allow sufficient budget to take it to a luthier for set-up after purchase. This can vary from a quick look-over to a full bridge and peg fitting.
- If you are buying online, buy a well-known make like Stentor, Hidersine or Primavera.
- There is a minimum price – our advice is not to buy at the cheapest point as these instruments are often not correctly proportioned and can be difficult to play and tune.

The way that a violin is set up is essential to the comfort and ease with which it can be played and also the sound that it makes. A good set up can result in an instrument which is easy to play and sounds good. Poor set up can make the violin uncomfortable to hold and play and sound less good. Some things that make a big difference are shown on this page.



For the best sound, when looked at from the side, the face of the bridge closest to the tail piece should be at right angles to the long edge of the instrument. The other side will look as though it is leaning back slightly.

Many cheaper instruments have bridges that lean towards the scroll, giving a weaker sound, and causing the bridge to lean further forward with tuning.

The height of the strings above the finger board: too high, and the strings will be difficult or uncomfortable to press down, too low, and the string may buzz against the fingerboard

The shaping of the fingerboard is important. In order to achieve comfortably low string clearances, but to avoid buzzing, the fingerboard should conventionally be slightly concave (or "dished") along its length. You can see this by looking from the scroll, along the fingerboard towards the bridge. On some cheaper and quickly made instruments, this is not the case, and some are even convex or can have lumps and bulges that make playing uncomfortable, and cause buzzing.



The top of the bridge should be shaped into a nice curve. Too flat will make playing on only one string difficult. The bridge curvature should mirror the curve of the fingerboard, with the string clearance on the E string (the top string) being slightly lower than the G string (lowest string).

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The height of the top nut above the fingerboard has a direct impact on the comfort of playing in the area where the first notes are learnt (first position). Too high, and pressing the strings down to the fingerboard will be uncomfortable. Too low, and the violin will make buzzing noises.

The tuning pegs should turn easily and smoothly, and stay where they are put. On many cheap instruments, the pegs are not properly round, making tuning difficult.

Strings: many entry level outfits are fitted with thin and low quality factory strings which do not enhance the playing experience. A big improvement in sound and playing comfort can usually be had by upgrading to a better quality set of strings.

Fine tuners: almost all student outfits these days come with fine tuners, but make sure that they work freely to make small adjustment to the pitch of the string.

Sound post: have a look inside the violin through the sound hole next to the highest string. You will see a small dowel of wood which is wedged between the front and the back, standing just behind the bridge. For the best sound quality and response, this should be upright, a good fit against the front and the back (you can only really see this with a mirror), and just behind the bridge foot.



The Rhythm Room team

info@rhythmroom.co.uk

01908 418570

Rhythm Room Ltd

247 Queensway

Bletchley

Milton Keynes

MK2 2EH

