

STRING
FRIENDS 1
TEACHER GUIDE

**TEACHING
NOTES FOR
STRING
FRIENDS 1**



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Thanks for downloading The Violin Club Teacher Resource for String Friends 1. This is specifically for teachers, but the curious may be here as well. Who can't resist peaking behind the curtain sometimes?!

What you won't find is a 'How To Teach' - you already have that covered. This guide offers a smorgasbord of ideas centered around the pieces to ensure the creativity keeps flowing for younger violinists.

String Friends 1 marks the beginning of The Violin Club journey. It introduces young players to the violin in a creative, structured and supportive way, balancing fun with strong foundational learning.

Each chapter includes an overview, teaching goals, practical tips, and a rapid-fire reference activity or two.

Practiced by and refined with many young violinists, welcome to this easy-to-follow and easy-to-explain guide that will empower young minds to flourish.



Overview



Teaching goal



Teaching ideas



Activities



ABOUT THE VIOLIN

The body positioning instructions at the beginning of String Friends 1 provide a template for your students at home. As they learn to handle such a delicate instrument, having a checklist for hands and feet helps to ensure a confident transition from rest position to play position.

Make rest position your default in lessons for quiet focus and self-control.

Spend the time on this part of the book reinforcing both violin part and character names.

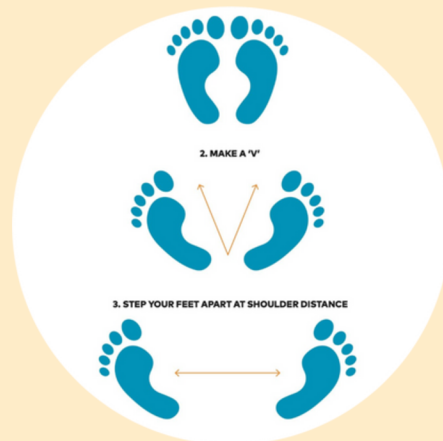
Keep minds alert and lessons alive:

"With closed eyes can you find your scroll in playing position..."

"Can you spot what I'm doing right or wrong with my feet in playing position?"

"Is the shoulder rest on the right way?"

Model good posture regularly with calm and clear instructions. When students feel secure they will naturally play with greater enjoyment and freedom.



LEARNING OPEN STRINGS

The first four pieces can be revisited when introducing bowing.



Meet The String Friends, Free Range, Little Animals and Dexter's On Time present the sounds (and string colours) of the four main characters of this series. Each piece focuses on tone, rhythm, and developing confidence with pizzicato before bowing is introduced.



Encourage a relaxed approach to tone and rhythm while helping students become comfortable with their first sounds on the violin.



Even if you're not yet familiar with all the characters, use their names as you demonstrate the pieces. They are more memorable than string names alone. Even at this beginning pizzicato stage you will notice how relaxed (or not) a player is. Keep the focus on the beat and creating a steady sound on each string. String naming and coordination will quickly follow.



- Create String Friends cards to match sounds to characters.
- Play short call-and-response rhythms.
- Ask students which character's sound they like best and why.
- Encourage students to use the online portal at home — these early successes build confidence quickly.

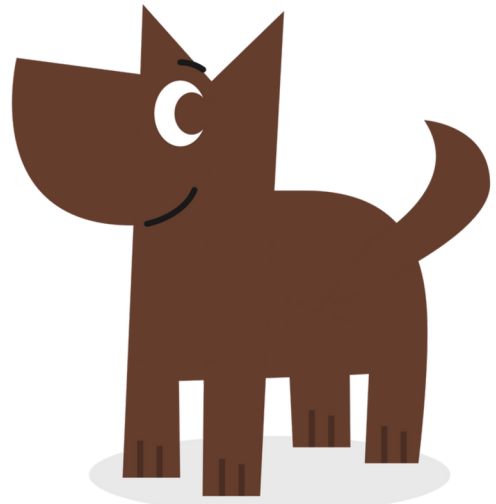


STRING FRIENDS CARDS

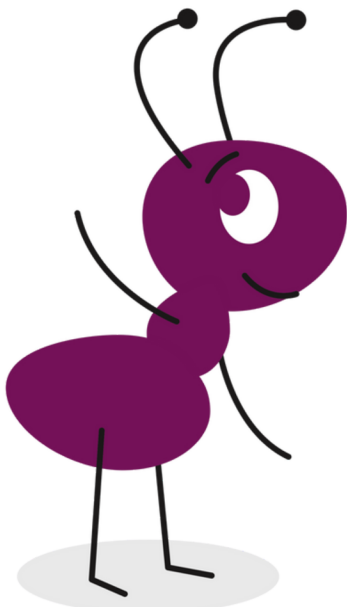
Cut out these handy cards



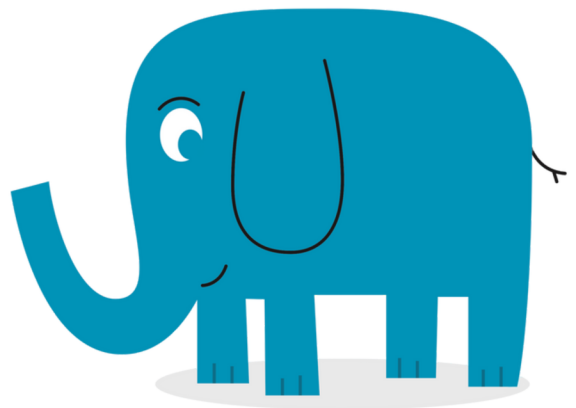
GEORGIA THE GIRAFFE



DEXTER THE DOG



ANNIE THE ANT



EDDIE THE ELEPHANT

THE BOW

Revisit the Open String pieces as you introduce bowing.



This is where the bowing begins. It's a note-worthy moment, and with a calm and patient approach, students will establish good long-term habits.



To develop a relaxed and balanced bow hold and to build confidence in using the bow smoothly across the strings.



Introduce the bow through story or metaphor — the Bow Family works beautifully. Encourage curiosity by naming the bow parts, and take time to get familiar with the "feel" of bow movement. Return to the open-string pieces as bowing begins. Aim for consistent tone rather than volume, and allow time for adjustment before adding new elements.



- Let students add bowing symbols to the first four pieces.
- Bow hands should feel natural, not look perfect. Correct gently but playfully.
- If the most co-ordinated of students can master Dexter's On Time with bowing, it's time to move on...

You do know how the "frog" of the bow got its name, right? Why don't you ask your student to find out too.



THE CROTCHET NOTE

[If you are a proponent of US music terminology, please get in touch!]



The crotchet (quarter note) introduces the idea of one sound per beat. Students learn to understand that rhythm is felt as much as it's read.



To connect rhythm with movement and help students experience steady pulse through clapping, marching, and playing.

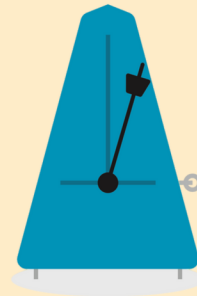


Begin by clapping or walking to the beat. Encourage students to say "walk" or "step" for each crotchet. Build musical memory by teaching the simple rhythm pattern used on this page and tapping your foot when you see the foot symbol.

Relate rhythm to the physical — one sound, one action. Keep the beat constant and focus on steady pulse before speed.



- Copy, trace and draw the crotchets on the page.
- Grab a stack of note flashcards and get the student to "spot crotchets".



- Play **Rhythm Call**. Build musical memory by teaching this simple rhythm — tap your foot whenever you see the (foot) symbol.

Start a metronome beat.

Can they clap along?

Set the beat to 80 bpm. Then increase it to 92 bpm, then 110, then 125.

Encourage steady pulse and praise rhythm awareness over speed.

BOWING CROCHET NOTES

Happy Annie



Happy Annie consolidates the first bowing exercises, encouraging students to connect smooth sound with confident motion. Some will take to bowing naturally, while others will need more patience and repetition.



To help students produce an even tone, control bow direction, and maintain relaxed arm movement.



Use imagery such as "as smooth as honey being poured." Play short demonstration phrases and have students imitate the movement before attempting full lines.

Encourage them to observe their bow path in a mirror and to aim for consistent contact with the string. If tone becomes scratchy, return to slow bowing and steady pulse.



- Play "Bow Echo" — teacher plays, student repeats using the same motion.

- Ask students to draw the bow path in the air before playing.

- Alternate between pizzicato and bowed versions of Happy Annie.

- Reinforce the idea that smooth tone grows from slow, steady practice.



THE MINIM NOTE

[If you are a proponent of US music terminology, please get in touch!]



These pages introduce the minim (half note) and shows how two-beat notes feel and sound. It encourages calm, steady bowing and greater awareness of bow length.



To help students recognise longer note values, sustain even tone, and control bow speed over two beats.



Demonstrate the difference between a crotchet and a minim by clapping or walking the rhythm together. Explain how a slower bow speed keeps the sound smooth for longer notes.



- Copy and trace the note, spotting the note that has a whole in its head.
- Play **The Minim Tryout**. Continue working that musical memory. Teach the student this simple rhythm.

Start a metronome beat.

Can they clap along?



- Review the difference between one-beat and two-beat bow lengths.
- Can they bow along using any open string?
- Encourage smooth bow transitions.

COMBINING RHYTHMS

Look & See, Georgia! and Hi Eddie!



These pieces combine the rhythmic values of crotchets and minims into short patterns. It helps students recognise how different note lengths work together in a bar.



To consolidate rhythmic understanding and support smooth transitions between short and long notes while maintaining steady pulse.

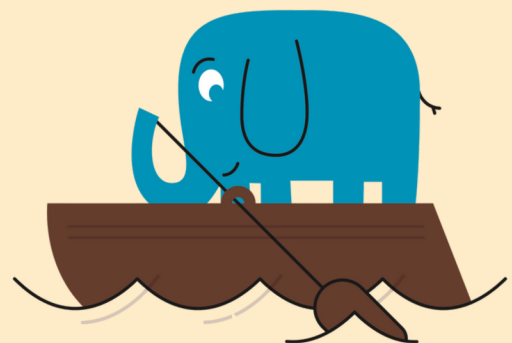


Relate rhythms to movement — for example, walking for crotchets and sliding steps for minims. Encourage students to count aloud before playing and to notice how bow length changes with each note value.

Soon the coloured notes will change to traditional notation, so build confidence now with visual and physical repetition.



- Clap, tap, or step the rhythms before using the bow.
- Circle or highlight different note values in the music.
- Create and glue paper note cards into rhythm patterns.
- Use playdough or chalk outdoors to draw notes and bars.
- Every piece in String Friends 1 builds the foundation for tone, rhythm, and musical joy — revisit these ideas often to keep progress steady and fun.



STRING FRIENDS CARDS

Cut out these handy cards



O
Georgia



GEORGIA THE GIRAFFE

O
Dexter



DEXTER THE DOG

O
Annie



ANNIE THE ANT

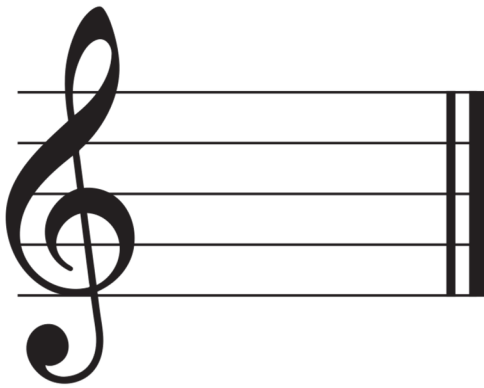
O
Eddie



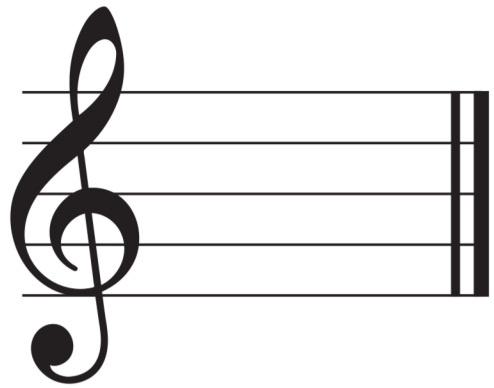
EDDIE THE ELEPHANT

STRING FRIENDS NOTES

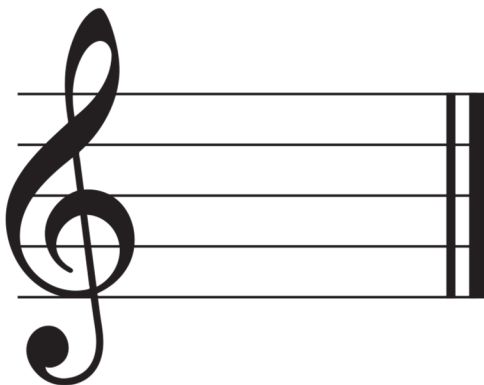
More cards for note learning



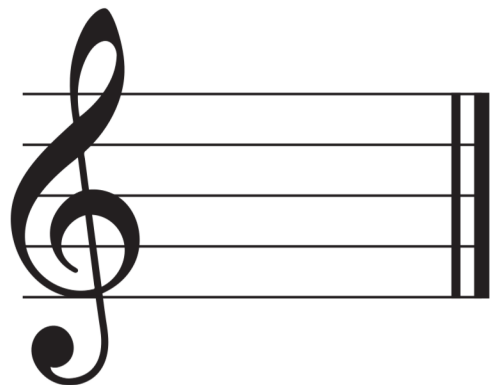
GEORGIA THE GIRAFFE



DEXTER THE DOG



ANNIE THE ANT



EDDIE THE ELEPHANT

VIOLIN HAND POSITION

My Computer, Twinkle Twinkle Little Star



When designing this course, we never set out to enforce a 'method'. However, we saw that the placement of the violin hand on the neck needed extra support, so pieces were created to focus on that skill alone.



Enable students to establish a comfortable left-hand shape and balanced 'hanging' hand before coordinating both.

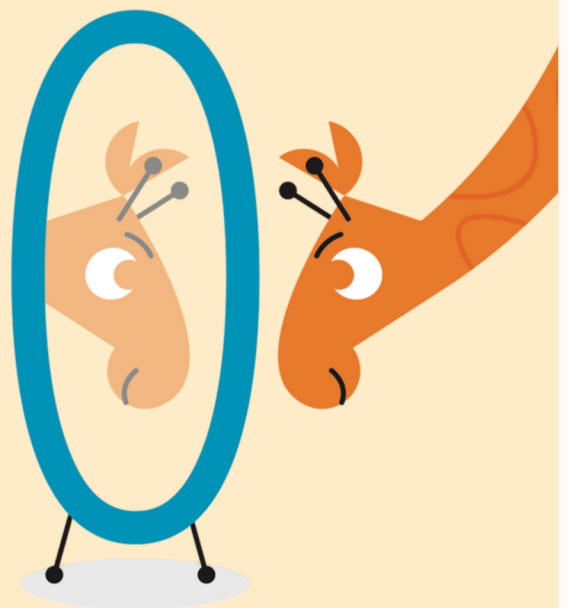


In My Computer and Twinkle Twinkle, return to pizzicato so the new hand position can first be mastered. Once the left hand looks great, add the bow.

Duet Twinkle Twinkle — this gives beginners instant motivation and lets them feel early success.



- Create a 'Mirror, Mirror' position with the violin hand — who can they see?
- Students imitate your hand, tapping fingers 1–2–3–4.
- Swap roles: see if they can tap a rhythm in Mirror position.



RESTS

Rest No More, Oma Rapeti, Three In A Bar



The first encounter with a rest came in Dexter's On Time. Now, different rest values present themselves. These pieces establish awareness that rests aren't to be ignored. They're part of the rhythm, just as much as the notes themselves.



improves understanding for students that silence is part of music. Recognising and counting rests builds rhythmic awareness and focus.



Understanding rests as silent yet essential, takes time and many reminders. Have students count aloud or tap the beat as you perform each piece, then repeat once the notes are secure. The goal is to make rests as natural to follow as any note they play.



Rests have to be recognised. Try imaginative ways to recreate rests.

Turn rests into a movement game: try 'Rest yoga' or poses.

Draw, trace and create rests and notes until they become familiar.

Play 'Freeze!' — listen for when the music starts and stops.



MORE NOTES

Little Kiwis



Our next book introduces the all-important performer workout. Little Kiwis is an entrée to this with its finger warm-ups encouraging finger movement at the beginning of each home practice.



Integrate Little Kiwis into every lesson to develop finger strength and coordination early on.



This is an audio-only file, but you can send students home with a short video of you both tapping along. They'll enjoy showing family members at home — see who else joins in!



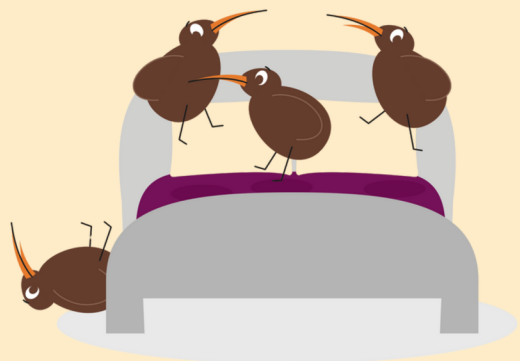
With the violin hand shape, start tapping your 4th finger on your thumb while saying the rhyme:

Four little Kiwis jumping on the bed,
One fell down and bumped her head!

Mamma called the doctor
and the doctor said:
No more Kiwis jumping on the bed!

Repeat with 3rd, 2nd, and 1st fingers.

Encourage students to invent their own "finger animal" verses or record their version to share in lessons.



MORE NOTES

Frank the Fish, Candy the Cat



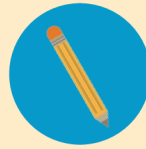
Our next pieces engage those warmed-up violin fingers. Frank the Fish and Candy the Cat introduce the framing of the hand with support from fingers 1 and 2. These pieces also begin to build an understanding of the seven notes every musician needs to know.



Present the visual and physical relationship between fingers, notes, and sound — allowing students to connect what they see, play, and hear. This stage also defines understanding of sharps in the musical alphabet.



These pieces involve finger placement, bow crossing, and rhythmic variation. Allow your student to set the pace, there's a lot to absorb. If your students need support, place a piece of washy tape under the strings so they have the visual of the finger 1 & 2 notes. Reinforce the new 'sharp' symbol visually; even if full understanding comes later, regular exposure undoubtedly generates more familiarity.

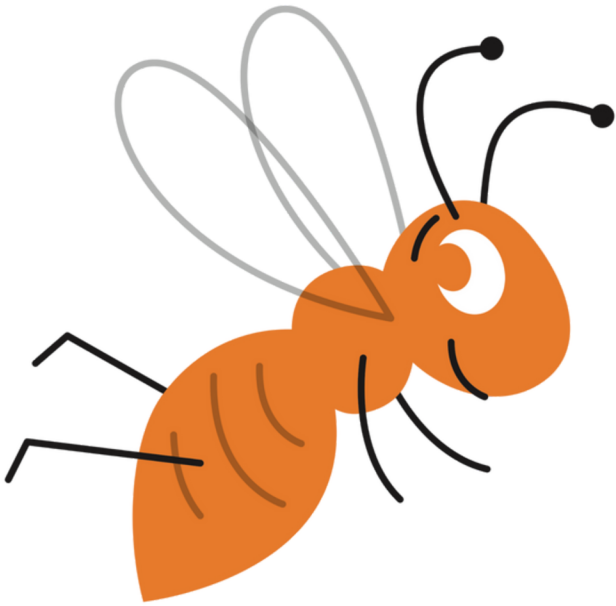


- Encourage note writing in any form — draw, colour, or trace the seven notes.
- 'Spot the note': Play a note while the student identifies it on their violin.
- 'Guess the note': Play with their back turned — can they name it?
- Create a mini note hunt: hide flashcards of the learnt notes around the room. Can they put them in alphabetical order?
- Add a Frank vs Candy challenge — can they find and play these new notes quickly?

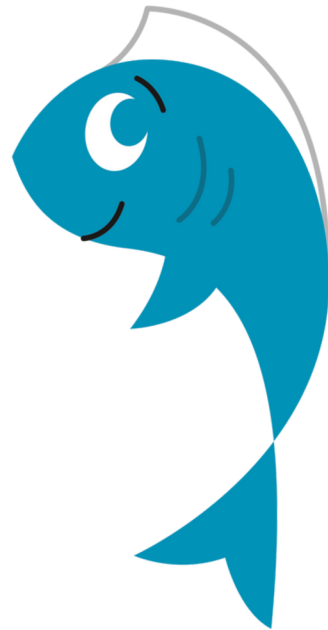


STRING FRIENDS CARDS

Cut out these handy cards



BERNIE THE BEE



FRANK THE FISH



CANDY THE CAT

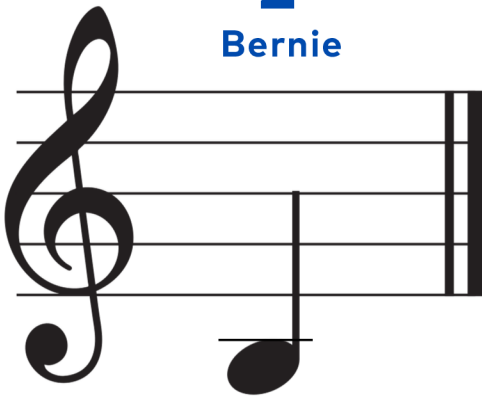
EDDIE THE ELEPHANT

STRING FRIENDS CARDS

Cut out these handy cards

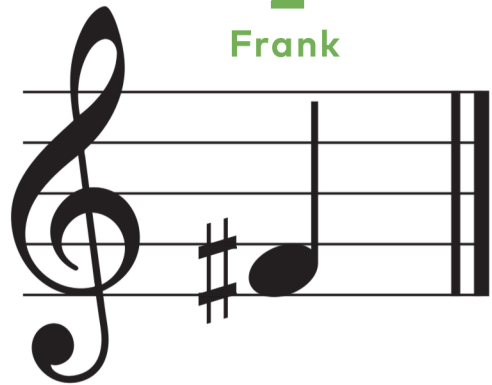


2
Bernie



BERNIE THE BEE

2
Frank



FRANK THE FISH

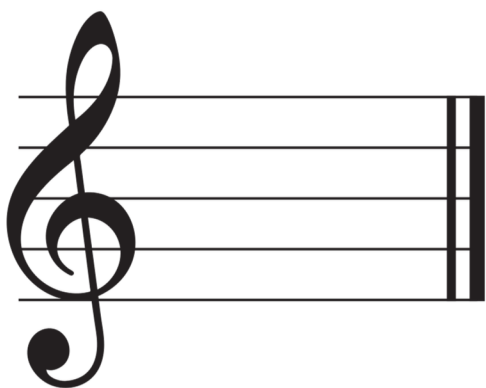
2
Candy



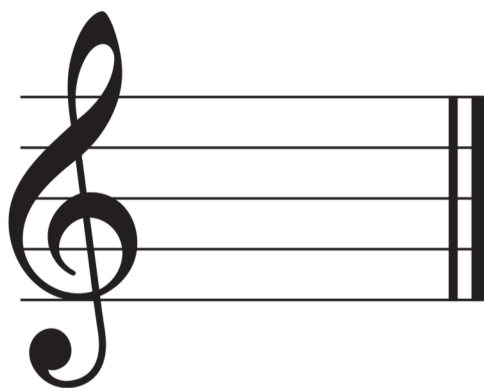
CANDY THE CAT

STRING FRIENDS NOTES

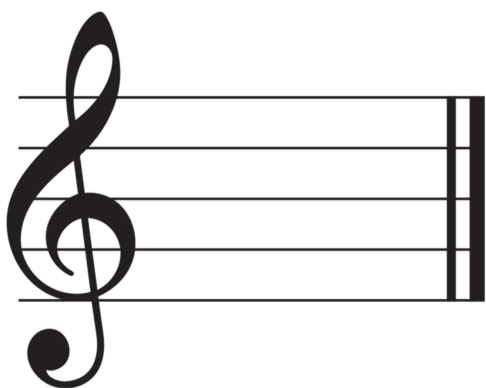
More cards for note learning



BERNIE THE BEE



FRANK THE FISH



CANDY THE CAT

MORE NOTES

See Saw, Pokarekare Ana



The next two pieces explore the Circle Bow (or retake) bowing technique. While you'll possibly witness some enthusiastic student arm circles, this lesson is all about smooth landings and developing graceful motion.



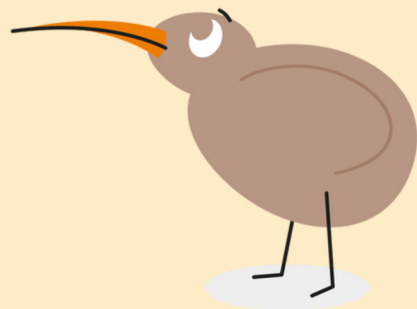
Demonstrate how to return to the frog quickly and silently, creating relaxed circular bow movements with confidence.



Around this stage we add a small 'runway' (a piece of washy tape) under the strings so that there is more emphasis on the bow moving in a controlled manner. The runway helps the centering of the bow as circle bows are explored. Remind students that bow control comes from the arm's weight and shape, not pressure. Watch for over-lifting or stiff wrists as they explore circles.



- Ask students to practice circle bows away from the violin first — balancing a pencil or chopstick instead of a bow.
- On the violin, alternate between big circles (See Saw) and small retakes (Pokarekare Ana).
- Try a 'silent landing challenge' — can they make the bow return with no sound at all?



MORE NOTES

Bernie the Bee, Nighty Night



Bernie the Bee is the last of our seven String Friends. This pacey piece ensures players stay alert by encouraging rapid finger placement.

The following piece, Nighty Night, is somewhat of a contrast - a serene conclusion to the collection introducing the semibreve (whole note) that also expands tone control.



Amplify speed and precision in Bernie the Bee, then focus on control and sustained tone in Nighty Night.

Encourage students to explore contrast - fast and light versus slow and smooth. At the same time refining bow balance and left-hand coordination.



Focus on smooth string crossings and accurate finger lifts.

In Nighty Night, discuss 'breathing with the bow' — long, slow, relaxed movements.

Ensure students awareness of how steady bow speed equals steady tone.



- Buzz Builder game – Place 1st and 2nd fingers down in time to a metronome, gradually increasing speed with each round.
- Bee Flight challenge – move the bow across all strings in small circle bows, landing silently each time (no crash landings!).
- Candle Bowing – balance a paper tissue on the violin while playing long bows without letting the tissue move.



MORE NOTES

Butterfly, Tongue Twister



Each book ends with a piece designed to challenge what's been learnt — not exactly a test though, more a celebration to showcase player progress and development.



To consolidate rhythmic understanding, strengthen left-hand agility, and encourage students to play from memory with musical independence.



These two pieces introduce the final new rhythm in String Friends 1 — the quaver (eighth note).

If your student hasn't learnt about fractions yet, this is the right time and place to connect rhythm to simple maths. Use pizzas to show how a "whole" note is shared when one of the String Friends knocks and asks politely for a slice!

Clapping rhythms obviously play an important part of rhythm learning.



Learning to play from memory is a big part of music. Some students will find this simple, as they will have learnt every piece from memory. Others need a lot of support.

Ideas to help:
Activity Ideas: Memory & Rhythm Games

Sticky Note Challenge:
Cover parts of the music and see if students can fill in the missing phrases.

Bow Echo: Teacher plays short rhythm patterns from Butterfly or Tongue Twister; student echoes from memory.

Memory Performance: Have students record their version from memory as a final challenge piece for the end of the book.

THANKS!

Thank you for caring so deeply about your students and for giving them the String Friends experience.

Every page in this series was created with teachers like you in mind — those who bring patience, creativity, and heart into every lesson.

By sharing these ideas and stories, you're helping young musicians discover not only how to play the violin, but how to love music for life.

The String Friends are ready to meet you all again in the next book!

Arohanui,
Emily & Andre Upston
The Violin Club



STRING FRIENDS 2 VIDEO LINKS

01 Easy Ride (Listening version)
https://youtu.be/ugE_DUSMeGO

01 Easy Ride (Play Along version)
https://youtu.be/jdFqkdy_Z-0

02 Bounce (Listening version)
<https://youtu.be/HLT1aIJNVUc>

02 Bounce (Play Along version)
<https://youtu.be/EtjhqOOA7Qo>

03 About Time (Listening version)
<https://youtu.be/hl7nt6RV5MM>

03 About Time (Play Along version)
<https://youtu.be/F6a59MyocME>

04 Freedom (Listening version)
<https://youtu.be/bCSmyekpDew>

04 Freedom (Play Along version)
<https://youtu.be/CwYpBhj1jB4>

05 I Love Ice Cream (Listening version)
<https://youtu.be/2Bnx2hXz6Xk>

05 I Love Ice Cream (Play Along version)
<https://youtu.be/s74uY1FVXT8>

06 Grace (Listening version)
<https://youtu.be/9s6CaLYRp-c>

06 Grace (Play Along version)
<https://youtu.be/SEsRb4tHr-4>

07 Skate Park (Listening version)
https://youtu.be/T3BCo9bZ_G4

07 Skate Park (Play Along version)
https://youtu.be/6_8PHJFTNjw

08 Country Fair (Listening version)
<https://youtu.be/rbqS9CiKVjs>

08 Country Fair (Play Along version)
<https://youtu.be/w8UDXBUgUb4>

09 Old Macdonald Had A Farm (Listening)
<https://youtu.be/iTvsh4ONDOc>

09 Old Macdonald Had A Farm (Play Along)
<https://youtu.be/jWdpOBc-MAg>

10 Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star (Listening)
<https://youtu.be/Fk-a6UKsWaE>

10 Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star (Play Along)
<https://youtu.be/cDJStN4oLwY>

11 Spooks (Listening version)
<https://youtu.be/9ZJpaqEMJfA>

11 Spooks (Play Along version)
https://youtu.be/YRBID_alh5I

12 Three In A Bar (Listening version)
<https://youtu.be/2CubilDYIng>

12 Three In A Bar (Play Along version)
<https://youtu.be/csYr1aVav7U>

13 Ode To Joy (Listening version)
<https://youtu.be/LgN3fHK7Clo>

13 Ode To Joy (Play Along version)
<https://youtu.be/9bOiQQypt-c>

14 Lightly Row (Listening version)
<https://youtu.be/EQD661Yu3dO>

14 Lightly Row (Play Along version)
<https://youtu.be/fdhB25cU6ig>

15 Gold (Listening version)
<https://youtu.be/3ZTCr2fC27U>

15 Gold (Play Along version)
<https://youtu.be/S7U52Vuj9ic>

16 So Long (Listening version)
<https://youtu.be/GiV8HrJCaNk>

16 So Long (Play Along version)
https://youtu.be/2FMlr_dG7vs