



Katie Glassman's
FIDDLE SCHOOL

STARTER KIT

UNIT 4



Bow Lengths

In fiddling, we use two bow lengths: long bows and short bows. **Long bows** span from your bottom sticker to your top sticker. We use them for quarter notes, half notes, and sometimes even longer notes. To play long bows:

1. Set up your posture, left hand, and bow hold with the steps laid out in Modules 1-3.
2. When you're in position, place your bow on the A string at the bottom sticker. Open your door (your forearm) and bow to the top sticker. Then close the door and bow back to your bottom sticker.
3. After you've done a few long bows, try connecting them by eliminating the pause between bows.

Short bows are measured between your bottom sticker and your middle sticker, and between your middle sticker and your top sticker. We use short bows for eighth notes. Most short bows will be between your bottom sticker and middle sticker. To play short bows:

1. Place your bow on the A string, then open the door to bow from your bottom sticker to your middle sticker, no farther. Then close the door and bow back to your bottom sticker.
2. After you've done a few short bows, try connecting them.

Let's Jam

Here's how to put your long and short bows into action:

1. On your A string, place your bow at the bottom sticker and play the rhythm ***watermelon***. That's four short bows—*wa-ter-me-lon*. Keep your upper arm still and bow by opening and closing your door.
2. Now try ***ap-ple***. That's two long bows. Good.
3. Now try connecting them. Play ***wa-ter-me-lon ap-ple: four short bows followed by two long bows***.
4. Give the same pattern a try on your D string next. The more you do this, the easier it will get.

Fingerboard Playing Position

1. Bring the fiddle to your neck and snuggle it in.
2. Use your left thumb to hoist your palm above the body of the fiddle.
3. Pull your elbow under the instrument to gently twist your forearm and palm towards the fiddle. Imagine that you're holding a ball and round your palm and fingers around it. **Keep your wrist straight.**

4. Maintain this hand shape as you slide your hand down the neck, away from the body and toward the scroll.
5. When your hand reaches the point just before the nut, stop and check your hand position. Is your wrist straight with your palm twisted outward and to the left? Are your fingers and palm still gently curved around the imaginary ball?

This is your fingerboard playing position.

How to Put Stickers on Your Fiddle

Fingerboard stickers mark the correct finger placement so that when your finger lands on its tip on the sticker, your notes are in tune.

To put on your stickers, you'll need:

- 1/8" pinstriping tape
- an open surface
- a pencil
- a soft blanket or towel to lay your fiddle on.

To place the stickers:

1. Cut four 4" strips of pinstriping tape and put them somewhere easily accessible.
2. With your tuner on the right side of your fiddle, put your fiddle in playing position, secure between your shoulder and your jaw.
3. Use your right hand to pluck the A string and see what pitch the tuner reads. If it's too low—any note that reads closer to F or G—turn the fine

tuner clockwise until it matches this pitch and your tuner reads that your A is in tune. If it's too high—anything from A# to B or higher—turn your fine tuner counterclockwise until the tuner reads that the pitch is an in-tune A.

4. Repeat this process with each string, moving to the D string next, then G, then E. Good.
5. When you have double checked all your strings to make sure they're in tune, put your fiddle in rest position. From here, make sure your tuner is angled so that you can read it in rest position. Now p
6. From rest position, follow the steps in Module 3 to put your left hand in position. Pluck your in-tune A string again with your right thumb. Now place your left first finger on its tip on the A string to make the note B. Adjust your finger placement until it your tuner tells you it's perfectly in tune.
7. When you get the note in tune, leave your finger where it is. With your right hand, grab your pencil. Note visually where your finger is and lift it slightly, and carefully mark with the pencil exactly where the tip of your finger was.
8. Once you've placed your mark, put your finger back down on the mark and pluck the string again. If it's in tune, great! If not, notice whether it needs to be higher or lower and adjust until the mark is in the right place.
9. Now repeat that process with your second finger. With your hand in place, put your second finger on its tip on the A string to make the note C while you pluck with your thumb. Again, rely on your tuner to know when it's perfectly in tune. Be picky about this: the notes need to be right on, not approximate. When you find the note, leave your finger down until you can mark its location with the pencil.

10. You're halfway there! Now use your third finger to repeat the process. This time, place your finger on its tip on the A string to find the note D. Again, be picky and adjust your finger until it's just right. Make your mark.
11. For the last sticker, place your third finger on its tip on the A string to find the note E. This note is higher than your last note even though you are using the same finger to find it. When the note is in tune, make your last mark and double check it.
12. Once you've made the marks of where your fingers should go, move to a flat surface and place a towel or a blanket over it to cushion your fiddle. Gently lay your fiddle down and grab one of the strips of tape you cut earlier. Thread the strip under the strings near the bridge and then guide it over the fingerboard, all the way back to the mark you made with your first finger.
13. When you have the tape over the mark, stand over your fiddle and make the tape parallel with the nut, the tiny piece of wood at the top of your fingerboard. Make the tape go straight across the fingerboard with no slant.
14. When you have it straight, press the tape down on the fingerboard. Wrap the ends around the back of the neck so that they overlap securely. If there's any extra tape, you can trim it at the end.
15. Repeat this same process with each mark for the other tapes. Remember, if you're having trouble, we're always just a click away to help you in a live consultation.

Tunnel Fingers

Once you've put tapes on your fingerboard, you're ready to start placing your fingers on the strings to create different pitches. To practice this:

1. Hold your fiddle in playing position, then balance it with no left hand at outlined in **Fiddle Balance** in Module 3.
2. Set up your left hand in **fingerboard playing position** as outlined earlier in this module.
3. From here, picture your fingers as tunnels over your strings. To function best, it's important that they keep this curved shape close to the strings. If your fingers are straight or point upwards, there are bound to be problems.
4. With your tunnel fingers, practice placing one finger at a time on the strings. Begin with the first finger. Drop your finger onto the string, letting its tip land right on top of the first finger tape you placed on the fingerboard. Lift and repeat with the same finger several times.
5. Repeat these steps several times with each finger. When you pick up each finger, look for its rounded tunnel shape.

Finger Placement with Bow

Here's how to add the bow:

1. Put your fiddle into playing position, then put your left hand into fingerboard playing position.
2. Set your bow on the A string at the bottom sticker and check your bow hold.
3. When you're ready, open the door and play a long down bow. Then close the door with an up bow.

4. Add the first finger. **In its tunnel shape**, let it drop onto the fingerboard on its tip, landing on the tape. **Press the string down all the way** and bow just like before, opening and closing the door.
5. Move on to your second finger and repeat the same process. Notice that as your fingers land higher on the neck, the pitch also gets higher.
6. Lastly, repeat the same process with your third finger. Let it drop **on its tip** on the tape, press down, and open and close the door of your forearm.

It might feel a little uncomfortable to press down the strings at first, but you'll build calluses on your fingertips in no time. Keep practicing these slowly.

Putting it All Together

Here's how to put fiddle posture, bowing, and fingering all together:

1. Begin with your fiddle in playing position and your left hand in fingerboard playing position. Set your bow on the strings and double check your bow hold. Before you begin, take a deep breath and relax!
2. Start at your bottom bow sticker on your open A and play four long bows.
3. Place your first finger on its tip on the tape and play four long bows. Repeat the sequence with your second and third fingers respectively.
4. When you've played up your A string on your first, second and third fingers, walk back down in reverse order—"peel the banana." Beginning with all three fingers down, play your third finger notes. Then lift your third finger and play your second finger notes. Lift your 2 and play your first finger notes. Finally, lift your 1 and play your open A notes. **When you lift your fingers, use the smallest motion possible.**