Tuning your violin/viola

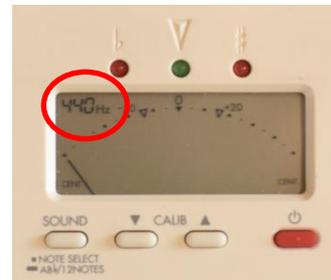# A guide for beginners, parents and carers

1. **Get hold of a tuner or tuner app**
   - You could use a piano/keyboard if you have one and are comfortable finding the correct notes to tune to
   - Pitch pipes can be used in the same way – there are specific pitch pipes for violin and viola available
   - Tuning apps are very useful and can be downloaded for free. **instuner** seems to be a popular one for Apple, or try **pitched tuner** for Android, both free to download
   - Some music books (such as Fiddle Time Joggers/Viola Time Joggers) have a tuning track on the CD to tune to

2. **Check the notes you are tuning to**
   - **Violin** strings are tuned to G_3, D_4, A_4, and E_5
   - **Viola** strings are tuned to C_3, G_3, D_4, and A_4
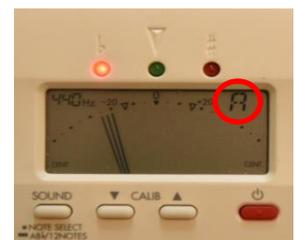   - If you are using a chromatic tuner or tuning app, check that it is set to **A=440Hz**

3. **Pluck the strings in turn to check the tuning**
   - Sit down with the violin/viola rested on your lap, strings facing you, with the scroll pointing upwards. Hold the instrument firmly by its shoulder with one hand, leaving the other free to gently pluck the strings
   - Rest the tuner on your lap next to the instrument, so it can pick up the sound (you will need a relatively quiet room to do this in)
   - Pluck one string at a time to see if it is too high (sharp) or too low (flat)

If using a chromatic tuner or tuning app, look for the following things

1. Which note the tuner is picking up – if it is not one of the notes you are trying to tune to it probably means the string is significantly out of tune (see tuning with the pegs below)
2. Whether the note is flat (♭) or sharp (♯) – some tuners have a dial which moves to the left (flat) or right (sharp), others have red lights to show you whether it is flat or sharp
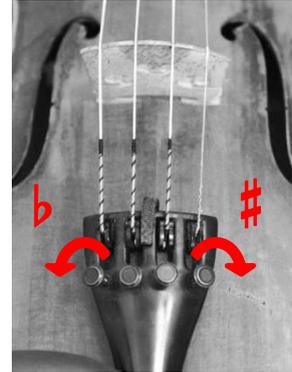
3. When the note is in tune, either the dial will point directly to the middle, or a green light will indicate correct tuning
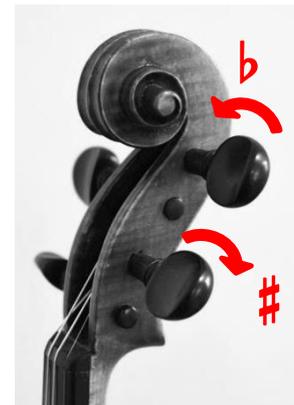
4. **If the correct note is detected but is out of tune, adjust the tuning using the fine tuners**
   - Find the fine tuners at the bottom of your violin/viola (on the tailpiece next to the chinrest)
   - To sharpen the note (make it higher/bring the dial to the right) twist the appropriate fine tuner to the right
   - To flatten the note (make it lower/bring the dial to the left) twist the fine tuner to the left
   - You may need to do this a few times until the dial reaches the middle or you get the green light confirmation

5. **If the tuner is detecting a different note, you may need to adjust the tuning using the pegs (the A string could be detected as a B (too high) or a G (too low) for example)**
   - Running your finger up the string to the pegs, locate the appropriate peg for the string you are tuning
   - To flatten the note, twist the peg towards you to loosen the string
   - To sharpen the note, twist the peg away from you (it is best to loosen the string by twisting very slightly towards you before you then twist away to tighten it. This should stop stiff pegs from suddenly twisting too far which could break a string)

A few things to be careful of when using the pegs to tune:

- Try to get the fine tuner into a neutral position before you use the pegs i.e. not too tight or too loose
- Use very small movements when twisting the pegs. Unlike the tuning pegs on a guitar or ukulele, the pegs on violins/violas need very little twisting to make a significant change in the tuning (the smaller the instrument, the smaller the movement needed to change the pitch)
- Try to push the peg in slightly as you twist. This should help to keep the peg in place and stop it from slipping after tuning
- Keep an eye on the bridge whilst tuning. If it starts to lean, do not tighten the string any further, or the bridge could collapse.

The website below includes a video outlining the above steps, plus a more in depth explanation with pictures to help if needed. *Please note this video is for tuning *violins* – although the technique remains the same, viola strings are tuned to different pitches (see point 2 above).

https://practicepizzazz.com/2020/03/12/how-to-tune-your-childs-violin/