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Set-Up

Most cheaper basses, when purchased, still need to be set up properly. Harnett was very insistent on that. He made the guy dress the fingerboard, put adjusters in the bridge, and trim the sound post. If you buy your bass in the typical music store, they will NOT be able to do any decent set-up. Take your new or new used bass to a real bass guy. In the beginning, adjust the strings low enough so you can play with a little bit of ease. It will take practice and time for you to become comfortable and build stamina. I have had many students who walk into their first lesson with a bass that is so difficult to play that it is totally understandable why they did not like to practice.

Recently a student brought his bass in, and the strings were a mile high off the fingerboard. He told me this was because if he adjusted the bridge to make the strings any lower they would buzz. He was right! The fingerboard was dipped badly. The bridge was warped and bent almost like a pretzel. The strings were very stiff, and the endpin rattled something fierce when you played the open A string. Of course, his wife had gotten “a deal” from a friend who new a guy who had a brother whose father was a cello repairman. Yea... r i g h t. And this repairman had endorsed this bass. Yikes! My new student’s bass needs the fingerboard planed, a new bridge, softer strings, and hopefully only a better quality endpin to stop the rattling. Oh yeah, the nut needed to be cut down also. If you just walk in off the street and say to the local bass guy, “I want my bass set up to play easily,” I suspect it will cost between \$200 - \$1000, depending on the work needed.

Here are a few areas to look at when deciding to get your current bass set up properly.

1. string height at the nut
2. string height at the upper end of fingerboard
3. dip in the fingerboard
4. sound post adjustment
5. width of strings on the bridge
6. curvature of the top of the bridge
7. endpin stability
8. what kind of strings will work best on your particular bass
9. removing buzzes from the fingerboard
10. checking for open seams
11. tuning pegs rattling

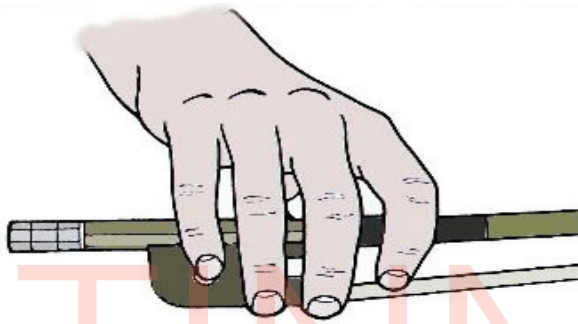
No matter how good or bad the quality of your bass, it must play easily and accurately or you will not be able to develop correct technique.



Shane Alessio - photo by Sarah Stinnett

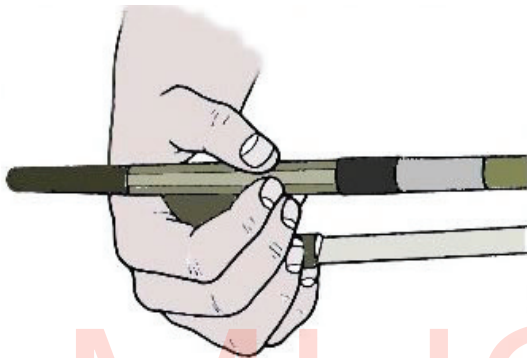
Learning to grip the bow properly is very important. It will take time to become comfortable holding the bow.

French bow grip



Notice how all of the fingers are laying on the bow. Do not allow your fingers to stick up in the air. Curve your fingers and maintain contact at all times, with all fingers.

German bow grip



I have known too many guys who could not understand the importance of having a decent bow. I know, I know, you just want to learn to play jazz, why should you pay for a better bow than the \$100 bow that came with the bass?

You need to get a pernambucco wood bow. I prefer an octagonal shaped stick. I suggest a medium weight at first. If possible, you need to try out the bow on “your” bass. If you have a cheap bass, then a medium quality bow is sufficient. As you play a better bass, you will want a better bow.

A decent student bow today starts at \$300 - \$600. Professional level bows start at roughly \$2000. You need to have some proficiency with the bow to even hear the difference between a good bow and a not so good bow, but you will always feel it when you put a good bow on your bass. The sound is deeper, and richer. A good bow draws more fundamental from the string. A good bow feels well balanced. It digs in better. Just like with basses, ask for advice when you are ready to upgrade your bow.

Etudes Chapter 1

No. 6 - Open String Etude

Lento

1

5

9

13

17

21

Items to remember in reference to the left hand.

1. thumb behind the middle finger
2. even pressure with all fingers
3. fingers used are 1, 2, and 4 - these are half-steps
4. maintain hand posture while playing each note
5. each finger supports, holds down the string, while the other fingers are playing higher pitches
6. economy of motion, place fingers in position to play all notes on one string without additional movement
7. press notes down before playing
8. maintain good spacing (1/2 step) between 1st and 2nd fingers, and 2nd and 4th fingers

For this type of practice, work slowly and deliberately. Focus on getting the physical motions and hand positions correct. Only with repeated practice will this become comfortable. It takes time to build the strength that will allow you to relax. Over time these principles will become second nature in your playing. Working on the fundamentals of good technique is a practice that all good musicians do, forever.

Major Scale: We all know the sound of a major scale. Play the following exercises with a full bow per note. Do not use the metronome.

No. 7 - Bb Major Scale - fingering

1 4 0 1 4 0 2 4

The F major scale uses the exact same fingerings and hand position as the Bb major scale, starting on a lower string. As you learn the fundamentals of good posture, fingering, and shifting, you will find that these principals apply all over the instrument. While the fingers for a specific scale may change, good posture and finger spacing will insure good intonation.

No. 8 - F Major Scale - fingering

1 4 0 1 4 0 2 4

No. 25 - G major Etude 2

♩ = 80

1

5

STINNETT

Detailed description: This block contains the first five measures of the G major Etude 2. It is written in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 80. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and a repeat sign at the end of measure 5. A large, semi-transparent watermark 'STINNETT' is overlaid across the middle of the page.

No. 26 - A major Etude 2

♩ = 80

1

5

9

13

MUSIC

Detailed description: This block contains the first thirteen measures of the A major Etude 2. It is written in bass clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 80. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and a repeat sign at the end of measure 13. A large, semi-transparent watermark 'MUSIC' is overlaid across the middle of the page.

No. 27 - C major Etude 2

♩ = 90

1

5

Detailed description: This block contains the first five measures of the C major Etude 2. It is written in bass clef with a key signature of no sharps or flats and a 4/4 time signature. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 90. The notation includes eighth and sixteenth notes, rests, and a repeat sign at the end of measure 5.

Cycle of 4ths: C F B \flat E \flat A \flat D \flat G \flat /F \sharp B E A D G C

It is a powerful sound, the root and the fifth. When played as a double stop, you can hear the resonance of the numerous overtones. This richness of sonority and timbre is a building block for most of our music. Using the cycle of 4ths as a root motion is an excellent procedure for working on your root - 5th intonation. Notice how the movement from one key to next in the cycle of 4ths is the same as moving from a V chord to a I chord.

When playing roots and 5ths around the cycle, you will have choices of where to move when going to the next chord - up or down. Work until both options are solidly under your fingers.

I realize that for some of you who are new to the bass this will be a very challenging task. Start slowly and begin by finding the root of each chord. After you can successfully play just the root around the cycle, add the 5th.

No. 43 - Cycle of 4ths - Pizzicato

$\text{♩} = 100$ pizz

1

5

9

13

17

21

Chapter 5

Shifting

Moving your left hand from one position on the fingerboard to another position on the fingerboard is called shifting. Obviously, you have already been shifting while playing the bass. I want to go over the basic shifting rules and motions to make sure you are on the right track.

When you move your hand position by shifting, playing in tune is the difficult part. Good intonation, when shifting, requires that you maintain excellent left hand posture. Keep the basic shape of your hand the same as you move. Keep the spacing of your fingers the same when you are moving. Keep your thumb in the same position relative to your fingers, behind the second finger.

Do not double shift. When you do shift, make sure to play at least two notes in that position before you shift again. This, of course, requires some planning in your practicing.

No. 54 - Example of double shift

bad shift - double shift

1 4 4 4 1

1

Detailed description: This musical staff shows a sequence of notes in 4/4 time. The notes are G2, F2, E2, D2, C2, B1, A1, G1. The first four notes (G2-F2-E2-D2) are played in one position. The fifth note (C2) is a double shift from the previous position. The sixth note (B1) is played in a new position. The seventh note (A1) is played in the same position as the sixth note. The eighth note (G1) is played in the same position as the seventh note. The fingering numbers 1, 4, 4, 4, 1 are placed above the notes G2, F2, E2, D2, and C2 respectively.

common fingering - no double shift

2 4 2 1

4

Detailed description: This musical staff shows the same sequence of notes as the previous staff. The first four notes (G2-F2-E2-D2) are played in one position. The fifth note (C2) is a single shift from the previous position. The sixth note (B1) is played in a new position. The seventh note (A1) is played in the same position as the sixth note. The eighth note (G1) is played in the same position as the seventh note. The fingering numbers 2, 4, 2, 1 are placed above the notes G2, F2, E2, and D2 respectively.

no double shift but not too good - 4 to 4

4 4 2 1

7

Detailed description: This musical staff shows the same sequence of notes. The first four notes (G2-F2-E2-D2) are played in one position. The fifth note (C2) is a single shift from the previous position. The sixth note (B1) is played in a new position. The seventh note (A1) is played in the same position as the sixth note. The eighth note (G1) is played in the same position as the seventh note. The fingering numbers 4, 4, 2, 1 are placed above the notes G2, F2, E2, and D2 respectively.

common - no double shift

2 4 4 1

10

Detailed description: This musical staff shows the same sequence of notes. The first four notes (G2-F2-E2-D2) are played in one position. The fifth note (C2) is a single shift from the previous position. The sixth note (B1) is played in a new position. The seventh note (A1) is played in the same position as the sixth note. The eighth note (G1) is played in the same position as the seventh note. The fingering numbers 2, 4, 4, 1 are placed above the notes G2, F2, E2, and D2 respectively.