

The alto clef

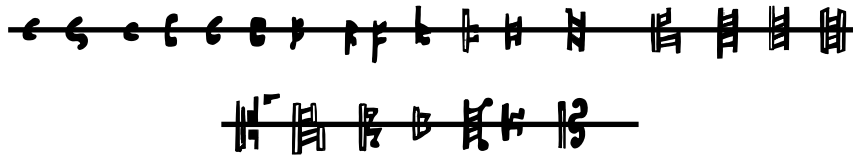
Viola music is usually written in the alto clef (also called the C or viola clef), although high notes can be in the treble clef.

The history of the alto clef

The alto clef (or C clef) began life in church music of the twelfth century. The letter 'C' was placed at the beginning of the line to literally indicate the pitch 'C'.



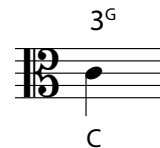
Over the years it changed shape, eventually becoming the elegant symbol we see today.



The original 'C' placed around the C line is still visible.



The design of the alto (C) clef shows the note C on the middle line. This is middle C on the piano and we play it with the 3rd finger on the G string when in 1st position.



Here are the note names for reference:

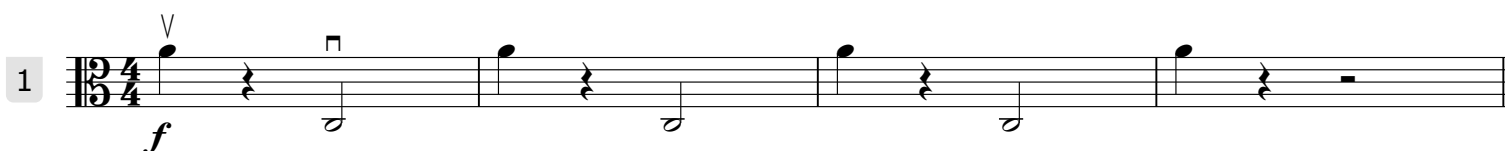


Stage 6

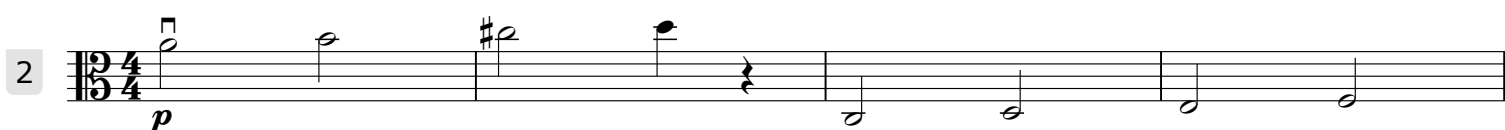
Control of the top and bottom strings

Exercise 7 These exercises help to develop control of the top and bottom strings.

Start with your bow at the point on the A string and lift it in the air as soon as you've played the short A. Land on C and relax. Think about how your arm moves.



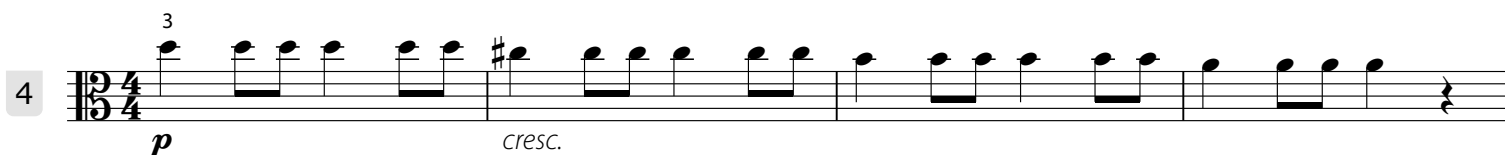
This exercise helps get your arms in the right position for playing on the C string.



This exercise contains a new C string harmonic. Aim to keep your left elbow at the same angle through the piece.



Start this warm-up in the middle of the bow. Play it quite fast and work out how the dynamic changes affect the amount of bow you use.



Stage 9

Playing chromatic notes, *pizzicato* and double stops

For *pizzicato* on the viola you'll need to press your left-hand fingers down a little more so that the string makes firm contact with the fingerboard. With the right hand, use the fleshy part of the 1st or 2nd finger and move the arm outwards towards the scroll.

Exercise 14 Practise this next series of exercises *arco* and then *pizzicato*.

Below are three options for fingering chromatic notes. If you have a larger viola, consider using the second or third suggestions. Choose the fingering that suits you best for the fourth line.

1

0 1 1 2 2 3 3 4

2

0 1 2 1 2 2 3 4

3

0 1 2 3 1 2 3 4

4

Enjoy playing this wonderful arrangement of Franck's Violin Sonata. Be prepared to stretch your fingers without straining. Feel free to add some slides to make it more stylish.

Theme from Sonata in A major, 2nd movement

César Franck

Allegro

f

cresc.

sempre f