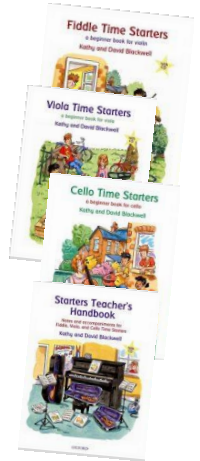


Guide to Starters and Joggers

What are the *Starters* books? The *Starters* books for violin, viola, and cello are designed for complete beginners. They contain an holistic and exciting range of fun activities, exercises, and pieces that help students develop good string technique alongside general musicianship skills. In addition, each book comes with **audio tracks** for every piece to support learning between lessons. The books are fully compatible and can be used in either individual lessons or mixed instrumental groups that combine violin, viola, and cello together.



Is there an accompaniment book? The *Starters Teacher's Handbook* contains piano and string accompaniments, audio tracks, and a wealth of creative ideas, warm ups, and photocopyable worksheets, all designed to support the early stages of learning.

How do the *Starters* books develop string technique? Activities and pieces throughout *Starters* develop freedom of movement in the bowing arm and a relaxed and comfortable posture.

- *Warm ups* (pp. 5 & 11): doing the actions and chanting or singing along to the audio backing encourages a good posture and bow hold while developing a sense of pulse.
- *Bowing skills*: these are developed with rhythm variations, e.g. *Rhythm train* (p. 17), which uses short bow strokes in the middle of the bow, and string-crossing pieces, e.g. *Happy Haydn* (p. 19) and *Swing band* (p. 21). Fully written out versions of the rhythm variations are free to download from our website.
- *Left-hand position*: Left-hand pizzicato in e.g. *Popcorn* (p. 22), harmonics in *Clear blue sky* (p. 35), and creating a tunnel over an open string in pieces such as *Starlight* (p. 27) are techniques that help establish good left-hand positions.
- *Further ideas*: page 66 of the *Starters Teacher's Handbook* has more ideas to help encourage good habits.

How about aural awareness? A key feature of the books is a strong emphasis on listening and singing. Encouraging pupils to sing the tunes before playing (using the words or to sol-fa) will help develop good intonation. The lyrics often remind players of technical points too.

Much of the material can be taught by rote or by ear, allowing learners to develop their aural awareness while focusing on good tone and technique. For example, *Jelly on a plate* (p. 8) may be taught like this: teach pupils to sing the tune by having them echo you a bar at a time in a call and response way. Then ask them to be 'musical detectives' and 'find' the tune on their instrument, (the starting note can be given as a clue). This tune can then be played by ear, beginning on any of the three lowest strings.

The 'Super listener' activities, e.g. *Echo calypso* (p. 13), suggestions to transpose tunes to other keys, and the 'listen and copy' approach used in many of the pieces, e.g. *Copycat blues* (p. 16) and *Scale builder* (p. 36), all help develop listening skills and build confidence.

What type of notation is used? The *Starters* books allows the teacher to have a flexible approach to introducing notation to suit individual or group needs.

- The first open string pieces use a *simplified notation* with a heartbeat symbol to represent the steady pulse of the music and letter names to identify the strings (pp. 6-8). This also enables non-musical parents to get involved in practice at home.
- *Standard notation* is then introduced one step at a time, with lots of reinforcement.
- Simplified notation is used for the tunes that use all the fingers on one string (pp. 24-5). These are grouped together so may be introduced at any time at the teacher's discretion.

Music reading skills are supported throughout the book in various ways:

- The '*Be a composer*' ideas encourage pupils to use the knowledge they've gained in a creative way and in the process deepen their understanding.
- *Activity pages and quizzes* help consolidate music reading skills in an accessible way.
- *Additional photocopiable worksheets* are also given in the *Starters Teacher's Handbook*.

Are the *Starters* books suitable for all types of lessons? Yes, the books suit pupils learning individually or in groups. Also, the pupil's books (violin, viola, and cello) are fully compatible, and so can be used in mixed group lessons or ensembles.

Differentiation and extension activities are an important part of group lessons, and many of the pieces in *Starters* provide an opportunity for this, with suggestions to transpose a tune to another key or with rhythm variations. *Fit as a fiddle* (p. 29) can be played by players at different stages (more advanced players can play the verses with everyone joining in for the chorus). Similarly, a simple ensemble piece with differentiated parts can be made by combining the two versions of *Clear blue sky* (pp. 34 and 35), with or without the additional part in *The Starters Teacher's Handbook* (p. 53).

How do the *Starters* and *Joggers* books work together? The *Joggers* books can be introduced and used alongside *Starters* once pupils feel comfortable with their instrument and the basics have been established. The extensive range of pieces in *Joggers* provide an abundance of reading practice while consolidating and introducing new elements, e.g. new notes, slurs, dynamics, and differentiated duets. From the open string tunes at the start of *Joggers*, which can be enjoyed when pupils are confident with reading the open strings, to characterful pieces using all the fingers, the *Joggers* books are the perfect companion to each stage of learning. In addition, our *Violin Star Theory* (ABRSM) complements *Starters* and *Joggers* with theory activities presented in an engaging and practical way.

In summary: Use the books together to develop the all-round musician and a player who is relaxed and comfortable with their instrument. For information on all our books and free additional resources to download, visit www.kathyanddavidblackwell.co.uk For sample pages and audio from all our books visit the Oxford University Press website www.oup.com

Kathy and David

