

THUMBS UP, CELLISTS!

*How to set up Thumb position
Common issues for beginning cellos and solutions*

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1) Position Review

- a. Four-finger positions : the 1st to 4th positions where we use the fourth finger
- b. Three-finger positions : up near the neck that we do not use fourth finger as much
- c. Thumb positions

2) Harmonics (1/2, 1/3, and 1/4)

- a. Wide C shape with thumb and the ring finger
- b. Thumb sits under the neck
- c. The 3rd finger on A string with wide C shape

3) Setting up Thumb Position

- a. You are the best or so-so!
- b. Thumb on the Harmonics (on TWO strings!!)
- c. The first knuckle of thumb touches A string
- d. Watch the posture – shoulder down and elbow forward, arm does not lean on cello
- e. Knock knock knock on cello body on the cello body with thumb on strings
- f. Tap Tap Tap with fingers on strings (D or G string)
- g. The shape of the hand needs to be round and curved (making a circle)
- h. The thumb press down at least half-way in thumb position when pressing down a different finger (e.g. when using the 2nd finger, both thumb and the 2nd finger press down the string)

4) Practicing with Thumb position

- a. Playing harmonics with thumb with various rhythms
- b. Playing D major in the first position
- c. Playing D major in the thumb position

5) The Four Patterns

- a. Pattern 1 (Major): WWh
- b. Pattern 2 (Dorian): WhW
- c. Pattern 3 (Phrygian): hWW

- d. Pattern 4 (Lydian): WWW
- 6) Non-Harmonics Thumb Position
- a. Thumb comes down and presses the two strings.
 - b. At the point, it is good to practice with scales and arpeggios.
 - c. Feel the hand as one unit or a "frame" (like the violin pedagogue Galamian's method)
- 7) Common problems with Thumb position
- a. High Elbow and Shoulder
 - b. Collapse Finger
 - c. Sound
 - d. Thumb on one string
 - e. Thumb too far-away
 - f. Moving fingers individually
- 8) Common issues for beginning cellos
- a. Low right wrist
 - b. High Shoulders, Low cello placing
 - c. Endpin Length
 - d. Cello Tilting too much to one side
 - e. "Violin bow hold" for both left and right hands
 - f. LH finger
- 9) Thumb Position Study Materials
- a. Rick Mooney: *Thumb Position for Cello (Book 1 & 2)*
 - b. Gabriel Koeppen: *Duets and Exercises Introducing the Use of the Thumb on the Cello*
 - c. Cassia Harvey: *Thumb Position for the Cello*
 - d. Otakar Sevcik: *Thumb Placing Exercises for cello, Op.1 Part 1*
 - e. Janos Starker: *An Organized Method of String Playing*
 - f. Helga Winold: *Cellocity*
 - g. Hans Jørgen Jensen: *Fun in Thumb Position*
 - h. Pat Legg and Alan Gout: *Thumb Position Repertoire*

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