



Technique

Use long slow strokes along the bow's entire length. Press the bow gently against the rosin and move it in both directions so that you collect rosin dust on both up-bow and down-bow strokes. Change the position of the rosin as you go along. If you are using a round cake, turn the cake slightly after a few strokes. If you are using rosin in a block use the right side, left side and middle of the cake. Doing this will prevent you from actually wearing a channel into the rosin. Keeping a smooth surface on the rosin cake will make it most effective.

As you draw the bow back and forth, be aware of the amount of effort it takes to move the bow. You will find that as more and more rosin clings to the hair it will become easier and easier to draw or push the bow across the cake. The change will be very subtle, but if you pay attention you will learn to feel it. Once you have reached a point where the bow travels smoothly STOP. Putting more and more rosin on the bow will just produce that cloud of rosin dust that your neighbour will find so distressing! If you like, you can tap the bow on your hand a few times to knock off any excess rosin before you start to play.

How often should I Rosin my bow?

The bow hair, the strings used, the temperature, the humidity, the style of playing and the violin's responsiveness, all contribute to the answer. The answer can vary from "every few hours" to "every few days. However, most students do not need to thoroughly rosin their bows every day.

Good practice is to "touch up" your bow every day you play. Running the bow across the rosin 6 or 8 times actually does even out the layer of rosin on the hair. If you hear the tone of the violin changing dramatically that is the time to thoroughly rosin your bow. When you finish playing, gently wipe off your violin with a lint-free cloth. A lint-free cloth is necessary so that the lint doesn't actually cling to the rosin on the violin. At the same time you clean off your violin, wipe the rosin from your bow. As always, avoid touching the hair as much as possible. Caked on rosin does not look good. It is also harmful to the sound of the violin. If you don't wipe the rosin off, you'll soon need to use a cleaner on the violin.

It is also a good practice to wipe the rosin from the playing area of the strings, especially the undersides of the strings. The amount of rosin on a string greatly affects the playability and the tone produced by that string.

A new cake of rosin is smooth or polished. You need to rough up the surface before it will cling to the bow hair. Simply score the surface of the rosin in a crosshatch pattern.

LOCHGOILHEAD FIDDLE WORKSHOP

LOOKING AFTER YOUR FIDDLE

1. Keep your Violin Clean. After you have finished playing use a soft, clean, lint free, dry duster to remove any rosin dust that has landed on the top of the violin, around the bridge area. Also wipe the strings where the bow touches. Rosin is very necessary but it is acidic. If you leave it on the varnish it will eventually eat its way into the surface and then it becomes very difficult, if not impossible, to remove. A quick wipe is all that is needed to keep your instrument looking and sounding at its best. While you wipe the violin it's a good idea to wipe the stick of the bow. **"Don't wipe the hair though!"** Rosin sticks to the bow too, and it looks unsightly when the residue builds up.
2. Keep your violin safe. When you are not using your violin put it back into its' case and make sure you fasten the lid. Many good violins are damaged because people do silly things. They lift up the case without having the lid fastened. The lid falls open and out pops the violin onto the hard floor. Or they put the violin on a chair, forget it's there and sit on it. The safest place for your violin is in its' case, unless it's tucked under your chin of course.
3. Don't let your violin get too hot. Your violin is glued together (there are no screws) with something called "Hide Glue". If it gets too hot then it comes unstuck and your violin will crack open and warp. Leaving your violin in a car on a sunny day can cause quite severe damage. If it's too hot or cold for you then it's probably too hot or cold for your violin!

How to care for your Violin Bow

Bows are extremely fragile! A broken bow can often be repaired, but if the head or stick is broken the bow loses any inherent value. Handle your bow as if it were made of glass. The safest place to store your bow is in your violin case, properly set in the bow holder. Always be conscious of your bow when you are handling it - take care not to bang it against anything if you are walking or moving with it in your hand. DO NOT applaud by tapping your bows on *the music stand in front of you*; many bows have been broken this way. Also, beware of low ceilings. Loosen your bow when you are not using it. The little screw at the end of the bow causes the "Frog" to slide up and down the stick and tensions the bow hair. Bow hair stretches and shrinks with humidity. If you don't loosen the tension on the hair then you risk stretching the hair or taking the curve out of the bow stick. If that happens you will find that you cannot tension the bow hair correctly and your playing will suffer. It is an expensive business re-hairing or re-springing a bow so that simple little tip can save many pounds and lots of inconvenience. The hair should be about the thickness of a pencil away from the stick at the middle of the bow when you play. When you have finished playing you should unwind the screw so that the hair almost touches the stick. **"Tighten to play, Loosen to put away"**

Violin Rosin

Rosin is a sticky subject. If you don't get a grip on it you won't go far in playing your violin. Violin rosin is a very serious business for anyone who plays a bowed instrument. The more you know about it, the better off you will be.

What is Rosin?

Rosin is the substance that a violinist uses to make the hair on his bow sticky. If a bow's hair has never been rosined it will not produce usable sound when drawn across the strings. Once rosined, the hair actually grips the string and pulls it . . . but since the bow keeps moving the string snaps back to its original position . . . where it is caught again by the rosin on the hair and the cycle is repeated. This happens very, very quickly. In the case of your A-string 440 times per second. Without the rosin's grip, the hair just slides over the string and you essentially hear nothing.

How is Rosin made?

The basic ingredient in rosin is pine sap. Manufacturers actually use more than 100 types of fir trees for this purpose. The tree is tapped, very much like a maple tree would be tapped for syrup. The tap needs to be renewed every four or five days to

make sure that flow continues. The time of year that the tree is tapped will greatly affect the resulting rosins. The product made by resin drawn in the summer and autumn will be darker and softer than that drawn in winter and spring.

The resin that comes from the tree is heated and purified, and then comes the step that rosin makers will not talk about. Each manufacturer has their own recipe. Different resins may be added. Some add beeswax. Others even add gold, silver, lead or copper flecks, saying that it adds to the rosin's ability to grip the string. The mixture is cooled, and bubbles are forced out. The thick goo is poured into moulds to form the cakes that we buy.

Is there a difference between Rosins?

Rosin choice is quite personal. Generally speaking, the darker the rosin the softer it is. Softer rosins tend to be stickier. While stickier rosins produce greater grip on the string, they also produce a grittier sound. Softer rosins also throw off more powder, making things difficult to clean. Harder rosin will not be quite as sticky, and so will not grip the string as strongly. The problem is that if the rosin is not sticky enough you will not produce the full sound that you desire.

Look for something in the middle. Dark amber seems to work well for most students. Look for rosin that is smooth and free of bubbles. Some people prefer rosin in the form of round cakes. Most student outfits come with a tablet of rosin. There are good rosins that come both ways. As you progress and become better at handling your bow you will probably start looking for stickier rosin and will probably become more selective in the rosin you use, but at all stages of your violin playing career you will be experimenting with rosins.

How do I Rosin a bow?

The goal of applying rosin to a bow is to get an even coat of rosin over the entire length of the hair. Too little rosin and you will not get enough pull to use your violin to its fullest potential. Too much and you will coat your bow and violin with a fine coat of sticky powder.