



VIRGINIA TECH™  
**STRING PROJECT**

**Parent/Student Handbook**

2025/26

**Our Mission:** To provide high-quality and inclusive string music education for our community and to prepare Virginia Tech's undergraduate and graduate music students for success in their futures as music educators.

What does this mean for our students? In classes, students will be learning from university professors, master string teachers, and graduate and undergraduate Virginia Tech music students. We serve a wide range of students in our area—from those interested in experiencing music in a group class setting for the first time, to adult learners reconnecting with past musical knowledge, to those who go on to win music scholarships to study music in college!

**History:** Winner of the 2021 American String Teachers Association Outstanding String Project of the Year, The Virginia Tech String Project, founded in 2007, is the signature community enrichment program for the department of music at Virginia Tech. Our program is a member of the National String Project Consortium, founded in 1998, to address a national string teacher shortage through a plan that establishes teacher-training programs at universities throughout the country. Master string teachers work with Virginia Tech's undergraduate music students to teach all classes. We fill a significant gap in the public-school system curriculum by providing beginning lessons in strings to students in the 3rd and 4th grades as well as providing a space for older students' musical growth through multiple string orchestras for those with prior experience.

Dear Students and Parents,

August 2025

Welcome! We are excited to enter our 18th year of the Virginia Tech String Project, and we look forward to welcoming you to classes very soon. We are thrilled to be continuing our guitar classes as well as our adult bowed strings (violin, viola, cello, and bass) class. Please read this handbook and keep it handy throughout the year to stay up to date on helpful information related to the program. Please also take a moment now to save all our concert dates in your calendar. Returning families, **we've highlighted all new/updated information in red** for your convenience.

Musically yours,

Mazi Pompell, VTSP Interim Director

Alan Weinstein, VTSP Artistic Director  
Associate Professor - Cello and Bass, Virginia Tech

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# Contact Information

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540-231-0416

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Yi-Wen Evans, Master Teacher (bowed strings)  
[yevans@vt.edu](mailto:yevans@vt.edu)

Joey Ballard, Master Teacher (guitar)  
joeyballard@vt.edu

Lindsey Finks, Assistant Director  
stringproject@vt.edu

[Visit our webpage!](#)

“Like” us on [Facebook!](#) We post pictures and information about the learning experience as well as program reminders and details about local string-related events.

[National String Project Consortium Website](#) This is the site for our umbrella organization. You can read more about the string project mission and country-wide impact here.

## Enrollment, Payment, and Scholarships

**Registration details:** We cannot accept students younger than 3rd grade into our program (unless they are in 2nd grade and have completed our summer string exploration camp). We do, however, welcome students of all ages above that, including adults! Group class tuition is \$80 per semester. A private lesson package is an additional \$200 per semester. Chamber music for advanced students is \$60 per semester. In order to take private lessons, students must be enrolled in group classes as well. In order to take chamber music, students must be enrolled in private lessons. [You should reregister for the program at the start of every fall semester](#) (fall to spring registration automatically rolls over). Please note that it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to provide written notice to the VTSP director if your child withdraws from the program at any time after the start of class or after the fall semester.

**Scholarships:** Need-based scholarships are available for group classes. If you would like to be considered for a scholarship, contact [stringproject@vt.edu](mailto:stringproject@vt.edu) after completing registration. Once on a scholarship, at the start of each new school year, contact the director to let them know that your child would like to continue receiving a scholarship.

**Payment:** Payments are due on the first day of class each semester. You should **bring cash (exact change only), a personal check, or a domestic money order** (no international or foreign money orders). **We are working on an online payment option. You will be notified when this is available.** **Checks and money orders should be made out to "Treasurer of Virginia Tech" with Virginia Tech String Project in the memo line. We cannot accept a check or money order made out to any other name.** You may send the payment inside an envelope with your child's name on the outside with your child to class, OR you can bring the payment yourself. If your child will be absent on the collection day, let the director know, and we will make other arrangements for collection. **If your child withdraws from the program after payments have been collected for the semester, a refund will not be issued.**

#### **Payment breakdowns:**

String Project group class costs \$80

String Project group class + private lessons costs \$280

String Project group class + private lessons + chamber music class costs \$340

Chamber music class only costs \$60

Adult string ensemble costs \$60

If you have a scholarship for group class and have questions about your total, please let us know. If you have multiple children in the program, you can add up the total amount and pay with one check, money order, or lump sum of cash.

## **Violin, Viola, Cello, Bass Classes and Private Lessons**

Beginner Class: for beginning 1st year students, Tuesdays AND Thursdays, **5:30-6:25pm, room 162, Squires Student Center** at Virginia Tech, 290 College Ave.

Beginner Class Belle Heth Location: for beginning 1st year students, Tuesdays AND Thursdays, **3:20-4:15**, Belle Heth Music Room, 151 George Street, Radford, VA.

Adult String Ensemble: for students beginning their 2nd year of study, Wednesdays **11:45am-12:40pm, room 240, Squires Student Center** at Virginia Tech, 290 College Ave.

String Ensemble: for students beginning their 2nd year of study, Tuesdays AND Thursdays, **5-5:55pm, room 243, Squires Student Center** at Virginia Tech, 290 College Ave.

String Sinfonia: for students beginning 3 or more years of study, Tuesdays AND Thursdays, **6:30-7:25pm, room 162, Squires Student Center** at Virginia Tech, 290 College Ave.

Youth Orchestra: *by audition only*\* for students beginning 4 or more years of study, 6-6:55pm, Tuesdays AND Thursdays, room 243, Squires Student Center at Virginia Tech, 290 College Ave.

Chamber Music: *by audition only*\* for students beginning 4 or more years of study **and enrolled in private lessons**, time and room TBA, Squires Student Center at Virginia Tech, 290 College Ave.

\*Youth orchestra/chamber music auditions will be held on the first day of class each fall semester. New and returning students audition every year. This helps encourage practice and allows teachers to assess student learning and understanding in a one-on-one setting. Please have a talk with your student about auditions ahead of time so that they understand this is not a competitive audition but an opportunity for teachers to find the best learning situation for them based on their skill level. If a student in Sinfonia auditions but needs more learning support before entering Youth Orchestra, they will continue in Sinfonia and can re-audition the following year. Please note that having previously played in Youth Orchestra does not guarantee that a student remains there every year. It would be *very rare* for a student to move from Youth Orchestra to Sinfonia, but not impossible. Please know that we will always keep the best interest of the child in mind during auditions, and we are ethically bound to make sure they are in the best possible learning environment to develop as a musician. We appreciate your confidence in our expert judgment and discretion in these matters.

**Private Lessons:** Are first come first serve with limited availability. A time will be scheduled between 10am and 6pm on Sundays.

VTSP will continue using **MyMusicStaff** to assist with scheduling, communication, attendance, and practice assignments for private lessons and bowed strings group classes. **Using MyMusicStaff is optional for students in group classes (but encouraged) and required for students in chamber music and private lessons.**

We will be taking advantage of the following features:

- Optional email and/or text reminders of lesson date/time/location.
- Access to a VTSP calendar showing every class and event your child is involved in.
- Optional practice log to keep track of what your student is practicing and for how long.
- Rescheduling private lessons in the event of a family emergency: if you need to miss one, you will be able to choose an empty slot on the calendar to make it up.
- Parents and students can view any notes taken during their class/lesson, so you always know what we are working on!
- Attendance records for classes and events.
- Printable PDFs of repertoire will be stored in the portal, so you always have access to one to practice with if your paper copy goes missing.

Portal accessibility can be located [here](#). Each family will receive an email to create a unique username and password to access your students' records.

# Guitar Classes

**Orange Guitar:** for beginning 1st year students, meets Mondays AND Wednesdays, **5:30-6:25pm**, in room 204/205, in Henderson Hall at Virginia Tech, 195 Alumni Mall.

**Maroon Guitar:** for students beginning their 2nd year of study, meets Mondays AND Wednesdays, **6:30-7:25pm**, in **room 324**, in Henderson Hall at Virginia Tech, 195 Alumni Mall.

**Hokie Stone Guitar:** for students beginning 3+ years of study, meets Mondays AND Wednesdays, **6:30-7:25pm**, in room 204/205, in Henderson Hall at Virginia Tech, 195 Alumni Mall.

Materials for all guitar classes can be found at this link:

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cjja-mBCIJOMYxBh589\\_vXi689OdmDHe?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1cjja-mBCIJOMYxBh589_vXi689OdmDHe?usp=sharing)

## Schedule

**VT\* location schedule for bowed strings:**

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aTytA6zFmFTXD5xxYLptM4tQNRlaBpEf/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aTytA6zFmFTXD5xxYLptM4tQNRlaBpEf/view?usp=drive_link)

**VT\* location guitar schedule:**

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/15UKMuy2lp3lVQ8oyHv2WWkWjzymJ6Mjc/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/15UKMuy2lp3lVQ8oyHv2WWkWjzymJ6Mjc/view?usp=drive_link)

\*Note that we follow VT and Montgomery County Public Schools scheduled breaks.

**Radford at Belle Heth\* location schedule:**

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sGAfulQ4EccAF7Uj7U-Bgu7hSup1NtMT/view?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sGAfulQ4EccAF7Uj7U-Bgu7hSup1NtMT/view?usp=drive_link)

\*Note that we follow VT and Radford City Schools scheduled breaks.

## Concerts

Solo recitals for students enrolled in private lessons: **Dec. 9th, 6pm; May 3rd, 5pm;** Squires Recital Salon

Fall Group Concert, **Dec. 7th, 3pm**, all students (guitar + bowed strings), Moss Arts Center

Spring Group Concert: **May 7th, 7pm**, all students (guitar + bowed strings), Moss Arts Center

Sinkland Farms Performance: **Oct. 11th, 11am**, (Groups TBD), Sinkland Farms  
 Christiansburg Farmer's Market Performance: **Oct. 23rd, time TBD** (Groups TBD)

Steppin' Out Festival 2026, **TBA**, open to students enrolled in summer private lessons and/or the summer intensive camp, Steppin' Out Community Stage

We will periodically perform the national anthem at local sporting events. Information about these optional performances will be shared via email as soon as it is available. We will also periodically perform outreach concerts at local places such as the farmers markets, retirement homes, etc. Information about these performances will be shared via email as soon as it is available.

## **Attendance Policy and Cancellation Policies**

**Group classes:** Classes are cumulative, with each one reinforcing and building on the techniques presented previously. The orchestra can only be as strong as the sum of its members, and since all of the students will learn and perform together, we ask that everyone participate equally. **This means that both classes each week are required**, with natural exceptions for family matters, school field trips, or illnesses. **If a student needs to miss a class, please notify the VTSP director via email** at [stringproject@vt.edu](mailto:stringproject@vt.edu). Multiple absences due to other extracurricular activity commitments will result in a discussion between the program director and parent about a path forward for successful VTSP participation.

**Students must have at least 75% attendance at the end of the year to automatically move into the next class. Students with under 75% attendance will be asked to demonstrate appropriate skills to teachers in order to move on. Students unable to demonstrate the necessary skills will be asked to remain in the same class the following year. We will always keep the best interest of the child in mind during this process, as we are ethically bound to make sure they are in the best possible learning environment to develop as a musician.**

**Private lessons:** A limited number of 30-minute private lessons are available this year. Lessons are taught by a string project student teacher. In order to take private lessons, students must be enrolled in group classes. **If you know you will miss a lesson in advance, give your teacher at least 24 hours notice. DO NOT SEND AN ILL CHILD FOR A LESSON.** If your child has had a fever (100.4 degrees) in the previous 24 hours of a lesson, let the teacher know that you need to cancel. If the student misses a lesson, a makeup lesson will only be available under special circumstances, such as family emergencies, and at the discretion of the teacher and VTSP director. If a teacher must miss a lesson, it will be rescheduled at a time that works for both parties. Parents are encouraged to attend lessons to take notes and to better support home practice.

VTSP follows MCPS' (VT classes) and RCS' (Belle Heth classes) inclement weather policies. When the public schools are closed or have early release due to poor weather-related conditions, we will not hold

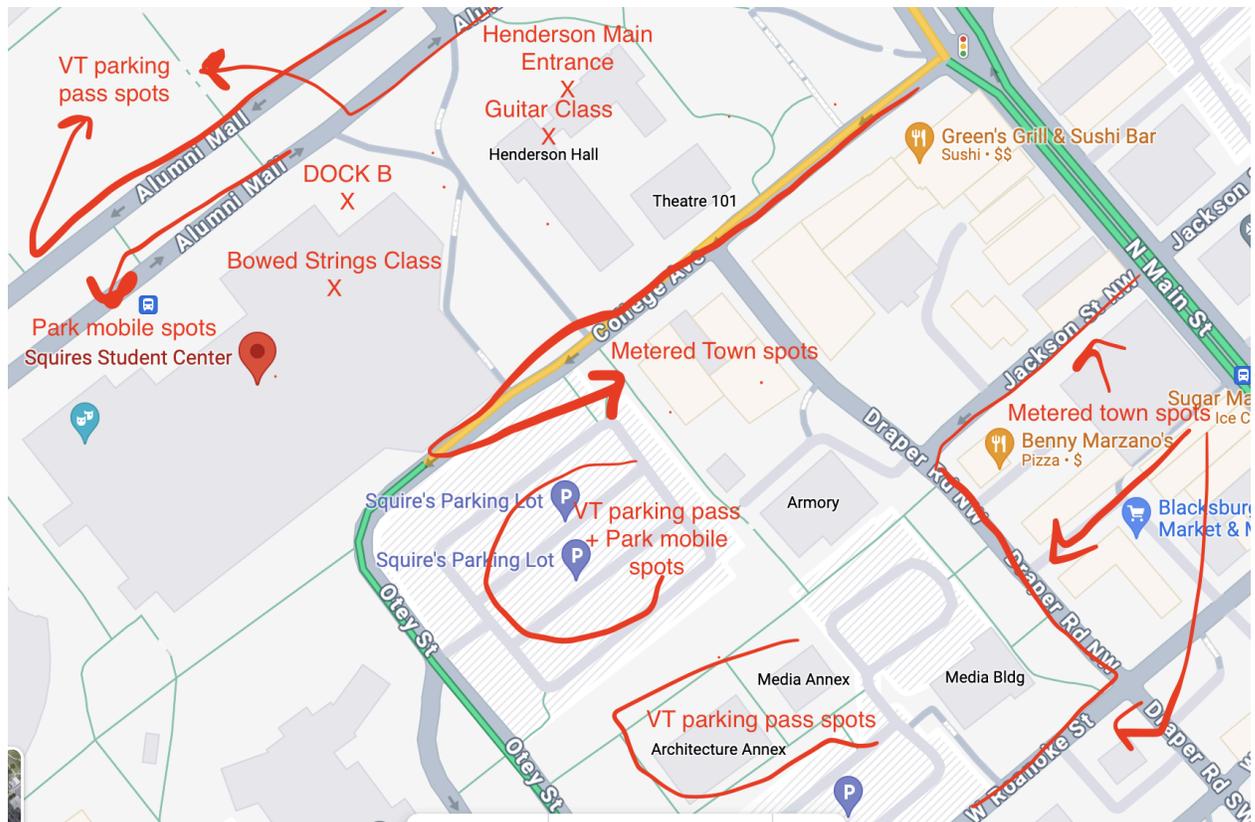
classes. We will hold classes on their normal schedule if schools are simply delayed. Parents will be notified of all weather-related cancellations via email and Facebook.

# Parking

The following parking options are available for VTSP VT location families:

- An evening-only pass is available for \$45 per semester.  
<https://parking.vt.edu/permits.html>
- Some metered parking is available in the Squires Student Center lot.
- Some nearby metered town parking is available.
- Parking through the ParkMobile app is available for \$2.30 per hour.

<https://parking.vt.edu/parking/parkmobile.html>



# Drop Off/Pick Up Bowed Strings @VT

The university mandates strict chaperone policies for minors on campus. **Please read this section carefully.** To opt out of the below drop-off and pick-up procedures, allowing your student to come and go to classes on their own, [you must fill out this form](#) and return it to the VTSP director. Your child cannot be unsupervised at drop-off and pick-up until this form has been received.

A student can be dropped off and picked up from their classroom by a parent or guardian. The parent or guardian is also certainly welcome to stay and observe the class as well (many beginner class parents are doing this already!).

Students can be dropped off at dock B on the Alumni Mall side of the building with a VTSP staff member who will walk them to class.

5:00pm start time: 4:45-4:55pm drop-off window

5:30pm start time: 5:15-5:25pm drop-off window

6:00pm start time: 5:45-5:55pm drop-off window

6:30pm start time: 6:15-6:25pm drop-off window

This will allow time for the students to be dropped off and walk to their class on time. At the end of class, students being picked up will walk with a VTSP staff member outside to meet their ride at dock B on the Alumni Mall side of the building. **Please be prompt with pick up so that VTSP teachers can get to their next class on time.**

5:55pm end time: 6:00-6:05pm pick-up window

6:25pm end time: 6:30-6:35pm pick-up window

6:55pm end time: 7:00-7:05pm pick-up window

7:25pm end time: 7:30-7:35pm pick-up window

**If you arrive late or early, you must accompany the child into class yourself.**

Please do not drop your child off by themselves or have them enter the building through any other door (unless they are with you).

## Drop Off/Pick Up Private Lessons and Chamber Music

The student should be brought to and picked up from the lesson room by the parent/guardian. Parents are encouraged to sit in on the lesson, but not required. DO NOT drop off your child by themselves ([unless you've turned in the release form](#)). Please be prompt with pick up, but know that if you are running late, the child will wait for you in the lesson room while the next lesson starts.

## Drop Off/Pick Up Bowed Strings @Radford

Students will walk directly from their classroom to the music room when called over by the loudspeaker. Students joining from homeschool or Dalton Middle should check in at the front office and walk to the music room. Parents/guardians should be out front for pickup at **4:15pm** sharp. Do not wait in the tutoring line; pull around those cars OR park in the lot to collect your student. **DO NOT BE LATE.** Our teachers need to transfer the students to your care immediately after class ends so that they can return to Blacksburg to teach.

## Drop Off/Pick Up Guitar @VT

A student can be dropped off and picked up from their classroom by a parent or guardian. The parent or guardian is also certainly welcome to stay and observe the class as well (this is encouraged).

Students can be dropped off at the main entrance to Henderson Hall (on the Alumni Mall side) with a VTSP staff member who will walk them to class (5:15-5:25pm drop-off time for the first hour and 6:20-6:25pm drop-off time for the second hour). This will allow time for the students to be dropped off and walk to their class on time. At the end of class, students being picked up will walk with a VTSP staff member outside to meet their ride at the same entrance where we are doing drop-off (pickup for the first hour is 6:30-6:35pm and 7:30-7:35pm for the second hour). **Please be prompt with pick up so that VTSP teachers can get to their next class on time.**

**If you arrive late or early, you must accompany the child into class yourself.** Please do not drop your child off by themselves or have them enter the building through any other door (unless they are with you).

## Instrument Rental, Care, and Supplies

Having a quality and properly sized instrument is of great importance for string playing. Children need fractional-sized instruments that are smaller than full-size instruments. This allows them to play in a healthy and successful way (playing on an instrument that is too big can cause serious physical health problems!) Instrument size can make or break your learning experience. **We do not recommend purchasing an instrument until your child has grown into a full-size instrument and demonstrated a commitment to music.** Never switch to a larger instrument without a VTSP teacher's go-ahead. Never buy an instrument without first showing it to a VTSP staff member or teacher. **WE DO NOT RECOMMEND BUYING AN INSTRUMENT FROM Amazon, TEMU, or eBay.**

VTSP does not provide instruments to students in an effort to keep costs low. Rentals can be acquired through a local music store, [Rocket Music](https://www.rocketmusic.net). They have the correct size bowed string instruments, 3/4 size guitars (younger kids/petite teens and adults will need this size), and full size guitars for rent. Email or call Rocket Music to schedule a 15-minute fitting. Appointments are recommended; call before you go.

[www.rocketmusic.net](https://www.rocketmusic.net)

[greg@rocketmusic.net](mailto:greg@rocketmusic.net)

1308 N. Main St., Blacksburg VA 24060

(540) 961-7655

**Never attempt at home repairs.** If your child's string breaks, contact Rocket Music to purchase a new string as soon as possible.

**At home, instruments should be kept in a safe place**, in their cases while not being played, and at a moderate temperature. **Don't leave your instrument in the car, near an AC unit, or near a heater.** We recommend purchasing a wire music stand for at-home practicing. You will also need a tuner or tuning app.

**Bowed Strings:** We use the progressive Essential Elements books for bowed strings in our classes, and teachers will notify you when it is time to purchase a new book. Books can be purchased at Rocket Music or online. Teachers may also assign additional solo pieces outside of the Essential Elements books. All classes will learn several string orchestra pieces each semester, and copies of this music are included in program tuition.

**Guitar:** Teachers will notify you of any necessary book purchases.

# Practice Expectations and Parent Involvement

We have all heard the old adage “practice makes perfect.” Here at VTSP, we are not striving for unattainable perfection, but know that **practice makes permanent!** If students practice the techniques and skills learned in class regularly at home, they will develop into confident, polished, and healthy performers. We encourage students to practice every day at home. Numerous studies have shown that short bursts of focused practice repeated on a regular basis are much more effective, enjoyable, and sustainable than one or two longer sessions over the weekend. Students in more advanced classes are naturally expected to increase their practice time as the musical level of difficulty increases. Teachers will provide clear practice expectations and goals on a weekly basis.

Parental involvement and positive reinforcement at home are both critical steps to student development. What can busy parents do to encourage the development of a love of practice? We welcome all parents to watch classes, take notes, and ask questions of our staff and teachers. Schedule practice time into the day, write it on the family calendar, and commit to it. Set aside a special space in your home for your child’s instrument practice. Keep the instrument and music in a highly visible place so practicing is never forgotten. Sense when a practice session is over. Encourage them on a daily basis, listen to music of all styles together, and take them to area concerts! We offer periodic parent workshops and will notify you of these via email and Facebook.

Parent/guardian volunteers are always welcome and needed for various tasks such as room setup, tuning, ushers for concerts, etc. Please email the VTSP director at [stringproject@vt.edu](mailto:stringproject@vt.edu) if you are interested in being a parent/guardian volunteer, and THANK YOU!

We strive to make VTSP an affordable learning option for all members of the community. If you feel called to make a donation to cover the cost of tuition for a family in need, please let us know. If your workplace or small business is interested in acting as a program or concert sponsor, we’d love to connect with you to discuss how they can support VTSP and promote their business at the same time.

## Tuning

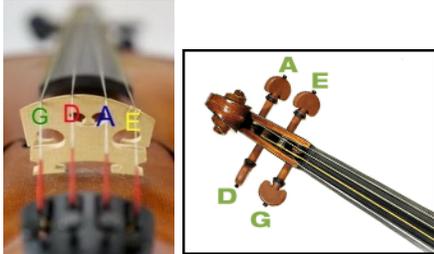
The parent should learn first and then help the student learn. Every child is different; some will take to tuning and be quite independent, while others may rely solely on the adult at home to tune their instrument. Remember, the worst-case scenario for home tuning is that a string breaks, and that is not the end of the world! This happens if you turn the peg too far, tightening the string so much that it pops. Strings can easily be replaced, and once one breaks, you most likely won’t ever break another! Take a moment to watch the tuning video of your child’s instrument below before attempting to tune it.

Tuning apps: Ins Tuner (basic version is free), Tunable (\$5), Pano Tuner (free), Tuner Lite by Plascore (apple only, free), ClearTune (\$3.99), and Tuna Pitch (\$2.99)

Tuners (some might include a metronome): any Korg brand tuner (\$14-\$25) and any Shar brand tuner (\$10-\$20)

**Violin:** Tuning video [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4\\_LPOiITXas](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4_LPOiITXas)

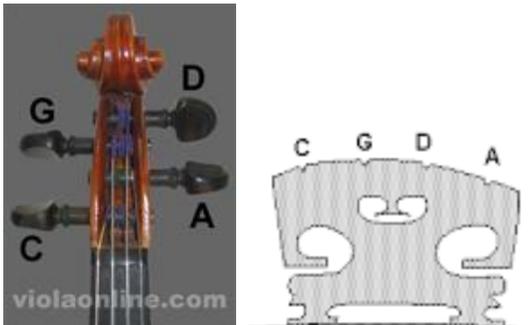
The strings of the violin are tuned in 5ths and are the notes G, D, A, E.



**Viola and Cello:** Tuning videos <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aMU3-tt3n6Y> (viola)

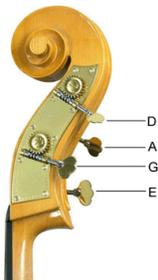
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1H4mgY\\_izi0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1H4mgY_izi0) (cello)

The strings of the viola and cello are tuned in 5ths and are the notes C, G, D, A.



**Bass:** Tuning video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUDwlwfMk5I&t=210s>

The strings of the bass are tuned in 4ths and are the notes E, A, D, G



**Guitar:** Guitar Tuning Video [How To Tune Your Guitar - Beginner Guitar Lesson #6](#)



## Concert Etiquette

At the end of each semester, our students get to showcase their music and progress in the form of a concert. It is truly a remarkable celebration of their work, and the entire community is invited. Parent emails with specific information will be sent as concerts approach. **We ask that all students look nice and dress in clothing conducive to performing on their instrument. Skirts and dresses should reach the knee or be lower in length. Keep in mind that your child will be performing on a raised stage when you consider skirt and dress length.** In an effort to build a sense of community among all of our string players and out of respect for the hard work and commitment involved in preparing for the concert, we ask that all students stay for the entirety of the performance. We understand busy schedules and will always endeavor to keep our concerts at a reasonable length. We want all of our students to have a large and enthusiastic crowd of their parents, friends, and peers! Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

## Other Helpful Information

### Gift Ideas for String Players

Set of extra strings (Thomastik Dominant strings are fine for most instruments)

Rosin: Hill dark or Hill light

Mute: Tourte

Cellists: Endpin Anchor

Tuning fork: A-440 with case

Electronic Tuner or App

Identification tag for case

Flash cards for note reading

Nice tote bag to carry music

Lint-free cloth to protect and wipe off instrument

Tickets to hear a concert

Wire music stand and carrying case for music and stand

Metronome or metronome app

Personalized stickers (name & phone number) for music

Folder or binder for organizing music

A pencil case with pencils, erasers, and a sharpener

Hill Peg Compound: to put on pegs to keep them from sticking and slipping

### **Gift Ideas for Guitar:**

Clip On Tuner (snarks are great but there are many others)

Capo (Kysers work great and they aren't over priced)

Guitar Picks

Extra Guitar Strings

-We personally love to use Elixir Strings. They are a little more expensive but they last way longer because of the coating on the strings.

-If your fingers hurt often, try using D'Addario Folk Strings. They are nylon but have a ball end so that they can fit any guitar [More info here on those](#)

Guitar Stand for when you aren't using it. They fall over a lot easier than you may think.

Wire music stand and carrying case for music and stand

Metronome or metronome app

Personalized stickers (name & phone number) for music

Folder or binder for organizing music

A pencil case with pencils, erasers, and a sharpener

### **Resources**

Rocket Music

[www.rocketmusic.net](http://www.rocketmusic.net)

[greg@rocketmusic.net](mailto:greg@rocketmusic.net)

1308 N. Main St., Blacksburg VA 24060

(540) 961-7655

SHAR Products – Strings, supplies music, books, Suzuki materials, instruments, etc.; everything for strings

sharmusic.com

(1- 800-248-SHAR)

D'Addario Guitar Products- <https://www.daddario.com/products/guitar/>

Games: Apps such as Rhythm Quiz, Note Squish, Flashnote, and Rhythm Solitaire are fun and can sharpen musical skills. There are numerous online games and many orchestras have educational games and information on their websites.

### **Books**

The Inner Game of Music, Barry Green and W. Timothy Gallwey

Stories of Composers for Young Musicians, Catherine Kendall

More Stories of Composers for Young Musicians, Catherine Kendall

The Talent Code, Unlocking the Secret of Skill in Sport, Art, Music, Math and Just About Anything,

Daniel Coyle

Nurtured by Love, Shinichi Suzuki