



OLYMPIC CELLO WORKOUT 7 EXERCISES TO PUT YOU IN GOLD MEDAL CONTENTION

Speed Endurance Strength

Make maximum use of a minimum amount of practice time.

I recently put together a group of exercises I do to keep in shape into a 7 step workout. In each exercise you will find Levels 1-3. Start with Level 1 and move up a level as soon as you can play the exercise perfectly. You can do these in 15 minutes or spend hours working at different variations.

[Lesson 1: Long Tones](#)

[Lesson 2: Pulsing](#)

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I'll keep you up-to-date on new lessons and other additions to the web site.

Your e-mail address:

WARNING: Pay attention to fatigue and especially to pain. It's good to strengthen but don't push yourself beyond what is reasonable for your level of playing and your physical strength. Some of these exercises are very demanding, they will stress your technique, your hands, arms, etc. Use your discretion and protect your body.

Note: Much of what is here was taught to me by one of the many different cello teachers I've had. Special thanks to all the great people I've been lucky to work with who have contributed to this collection especially Robert Gardner, Zara Nelsova, and Ron Leonard.

You can check in to see what I'm up to with these exercises. I'll post every once in a while. I'll also post any good ideas you guys come up with, so if you come across something that seems helpful send it to me.

Adobe Acrobat Version: I have also posted an [Adobe Acrobat version](#) of the lessons which will you to print nicely a 25 page booklet. Many programs install the Adobe Acrobat Reader so you may have it already on your hard drive. If not click [here](#) for the free Reader.

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OLYMPIC CELLO WORKOUT LONG TONES

This is a standard exercise for wind players to develop a beautiful, full sound. The incredible Zara Nelsova taught me this one. Her father was a flute player.

- Build Endurance
- Aid Tone Production

PREPARATION	DESCRIPTION
Metronome Quarter note=60 Use <u>open "G"</u> String for this exercise.	In this exercise, all levels, you will be playing the open "g" string. Sounds kind of simple but it's not quite so easy. Start with Level 1 and try to do all the exercises indicated. Do 2-4 cycles (down bow + up bow) per exercise. Play as close to the bridge as possible without creating a <i>sul pont</i> sound. Concentrate on creating a solid tone without wavering. Your left hand can be in a relaxed position on the instrument or in your lap.

LEVEL 1

8-10 clicks per bow

1. Consistent tone at *forte* on both DOWN and UP bows.



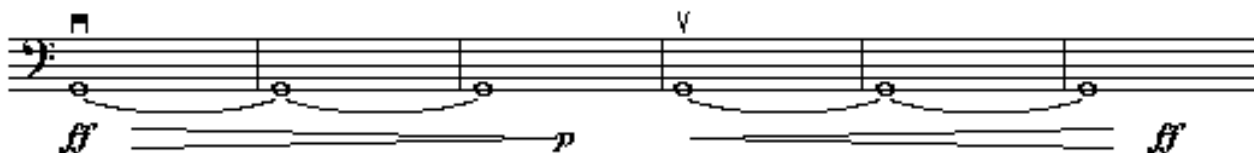
2. Down bow: crescendo to mid-bow, decrescendo to tip. Up bow: cresc. to *forte* mid-bow and decresc. to frog.



3. Down bow: *piano* crescendo to *forte* at tip. Up bow: *forte* at tip, decrescendo to *piano* at frog.



4. Down bow: start *forte* and decrescendo to tip. Up bow: start *piano* and crescendo to the frog.



LEVEL 2

14-16 clicks per bow

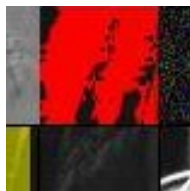
LEVEL 3

20-25 clicks per bow

Further Study: Try this on other open strings. Use stopped notes too. The narrower the string and the shorter the string length the more difficult the exercise is to execute.

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OLYMPIC CELLO WORKOUT PULSING EXERCISE

This exercise is also for *legato* as well for perfecting bow usage.

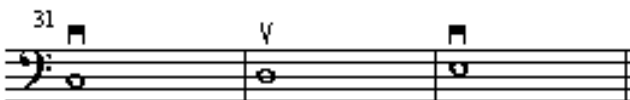
- Beautiful *legato* sound
- Bow usage

PREPARATION	DESCRIPTION
Metronome at QUARTER NOTE =60 Pick any scale to use.	Start by playing 4 beats to a bow. Pulse the right hand playing the rhythms indicated. Do this correctly by never stopping the bow. As the string length shorten you will need to implement less emphatic pulsing by the right hand. Use whatever fingering you're most comfortable with.

LEVEL 1

One octave of any scale.

*think
this:*



*but
play:*



continue up scale in same manner

LEVEL 2

2 octaves

*still
thinking
legato try
these new
rhythms:*



continue up scale (2 octaves) in same manner

LEVEL 3

3 or more octaves

*more
complex
rhythms:*



Further Study:

*still
more
difficult:*



Try starting with faster "pulses" and ending each bow stroke with the slower divisions. Use this on any *legato* passage you might be working on. Subdivide each note into some pulsing rhythms that accelerate before the bow change.

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OLYMPIC CELLO WORKOUT COORDINATION

I've been looking for a way to constantly challenge coordination of L and R hands. It seems the only way to constantly throw myself "curves" in terms of bowings, rhythms and L hand patterns.

- Coordination between left and right hands
- Endurance

PREPARATION	DESCRIPTION
Metronome variable. Any scale: use 3rds, 6ths or octaves.	Play this exercise loudly (<i>fortissimo</i>) and off the string. When executing the different bowings play <u>on</u> the string but still loud.

LEVEL 1

Quarter note =70-80

1-2 octaves, use only 6ths. Play both off and on the string, always loud.

Pattern
1:

The image shows six staves of musical notation for a cello exercise. Each staff begins with a bass clef. The first five staves contain continuous eighth-note patterns. The first staff has a single eighth note per beat. The second staff has two eighth notes per beat. The third staff has four eighth notes per beat. The fourth staff has eighth notes beamed in pairs. The fifth staff has eighth notes beamed in groups of four. The sixth staff continues with eighth notes beamed in groups of four, ending with a whole rest.

pattern 1, four beats per position

Do the same exercise (same scale, interval, number of octaves) using the following patterns:

Pattern 2:

A single staff of musical notation starting with a bass clef, containing a continuous eighth-note pattern with two eighth notes per beat.

Pattern 3:

A single staff of musical notation starting with a bass clef, containing a continuous eighth-note pattern with four eighth notes per beat.

Pattern 4:

A single staff of musical notation starting with a bass clef, containing a continuous eighth-note pattern with eighth notes beamed in groups of four.

LEVEL 2

Quarter note=90-100

range: 2 octaves
add 3rds or octaves

At Level 2 the exercise moves faster, you will spend two beats on each interval instead of 4. First play all of Level 1 at this new tempo and then try this faster moving version. .



example: pattern 1

Do this on all four patterns



example: pattern 4, 2 beats per position

Try the following different bowings but start at a slower tempo, Quarter note=60-70
Although it's printed here moving 1 beat per position continue playing 2 beats per position for Level 2.



Continue up scale (two octaves) using this bowing. Remember to start at a slower tempo and to play these exercises on the string, not off.



pattern 2 with bowing

Patterns 3 & 4 are shown here with 2 different bowing possibilities. There are others for Patterns 1 & 2, can you figure them out?



pattern 3 with bowing



pattern 3 with another bowing, shown here descending



pattern 4



pattern 4, alternative bowing, descending

LEVEL 3

Half note=60-70

Play all of the above patterns at this faster tempo and now play one beat per position. Try different scales.



pattern 1 in Db major

Different intervals:

Try all the patterns in a new key, with different intervals.



pattern 1, in 3rds, in Eb major



pattern 1, octaves, Eb major

Remember to play loudly. Playing loudly will demand that you have the left hand patterns worked out as well as the bowings and the string x-ings.

Work up the bowings introduced in Level 2 to the Level 3 tempo playing on the string. Try to add 4ths (careful to play augmented 4th when demanded by scale.)

Notes: Time your shifts precisely. This is a tiring exercise. Playing this loud is difficult to keep up so take breaks to collect yourself and rest your arms/fingers.

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OLYMPIC CELLO WORKOUT STRING X-INGS

This develops both string x-ings and a firm knowledge of where notes are on the fingerboard.

- Speed and coordination across strings.
- Endurance

PREPARATION	DESCRIPTION
Metronome variable. Any scale.	Pick any scale and play across the fingerboard on 3 strings to start. Play only 3 notes per position--no open strings. Make up your own rhythmic patterns and bowings. I've included a basic version that I work off of.

LEVEL 1

Quarter note=90

Play the exercise in 8th notes up to 4th position only, limit yourself to C major or A natural minor.

Starting on the C string play only 3 notes and cross to the next string. After each quarter note shift up on your first finger. As you get more comfortable with the patterns introduce some bowings; variations of two slurred and two separate work well, but use your imagination!

notice that the passage is in C major but you don't have to start on a "c." You may start on any note and continue in any scale.

LEVEL 2

Quarter note=100-120

For Level 2 use any scale you wish and play 8th notes at this faster tempo. Play a full octave of the exercise. When in thumb position never actually use the thumb, only 1-2-3 in these upper positions.

The image displays seven staves of musical notation for a Level 2 exercise. Each staff contains a sequence of eighth notes, starting from a low register and ascending to a high register, covering a full octave. The notes are grouped in pairs, and the overall pattern is a continuous eighth-note scale. The notation is in bass clef.

A full octave range.

The image shows a single staff of musical notation for a 3-string string x-ing exercise in D-flat major. The exercise consists of a sequence of eighth notes, with the first three notes of each pair being played on the same string (x-ing), and the last note of each pair being played on a different string. The pattern is repeated across the staff, ascending and then descending.

example of 3 string string x-ing exercise in Db major. Continue up following the 3 note/string pattern. Descend the same way.

LEVEL 3

Quarter note=100-120

Use all 4 strings now and work your exercise up to an extremely fast tempo (sixteenth notes at tempo marked above). Use alternative scales like half-diminished or diminished scales, modes, etc.

continue pattern up ...

4-string string x-ing exercise. Try this in any key and remember you do not have to start on the tonic of the key.

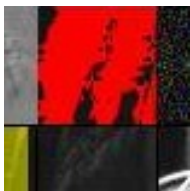
Here's an advanced version of this exercise. The scale is Eb ascending melodic minor, starting on D natural. Try to work this up to the Level 3 tempo indicated above. Experiment with bowings and then do this same exercise using sextuplets.

Eb melodic minor over 4 strings, page 1

Eb melodic minor over 4 strings (continued)

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OLYMPIC CELLO WORKOUT 1-String Scale

Now we'll work up and down the fingerboard.

- Shifting, intonation
- Speed

PREPARATION	DESCRIPTION
Set metronome at tempo indicated for each level. B Major scale on "A" String, 2 octaves.	This deals with shifting and hand position. It can be played on any string and should be practiced on all strings once you have learned the exercise well on the "A" string.

- Shifting
- Intonation within position

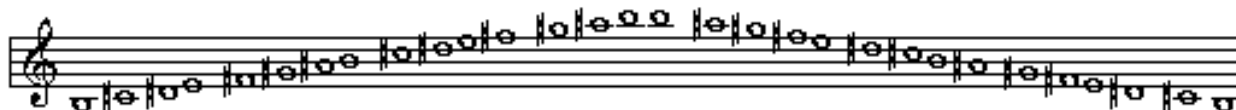


LEVEL 1

Quarter note=90

Play the scale in whole notes, 4 clicks per note, 1 note per bow.

Play with a full sound, no vibrato



Use fingering from above.

Then play the scale in half notes:



Same fingering as above

...quarter notes:



Now play 8th notes, bowing 2 per note, add bowings:



Add the bowings indicated.

LEVEL 2

Quarter note=110-120

Play scale in 8th notes:



Add bowings. There are 4 different bowings suggested here based on groups of 2 bowed, 2 separate. Once you've mastered these come up with your own.



Play position exercise:



Add bowings to this too (same 4 bowing ideas.)



*The following variations speed up the position exercise,
forcing you to shift sooner:*



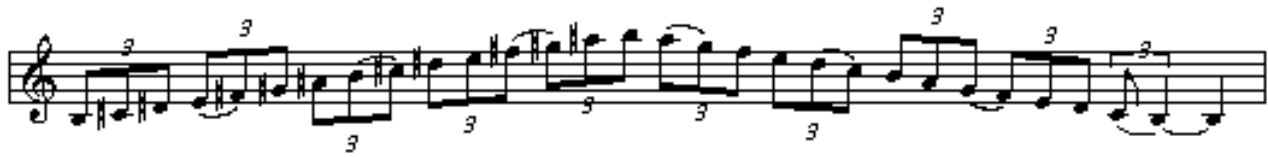
LEVEL 3

(same tempo as Level 2)

Triplets, then add bowings:



This same 2 slurred/2 separate bowing pattern adds a twist when done on triplets!



Play scale in 16th notes and add bowings:



16th note scale with 4 bowing variations.

Play original position exercise in 16th notes. Then try variations:



16 note version of position exercise, variations.

Further Study: Try this on other strings. E major on the "D" string, Ab major on the "G" string, Eb major on the "C" string, for example. Then move to other scale types: minor, half-diminished, etc. Keep trying to develop variations on this and all of the exercises as this will keep your brain engaged which will equal better practicing.

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OLYMPIC CELLO WORKOUT IMPROVISATION

Creative break.

- Use different part of your brain
- Learn to listen to what you're playing in a different way.

PREPARATION	DESCRIPTION
No metronome, no scales. 5 minutes in length	Even if you have no intention of performing improvisation you can benefit from a little each day. You will learn more about yourself, what kind of ideas you gravitate to, what things you play well and vice-versa.

LEVEL 1

Play freely for 1 minute (approx.). Before each improvisation think of a mood or an image you will try to express in your improvisation. After you're done move on to a new image or mood. Anything is possible; anger, darkness, comic. Think of a scene from a movie (love scene, murder), your mood right now, a childhood experience, anything. Just be clear in your thoughts about what the feeling is exactly.

Please, do not judge yourself at all in this exercise. If you are like me and learned the cello in the usual classical model than you have internalized a very judgemental character who informs you whenever you play out of tune, with poor sound, and all the other things we try not to do. Unfortunately this character makes it very hard to improvise because it will constantly tell you what's wrong with what you are doing and make it impossible to continue. Give this character a break, some time off. Just play and try to enjoy your creative process without evaluating the results.

LEVEL 2

Continue as you did in Level 1 but consciously add more dynamic variation, different bowings, stops and starts, varying tempi. Create as much variety as possible. You may divide up the 5 minutes as you wish.

LEVEL 3

Do a series of short improvisations and concentrate on making clear beginnings-middles-and ends. Try to vary how you start; for example, start softly and end with a bang, or the reverse. What should the middle be about? Experiment.

Further Study

Transcribe a "lick" or part of a solo from a recording that you especially like. Make it pretty small to start; half a bar or a bar, not a long, long phrase. And try this *lick* in a different key or just freely improvise using this bit of a solo as a starting point and see where it takes you. Again, this isn't easy so don't be hard on yourself.

As you play listen to what you are doing and when you play something you like try to develop this idea by examining what makes it tick. You may play with the ideas intervallic content (for example maybe the idea is 6th

followed by a major second.) which you try out using different starting notes. Check out the idea's general shape (down then up) and play with that; its rhythm, anything about the idea that can be repeated somewhere else on the fingerboard in some new way.

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OLYMPIC CELLO WORKOUT WARM-DOWN

Calming Final Exercise

- Compare your inner sense of intonation (the pitch you hear in your head) with what you sing.
- Bring your muscles and brain into a more relaxed state.

PREPARATION	DESCRIPTION
Metronome at Quarter note=72	Start with exercise as written and then transpose it to other open strings. Play 4-10 clicks per bow, whatever is comfortable. Find an appropriate range in which to sing.

ALL LEVELS

Bow long open "d" and sing moving quarter notes. Repeat 2 or 3 times and then reverse roles: play the moving notes on your cello and sing the held "d." Be very calm, very relaxed.



Rest your singing voice. Bow the open "D" string and play the moving notes on the "G" string shifting up using a long, relaxed, audible, glissando. Time your gliss to last 2 beats. Play the following exercise moving up a half step every cycle:



Continue up in this manner. A range of one octave is the goal. Start with a fourth (in this case, from "a" up to "d") and progress from there.

Further Study: Move between these two exercises without a break. Also try....

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