

# Care and Feeding of Your Bass Section

*Bob Phillips-Alfred Publishing*

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- I. Recruiting bass players
  - A. Size-(size/gender)
  - B. Instrument appearance
  - C. Cost-(buying/renting)
  - D. Balance of orchestra (10-15%)
  - E. The bass personality or “What are they doing back there?”
  - F. Recruiting process (Now or later) and controlling the process
  - G. Making it attractive- using college and professional resources
- II. Starting in a Heterogeneous Setting
  - A. Size
  - B. Playing set-up
  - C. Stools, bow, and rosin
  - D. Method books (No folds)
  - E. Unison playing/Class pace/Intervals- (What’s the hardest instrument?)
- III. Retaining bass players
  - A. Lack of good instruments
  - B. Lack of practice instruments-(transportation, new rental programs)
  - C. Lack of private teachers
  - D. Lowered expectations of string teachers
  - E. Featuring the bass –alt. styles, chamber music, solos, Georgia syndrome
- IV. Technical Considerations
  - A. Positioning the Bass
    1. Instrument Height
    2. Securing the bass
    3. Stance/sitting
  - B. Bow Hold
    1. French bow
    2. German bow
  - C. Producing a tone (weight vs. length)
    1. String contact
    2. Arm stroke
  - D. Left hand Position
    1. Placement (1,2,4)
    2. Positions-(electric bass)
    3. Shifting
  - E. Tuning
    1. Open strings
    2. 3<sup>rd</sup> position harmonics
  - F. Listening problems
    1. Tuning
    2. Playing in tune
    3. Who leads? Cellos (Baroque, Classical) or Basses (Romantic and beyond)
    4. Attack and anticipating
- V. Suggested Equipment
  - A. Rosin-Pops, Carlsson Swedish, Nymen Swedish, Kolstein Ultra Formulation Supreme
  - B. Strings-Pirastro Flexocor-medium, Thomastik Spirocore-orchestra, Thomastik Rope core-regular, Thomastik Dominant, Savarez Correlli-medium tension
  - C. Resources-Lemur Music Inc. PO Box 1137, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92693,1-800-246-bass. Shar Products
  - D. Organizations- International Society of Bassists, MENC, ASTA

[www.phillipsfiddlers.com](http://www.phillipsfiddlers.com)

## Double Bass Facts

Lawrence P. Hurst, Professor of Double Bass, Indiana University

### Ratio of String Length to Bow Length

Instrument	String Length to Bridge	Bow Length	Ratio of String Length to Bow Length
Violin	12 7/8"	25 3/4"	2 to 1
Viola	14 1/2"	25 3/4"	1.8 to 1
Cello	27 1/2"	24"	.87 to 1
Bass	42"	22 1/2"	.53 to 1

### String Length as a Ratio of Bow Weight

Instrument	String Length	Bow Weight	Grams per Inch
Violin	12 7/8"	58-63 grams	4.5 to 4.89
Viola	14 1/2"	74-74 grams	4.4 to 5.1
Cello	27 1/2"	74-95 grams	2.6 to 3.4
Bass	42"	110-165 grams	2.6 to 3.9

### Width of Hair as a Proportion of String Length

Instrument	String Length	Width of Hair	Ratio of Hair Width to Hair Length
Violin	343mm	10mm	1/32.2
Viola	386mm	11mm	1/35.1
Cello	732mm	12mm	1/61
Bass	1117mm	16mm	1/70

### Distance from the Nut on the D string to the First Semitone D#

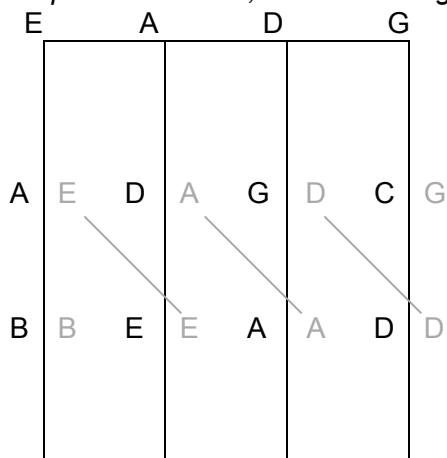
Instrument	Distance from the Nut on the D string to the First Semitone D#
Violin	9/16"
Viola	3/4"
Cello	1 3/8"
Bass	2 1/2"

### Double Bass Harmonic Tuning

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#### Double Bass Third Position.

Stopped pitches in black, harmonics in grey.



4th Finger  
Stopped

1st Finger  
Stopped

4th Finger  
Harmonic

1st Finger  
Harmonic

G string D string A string E string