

Tuning String Instruments with Pegs

Key Concepts

- Readiness: Student can (a) sing/match pitch and (b) determine if sounds are higher/lower than a given pitch (live, recorded, or audiated)
- Pegs must be in good working order
- If an instrument has fine tuners, pegs are generally used for “gross” tuning; fine tuners are used for “fine” tuning (i.e., up to a Major 2nd)
- Loosen pegs first, especially “sticky” pegs
- *Must* make sound *when* turning pegs!
- Turn AND push pegs *at the same time*



Steps for Tuning with Pegs

1. You need to tune to *something* (e.g. piano, pitch pipe, tuner, etc.). Make sure you can audiate the note to which you are tuning.
2. Determine the proper peg to turn by following the string up into the pegbox.
3. With your non-dominant hand, begin plucking the out-of-tune string. *Always* pluck the string when turning the peg to avoid over-tightening and breaking the string.
4. While plucking, use your dominant hand to turn the peg. Make sure that you:
 - a. continue plucking with your non-dominant hand;
 - b. *first loosen the peg* (even if the string is flat);
 - c. continue plucking;
 - d. *while* turning the peg, push it into the pegbox;
 - e. continue plucking;
 - f. *get close* to the pitch; try not to go above the desired pitch.
5. Use the fine tuner to fine tune the string.

Tips

- When sitting, it is easier to tune cello pegs with the endpin pushed all the way in;
- You may need to use your leg to help brace the side of the cello while pushing in the peg;
- Make sure you have enough fine tuner to work with. In other words, if you need to use the pegs, you might as well loosen the fine tuners (most of the way) before tuning with pegs;
- *For pegs that are hard to turn, use a peg compound. Hill Peg Compound is the best!
- *For pegs that are too slippery, apply a stripe or two of chalk along the length of the peg;
- If a peg will not loosen, wrap a washcloth around the peg and then grab the peg with pliers (over the washcloth) for extra leverage. *Always* loosen a stuck peg!
- * You will first need to remove the peg from the pegbox to apply compound or chalk.