

# AFTER THE METHOD BOOK: SEQUENCING INTERMEDIATE BOW-HAND DEVELOPMENT

---

*Jacob M. Dakon, Ph.D.  
February 28, 2020  
University of Kansas  
Lawrence, KS*

# WANT TO FOLLOW ALONG?

---

<http://jacobmdakon.weebly.com/pedagogy.html>

# YEAR 1 METHOD BOOKS

---

- **Most 1st-year method books teach and reinforce:**
  - Bow Hand-Shape (finger placement, relaxed, rounded)
  - Bow lifts, String Crossings
  - Simple-Connected Bow Stroke
  - Staccato Stroke
  - Hooked bowing, Slurs, and Ties
  - Basic dynamic contrast



# YEAR 2 METHOD BOOKS

---

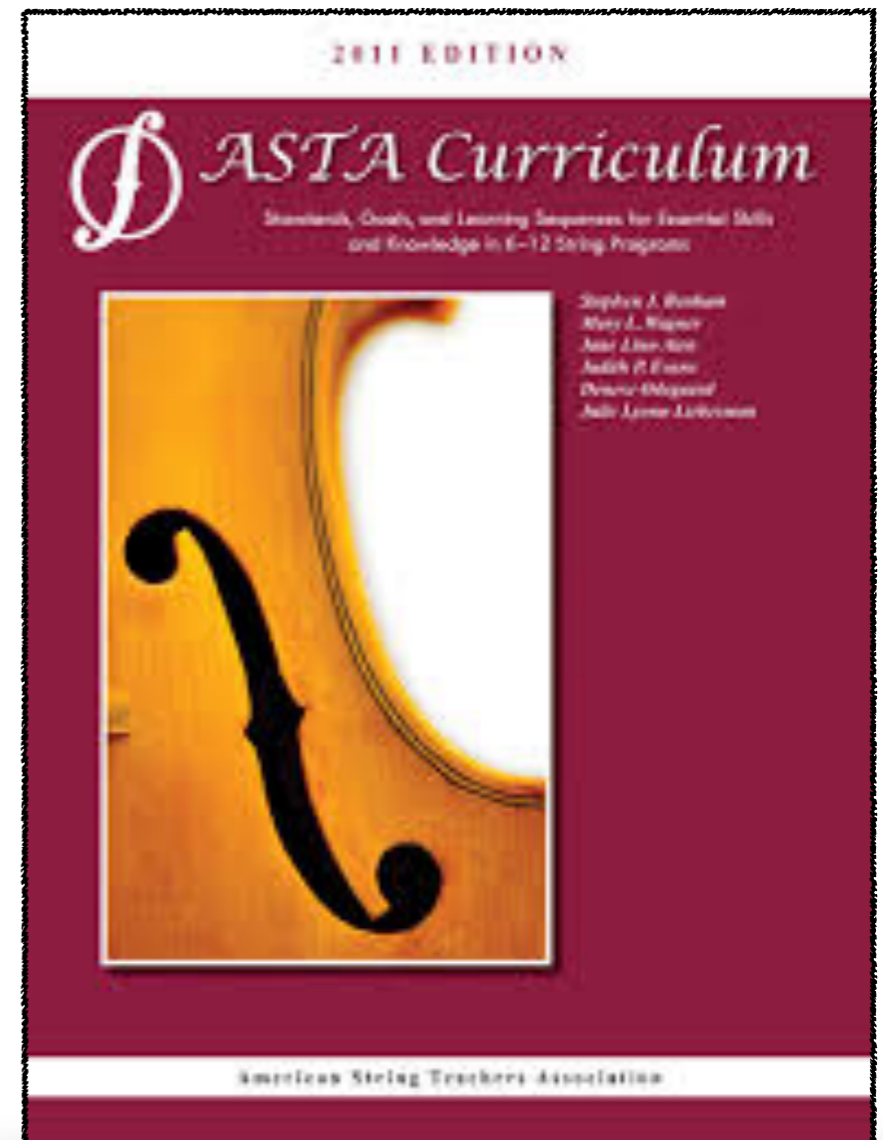
- Most 2nd-year method books teach and reinforce:
  - Varied Dynamic contrasts (mf, mp)
  - More advanced rhythmic patterns (Sixteenth-Note Variations, Triplets, and Syncopation)
  - Accented Détaché, (or Martelé)
  - Brush stroke/spiccato



# WHAT'S MISSING? LET'S CHECK THE ASTA CURRICULUM...

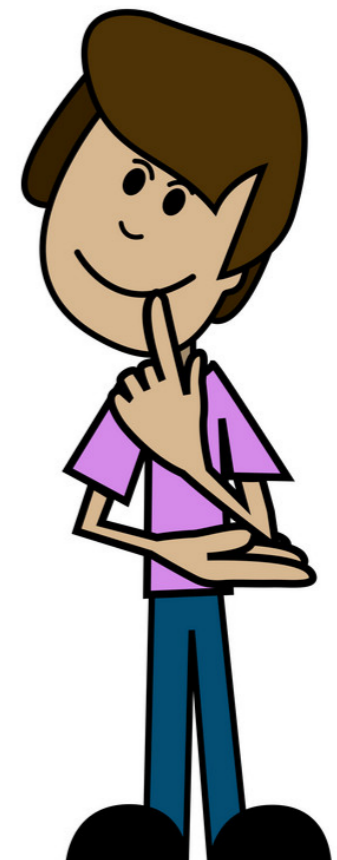
---

- Finger Flexibility
- Tremolo (often taught earlier; review and refine)
- Pulling/pushing a full-bow
- Martele (marked stroke)
- Accented Détaché
- Slurred Staccato
- Portato (a.k.a. Louré)
- Collé (violins/violas only)
- Brush Stroke and Spiccato



# Right-Hand Finger Flexibility

Tremolo  
Pulling/pushing a full-bow  
Accented Détaché  
Slurred Staccato  
Portato (a.k.a. Louré)  
Collé (violins/violas only)  
Brush Stroke and Spiccato



# RIGHT-HAND FINGER FLEXIBILITY (ROLLAND)

---

- When starting a down bow at the balance point (**HOME**),
  - Wrist and knuckles are flat
  - Fingers and thumb are curved
  - Elbow is slightly lower than the wrist
- When starting the up-bow at the upper-half or tip,
  - The wrist raises slightly
  - The fingers extend
- During the direction change at the frog, return the fingers home.
  - The wrist slowly flexes downward returning to the original down-bow position

## W/ LIGHTWEIGHT OBJECT: “TALL FINGERS/SHORT FINGERS” (H&G)

---

- Create a relaxed and curved bow-hand shape on a pencil or straw. Ensure the knuckles are relatively flat.
- Move index, middle, ring, little finger, and thumb from curved flat position into straight relaxed position
- Slowly alternate between straight and curved bow hand-shape position.
- Keep fingers and hand relaxed throughout; wrist may react slightly.
- Variation: Use bow; do the same motion after pronating the hand.
- **OUTCOME:** Explores the range of motion in the fingers; releases any tension in students’ right-hand fingers



## W/ LIGHTWEIGHT OBJECT: THE “FOLLOW THROUGH” (ROLLAND)

---

- Form a bow hold around the bow-like object
- Move the bow straight up toward the ceiling; fully extend right arm.
- “As the arm reaches its limit, move the hand fingers, and bow a little further. Allow the fingers to flex and follow through.”
- Do not grip the bow tightly with the first finger.
- Variation: Transfer motion to the bow
- **OUTCOME:** Isolates movement in the arm, allowing fingers to move the bow independently.

## WITH BOW: “CREATING RESISTANCE” (ROLLAND)

---

- Hold the bow in front of the bow; support the upper third of the bow with the left hand.
- Start with a flat hand and knuckles (i.e., home)
- Pretend to push an up bow, allowing the wrist to raise and fingers to straighten slightly.
- Pretend to pull a down bow, allow the fingers to return to the flattened position (home)
- Variation: Drag the hand over the bow, use friction to initiate wrist flexibility
- **OUTCOME:** The friction between the hand and bow stick allow the wrist and fingers to imitate the flexing motion.

## WITH BOW: “PULL AND PUSH” (H&G)

---

- Form bow-hand-shape at the frog. Hold the upper half with left hand with bow in front of body.
- Push and pull bow with the **left** hand; allow right hand to react (flex) to the motion. Repeat.
- Push and pull bow (flex) with the **right** hand; allow left hand to react. Repeat.
- Repeat motions over left collarbone for violins and violas.
- **OUTCOME:** Students can move the bow with only the flexion and extension of fingers

## WITH BOW: “PENCIL INSIDE OF THE BOW TIP” (ROLLAND)

---

- Hold bow with right hand at the balance point or frog
- Support the tip by inserting a pencil between hair and bow stick.
- Keep the bow hair parallel to the floor
- Pull bow back and forth with the right-hand fingers. Allow hand and wrist to move.
- Increase motion to include détaché stroke.
- **OUTCOME:** Finger flexibility is developed in an authentic bowing situation. Allow for experimentation of different bow lengths.

## WITH INSTRUMENT: “STOP AND FLEX” (H&G)

---

- Review “Creating Resistance” with the bow on the string
- Pull the bow 3 to 4 inches. Stop and flex fingers; push the bow.
- Repeat. Decrease the stopping time gradually.
- **OUTCOME:** Finger flexing is developed in an authentic bowing situation.

## WITH INSTRUMENT: “BALANCE POINT RUB” (H&G)

---

- Create a proper bow-hand shape near the balance point. Place the bow on the string at the balance point.
- Instruct students to make short strokes at the balance point by flexing their right-hand fingers and wrist.
- **OUTCOME:** Preparation for spiccato stroke.

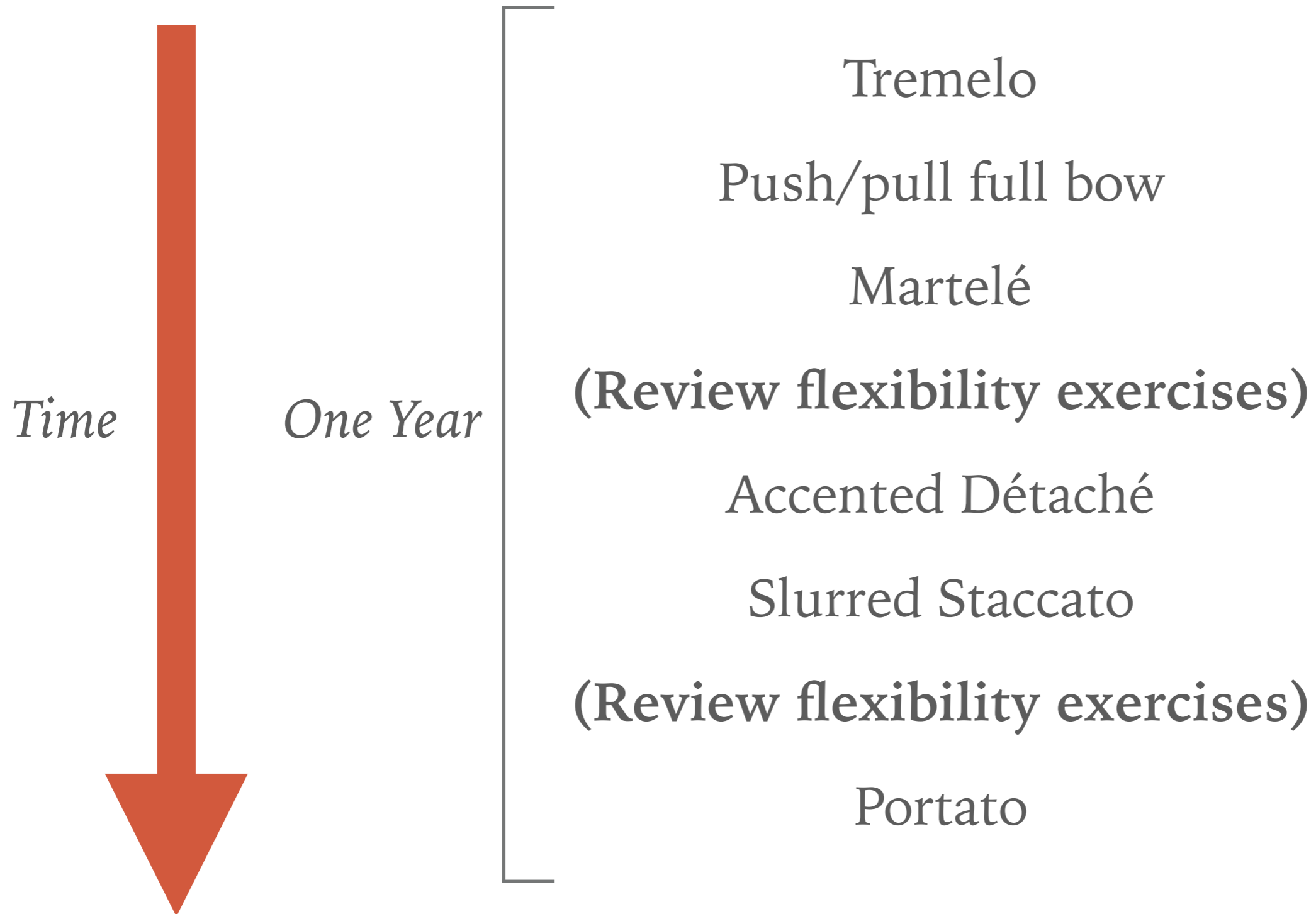
## WITH INSTRUMENT: “LIFT/SET/SETTLE/SCRUB” (H&G)

---

- Raise bow directly above the string (“lift”).
- Set the bow on the string without drawing it (“set”)
- Drop the shoulder, knuckle, and knuckles; flex fingers into traditional bow hand shape (“settle”)
- Using the fingers only, scrub the string (“Scrub”)
- **OUTCOME:** Allows student to practice setting the weight of their arm into string; helps students initiate an articulated bow stroke.

# BACK TO THE CURRICULUM

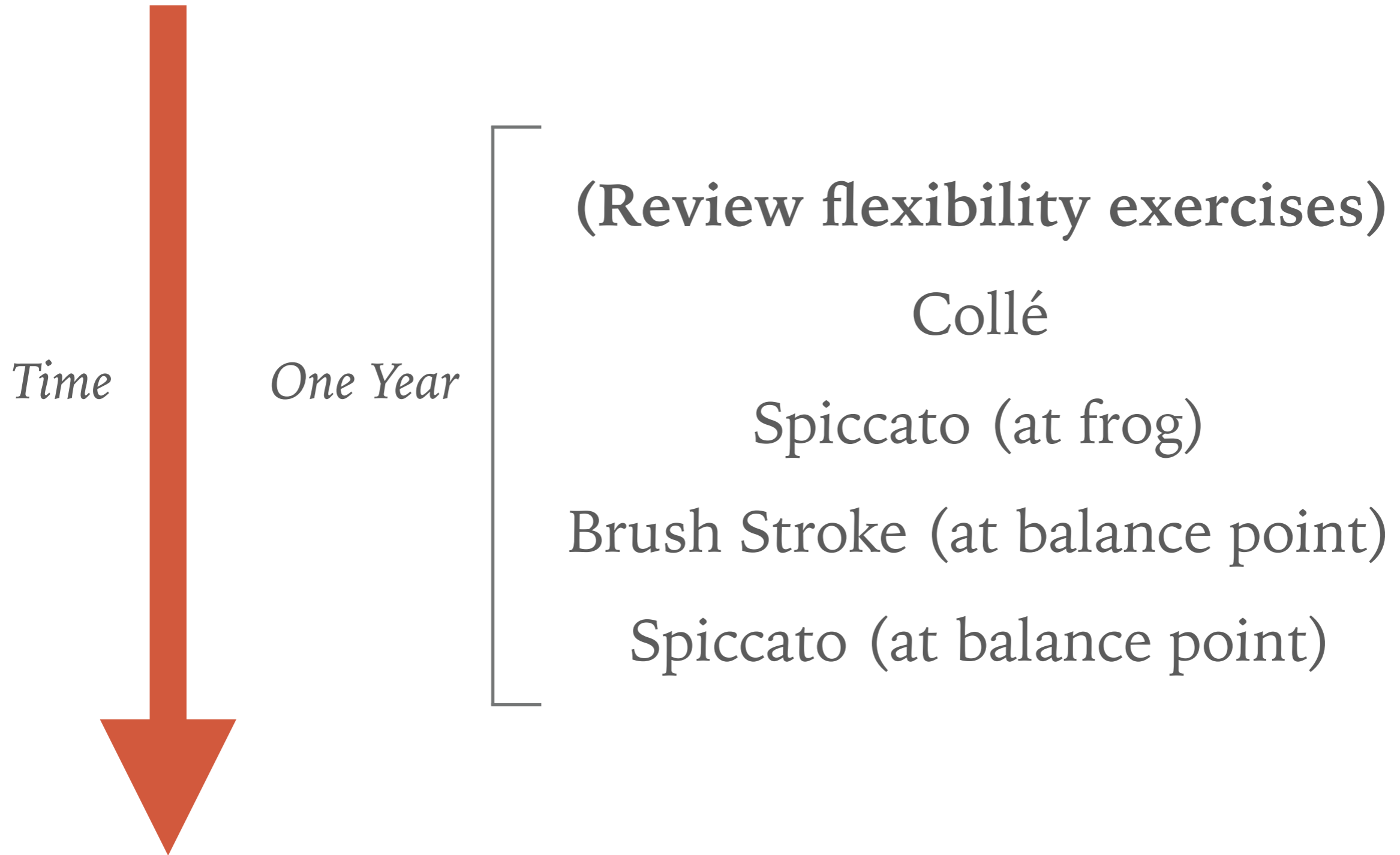
---





# BACK TO THE CURRICULUM

---



# OTHER MEANS OF ASSESSING FLEXIBILITY

---

- Can the student flex with ease at the frog when the bow is stationary?
- Can the student flex the wrist and fingers while pulling  $1/4$ ,  $1/2$ , and  $3/4$  of the bow?
- Do the wrist and fingers adjust slightly when playing simple quarter and double-eighth rhythms?
- Can the student pull a full bow with smooth wrist and finger motion?

# THANK YOU FOR COMING!

---

## QUESTIONS?

(This presentation has been posted to [jacobmdakon@weebly.com](mailto:jacobmdakon@weebly.com))

### Contact Information:

Jacob M. Dakon, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of Music Education  
String Pedagogy  
University of Kansas, School of Music  
Murphy Hall, 1530 Naismith Drive, Office 448C  
Lawrence, Kansas 66045-3103  
[jmdakon@ku.edu](mailto:jmdakon@ku.edu)  
[jacobmdakon@weebly.com](mailto:jacobmdakon@weebly.com)



# AWAY FROM THE BOW: “JELLYFISH”

---

## “Jellyfish”

- Hold and relax right hand in front of body
- Initiate an upward pulse with the arm and forearm; allow hand and fingers to react as if tentacles of a jellyfish.
- **OUTCOME:** Releases tension in students’ right-hand fingers