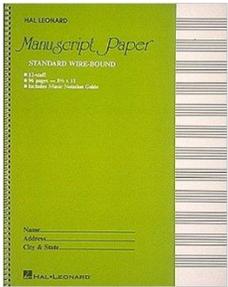


# Things all Violinists Need (eventually)

1. **Rosin** - Rule of thumb, if the Rosin is in a wooden block ("U" shaped wood with rosin in between), this is poor rosin. There is probably a local music store that carries larger nicer rosin, *but it will break if dropped*, yet still useful even when broken, she can keep some in her case and some at home for quick access. The easier it is to practice, the more she will practice. New rosin needs to be "broken in". Open the rosin, take a sharp car key and scrub/score the rosin across the top. This breaks the outer hard shell of the rosin open allowing for the rosin's enclosed center to be applied to your bow. (NOT GOOD ROSIN below)
2. **Pencil(s)** ALWAYS have a good sharpened pencil in your violin case, and music bag and with your note book (see # 3). NEVER use anything but a pencil to write in your music books, so get used to always having a pencil. Write lightly in case you need to erase... have pencils with good erasers. On borrowed music, write EXTRA light!



3. **A NOTE taking blank book:** I found it so helpful to take notes for lessons. The teacher would say, "Play this thing 50 times every day this week", etc. I wrote those things down during the lesson and then DID THEM! HUGE progress was made at almost every lesson because of this. Also you make notes of questions of things you didn't understand at the last lesson so you can ask about them at your next lesson. It is always good to do that in ONE book. Some teachers may furnish a "Practice Record" sheet for each lesson, this is also a good place to write notes and questions, just be sure you get to keep these notes (and keep them in a notebook for referencing in the future). I



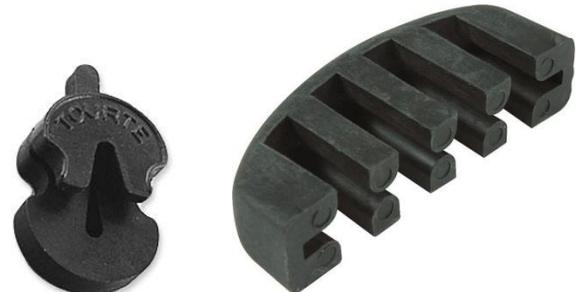
found at a Barnes & Noble bookstore at Christmas time some Staff Paper bound into a nice "blank book". This may come in handy as you advance and start reading music, or if your teacher wants you to play a certain scale or exercise that is not in written form, etc. She can write it on staff paper for continued use throughout the years. It is a good idea to review all these old notes from time to time.

4. **A Music Bag** to carry music to and from lessons or classes/orchestra if it will not fit inside the case music zipper section (never put music on top of the violin itself). If your KUN (or other shoulder rest devise) doesn't fit in the case, this helps you keep from losing it.
5. **An appropriate Shoulder rest:** Be it a rubber band and a foamy sponge or a Kun-type product



(<http://www.kunrest.com/products.html>), everyone needs something to raise the instrument off the shoulder to prevent neck injuries and soreness. I recommend the sponges for the beginners and the Kun for more advanced players. There is nothing wrong with using a sponge, it's easier on the body and very inexpensive until the student starts playing at school or in a more formal Youth Symphony situation. Note: Cheap, knock-off kun-type shoulder rests may be very flexible and may scratch the back of the violin. Be careful when buying off brands. Some Kun shoulder rests have collapsible legs to help it fit into the case. They come in size ranges and are adjustable to fit violins, be sure to buy a size that fits your size violin.

6. **Violin MUTE and Practice Mute.** A *regular Mute* will be needed when you start playing in an orchestra or class room situation but not needed until that time. It's very tiny and will set you back \$5 +/- . A *Practice Mute* covers all 4 strings and sits on the bridge (maybe sized according to your violin size). This is so you can practice in a hotel while on vacation and not bother neighbors or if Grandma comes to visit and is napping. It



makes the instrument sound quiet and strange, but you can still practice. Once removed, it is really great how the instrument sounds again! (Regular Performance Mute left – Practice Mute right)

7. **An Electronic Tuner** – There is one that simply plays an “A” for you to tune the A and then tune all the other strings from the A, or the kind that hears whatever note you play and tells you if it is in tune or not. This second type is harder to use. I recommend getting the A correct first, then tune by sound rather than electronics. New Strings need lots of tuning as they stretch out.

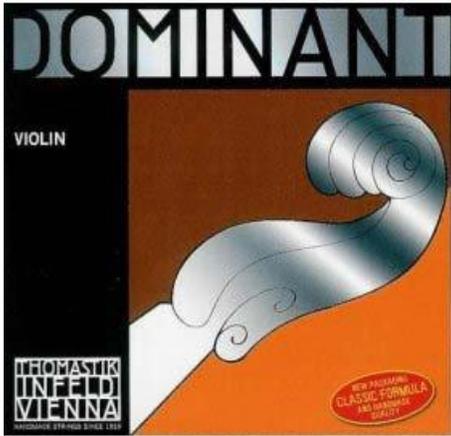


8. **A Metronome** - EVERY musician needs this and needs to use it as a part of every practice session. Keep it accessible and you will use it more often.



No need to carry it to and from lessons or orchestra rehearsals, though. Keep it on your stand at home. This photo is an all-in-one tuner & metronome. There are Many brands, I prefer one that can subdivide the beat (4/4, 6/8, 3/4 etc.) you can also turn OFF the click and use just the light. It has A440 pitch (sound) to help you tune, an all-in-one tuner/metronome. Also, there are APPS from iTunes for your iPhones which will do the same thing. Not sure if there's an Android equivalent, but I would imagine that there is. They are very reasonable, but keep in mind you have limited battery life.

9. **An Extra Set of Strings at all times.** Some cases come with a "String Tube" (be sure to leave the string labels on the strings) but if yours doesn't have this, strings are tiny and will fit in the storage compartment of an oblong case. Always have a spare set (all 4 strings) and maybe 2-3 extra "A" strings on hand as the A tends to break more often. SharMusic.com ships strings free if you buy a certain \$\$ amount. Sometimes I get one set with 2-3 extra "As" to bump it up over that free shipping mark. Shar generally has the best price on strings. I totally recommend "Thomastik (brand) Dominant (grade)" strings. NEVER use "Super Sensitive" strings, they sound AWFUL and are all steel so they could cut your bridge. They are for a reason!! When buying strings you'll need to know whether to buy the "E" string with a LOOP or a BALL end.



Look at the E string on your violin. Is there a *ball* that fits through a hole in the tailpiece or slips through a slot on the E fine tuner? Some tuners are just a post that isn't divided down the middle, so you'd need the loop for this type. Buy more of what you already have.

10. **A nice soft micro-fiber polishing cloth** to wipe her finger prints off the instrument. Wipe it off EVERY day as you finish practicing (hand oils and rosin dust are not good for the violin finish).
11. **Professional Grade Violin Polish.** These are available in better violin shops (you can order them online through SharMusic.com. Don't use regular furniture polish on the violin as they tend to build up "gook/wax". As you notice the finish looking dull, or if you have a concert/recital coming up, these are great times to clean the violin really well.

12. **Chin Rest Key** not generally needed for beginners, but Intermediate – Advanced players need one from time to time. It is not advisable to use other items (like a paperclip) as it is very easy to scratch your violin. You can buy them in multi-packs so you can ALWAYS have one in your case and also have one in your practice space.



13. **Peg compounds** (one for slipping pegs and another for sticky pegs). Your teacher will probably have these on hand, but later on, when you are in a class situation or orchestra, in Jr. Hi or beyond, this will be very handy to always have as you are expected to keep your instrument maintained and playable without interruptions during the rehearsal. Depending on the season of the year and the humidity level, you will always need one or the other.



14. **A good quality folding music stand:** We have always bought "Manhasset" Music stands, but they are very expensive AND they don't fold well for carrying to other places. The "On-Stage" music stand is REALLY incredible. It is very sturdy,



lightweight aluminum and won't fall over like those pokey-metal stands you can get for \$15-\$20, but costs only about \$40 (B&H Photography - on line sells them, the cheapest I have found). It just makes it easier to practice if you have a quality stand and can leave your music open and ready to play even if you don't play outside of your home.

15. **A Violin Stand or hanger.** If you have a great music stand (Manhasset or On-Stage variety), there is a violin hanger that affixes *to the stand* where you hang the violin on a rubber covered forked hanger and there is a place to hold the bow to hang as well (of course with the hairs loosened). (See the first photo.) There is the same thing that hangs on the wall. Both of these



cost about \$10 - \$15. I'm not fond of the third kind (far right pic) because it sits on the floor or on furniture. To me it is not very sturdy. Especially with children. On Stage in a BAND, maybe, but no one in a symphony uses these types of holders during concerts. These are really a tool for home use. BUT, not everyone's house is conducive to this type of storage arrangement. As a teacher I kept my violin OPEN on top of my piano, or hung from my music stand using the 1<sup>st</sup> picture above so that it was easy to grab to play, but wasn't down on the floor for students to trip on. If there is a dresser or table where you can leave the violin case open without fear of it falling, or another child throwing a basketball at it, this will make practice time easier, you simply pick it up, rather than unpacking it each session and re-packing it afterwards. Making it convenient/easy to practice makes it easier to practice. Saving time unpacking and repacking means one will practice more often for longer periods of time.

16. **A Back-Up bow:** This is not necessary for beginner players, but once you begin to play in a class or Orchestra, crazy things happen, you drop it and it breaks, someone steps on it, or the hairs malfunction and fall out. A back-up is needed always once you begin to perform with groups or at weddings.

17. **Good Case:** I only mention this, not because most people don't think of a case, but the case is there to protect your instrument while transporting, and to hold items related to your violin in its pockets. It is surprising how much stuff can fit into a violin case, but you do not have to spend hundreds of dollars in a case if it doesn't travel a lot (like airlines, etc). Students need a place for 2 bows. They need a humidifier in the case, but it doesn't have to be a fancy one. If you buy a case with a built-in humidifier, you'll pay a LOT for the case. Below are 2 examples. Most cases come with a protective blanket that is placed over the violin (between the bows and violin) to avoid accidental damage/scratches on the violin. Most come with a few pockets to store your Kun, Rosin, Chin Rest Key, Fingernail clippers, Metronome, Music etc. Don't go overboard on a case, they all do the same thing.



18. **Outer Case Cover:** IF you live in an extreme climate (either HOT or COLD but especially cold) if you need to be out in the weather for long periods of time (your commute/drive is long, or you rely on subway/bus transportation and these things are not climate controlled, then I also recommend an exterior insulated case. This is only needed if you have long periods of time when your violin will be exposed to the weather, OR if you would rather only carry ONE item, your violin, but have a few other things to carry as well, a change of clothes, extra shoes, lots of music or school books, lunch, bottled



water, etc. These over-cases tend to come pretty roomy, and with back-pack straps or subway straps, so these can turn into a 1-bag trip which includes your violin. They also tend to have extra pockets. Just remember, if YOU are wearing a coat, your violin should also wear a coat. Personally, I use mine more in the summer when I need to carry other stuff as I'm not often out in the cold or hot weather, but when I do outdoor concerts, I always want a fan, a bottle of water, music stand lights and clothes pins to hold my music down so that it doesn't blow away. This bag is really good to hold ALL those things in so that I don't forget them (especially the clothes pins and fan).

19. **Music Stand Light:** If you are not yet a performer, this could come way down the list of things to buy, but since I mentioned it, I thought I'd put it on the list as well. I recently purchased one of these stand lights and it is simply wonderful! It costs about \$40. It has 2 lights on each wire, enough to light up 4 sheets of music, which is more than a typical music stand will hold. Each light is operated separately has 2 settings each. It operates with 3 – AAA batteries or plugs into a standard American outlet (110v.). You can use power when you have it, or use the batteries when you don't. Since each light has 2 brightness settings, you can set it for dim when you need to and bright when you need to. Most typical stand lights are \$65 *or more*. This is a fantastic little gem. The batteries go right under the clip (that affixes it to the stand). This is a cool tool that will easily fit into a case.



20. **Put some ID inside your case:** This can be in the form of a Business Card in one of the interior pockets (just under all the other things you'll have in there, pencil, kun, rosin, etc.) You do not put your child's name on the outside of the case. You can even hand write on a piece of paper: "THIS VIOLIN BELONGS TO." Put phone numbers especially, possibly not an address or the finder may just show up on your doorstep. You could use a work address possibly. Just like flying, cases look alike. Identify your case in some way. I use a piece of bright pink duct tape on my suitcases. I'm sure when mine comes around the baggage claim that I have the correct bag. If you are ever in a group class, orchestra, etc., and everyone's cases are jammed in one corner, you'll find yours easily without having to read a luggage tag. Those are helpful too, but your ID could be inside and just some identifying thing on the outside. BTW ribbons come untied and fall off. Key Chains could also be used for identifying your case amongst many.

21. **BONUS ITEM: Money!** Use a little zip-lock snack bag if you want, but always include a few dollars and also change, especially for those who may need something to drink or eat during an unusually long rehearsal. If this is for a child, let them know this is emergency money **ONLY**. If your child rides public transportation, if they lose their pass, they can still get home if they have enough emergency cash in their case. Use a different pocket, in a panic, they'll look in every pocket for spare change... especially teenagers! The idea is to make their CASE the EVERYTHING bag when in lessons or group string activities. It will omit having to carry multiple bags and take a chance on losing one of them.



22. **BONUS ITEM 2 Insure Your Violin:** You can get very inexpensive insurance for your violin that is a "NO FAULT Personal Articles Policy" For a \$5,000 instrument, you can expect to pay \$50 per year (check with your insurance agent for actual cost), but it covers the instrument if it gets run over by the bus, if you forget it on the subway, if it is stolen from under your chair at a restaurant, etc. Well worth the money if you have a lot invested in an instrument. Your insurance company will either insure the amount you PAID (show receipt) for the violin OR the appraised value. If your instrument dealer will write up a full appraisal value on letterhead even if you didn't pay that much, the insurance can use that figure for the insurance replacement value.