



Maple Creek - Strings Program

Dear Parents and/or Guardians,

Your student has enrolled in the string orchestra and will be learning to play the violin, viola, or cello.

These instruments have special requirements due to the physical nature and your student will experience some minor discomfort of their bones and muscles as they learn to handle the instrument properly. There are some things you can do to help!

Please encourage your student to practice regularly as this will help their body “figure out” what to do and the muscles and skin will toughen and get stronger.

Please also encourage your student to keep their fingernails on both hands trimmed. Not only is this good hygiene but it will enable better technique. Here’s why.

You can't play properly with long nails. Your finger should press the strings at a ninety degree angle to the fingerboard, or as close as possible to that. Once your fingernails get past a certain length that isn't possible, and you won't be able to make good contact with the strings with enough downward pressure to avoid dead notes and string buzz. It is also more likely that you might touch strings that you didn't mean to while playing.

Over time, your nails scraping against the fingerboard will damage it. You'll end up with dents and discoloration, probably unevenly across the neck. They'll have to be pretty bad before they cause any serious problems with the instrument but they're ugly.

Long nails are more likely to snag on a string, crack or break while you're playing. Even a minor snag can be very painful, and a bad break might end up with you bleeding all over your instrument. It's not fun playing with a hand injury either- it *hurts*.

Shorten your nails as much by possible, but not by **cutting**. The problem with cutting them very short is that the tool compresses the fingernail and pulls it away from the skin. That causes the separation and pain. You should cut your nails only to a comfortable point, and then from there continue to shorten them by **filing** with a file.

As with all things, please contact me if you have any questions or concerns,

Laura Olson
Strings Specialist
CW Area Schools