

# Violin



Sometimes called a “fiddle,” although not the smallest, highest pitched instrument in the violin family of instruments. The viola and cello are two of its cousins. The name “violin” comes from the Medieval Latin word *vitula*, meaning “stringed instrument.” The modern form of the violin was first made in Italy in the 16th century.

always used for “fiddle music,” the violin is the violin family of instruments. The viola and cello are two of its cousins. The name “violin” comes from the Medieval Latin word *vitula*, meaning “stringed instrument.” The modern form of the violin was first made in Italy in the 16th century.

A “**luthier**” is a person who makes and repairs violins. Violins are usually made of wood. They have four nylon or metal strings and a figure-eight shaped body with two S-shaped holes. The strings run from the body up a long neck to tuning keys, much like a guitar. There is a chin rest at the base of the violin used to balance the base between the player’s jaw and shoulder. The player then uses the hand of that shoulder to hold down the strings on the neck in varying positions. There are no frets to show where to hold the strings. Players must learn the proper finger placements for correct **intonation**, or pitch accuracy, by memory. The other hand holds the bow, a long stick with a ribbon of horsehair strung along its length. The bow is moved across the strings in slow or fast motions (*arco*) as the other hand holds the strings on the neck to produce music. The strings can be plucked (**pizzicato**) as well with fingers or a pick, which is thought to be the way violins were first played. The bow is thought to have been invented by horse owners in Central Asia.

Violins are also one main instrument in concert halls. Violin musicians play many genres of music including Baroque, classical, jazz, folk, country, rock, and traditional music of many Asian, European and Indian cultures.



1. **New terms:** See how these three terms are used in the text, and write a definition next to each one.

**luthier**      a person who makes and repairs violins

**intonation**      pitch accuracy in music

**pizzicato**      another term for plucking strings in music

2. What material are bow strings made of?

horse hair

3. Violins are used in concert halls.

**True or False?**

4. Name two other instruments in the violin family.

the viola and the cello