

Double Bass 101:

Foundations for Building Strong Players

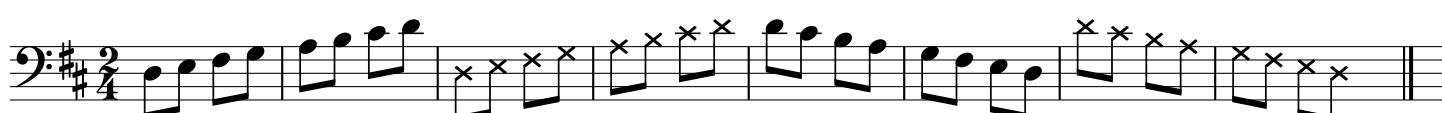
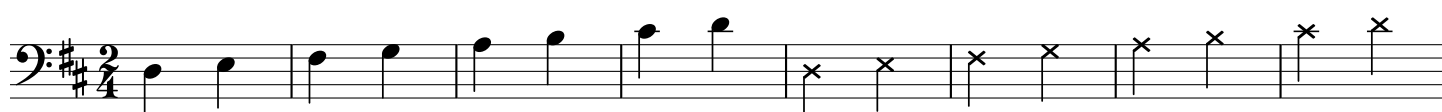
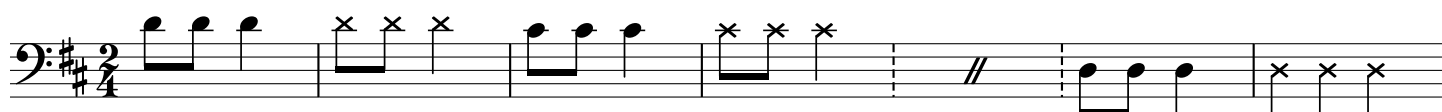
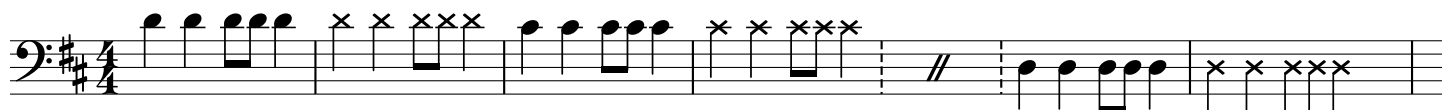
The Midwest Clinic
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Sizing	$\frac{3}{4}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{4}$		Nut should be between hair line and eyebrow Comfortably form a proper LH shape in first position
Strings	G (A)	D (E)	A (B)	E (F#)	Highest to lowest (Tuned in 4ths) Solo strings are tuned a M2 higher
Left Hand	(1) Thumb in middle of neck (3) Rounded finger	(2) Bass “K” = space between 1 st and 2 nd (4) Straight wrist (elbow floating above heel)			
Right Hand	(1) Thumb Bump (3) Squared Hand	(2) 2 nd and 3 rd split ferrule, almost 2 knuckles deep (4) Straight wrist, relaxed hand			
Fingerings	1 ^ 2^(3)4	m2 between 1^2 and 2^4 = M2 between 1 – 4 3 rd finger used in thumb position Thumb used in place of 4 th finger in thumb position			
Fingering Positions	General Notes	Thumb position starts on the middle harmonic Positions are generally anchored with 1 st finger placement Shift = move the 1 st finger/hand a m2 or more Pivot = roll the hand on the thumb to reach a m3			
	Traditional	Location of the 1 st finger Built on natural minor scale for each string [Ex. G-string = I (A), II (Bb), III (C), IV (D), V (Eb)] $\frac{1}{2}$ (Ab), II $\frac{1}{2}$ (B), III $\frac{1}{2}$ (C#), V $\frac{1}{2}$ (E)]			
	Rabbath/Vance	Anchors on the 1 st finger, but overall location of hand Based on the natural harmonics of the strings [Ex. G-string = I (A), II (C), III (D), IV (G)]			
Pedagogical Decisions	Bow Posture Endpin Beginning Position	French or German Sitting or Standing Straight or Bent Block or ‘Traditional’ (lower positions = first and third)			
Notation	Pitch Clefs	Sounds down an octave from written pitch Bass, Tenor, & Treble			
Accessories		Rock Stop = keeps endpin from sliding Damp-it = prevents cracking & open seams Stool Soft Cloth C-extension = drops E-string down to a low C			

Allen Beginning Class Warm-Up

This exercise should be performed pizzicato with focus on posture and left hand technique.
Teacher and student(s) alternate measures.



Vance Finger Pattern Exercise

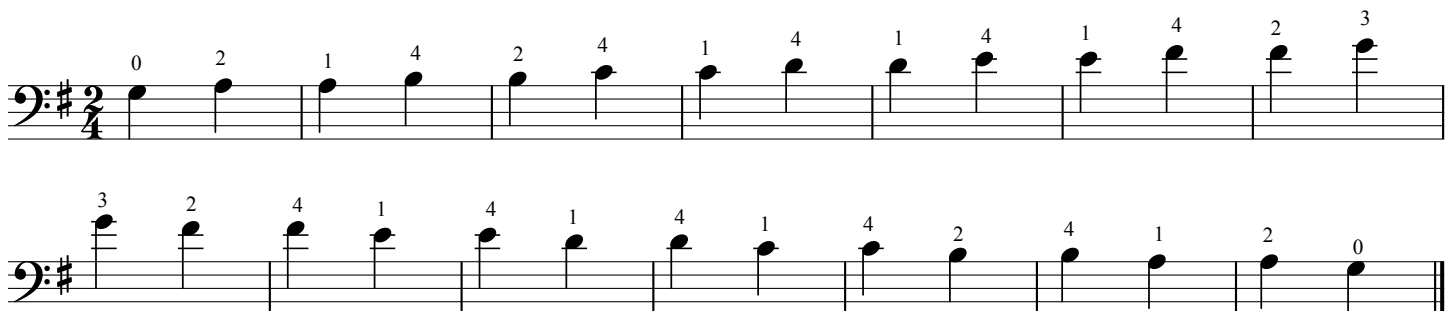
This exercise reinforces proper left hand shape and aural skills. Focus should be given to left technique and intonation. If desired, start in $\frac{1}{2}$ position and work up to V position (and beyond). Repeat on D, A, and E strings.



The Vance Finger Pattern Exercise is written in bass clef. It consists of five lines of music. The first line contains two measures of quarter notes with fingerings 1, 2, 4, 2, 1, 4, 2, 4, followed by two measures of eighth notes with slurs. The second line contains four measures of eighth notes with slurs. The third line contains eight measures of eighth notes with slurs. The fourth line contains a half note with a glissando line and a half note. The fifth line contains two measures of quarter notes with fingerings 1, 2, 4, 2, followed by four measures of eighth notes with slurs, and ends with a whole note.

Bradetich Finger Replacement Exercise

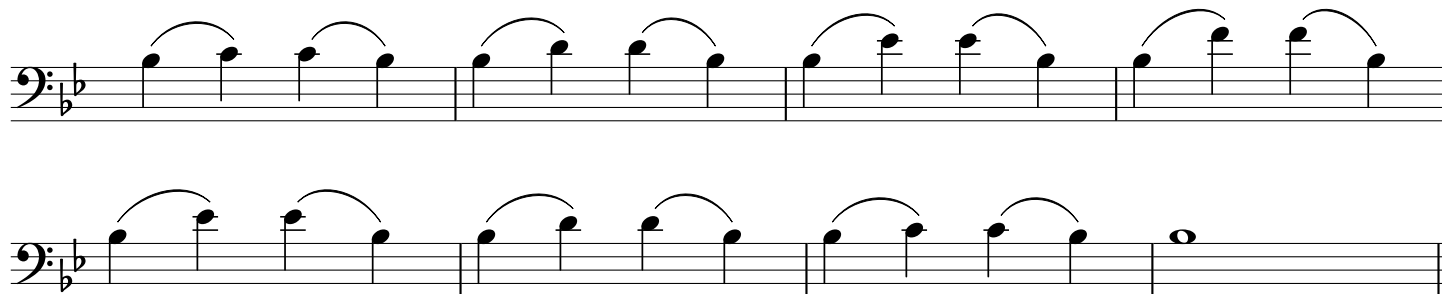
Focus should be placed on making quick, smooth, and unnoticeable shifts.



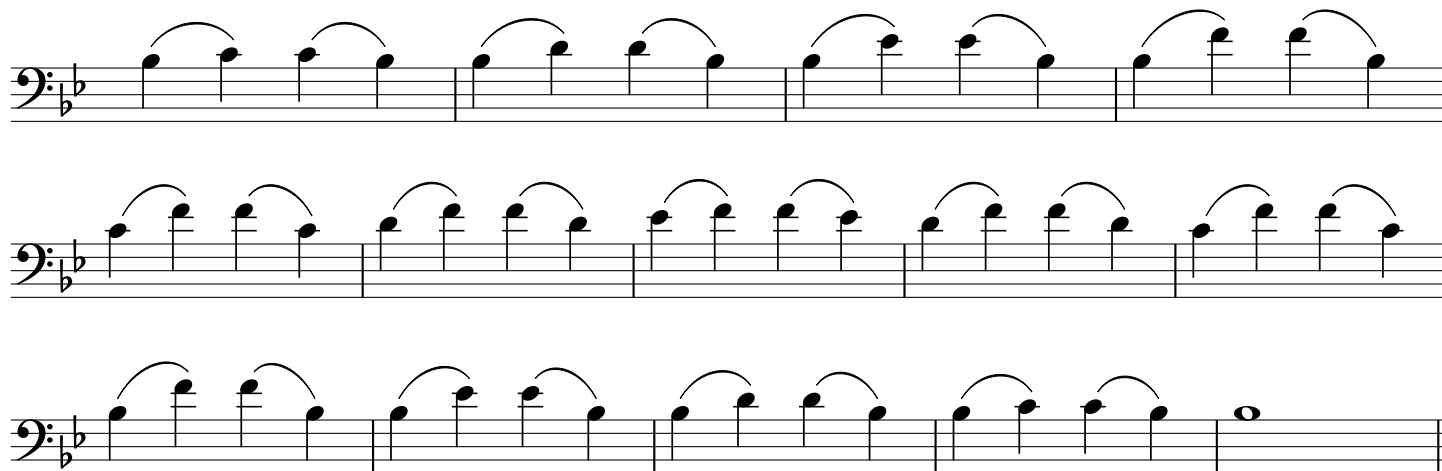
The Bradetich Finger Replacement Exercise is written in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 2/4 time signature. It consists of two lines of music. The first line contains 14 quarter notes with fingerings 0, 2, 1, 4, 2, 4, 1, 4, 1, 4, 1, 4, 2, 3. The second line contains 14 quarter notes with fingerings 3, 2, 4, 1, 4, 1, 4, 1, 4, 2, 4, 1, 2, 0.

Karr Vomits

This is a shifting drill that is used to reinforce left hand technique, right hand technique, and aural skills. It is useful if the student(s) tell you what technique they are aiming to reinforce when performing (e.g. straight bows, rounded fingers, etc). Shifts should be slow-ish and deliberate. Repeat using different strings and finger combinations: 1-1, 1-2, 1-4, 2-1, 2-2, 2-4, 4-1, 4-2, 4-4.



Dry Heaves



More advanced variations go one- and two-octaves. In these versions, all 4th fingers are replaced with the thumb when performing in thumb position.

Thumb Position

The following examples display several thumb position finger patterns. It is important that you form a proper, relaxed position so that you can quickly adjust between patterns.

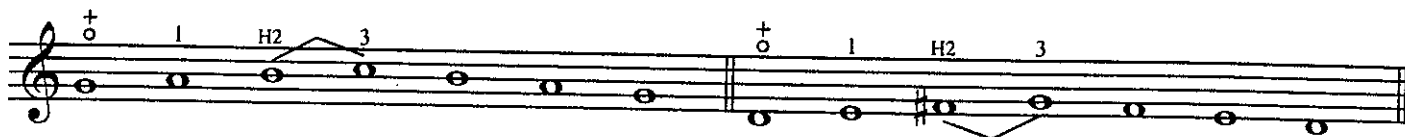
1. The 3 finger can be substituted with a H2. Practice both ways so that you are capable of doing each, even though you may prefer one over the other.



2. The following fingering has 1, 2, & 3 all a half step apart.



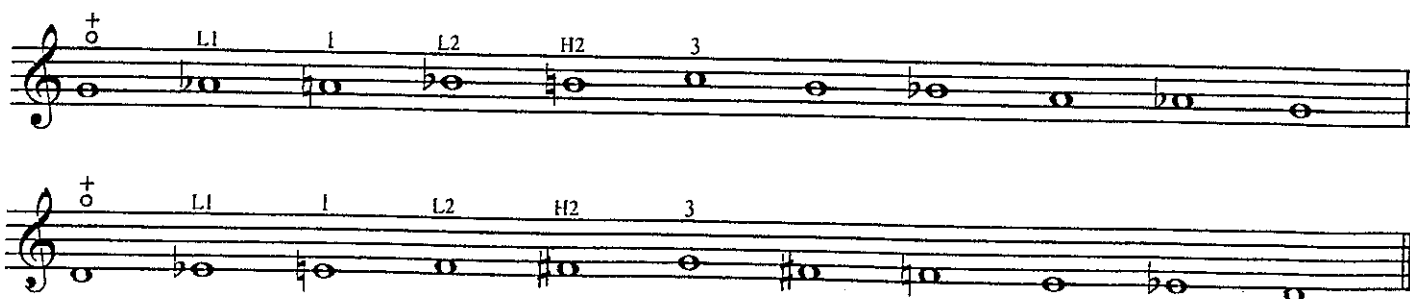
3. This fingering shows how to play up to a C using a H2 & 3.



4. A finger pattern using a L1.



5. Chromatic scale in thumb position.



Music Marking

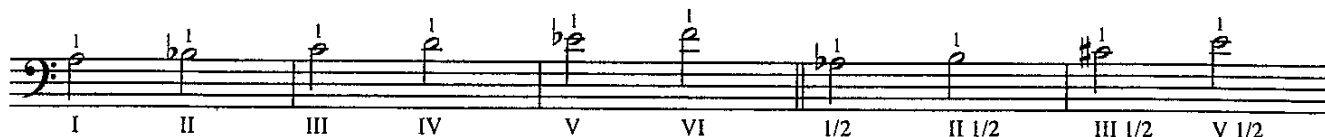
1. Shifting (-)

Some editors will angle the dash slightly upwards or downwards to give an extra indication of which way your hand should be moving. It is usually followed by the new finger being used and placed above the note.



2. Positions (III)

Positions to help tell you exactly where your hand should be on the neck. Notes on the G string not in Bb Major are given a 1/2 designation.



3. Half Steps (^)

This marking is very useful in fast and high passages because it is a quick visual telling you what finger pattern you should be using.



4. Harmonics ($\begin{smallmatrix} 3 \\ 0 \\ 0 \end{smallmatrix} + \end{smallmatrix}$)

Harmonics are used frequently in upper positions, especially in thumb position. The common designation is to show the finger to be used on top of an "o" which stands for "open", or not depressing the string. A "+" sign stands for "thumb."



5. Sul D (- - -)

Often, a composer wants a particular tone from our instruments. Playing notes in a higher position on a lower string provides a darker and richer tone. A great example is Bach's *Air on the G String* which requires the violins to play almost exclusively on the G String providing a rich tone.



Progressive Solo Repertoire for the Double Bass

Built on New York's NYSSMA Manual

Grade 1

Progressive Repertoire for the Double Bass, Vol. 1	Vance, George
<i>Reuben and Rachel</i> (pg. 18)	
<i>Fox and Goose</i> (pg. 18)	
String Festival Solos, Vol. 1	arr. Applebaum, Samuel
Festival Performance Solos	pub. Carl Fischer
<i>Mummers Danse Grotesque</i> (pg. 23)	

Grade 2

Progressive Repertoire for the Double Bass, Vol. 1	Vance, George
<i>The Happy Farmer</i> (pg. 31)	
Solo Time for Strings, Book 2	Etling, Forest
<i>The Brook</i> (pg. 9)	
String Festival Solos, Vol. 2	arr. Applebaum, Samuel
<i>Rigaudon</i> (pg. 3)	
Festival Performance Solos	pub. Carl Fischer
<i>Minuet in G Major</i> (pg. 22)	

Grade 3

String Festival Solos, Vol. 2	arr. Applebaum, Samuel
<i>Allegretto</i> (pg. 3)	
Festival Performance Solos	pub. Carl Fischer
<i>The Jolly Dutchman</i> (pg. 16)	
Progressive Repertoire for the Double Bass, Vol. 3	Vance, George
<i>The Elephant</i> (pg. 13)	
<i>Gavotte</i> (pg. 8)	

Grade 4

Solo Time for Strings, Book 4	Etling, Forest
<i>Minuet</i> (pg. 5)	
Festival Performance Solos	pub. Carl Fischer
<i>Gavotte in G minor</i> (pg. 15)	
Progressive Repertoire for the Double Bass, Vol. 1	Vance, George
<i>Bagatelle</i> (pg. 36)	
Progressive Repertoire for the Double Bass, Vol. 2	Vance, George
<i>Song of the Volga Boatmen</i> (pg. 13)	

Grade 5

Progressive Repertoire for the Double Bass, Vol. 2	Vance, George
<i>Allegro & Flow Gently Sweet Afton</i> (pg. 30-31)	
<i>Sonata in G minor</i> (mvts. 1 & 2)	Marcello, B. / tran. Zimmerman, F.
<i>Apres un Reve</i>	Faure, G. / tran. Zimmerman, F.
<i>Concerto in F Major</i> (mvt. 1)	Capuzzi, A. / ed. Baines, F

Grade 6

<i>Concert in G Major</i> (mvt. 3)	Cimbador, G. / ed. Slatford, R.
<i>Sonata in F Major</i> (mvts. 1 & 2)	Galliard, J. / ed. Zimmerman, F.
<i>Sonata No. 3 in A minor</i> (mvts. 1 & 2)	Vivaldi, A. / tran. Zimmerman, F.
<i>Sonata in G minor</i> (mvts. 1 & 2)	Eccles, H. / tran. Zimmerman, F.

Walking a bassline is a part of every bass players life. Bass players must have at least a familiarity with walking bass-lines and how they are constructed. In addition to improvising on their instrument, have students write out their own Blues Basslines using these ideas.

Start by getting form: Get the Groove of the root: 3 beats of root and then passing/chromatic tone on Beat 4 (half-step higher or lower than new chord).

Double Bass

Bb7 Bb7 Eb7

Bb7 F7 Eb7 Bb7 F7

Connect Roots using either of the above, add a passing/chromatic tone a $\frac{1}{2}$ step away from the root on beat 4, before chord change:

Here are some more strict and basic rules...but remember: Rules are Made to be Broken!

Beat 1 & 3: Chord Tones **Beat 2 & 4:** Passing Tones & Chord Tones

Double Bass

Bb7 Bb7 Eb7

Bb7 F7 Eb7 Bb7 F7

Questions to Consider as you move on: You've got 4 beats to go from Bb to Eb...are you going up or down? how far is it up? how far down?

Talk about outlining the Chords: See the Chord Arpeggio sheet

Connect Roots using SCALE tones

Double Bass

Chord progression: Bb7, Bb7, Eb7

The notation shows a double bass line in 4/4 time. The first measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The second measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The third measure is Eb7 (Eb, G, Bb, Db). The fourth measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The fifth measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The sixth measure is Eb7 (Eb, G, Bb, Db). The seventh measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The eighth measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The ninth measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The tenth measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The eleventh measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The twelfth measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The thirteenth measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The fourteenth measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The fifteenth measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The sixteenth measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The notation is a scale-based connection between Bb7 and Eb7.

Connect Roots using only CHORD tones:

Double Bass

Chord progression: Bb7, Bb7, Eb7

The notation shows a double bass line in 4/4 time. The first measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The second measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The third measure is Eb7 (Eb, G, Bb, Db). The fourth measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The fifth measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The sixth measure is Eb7 (Eb, G, Bb, Db). The seventh measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The eighth measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The ninth measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The tenth measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The eleventh measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The twelfth measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The thirteenth measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The fourteenth measure is Bb7 (Bb, D, F, Ab). The notation is a chord-tone connection between Bb7 and Eb7.

Recommended Resources

- Applebaum, S. (Ed.). (1995). *String Festival Solos, Vol. 1 & 2*. Belwin Mills.
Close, J. P. (2012). *Early Start on the Double Bass, Books 1-3*. Barenreiter.
Etling, F. (1970). *Solo Time for Strings, Books 1-4*. Highland/Etling.
Fischer, C. (Ed.). (2002). *Festival Performance Solos*. Carl Fischer.
Green, B., & Neighbor, J. (1999). *The Popular Bass Method, Books 1-3*. Liben Music.
Rabbath, F. (1980). *New Technique for Double Bass*. Alphonse Leduc.
Simandl, F. (1984). Ed Lucas Drew. *New Method for the Double Bass*. Carl Fischer.
Vance, G. (2000). *Progressive Repertoire for the Double Bass, Books 1-3*. Carl Fischer.

Young Double Bass Programs

Johnny Hamil (Kansas City)

<kcbassworkshop.com/?page_id=45>

Tracy Rowel (Baltimore)

<Peabody.jhu.edu/conservatory/strings/doublebass/bassworks/index.html>

Barry Green (San Francisco)

<www.goldengatebasscampsf.com/members/barry-green/>

Ithaca College Summer Music Academy (upstate New York)

<www.ithaca.edu/music/prepdivision/academy/>

THANKS!!!

Particularly to all of my double bass friends and teachers – Nicholas Walker, Patrick O’Connell, Tony Pinelli, Mark Foley, Nick Scales, Henry Neubert, and the list goes on...