

Intermediate notes

Intermediate notes are part of the mechanism of shifting, and are used in measuring distances and exact intonation.

How clearly you can hear intermediate notes depends on the type of piece and the context. They can range from inaudible, through to 'ghosting', through to being an expressive element of the shift. 'Ghosting' means to play the intermediate note with as little bow as possible (no more than one centimetre), and with as little bow pressure as possible (barely touch the string with the bow), and harmonic-like finger pressure.

¹ See also *Ghosting*, page 182

The ideal is that in the end there is no 'shift' at all, i.e. in the following example, play 'note-note-note', rather than note-note-*shift*-note-note':



However, practising intermediate notes brings great security to each shift by clarifying the positions before and after the shift; the fingers that will actually do the shifting; the exact interval that the shifting finger must travel.

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Classical shifts

Classical shifts are also known as 'beginning shifts' because you move on the finger that begins the shift.

Ascending Shift up on the lower finger until you are in the right position to place the upper finger directly on its note. The note that you shift to with the lower finger is the intermediate note.

Descending Shift down with the upper finger until you are in the right position to place the lower finger directly on its note. The note the upper finger shifts to is the intermediate note.



(1) The note you are shifting to, fourth-finger B \flat , is in 5th position. Shift with the first finger to 1st position. This note, F, is the intermediate note. Having arrived there simply drop the fourth finger on B \flat .

Although the sound of the shift is an octave, the actual distance of the shift is a perfect fifth, B \flat to F, played first finger to first finger.

(2) Shift with the fourth finger to 1st position. Eb is the intermediate note, and having arrived there simply drop the first finger on B \flat and then lift the fourth finger. The actual distance of the octave shift is again a perfect fifth (fourth finger to fourth finger).

Example 1

Mozart: Concerto no. 5 in A, K219, *mov. 3*



(1) Play the two notes of the shift (A, F \sharp), and the intermediate note (C \sharp), with equal length and equal bow pressure.

(2) Play the intermediate note shorter.

(3) Ghost the intermediate note.

(4) Still thinking of the intermediate note, play A followed by F \sharp as if there were no shift – simply play the two notes one after another.

Elgar: Sonata in E minor, op. 82, mov. 3, b. 40

p cresc.

as in Example 1.

J. S. Bach: Concerto no. 1 in A minor, BWV1041, mov. 2, b. 5

as in Example 1.

Bruch: Concerto no. 1 in G minor, op. 26, mov. 2, b. 3

marked '+' can be approached as part-shift part-extension:

approaching the intermediate note (C) with the third finger, extend back with the first finger to G.

as in Example 1.

Beethoven: Romanze in G, op. 40, b. 20

as in Example 1.

Example 6

Bruch: Concerto no. 1 in G minor, op. 26, no. 1

- (1) Play the two notes of the shift (D, B), and the intermediate note (G), with equal length and equal dynamics.
- (2) Play the intermediate note shorter.
- (3) Begin to build the shift into the phrase while ghosting the intermediate note.
- (4) Play *spiccato*, as in the passage itself. Shift with the first finger to the intermediate note while the first finger is in the air after playing D.

Example 7

Paganini: 24 Caprices, op. 1, No. 24

- The intermediate note is F#, making the shift a perfect fifth from B–F#.
- (1) Play the two double stops, and the intermediate note, evenly under one slur.
 - (2) Learn the distance of the shift. Bow lightly over the fingerboard to encourage the fingers to be on the string.
 - (3) Ghost the intermediate note.
 - (4) Move from one double stop to another as if there were no shift – simply two notes one after another.

Example 8

Beethoven: Concerto in D, op. 61, mov. 1, 1.1

- The intermediate note does not have to be in the same position as the final note of the shift. Here, fourth-finger Ab is an extension. The intermediate note D sets the position for the following notes should be kept down on the string.

Practise the 1-1 shift on its own, bowing lightly over the fingerboard.
 Gradually shorten the intermediate note (D) until playing it as a ghost (written as an x-note).
 Play from Ab to Ab as if there were no shift.

Example 9 Paganini: 24 Caprices, op. 1, No. 19, b. 25

The two shifts marked '+' can be played as part-shift part-extension. Practise playing the intermediate notes as grace notes:

Begin slowly, and gradually speed up to as fast a tempo as possible.

Romantic shifts

Romantic shifts are also known as 'end shifts' because you move the finger that ends the shift.

When played the Bb with the first finger, place the fourth finger lightly on the string as if to play a harmonic. Shift with the first finger on the string, sliding the finger into its note from

Although the sound of the shift is an octave, the actual distance of the shift is a perfect fifth, Eb to Bb (first finger to fourth finger).

Clearly you can hear the slide into the note depends on the type of piece and the context. It can be almost inaudible or 'ghosting', through to an expressive portamento.

See *Slow arrival speed*, page 172, for further examples of Romantic shifts.

Example 10 Granados (arr. Kreisler): Danse espagnole, b. 48

Play the two notes of the shift (B, B), and the intermediate note (G#), with equal length and tone.
 Make the intermediate note shorter.
 Ghost the intermediate note.
 When ghosting of the intermediate note, play as if there were no shift – just two notes one after another.

Example 2

Viotti: Concerto no. 22 in A minor, op. 36

- (1) The intermediate note is A whether the shift is with a fourth or a third finger.
- (2) Practise the minor third from A to C.

Example 3

Rode: 24 Caprices, No. 10

- (1) The intermediate note is fourth-finger G \flat .
- (2) Practise the major third from G \flat to B \flat .

Example 4

Brahms: Sonata no. 2 in A, op. 100, no. 1

- (1) The intermediate note is third-finger G \sharp .
- (2) Practise the perfect fourth from G \sharp to C \sharp .

Like the lower fingering in Example 2, this shift could also be played part-shift part-extension with the intermediate note. In (1) reach up to A with the third finger. Then in (2) shift between A and C.

Example 5

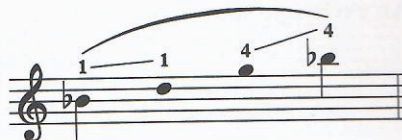
Fibich: Poème

- (1) Both fingers shift a perfect fourth.
- (2) With both fingers on the string, first play only the lower note, then only the upper, then both together.¹

¹ See *Playing one string at a time while fingering both strings*, page 225

Intermediate shifts

Intermediate shifts are a variation of Romantic shifts. They end with the lower finger on the string and begin (usually inaudibly) like a Romantic shift, but begin (usually inaudibly) like a Romantic shift. They are normally used only for ascending shifts, and are normally used only for ascending shifts, and are normally used only for ascending shifts.



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Intermediate shifts make the two notes of the shift seem closer together. In the example (octave B \flat to B \flat), the shift with the first finger and a minor third with the fourth finger feels like two very small intervals. In comparison the perfect fifth in either a Classical or Romantic octave shift seems much further.

Brahms: Sonata no. 2 in A, op. 100, mov. 1, b. 41



Intermediate shifts make the two notes of the shift (A, F \sharp), and the intermediate notes (B, E), with equal length and tone. Intermediate notes shorter.

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Schubert: Sonata in A, op. posth. 162, mov. 1, b. 5



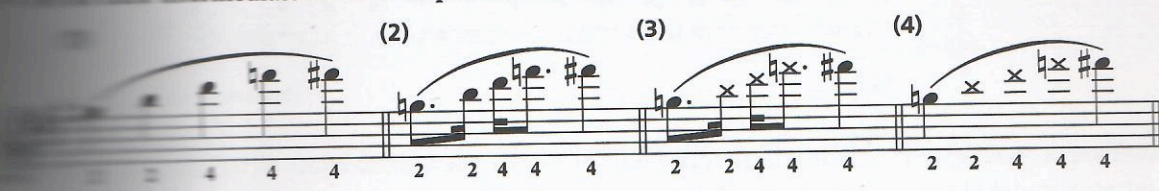
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Fauré: Sonata in A, op. 13, mov. 4, b. 47



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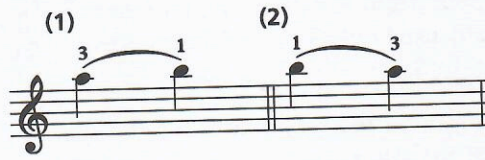
¹ See Slow arrival speed, page 172



Intermediate shifts make the two notes of the shift (A, F \sharp), and the intermediate notes (B, E), with equal length and tone. Intermediate notes shorter.

Exchange shifts

An exchange shift is one where the fingers 'cross over' each other during the shift:



(1) **Ascending** Begin the shift with the higher finger on the string and end the shift with the lower finger. Sometime during the shift, change from the higher finger to the lower finger.

(2) **Descending** Begin the shift with the lower finger on the string. When it reaches the destination note, replace it with the upper finger, using a substitution.¹

¹ See *Substitutions*, page 159

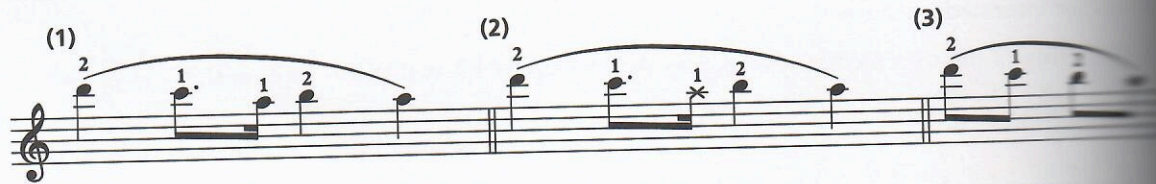
At the same time, the lower finger continues down until it reaches whatever its note would be in its new position (either remaining above, or resting on, the string).

Example 1

Rode: Concerto no. 7 in A minor, op. 9, mm. 1-2



- Practise the shift to the second finger (marked '+') by shifting the first finger down to its new position

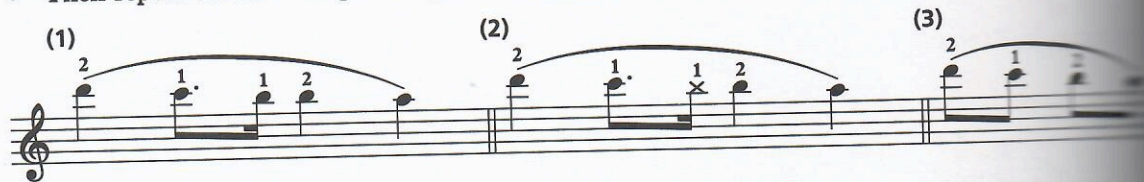


(1) Play the intermediate note (A) distinctly, as an extra note.

(2) Ghost the intermediate note.

(3) Play without the intermediate note as simply one note to another.

- Then repeat the three stages using a substitution, so that now the intermediate note is B:



- Practise the substitution on its own:



Afterwards, playing without the intermediate note as simply one note to another, the shift will feel easier and easy, and will not disturb the rhythm of the scale.

Schubert: Sonatina in A minor, op. 137 no. 2, mov. 2, b. 25

Practice the shift to the third finger ('+') by shifting the second finger down to its new position:

Practice the intermediate note (C) as an extra note.

Practice the intermediate note.

Practice the shift in the context of the passage, playing the intermediate note like a grace note.

Repeat the three stages using a substitution:

Practice the substitution on its own:

Bruch: Concerto no. 1 in G minor, op. 26, mov. 1, b. 79

Practice shifting below the note to the new position, first slowly and then at performance tempo.

Practice the shift as a substitution.