

Modified Galamian

Three-Octave Scale Fingerings for Violin

This system avoids the “4-4-4” fingering at the very top, which can be unclear and, in my opinion, not useful in the musical literature. For those with larger hands, you may need to let your 3rd finger pop up temporarily to allow 4th finger to play the correct pitch. Remember to keep 1st and 2nd fingers anchored. I find this a more reliable strategy than using the 4-4-4 fingering, and a more easily remembered system.

As in the Galamian system, add the three extra notes at the beginning and end, so that we have 24 notes in each direction. This allows for a huge number of possible ways to practice using bowings and rhythms grouped by the numerical factors of 24.

When practicing scales, remember:

- Use no vibrato, so you can gather reliable accuracy data.
- Consistent tone, clean rhythm, and smooth string crossings are just as important as beautiful intonation

Going up the scale

- FIRST SHIFT EVEN/ODD. If the scale started on an even numbered finger (or space note), shift to an even-numbered position; if you started on an odd finger, shift up to the first odd position.
- UP BY TWO. Except for the first shift, which might go up 3 positions, all shifts upward go up two positions (as in 1-2, 1-2, 1-2-3-4, etc.).
- ONE FROM G, TWO FROM D. If the scale starts on the G string, shift once on the A string; for scales starting on the D string, shift twice on the A.
- Start C, C#, D scales on the G string, in 3rd position.

Coming down the scale

- “E” ALL THE WAY DOWN. Come all the way down on the E string. End in the same position you started with.
- 4th DOWN RULE: The first shift downward will be to the 4th finger, except scales G, C, and C#. The general principle: on the way down, use bigger shifts first. Most scales will be 4-3-2-1, 4-3-2-1. For the exceptions (G, C, C#), you will shift to 3rd finger/3rd position; otherwise, you’ll come through either 3rd or 4th position.

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