



Discover Double Bass

INTONATION & SHIFTING EXERCISES FOR DOUBLE BASS

by Geoff Chalmers

www.discoverdoublebass.com

Intonation and Shifting Exercises for the Double Bass

The Three-Step Process to Accurate Tuning

Geoff Chalmers

Introduction

When playing the double bass, it is crucial that you do so with accurate and consistent intonation. For this reason, I strongly recommend that you add the following exercises to your practice routine.

Following these recommendations, you'll develop a consistent hand shape, shift more accurately and establish the habit of careful listening.

Keep in mind the following points as you practise.

- Play a small selection of the exercises as part of your everyday warm up in addition to scales and arpeggios.
- Practise these exercises slowly, carefully and in a relaxed manner. If it hurts, stop.
- Play these exercises out of time, whilst checking your tuning against open strings and harmonics. Slow down the exercises until you can play them accurately. Your focus should be on proper pitch rather than rhythm and speed.
- Divide the exercises into small sections and work on the parts you find hardest until you perfect them.
- Explore alternative fingerings, especially at the neck heel. The suggested fingerings are not definitive. All the exercises can be continued into thumb position once thoroughly learnt.

To play the double bass in tune, you need a good ear, the correct hand shape and accurate shifting.

Let's look at each of these elements.

1. How to Develop a Good Ear

- Try to hear the note you are about to play before you shift; you need a target to aim for.
- You may need to adjust your hand shape slightly to correct your tuning once you reach the target note, so listen carefully.
- Use the bow to develop your ear. Don't worry about your arco technique. In this context, bowing is just a way of producing a very focussed sound, which is more effective than pizzicato for assessing intonation.

- Listen for the tension between notes when they are out of tune, as well as how they sound when in tune.
- When making adjustments, determine if you are sharp or flat before correcting your pitch. Eventually this process will become second nature and part of your subconscious, resulting in more accurate tuning.

The free scale backing tracks in the Bass Player Toolbox are a great tool to help you reference your tuning whilst practising scales and arpeggios. I also recommend that you watch all of the video lessons about scales to make sure you are using the most effective fingerings. You can find them at www.discoverdoublebass.com

Put careful listening at the centre of everything you do and it will soon become second nature.

2. How to Maintain a Consistent Left-Hand Shape

- Fingers 1, 2 and 4 of the left hand should be divided into three equal semitones. A common problem is that the gap between the first and second fingers is too small or decreases as you shift.
- Apply pressure to the strings through your fingertips using arm weight, not by squeezing the neck.
- Your thumb should be completely passive. Its role is to help measure distance and stabilise the hand when needed.

The left-hand technique lessons at www.discoverdoublebass.com will show you how to establish the correct hand shape.

Playing the following chromatic exercises will require you to focus on your hand shape and semitone shifts.

3. How to Develop Accurate Shifting

- Reaching for the target note without accurate and consistent practice is unlikely to achieve reliable results.
- The purpose of the following exercises is to memorise the distance of semi-tone and tone shifts. Play them as a slow glissando (i.e., a glide from one pitch to another) with your finger in constant contact with the fingerboard throughout the movement.
- As you improve, you can speed up the shift. In normal playing, it is desirable to disguise shifts with speed. However, to help you better learn these distances, I recommend practising the shifts slowly and evenly.

Watch the video lessons on shifting at www.discoverdoublebass.com for a detailed look at the technique.

***With practice, you will develop accurate and consistent tuning.
This will allow you to focus on creating music, without the
distraction of technique.***

Geoff Chalmers

Scroll down for the sheet music



Chromatic Scale Exercises

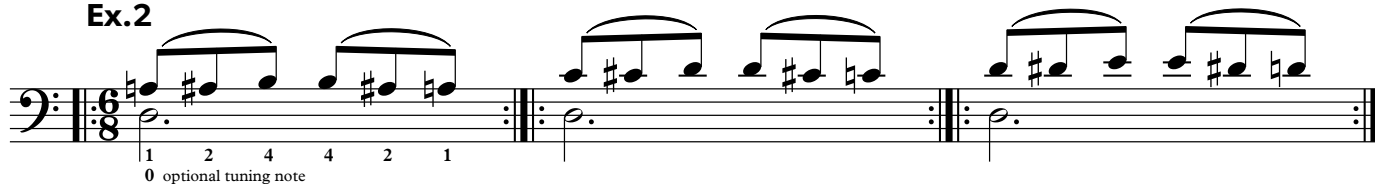
Pick a small selection of exercises for each practice session.

PF=Primary Fingering
AF=Alternate Fingering

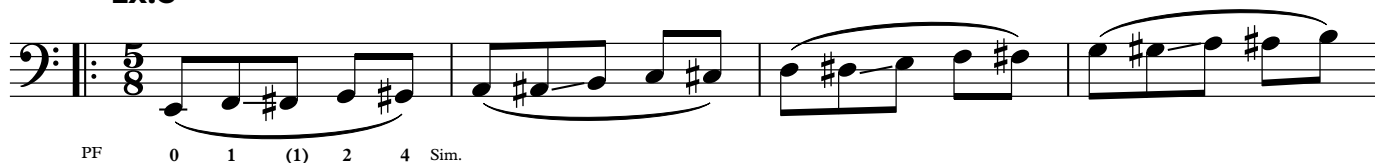
Ex.1



Ex.2



Ex.3



Ex.3b



Ex.4



Ex.4b



Ex.5

PF 0 1 2 4 1 (1) 2 4 1 (1) 2 4 1 (1) 2 4 Sim.

3 (4) 2 1 4 (4) 2 1 Sim.

4 (4) 2 1 4 2 1 0

Ex.5b

AF 0 1 2 4 1 2 4 (4) 1 2 4 (4) 1 2 4 (4) Sim.

3 2 1 (1) 4 2 1 (1) Sim.

4 2 1 1 4 2 1 0

Ex.6 Studies in 4ths

1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1

1 1 1 1 1 1 Sim.

Ex.6b

1 1 1 2 2 2 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 Sim.

1 1 1 2 2 2 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 Sim.

Ex.7 Studies in 5ths

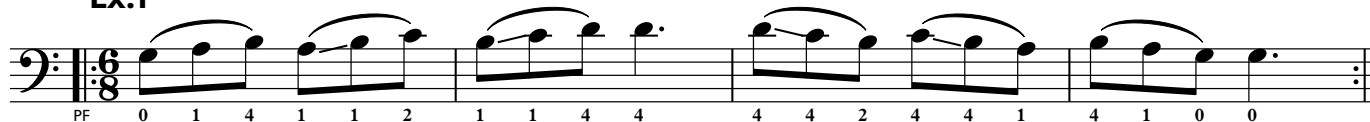
First system of musical notation for Ex.7. It consists of a single staff in bass clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation includes a repeat sign at the beginning. The notes are: F#4, A4, B4, C#5, D5, E5, F#5, G5, A5, B5, C#6, D6, E6, F#6, G6, A6, B6, C#7, D7, E7, F#7, G7, A7, B7, C#8, D8, E8, F#8, G8, A8, B8, C#9, D9, E9, F#9, G9, A9, B9, C#10, D10, E10, F#10, G10, A10, B10, C#11, D11, E11, F#11, G11, A11, B11, C#12, D12, E12, F#12, G12, A12, B12, C#13, D13, E13, F#13, G13, A13, B13, C#14, D14, E14, F#14, G14, A14, B14, C#15, D15, E15, F#15, G15, A15, B15, C#16, D16, E16, F#16, G16, A16, B16, C#17, D17, E17, F#17, G17, A17, B17, C#18, D18, E18, F#18, G18, A18, B18, C#19, D19, E19, F#19, G19, A19, B19, C#20, D20, E20, F#20, G20, A20, B20, C#21, D21, E21, F#21, G21, A21, B21, C#22, D22, E22, F#22, G22, A22, B22, C#23, D23, E23, F#23, G23, A23, B23, C#24, D24, E24, F#24, G24, A24, B24, C#25, D25, E25, F#25, G25, A25, B25, C#26, D26, E26, F#26, G26, A26, B26, C#27, D27, E27, F#27, G27, A27, B27, C#28, D28, E28, F#28, G28, A28, B28, C#29, D29, E29, F#29, G29, A29, B29, C#30, D30, E30, F#30, G30, A30, B30, C#31, D31, E31, F#31, G31, A31, B31, C#32, 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Intonation and Shifting Exercises

C Major Scale Studies

PF=Primary Fingering
AF=Alternate Fingering

Ex.1



When playing pizzicato shifts play the note, shift but don't re-pluck the target note.

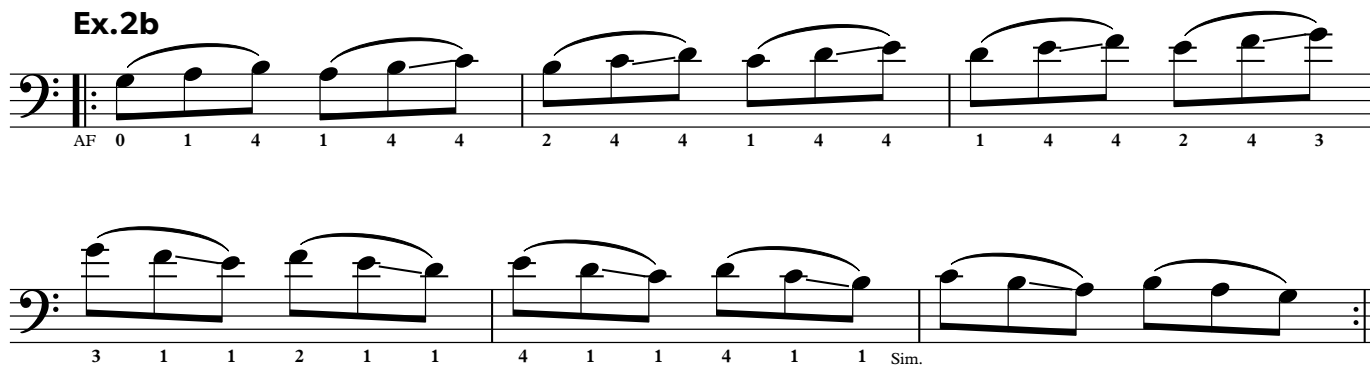
Ex.1b



Ex.2



Ex.2b



Ex.3 Studies in 3rds



Ex.3b

2 0 2 2 1 2 2 1 2 4 1 4 4 1 4 4 2 4

3 1 3 4 2 4 4 1 4 4 1 4 4 2 4 4 2 4

Ex.4

1 0 1 2 2 1 1 4 4 1 1 2 3 1 1 2 4 1 1 4 4 2 1 2

Ex.5

0 1 2 1 1 2 4 1 1 4 4 2 1 3 4 2 1 4 4 1 1 2 2 1

Ex.6

PF 0 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 3 1 2 Sim.

Ex.6b

AF 0 2 2 1 1 2 1 2 3 2 Sim.

Ex.7 Studies in 4ths

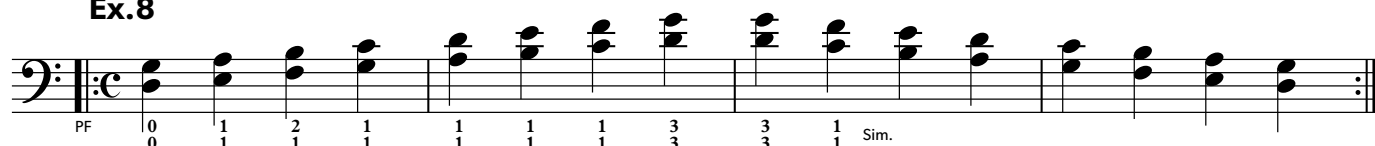
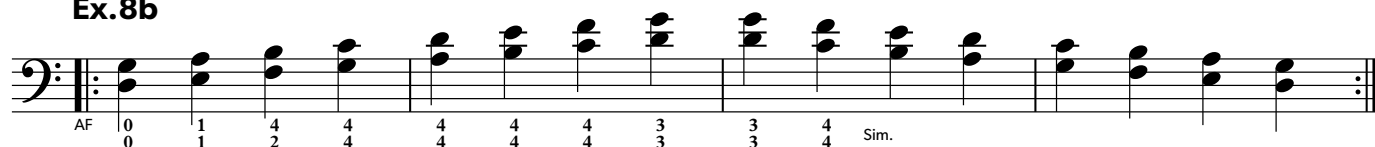
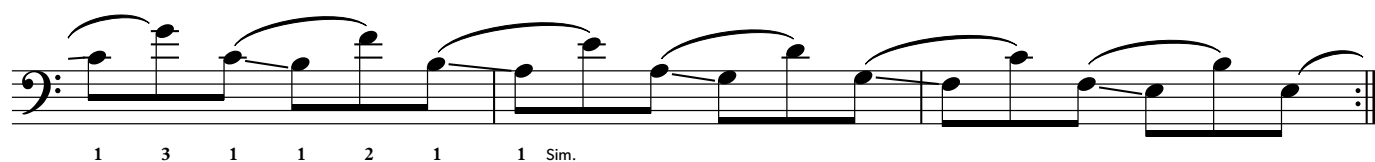
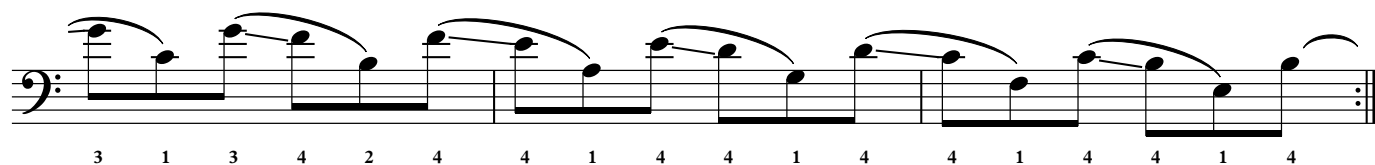
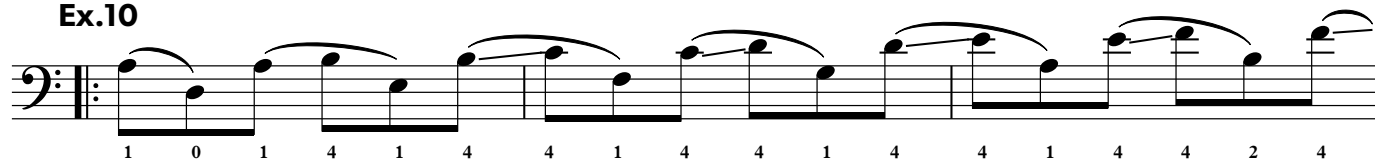
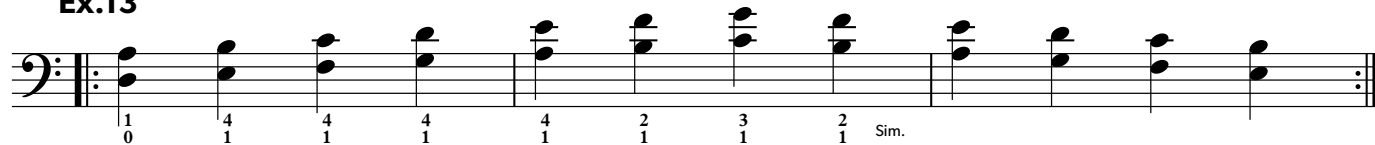
PF 0 0 0 1 1 1 2 1 2 1 1 1 1 1 1

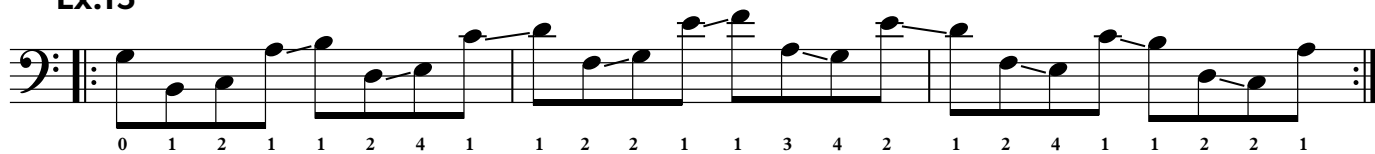
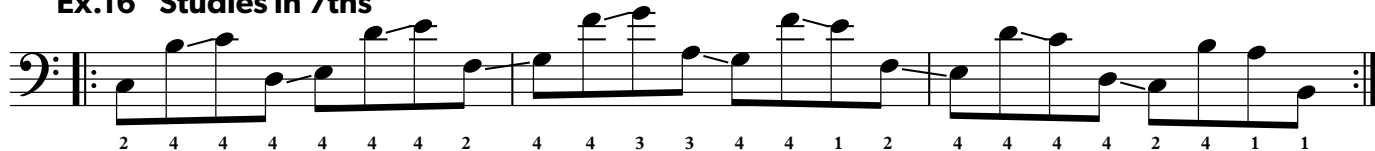
1 1 1 3 3 3 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 Sim.

Ex.7b

AF 0 0 0 1 1 1 4 2 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 4 3 3 3

1 1 1 1 1 1 Sim.

Ex.8**Ex.8b****Ex.9 Studies in 5ths****Ex.10****Ex.11****Ex.12****Ex.13**

Ex.14 Studies in 6ths**Ex.15****Ex.16 Studies in 7ths****Ex.17****Ex.18 Studies in Octaves**

Remember to pick a small selection of these exercises for each practice session. Use them to find your weak spots, don't rush through them. Work carefully and slowly, focusing on the parts you find hardest.