



# SIZING THE *Violin*

by Elise Winters

*Sizing a violin is important for ensuring physical comfort, tension-free playing, and good technique. If in doubt, it is always better to size smaller. There is generally no downside to this; an instrument which is even slightly too large can make it harder to maintain a balanced left hand and good posture.*

## ARM LENGTH

If a violin is available, have the child place it in playing position, fully snug against their neck. Then have them extend their arm. If their wrist lines up with the bottom of the curve of the scroll, the violin is the correct size.

Each fractional violin is approximately one inch (2.5 cm) longer than the size below. As a result, if the wrist is one inch beyond the scroll, the child are ready for a bigger violin; if it is at all behind this point, a smaller one will most likely be ideal. There is some variation in fractional size instruments, so occasionally an “in-between” size may be available that is a perfect fit for a given child.

While adults may choose to play a larger viola for purposes of resonance, for children and teens the viola should be sized the same as for violin.

## HAND SIZE

If a student’s pinky finger is short relative to their arm length, the violin should be sized smaller. The pinky should be curved in normal playing position.

A mismatch between arm and pinky length is quite common, and can be frustrating because the violin can appear visually much too small, yet still be the correct size for the child. The correct sizing, though, will create a balanced left hand and allows the muscles to develop strength at the correct angle.

This same child will likely be ready for the next size bow before they are ready for a new violin. If they can reach past the bow tip when they extend their arm, they should go up to the next bow size. They will also need the next larger case.

## STRENGTH

A child with lower muscle tone will have relatively greater difficulty supporting the weight of the violin. In this case it may be appropriate to select one size lower than the child’s arm length might suggest.

## FINGER WIDTH

A child whose fingers are quite wide but not as long may struggle to get their half-steps close enough as they reach the upper range of their current instrument size.

This is the one situation in which it may be appropriate to move to a larger instrument even when the pinky is too short to curve in its usual position. Assuming this student has good muscle tone, they may find the next size instrument more comfortable and easier to play.

## MEASUREMENTS

If no violin is available for fitting the child, simply measure from the child’s neck to the middle of their palm with the arm fully extended. The lengths shown below are the minimum suggested length for that size.

Violin Size	Minimum Inches	Centimeters	Typical Age
1/16	14.25	35.5	2-3
1/10	15.25	38	4-5
1/8	16.5	42	4-6
1/4	18.5	47	5-7
1/2	20.25	51	7-10
3/4	22.25	56	9-12
Full	23.25	59	12+