



EDUCATION

at

POIEMA ACADEMY

VIOLA FAQs

What is the difference between a Violin and a Viola?

The Violin is considered to be the “soprano” of the string family, while the Viola would be considered to be the “alto” voice. Both instruments are played on the shoulder. As a child grows and moves into larger sizes, the viola will be proportionately larger in length, width and thickness than the Violin.

How can I know whether or not my child will like the Viola?

The best way to find out is to have your child listen to different recordings of professional Violists & see how they respond to the deeper, richer sound. A few excellent professional Violists to search for on YouTube are: Yuri Bashmet, Kim Kashkashian, Cynthia Phelps, and Tabea Zimmerman. There are several links at the bottom of this FAQs page.

What age is best to start on the Viola?

It is possible to start learning the Viola at any age from 4 years old and up; however, as with the Violin, “the earlier the better!”.

Do they make Violas small enough for a 4 year old?

A “Viola” for a small child is generally a violin that has been re-strung with the Viola strings. The biggest differences at this point are: identity as a Violist, beginning to learn to produce a deep Viola tone, learning the different clef, and learning the few different pieces in the Suzuki Viola repertoire.

What is the difference in repertoire between Suzuki Violin and Viola?

In the first 3 Suzuki books, there is very little difference. Between Books 1-3, there are a total of 3 pieces in addition to those found in the Violin books. Starting with Viola Book 4, there are a few of the Violin pieces, but many of the pieces are specific to the Viola.

Do Violists read the same clef as Violinists?

Violists primarily read the alto clef, and start out with this clef when they are first learning to read notes. When they are proficient with alto clef, they should begin to learn to read treble clef, since much of the advanced repertoire contains both clefs.

If a child is not yet proficient in reading treble clef, should they master treble clef first, then start alto clef or learn them simultaneously?

This question is best dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Please talk to your teacher directly.

What different opportunities would be available to my child as they get older, a) if they just know violin, b) if they just know viola, c) if they know both well.

The most common response is "Violinists are a dime a dozen, but everyone needs good Violists!" Even with the increase of Viola students in the last couple of decades, there are still many more Violinists than Violists, and therefore a good Violist is always in demand!

Where can I get more information on the Viola, or listen to performances by Violists?

[Clarke Sonata for Viola & Piano](#)

[Schubert Arpeggione Sonata](#)

[Hymn Tune from Jupiter, Bringer of Jollity](#)

[Mozart Sinfonia Concertante](#)

[Debussy Sonata for Flute, Viola, and Harp](#)

[Brahms Viola Sonata](#)

[Bruch Romanze](#)

[Wikipedia article about the Viola](#)