

Cello Basics

Music

Tuning, first position and the bowing terms on the page.

Four strings tuned in fifths, C G D A from low to high — an octave below the viola. Read in bass clef, moving to tenor and treble clef for higher passages.

STRINGS
C G D A

CLEF
Bass

RANGE
~4 octaves

- Tuning: C G D A, low to high, a fifth apart.
- First position spans a fourth on each string.
- Fingers are numbered 1–4; the thumb is used only in high positions.
- V above a note means up-bow;  means down-bow.
- Down-bow is stronger — it takes strong beats by convention.
- Pizzicato: pluck. Arco: return to the bow.

LOOK FOR IT

A phrase starting on beat one is normally taken down-bow, for the weight it gives.

The viola is tuned to the same four notes an octave higher, and reads alto clef.