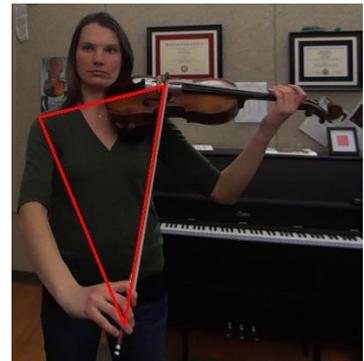


## Straight Bow – The Two Inch Stop

*This exercise comes from Carol Rodland, who taught it to me more than a decade ago. Since then, I've assigned it to every student who has had crooked bow issues and have had 100% success.*

### Three Bow Arm Shapes



1. Stand in front of a mirror so that the end of your fingerboard and your bridge make two thin, straight, parallel lines (you will not be facing the mirror-- the strings will be).
2. Looking into the mirror, place your bow so that it is exactly parallel between the line of the bridge and the line of the end of the fingerboard. You'll now have three parallel lines. Make sure your hair is flat (you'll be able to see hair on either side of the stick). Sink your arm weight into the string (keep your shoulders relaxed!).
3. Once everything is parallel and properly set up, close your eyes. Move the bow two inches, with your eyes closed. Listen for rich, zingy tone.
4. Freeze.
5. THEN, open your eyes and assess the motion you just made. It's incredibly important to check in the mirror, and not with your eyes over the bridge— it's easy to see in the mirror if your bow is parallel, but the angles get confused if you look over the bridge, and it can look as though your bow is straight when it really isn't.

Now that you're looking into the mirror, did your bow go crooked? Did it move out of the sounding point in which you started? Did your hair stay flat? It's very important to stop and think. Don't simply correct whatever mistakes were made, but try to assess your tendencies.

6. Correct everything so that your bow is again parallel to the bridge, in the correct sounding point, with flat hair and arm weight in the string. Freeze here for a moment and try to memorize how it feels. This is the most important part, as you want this to become the new natural.
7. Repeat steps three to six the entire length of the down and up bow a few times.

Try to remember the three shapes made by your right arm: When at the frog, your upper arm is in front of your body, making a small triangle (upper arm, lower arm, viola). As you initiate the down bow from the frog, the upper arm opens towards your right side. At approximately the half-way point in the bow, the upper arm will be parallel to the bow, creating a parallelogram (bow and upper arm are parallel; viola and lower arm are parallel). From there, the upper arm stops moving, and the lower arm continues to open, until the arm is straight and the large triangle is formed (bow, arm, viola).

*NOTE: For short-armed violists who cannot reach the tip with a perfectly straight bow, stop the two-inch stop exercise as close to the tip as you can without having to compromise physical comfort or straight bow. If you fall in this category, be sure to ask your teacher for modifications.*



*Katrin Meidell, DMA, is Assistant Professor of Viola at Ball State University. Previously, she taught at Texas Tech University and Texas Woman's University. She is violist of the Hibiki Trio, and performs solo and chamber concerts on a regular basis. In the orchestral setting, she has performed with the Indianapolis and Fort Worth Symphonies, the Fort Wayne and Boston Philharmonics, and freelance orchestras throughout Indiana, Texas, and Oklahoma. Meidell received her BM, Magna cum laude, from Boston University, where she studied violin and viola with Dana Mazurkevich and Michelle LaCourse. She earned her MM from the New England Conservatory of Music, where she studied with and served as teaching assistant to violist Carol Rodland. Meidell earned her DMA at the University of North Texas, where she studied viola performance with Dr. Susan Dubois and music and medicine with Dr. Kris Chesky, with whom she worked on finding a comprehensive answer to why string players are prone to injury. For more information, please visit [www.katrinmeidell.com](http://www.katrinmeidell.com).*