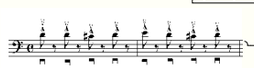
OFF THE STRING

- PRINCIPLE: We don't make the bow bounce, we create conditions that allow it to bounce.
  - Let the bow work: check --
    - keep the stroke focused on a single point: right in the middle of up/down is where the bow will bite the string.
    - contact point: if there is not enough resistance (i.e., too close to fingerboard), bow has nothing to bounce off.
    - placement: IN GENERAL, the faster the stroke, the further out in the bow.
      - also: a virtuosic solo spiccato is bouncier (and further from the frog) than what you would use in orchestra or quartet.
        - move toward tip, toward frog, try different bounce points
    - bow angle: more hair? less hair?
    - bow stability: if bow rolls, you lose the energy that would take the bow off the string
      - 2nd or 4th finger can stabilize the bow
    - make sure you have enough rosin on the bow.
  - *It is all about the bite! The stroke works only when there is a firm point of resistance between the bow and the string. Think of throwing the bow into the string, not lifting the bow out of the string.*
  - Don't waste energy: check --
    - FEET: when the cello is stable, the bow has something to bounce off.
    - HEAD: watch out for the bobblehead: takes energy out of the stroke, moves the bow around
  - Do the OPPOSITE of what you would do to create legato
    - Is elbow too high? too low? Try adjusting up & down to find bounce
    - Too much weight, esp. 2nd, 4th fingers, will keep bow on the string. Try releasing fingers
- **Work with these fixes before you start making adjustments to your technique**
- MECHANICS
  - WRIST AND FINGERS; flexible and strong.
    - **For MR, it is my 3rd finger that throws the bow at the string and feels the bite. When I want to make my spiccato bitier, or need to launch it, I focus on that finger.**
    - BUILDING THE SKILLS
      - Practice right up next to the frog, on the string. Focus on maximum motion of fingers, stability of bow
      - Practice rapid string crossings in different places in the bow. Use wrist (not forearm) for the crossings. Focus on loose wrist motion ("wave bye-bye")
      - Practice heavy collé, use extreme springy fingers.



      - Practice up-bow staccato. Focus on feeling of fingers biting the string, arm/shoulders remaining loose, flexible
      - OUTSIDE THE BOX: the motion is a much like dribbling a basketball. Which is worth practicing, with the focus on the fingertips and wrist, the rapid throw-and-catch motion
  - ELBOW: forearm moves freely. Motion from elbow, not shoulder
    - Practice near the tip. Focus on the swinging-door motion of the lower arm.
  - UPPER ARM: muscles here (biceps & deltoids) support the arm, hold the elbow at the right level. NOT the shoulder (trapezius).
    - Imagine your elbow resting on a table.
    - Try playing while keeping a juggling bag or hacky sack resting balanced on your elbow.
  - SHOULDER: relaxed, open. Holding or pressing with shoulder muscles will (a) keep the bow from bouncing and (b) give you a nice burning pain after a while.
    - Make a sling/hammock out of a dish towel. Get a friend to support your upper arm while you play. Focus on releasing the weight of your arm into the sling.
- PERSPECTIVE
  - Thrown strokes are about touch and feel. Cultivate a refined sensitivity to what the bow feels like when the stroke is working.
  - Build a bit at a time, like mastering a trill. So get 1 minute of clean, comfortable sautille; build up to 2; build up to 5...
  - Want to have independence of L & R hands. You may find you get your sautille on a single note, but lose it when you add notes.
    - Practice for fluid, confident LH separately from the bow.
    - Tension, panic, clamping down in the LH will make the RH lose its poise.
  - Make it as natural as breathing. If you can keep a sautille going while you talk to someone, you own it.
- LISTEN
  - **Common mistake in understanding: going for a "light" sound by thinking of a light stroke. There is a ton of energy in the stroke; the lightness in the sound comes from manipulating the resonance, changing the length of the stroke, height of the bounce.**
  - Crisp, definite starts to notes. (Might even be gritty for flashy virtuosic sound.) Fuzzy, mushy beginnings tell you there is not enough bite, not enough bow contact, not enough spring in the fingers.
  - Clear, ringing sound in the life of the note. Fuzzy, dead notes tell you the bow is killing the note, not coming away from the string. Arm could be stiff, bow not at optimum placement.
  - RELENTLESSLY EVEN
    - Rhythmically even: work with metronome, notice rushing/dragging
    - Even in accent: notice if up or down bows are stronger/weaker, work to even them out
  - Listen VERY CAREFULLY for clean coordination between bow and fingers.