ADVANCING THE ADOLESCENT ORCHESTRA

A systematic approach for successfully advancing the string student from the elementary orchestra to the high school orchestra

Emphasis: organization, technical skills, tuning, bow mastery, shifting, vibrato, phrasing and musicianship

Junior high and middle schools students are difficult in every way. The string class is no exception. These are the years when string classes experience a great number of drop outs. We need to do all we can to keep these students in the orchestra program.

Discipline of the junior high /middle school student is the most difficult. They are rebellious, attempting to establish their independence. What these students really want and need is firm discipline and a consistent routine.

Any playing problems such as incorrect positions or bow holds should be corrected now.

ORGANIZATION

Before school starts:

Communicate with building and fine arts administrators and counselors. Set dates for concerts, contests, meetings and all activities that require facility use.

Establish and nurture the relationship with the custodial staff.

Prepare a document for students and parents detailing requirements, calendar of events, uniform, grading, etc. Have the principal sign the document before distribution.

Check the rehearsal facility and school-owned instruments. Designate places for the students to keep instruments and music.

TUNING

Students must take responsibility for maintaining their instruments. Change strings and rehair the bow at least once a year. Check for proper bridge fit and adjustment.

Suggested routine for grades 6 and 7:
ALL TUNING IS DONE IN COMPLETE SILENCE
The teacher tunes the violins and violas while the cellos and basses tune themselves. The cellos and basses must have fine tuners/mechanical pegs. Cellos and basses tune individually using a tuner with a meter. (Korg, Boss)

In the spring, after contest and spring concerts, violins and violas begin to tune themselves. Cellos and basses begin to tune without the aid of the meter.

Sound the pitch of each open string on a tuner. Place violins and violas on the knees facing the player. Manipulate the peg with one hand while plucking the string with the other hand. Cellists may need to stand to gain maximum leverage when turning a peg is necessary.

Tune one string at a time. Stop periodically to listen to the pitch. Check the pitch with the bow. Young students think it is really cool to check pitches with an up-bow.

Grades 7 and 8
Begin by sounding the pitch for each open string from the tuner. Always check pitch with the bow. Introduce the perfect fifth and have students play the perfect fifths. Explain tuning with harmonics to cellos and basses. By the end of the school year, all students should be tuning alone using perfect fifths and harmonics.

POSTURE

Sit with both feet flat on the floor. The thighs are parallel to the floor. Support a significant amount of body weight into the legs and feet. The spine is straight and the head is erect. Support the upper back with the lower back.

POSITION AND BOW HOLD

Spend time at the beginning of the school year discussing correct position of the instrument and a proper bow hold. Emphasize a natural approach and the importance of tension free playing. Reinforce these concepts in the classroom every day.

TONE

Even beginners will play with a beautiful sound if they understand that tone is like the motion that generates it. The bow should be perpendicular to the string. Make a "T". In keeping the bow straight, the importance is in the point of contact. The horse hair is "exciting" the string.

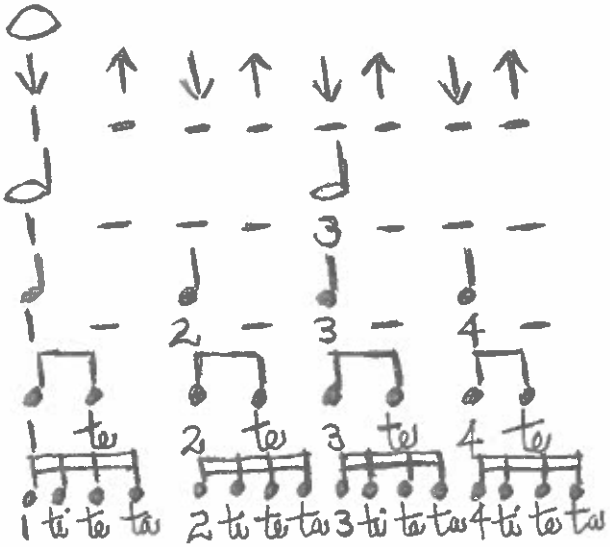
SUGGESTED BOW EXERCISES

Beginners: 1) two half notes on each string beginning with the lowest string, up and back down
2) one half note on the lowest string, half rest, one half note on the highest string (repeat four times)
Middle school and high school: one whole note on each string beginning with the lowest string, crescendo to the tip, diminuendo to the frog
High school: Long bow exercise: twelve slow counts down bow, twelve slow counts up bow on double stops beginning with the bottom two strings, then the middle two and finally the top two

Double basses always start these exercises from the top string(s).

RHYTHM

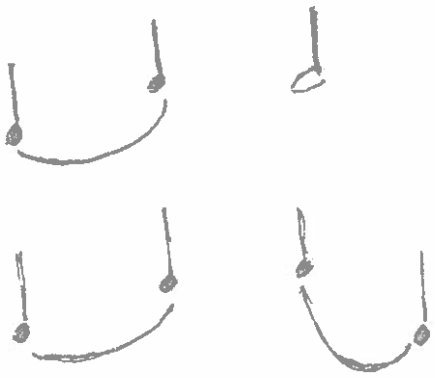
Rhythm is the most basic element of music. Teach the subdivision of the beat to the youngest students.



INTONATION

Intonation must be perfect. Teach the student to hear whole and half steps by singing and playing finger patterns and scales. (Refer to handout)

SHIFTING



VIBRATO

Violin and Viola

The vibrato unit consists of the forearm, wrist, first joint and tip of the playing finger. Begin vibrato practice in third or fourth position. Place the wrist against the box. The wrist is the motor for the exercises. "Rub" the playing finger up about one and one-half steps to a point where the first joint is extremely curved. "Rub" back to the original position. Now "rub" back about one and one-half steps to a point where the first joint is stretched and lying flat on the fingerboard. "Rub" up to the original note. Repeat with all fingers on all four strings.

Cello and Bass

The vibrato unit consists of the forearm, wrist, hand and playing finger. Begin vibrato practice in third or fourth position with large movements produced by the left forearm from the elbow. The large movements should be executed parallel to the fingerboard. As the desired speed and amplitude of the vibrato are achieved, the movement will become a combination of parallel and rotary motion. The finger "has" the note. The arm moves behind it.

MUSICIANSHIP

Teach phrasing and musical concepts from the beginning.
Make crescendo as a musical line ascends, diminuendo as a line descends.
Short notes lead to long notes.
Every note that is followed by a rest should be tapered and rounded.

STRAIGHTEN UP

for your good health

Photos by Rudy Gutierrez / El Paso Times

Tessie Moton, an occupational therapist at Rio Vista Outpatient Physical Rehabilitation Center, 1380-A Lomaland, demonstrates correct posture while standing. Note the arch in her lower back. This is the natural and healthy way to stand. Slouching can cause back pain and injure the discs in the back.

By Bernadette Sedillos Self
El Paso Times

When "Dr. Mom" nagged you about sitting up straight or not slouching as you walk, she knew what she was talking about.

Good posture isn't simply about looking good; it's as important to the body as exercising and eating a balanced diet, health professionals say.

"If your posture isn't good, it can affect your body in so many ways," said Tessie Moton, an occupational therapist at Rio Vista Outpatient Physical Rehabilitation Center, 1380-A Lomaland.

Posture — the way in which the body is held when sitting, standing, walking, lifting or even reclining — is about balanced "body mechanics," Moton said.

And as in a vehicle, when one part isn't working as it should, it stresses other parts and affects the whole car.

Common problems resulting from poor posture include disc degeneration, sciatica, chronic back pain, hip and knee problems, shoulder and neck pain and headaches.

All that from slouching?

Yes, and more, health professionals say.

elpasotimes.com
ONLINE EXTRA:

- www.clevelandclinic.org
- www.WebMD.com
- www.spine-health.com

"Aside from causing back and neck pain, bad posture can affect your balance," Moton said. "It can affect your digestive system — from squishing your organs together in an unnatural position for long periods of time."

Bad posture can also affect a person's driving, which can be a safety hazard.

Good posture, Moton said, helps the various joints, ligaments, tendons and muscles function smoothly. However, when pressure, pulling or other strain is exerted on the joints or muscles, problems — and pain — can develop.

"You know that song, 'The hip bone's connected to the thigh bone ... ?' " Moton asked. "Well, it's all very true. It's like we're one big puzzle, and when one piece of the puzzle is put out of alignment, the rest of the pieces don't fit the way they're supposed to."

Back problems are the No. 2 most-common health ailment reported in the United States. They're surpassed only by the common cold, said physical therapist Harry Koster, owner of Spine & Rehab Specialists, which has several locations in El Paso.

It's estimated that at least 80 percent of Americans will have back problems at some time in their lives.

Among those who know what an aching back feels like is Rob Sifuentes of East El Paso, who still feels the aches and pains of an old injury.

"I hurt my back lifting when I was in my early 20s, and I can feel these pains that come and go," said Sifuentes, now 44. "I can't lift stuff like I used to. I really feel it when I play ball, too."

Sifuentes, a maintenance worker at an apartment complex, uses a lumbar support belt when he works. It helps him keep proper posture, especially when lifting or bending.

"My wife tells me I kind of slouch," he said, laughing, and straightening out his shoulders.

Slouching can become habitual, Koster said, because most people are inclined to be a bit lazy with

Please see **Straighten** Page 2

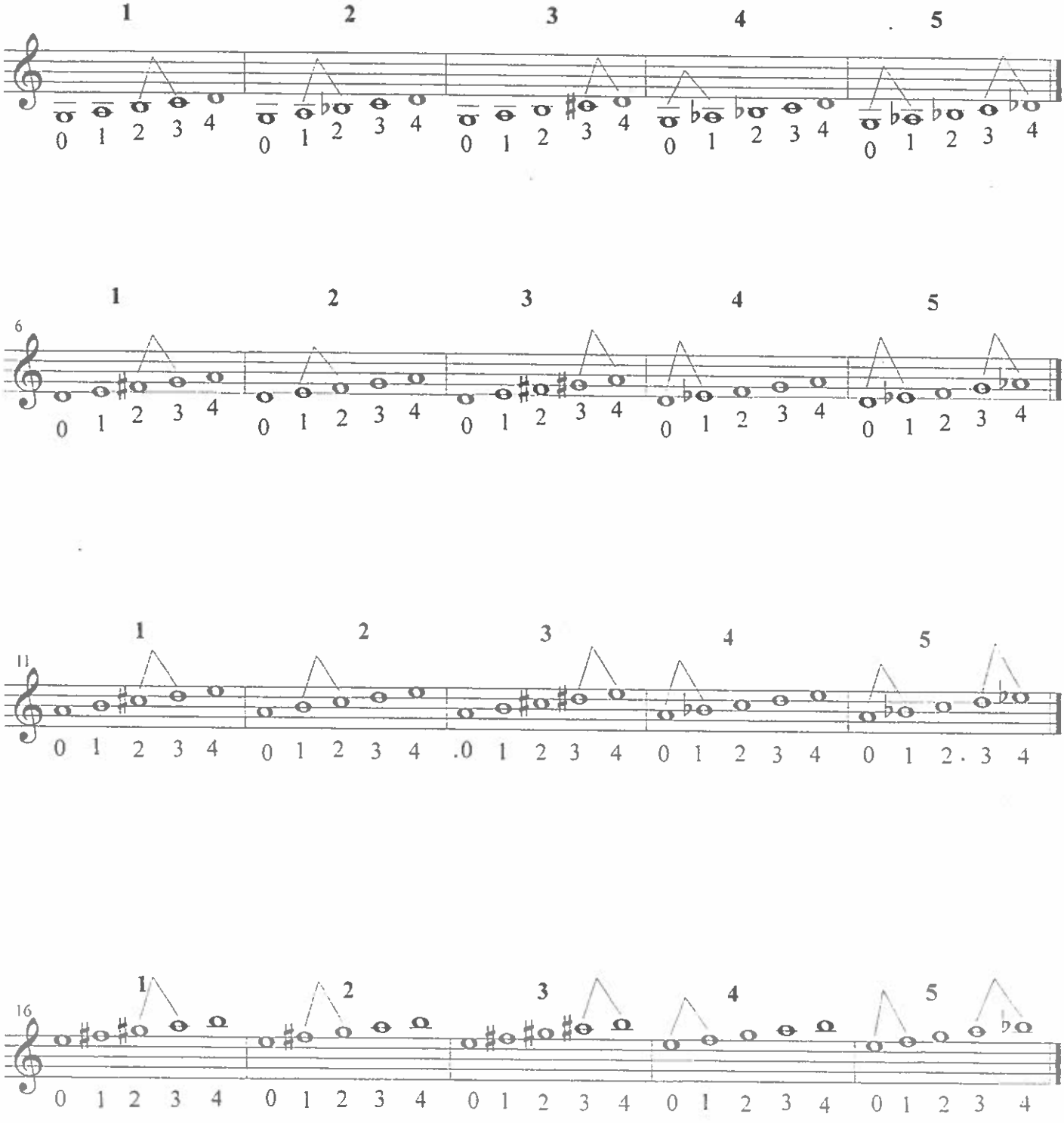
Tips for correct posture

- **Your head** should be directly over your neck, the chin slightly tucked in.
- **Shoulders** should be equal and squared back, not rounded or slumped.
- **Your midback** should remain straight and erect.
- **When standing** or sitting, your hips should be in line with the shoulders. The ankles should be in line with the hips.

Source: Rio Vista Outpatient Physical Rehabilitation Center.

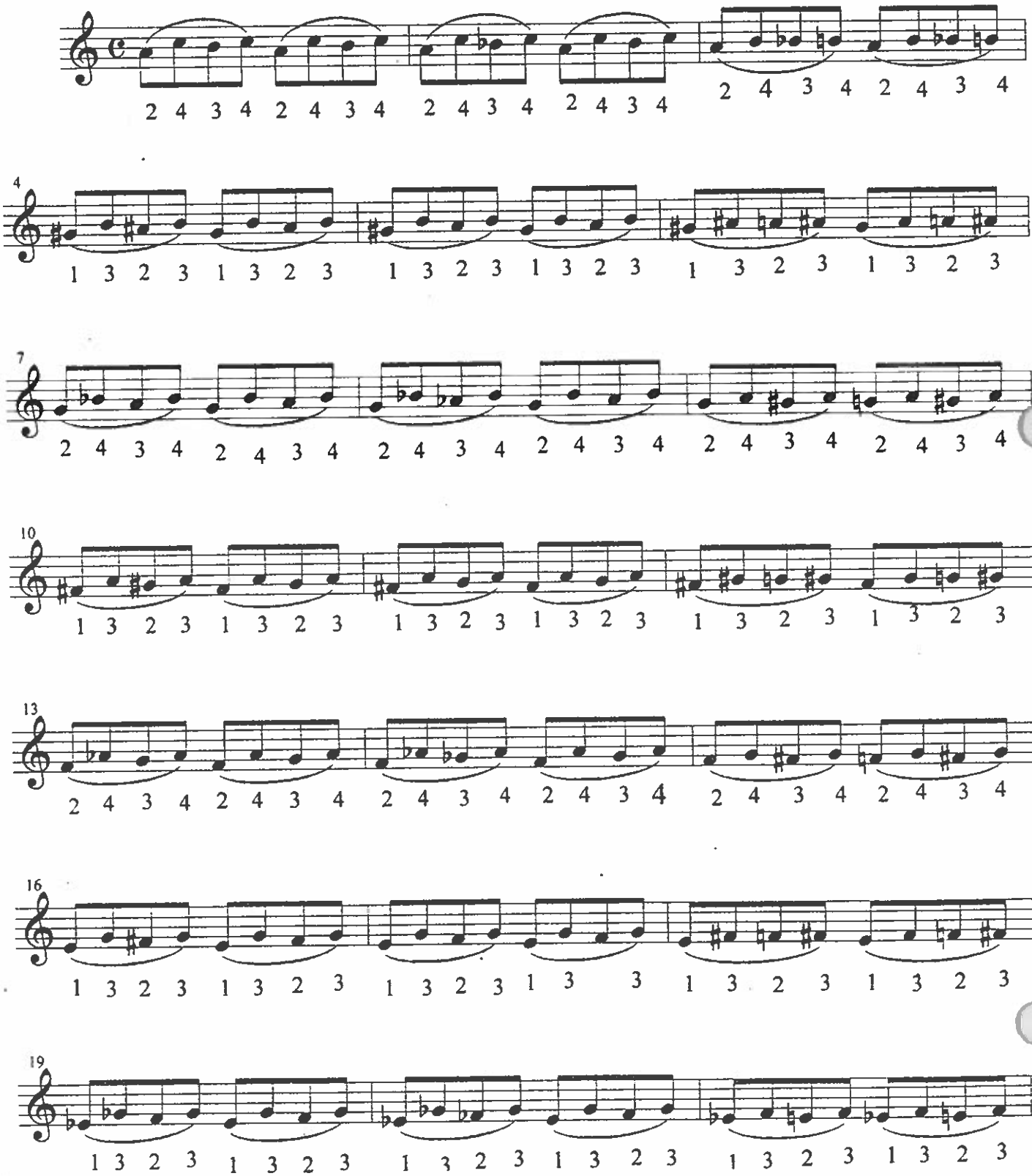
Tessie Moton, left, demonstrates the proper position for the body when lifting an object. She's using the muscles in her legs to bear most of the weight. This can help avoid injury. When lifting, Moton advises, never twist the body at the waist toward one side. It's better to move the feet in the direction you intend to go.

VIOLIN FINGER PATTERNS



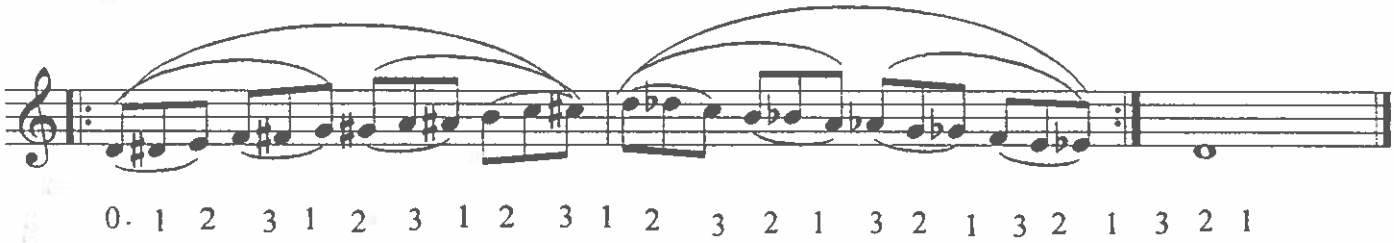
LEFT HAND ARTICULATION

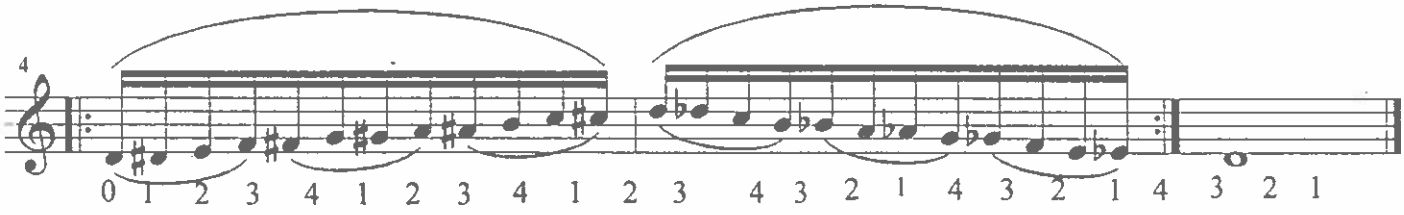
VIOLIN



CHROMATIC SCALE ON ONESTRING

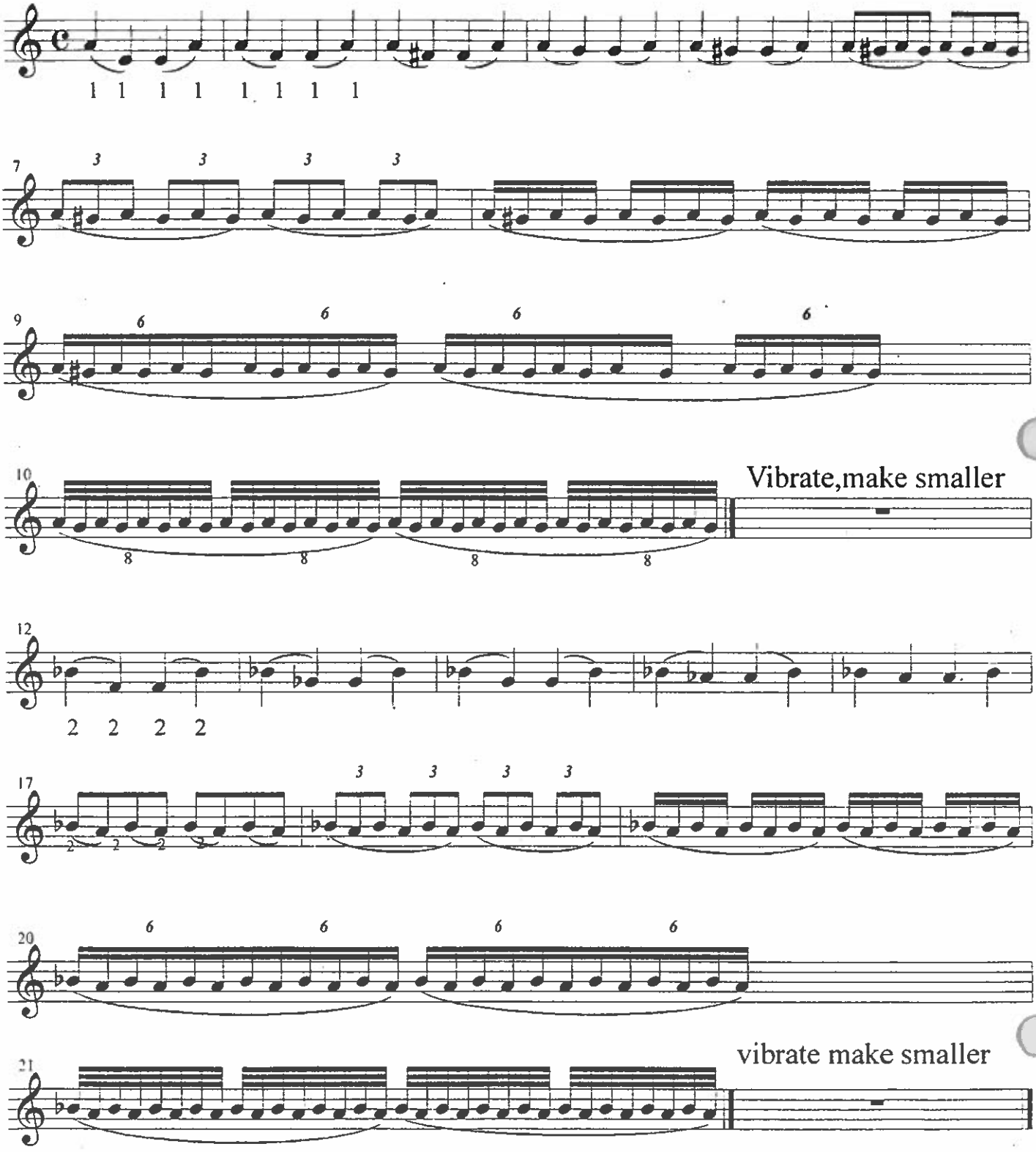
VIOLIN





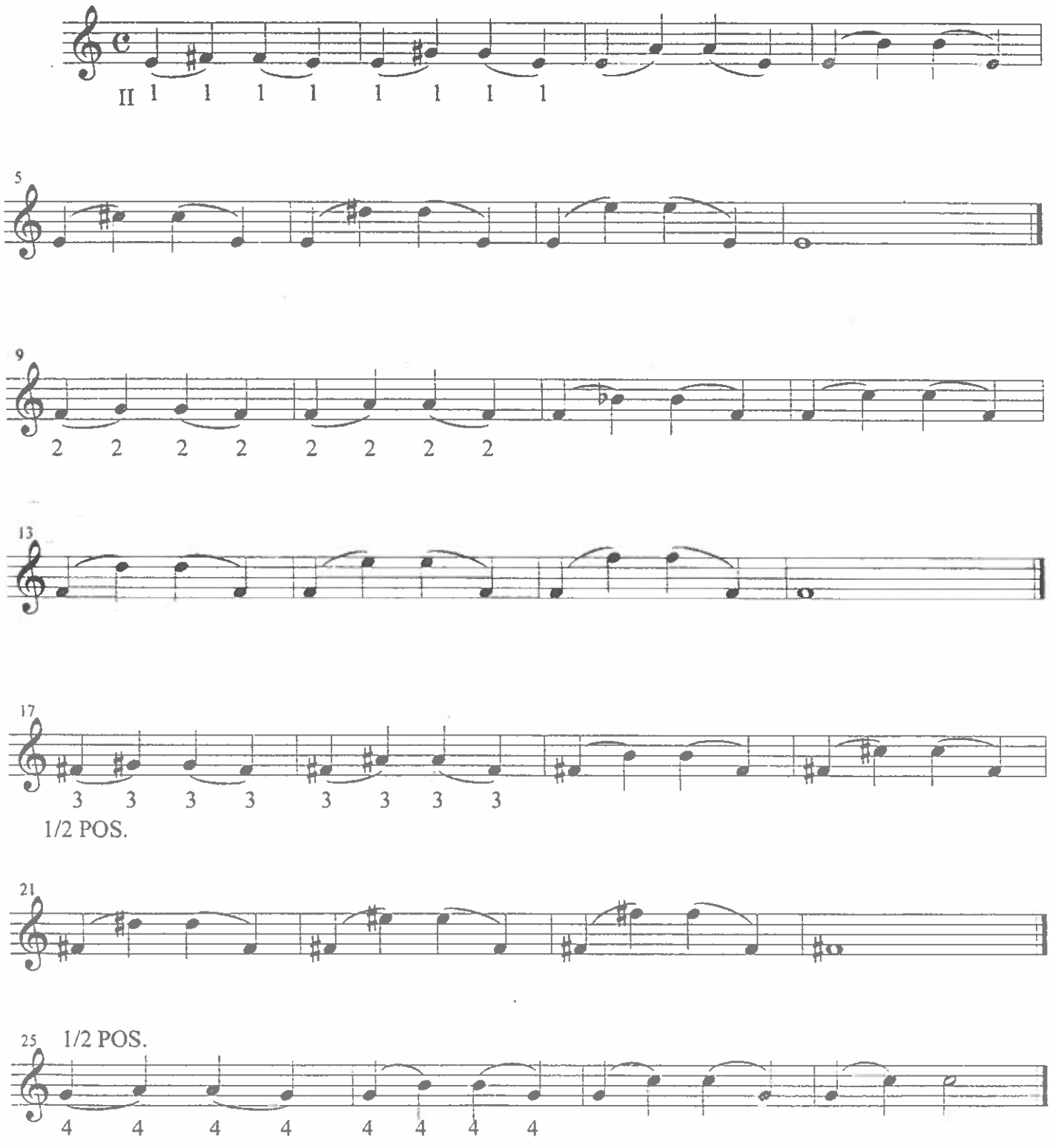
VIBRATO/ SHIFTING EXERCISE

VIOLIN



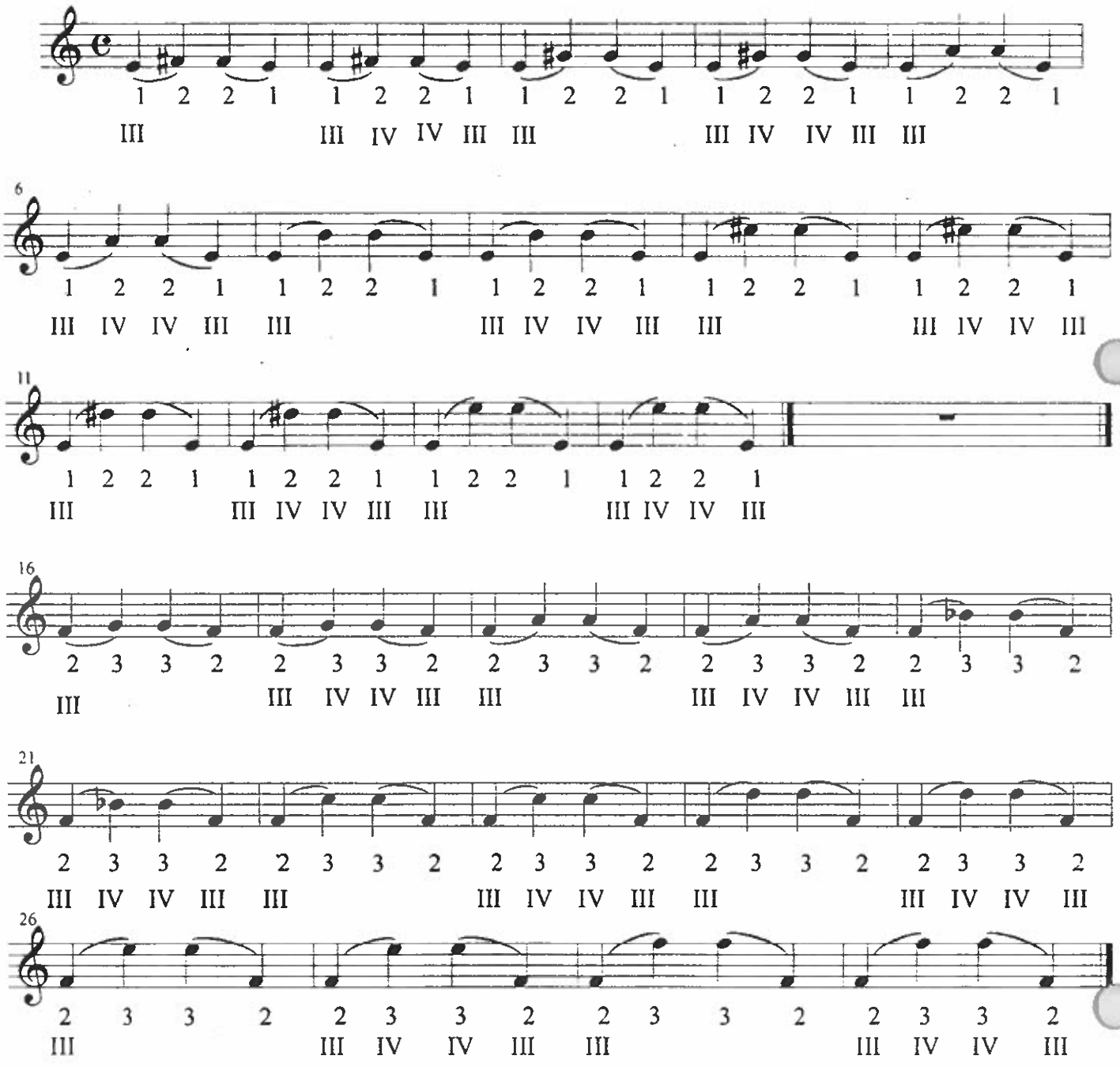
SHIFTING ONE STRING,ONE FINGER

VIOLIN



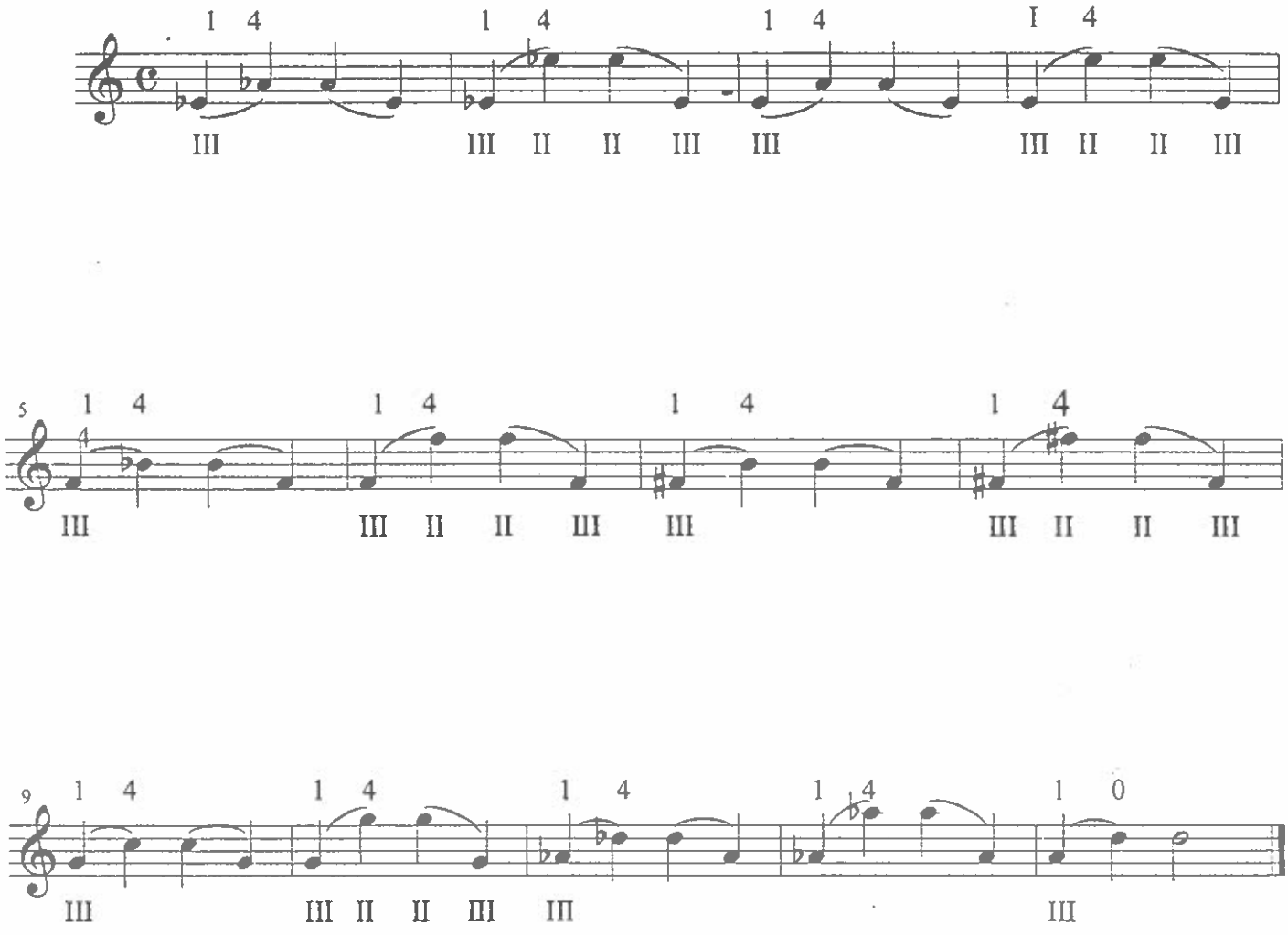
SHIFTING-To next finger on same string
to next finger on next string

VIOLIN



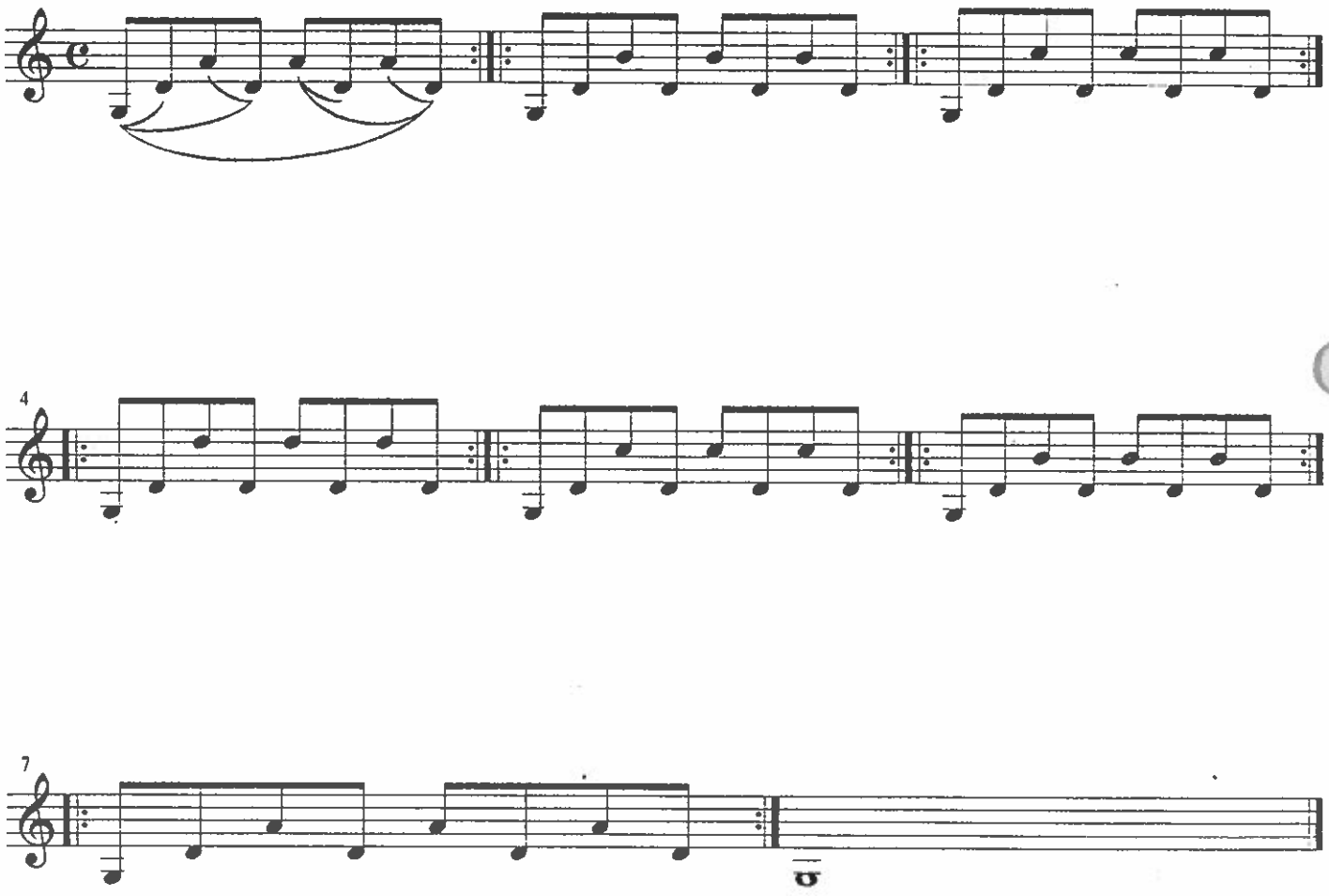
Perfect fourth octave stretch

VIOLIN



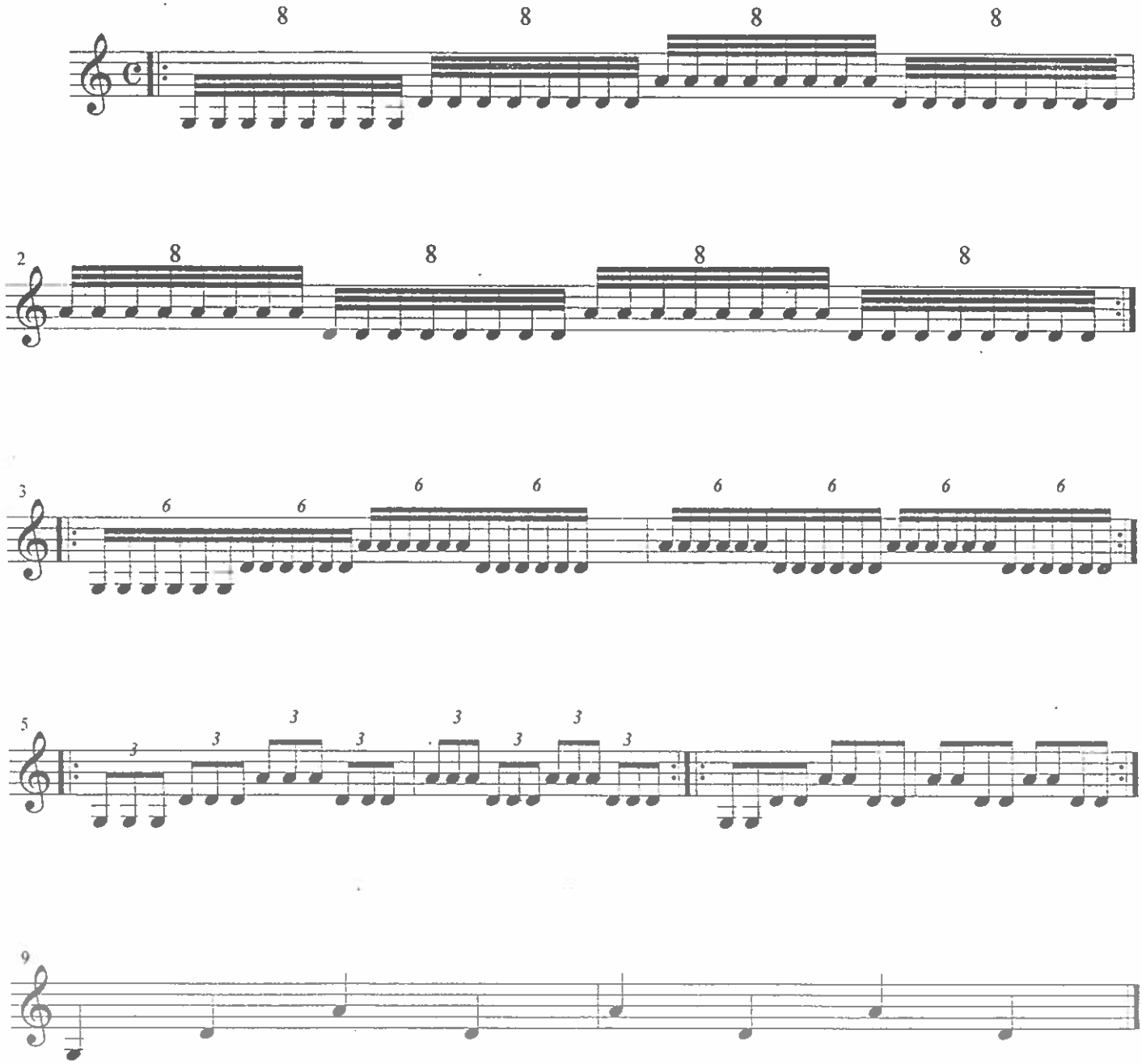
Crossing strings,slurred and separate

VIOLIN



SPICATTO/CROSSING STRING EXERCISE VIOLIN

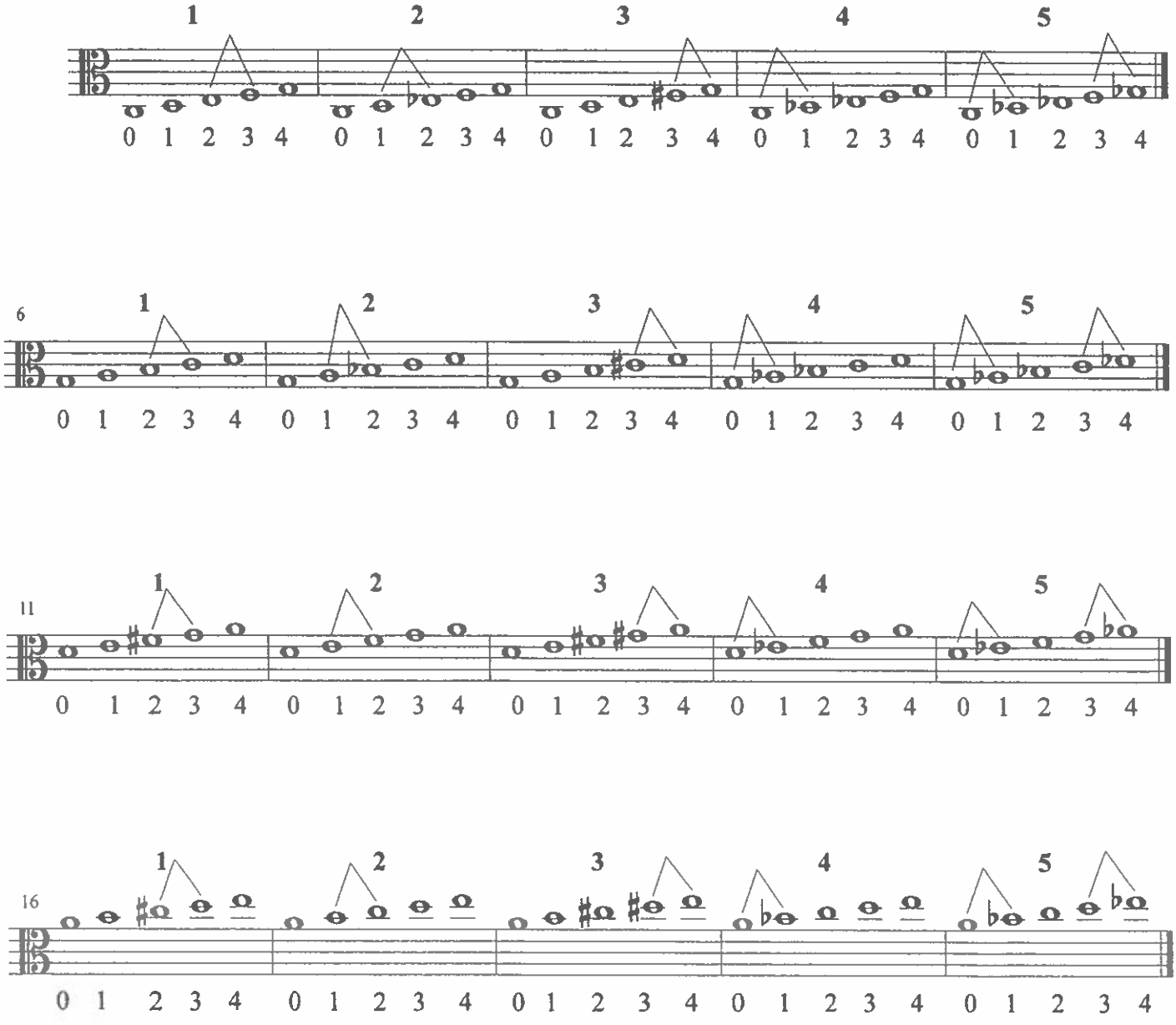
VIOLIN



Each exercise will continue in a similar manner using the notes of the string crossing

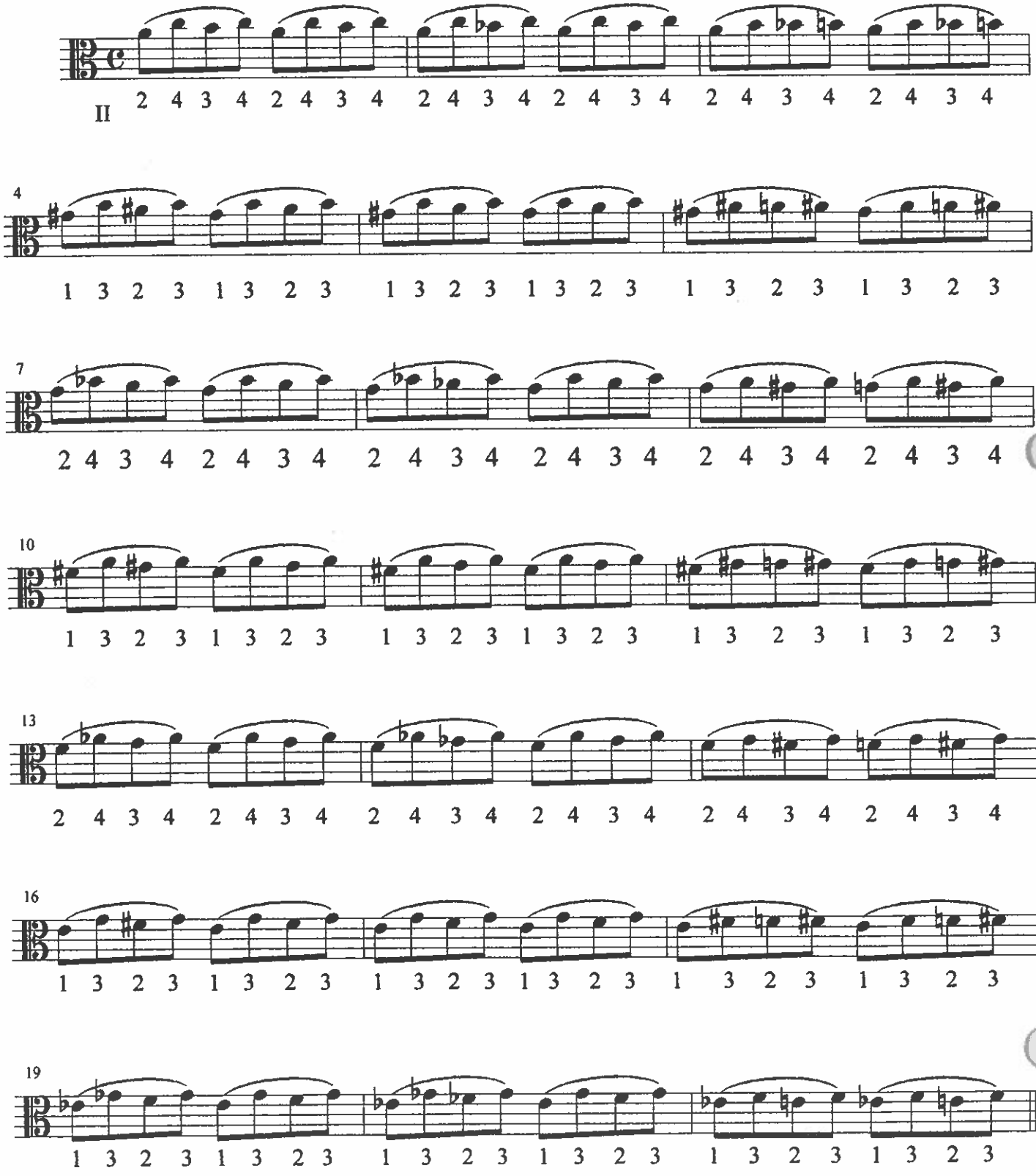
FINGER PATTERNS VIOLA

VIOLA



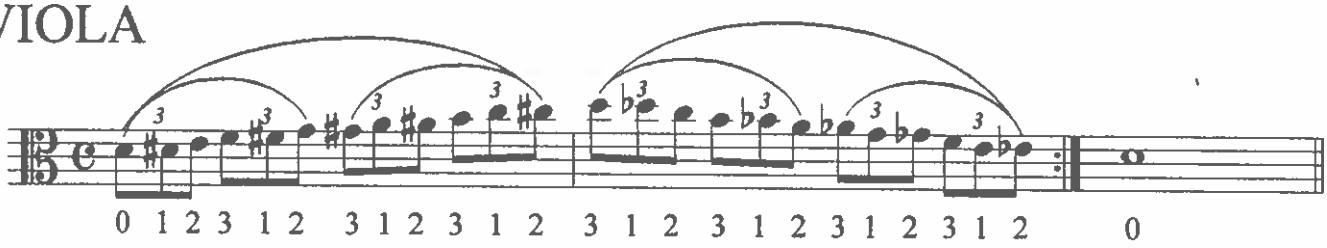
LEFT HAND ARTICULATION

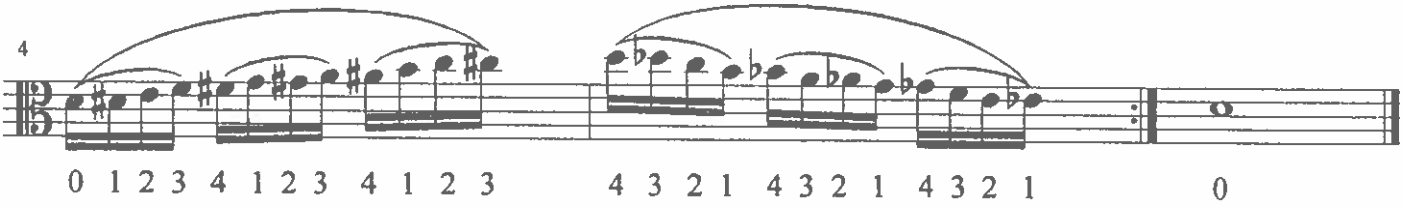
VIOLA



V. CHROMATIC SCALE ON ONE STRING

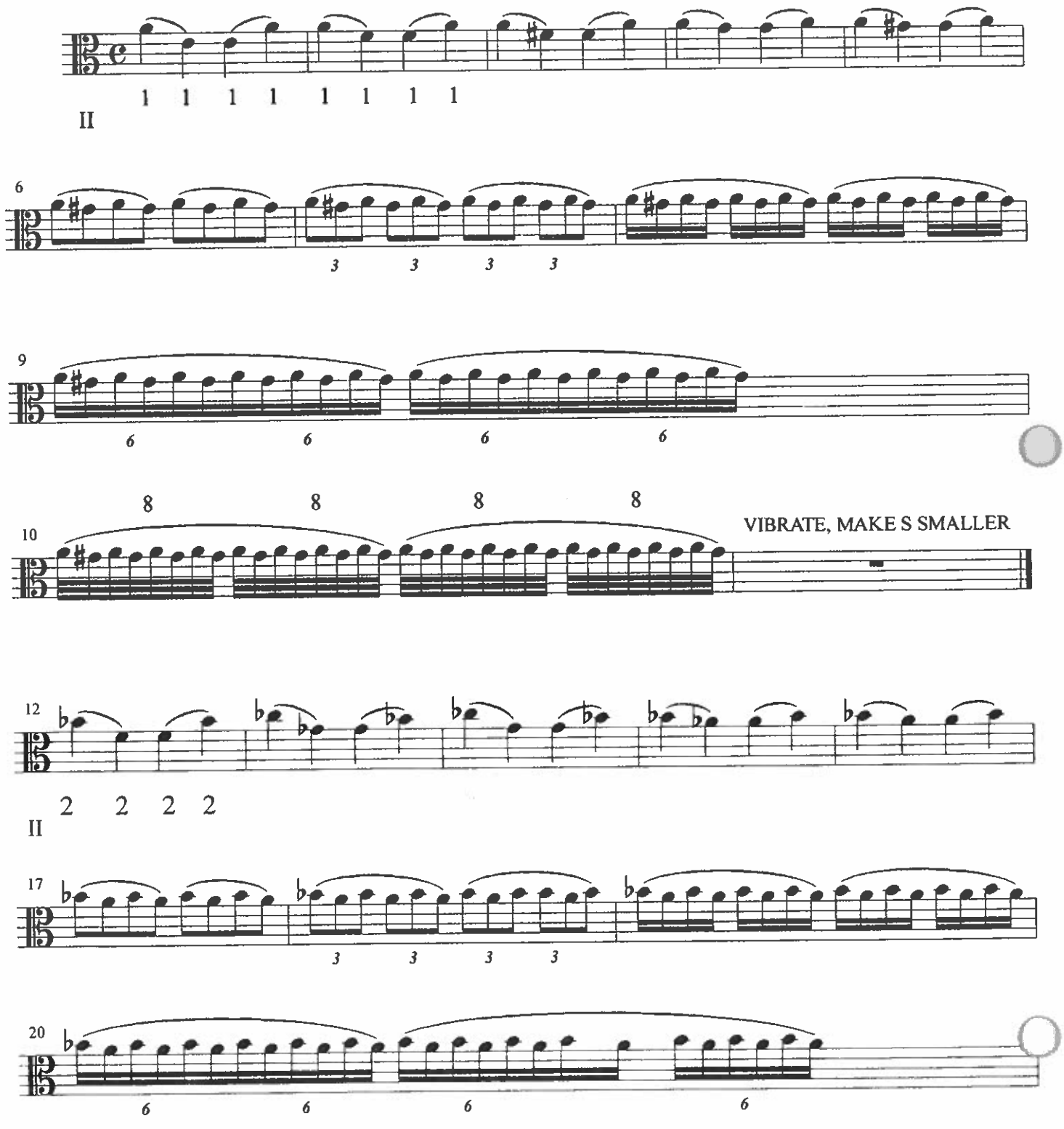
VIOLA





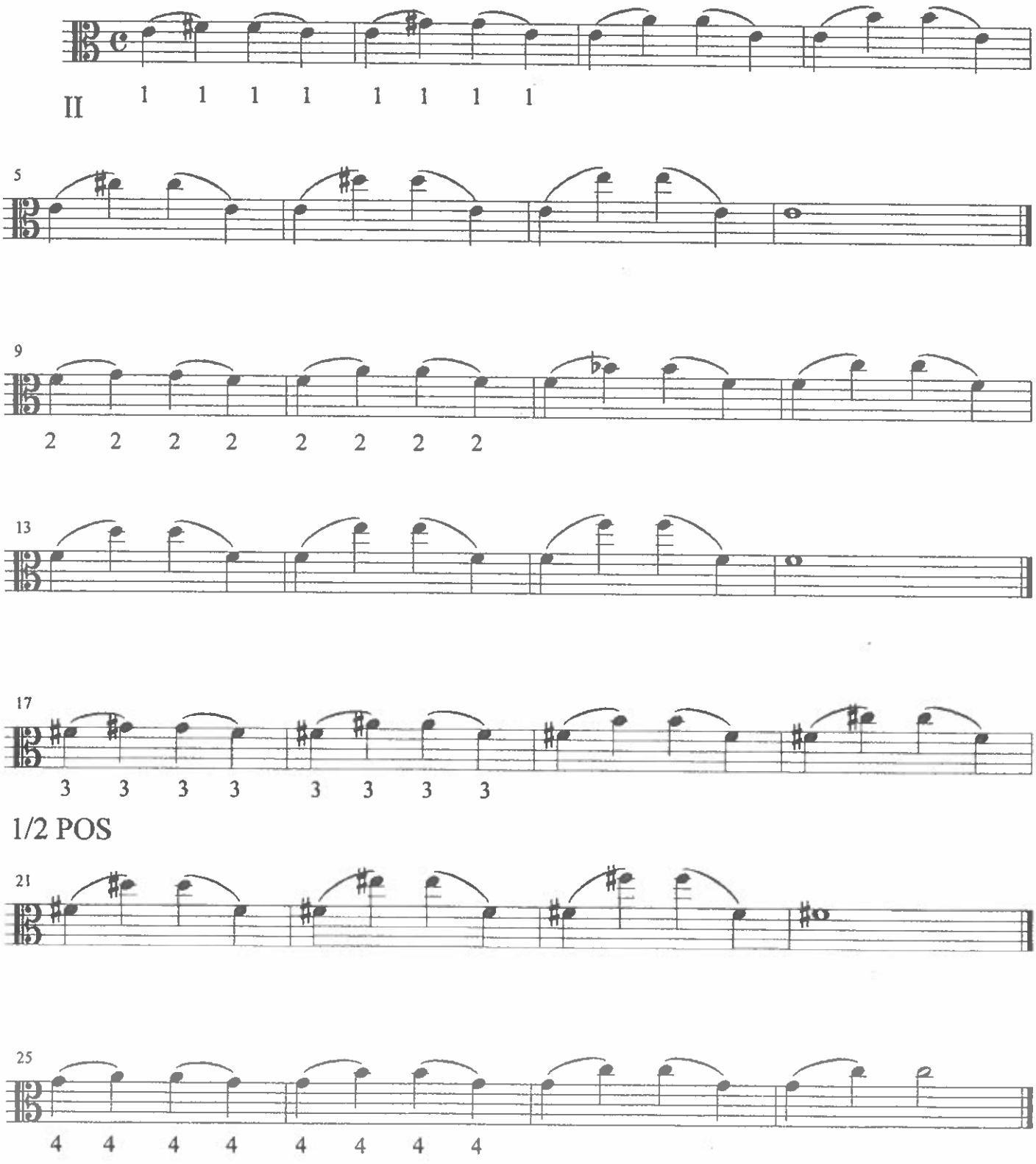
V. VIBRATO/SHIFTING EXERCISE

VIOLA



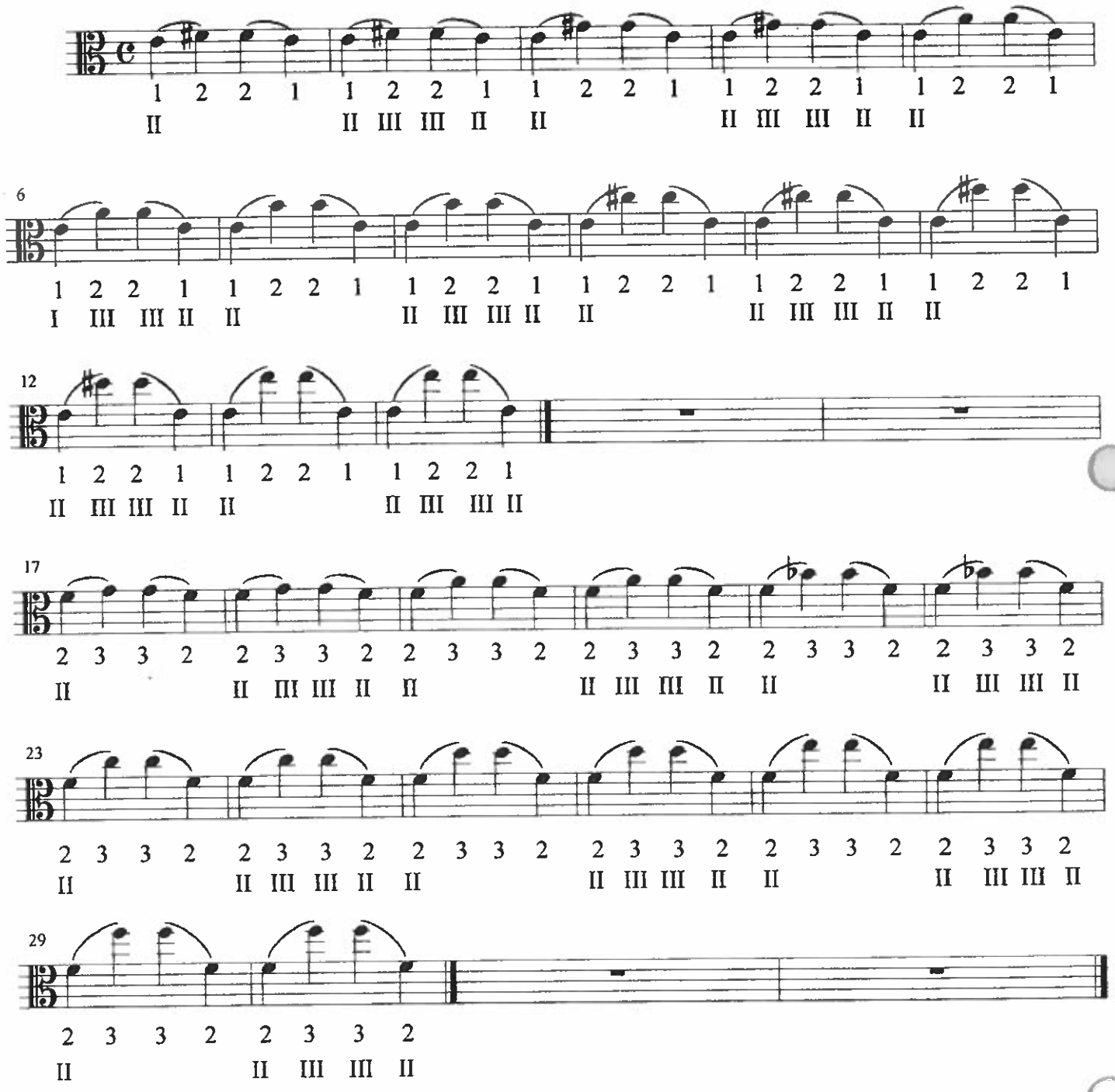
SHIFTING ONE STRING ONE FINGER

VIOLA



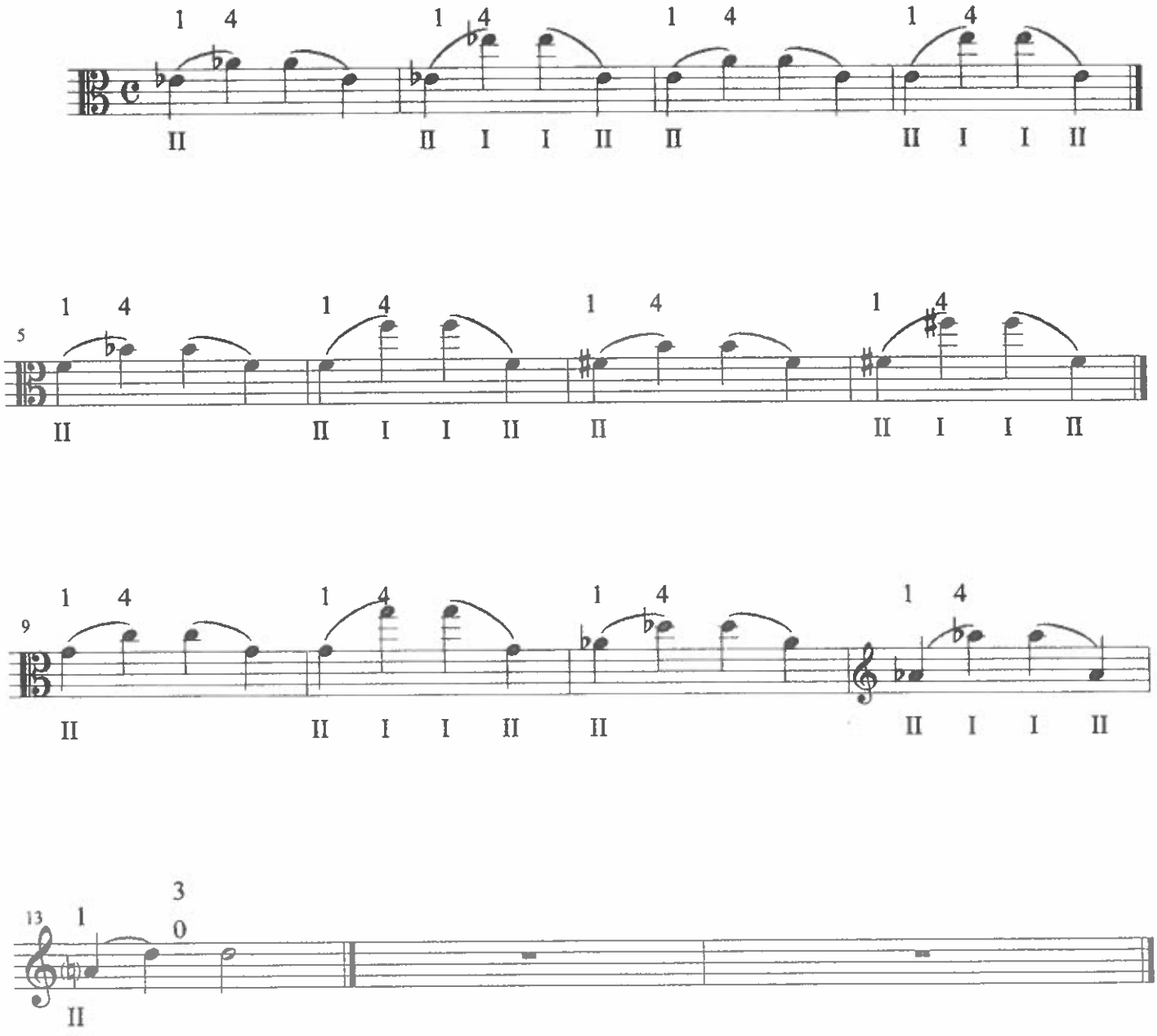
SHIFTING To next finger on same string to next finger on next strings

VIOLA



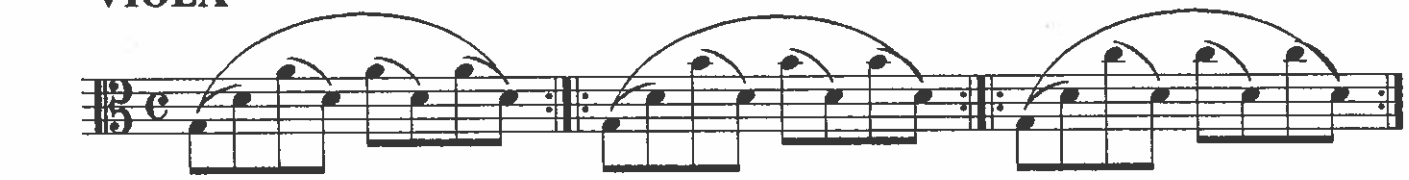
PERFECT FOURTH OCTAVE INTERVAL

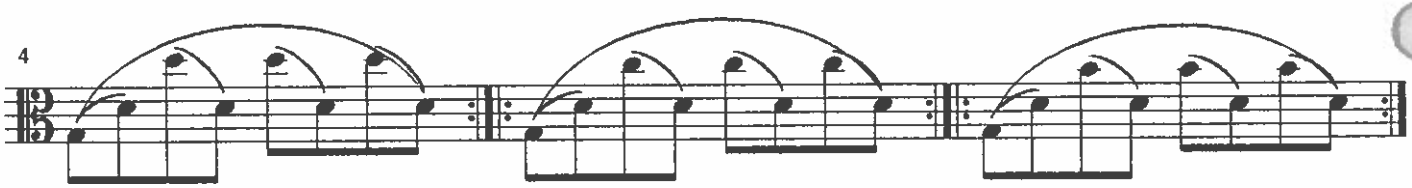
VIOLA

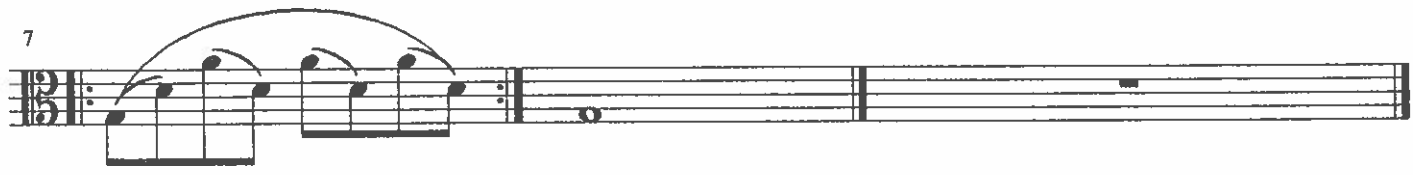


CROSSING STRINGS SLURRED AND SEPARATE

VIOLA

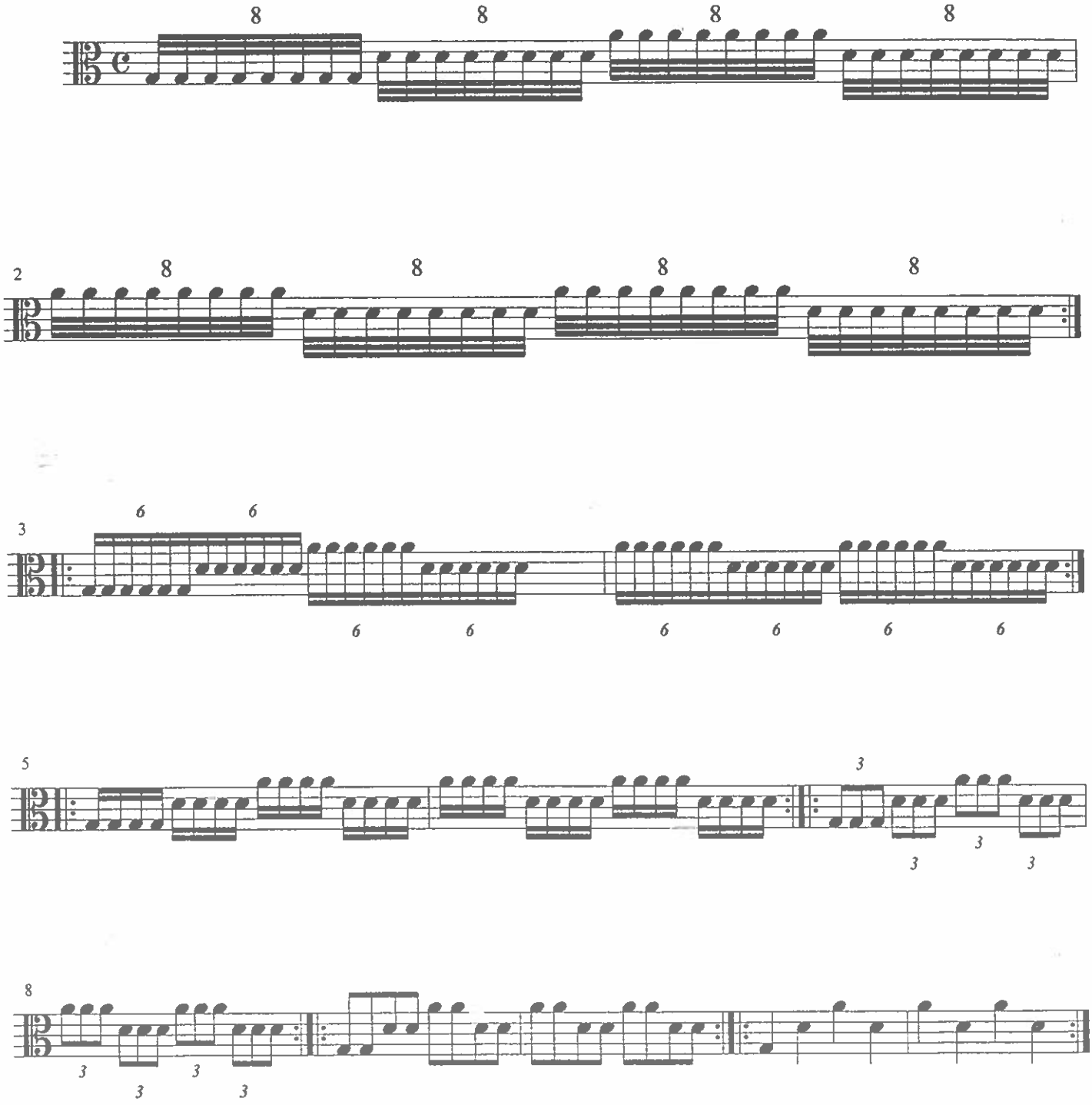






SPICATTO/CROSSING STRING EXERCISE VIOLA

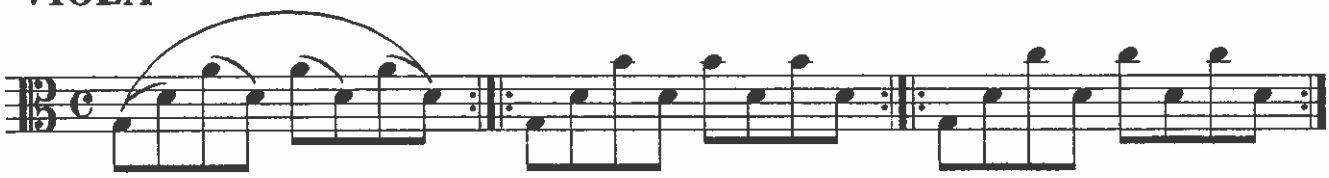
VIOLA

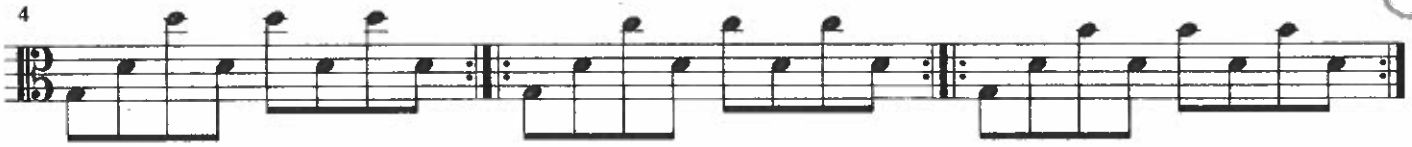


Each exercise will continue in a similar manner using the notes of the string crossing exercise

CROSSING STRINGS SLURRED AND SEPARATE

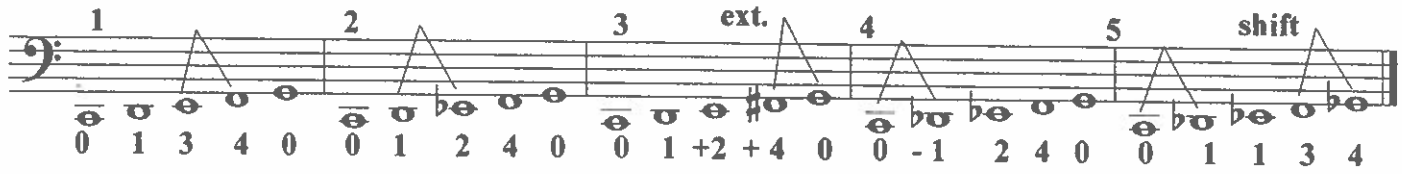
VIOLA

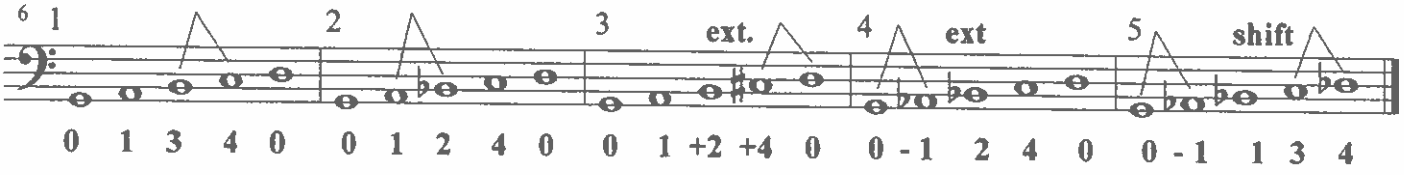


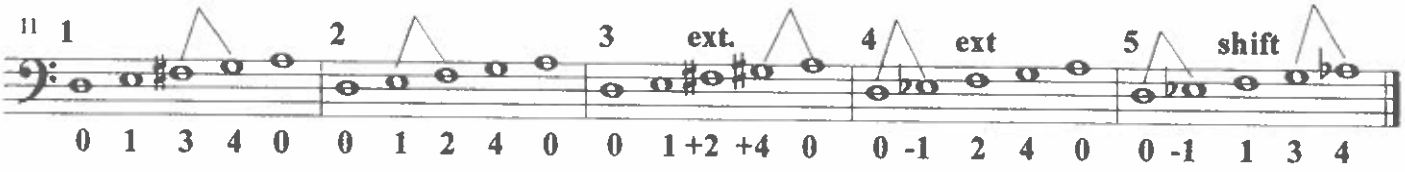


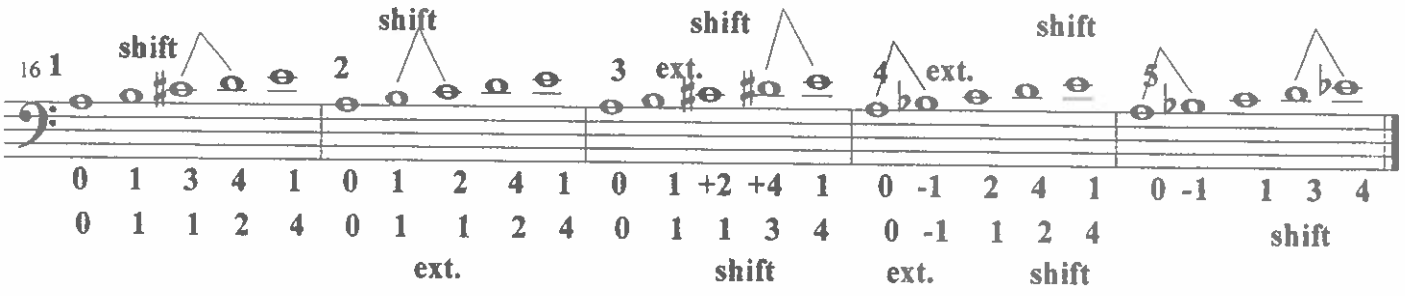
CELLO FINGER PATTERNS

CELLO



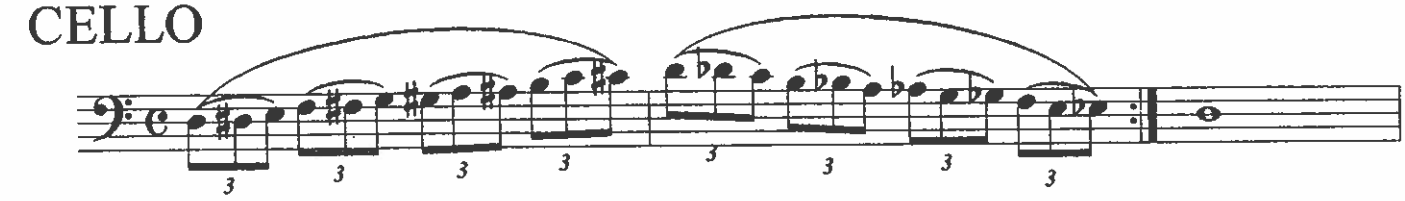


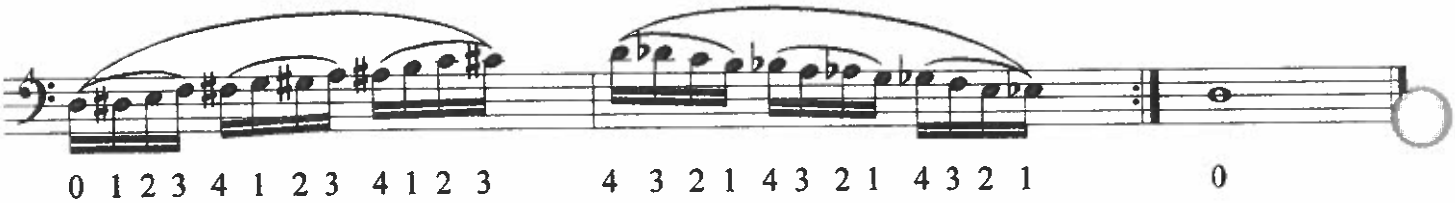




CHROMATIC SCALE ON ONE STRING CELLO

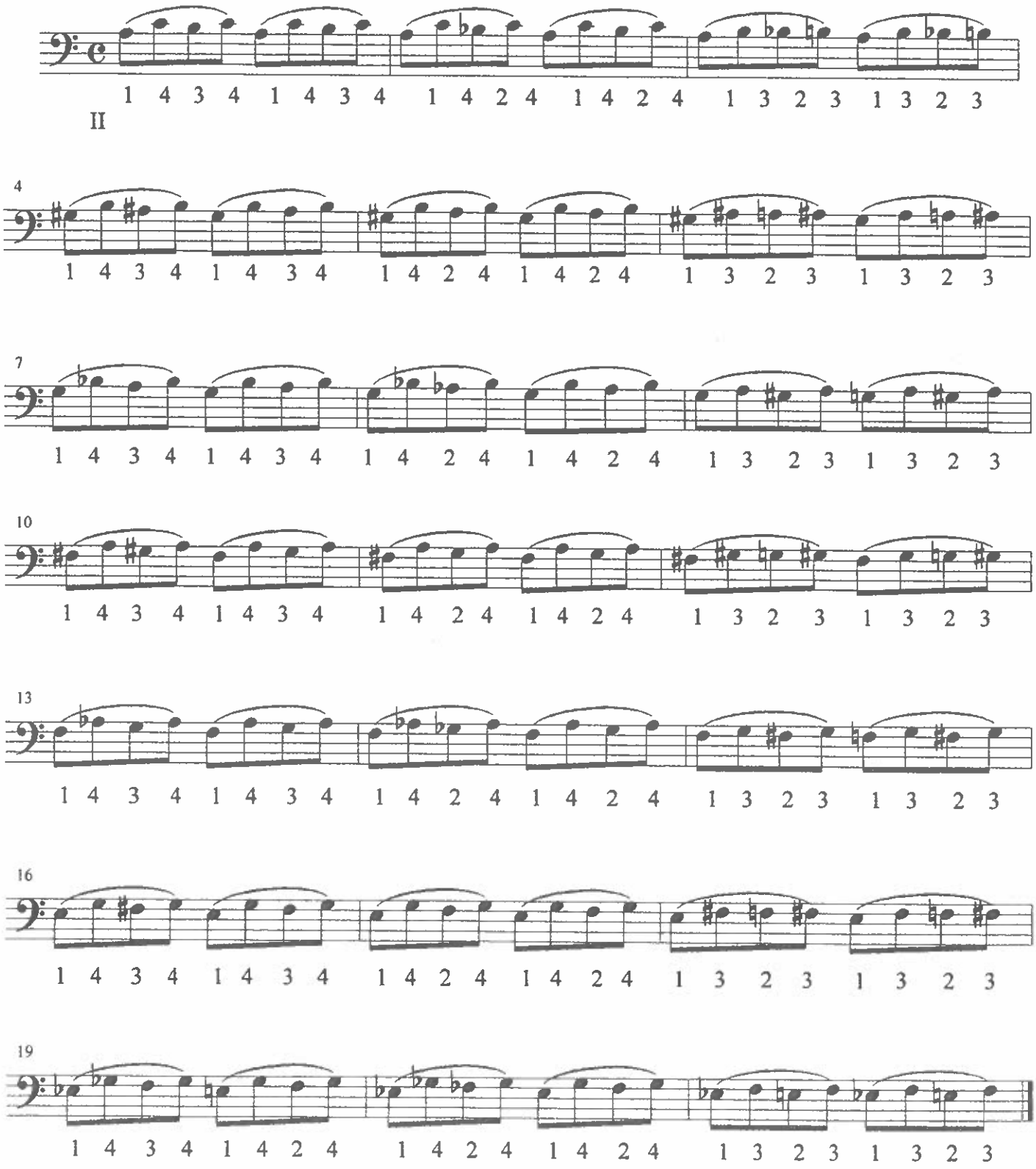
CELLO





LEFT HAND ARTICULATION

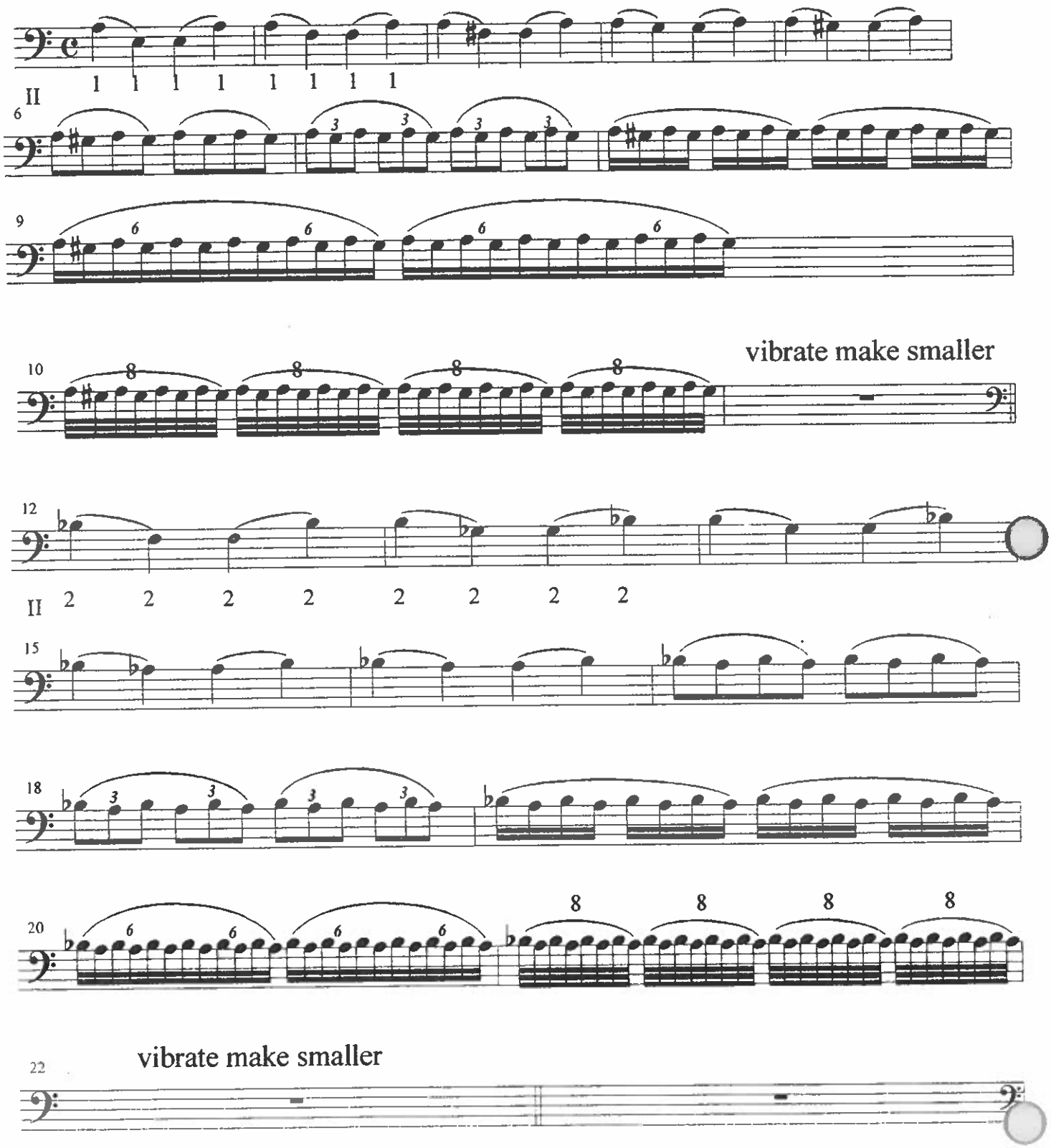
CELLO



EXECUTE THIS EXERCISE ON ALL FOUR STRINGS USING DIFFERENT RYTHM

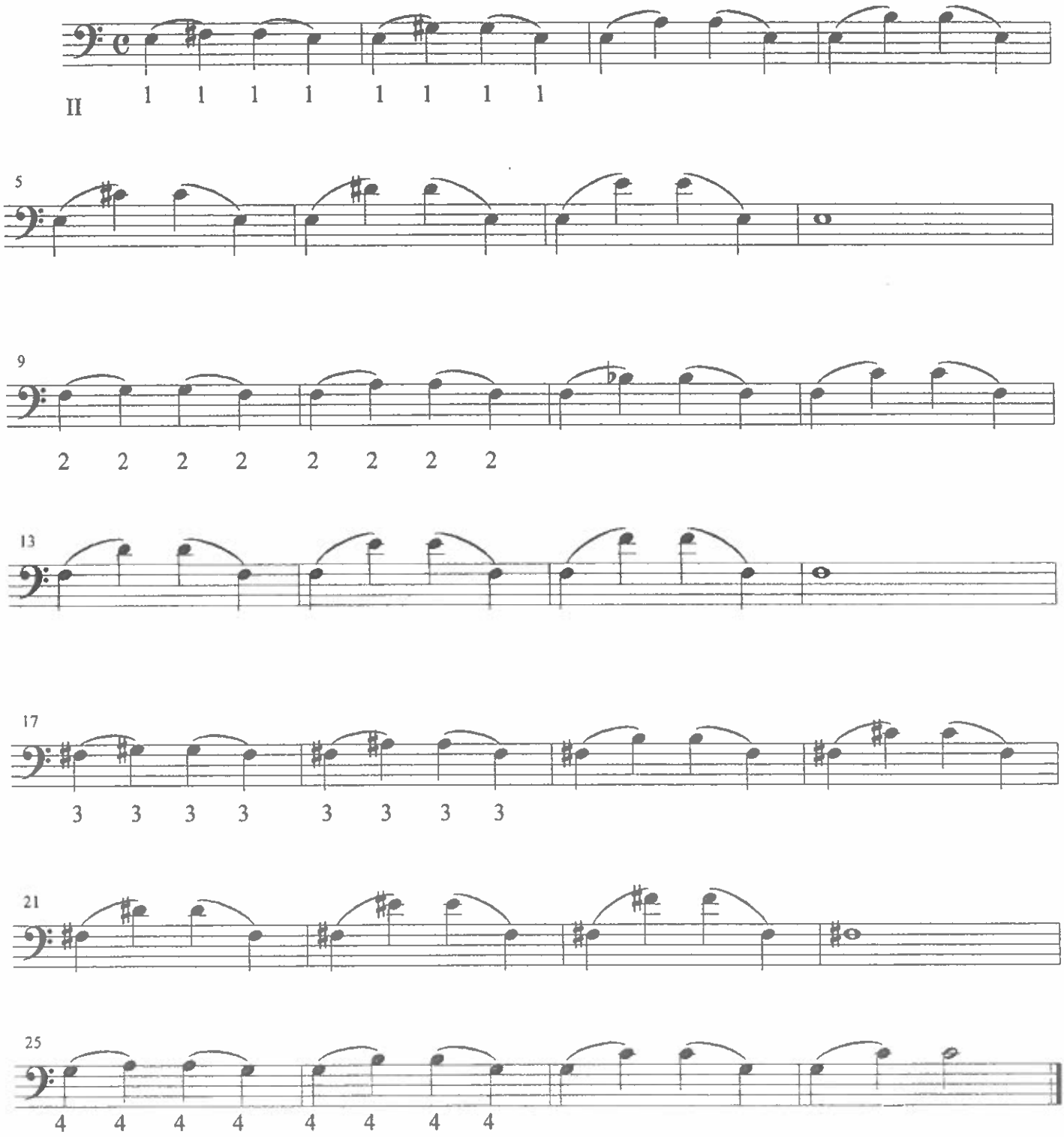
VIBRATO SHIFTING EXERCISE CELLO

CELLO



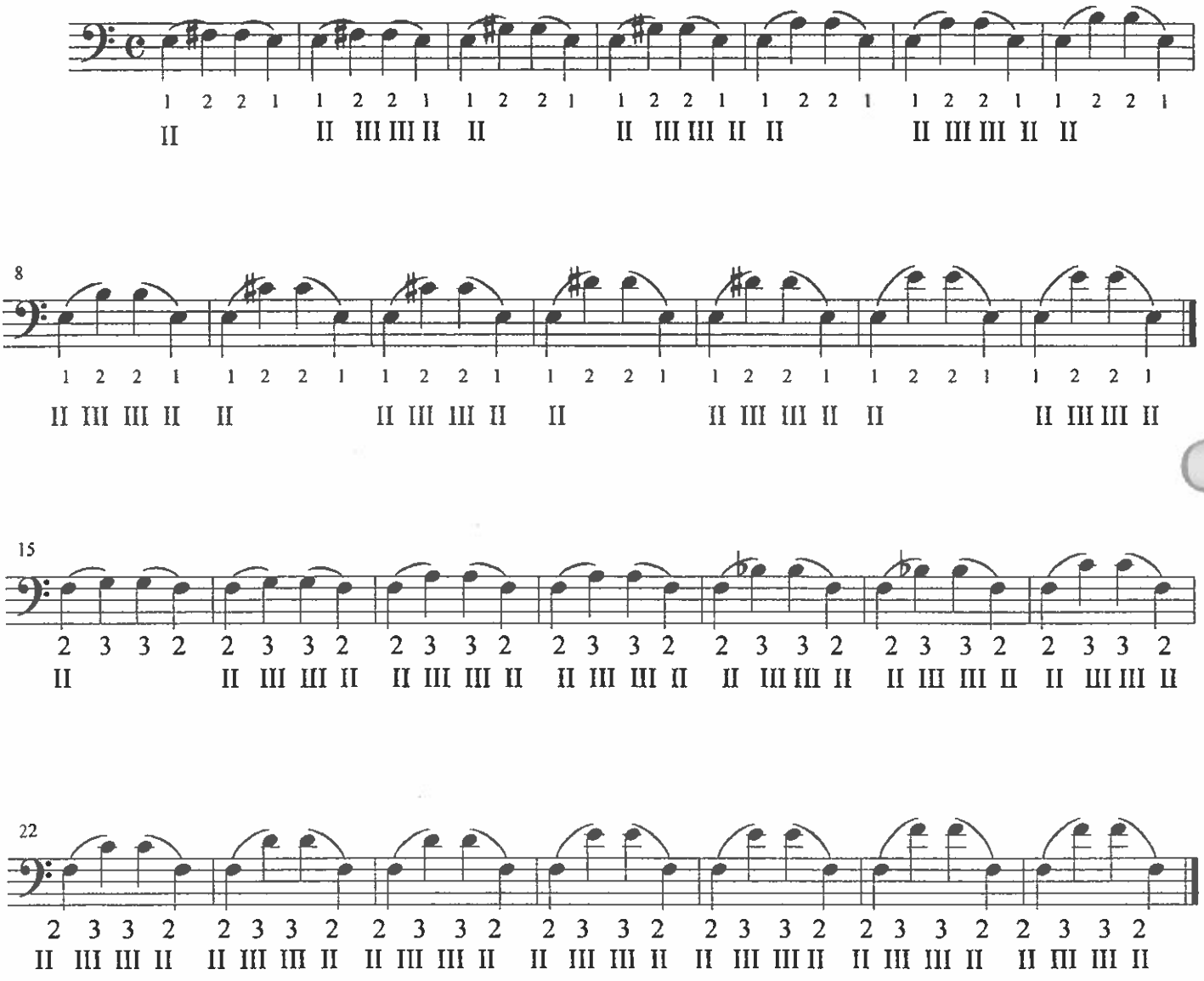
SHIFTING ONE STRING ONE FINGER CELLO

CELLO



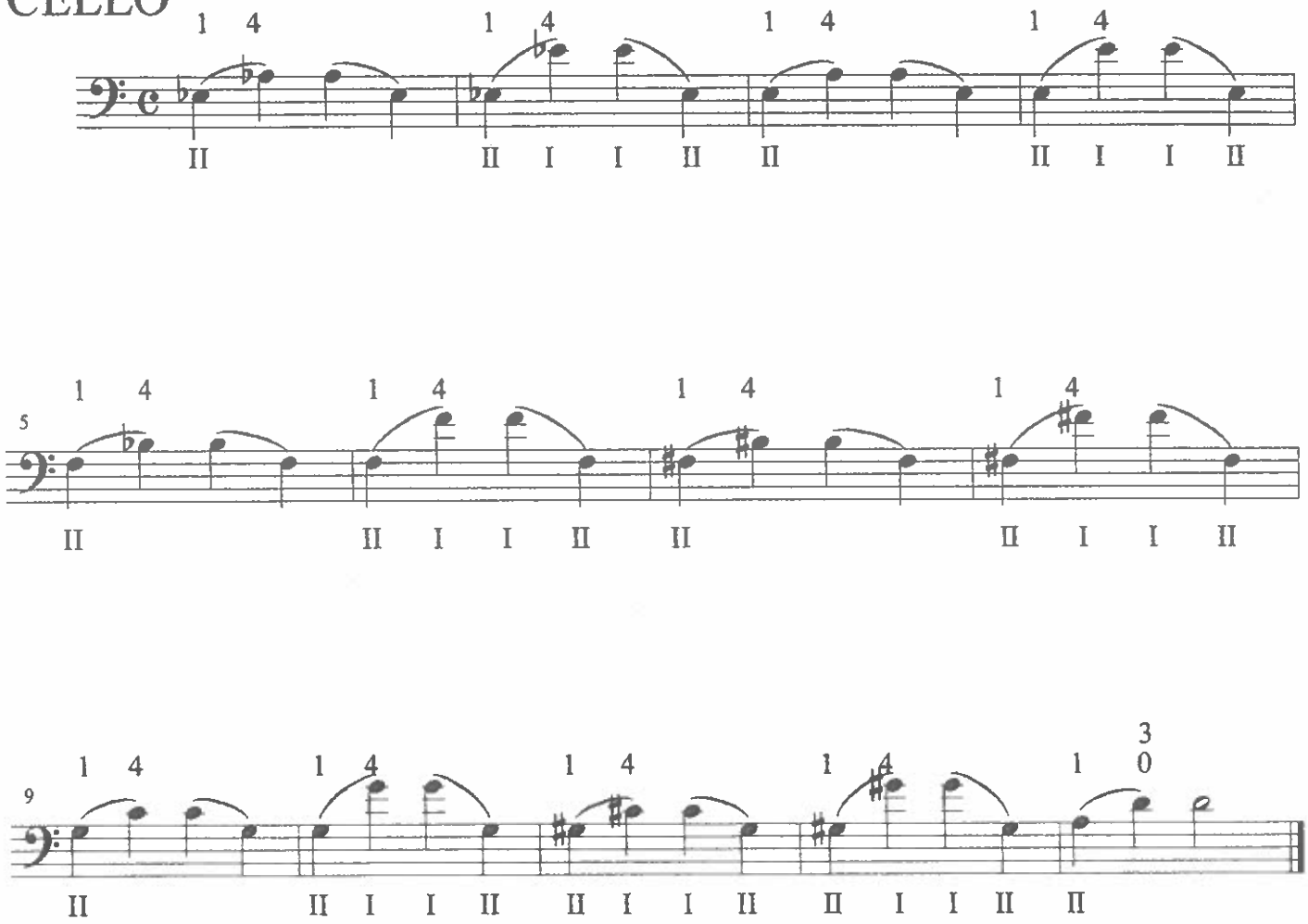
SHIFTING To next finger on same string to next finger on next string cello

CELLO



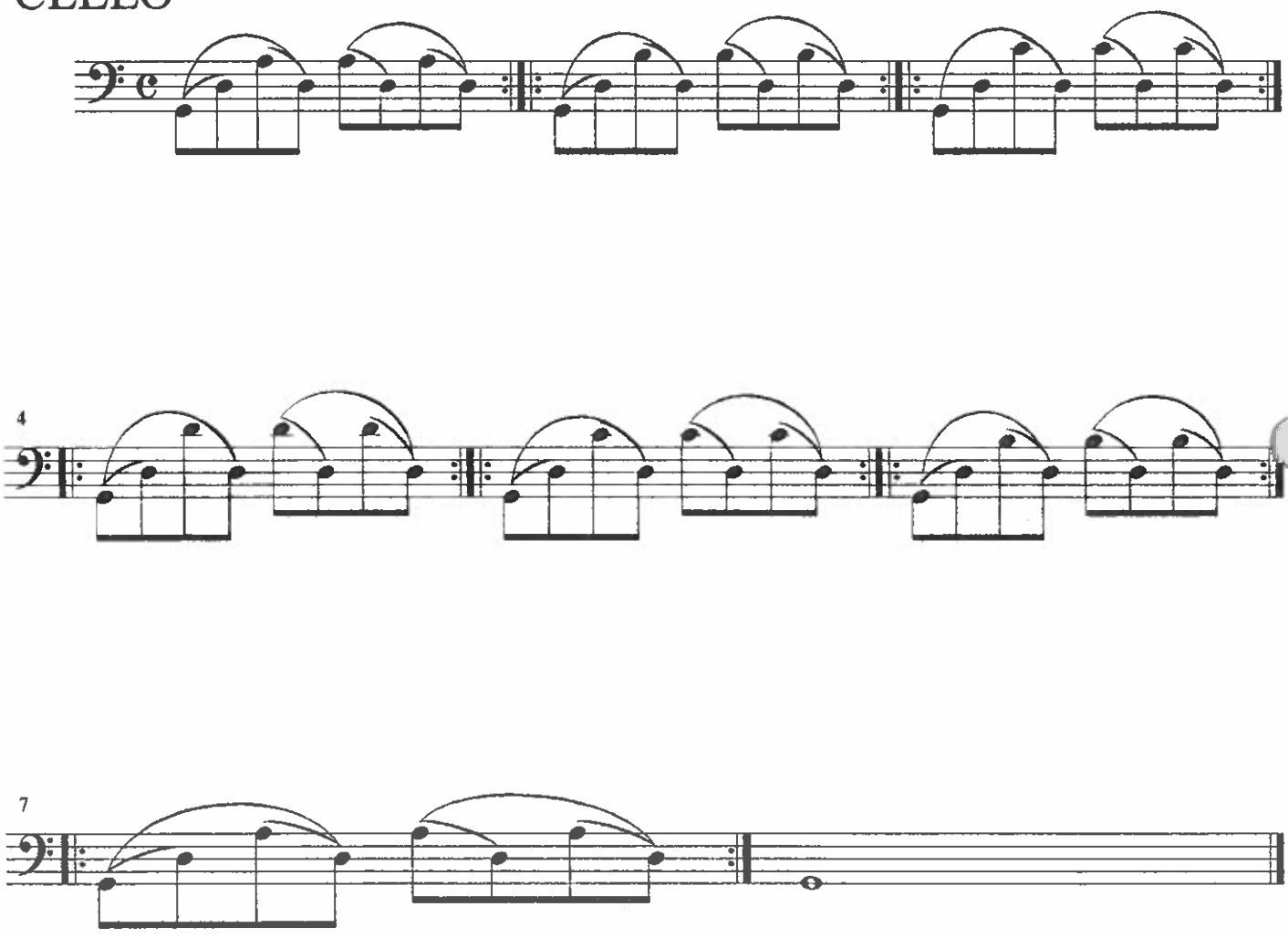
Perfect fourt Octave interval CELLO

CELLO



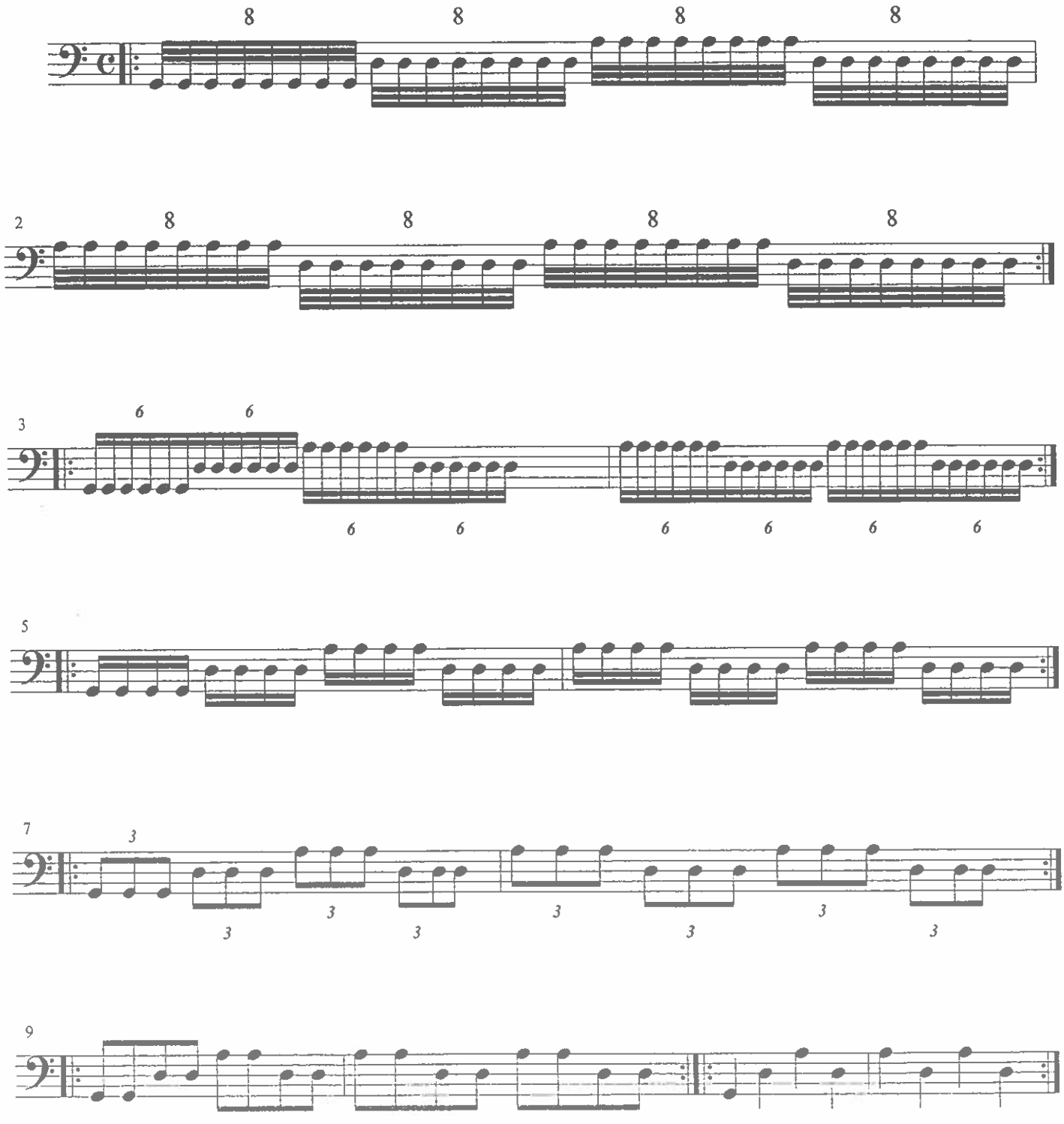
Crossing strings slurred and separate CELLO

CELLO



SPICATTO/CROSSING STRING EXERCISE , CELLO

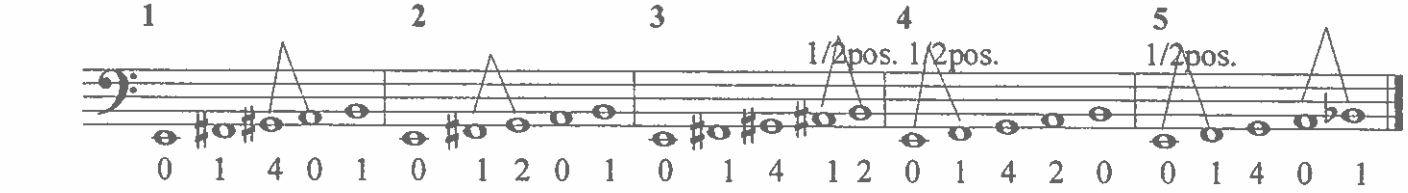
CELLO

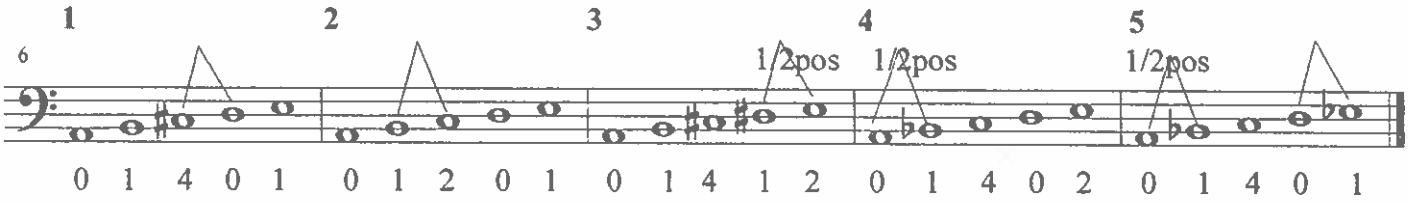


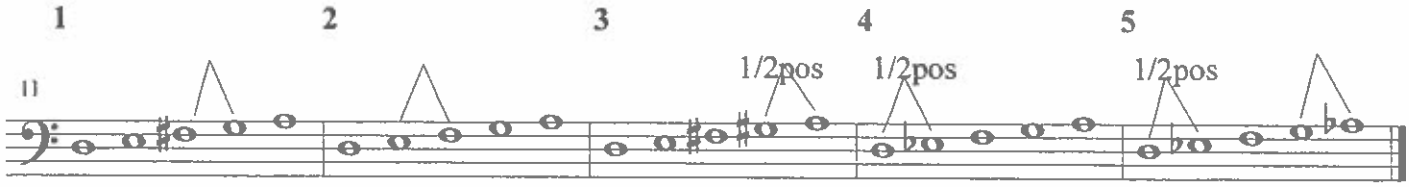
Each exercise will continue in a similar manner using the notes of the string crossing exercise

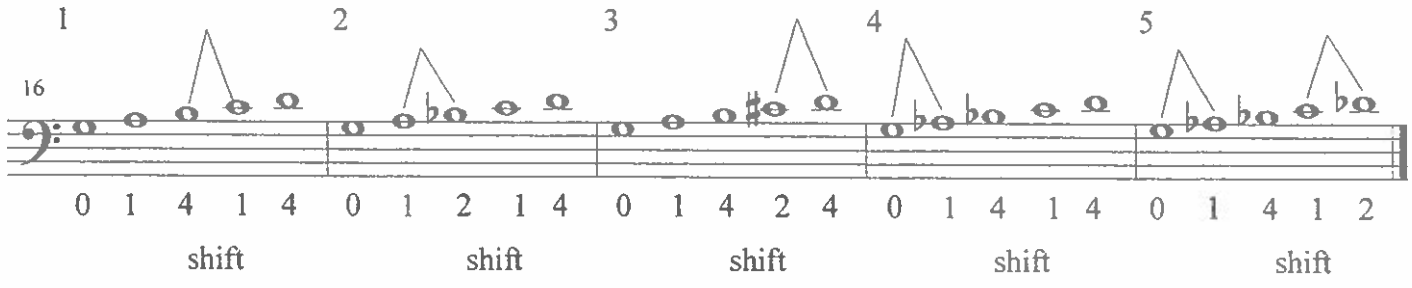
BASS FINGER PATTERNS

BASS



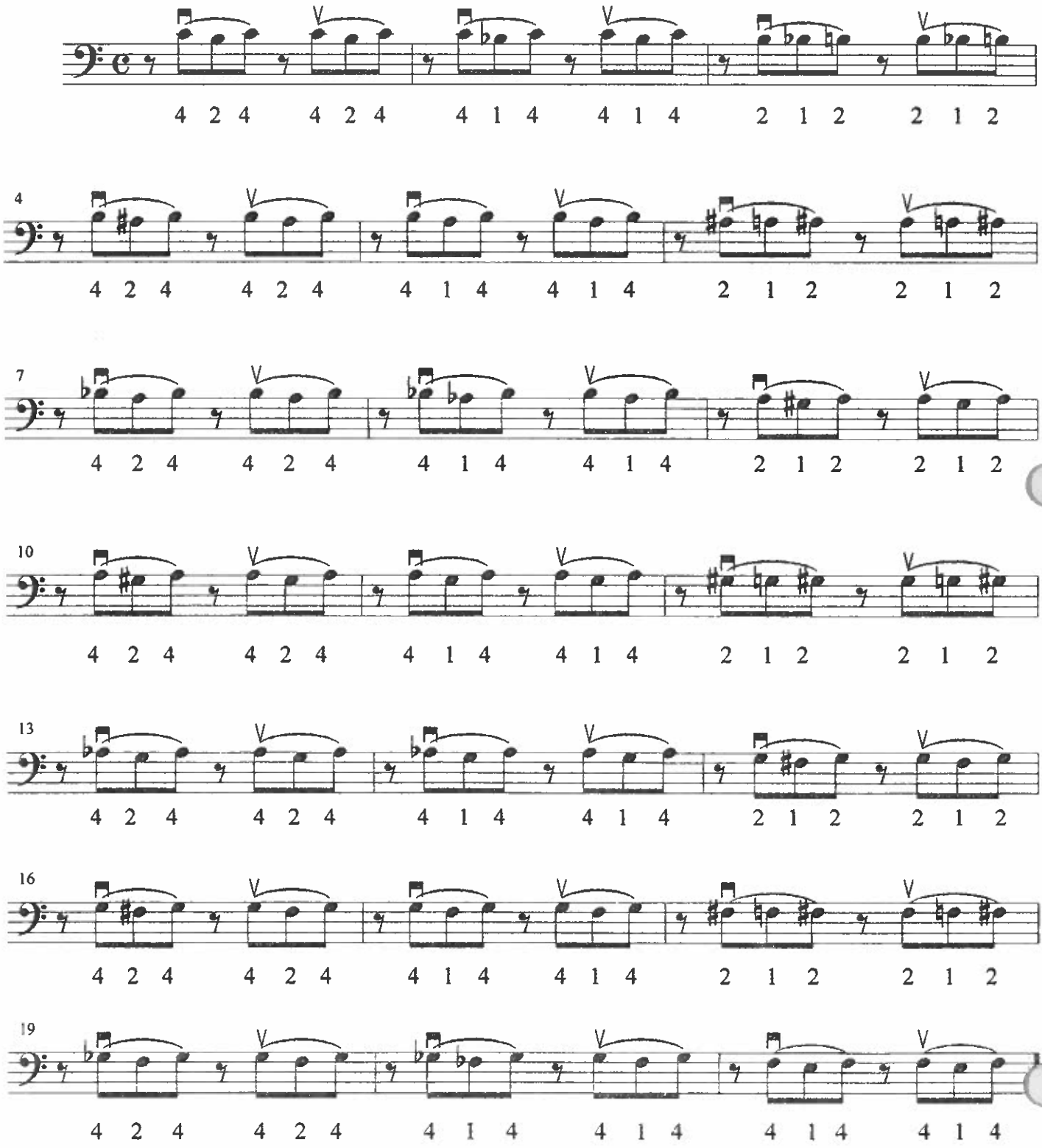






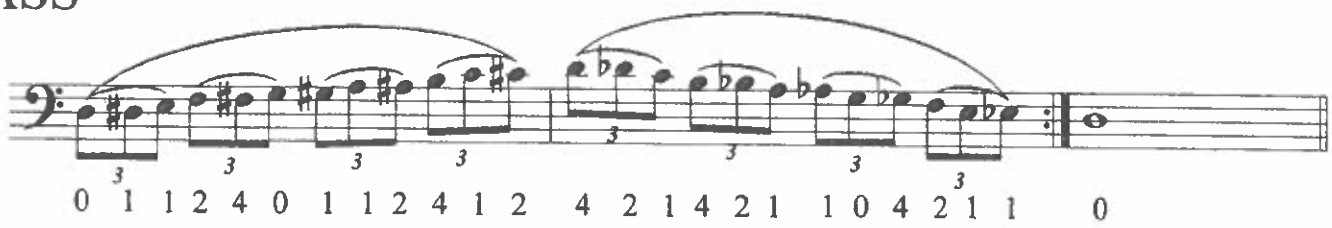
LEFT HAND ARTICULATION BASS

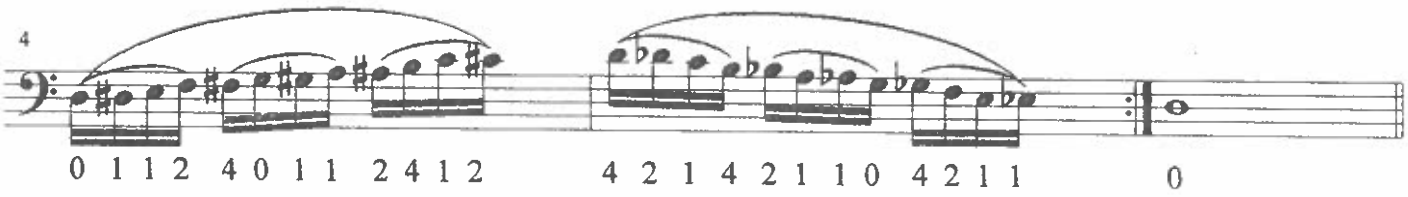
BASS



CHROMATIC SCALE ON ONE STRING BASS

BASS

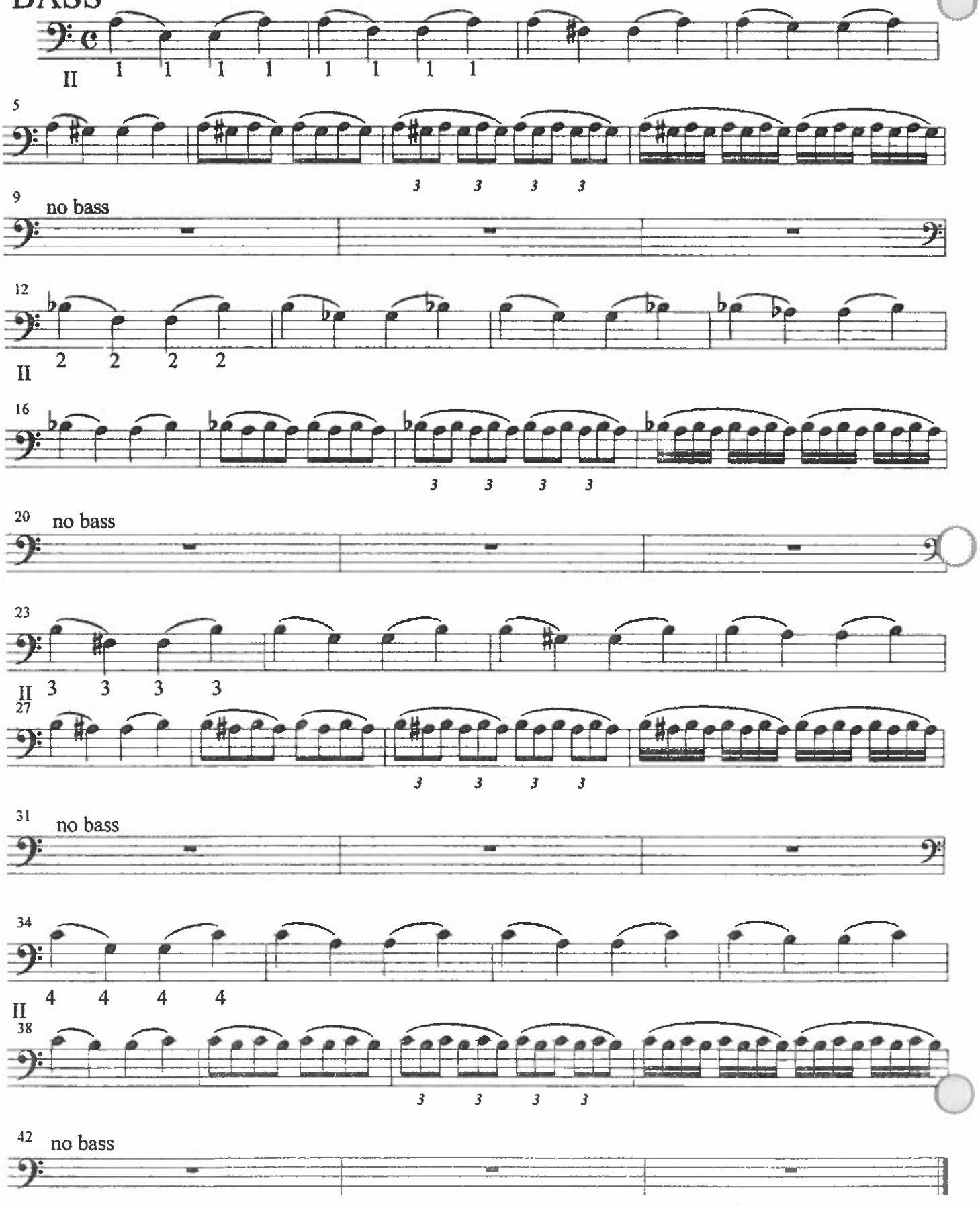




III

VIBRATO/SHIFTING EXERCISE BASS

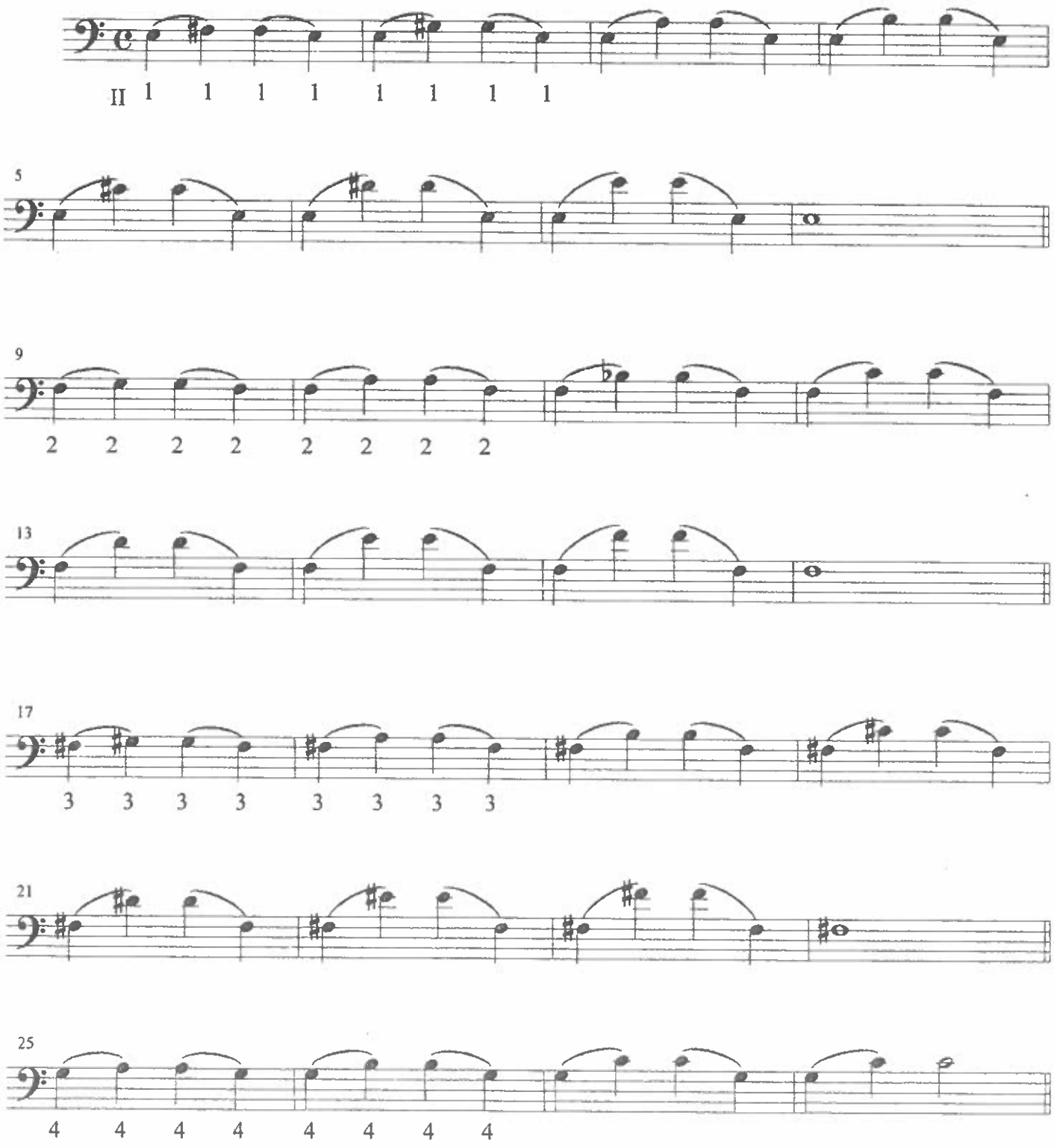
BASS



SHIFTING-ONE STRING ONE FINGER BASS

IV

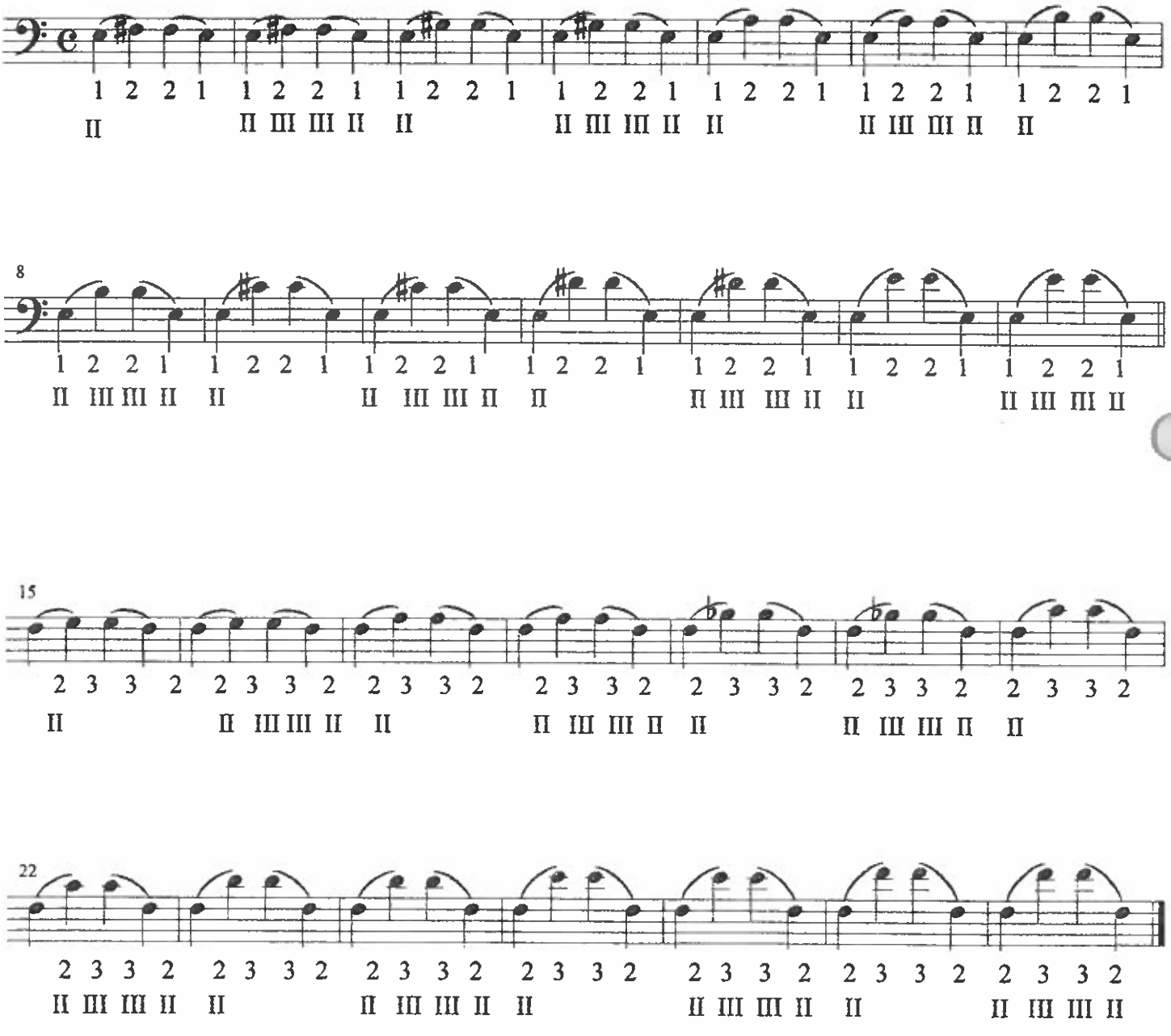
BASS



SHIFTING to next finger on same string to next finger on next string BASS

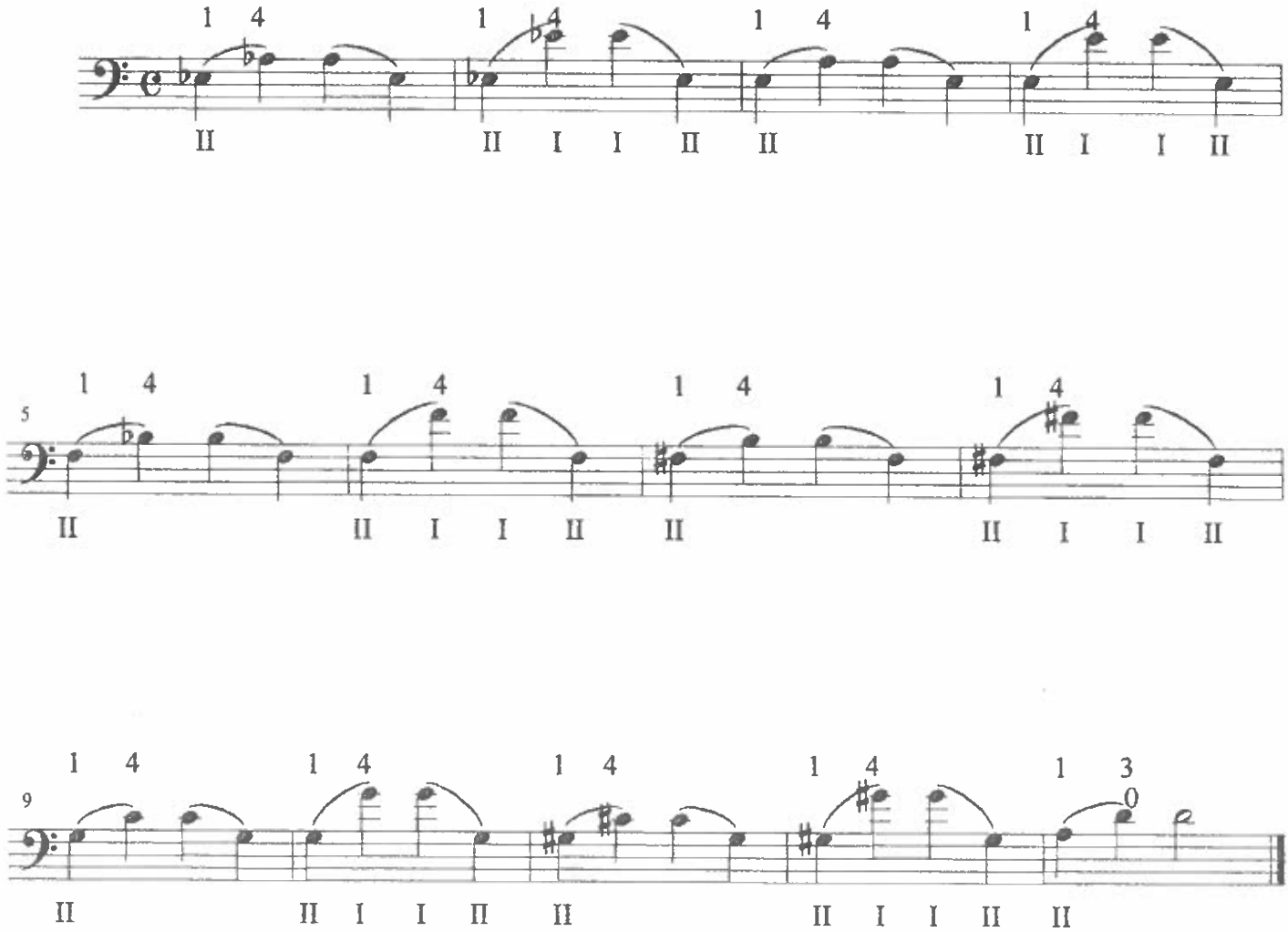
V

BASS



Perfect fourth,Octave interval BASS

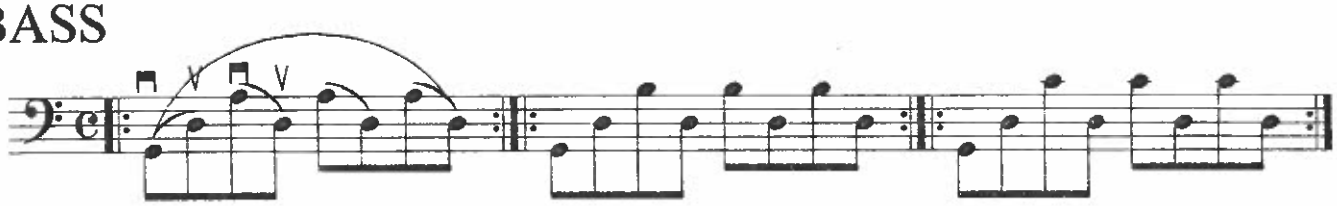
BASS

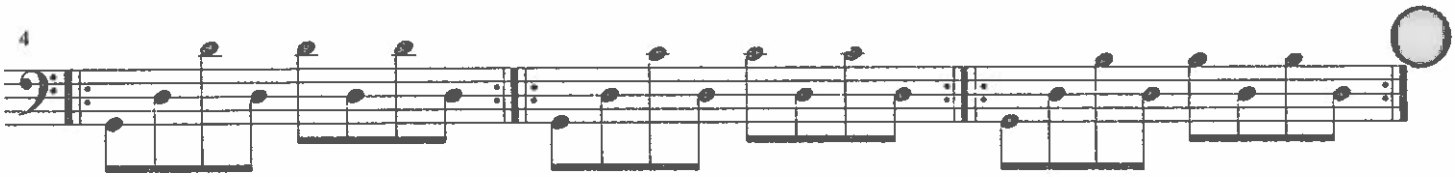


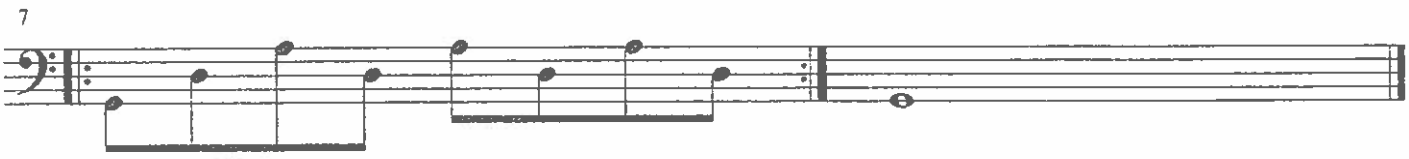
Crossing strings,slurred and separate BASS

VIII

BASS

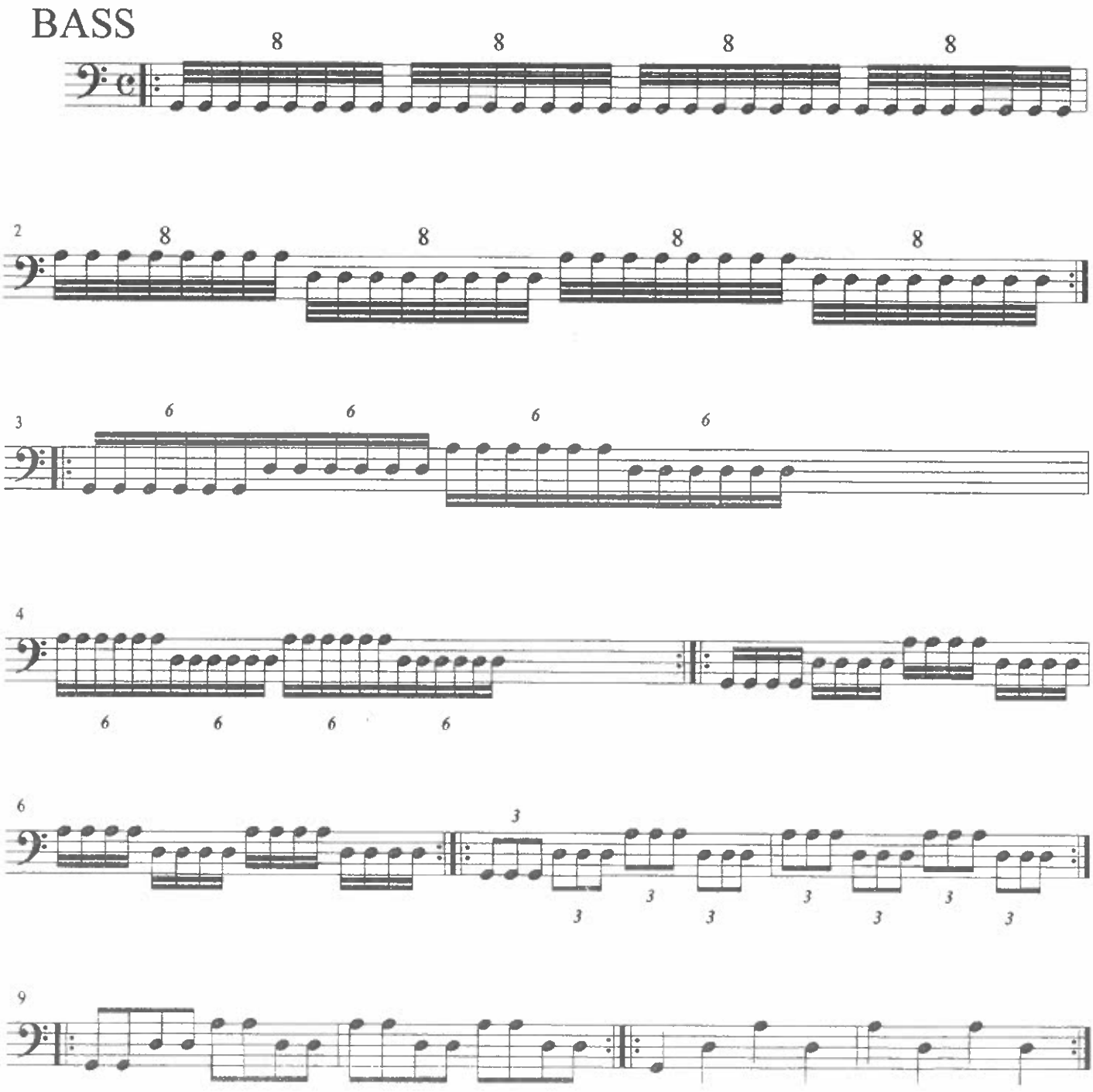






Spicatto/crossing string exercise BASS

VIII



Each exercise will continue in a similar manner using the notes of the string