

Thank you for your inquiry into violin instruction. I hope this answers some of your initial questions.

I use the Suzuki method of instruction. Dr. Suzuki believed that the most difficult thing any of us does is to speak our native language, and yet we all do it. Think of the brain activity, lungs, vocal chords, tongue, jaw, etc that are required to function in unison for us to speak. So music education should happen the in the same way that we teach language. The student listens intently and begins to mimic the sounds he hears. As he develops skills and begins to “speak” fluently on the instrument, then note reading is added just as we add reading after a child is speaking. It’s a natural and comfortable way to learn.

The benefits to starting young are great. A child *enjoys* repetition which is the key to this method. They also establish a routine of daily practice, a discipline that translates well into other areas of life, before they know how to complain and rebel effectively (while you can still win the battle 😊). Just as they can learn other languages more easily when they are young, music too comes more readily at an early age. I have found that the mathematical side of the brain is definitely inspired through musical instruction. Lessons will be fun and encouraging times for your child and will be geared to their age.

So the key to success is the parent who is the daily teacher/encourager of the child. You must have a strong dedication to the process. No matter how much fun your child has at lessons or performing and no matter how much they may have wanted to take violin, there will be NUMEROUS times that they want to quit. It will be your dedication and enthusiasm that will see them through these times. You will have to encourage when you feel like screaming. You’ll have to make it fun and play games when you know you could be done in 3 minutes if they’d just play the silly song once. I’ve been there with three of my own children so I know what I’m asking you to do is difficult. Your commitment with your child will be for years, so you must decide if you think it will be worth it. It does provide a great opportunity for bonding as you see success together and you will be giving your child a wonderful gift.

So, what is involved? The student receives a private lesson each week that lasts ½ hour. The parent must be present as they will be learning how to “teach” the child for the remainder of the week. They then set aside time each day to work with the child for the rest of the week. I will provide a practice sheet with the assignments listed. One day a week should be set aside for guilt free NO PRACTICE. The student should also attend a group lesson each week. These last 45 minutes and do not require the parent to stay. They are times of great fun and friendship for the kids and one less day you have to practice with your child as I’ll be doing it for you! Listening is THE KEY to success. So the parent needs to make sure that the child has opportunity for that daily. Most parents find putting the CD on repeat as the child goes to bed works well. Other’s just leave it on as background music while the child is playing or as they are traveling in the car. Most successful families make extra copies of the music and have it running in all these places. The more they listen, the quicker they progress. The children will perform as a group and usually we find opportunities to play in the community throughout the year. I will also have recitals periodically. Our goal in these opportunities will be to keep it fun and rewarding for the kids, not the pressure cooker “recitals” you may remember from your childhood.

So, if you’re up for the adventure, I’d love to partner with your family! Details on the next page.

My background:

I started playing at age four in an experimental Suzuki group and continued with private instruction through college (I majored in engineering, not music, however). I performed in orchestras and string ensembles from the age of 6 on. My three children started violin or cello Suzuki instruction at the age of 4 (the youngest started at 2 ½). They always studied with other teachers, so I gleaned great information watching amazing teachers around the country as we moved. All three of my children are grown and still enjoy playing. They've had great opportunities through their music, including travel, friendships, participating in worship and earning their money during high school and college by performing and teaching. I started teaching about 20 years ago and have loved being involved in the lives of so many wonderful young people and their families.

Rate: There is an initial lesson so you can get to know me and decide if you think you'd like to go forward for which there is no charge. The rate for lessons is \$60 per month. This includes the ½ hour private lesson and the group lesson. Make up lessons will be scheduled if weeks need to be missed due to travel or illness on the part of the student or teacher.

Other costs: The violins can be purchased online, usually for \$100 or less when they are little. As the child grows, they will periodically need new violins—typically one every couple of years. The old ones can be sold when you're finished with them, although many families hold on to them as keepsakes. The CD needs to be purchased—usually around \$13. After 6 months to a year, when note reading is introduced, books will begin to be purchased but costs are minimal for that.

Location: I will be teaching at Woodlawn United Methodist Church and currently group lessons will be offered at a location in Lynn Haven.

References happily provided upon request.

Questions? Please feel free to call 319-3369 or email [cathystevens58@hotmail.com](mailto:cathystevens58@hotmail.com)

Sincerely,

Cathy Stevens