

Bowing terminology

On the string

Detaché: literally, “detached” (not slurred) Can be legato (smooth) or staccato (short, or separated)

Collé/finger detaché: detaché stroke executed with only finger motion

Slurred: two or more notes in the same bow direction, smoothly connected.

Hooked: two or more notes in the same bow direction, with a stop between them

Portato or Louré: two or more notes in the same bow direction, without a stop, but with pulsing on the beginning of each note

Marcato: literally, “well-marked” detaché stroke with a strong beginning sound

Martelé: literally, “hammered” detaché stroke with more strongly accented attacks than marcato, often with silence between the notes.

Tremolo: legato stroke in the upper half of the bow, with very rapid changes of direction

Piqué: literally, “poked” staccato stroke in the upper half of the bow, usually on uneven rhythms, starting up-bow. Very short and accented.

Off the string

One note per bow stroke:

Spiccato: controlled bouncing bow with the following refinements-

Brushed spiccato: near the frog, using a whole-arm motion, no finger or wrist movement.

Saltato: more aggressive “thrown” staccato in the the upper half of the bow using the whole arm. There are variations on this stroke: tapping (wrist only) and bouncing (elbow/shoulder motion)

Sautillé: very fast bouncing bow executed with mostly the fingers, but requiring impetus from the upper arm. The hair doesn’t leave the string, but the stick arcs closer and further away from the hair, creating a detached sound

Slap stroke: like martelé, but from the air. Because the sound continues in legato after the initial attack, the stroke must begin at the tip or frog where there is no bounce created.

Multiple notes per stroke, or repeated strokes in the same direction:

Up- or Down-bow spiccato: Repeated strokes in the same direction, usually initiated by the wrist or fingers. There are multiple variations -

Flying spiccato: repeated strokes in the same direction while the bow continues to move horizontally

Standing spiccato: repeated strokes in the same direction, staying in the same place on the bow, created by finger or wrist circles

Ricochet: thrown spiccato with multiple notes in the same direction and equal tone on each

Jeté: like ricochet, but with the notes allowed to decay naturally

Specialty

Ponticello: bowing very close to the bridge, resulting in a glassy, wiry sound

Sul tasto: bowing over the fingerboard, resulting in a muted, hazy sound

Col legno: bowing with the stick on the string instead of the hair. Usually assume to be “battuto” or from the air, although more modern composers sometimes use it legato

Bariolage: Quick alternation between a static note and changing notes forming a melody on an adjacent string. quick string crossings are a prominent feature.