

Welcome to BKCM Suzuki Cello!

Dear Beginner Suzuki Cello Parents,

Welcome to the Suzuki cello program at Brooklyn Conservatory. I am very excited for you all to begin your cello journey this fall. Below are important details regarding our absence policy, cello safety, practice tips, and the materials that will help set you up for success. Please email me if you have any questions. I am here to help or connect you with someone who can.

Sincerely,
Shayna Dulberger
BKCM Lower Strings Head Suzuki

CONTACT INFORMATION

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ABSENCE POLICY

As stated in the Suzuki Division Family Policies, there are only six absences allowed for the entire year per class. This is really a lot of absences taking in mind the fact that every class missed will lead to your son or daughter missing key time with their teacher, recital and/or festival preparation, and will likely lead to them having to catch up on the things that they Missed.

Additionally, your attendance at Parent's Class is very important, as every class will be continuing from the previous one.

If for any reason your child needs to miss a class, please email, text, or call the teacher to let them know as soon as possible. Each teacher will have their preference of the method of communication. In addition, please contact the Registration Desk so that they also know that you will be absent. Just in case the teacher does not receive the message, this will be helpful, and also so that the front desk is informed about what is happening in the school that day.

There are NO MAKEUPS within the Suzuki Division for student absences.

IMPORTANT DETAILS

- **Where to Keep the Instrument-** It is very important to store the instrument in a spot that is out of the way, where children cannot get to it and knock it over. In addition, at no time should the instrument ever be stood up against a chair or wall. This is how accidents happen, and how cellos can easily be broken! Always lie the cello on its side or on its back. The only circumstance where the cello can be stood up is if it is in a corner where there is absolutely no way for it to be knocked over.
- **Extreme Temperatures-** Your child's cello should never be left in a car during extreme heat or cold. This can cause cracks in the instrument's wood, and although it can be glued the instrument will never be the same.
- **Humidity-** On this same topic, a Dampit would be a great way to make sure that your instrument is well humidified in the colder and drier months. Just put the dampit under water, and use a paper towel squeeze/blot out the excess water so that it will not drip inside the instrument and cause water damage. Repeat this process every day or so to keep the instrument healthy. You can also run a humidifier to help with this situation.

During the hotter months, too much humidity can also be an issue, so keeping the instrument in an air conditioned climate on the most humid days can certainly help with this issue.

- **Practicing consistently in small doses.-** The more your child practices, the quicker he or she will learn. The best way to practice is in small doses every day, or even several times a day. This gives your son or daughter a chance to digest everything and not be overwhelmed. They will have the patience to sit in small doses, and will not lose focus as easily as if you were to try to have them practice for a long period of time. We want practicing to be fun, not to be a hassle every time you force them in the chair. Wouldn't it be great if they asked you to practice??
- **Practicing should be fun!-** It should not feel like work or a chore. How do you keep it fun? Make it a game. Use their favorite toys (legos, action figures, cars, or even coins) to count how many times that they repeat something. Or give them 10 of these counting items and every time they forget to do something that you're working on (ie: keep their bow straight or their arm up), you get to (GASP!) steal one of their chips! We all know they won't be too happy about that, and will try their hardest to keep all of their tokens! You can also use dice from a board game to find out how many times they will have to repeat something. The goal is to make every practice session feel fresh and fun. Please don't hesitate to ask if you need more suggestions for fun practicing techniques.
- **Listening-** As I mentioned earlier, think of the way that you learned how to speak...it was easier to learn words because of the repetitions that your parents exposed you to. The more a word was said and repeated, the more quickly and easier it was learned. It is the same with music. The more your child listens to the CD, the easier

it will be for them to learn the pieces when they get to it. Listening should be a part of your every day schedule. You can put the Suzuki CD on while you're in the car, while they're playing games, or while you're cleaning the dishes from dinner. It does not always have to be active listening to be effective because your child will still be absorbing everything that he/she is hearing.

- **Chair/Posture-** The chair that your child will be practicing on is very important. Ideally, we want the hips to be slightly higher than the knees. This encourages the child to sit up with a tall tummy instead of slouching or leaning backwards. By bringing your own stool to the lessons it is helpful so that the set-up is always consistent, as it can greatly affect how we play the instrument.
- **Rosin-** Your child's bow should be rosined every couple of days that they practice. This keeps the bow sticky and helps them make a sound more easily without trying so hard.
- **Cleaning the Instrument-** Whenever you notice that there is rosin on the wood of the instrument, it should be wiped with a soft cloth. There are special cloths that you can buy from www.sharmusic.com. In addition, every couple of months, you can clean the fingerboard and strings with rubbing alcohol.

When doing so, please be careful to cover up the wood of the instrument, as it can get damaged by the alcohol. Here's how to do it: Lie the cello on its back on the floor, put a little alcohol on a paper towel, and clean each individual string, and the fingerboard underneath the strings as well. Nothing else should be cleaned by the rubbing alcohol. Cleaning your strings will make it easier for your child to play because caked on rosin makes the strings move more sluggishly, and makes it harder to get a nice sound!

MATERIALS

Materials you will need to purchase if you do not already have them. Most of which can be found at www.sharmusic.com or www.johnsonstring.com

- Cello Rosin- This should be included with your Johnson's rental
- Xeros Cello Endpin Anchor- Can be purchased through Johnson's (\$12.99 each)
- Mini Bow- Starting on a smaller bow can be extremely helpful for younger kids. I like to start all of my kids on smaller bows if they are younger.
 - You can purchase these smaller bows at: bowsforstrings.com/products/mini-bow (\$35 each)
 - Or you can ask Johnson's Strings to include a 1/16 size violin bow instead of the cello bow that goes with whatever size you're ordering.
- Tuner- There are many free apps available for smart phones no matter the operating system. Some tuners to consider are Instuner and Tunable. If you do not have a smartphone, or would prefer a physical tuner, I would suggest the Shar Metro Tuner or the Korg Digital Metronome.
- Suzuki Cello School Volume 1- included in your Parents Materials
- Suzuki Cello School Recording for Volumes 1 and 2
 - <https://music.apple.com/us/album/suzuki-cello-school-vols-1-2/874312786>
- Notebook for taking notes- Very important!
- Cello Stool/Chair-



- For kids who are not ready for a regular sized chair, I usually recommend for my students to buy the Percussion Plus Junior Drum Throne available from Amazon. (around \$60) It's collapsible, and easily adjustable to grow with them. It is very important, no matter what chair that you get that it has no back. This will encourage the student not to lean backwards especially at first.
- If your child is older and ready for a more regular sized chair, you'll want to invest in a chair that is geared towards playing cello and that they use for years to come. Try the Adjustrite Musician's Chair. It is a bit expensive, but again it's a really great chair for playing cello, and you can adjust the height as they get taller.



- VioTech Suregrip Bow Cushions for Cello- Not necessary, but makes playing more comfortable, especially for kids. Also available at Johnson's Strings.

