

Suzuki Strings Handbook

(revised August, 2024)

Suzuki Strings Program (cello, viola, and violin) for ages 4 and older



What is the Suzuki?

The Suzuki Method can be thought of as having three components:

1. PHILOSOPHY of education
2. CURRICULUM of materials
3. TECHNIQUES that flow from the philosophy

The **PHILOSOPHY** is what makes the Suzuki Method different from other forms of education, specifically other methods of music instruction. The most important message is simply this:

All Children Have Talent!

1. **The environment**, rather than genetic background, determines the success of the student.
2. Dr. Suzuki observed that **every child learns his or her native tongue** in the first few years of life by listening to and imitating the mother's voice; Dr. Suzuki called this the "mother tongue" approach. We now know that the same process can be used to teach music.
3. We are most successful when we break each new skill into the smallest possible steps, affirming and supporting each attempt with positive reinforcement.
4. The purpose of music instruction is not to create professional musicians, but to **develop the whole child through the study of music**. Dr. Suzuki's goal was not simply to develop professional musicians, but to nurture loving human beings and help develop each child's character through the study of music.

The **CURRICULUM** of the Suzuki Method is slightly different for each of the instruments studied. Each instrument has a well-considered anthology of musical pieces that spans several volumes of music.

All instruments begin with *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* and end with a major concerto from the classical music period. If it is true that "everything in music is preparation" (Gerhart Zimmermann), then the genius of Suzuki is truly expressed in the scope and sequencing of the music in his carefully planned method.

Suzuki gave much thought to the introduction and subsequent repetition of each technique to be studied. The brilliance of the method is that all of this technique is disguised in musical selections that are charming, compelling, interesting, delightful, and attractive to children and their families. Much of the motivation for learning comes from the desire to learn new pieces in the repertoire.

Suzuki teachers use a number of **TECHNIQUES** that make the method a unique approach to teaching instrumental music. These technical concepts are specific teaching ideas that flow from the philosophy of the method.

We want to capitalize on the child's ability to absorb sounds in the early developmental years before age six, so formal instruction may begin as early as age four. If we begin lessons this early, then clearly we must invite the aid of a parent as an assistant teacher to help guide the child in practice at home. This strong partnership of parent, teacher, and child is often referred to as the Suzuki triangle.

When a child learns to talk, parents are involved in the process with their child. In the Suzuki Method, parents attend lessons with the child and serve as "home teachers" during the week. Previous musical knowledge from the parent is not

at all required, however, as the teacher ensures that parents understand all unfamiliar technical and musical concepts. Parents work with the teacher to create an enjoyable learning environment.

Since the method is based on the mother tongue approach to learning, the use of reference recordings is essential to the progress of all students. Daily listening to recordings of the pieces to be studied helps the child to learn the melodies and to hear how good violin tone sounds. Listening also aids in developing accurate pitch and rhythmic pulse.

One of the most important techniques employed by Suzuki teachers is that of learning to play the instrument by ear. This approach allows the child and parent to focus on how they are playing rather than on what they are playing. In other words, the goal of a Suzuki student is to focus on how well you can do something rather than on what you are able to do.

Playing by ear frees the eyes to observe fingers and bow arm. This observant approach helps us to evaluate how we are doing, rather than having eyes glued to a page of music telling us what to play next. Several factors will determine the readiness of a student to begin the important skill of reading music. Among these are the age of the child, years of study, performance level, and interest in reading music. Lessons are taught individually to allow each student to learn at his or her own pace. Technical skills are broken down into the smallest possible steps so that information is introduced in a way that is understood by both parent and child. Suzuki teachers employ the concept of one-point teaching. We will focus on only one technique at a time, temporarily overlooking others so that we do not overwhelm the child with instructions about several different things at once.

Group classes are designed to allow children to share their music with others, while we reinforce important skills introduced at the private lesson. Another function of the group experience is to learn how to play together. The social benefits of group classes are a tremendous aid in the motivation to practice at home. As we return to the idea of learning by the mother tongue approach, remember that a child does not discard the first words learned but continues to use them over and over as new words are added to the vocabulary. Suzuki students keep the original pieces learned in their repertoire, reviewing them daily to perfect those skills, which are then used again and again in the subsequent pieces.

Prezuki – Early Childhood Music

“Prezuki” is an early childhood music class that gives families a glimpse into the Suzuki Method: early start, parental involvement, group experiences, mastery through repetition, positive reinforcement, experience with instruments, and introduction to Suzuki repertoire. Prezuki is designed for children 18 months - turning 4 yrs old after December 31, 2023 with a parent/guardian. Students turning 4 during the school year may continue with this class. Class repertoire varies each semester and continuing students can improve skills and deepen their understanding of the concepts learned.

Prezuki Schedule and Tuition – Prezuki classes meet weekly on Thursdays or Saturday mornings during the fall and spring semesters. Classes are offered at various times to accommodate family schedules.

Tuition - \$100/semester. No refunds are given for withdrawal from Prezuki.
For more information, click here: [Prezuki/Early Childhood Music](#)

AOM Suzuki Strings (age 4 and older)

Why Suzuki?

The Academy Of Music (AOM) Suzuki Strings program families participate in weekly private lessons (teacher/parents/child), daily home listening and practice (parent/child), weekly group classes (teacher, students at similar level, parents), regular performances, and extracurricular opportunities.

Instrumental study is “hard fun.” Our program offers a unique community in which the child, parent, and family are offered a strong foundation for musical success and growth.

Suzuki Registration

Observation is required before registration. Click [here](#), or go to <https://aomva.org/wp/suzuki-observation/> to set up an observation time and day.

Scheduling Private Lessons – After completing required observations you will be referred to a private teacher by the Suzuki Strings Program Coordinator. Private lesson dates/times are scheduled with your teacher. Please register with AOM once you have been assigned a private teacher at <https://aomva.org/wp/suzuki-registration/> or click [here](#)

Group Classes – Group class assignments, concert and recitals dates are available at the beginning of the academic year. Most group classes meet on Thursdays, with some of our advanced ensembles meeting on alternate days.

Lesson Agreement Form – After lessons have been scheduled with your private teacher, the registrar will send a link to your Lesson Agreement Form. This is your contract with AOM concerning what you are expected to pay. After completing this form, you will be asked to pay a one-time registration fee of \$35.00/family.

Your teacher will submit the length, and location of your lessons to the AOM office. This will generate your invoice.

Suzuki Tuition – Annual tuition will include the following, to take place from September through mid-June:

- STAHR membership*
- 34 private lessons
- 24 group classes
- Book Graduations
- Play-Ins
- Group Class Dress Rehearsals
- Group Class Concerts
- Studio Recitals

Opportunities and other special events (to include Virginia Children’s Festival, Advanced Ensemble Recital, Bach Festival, Twinkle Recital and others)

*The STAHR membership provides members a discounted registration fee for the STAHR workshop.

Two equal invoices will be sent in September and January. You may set up a Payment Plan for as many as 10 or as few as 2 payments for your yearly tuition. If you want a 10-payment plan, you must set it up before the end of September. Payment plans that begin in October will have a maximum of 4 monthly payments for Fall. We will automatically duplicate your Fall plan for Spring, unless you notify us by the end of January.

The tuition rates for 2024-2025 are:

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| 30 minute lessons: | \$1,490 or \$745 per semester |
| 45 minute lessons: | \$2,030 or \$1,015 per semester |
| 60 minute lessons: | \$2,580 or \$1,290 per semester |
| Prezuki: | \$100.00 per 10 week session |
| Registration fee for new families: | \$35, one time covers the whole family |
| Sibling discounts: | \$25.00 |

Policies

Attendance and Missed Lessons – Your teacher will provide you with the attendance policy for his or her studio. Cancellations due to illness, family emergency, or inclement weather may be made up at the discretion of the teacher. Please do not expect make-up lessons for other reasons. Lessons cancelled by the instructor will be made up in a mutually agreeable manner.

Withdrawals and Refunds – Your agreement with your teacher and AOM reserves your lesson and group class space. Except for serious illness/unexpected move/military orders you will be expected to complete the semester and year of lessons as agreed.

In order to study with an AOM Suzuki teacher, participating families agree to maintain consistent group class attendance and participation.

Payment – You can make payment in full by mailing a check, or calling the office with a credit/debit card, or by visiting our website here. If you'd like to set up a payment plan, you can call the office at 757-627-0967.

Scholarship application - the primary mission of AOM is to provide music instruction to interested families regardless of the ability to pay. If your family is in need of assistance to pay for music instruction through our program, please click [here](#) or go to <https://aomva.org/wp/scholarships/new-application/>, or contact Anna Feucht, AOM Program Director at afeucht@aomva.org

About the Academy of Music

The Academy of Music is Hampton Roads' only independent non-profit community music school that is accredited by the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts. Our mission is to provide the joys and benefits of learning music to the residents of Hampton Roads, regardless of their ability to pay.

Founded in 1991, The Academy of Music offers private and group instruction for most instruments and voice. Our instructors are highly trained professionals and include members of the Virginia Symphony, Virginia Chorale and other leading ensembles. The Academy's offerings, designed for all ages and skill levels, are:

Academy Studies with programs conducted at various sites: Ghent United Methodist Church, First United Methodist Church, Royster Memorial Presbyterian Church and Talbot Park Baptist Church in Norfolk; Monumental United Methodist Church in Portsmouth; St. John's Episcopal Church in Hampton; Bayside Presbyterian, Emmanuel Episcopal Church and Providence Presbyterian Church in Virginia Beach.

Community Outreach programs, conducted in partnership with other institutions, such as our music program at Park Place School, our Band Together Program, and Harps on Fire, all in Norfolk.

In addition to our outreach programs, The Academy provides funding for students enrolled in private study who could not otherwise afford music lessons. This year, about 30% of our students will receive music instruction at little or no cost to their families through partial or full scholarships.

In 2000, The Academy of Music was fully certified by the National Guild of Community Schools of the Arts after meeting its rigorous evaluation criteria. The Guild provides leadership and advocacy for some 300 schools of the arts across the country, sets quality standards and promotes public awareness of the value of arts education.