

How to Adjust a Double Bass Bridge

A double bass is pretty easy to take care of, but your bridge may be getting a little out of whack if you play your instrument a lot. Whenever you tune your bass strings, you push the bass bridge forward without realizing it, which may be...

Altering Your Bridge Manually

1. **Place the bass face-up on a flat, sturdy surface.** Find a large, open space in your home or practice area where you can lay your double bass flat on the ground. Always keep the bridge and strings face-up so the instrument isn't damaged.^[2]
 1. If you don't have a lot of room in your home, you can always place your bass on your bed.
2. **Check that your bridge lines up with the notches in the F holes.** Take a close look at large, symmetrical F holes on both sides of your base. On the inner edge of each opening, look for a carefully etched notch—these notches form an invisible, horizontal line across your instrument, and represent where your bridge should be placed. Look at your bridge to see if it's centered over this line, or if it needs to be adjusted.^[3]
 1. It's okay if your bridge isn't exactly straight—it's easy to adjust!
3. **Pinch the outside of the bridge with your thumb and middle finger.** Grip the outside edges of your bridge firmly to hold it in place. Keep your arm and hand tucked beneath the strings so you don't hurt your bass in the process.^[4]
4. **Adjust the bridge with the thumb of your opposite hand.** Place your fingers on top of the strings, centering your thumb next to the top of the bridge. Force the bridge backwards until it's completely perpendicular to the base of the instrument.^[5]
 1. Don't use your fingers to pinch and adjust the bridge. Using your thumb is an accurate way to adjust your instrument without possibly harming the bridge piece.
 2. Your bridge should form a 90-degree angle with the rest of the instrument.^[6]
5. **Try to slide a small sheet of paper beneath the feet of your bridge.** Place the paper flat on your instrument, then try to push it beneath the bridge feet. If your bridge is completely sturdy and well-adjusted, the paper won't be able to slide beneath the bridge whatsoever.^[7]
 1. If you can slide the paper beneath your bridge, you'll need to make a few more adjustments.
6. **Measure the total string length with a ruler or tape measure.** Contact your luthier, or bass maker, and see what the vibrating length of your bass string is. Use this number as a guide when measuring the string from the tuning pegs down to the bridge.^[8]
 1. Some basses have a vibrating string length of about $41\frac{1}{2}$ in (105 cm).
7. **Make any final adjustments to the bridge with your thumb.** Use both hands to tweak and adjust the bridge. Double-check the string length against your ruler or measuring tape for extra confirmation.^[9]
8. **Double-check your bridge placement with a bridge stick.** Check your double bass case to see if you have a bridge stick, or piece of wood that helps measure the distance between your bridge and fingerboard. Use the bridge stick as a template to see if your fingerboard and bridge are spaced evenly.^[10]

1. Some luthiers will include bridge sticks with their basses, though others might not. If you don't have a bridge stick, don't worry about this.

Using an Adjustable Bridge

1. **Rotate the wheels on your bass bridge to raise or lower your strings.** Look above the feet of your bridge to find adjustable metal rings. Test out these rings by turning them slightly, and see if your bridge goes up or down. Use these wheels as needed to lift and lower your strings along your bridge.^[11]

Tip: You may have an easier time adjusting the bridge if you loosen the strings beforehand.

2. **Check that your strings on the 'G' side are 5 to 6 mm (0.20 to 0.24 in) above the fingerboard.** Measure the gap between each bass string and the fingerboard. Keep in mind that the leftmost 2 strings (D and G), or the 'G side' need to be 5 to 6 mm (0.20 to 0.24 in) above the fingerboard.^[12]
 1. As an extra precaution, you may want to loosen the tuning pegs before making any adjustments.^[13]
 2. Use your own discretion when adjusting your strings. If a certain measurement feels more comfortable, go with that.^[14]
3. **Measure the strings on the 'E' side of your instrument.** Tweak the wheels on your adjustable bridge to raise or lower your strings on the rightmost side of your instrument.^[15] To be safe, loosen your tuning pegs slightly while adjusting the bridge so your instrument isn't strained or damaged.^[16]

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