

The Problem of Developing Equal Skills with All Fingers

By this time you will have realized that some fingers are more difficult to control than others.

The 5th finger is the smallest and weakest, and requires special exercise to develop strength equal to the others.

The 4th finger is the least independent finger, and the least agile. It is the only finger that is bound to its neighboring fingers by tendons that limit its movement.

The 3rd and 2nd fingers are the most agile fingers. They can move more easily through a larger arc. They are the strongest fingers.

The 1st finger (thumb) has its own problems. Its muscles are not designed to make it easy to strike a downward arc, but rather to pull the thumb inward, toward the palm. This makes it practical to turn the thumb under the fingers for playing scales, as you will see later, but in ordinary playing the thumb must strike on the side-tip, and is thus more awkward than the other fingers.

The following illustration shows the tendons of the left hand, as viewed from the back of the hand.

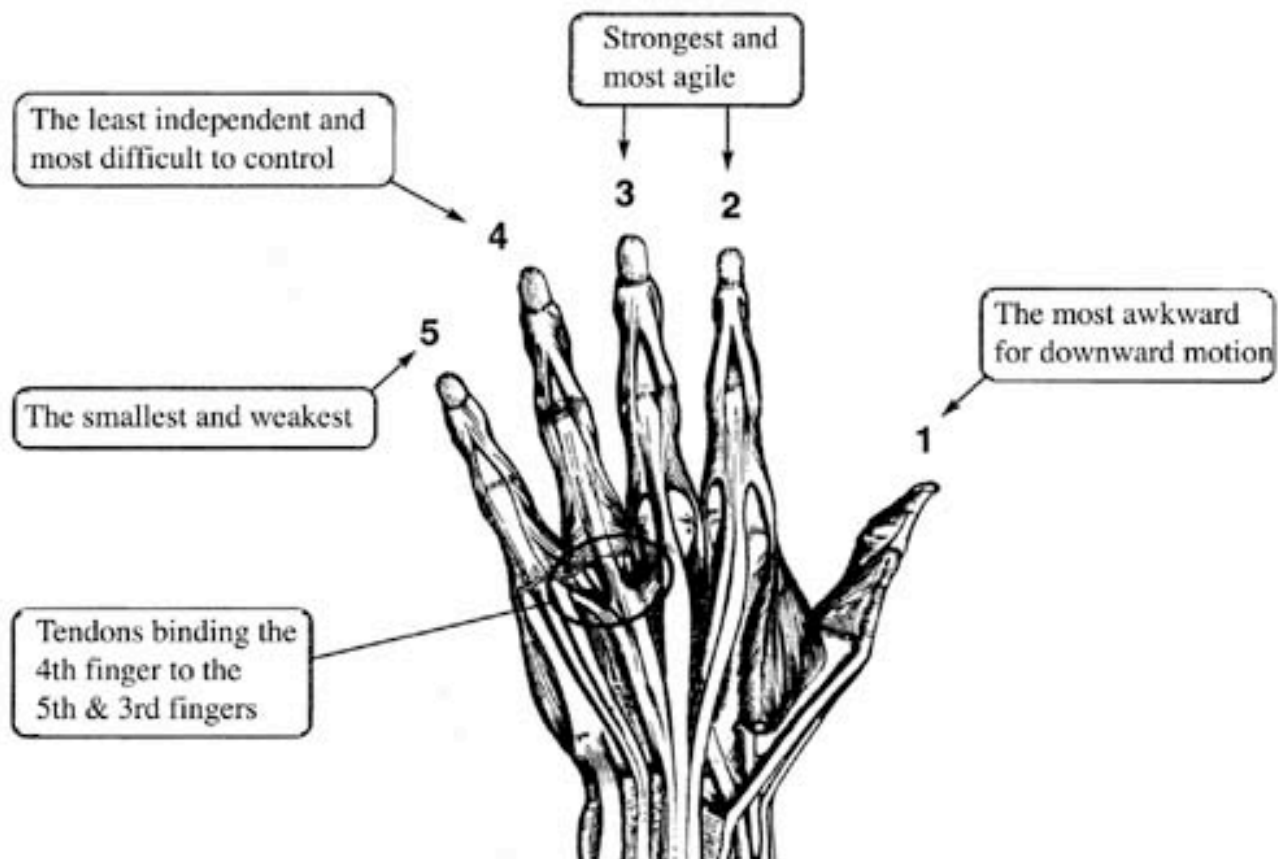


Illustration from Gray's Anatomy

A Leschetizky Solution

Theodor Leschetizky (1830–1915) was one of the most prestigious teachers of his time. Among his most famous pupils were Paderewski, Gabrilovich and Artur Schnabel. He was a genius at overcoming the technical problems of each of his pupils; one of his most effective exercises was specifically devised for developing skill and agility with all fingers, and overcoming the problems of playing well with the weakest and most awkward fingers.

IMPORTANT! Read Leschetizky's own instructions carefully before playing:

While FOUR fingers hold the whole notes down, ONE finger plays the quarter notes.
Repeat each measure many times.

1. In the first measure, press down the five keys together (G A B C D, all the keys in G POSITION), then raise the thumb JUST HIGH ENOUGH TO LET THE KEY RISE TO ITS LEVEL, keeping the thumb in touch with it. Now have the thumb press the key down again, hold it a moment, then rise again.
 2. Continue in the same manner with the 2nd finger, raising it about one-third of an inch and striking the key repeatedly while the other fingers hold their keys.
 3. Proceed similarly with the 3rd finger, keeping the others down.
 4. Now continue with the 4th finger, but raise it AS HIGH AS POSSIBLE, so that this hampered finger may gain more independence.
 5. Continue with the 5th finger, raising it also AS HIGH AS POSSIBLE, so that it may acquire more strength.
- Keep fingers CURVED at all times.

Follow the same procedure as outlined above when playing with the left hand.