

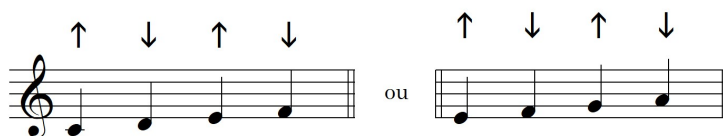
Articulation

This study is aimed at musicians with some knowledge of harmony and who have already mastered the technique of the instrument, but who are looking for a new dimension in improvisation and interpretation, thus presenting the harmonica from a new perspective.

One of the defining characteristics of the harmonica, as is well known, is the fact that one must both blow and draw air to produce sound.

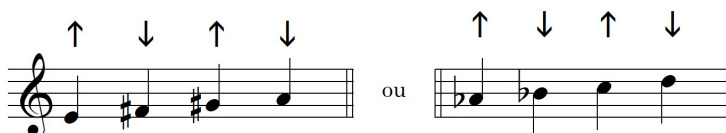
Although this characteristic can be considered an advantage—since we do not need to pause for breath—it entails a significant disadvantage regarding phrasing, as the flow is interrupted when we reverse the direction of the airflow.

It becomes very difficult, for example, to play the examples below legato:

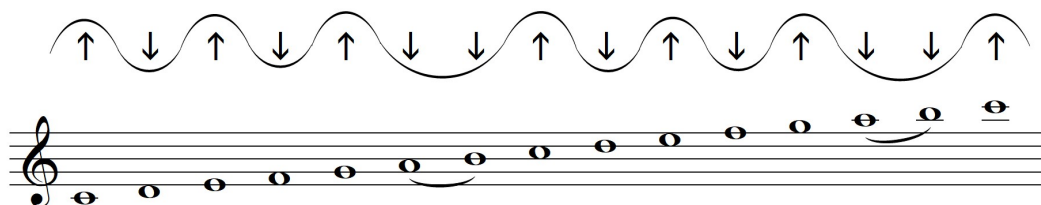


> For now, we will use arrows to represent blown and drawn notes.

Nas notas acidentadas a tarefa se torna ainda mais difícil:



With the notes involving accidentals, the task becomes even more difficult:



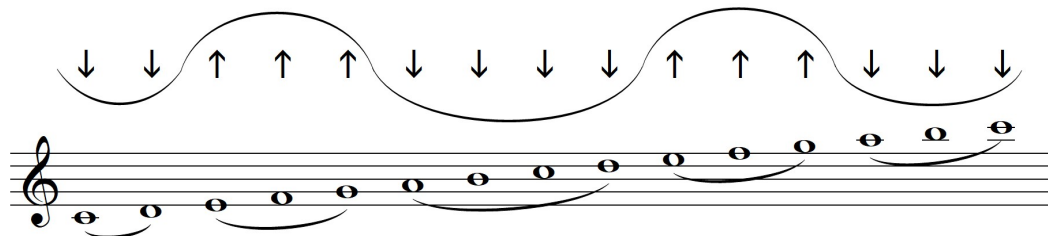
There are two notes on the harmônica – in its factory tuning – that can be played in different ways: the note F and the note C.

F – Draw or blow note with side button

C – Blow or draw note with side button

It is worth noting that precision in choosing which hole to use for the blown C note at each octave change—whether the C that concludes the octave or the C that begins the next—is crucial. Without this precision, the sound will have an unwanted vibration.

If we change the reflection of these notes in the C major scale, we obtain the following result:



Note that in the second graph we obtain more *continuous* and *smooth* curves.

This study is based on this concept – namely, making the most of the connections between blown or drawn notes.

Whenever the performer plays the notes F and C, they must analyze which reflection will yield the best result. *Always!*

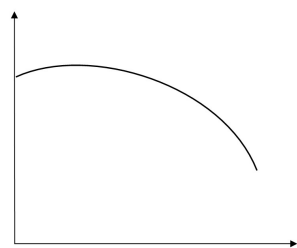
Traditionally, two symbols are used for bowed instruments to represent bowings:

▣ - Downward bow

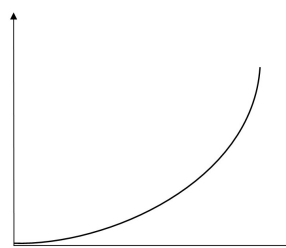
∨ - Upward bow

In phenomenological terms, the downward bow movement resembles blowing, and the anti-gravity upward bow movement resembles drawing. We will therefore use this symbolism to indicate the reflex to be employed.

Note that when we exhale, the sensation is one of relaxation, whereas when we inhale, the sensation is one of tension pressing against our lungs. Let us look at the graphs below:

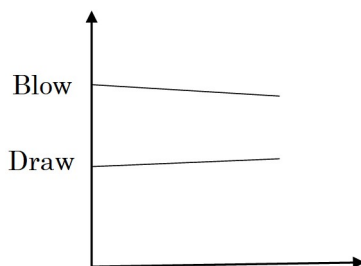


Blow



Draw

Due to this characteristic, the difference in inflection between blow and draw notes becomes clearly audible, impairing articulation. We must therefore balance the air columns according to the chart below:



A good exercise for balancing blow and draw notes is to play extremely softly – at a nearly inaudible volume – while ensuring the notes sound identical in terms of attack, volume, and sustain.

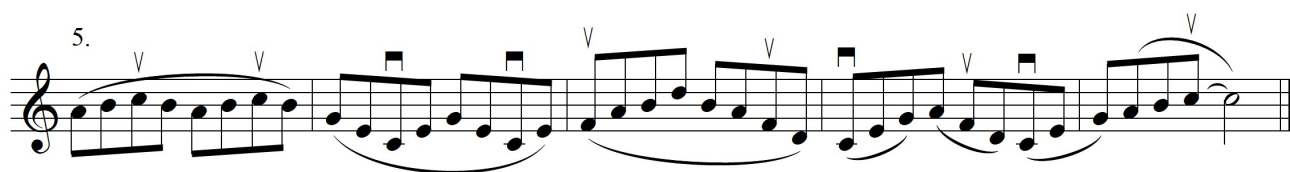
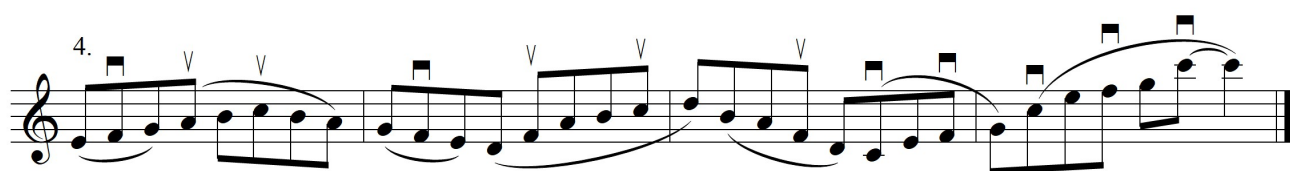
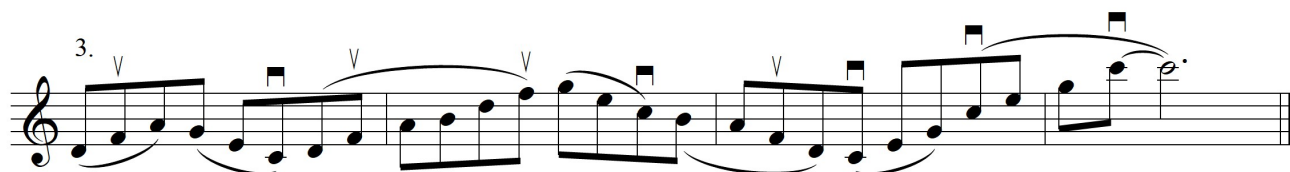
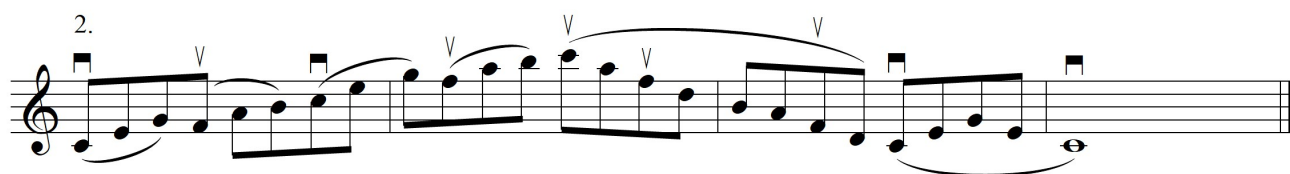
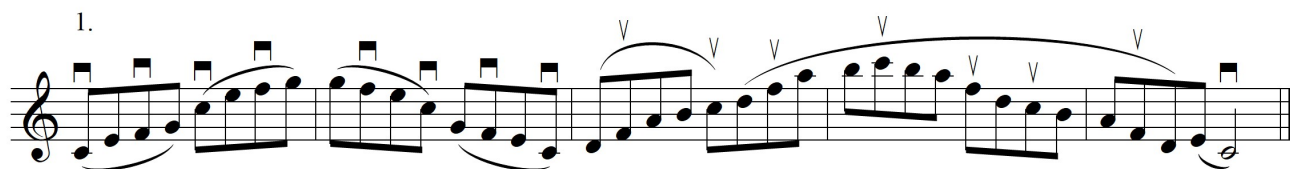
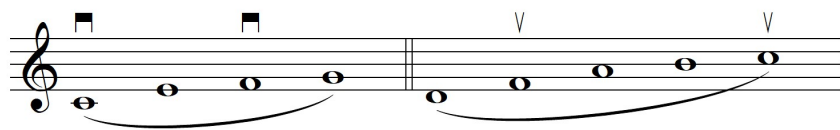
> Embouchures where the tongue overlaps the mouthpiece – such as tongue blocking or positioning the tongue against the roof of the mouth – tend to yield better results regarding this balance, since the airflow curves around the tongue before reaching the reed.

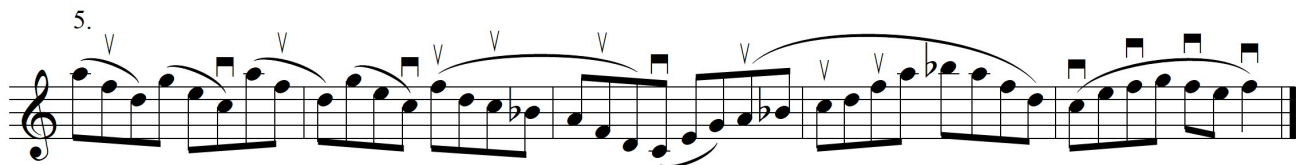
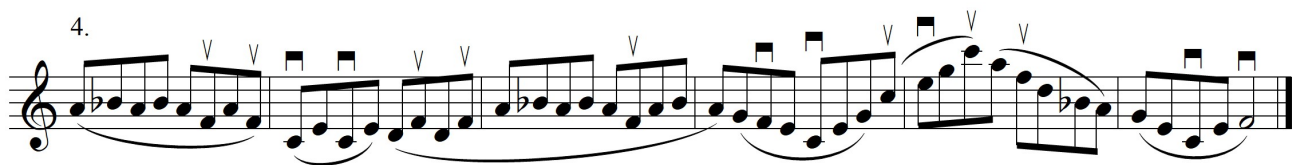
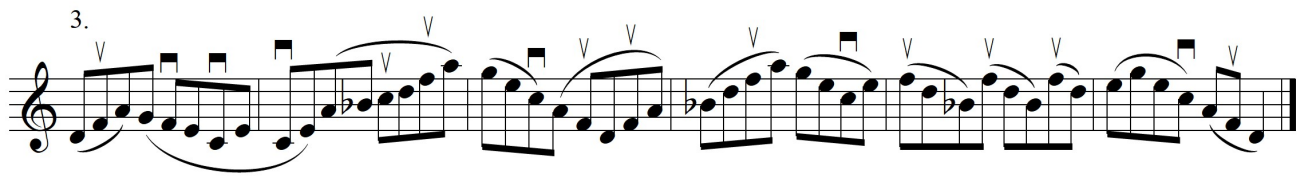
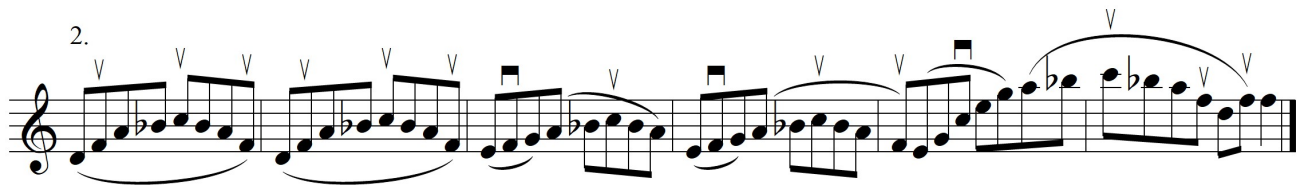
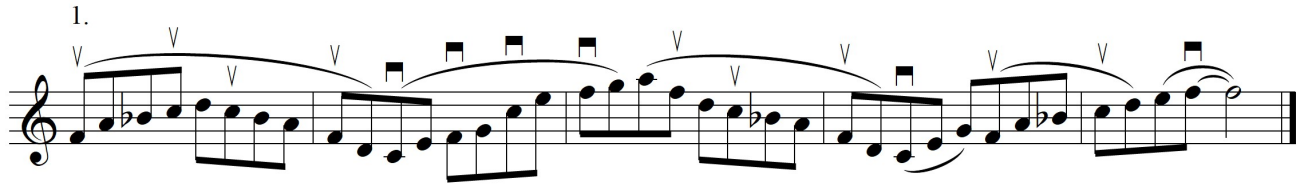
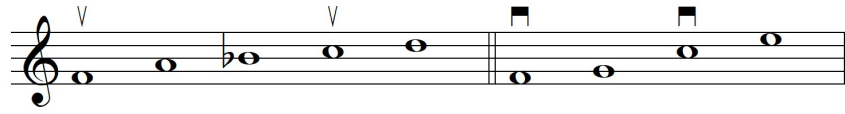
Some scales will be presented where we will identify which notes are aspirated or blown. Next we will propose some exercises that demonstrate its use. In some cases which notes we use or not use as the key. Each proposed cell can be worked on separately, independently of the entire study sentence.

Based on this principle, it is up to the student to connect the notes, always aiming for the most fluid articulation possible. While the scales are being presented, certain articulations (phrases) will be introduced; however, each student should also create their own ideas.

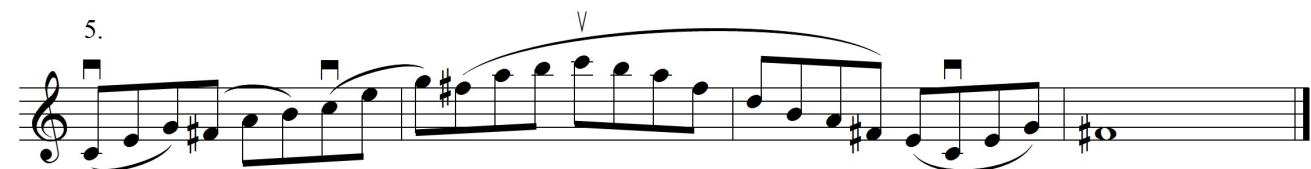
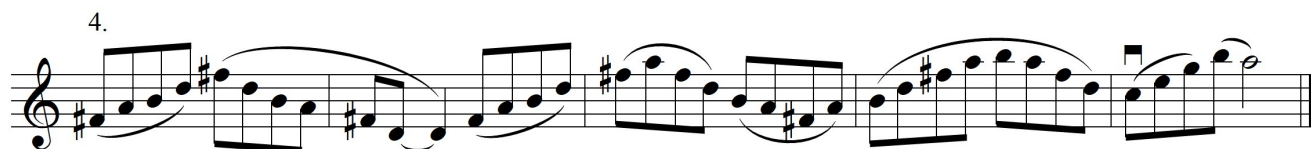
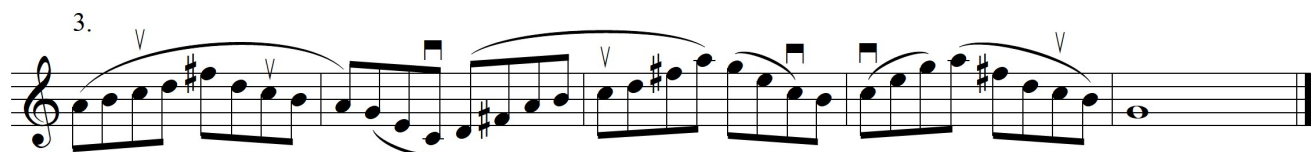
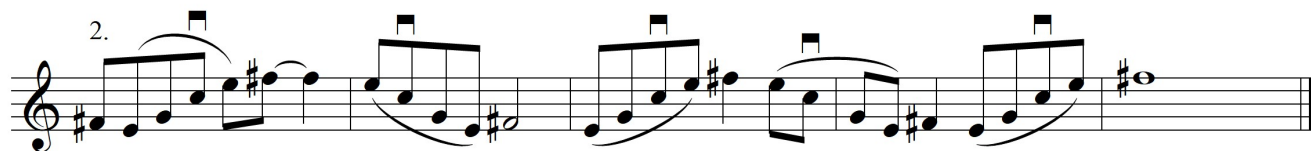
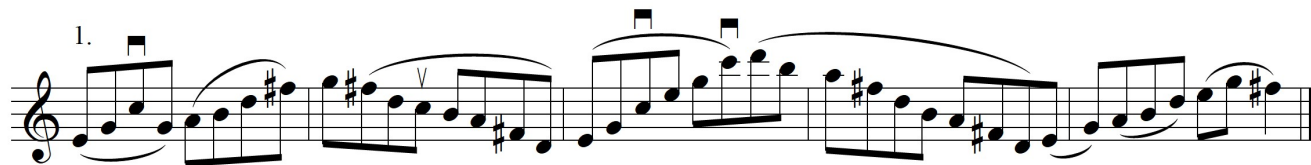
Since the scales are not organized in the traditional manner, there is no need to list all the modes generated by them – particularly the relative minor – though it is important to be able to identify each distinct type of mode and its respective harmonic relationships.

C Major

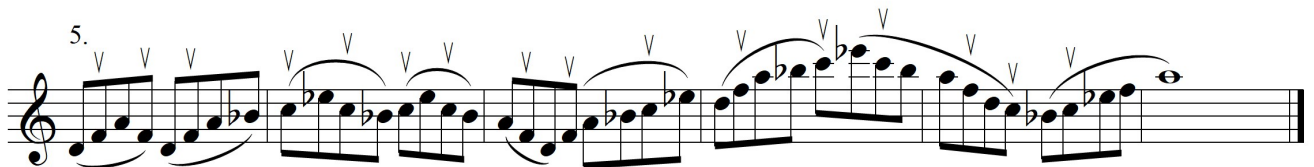
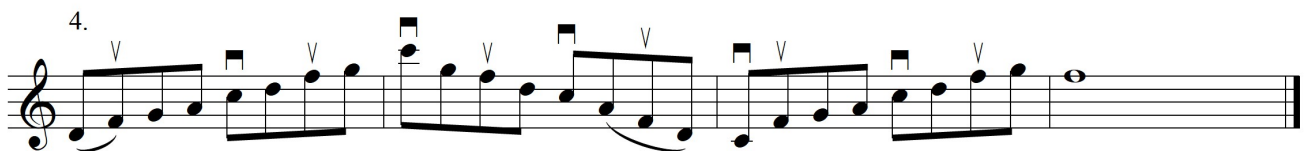
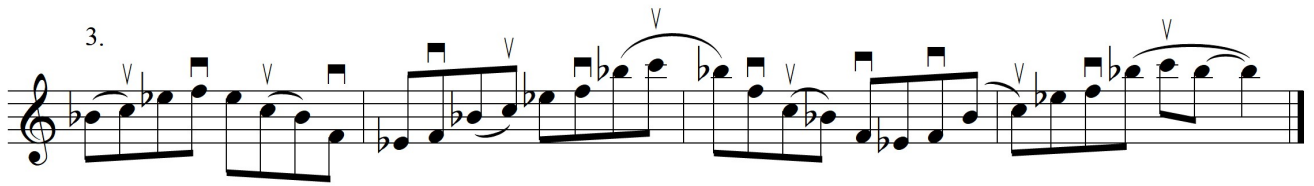
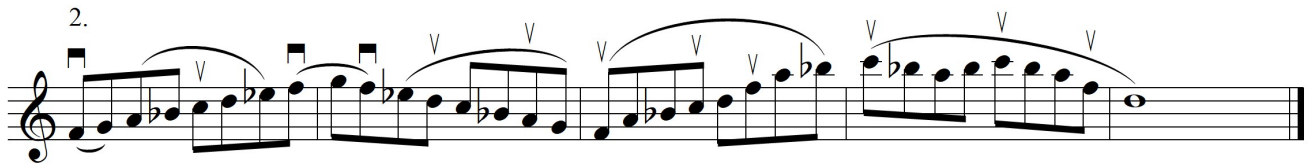
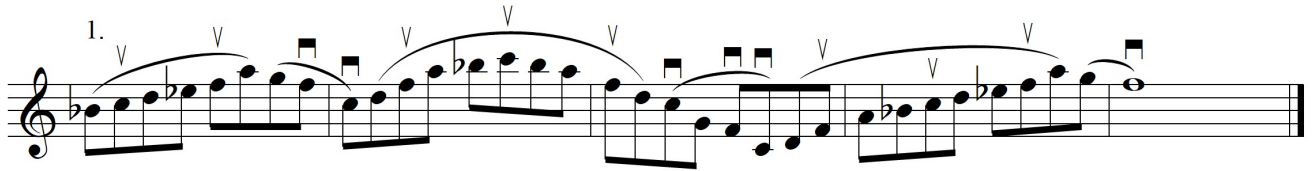
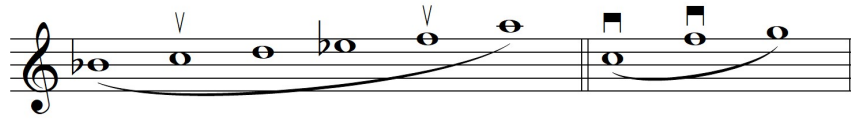


F Major

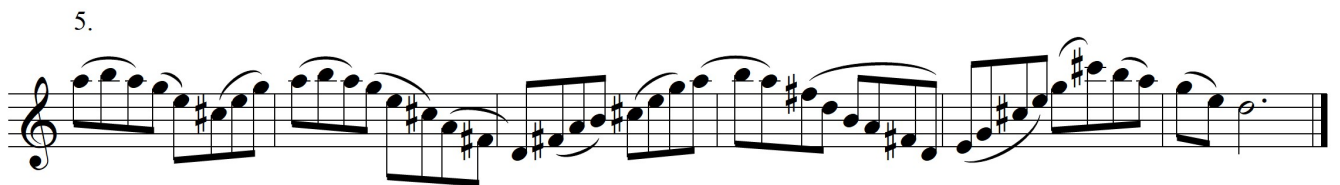
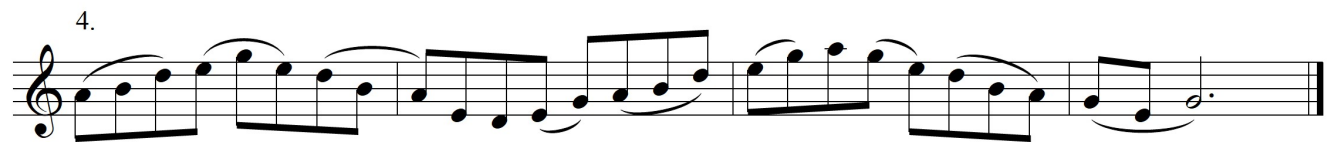
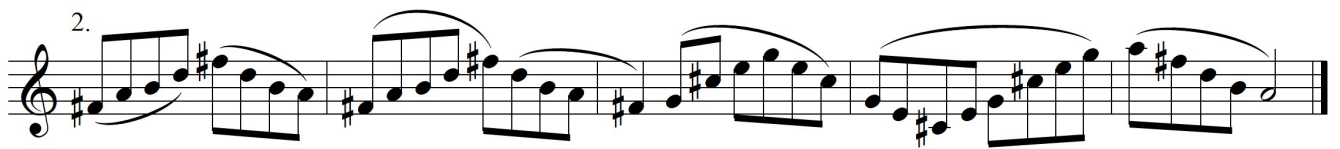
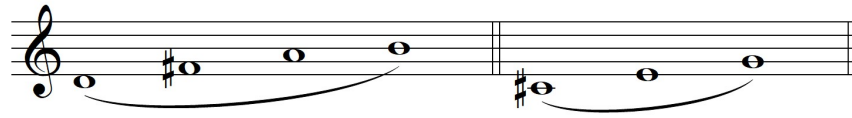
G Major



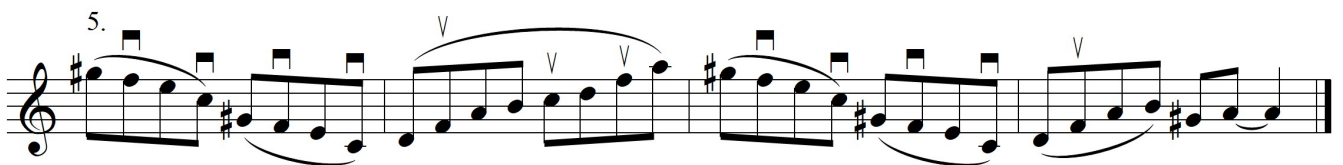
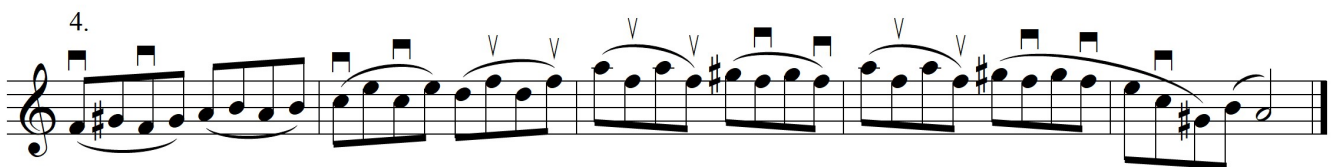
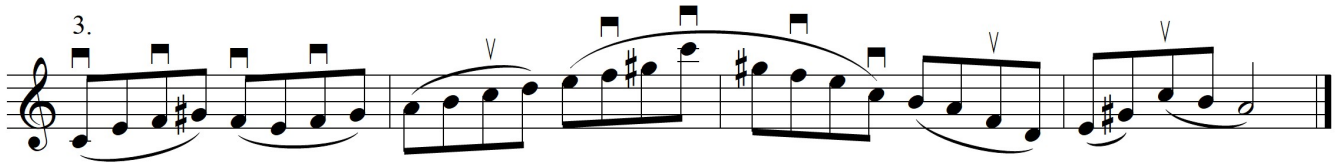
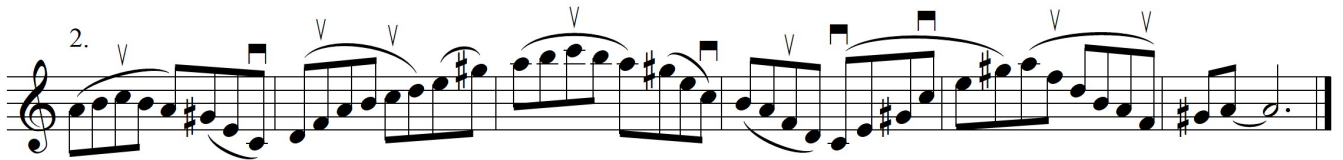
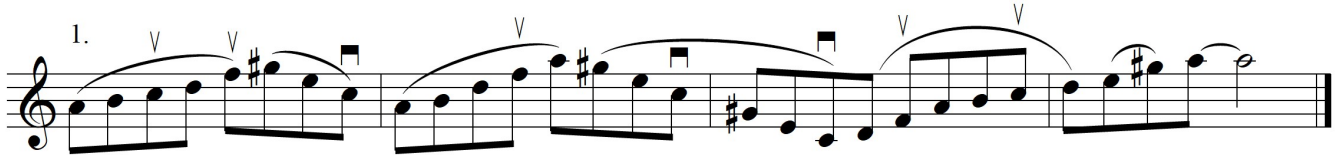
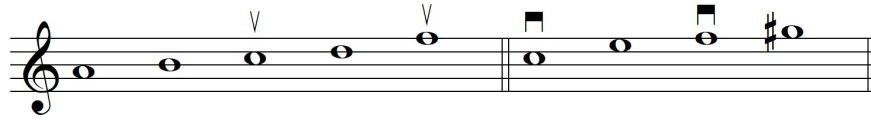
Bb Major



D Major



A harmonic minor



D harmonic minor

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Autor's note

On my harmonicas, I use a tuning called C6; that is, instead of the C and C# notes that end the octaves, I place a blow A and a blow Bb – respectively – in every octave (except the last one), thereby increasing the possibilities for articulation:

This subject will be addressed in another chapter titled “Why So Many C Notes?”