

# Woodwind Instrument Maintenance

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One of the most important parts of owning an instrument is knowing how to maintain it. This is especially critical for young band students who sometimes find it difficult in their busy lives to properly care for their horn. In this fast-paced, "instant gratification" world a few moments of daily attention will keep your instruments performing properly for many years. We will outline a few general and not-so-general maintenance tips for you below.

## **General Woodwind Maintenance**

- Swab instruments after each playing session with an instrument-specific swab
  - o DO NOT use a cloth too large for your instrument! This is especially important with oboes and piccolos considering their relatively small bore
  - o Do not leave your "leave in the horn" type swabs in the horn!
  - o Wipe down the finish of the instrument weekly to remove fingerprints, oils, other moisture and debris
- DO NOT use alcohol to clean any plastic parts on an instrument including joints and mouthpieces!
- Apply key oil lightly at all key pivot points monthly
- Light rain will not destroy your marching woodwind instruments (just be sure to dry them thoroughly after being exposed!)
- Do not use excessive cork grease on tenons and neck corks
- Thoroughly clean out your mouth with water between eating and playing your horn
- Check the case monthly to ensure that the latches, hinges and handle(s) are in proper order. Also check that there are no foreign objects inside the case that could cause damage to the instrument
- Do not store books, large swabs, stands or other items in your case
- Do not turn any adjustment screws on your instrument
- Have your instrument serviced by a qualified band instrument repair technician at least once per year

## **Flute/Piccolo**

- Keep tenons and sockets clean
- Check seal and position of headcork
- Do not attempt to polish your silver flute yourself – polishing cloths and silver polishing chemicals will damage the pads
- To remove fingerprints and other dirt from the instrument use only a standard (non-silver) cleaning cloth

## **Saxophone**

- Keep neck tenon/socket clean
- Keep neck cork well-lubricated (but do not over-lubricate!)
- Check all guard screws weekly
- Always use a neckstrap with all saxophones to prevent the bottom bow from being damaged

## **Mouthpiece/Reeds**

- Discard any mouthpiece or reed with a chip or crack
- Clean mouthpieces weekly with soap, water and a mouthpiece-specific brush
- Do not leave reeds on the mouthpiece
- Check metal ligatures weekly for signs of damage – an out-of-round ligature can cause irreparable damage to mouthpieces

## **Clarinet/Oboe**

- Keep tenons well lubricated (but do not over-lubricate!)
- Watch for bridge mechanism during assembly
- Check weekly for loose socket and bell rings
- For wood instruments have the bore checked yearly for cracks, leaks and proper lubrication
- For bass clarinets, keep neck tenon/socket clean

## **Bassoon**

- When assembling the instrument, be careful not to damage the whisper key pad and whisper key bridge
- Keep tenon and bocal corks well lubricated
- Check all guard screws weekly
- For wood instruments have the bore checked yearly for cracks, leaks and proper lubrication

