

Care & Maintenance of Your Clarinet

Good care and maintenance of your clarinet can ensure a lifetime of playing enjoyment.

Assembling your clarinet

1. Make sure that all joint corks are smooth and well lubricated with cork grease. This will help to ensure a smooth and easy fit.
2. Hold the upper body joint in one hand, with your fingers pressing onto the rings. This lifts the “bridge key”, reducing the likelihood of damaging it while assembling the clarinet. Hold the lower body joint in your other hand near the bottom, and put the two pieces together with a twisting (not rocking) motion. When the bridge key is aligned with its mate, you can let go of the rings. Be careful not to put too much pressure on the mechanism as you put the pieces together.
3. Attach the bell to the bottom joint, the barrel to the upper joint, and the mouthpiece to the barrel, all with a twisting motion. Align the flat side of the mouthpiece with the thumb rest.

Caution Do not rock the joints when assembling or disassembling the instrument, especially on wooden instruments. If the tenon breaks, it is an expensive repair – if it is possible at all.

Repairer’s Tip Joints on wooden clarinets can swell or shrink as the weather changes. We set up our clarinets so that joints fit well, but they may move over time. If the joints get tight, don’t leave it – bring the clarinet to us and we’ll adjust it. This is free in the first year.

If you don’t get your joints re-fitted, you might end up with bent keywork from forcing the joints together – or your clarinet might get stuck together!

Cleaning your clarinet

We recommend using a chamois pullthrough to remove the condensation from the inside of your clarinet. You can extend the life of the pads and mechanism and reduce instrument maintenance by swabbing out your clarinet after each use. To help with sticky pads, you can try using a “Pad Saver”. We don’t recommend the use of cigarette papers, as these can fray the pads. Wash the mouthpiece from time to time using lukewarm water only.

Remove fingerprints from the clarinet using a fine microfibre polishing cloth. Occasionally use a silver cloth on the keys to remove tarnish. **Never** apply liquid silver polish.

Tip Using a mouthpiece patch on your mouthpiece will help protect it from your teeth. It feels more comfortable, too!

Preventing cracking on a wooden clarinet

Store your clarinet in a safe place where the temperature is stable: the temperature can change rapidly next to a window or radiator, for example. Warm the clarinet up in your hands before blowing into it. This also helps to prevent cracking. Your instrument is best stored in its case when you are not using it.

To ensure a wooden clarinet’s long life, it should be properly “played in”. For the first couple of months, limit your playing to 20 minutes at a time, with breaks of at least 4 hours. After the first two months, gradually increase length of playing sessions; after six months you can consider your instrument “played in”.

Recommendations for maintenance

Your clarinet should be cleaned and adjusted approximately once a year by a qualified repair technician.

