

Looking After Your Oboe

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

Assembling your oboe

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 and the lower body joint in your other hand near the bottom, and put the two pieces together with a twisting (not rocking) motion. 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, holding the Bb key closed with your thumb – this lifts the “bridge mechanism” reducing the likelihood of damaging it while assembling the oboe.

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

Cleaning your oboe

We recommend using a silk pullthrough with a string to remove the condensation from the inside of your oboe, although some players prefer to use silk mops. You can extend the life of the pads and mechanism and reduce instrument maintenance by swabbing out your oboe after each use. We don't recommend the use of cigarette papers, as these can fray the pads.

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

Preventing cracking in an oboe

The biggest cause of cracking in oboes is rapid temperature change. Store your oboe in a safe place where the temperature is stable: the temperature can change rapidly next to a window or radiator, for example. Warm the oboe up in your hands before blowing into it. Your instrument is best stored in its case when you are not using it; a case cover for your oboe can add a layer of insulation against temperature change. Always dry the inside of the instrument before putting it away.

Don't Panic Cracks can often be repaired, so don't panic if one appears – take it immediately to a specialist repairer. If left, the crack may grow and become more difficult to repair. However, a handful of players find that their oboe actually sounds better once a crack appears and has been repaired, and the tension in the wood has been resolved!

“Playing in” a new oboe

To ensure an oboe'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 oboe should be cleaned, oiled (both the wood and mechanism) and adjusted approximately once a year by a qualified repair technician.

