

Care and Maintenance of the Oboe

You Will Need:

- 1) Silk swab. Silk or microfiber work best, because they absorb moisture well and will not get stuck.
 - A small cotton or wool swab can also be used, if it has a “tail” (something you could use to pull it out the way it went in).
- 2) Soft cloth.
- 3) Cork grease or paraffin wax.
- 4) Pad cleaning paper.

Daily Care

- 1) Never leave your instrument by itself. It takes very little time for someone to take it.
- 2) Never leave your instrument on the ground, on a chair, on a music stand, etc. Always keep your instrument in your hands or in the case.
- 3) Do not let other people use your instrument unless you teach them the right way to hold and use it.
- 4) Do not use your case as a chair or step stool. It is not designed for that kind of weight.
- 5) Lay your case flat on your lap before opening it. Do not let it “fall” open.
- 6) Twist the parts of your instrument together. Do not rock them in to place.
- 7) Do NOT grab the long rods on the oboe when putting the instrument together.
- 8) Secure all loose items in your case. Anything loose will damage your instrument.
- 9) Do not put music in your case, unless space is provided for it. If you have to fold it or if it touches the instrument, it shouldn't be there.
- 10) Avoid eating or drinking anything but water just before playing. If you must, rinse your mouth with water or brush your teeth before playing.
- 11) Grease your corks only when it is needed, and don't use too much grease.

Daily Cleaning

- 1) Keeping your instrument dry when you are not playing it is the most effective way to keep it in good condition.
- 2) Take out the reed and blow hard through the cork end. Carefully wipe it on your swab or forearm and put it in your reed case.
- 3) Remove the upper joint, drop the weight of the swab in the large end and pull it through the instrument. Then dry the connector (called a “tenon”) and place the joint in the case.
 - If you do not have a silk swab, do not pull it through the small hole. Pull it until the cloth can be seen and then pull it back out the other end with the tail.
- 4) Drop the weight of the swab through the bell and pull it through the lower joint.
- 5) Separate the bell and lower joint and dry the tenons. Place them in your case.
- 6) If you have a wood oboe, keep your dampit damp.

Weekly Cleaning

- 1) Wash the swab by soaking it for 3 minutes in a sink filled with lukewarm water and soap or a mild detergent. Rinse thoroughly. Let dry completely.
- 2) Carefully wipe the keys ONE AT A TIME and the body clean with a soft, clean cloth. Be careful not to snag any springs.
- 3) Make sure the screws at the ends of your rods are not sticking out.
- 4) While you are practicing, leave the case open in the sun. The warmth will dry out any moisture and discourage moths from living in the case (they like to eat pads).
- 5) Vacuum your case.
- 6) This one should actually be done every other week.
 - Have a parent help you make a bleach solution of one drop chlorine bleach to one cup warm water. Mix well with a small pipe cleaner. Carefully push the pipe cleaner through the cork end of your reeds and pull it out the other end.

Every Four Months

- 1) Dust in between the rods and keys if they are dirty. Use a watercolor paintbrush or pipe cleaners.
- 2) Clean the pads. Put pad cleaning paper or a NEW dollar bill under the pad, press the key and pull the bill out slowly. Don't push too hard or you will rip the paper!
- 3) If any corks or felt bumpers are missing, have them replaced. If they are missing, you may hear metal hitting metal when you push your keys. You should never hear this on an instrument that is working properly.
- 4) Check your pads for tears in the skin and discoloration. Worn-out pads will not seal and will make playing the instrument more difficult.

Regular Check-ups

To keep your instrument in top working condition, have it checked by a qualified repair person once per year (Winter break is better than summer, repair shops are not as busy). Woodwind instruments will stay in top form if they are overhauled every three to five years. Regular maintenance keeps an instrument in good playing condition for a period of years, rather than allowing it gradually to deteriorate, becoming more difficult to play and more expensive to repair.

