

Looking after your instrument

Strings

- A stringed instrument is made of thin wood and joined with glue. It is affected by heat, so don't leave it in the sun or near a heater.
- Keep your instrument in a safe place, where it won't be knocked.
- Do not turn the pegs on your instrument unless you have been shown how to do it.
- Keep a duster in the case to wipe off the rosin and keep the instrument clean.
- Never touch the hairs of the bow.
- Always slacken the hairs of the bow after use.
- Do not tighten the bow too much, your teacher will show you how to do it.

Violin/Viola

- Always open the case on a flat surface and pick up the instrument by its neck.
- Never put the violin down on its front, this may damage the bridge.
- Always take the shoulder pad off before closing the case.
- Do not keep music in your case, use a folder or music case.
- Make sure the case is shut properly before carrying it.

Cello

- Always lay your cello down on its side.
- If you are leaving the cello, even for a few moments, push in the end pin.
- Never try to stand the cello up leaning against anything.
- Be careful with the neck of the cello when you are carrying it, it can easily be broken off.
- Don't drag your cello along the ground when carrying it in its case.

Double Bass

The same as for cellos, but be particularly careful not to knock the top when carrying the instrument through doors.

String Consumables

Hirer's parents/carers are liable for the cost of replacement strings but if in doubt about what to buy or where to buy strings, please ask your child's teacher for advice. The teacher will always be happy to show your child how to put on a new string.

Electric Guitars and Basses

- Never rest your guitar anywhere it might fall over, as switches, necks, headstocks and tuning keys are easily damaged. Leave the guitar in a case or on a guitar stand.
- Wipe down your guitar regularly with a dry or very slightly damp duster – never use any polish other than those designed for guitars.
- Strings should be changed at least every 3 months to maintain good sound and tuning.
- If switches, sockets or parts become loose, ask your teacher or a music shop to fix them – this can usually be done quickly and easily but the guitar can be damaged if it is done incorrectly.

- Turn down the volume on the amplifier when plugging-in and unplugging your guitar, otherwise you could damage the speaker.

Classical and Steel-String Acoustic Guitars

As for electric guitars and basses, plus:

- Never fit steel strings to a classical guitar as this could seriously damage the instrument.
- Acoustic guitars, being hollow, are more easily damaged than electric ones and therefore extra care must be taken with them – invest in a hard case if possible.
- Hirer's parents/carers are liable for the cost of replacement strings but if in doubt about what to buy or where to buy strings, please ask your child's teacher for advice. The teacher will always be happy to show your child how to put on a new string.

Electronic Keyboard

Do:

- Keep the instrument covered for general protection (buy a keybag).
- Keep instrument away from damp, wet or dusty conditions.
- Remove batteries when you are not going to use the instrument for a long time,
- Ensure you have the correct adaptor if using mains electric; make sure that you put the plug into the mains socket LAST, before switching on.
- Unplug the power adaptor when not in use or during electric storms.
- Make sure you have your keyboard 'security marked'.

Do not:

- Use stickers or marker pens on the keys.
- Play the keys with dirty or sticky fingers.
- Rest your weight or put heavy objects on the keyboard.
- Use excessive force on the keys, buttons, switches or connectors.
- Eat or drink near the instrument.
- Mix old and new batteries.

Woodwind

Woodwind instruments are very expensive. Always think carefully about how you handle them and where you put them down.

Do:

- Insure your instrument to avoid big bills for loss/damage.
- Handle your instrument carefully at all times.
- Keep it in a safe place at home and at school.
- Tell your teacher if anything seems not to be working properly.
- Dry it out properly every time, your teacher will show you how.

Do not:

- Apply excess pressure to the keys when handling.
- Stand the instrument up on its end, even if it will balance like that.
- Rest the instrument on a music stand.
- Leave it in sunlight or anywhere else hot.
- Let friends play it, it's unhygienic and may get broken.

- Make any adjustments to the instrument.
- Keep anything in the case on top of the keys; it will damage the keys.
- Leave it in school overnight.

Flute

- Clean the joints with a cloth so they fit together well.
- Be careful with the thin metal ends of the joints.

Clarinet

- Don't forget to dry the mouthpiece every time.
- Keep the cork joints greased regularly.
- Be careful of the link and other easily damaged keys.

Saxophone

- Put the stopper in the end every time it's in the case.
- Clean the crook and mouthpiece joint every time with a cloth.
- Be careful with the easily damaged long keys.
- Lay it down slowly so you don't damage the lacquer.

Oboe

- Keep the cork joints greased regularly.
- Be careful of the link and other easily damaged keys.

Bassoon

- Be careful with the easily damaged long keys.
- Keep the cork joints greased regularly.

Clarinets, saxophones, oboes and bassoons are provided for each new hire with reeds provided. Hirer's parents/carers are liable for the cost of replacement reeds as required.

Brass

Weekly:

- Check all tuning slides, move and apply fresh Vaseline if necessary.
- Wash the mouthpiece in warm, soapy water.
- Remove valves, one at a time, wipe clean and apply fresh valve oil,

Each half term:

- Remove all slides, wash thoroughly and apply fresh Vaseline.
- Wash inside instrument with warm, soapy water and rinse thoroughly.

Trombones:

- Remove slide, wipe clean and apply fresh slide cream and water weekly.

Horns:

- Apply a few drops of valve oil to rotary valves weekly.