

Flute Cleaning

After you use your flute and before you store it, you must always remember to clean or dry it. This is because when you blow into the flute, moisture forms inside which can cause the pads to deteriorate. Here are some tips on how to clean your flute properly.

- Use a clean soft cloth to clean the inside of your flute. Just a small piece will do.
- Fold the cloth lengthwise in half and thread the edge of the cloth through the slot on the cleaning rod.
- The cloth must be wrapped snugly on the edge of the rod so you'll be better able to clean the inside of your flute.
- Wrap the rest of the cloth tightly around the rod and securely hold the end of the cloth and rod with your hand to avoid bunching up and getting stuck when cleaning the inside of the flute.
- Now push the cloth-covered rod all the way inside your flute and twist it as you move in and out. Be very careful when doing this. The head joint is the part of the flute that gets the most moisture so be sure to give it a thorough drying.
- The outside of the flute may be cleaned by gently using a clean damp cloth, but avoid getting the pads under the keys wet.

Now you can store your flute in the case when you're not using it. This will ensure that your flute will last longer and perform well.

Clarinet Cleaning

1. Remove the reed after playing and store it in a reed case to dry. Take off the ligature. Put the rest of the clarinet in a safe place. Don't stand it on end, unless you have a clarinet stand (It holds your clarinet upright, and can usually be folded and stored in the bell), since it can fall over.
2. Pick up the clarinet and turn it upside down, so the bell is facing up. Pick up your cleaning swab and drop the weight down the bell. Wait for it to come out the mouthpiece and gently pull the swab through the clarinet. You may have to do this several times. Then, fold the swab and store it in your clarinet case.
3. Get out some cork grease. Grease the corks by rubbing cork grease on them with your fingers. Cork grease comes in many different forms, but the most common looks like lip balm.
4. Take out your cleaning cloth and polish the keys to remove fingerprints and grime. Then, take out your dusting stick. Dusting sticks are long, twisted, thin, wire, with a small, broom-like thing at one end, and a little thing that looks like a tooth cleaner at the other end. Gently clean between and under the keys with the mouthpiece-brush end, and brush the dust off with the broom end. You may wish to polish the instrument again after doing this. Place the mouthpiece cap over the mouthpiece, then store the clarinet in its case. Put the case in a safe place.

Warnings

- It's a good idea to soak the mouthpiece in cool water with a little dish soap once a week, but don't get the cork wet.
- You don't always have to grease the corks. If you do, they will rot and you will have to replace them.
- Be sure to use tissue to absorb moisture that collects in the tenons and joints.
- Always unfold your cleaning swab completely, or it will get stuck in the clarinet.
- Don't press down too hard when cleaning the keys, you could bend them.
- If your swab gets stuck, *Do Not* try to pull it out. Take the clarinet to the nearest music store and get professional help.
- If your dusting stick doesn't fit in a space, *don't* force it. You could damage your instrument.
- *Do Not* leave the reed on the mouthpiece. Removing the reed may seem like a waste of time, but if you don't let it dry after each use, it will get really gross and possibly stick to the mouthpiece.
- Never put any part of the instrument except for the mouthpiece in your mouth. This may seem obvious, but many people like blowing into the holes, which leaves a greenish, crusty substance on the keys.
- Make sure you scrape the icky stuff off the end of mouthpiece often. You can loosen the gunk by dipping the end of the mouthpiece in mouthpiece in cool water. Then, scrape the stuff off with your fingernail or a mouthpiece brush.
- Don't stand your clarinet up on the bell unless you have a clarinet stand, because it can fall over easily.
- Don't use any kind of metal polish on your clarinet; it's bad for the keys.
- Woodwind instruments *cannot* get wet. If they get even a little moist, the pads that cover the holes will absorb the water and get big and puffy. Then they won't cover the holes correctly.
- Be very careful when handling the reed. Reeds are paper-thin and easy to crack or chip.
- Never run a swab of any kind through your mouthpiece.

Saxophone Cleaning

1. **Clean your mouthpiece.** Remove the reed and ligature, and use the mouthpiece brush to remove any foreign material inside the mouthpiece. Run *cold* water through the mouthpiece at the sink. Finally, using a clean, lint-free cloth, pull it through the mouthpiece to dry and remove any particles missed by the brush. This may take a few passes.
2. **Swab the neck.** Use the brush attachment (looks like a flexible metal hose with a rag ball on one end, and a small brush on the other) and pass it through the larger, base opening on the neck, coming out on the narrow side to which the cork is attached. Brush out the inside to remove any foreign particles or bacterial growth, and use the swab last. You *can* run water through the neck as well, just be sure that no water comes in contact with the cork, or it will swell and deform. Be wary of the pad on the octave valve as well.
3. **Swab the body.** With a standard cleaning kit, there is an attachment that looks like a brush and cloth on a long string weighted on the opposite end. Put the weighted end into the bell of the saxophone, and turn the sax upside down, bringing the weighted end completely through the body and coming at the narrow end to which the neck is attached. Gently pull the swab through the body, repeating this process several times. If possible, hold the keys down as you do this. It is not unusual to see a slight green color on the pad after a few passes. This is corrosion on the inside of the saxophone, as brass rusts green due to the copper.
4. **Check & clean the valve pads.** There are many on the saxophone, so this may be the most time consuming step. Visually inspect each pad, looking for wear or tears. If a pad is torn, take it to your local repair shop for replacement. Using a piece of paper, a dollar bill, or a pad cleaner, slide the paper underneath the pad, close the valve, and slowly pull the paper out. This helps remove foreign material from the pad.
5. **Tighten loose screws.** Most screws on a saxophone are of the flat head, not Phillip's. You can tighten loose rod screws safely, but do not over-torque them. If this happens, you may not be able to press keys such as those necessary for a high-D or F#.
6. **Swab and grease the corks.** Dry the cork on the neck completely, and add a liberal amount of cork grease. Rub the grease into the cork to 'condition' it, and add another light coating. Do this weekly, and you'll maintain an impressive seal. After some time of doing this, the cork will get saturated with grease; do not grease further, or you will hasten the deterioration of the cork. Don't try to grease the little bits of cork on the ends of actions; they're there for padding.
7. **Reassemble your saxophone.** It should look, smell, and play beautifully!

Tips

- Purchase a "Sax Saver" from a local store. A sax saver is a body insert that looks like a furry rod that is placed into the body of the saxophone during transport and storage. Not only will the saver help absorb excess moisture; you won't have to worry about losing another neck cap. However, the use of these are slightly controversial, as many claim that they absorb the excess moisture and let mold grow in them. Make your own judgement.
- Clean your saxophone every other week at the latest. A good rule of thumb is to clean your sax whenever you need to replace a reed.

Warnings

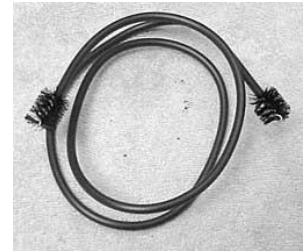
- Do not attempt to oil, remove dents, replace pads, or use scratch-removers on the finish of your saxophone. Leave these things to a professional. If you have a rental instrument, in most cases these services are performed free of charge.

Trumpet Cleaning

ONCE EVERY 2 to 6 MONTHS: Clean the horn with a bubble bath. Dish soap works fine. Fill a bath tub or large sink (like a laundry sink) with lukewarm water. **Do not use hot water!** Really hot water can damage some lacquer finishes and is not necessary anyway. Add some dish soap (with lemon or citrus).

1) Disassemble your trumpet. Take out the valves (carefully) and remove all the tuning slides. Place the disassembled horn in the water and let it soak. Some let it soak for 5 minutes, some 30 minutes, and others overnight! I think 30 minutes is plenty.

2) Using a flexible cleaning brush (often called a snake) make sure the horn is completely underwater and filled with water. Using the snake, work it back and forth through the entire horn. This gently scrubs away the "gunk." Use the snake on the inside of the tuning slides also!



3) Using a gentle cloth (old t-shirts and old wash cloths work well) wipe the outside of each valve. Run the cloth through the holes in the valve. Remember, the valves are delicate and should be handled with care.

4) A special brush is available for the valve casing (the part of your trumpet where the valves go up and down). You can use this brush to clean the valve casings. Or use the cloth and wipe the inside of the valves casing. Either way, be gentle. Do not "scratch" the casing or the valves.

5) Using running water (lukewarm again, no hotter) carefully rinse all the parts of the trumpet. Thoroughly flush each part with running water.

6) The tuning slides often accumulate dirt from the slide grease. Wipe the part of the tuning slide that fits into the trumpet with the soft cloth.



7) Dry each part with a soft towel. Let the parts "air dry" for about 15 minutes or so by placing them on the towel.

8) Using your valve oil, put oil on each valve. Carefully reinsert each valve into the casing. The valves are numbered usually so you can put the correct valve in the correct part of the casing.

9) Apply fresh tuning slide grease to each tuning slide. Use sparingly. A little goes a long way. Insert each tuning slide and wipe away the excess that may be around the tubing.

10) Put your mouthpiece in the soapy water. Using a mouthpiece brush, clean the mouthpiece and rinse. Do not forget the mouthpiece. Small amounts of gunk on the mouthpiece can make a big difference.



11) Dry the mouthpiece and go practice!

Note: Do not use abrasive cleaners or cleaning pads. In other words, do not use Ajax, Comet, Brasso, SOS pads, steel wool, etc.

Trombone Cleaning

Once Every 2 to 6 Months:

To give your trombone a good cleaning, you need following items:

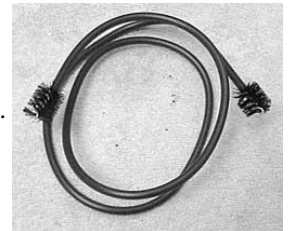
- A flexible brush commonly called a "snake" which can be purchased at any music store
- A mouthpiece brush -- again available at any music store.
- A bathtub
- A mild soap. Mild dish soap will do just fine. With lemon or orange is even better.
- Some cotton rags
- A beach towel to dry the trombone

Fill the bathtub with lukewarm water. Do not use hot water. I repeat, **WARNING: Do not use hot water!** Hot water can actually damage the lacquer. Nice lukewarm water is just fine. Disassemble the trombone into two parts, the slide and the bell section. Then take the outer slide off the inner slide. You now have three parts. Then remove the tuning slide. Now you should have four parts in the water. Include the mouthpiece and you have five!

Place all the parts in the bathtub of lukewarm water and let them soak for about 5 to 10 minutes. Be very careful with the parts, especially the inner and outer slide. Gently handle them at all times. Stand the bell section up away from the other parts and gently rub the bell on the outside and as much as you can on the inside. Rinse. To rinse the parts I like to use the shower head if your bathtub has one.

Use the beach towel and dry the bell as much as possible. Set it aside in a safe place and letting it finish by air drying. **Do not** use a blow dryer for any part of the drying process, as a blow dryer can get very hot and can damage the lacquer!

Next, take the outer slide and run the snake back and forth through inside of it. Make sure the outer slide is filled with water. Do this for about 1 to 2 minutes on each side of the slide. Often junk will come out into the water. Good! Keep working at it for at least a minute on each side. Using a clean stream of water, rinse the inside and outside of the outer slide. Dry with beach towel and let it air dry with the bell.



Take the inner slide and use a clean cotton rag and wipe firmly, but gently up and down the outside of the inner slide. Then take the snake and clean the inside of the inner slide as before with the outer slide. Rinse and dry and place it with the other parts.

Use the snake to clean the inside of the tuning slide. Finally, take the mouthpiece brush and go through the shank of the mouthpiece. This will only take about 30 seconds or so. Rub the mouthpiece with a cotton rag. Then dry. If the mouthpiece gets gunk in the cup or shank, it will greatly disrupt the airflow. Do not neglect your mouthpiece



After the horn completely "air dries" you will have a nice clean trombone! You will have to reapply a slide lubricant to the slide. Then apply tuning slide grease. Use sparingly -- a little goes a long ways. Reinsert the tuning slide into the bell section. Wipe any extra grease away with a clean cloth.

Note: Silver plated horns will probably tarnish the next day or so after a cleaning. Using a mild silver polish, clean the horn as directed on the polish bottle. Only clean the outside. The inside is brass or copper.

Note 2: Do not use abrasive cleaners or cleaning pads. In other words, do not use Ajax, Comet, Brasso, SOS pads, steel wool, etc.

French Horn Cleaning

Cleaning a french horn regularly can determine the durability of the instrument. This article explains a cost effective method of cleaning your horn.

In general, your french horn will not just hop into the bath tub when it's dirty. I have found that it takes a bit of coercion and some special care to clean a french horn. The tub really is a great place to clean a french horn, if you are going for the all-over, in-and-out scrub, but it is your responsibility as the owner to get the horn in and out of the bath. There are some general guidelines that I recommend you follow which I have acquired over years of bathing my horn as well as numerous other horns.

First, draw a bath just as if you were going to lavish yourself in it. Fill the tub with warm water to avoid shock when your horn initially touches its bareness to the substance. The catch here is that instead of adding a lilac-scented bath gel or quick-dissolve relaxation crystals, you add mild hand soap. I generally like to also lay a towel along the bottom of the tub in the water so that when my horn gets in it is protected from scratches against the tub's scaly surface.

Now comes the part where your horn must brave unfamiliar waters. The key point to remember when encouraging your horn for this task is that just like us, horns don't like to take baths with all of their clothes on. You must remove all slides and place them gently onto the towel in the bottom of the tub. Then your horn will feel light and carefree as you place it also on the towel.

Everything is soaking now and the horn has adjusted, you may even see iridescent grease swirls begin to circulate the tub. At this point, while the horn is beginning to bathe itself, you will need to clean behind its ears, scrub the back of its neck, and scour all other nooks and crannies that it may miss. What this means is that you will need a washcloth of your own with which you will massage the ends of slides where grease is stubborn. Try to also scrub in between all of the tubing on the horn where dust and grease collect over time. And for the final bathtub cleaning step it is best to use a "snake" to clean out the inside of the slides on the horn wherever possible. If you don't know what a "snake" is, it is simply a few feet of a metal or rubber cord with pipe-cleaner type material on the ends. They can be purchased at most music stores for only a few dollars.

Once you have cleaned and rinsed your horn, you will need to dry it off so that it doesn't catch a cold. I usually just lay another large towel on the bathroom floor and place the pieces of my horn on it after I wipe them. Horns and their parts are patient, so take your time and dry thoroughly.

And the final step in the process of cleaning your french horn is reassembling. This step may sound easy but it involves three actions. One: you must lubricate all of the slides with a thin layer of grease. Two: oil needs to be applied to the inside of the horn as well as all bearings and levers. Three: if you choose to polish your horn, now is the time.

Once you return your horn to its natural body form, it will play more freely, look more beautiful, and it should operate at its optimum level as soon as the oil works its way in. Your horn probably only needs a bath once every few months, but just check behind its ears regularly for dirt and use what you find as your gauge.

Baritone Cleaning

Before you play, you should wipe down and relubricate all moving parts. After you play, if your horn will be sitting untouched for a few days (for example, if you only use your horn for rehearsals once per week), you should repeat the procedure before storing it. The damaging build-up of calcium, sugars, and rust deposits inside the instrument begins to occur soon after playing because the light-weight lubricants used for brass instruments begin to break down within twelve hours of application.

Wiping down and re-greasing/oiling all moving parts with every use will prevent sticking, sluggish valves/rotors and seized slides and valve/rotor caps.

Seventy percent of brass instruments brought to any instrument repair technician exhibit problems due to lack of proper regular maintenance. Using good quality oil and grease of the correct weight designed for brass instruments every time you play will extend the life of your instrument, ensure the quality of your playing, and significantly lower your repair costs.

It is important that you take your instrument to a qualified instrument repair technician as soon as a problem occurs. Instruments never repair themselves and neglecting repairs creates more serious problems which compound in severity with use. Ignoring a problem will extend the damage and increase the cost of repair.

Basic Regular Maintenance of the Baritone

Assemble equipment. You will need:

mouthpiece brush	brass cleaning snake
clean lint-free cloths (cut up old t-shirts)	small valve cleaning rod
good quality valve oil	good quality slide grease
paper towel	Q-tips
Lemon (not regular) Pledge (for brass horns)	silver polish (for silver horns)

Choose a large flat surface on which to work and spread out a clean towel. The floor is recommended as a good workspace for cleaning the large brass because it is solid and pistons and slides cannot be dropped and damaged.

Remove the mouthpiece from the shank and soak it in warm water. Wash with non-bleaching soap and scrub with a mouthpiece brush. Rinse thoroughly to remove any unsavory flavors from soap.

Before you begin, remember that every piece of the instrument must go back together exactly as it was removed. Keep it simple!

To remove the first piston, carefully unscrew its top valve cap counter-clockwise. Take the piston out of the casing and wipe it down with a clean dry lint-free cloth to remove the old oil and debris. Place the wiped down piston on the towel. Remove the bottom valve cap in the same fashion (by unscrewing it counter-clockwise) and take out the valve spring. Some springs are attached to the bottom valve caps and some are loose, depending upon the manufacturer. Wipe both the spring and the bottom cap with the cloth and place them on the towel with the piston. Use a Q-tip to wipe down the threads of the caps.

Remove the second and third pistons in the same way and place the wiped parts on the towel being very careful to keep each set together - piston 1 with spring 1 with cap 1, piston 2 with spring 2 with cap 2, etc.

Using another lint-free cloth, fold it over the valve cleaning rod guide to create a pilot in order to ensure that there will be no contact between the rod and the inside piston walls. Push the cloth-covered rod through the piston casings, top to bottom, to clean them. Never insert the rod from the bottom because when playing the instrument, the piston action causes the calcium buildup, sugars and other debris to be forced to the bottom of the casing. The goal is to remove the deposits from the pistons and casings, not to contaminate them further.

Generously oil the first valve piston, insert the piston in its casing and work the piston up and down several times to evenly coat the casing. Add a few more drops of oil for good measure and screw on the top valve cap ensuring that the valve guide is in place. Insert the correct valve spring from the bottom. Oil and screw on the bottom valve cap, seating the spring in its groove, being careful to avoid cross threading. Repeat the oiling procedure for each piston.

Remove all tuning slides paying close attention as to where they came from and what direction they were facing. Wipe each slide down with a third lint-free cloth or paper towel. Remember to run your cleaning snake through the slides. Oil and grease do not mix so it is important that there is no contamination between the two lubricants.

Generously apply grease to the top half of each inner slide stocking, one slide at a time. Insert the newly greased stocking into its outer slide, working it in an up and down and circular motion making sure both sides are evenly coated. Insert each re-greased tuning slide into its proper sleeve in this manner and wipe off any excess.

A quick exterior polish and your instrument is good to go!