

How to look after your instrument

Regular maintenance

1. Try not to touch the varnish; handle it by the neck and the end-button only.
2. Clean off rosin and finger marks with a soft cloth (microfibre is ideal) or duster before you put the instrument back in its case.



3. Check periodically that the bridge is straight; if not, move it carefully back. Support the back of the bridge with your thumbs and the front with your fingers, and gently pull the bridge straight.

4. When you change the strings, rub a little dry (unused) soap or soft pencil lead into the groove of the top of the bridge. This will help the strings to slide easily over the bridge, and make it easier to straighten the bridge. Take extra care to check that the bridge remains straight while the new strings settle in.

5. Check the adjusters periodically to make sure that they are not wound down so far that they touch the front of the

instrument.

6. Protect the instrument from extremes of temperature. In particular, don't leave it in a parked car in hot weather, as this can permanently damage the varnish.

7. Make sure that when the instrument is in its case, it is protected by either a blanket that might have been supplied with the case, or wrapped in a cloth. This prevents the instrument rubbing against the bow holders, which can cause permanent damage to the front of the instrument.

Longer-term maintenance

1. It's a good to get a new instrument checked over by the maker after about six months or a year, and thereafter to have a check every few years, or more frequently if the instrument is in heavy use or there seems to be any sort of problem.

2. The things that may change over time are as follows:

- Although the soundpost will have been carefully fitted and adjusted when the instrument left the maker, it may be necessary to adjust the position or refit the soundpost later. As the instrument settles down, the string tension can slightly change the shape of the instrument. The body may become slightly deeper, and therefore the soundpost becomes very slightly too short. You can often tell if this has happened; it feels as if the instrument has lost some of its clarity and power. As the instrument develops, sometimes the original position of the soundpost is no longer optimal.
- There may be some wear to the varnish, caused by abrasion from sweat and dirt, accidental damage to the instrument, etc. The varnish should be checked regularly so that any damage can be repaired to prevent wear to the wood beneath.
- The fingerboard will wear into pits and grooves from the sweat of the fingers and the vibration of the strings, and will need to be resurfaced.