

Caring for Your Bassoon

In order to continue to work properly, it is very important that your bassoon be properly maintained. Not only is a bassoon a musically artistic device, but it is also a mechanical tool requiring cleaning and service just as any machine would. Fortunately, maintaining a bassoon is not a difficult task when the student follows a few simple procedures on a regular basis. The following steps should be taken to keep your bassoon looking and sounding great.

| Every Time You Play | Once a Week | As Needed |
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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Wipe fingerprints clean with a handkerchief.2. Swab your bassoon thoroughly to remove condensed moisture.3. Gently wipe any moisture from the bocal.4. Store your reed in a good reed case. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Remove old cork grease and apply new cork grease to all joints.2. Check the bassoon for loose corks, strings, screws and springs. Don't tighten them yourself! Let your teacher know if something needs to be adjusted.3. Gently wash and brush your bocal in lukewarm water. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Have any loose or leaking pads replaced by a professional repair technician. |

Daily Maintenance

The greatest danger to your bassoon is moisture. The condensation that naturally collects inside your instrument as you play can not only cause pads to leak and eventually fall off, but can actually cause a wooden bassoon to mildew and rot. Consequently, you absolutely must swab your instrument dry every time you play.

Swabbing a bassoon is relatively simple. Once you have finished playing, store your reed in your reed case and carefully remove the bocal. Gently and carefully shake your bocal to remove excess condensation. If possible, you should also take a moment to brush your bocal with either a bocal brush or a long pipe cleaner.

After storing your bocal in the case, take the smaller of your two swabs from the case and remove the wing joint of your bassoon. Holding the wing joint upside down, carefully drop the weighted portion of the swab into the wing joint so that it drops through the bocal socket. Gently pull the unfurled swab through the instrument. Repeat this three or four times to make sure the moisture has been removed and place the wing joint in the case.

Next, remove the tenor joint and bell sections from the boot. Swab the tenor joint and bell using the larger of your two swabs in the same manner as for the wing joint. After you have stored the bell and tenor joint in the case, swab the boot by dropping the weighted end of the swab into the smaller hole of the boot and rotating it so that the weight drops out of the larger hole. Gently pull the swab through the boot several times and place everything back in the case.

If the swab becomes stuck, do not try to force it through the instrument. Instead, grasp the cloth of the swab and gently pull it out in the opposite direction inserted. You may use tweezers to grasp the swab if it is out of reach for your fingers. If this doesn't work, however, you will need to have the swab removed by your director or a professional repair technician. You should pull your swab through the bassoon at least three times to make sure you have removed all of the accumulated moisture. See the pictures below for examples of how to correctly swab your bassoon.

Weekly Maintenance

The wrapped string that seals your instrument should be greased at least once a week. Don't wait until it becomes difficult to assemble the instrument before you apply cork grease, since this means that the strings are already dry and will have begun to wear down. When applying cork grease, always wipe the old grease off with a lint-free cloth that won't be harmed by staining, such as a shop towel. Apply the new cork grease around the surface of the string so that the entire surface is covered without excessive build-up. Gently twist the greased joints together, wiping of any extra grease. Do the same thing for the cork on your bocal.

About once a week you should take a moment to visually inspect your bassoon for any loose or missing screws and springs. Never adjust a screw or spring on your instrument yourself. Only your band director, private teacher, or professional repair technician should make adjustments to your instrument. Notify your director as soon as possible if you notice a mechanical problem with your instrument.

Occasionally, you should take some time to clean your bocal by gently scrubbing it with your bocal brush or a soft pipe cleaner in lukewarm water. Do not allow the bocal to soak in the water for a long period of time, however, as this can damage the cork. Wipe excess water off of the bocal after washing it and allow it to fully air dry before greasing the cork and returning it to the case.

Occasional Maintenance

From time to time, your bassoon will need repairs and adjustments by a qualified repair technician. Pads will wear out with use, and corks will deteriorate in time. The better you care for your instrument, however, the less frequent and less costly your trips to the repair shop will be. Prevention is the best medicine for your bassoon. Proper instrument maintenance is part of your responsibility as a musician.