

Clarinet Maintenance and Cleaning

Needed items

Handkerchief or silk swab, cleaning cloth, cork grease, mouthpiece brush, reed guard

Storing your instrument

When not using your instrument, keep it closed in its case to help protect it and to prevent the possibility of damage. Keep reeds stored in a reed guard to allow them to properly dry out and to avoid any chipping or cracking.

Do not store the instrument in areas of extreme temperature changes. Keep the instrument away from heating supplies or from windows where direct sunlight or other weather can cause damage.

Daily Maintenance

As you play, your clarinet collects moisture inside from the warm air coming out of your mouth. If you do not clean this moisture out after each playing session, it can accumulate in your keypads and cause air leaks. After playing, take your reed off, squeeze the excess water out of it and place it in your reed guard. Drop the weighted end of the cleaning swab through the mouthpiece and let it fall to the other end of the clarinet. Pull the swab gently through the instrument and repeat a second time. The outside of the clarinet should be wiped off with a clean cloth to remove fingerprints. This will stop your instrument from tarnishing and keep it in good working order.

Weekly Maintenance

The mouthpiece should be cleaned once a week using warm soapy water and your mouthpiece cleaning brush. This will sanitize the mouthpiece and also remove any foreign materials.

Keep the tenons (the places where your clarinet joints fit together) clean and greased. Apply a small amount of cork grease if the instrument is difficult to put together.

If you have pads that stick as you play, take a sheet of cigarette paper and place it beneath the sticky key. Gently push the key down, but with a little more pressure than when you play the clarinet. Pull out the paper while being careful not to tear it. Repeat as necessary.

Yearly Maintenance

Have your instrument checked out at a music store. They will do minor repairs and replace worn pads or corks. You may ask for an estimate for cleaning and repairs before having the work done. If you are renting an instrument, this work will be covered in the rental program. Early summer is a great time to do this.