

Clarinet Care



The most frequent cause of damage to a clarinet is due to improper assembly and disassembly. This is because the keys are made of soft metal and bend very easily. If the keys are bent even slightly, the pads in the keys will no longer cover the holes with a perfectly airtight seal. If the seal is broken then the clarinet will either play poorly or not at all. Therefore, the biggest enemy of any clarinet is the hands of the player. This is because many players do not even realize that they are bending keys as they are handling their instruments.

Ten Clarinet Care Imperatives:

1. Do not play with anything in your mouth (i.e. crumbs, bits of nuts, etc.) or after eating candy. Rinse your mouth before playing if necessary
2. Never put your clarinet in water to wash it
3. Always play with clean hands
4. Clarinets play best when the reed is moistened. Soak the thin end of the reed in your mouth while you are putting your clarinet together.
5. Do not ignore any problems, but take care of them right away
6. Do not slam the keys down when playing
7. Clean the interior and exterior of the clarinet daily
8. If you place the instrument down, do so onto a stand to let the interior drain
9. Do not turn any of the screws on your clarinet
10. Do not leave your instrument on the floor under any circumstances

Parts of a Clarinet -



General Maintenance:

What you will need:

- Cork Grease (use sparingly)
- Clarinet swab for drying the bore of the instrument
- Mouthpiece brush (optional)



Frequency: Every Time the Instrument is Played

- Carefully remove and replace the instrument from the case, check for weak or broken case latches.
- Glance at the instrument to check for loose or missing parts.
- Dry the instrument before storing it in the case.
- Avoid placing excessive amounts of "stuff" in the case that might damage the instrument. Loose mouthpieces, books, mutes, lyres, etc. can bend the thin metal.

Storing your instrument –

When not using your instrument, keep it closed in its case to help protect the finish from unnecessary exposure to impurities in the air, especially in geographic areas affected by salt or sulfur content. Also, keeping the instrument in its case helps prevent the possibility of damage by dropping it accidentally.

Do not store the instrument in areas of extreme temperature changes. Keep the instrument away from radiators or from windows where direct sunlight can cause extreme heat.

Putting your clarinet together –

If you follow these steps below you will learn to assemble your clarinet the right way.

Greasing the corks:



You should not put grease on the corks every time you play. You only apply grease to the joints when the instrument is hard to put together. For the joints that are hard to put together, put a small amount of grease on the cork, and spread it around with your fingers so that you cover the whole cork surface with grease. If the instrument is still hard to put together with a new coat of grease then the corks

need to be sanded down at a repair shop. This is not a big job; a repair tech can do it for you while you wait. Clarinet joints should not be too loose either.

Remember that it is much better to have a tight clarinet when it is new because the corks will compress anyway as you use the instrument. If the corks are too loose when new, then your instrument may wiggle or fall apart in a few months. If your cork joints are too loose, you will need to have new corks installed.

Assembling the clarinet:

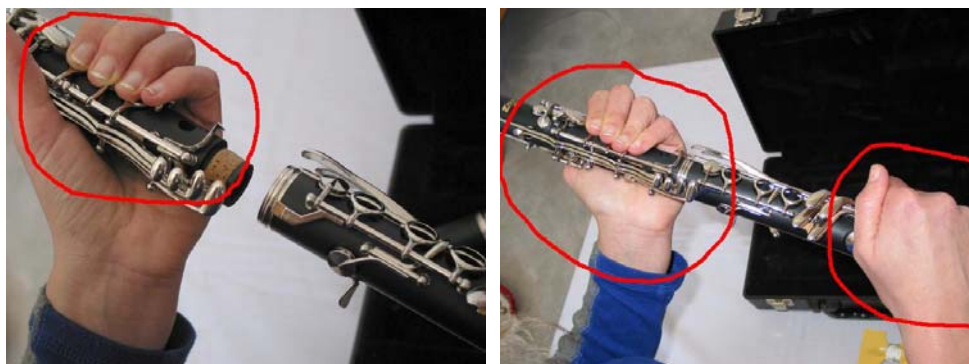
First pick up the Lower Joint. This is the biggest piece in the case. After picking it up turn the Upper Joint around if you have to so that the two large keys and the key cluster facing you.

Put the palm of your hand directly over these two big keys so that the keys are pressed down by the fleshy part of your palm just below the thumb. As long as you are pressing straight down on the keys you will not hurt them regardless of how hard you press. Incidentally, that key right below your thumb is the most frequent one to be bent on a clarinet. If you bend this key you will not be able to play the lower notes.



While holding the Lower Joint, extend both of your index fingers and pick up the Upper Joint.

Wrap your left fingers on the Upper Joint around the **Larger Ring Key**. Take a close look. If you depress the large ring key on the Upper Joint, the bridge key will lift. This is because the larger ring key and the bridge key are actually **the same key**. This Upper Joint Ring Key must be depressed in order to raise the Bridge Key. Here is the correct position of your left hand.



Now you have both of your hands in the correct position. Now place the Upper and Lower Joints together by both pushing and twisting a bit back and forth. Your hands will move in opposite directions as you twist.

Always push and twist back and forth as you assemble the two joints. Do not attempt to screw them together and do not make large movements because the key clusters on both joints will run into each other and then they will get bent and misaligned. If you neglect to raise the bridge key on the top joint, when you insert the two sections the Bridge Key on the Lower Joint hits the Bridge Key on the Upper Joint. In the best case you will tear off the cork and in the worst case the keys get really bent or even break if excessive force is used.

Notice that for perfect alignment the two posts that look like little balls should be aligned in a straight line. If you align these two posts the Upper and Lower Bridge keys will automatically be aligned as well.



Next, you put on the Bell. You do this by holding the clarinet in your **LEFT** hand and you put the Bell on with your **Right** hand. Your thumb can wrap around the instrument because this part of the instrument (the Lower Joint) will not move. You will just hold it stationary while your right hand twists the Bell into position. Your Right Hand holding the Bell will move as you wiggle the Bell on the Lower Joint.



Next you put on the Barrel. First hold the instrument in your left hand in the exact same position that you had when assembling the Upper and Lower joints.



Make sure you push the Barrel all the way down. This is how you tune a clarinet by pulling the Barrel out a bit if you are too sharp. If you are a beginner, you shouldn't worry about this. You have more important things to consider like playing good, strong, clean notes, regardless of your tuning.

Now with the Barrel assembled you must put on the Mouthpiece. First turn the clarinet so that the Register Key faces you directly. You must do this so that the alignment of the Mouthpiece will be correct.



Hold the clarinet so that you are holding both the Upper Joint and the Barrel at the same time. If you do not do this, the Barrel may turn when you are trying to install the Mouthpiece. Slip on the mouthpiece the same way you did the other parts. Remember hold the clarinet in your **LEFT** Hand and the Mouthpiece in your **RIGHT** Hand. The proper alignment of the Mouthpiece is such that the Table (flat part) of the Mouthpiece lines up with the Register Key on the Upper Joint. You are almost done but you are not ready to play yet. You must also install the Reed.

Putting the reed on:

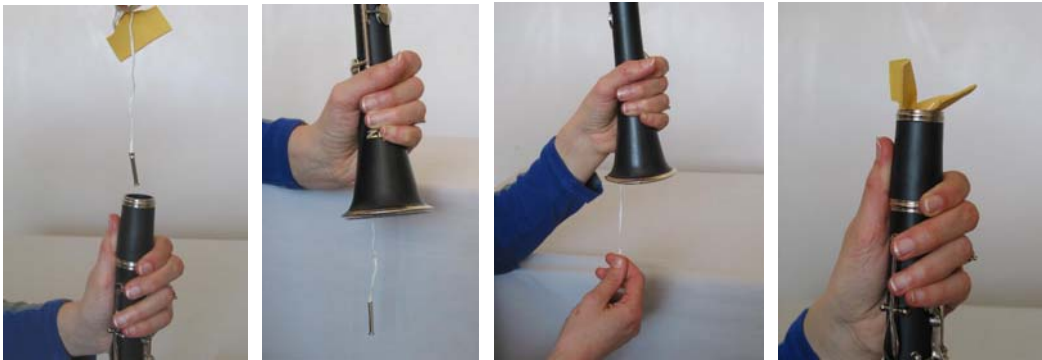
Place the Reed on the flat part of the Mouthpiece. Center it and hold it in position with your thumb.



Slip on the Ligature being careful not to hit the reed because you will crack it. Next, center the Ligature over the reed making sure that the Ligature is quite low on the Reed and over the unshaved part of the Reed. Tighten the screws nice and tight and you are ready to play after you moisten the Reed in your mouth for a minute

Drying your Clarinet –

Did you know that you are not actually cleaning your clarinet? What you are doing is drying it. Clarinets do not like moisture. Pads will deteriorate sooner if they are wet and the clarinet will get moldy after a while. Especially, it is not a good idea to place a wet clarinet into a closed case. It can not breathe or dry out. The best way to dry a clarinet is to let it air dry. If you have a safe place to put it, then just leave the lid of the case open and let the clarinet dry overnight. Many times you do not have the opportunity to do this like when you are at school, so you must use a swab. Pull through swabs come in different styles but they do the same thing. They remove the moisture from the instrument.



Simply just remove the Mouthpiece after playing. Pull-through swabs have a weight on a string that is dropped through the instrument and when it comes out the other side you simply pull the swab through the instrument several times. Pull gently because the Swab has to clear two metal tubes in the inside of the clarinet. If you pull too hard and too fast the Swab can get stuck and tear.