

Care of Your String Instrument and Bow

The instrument and bow are fragile and should always be handled with care. **Remember, YOU are responsible for the proper care and handling of your instrument.** If you care for your instrument responsibly, it should last for many years.

The Instrument

You are the only one who should handle your instrument.

Handle it gently.

Protect extra fragile parts.

The bridge is not glued on. It is movable and held in place only by the tension of the strings.

The neck of cellos/basses is also fragile, especially if dropped or bumped sharply.

Keep your instrument in its case while riding in a moving vehicle or while outdoors.

Keep your instrument at room temperature and medium high humidity.

Sudden extreme changes of temperature or humidity cause warping and cracking.

Never leave your instrument in a cold car or garage! See "When Things Go Wrong"

Walking to school with an instrument is fine as long as the instrument is not outside for a long time.

Keep your instrument dry!

Water can quickly destroy an instrument - even just a damp rag!

Keep all liquids (including water bottles & other beverages) away from your instrument.

Do not store liquid polish in your case.

Keep music, papers and other objects out of your case.

Papers and music should be in a music folder. Stuffing them in a case could cause cracks or a broken bridge.

Music stands should never be carried in any pocket of a cello or bass case.

Clean your instrument of rosin dust after every playing session using a soft, clean cloth only.

Do not polish your instrument until taught to do so by a teacher.

Use only string instrument polish -never furniture polish or other wood cleaners.

Check your instrument before every playing session. See your teacher if problems arise.

Is your bridge straight up and down?

Are your fine tuners close to the top of the instrument?

Does anything look different?

Have any cracks developed on your instrument?

Store your instrument in a safe place.

Cellos and basses must be stored on their sides. (Never, never lean them against a wall or lay them on their backs.)

Keep your instrument in a latched (or zippered) case when not in use.

Keep your instrument away from children and animals.

Never leave your instrument on a piece of furniture used for sitting.

Never attempt repairs yourself or allow any untrained person to work on your instrument!

Never use glue anywhere on the instrument.

Improper repairs only cause added expense.

The orchestra teacher can fix some problems and will let you know if the instrument needs a repair technician or luthier. (A luthier is the name for someone trained to make and repair stringed instruments.)

Do not tune your instrument or try to fix a loose string unless you have been taught to do so.



The Bow

Never touch the bow hair or rosin.

Oil and dirt keep the hair from holding the rosin and it will no longer make a sound.

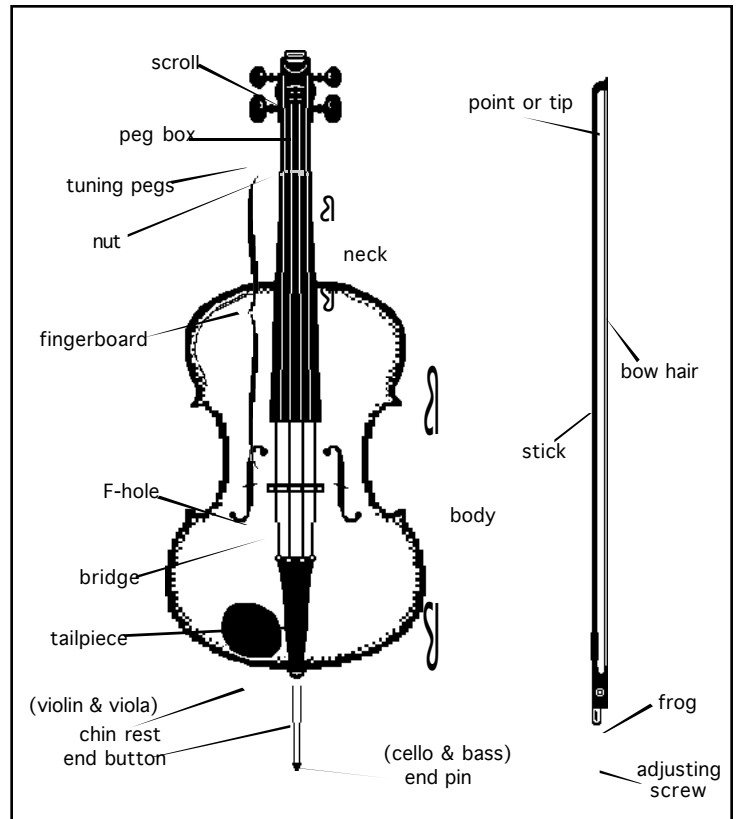
Apply rosin as instructed by the teacher.

Rosin is specially prepared tree sap that makes the bow hair grip the string.

Tighten the bow hair for playing and loosen it (closer to the stick) before storing it in the case.

Use the adjusting screw at the end of the bow to adjust the tension of the hair and stick.

Use the bow only for its intended purpose - playing the instrument.



When Things Go Wrong

Instrument Gets Too Cold - Do not open the case. Let it warm up slowly in the case for about 20 minutes.

String Breaks - Purchase a replacement string (you will need to know which string and the instrument size.) The orchestra teacher can put it on for you. Or, you can take the instrument with you to the music shop. This should be done within a few days to prevent more expensive problems. Most teachers want students to bring an instrument to class even if a string is broken.

Bridge Falls Down or Is Out of Place - The bridge should be moved only by your orchestra teacher or a repair technician. If it has fallen, treat the instrument gently to prevent additional problems. Your teacher may be able to put it back in place if no breakage has occurred. Sometimes bridges warp or crack and need to be replaced at a string repair shop.

Something Rattles Inside the Instrument - This can be serious. You will see 2 holes carved in the instrument top. These are the the f-holes. Look into the instrument cavity through the one on the right. You should see a small wooden dowel standing between the top and the bottom. This is the soundpost. If this is still in place, something may have fallen into the instrument. Treat the instrument very gently (so the soundpost is not knocked down) and show it to your teacher as soon as possible. If the soundpost is down, you must relieve the pressure of the strings so the top does not collapse or crack. Hold the instrument with the strings facing you. Turn all four pegs toward you one turn to loosen them. Take the instrument to a string repair shop as soon as possible.

A Crack Appears on the Instrument - For small cracks or nicks in the wood, ask your teacher to look at it. They will let you know if you should have it repaired. For large cracks or cracks which allow you to see between the pieces of wood, you should take the instrument to a repair shop.

Water on the Instrument - If a small amount of water gets on the outside of the instrument, wipe it off immediately. Talk to the teacher as soon as possible. For large amounts of water (or if water spills inside the instrument), take the instrument to a repair shop immediately. Sometimes the instrument can be saved if it is worked on **before** it dries out.