

The care and feeding of a flute



Assembling

When installing the footjoint & headjoint, do not hold the flute body or the foot joint with your hand around the keys or rods. This could bend the rods. Hold the flute body up at the headjoint end where the name is engraved. Hold the foot joint at the bottom and gently twist the foot on. Flute tenons must be kept clean & dry. Do not use oil or grease on the tenons. Wipe the tenons and the sockets they fit in with a soft cloth frequently.

Cleaning the inside

Moisture is the enemy of every flute. The pads are made of cow intestine lining and we want to keep them dry. After every time you play or practice, use a soft cotton handkerchief with your cleaning rod to push it through the foot joint and body. Stuff the end of the handkerchief in the head joint with the cleaning rod, and twist it around enough times till you see it turn through the embouchure hole. Do not store your cleaning cloth in your case. You want the moisture away from your flute.

Cleaning the outside

Wipe the outside of the flute with a treated polishing cloth designed for a silver finish. I have very fine quality treated polishing cloths made especially for flutes in stock. If your flute is nickel plated, any soft cloth will do. Gently wipe the keys and body, being careful not to touch the pads as they are very delicate and tear easily. Also take care you do not catch the cloth on the springs. Do not use metal polish. It contains abrasives that may break the skin on the pads or get into the moving parts. Dust and dirt can be removed with a duster brush once a month.

Headjoint

Your cleaning rod has a reference line on the end of it. When the rod is inserted in the head joint until it meets the cork, this line should be in the center of the embouchure hole. Adjust the head crown until it is centered by turning it clockwise to move the rod reference line in, and counter-clockwise to move it out. After turning it counter-clockwise you will have to push the crown in by pressing it against a table top protected with a soft cloth. The pitch of your flute may be changed by moving the headjoint in or out, not by turning the crown cork adjustment. Most flutes are set to play in tune with the headjoint out a few millimeters.

Oiling

Do not oil your flute unless you know what you are doing. Proper oiling can only be accomplished by completely disassembling the flute. It is unlikely oiling will need to be done more than once a year. This is a service that is inexpensive, but can keep your flute in fine shape. If the keys are sticking they are probably gummed up with old oil & dirt and need proper cleaning rather than oiling.

Protection

Open your case on the floor or table. Be careful not to bump your flute against chairs, music stands, etc. Do not leave your flute unattended or in extreme of temperature, like in a car. When not playing, either hold your flute or put it in the case. Do not set it on a chair or on the ledge of the music stand. Symphony musicians during intermission of a concert will carry their flutes with them. Their living depends on their instruments being in good condition. So treat your flute like a professional. Do not store pencils, cleaning cloth, etc. in your case. Be sure your case is securely locked before you pick it up. Keep your case in a case cover for further protection. Protect your instrument.

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