

Dear Student Musician:

If you want to learn how to take good care of your instrument, please read this guide carefully. Give your instrument the love and attention that it needs, and it will sound better, play easier, and help you make rapid musical progress. Learn the habits of caring for an instrument now, and when you trade up to a better instrument, you will already know how to care for it! Please keep this Guide in your case and re-read it from time to time.

In General:

1. Heat and dry air are bad for instruments because they cause cracks. If you don't humidify your home in winter, use a Dampit and store your instrument (in its case) in a cool closet or away from radiators or hot air vents. Never leave your instrument in a car. In any season the trunk or rear window can get hot enough to melt the varnish.
2. Always loosen the bow after playing. For best tone, use as little rosin as possible and try never to touch the hair. The oils in your hands cause the bow hair to become slippery and loose friction. The bow tip breaks easily, so take care not to hit anything. Keep the tip pointed straight up when you are not playing.
3. Everybody should consider insurance for their instruments and bows. There is no room here to cover this topic adequately, but call us for a copy of "The Musician's Guide to Instrument Insurance" for detailed answers to any questions.

Each time you finish playing you should:

1. Check the bridge position. It should usually be in line with the inside nicks of the f-holes, positioned so that the strings are centered on the fingerboard.
2. Check the tilt of the bridge. When viewed from the side it should stand straight up,

leaning just a tiny bit back (away from the fingerboard). It should not be bent in the middle, and the feet should make perfect contact with the top of the instrument. Ask your teacher to show you how to do this safely, or bring it to us and we will be happy to show you.

3. Wipe the instrument clean with a soft dry cloth. Now and then use some of our violin polish to help preserve its sheen. Never use alcohol, which will harm the finish.
4. Check to see if the strings are old, frayed, or unraveling. Old strings sound bad and make playing in tune very difficult. Strings should be changed at least twice a year.
5. If you use a shoulder rest, make sure it is not scratching your instrument at the contact points or anywhere else.
6. Loosen the hair before putting the bow away. Be sure it is held firmly and will not come loose after the case is shut. If the bow holder is not working properly, have it fixed.
7. Check the Dampit and moisten it if it looks dry once the heat is turned on in your home. You may need to use it in the summer if you visit a dry climate (like the Southwest).
8. Put the instrument in its case, close it carefully, and put the case in a safe, cool place. Never stand a case on end unless it has some extra support to keep it from falling over.

Each time you change strings, you should:

1. Reread this guide carefully.
2. Change the whole set to make your instrument sound its best, and always use top quality strings. Inexpensive strings will not let you and your instrument achieve your tonal potential, and also wear out faster than better quality strings.
3. Change the strings one at a time, using tweezers to reach the tight spots in the pegbox.

4. Loosen the fine tuners until they stop lowering the pitch, tune up with the pegs, and finish with the fine tuners. This lets the tuners work better and will also keep the underside of the tuners from scarring the top of the instrument.
5. Lubricate the peg with peg compound if it is difficult to turn. If the peg slips, rub some brown pastel chalk on the peg and then wind the string so it touches the inside of the pegbox.
6. Lubricate the string grooves in the nut and bridge with pencil lead before installing the new string. These grooves should be just deep enough to keep the strings from sliding around. If the strings are below the surface of the wood, the grooves are too deep, and will wear the strings out and break them.
7. Before tightening the string, be sure it is in the right groove at the nut and bridge.
8. Remember that new strings stretch as they break in, and as you tighten them, the bridge will bend toward the fingerboard. Straighten it carefully, making sure the feet contact the top of the instrument perfectly.

Each time you play in a group or orchestra, you should:

1. Put your case in a safe place where nobody will trip over it or kick it.
2. Remember that most accidents occur in an orchestral setting and that you must take extra precautions to protect your instrument. Never leave a bow or instrument on a chair, music stand, or on the floor. Cellos should be placed carefully on their sides, never dragging them across the floor.
3. Never rush and never let anybody (even a grown-up or your teacher) rush you when you are putting your instrument away. Never shut the lid of your case without double checking that it is fastened. If you are interrupted it is very easy to forget that the case is unfastened, pick it up by the handle, and have the instrument spill

onto the floor.

4. Never applaud by tapping the music stand with your bow. If you want to applaud but cannot use your hands, tap your feet lightly on the floor.
5. In case of an accident, retrieve any broken pieces -- no matter how small -- save them in an envelope, and get the instrument to a repairman at once. If the neck or fingerboard become loose or your bridge breaks, loosen the strings completely and pad the instrument so the tailpiece or fingerboard can not scratch the top. If you do not have insurance, check to see if the school does.

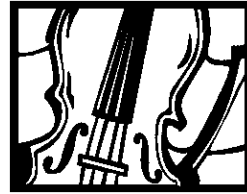
At least once a year you should:

1. Have your bow rehaired. As the hair gets old, it gets dirty and will not play well. If you have a black mark by the frog, the hair is dirty and it is time for a rehair. If the ivory tip on the head of the bow is broken, it should be replaced. It gives the bow head valuable protection.
2. Bring the instrument in for a checkup. Small problems that you may not even notice can be taken care of before they get out of control.
3. Take a moment to clean your case. Brush or vacuum out the inside. Check for any loose trash or exposed screws, nails, or hardware which might damage your instrument. Check that the bow holders are not weak or broken.
4. Check to see that your instrument and bow are insured for their current value.

If you aren't going to play for more than a month, you should:

1. Clean the instrument, bow, and case.
2. Loosen the string tension no more than two whole steps. This will reduce tension on the instrument while keeping enough pressure on the soundpost to keep it from moving or falling over.

3. Loosen the bow tension.
4. Wrap a few mothballs in a hanky and place them in the case (either in an accessory pocket or somewhere they will not touch the instrument directly). This will keep insects that eat bow hair out of the case.
5. Put the instrument and bow carefully away and store the case in a cool, safe place - away from heat and excess humidity. A bedroom closet with the door shut is usually a perfect spot.



Thank you for taking the time to read this guide. If it seems a lot to keep in mind, just remember all you really need to do is use a little common sense and treat your instrument with love.

Remember that the tone of every single stringed instrument improves with age, but only if it is cared for by the owner. We are only able to enjoy the tone of a Stradivarius played by a concert artist today because the previous owners cherished their instrument. If you do the same for your own instrument you will reap great rewards.

So study hard, have fun doing so, and keep this pamphlet in your case to reread from time to time. You are always welcome to visit my shop, just call for an appointment. If you have any suggestions for improving this Student Guide, please let me know. I love to hear from you!

Good luck
and enjoy your music!

Charles J. Rufino

Charles J. Rufino

Violin maker Charles J. Rufino studied in the finest studios of Europe and the United States before establishing his own in 1983. Today he has studios in Huntington, Long Island and New York City and his instruments are played by professional musicians in live concerts and on television, in movies and on Broadway.

Mr. Rufino is a member of The American Federation of Violin and Bow Makers and L'Entente Internationale des Maitres Luthiers et Archetiers d'Art.

He is well known spokesman for his art, and presents "The Art and Lore of the Violin", a lecture program, numerous times each year.

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