

CARE OF THE STRING INSTRUMENT

By James Butler

The string instrument is a sensitive and delicate instrument and requires care and attention in its use. Students should be taught from the beginning the proper care of their instrument.

The string instrument should not be subjected to extremes in temperature. NEVER LEAVE A STRING INSTRUMENT IN A COLD CAR OR IN DIRECT SUNLIGHT. The instrument is also adversely affected by a wide range in humidity levels. Extremely dry or damp conditions cause the wood and seams to expand or contract abnormally.

The bridge is quite fragile and is apt to crack if it is subjected to improper tuning procedures or if it is dropped. New students and their parents are advised to request tuning instructions from the teacher.

At no time should all four strings be loosened simultaneously because the sound post (inside the string instrument) is held in place only by the pressure of the strings on the bridge.

Do not touch the bow hairs with the fingers since this leaves a residue of body oil that contributes to a poor sound and subsequent deterioration of the bow hair. Individual bow hairs will break with use; cut these carefully even with the tip or frog. Poor handling practices can accelerate this condition and, in time, make the bow unfit for use.

Loosen the bow hair after each use or the bow will warp. The bow is quite fragile at the tip and will break easily if dropped or misused. A broken bow cannot be repaired. Do not use polish of any kind on the string instrument or bow. Rosin dust that accumulates on the string instrument and strings can be cleaned by wiping gently with a clean soft cloth (as a diaper, scarf or similar lint-free material).

Label the outside of your case with your name, address and telephone. Do the same for your child's instrument. Write the size, brand name and serial number of your child's string instrument in a safe place at home for identification in case of loss.

Strings should not be considered permanent. With use, they stretch and lose their ability to resonate. There is no way to predict the life of a string. As a general rule, a yearly change of strings is recommended.

Tuning pegs, especially on small string instruments, tend to slip. If this is recurrent, the teacher will apply peg dope to the pegs.

Do not attempt even minor repairs yourself. Call the teacher whenever you feel there is a problem, so that the condition will not go uncorrected for an entire week of practice.