

Caring for Your Saxophone

In order to continue to work properly, it is very important that your saxophone be properly maintained. Not only is a saxophone a musically artistic device, but it is also a mechanical tool requiring cleaning and service just as any machine would. Fortunately, maintaining a saxophone is not a difficult task when the student follows a few simple procedures on a regular basis. The following steps should be taken to keep your saxophone looking and sounding great.

Every Time You Play	Once a Week	As Needed
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Wipe fingerprints clean with a handkerchief. 2. Swab your saxophone thoroughly to remove condensed moisture. 3. Gently wipe any moisture from the mouthpiece. 4. Store your reed in a good reed case. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remove old cork grease and apply new cork grease to the cork on the neck of the instrument. 2. Check the saxophone for loose corks, screws and springs. Don't tighten them yourself! Let your teacher know if something needs to be adjusted. 3. Gently wash your mouthpiece in lukewarm water. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have any loose or leaking pads replaced by a professional repair technician. 2. Lightly polish the body of your saxophone with non-abrasive furniture polish and a rag. Never spray polish directly onto the saxophone. 3. Under the close supervision of your teacher, oil the keys and rods of your instrument using key oil or household oil (ie. 3-n-1).

Daily Maintenance

The greatest enemy of your saxophone is moisture. The condensation that naturally collects inside your instrument as you play can over time cause pads to leak and eventually fall off. Consequently, you absolutely must swab your instrument dry every time you play.

Swabbing a saxophone is quite simple. Once you have finished playing, store your reed in your reed case and carefully set the ligature aside. Remove the neck of the saxophone and use your handkerchief or brush to remove moisture from the inside of the neck. Once you have done this, place the neck in the case. Take your instrument swab from the case and gently drop the weighted end of the swab into the bell of your saxophone and rotate the instrument so that the weight drops through the entire length of the body. Gently pull the swab through the instrument. Repeat this process several times. If your swab becomes stuck, do not force it through the instrument. Instead, ask your teacher for assistance. You may wish to insert a "Shove-It" pad saver into your saxophone during storage to draw out any missed moisture. If you do use a pad saver, remember that it is to be used in addition to, not in place of, regular swabbing. The illustrations on the following page demonstrate the correct procedure for swabbing a saxophone.

You should make sure to wipe your instrument clean with your handkerchief every time you play. Doing this will not only keep your instrument shiny and free of dirty fingerprints, but it will also prevent the natural acids secreted through your body oil from deteriorating the lacquer finish of your saxophone.

Weekly Maintenance

The cork on the neck of your instrument should be greased at least once a week. Don't wait until it becomes difficult to attach the mouthpiece before you apply cork grease, since this means that the cork is already dry and will have begun to wear down. When applying cork grease, always wipe the old grease off with a lint-free cloth that won't be harmed by staining, such as a shop towel. Apply the new cork grease around the entire surface of the cork so that the entire surface is covered without excessive build-up. Gently twist the mouthpiece onto the neck, wiping of any extra grease.

About once a week you should take a moment to visually inspect your saxophone for any loose or missing screws and springs. Never adjust a screw or spring on your instrument yourself. Only your band director, private teacher, or professional repair technician should make adjustments to your instrument. Notify your director as soon as possible if you notice a mechanical problem with your instrument.

Occasionally, you should take some time to clean your mouthpiece by gently scrubbing it with your mouthpiece brush in lukewarm water. Wipe excess water off of the mouthpiece after washing it and allow it to fully air dry before greasing the cork and returning the mouthpiece to the case.

You should also make sure to wipe clean the joint where the neck connects to the body of the saxophone. This joint is not intended to be greased and should work very well if it is clean and free of damage.

Occasional Maintenance

Wiping your instrument clean with your handkerchief every time you handle your instrument will generally keep your instrument looking very nice. Occasionally, however, you may want to give your instrument a little extra shine. To do this, simply take a soft cloth and spray it with a mild, non-abrasive furniture polish (ie. Pledge). Carefully avoiding the pads on your saxophone, gently wipe your instrument until the finish is brilliantly clean.

Keys and rods should be oiled periodically with household oil or key oil to maintain smooth key action. A student should never attempt to oil their instrument without the close supervision of a band director or private instructor.

From time to time, your saxophone will need repairs and adjustments by a qualified repair technician. Pads will wear out with use, and cork will deteriorate in time. The better you care for your instrument, however, the less frequent and less costly your trips to the repair shop will be. Prevention is the best medicine for your saxophone. Proper instrument maintenance is part of your responsibility as a musician.