

THOUGHTS ON FLUTE CARE

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Most flutists I have met take the assembly and basic maintenance of their instruments for granted. In order to increase the life of your instrument and reduce the need for repairs, I would like to offer these tips:

ASSEMBLY: Be careful not to hold your flute by the keys while assembling. Grabbing the mechanism can cause problems with adjustments. First, align the parts so that they will go together straight. Any angle can cause excessive wear and leaking. Next, carefully (but firmly) hold the main body and insert the parts with a twist.

If the parts are hard to insert, **don't use grease!** Grease attracts dirt which will scratch and grind the tenons. Instead, use some rubbing alcohol on a rag and thoroughly wipe the contact surfaces to clean them. If the parts are still too hard to assemble, see your repair technician for adjustment.

CLEANING: Swab every 20 minutes of playing time. Use a cleaning rod with a soft cloth folded over the end. Run it through the body and foot joint. Wooden rods are preferred, since they will not scratch the inside.

Fuzzy rods (like Pad Savers) will deposit fuzz that can accumulate under pads and cause leaks. The fuzz will also collect around the key mechanisms, sticking to the key oil. If the fuzzy rods are left inside the instrument while in its case, the fuzz will stick to the pads as they dry, which is also harmful.

Clean the keys. The longer your fingerprints and oil from your skin stay on your flute, the harder it is to clean and the faster your shiny plating will wear-off. Some silver polishing cloths will leave residue and dust which can lead to mechanical problems. Soft chamois or very high-quality cloths are recommended and can be purchased from professional flute manufacturers.

Never touch the pads with your cloth! If you wipe down the length of your flute, you will easily tear the pads and have to replace them. With a pointed finger, wipe-off the body and key tops.

If you feel any stickiness, use rubbing alcohol on a clean rag to wipe those spots. Q-tips with alcohol are great for cleaning out the embouchure hole.

POLISHING: Never use liquid polish! It can ruin the pads and rust the key mechanism. Just keep your flute clean.

OILING: The mechanism needs to be lubricated to prevent wear and keep screws from backing out. Just a few applications per year is enough. Lightweight motor oil (like 5w-30) or transmission fluid works well. Use a needle to place a single drop between the post and key.

Please contact me if you have any further questions, and enjoy your flute!

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