

Instrument Care Guide

Stringed instruments are fragile. Here are some tips to keep your instrument in good condition:

Never leave your instrument in the heat! Summers in Arkansas are hot and humid, and we've seen instruments ruined after being left in a hot car for just ten minutes. Heat causes the varnish to melt, the glue to fail, and cracks to develop. Even if it's brief, exposure to heat will have a permanent impact on your instrument. Avoiding the heat is the single most important thing you can do to keep your instrument healthy.

Never leave your instrument in the cold! Cold is also damaging to your instrument. Our cold, dry winter climate will cause wood to shrink and crack, seams to come unglued, varnish to craze, pegs to contract, and fingerboards to pop off. Keep your instrument in an environment above 50 degrees as much as possible. Also, combat the extreme dryness by adding a humidifier to your case or storing your instrument in a room with a humidifier. Ideal relative humidity for your instrument is 40% to 60%. Most houses are around 20% in the winter, so we recommend using a humidifier to add some moisture to your air, if you can.

Do not attempt any repair work yourself. There is a right way and a wrong way to fix any issue you might have with your instrument. If it's done the right way, your instrument can last for decades or centuries. If it's done the wrong way, your instrument is doomed. Glue is a common culprit. We use special water soluble glue to repair cracks and open seams. Modern, synthetic glue (such as SuperGlue or TiteBond) will ruin your instrument. Also, the bridge of the instrument should never be glued. Remember, if you're renting your instrument, repair insurance is included. If you purchased your instrument, it has a warranty, so there's nothing to lose by bringing it back to our shop.

Care for your bow. Do not touch the hairs on your bow. Your fingers have natural oils, and these oils will be absorbed by the hair. The hair will develop slick spots and won't grab the string properly. Also, loosen the hair when you put the bow back in the case. If the bow is tight all the time, the hairs will stretch out and become brittle. The stick will lose its curve and spring (called camber) and will be difficult to control.

Leave the instrument and bow in your case when you're not playing. The safest place for an instrument is in its case. If it's sitting out, it's more likely to get knocked to the floor, stepped on, crushed by a backpack or otherwise damaged by you, a sibling, or a pet (we've seen it all). The case will also insulate the instrument and lessen the effect of changes in your house's indoor climate.

If you have questions about your instrument or need a repair, don't hesitate to come to the shop or give us a call. We are here to make sure your instrument is always in excellent condition!

