

Playing in a new recorder

Wooden recorders must adapt to the moisture and warmth from breathing, because they absorb moisture easily, especially in the windway, the window and the labium. If too much moisture is absorbed, the wood swells and becomes warped. A new instrument must not become too moist. That is why initially, it should only be played for a short time each day.

The time limits as stated below are just a guideline. It is advisable to listen carefully to the sound of your recorder when it is being played in and to stop playing if the sound changes, even if the time limit has not run out. Your recorder must be allowed to dry out completely. Wipe it out carefully with a cloth and leave it to dry. Never use a hairdryer or anything similar to hurry the drying out process, this would lead to cracks in the wood. Direct sunlight or a constant cold draught are other factors which can also produce cracks in a damp recorder.

Never play your instrument before it has dried out completely. We recommend playing your instrument for just a very short time several times a day.

Your recorder must not only adapt to warmth and moisture but also to the varying pressure when being played. Do not immediately try the highest notes, it is advisable to start in the lower register, extending your range, little by little, with long notes and slow runs.

This is not as complicated as it sounds and you will soon get the feel of your recorder. You will notice that your recorder adapts to you. You can forge a relationship which can last a lifetime.

Children can play in their recorders themselves. They will often need support from their teacher but it helps them develop an attachment to their instrument if they look after it themselves from the beginning. Children who are encouraged in this way will learn about their instruments and themselves.

Even children with excessive saliva production can play in their own instruments under the guidance of their teacher. If the recorder becomes too damp, then borrowing an instrument from the teacher or using a plastic head can be helpful and ensure continuity of lessons and practicing.

If your recorder sounds "hoarse" too often or its tone changes for the worse, we advise you to return it to the maker. Sometimes the proportions in the area of the windway change after a while; an experienced instrument maker can easily remedy this. Very often, players tolerate imperfections for far too long, which is quite unnecessary with recorders made today.

Plastic instruments or recorders with a plastic head joint require no playing in. Wooden recorders, however must adapt to the moisture and warmth from breathing.

In the first six weeks, you should not play for longer than:

- ***ca. 5 minutes a day in the 1st week***
- ***ca. 10 minutes a day in the 2nd week***
- ***ca. 15 minutes a day in the 3rd week***
- ***ca. 30 minutes a day in the 4th week***

The instrument should be played daily, yet take care not to play the highest notes right in the beginning. We advise to start in the low register and to increase the compass slowly but surely. The best way of becoming closely acquainted with your instrument and its sound qualities is to play long notes and slow passages.

Daily care

Before playing: how to warm your recorder

The recorder or the head joint should be warmed before playing by carrying it close to your body or holding it under your arm. If you warm your recorder, it can absorb the condensation water more easily and will help prevent clogging.



While playing: how to blow out excess water

Water will accumulate in the windway and cause the recorder to clog. To clear excess moisture, close the lower end of the head joint with your hand and blow hard through the window. The water will trickle down the windway. While playing, it is easiest to suck out the water. Be careful never to touch the labium as it will easily warp when moist. This will cause irreparable damage to your instrument.



After playing: how to dry your recorder (see illustrations)

It is best using soft cotton fabric, for instance an old T-shirt, dish cloth or anything similar. Take care that these fabrics do not leave any fluff in the bore. Cut a piece of fabric and pull it through the cleaning rod (picture 1-3). Introduce the cleaning rod in the bore and gently wipe it clean (picture 4-6). For hygienic reasons, we recommend to change the cleaning cloth frequently. The cloth enclosed when purchasing the recorder is also suitable for drying your instrument. It has been treated with starch, so please wash it in hot water with a little detergent before use.



Some players maintain that drying the instrument after playing is superfluous since the bore is soaked and it is useless to try wiping off the water. Nevertheless, there is no harm in wiping out the bore of the head joint, but keep in mind that most of the moisture will collect in the windway, and this area is inaccessible with a cloth. However, if you keep the instrument in a well aired place, for instance on a book shelf, the moisture will evaporate by itself.



Storing your recorder

Cases and covers are only designed for transport and as a storage for your instrument when it is completely dry. After playing, the recorder will remain moist for quite a while and should not be kept in the case or cover but in a dry place, on the cover or in an open case. Prevent exposing the instrument to any direct sunlight or other heat sources, moisture or cold draughts. If the recorder is not stored properly and cannot dry, the wood will absorb too much moisture and encourage mould. Your recorder is best kept in a safe place with stable temperature and humidity, for instance placed on a book shelf in its open case.



Care of the cork round the tenon

The pressure must be taken off the cork for it to fulfil its function as "buffer" between the two parts of the recorder. Your recorder must be dismantled after playing to allow the cork to dry out and to regain its shape. Many players think they are doing the cork good by greasing it regularly. This is not so! The cork itself needs no further care other than already described. The grease issued with your recorder is only to make it easier to put your recorder together when the connection becomes too stiff. Wood is a changeable material and sometimes becomes slightly warped, which you notice when you cannot assemble or dismantle your recorder so easily. In this case, you can grease the cork round the connection (but only very sparingly) to make assembly smoother. Greasing too frequently and too much leads to the glue between the connection and the cork dissolving and the cork then has to be replaced. Thread winding is the historical way of producing the plug connection. It is more flexible to work with than cork, as it is more adaptable and can be easily unwound, if the connection is too tight or rewound, if the connection is too loose. The reason why most of the less expensive recorders have cork is that the thread winding is a more complicated process in production. Grease is also used in the thread winding process to impregnate the thread and prevent it from becoming saturated with water.

Oiling wooden recorders

Recorders are heavily exposed to moisture. In order to maintain the tone quality and prevent the wood from cracking, it is necessary to oil the instruments frequently.

Which recorders have to be oiled?

Our recorders made of maple (not waxed with paraffin), boxwood, ebony, grenadilla, olive, palisander, plum or rosewood have to be oiled in order to maintain their quality. Instruments made of maple and pear wood on the other hand do not necessarily have to be oiled if they have been impregnated with paraffin. However, oiling will not do them any harm.



How often does a recorder have to be oiled?

As a rule, one can say that the bore should always be slightly greasy. The recorder is well protected when it shines a little from the inside. Should the bore however look dull and greyish then the instrument desperately needs a coat of oil. The instruments differ as to how frequently they have to be oiled and there is no overall rule. It is best to observe your instrument carefully and treat it with great caution. You will find this most rewarding!



Which parts of the recorder have to be oiled?

Wood that has been varnished does not have to be oiled. Otherwise one can apply oil to all parts apart from the windway. In order to avoid the oil from leaking anywhere near this area, one should refrain from applying oil to the block as well as the parts of the labium (see below).



Which is the right type of oil?

It is advisable to use sweet almond oil since its consistency is thin and odorless. It can be applied easily and does not leave any sticky remains. This vegetable oil is absorbed by the pores of the wood and forms a film that protects the recorder from moistness. The Moeck-maintenance kit contains almond oil but one can also purchase it at a chemist's or at a drug-store. For keys it is recommendable to use sewing machine or special key-oil. These mineral oils do not harden and prevent the mechanism from clogging.



What is needed to oil the recorder?

- **recorder oil** – we recommend almond oil
- **a paintbrush** – as fine as possible
- **a cotton cloth**
- **an oil brush** – one can also use bottle or spout brushes that can be obtained in a supermarket. These brushes are made of pig bristle or plastic and are quite stiff. Nevertheless, you cannot damage the wood of your recorder with these brushes when employing them carefully. The fluffy woolen cleaning rods one used to use are not recommendable since bits of fluff can get stuck in the bore. It is best oiling recorders on a plastic sheet to avoid inevitable oil stains.



Many professional recorder makers and players that play on instruments made of palisander, plum- or rosewood or unwaxed maple like to use refined linseed oil which is thicker, hardens slightly and eventually seals the instrument. However, linseed oil has its disadvantages: firstly, often a resin-like residue remains sticking on the instrument which is very hard to remove and secondly, it goes bad rather quickly (you can tell by the unpleasant smell), so that one no longer can use it. Also linseed oil is inflammable and consequently not very safe. Cleaning cloths soaked with linseed oil should be carefully observed. We therefore advise our customers against the use of linseed oil and recommend to follow our oiling instructions using almond oil only.



Please feel free to ask the advice of our recorder makers on the use of linseed oil.

How to oil your recorder correctly:

Before oiling your recorder, it should be thoroughly dry. Never try to oil a recorder you have just played on, since dampness will then remain in the wood. You can protect the key pads of your instrument from oil by covering the finger holes from the outside with some tissue. The most important part that has to be oiled is the bore of the instrument since most of the moisture collects here.

The middle - and foot joint are the easiest to oil. Apply a few drops of oil on to the inner edge of the foot hole and push the cleaning brush with turning motion through the foot joint until it appears on the other side. Then pull the brush while turning it, back again. Now examine the joint carefully from the inside and check that the whole inner part is covered with a smooth coat of oil. If there are still some dry spots, then repeat the procedure once more.

One should take great care when oiling the head joint and ensure that no oil drips on to the block. Always hold the head joint with the beak pointing up in order to prevent oil from trickling into the windway. Now take the oily brush and push it carefully with turning motion slowly into the head joint until you see the top of the brush at the window. Continue turning very carefully until the point of the brush (there should be no oil on it) touches the block very lightly. Now pull the brush out again while turning it, and check the inside of the head joint if it is covered all over with a coat of oil. If necessary, repeat the procedure by adding a few drops of oil.

One can rub the exterior of recorders that are not varnished with a slightly oiled cotton cloth to give them an attractive warm shine. When oiling the head joint, always take care not to let any oil drip into the windway. Rub the head joint with a cloth but leave out the beak and in particular the blowing end. Oil the surfaces of the labium with a fine paintbrush while taking special care not to come near the windway. Since oil leaks it will cover the side surfaces of the labium by itself. The joints should be left standing vertically to dry e.g. on a plate, and left for several hours or overnight so that the wood can absorb as much oil as possible. After this, one should remove any excess oil with a clean cotton cloth.

Important rules when oiling:

- The instrument must be dry before applying oil!
- Hold the head joint vertically with the beak pointing up!
- Ensure that no oil drips on to the block!
- Take care that no oil drips on to the surfaces of the windway!
- The wood of the recorder needs some time to absorb the oil

When your recorder needs servicing or repair

Wood has many good qualities and is ideal for making recorders. Nevertheless: it is a natural material which can become warped especially under the influence of moisture. Even if you have played your recorder in and looked after it carefully, the tone can change, or it can clog too often, the higher registers are difficult to achieve or some other defect becomes apparent. Now is the time to send your instrument back to the original maker or any other professional instrument maker. In nearly all cases, the tone, response and the intonation can be improved to make your recorder sound like new.

The procedure for repairs

First your recorder is given a repair number which is then saved in the computer with your address to ensure you receive your own instrument back.

The instrument maker then reads the covering letter and plays the recorder to see and hear what you wish to have improved. Any queries arising are cleared on the phone. Your instrument is then carefully checked and a repair plan drawn up. If further problems arise which entail extra cost or are not mentioned in the covering letter, you receive an estimate and can decide whether further work should be completed.



Your recorder then passes through various stages until it is repaired to our satisfaction and can be returned to you. The invoice is written and your recorder packed for posting.



What are the most common problems and how are they solved?

The tone is poor

There are many reasons for this but it is usually due to a dirty or warped windway. The block is removed and cleaned. The windway, the chamfer, the window and the labium are also cleaned either with steel wool or with a file covered with sand paper. If the windway is too narrow, the block is filed down to the right height and the chamfer is adjusted.



Your recorder does not respond in the higher register

Again the windway and the labium are cleaned and adjusted. If the inner bore is warped, it is filed and adjusted to its original shape. The finger holes are cleaned and adjusted as required.

The cork has come away

The rest of the cork is removed completely and all residual glue, oil and grease is cleaned off the tenon. New natural cork is then glued on to last.

The connection is too loose or too tight

If it is too loose then thicker cork is used. The cork is filed down if it is too tight.

A crack has formed

Usually small cracks are easily glued and filed down. Larger cracks can also be repaired. In some cases, e.g. when the labium is pressed in, the particular joint that is cracked has to be renewed.

Your recorder is out of tune

This is usually due to the narrowing of the inner bore or finger holes. The inner bore is reamed anew, the finger holes are cleaned and, if necessary, enlarged or reduced in size.

The thumb hole is (badly) out of shape

A lining made of artificial ivory or artificial horn is inserted, the thumb hole regains its original shape. (This repair is not possible under guarantee).

The key does not close properly

The padding is renewed and the key is adjusted accordingly.

The key does not open / shut any more

The spring of the key is renewed and the hinge is cleaned, oiled or replaced if necessary.

The keys make too much noise

Cork or felt is inserted. Very often the padding has become stiff and needs replacing.

These are the most common repairs which are required. We also cover the beak with artificial horn, renew the block, foreshorten the recorder if the basic tuning is too deep and put rings made of artificial horn or metal on the upper and lower parts, renew the threading and put on extra keys as requested. Recorders last a long time when properly cared for. Even so, many players do not realize that it is still necessary to have their instruments looked over every now and then. Repairs are always worthwhile and make your recorder sound as it should.