

STRING CARE CHECK LIST

String instruments can last for hundreds of years, but that is only with good care. Maintaining your instrument can help maintain its tone, stability, and ultimately its market value. Here is a checklist to take better care of your instrument and bow to keep them in good repair.

1. **Avoid touching the varnish:** Your fingers have oils that can react and strip the varnish off of your instrument. Try to touch the instrument only by the neck and chinrest.
2. **Don't touch the hair of your bow with your fingers:** To keep the hair supple and clean, avoid touching the hair with your hands. If you notice that the hair of your bow is dirty near the frog, this is the dirt from your fingers. If needed, apply a small amount of rosin on the bow before playing. Hold the rosin in your left hand, place the bow hairs flat on the rosin and slowly move the bow back and forth on the rosin.
3. **Support the neck while tuning:** When you are tuning your instrument with your pegs, support the other side of the neck with your other hand. If you do not do this, you run the risk of snapping your neck, or loosening the seams around it.
4. **Always loosen your bow when not in use:** If you do not loosen your bow after you play, the tension can cause the stick to warp over time. Also, do not over-tighten your bow; only tighten your bow as much as the width of the stick. Too tight, and your bow can break.
5. **Always clean your instrument after playing:** Use a soft, lint-free cloth to clean your instrument. Many music stores sell inexpensive cloths that are ideal for cleaning your instrument. The varnish on your instrument is made out of rosin, so any rosin left over on the body of your instrument can cling to the instrument and become dirty. This will ruin the finish of your instrument, it will eventually have to be re-varnished if you do not clean it properly.
6. **Clean the stick of your bow, too:** The wood of your bow is also treated with the same varnish as your instrument, so remember to clean the rosin off of the stick after each time you play. (Do not clean off the hair of the bow!!).
7. **Never use alcohol or other solvents:** If you are consistent enough, you do not need to use anything but a dry soft cloth, but if you need something more, purchase a instrument-specific polish (NEVER furniture polish). Use a separate cloth than your usual cleaning cloth to polish your instrument. Alcohol or other solvents can strip your instrument of its varnish. Even hot water can hurt your instrument!
8. **Put it away:** Always put your instrument away when you are not playing. Never leave it on a chair or table, or even hanging from your music stand. When your instrument is not in its case, it can be easily knocked over, sat on, or stepped upon.
9. **Keep your case in a safe place:** Store your case where your instrument will not get wet or be tipped over. Always store your case face-up, or on its side. Never let your instrument rest on its bridge, even in its case; the added pressure combined with the high tension of the strings can cause the wood to crack.
10. **Changing strings:** Pay close attention to the look of your strings; if they are frayed there is a greater chance that they might break. Only change the strings one at a time to maintain the tension over the bridge. If you do not do this, the bridge and the sound post may fall over.
11. **Bridge is leaning forward:** If your bridge starting to lean forward, carefully adjust it so that the feet are flat against the face of the instrument. The bridge will start to lean forward from string tension. If it leans too much, it is at risk of falling, which can cause the sound post inside the instrument to fall as well. Another tip: loosen your strings slightly before you move your bridge.
12. **(Non-School Instruments Only) Take your instrument in to a luthier:** Just as you take yourself or your family in to the doctor for a check-up, you should take your instrument into a violinmaker or luthier to be cleaned and maintained. Do not ignore minor problems; many major problems like cracks can start out very small. A professional has many specialized tools that you cannot access yourself so, if you are unsure of something with your instrument, consult them to avoid making mistakes and damaging your instrument and bow.