

Want a Beautiful Tone? Keep your instrument in good shape!

Beautiful tone comes from the proper care of the the instrument which produces tone. Here are some helpful tips on string instrument care:

- Wash hands with soap and water before playing, *every time*. Dirt and skin oils smudge the finish and dirty the bow hairs, making them resistant to rosin. Germ gel doesn't remove grime. Use water.
- Do not touch the bow hairs except where the thumb's knuckle rests.
- Loosen the bow after EVERY use. Changes in humidity change the tension of the hairs. The bow can lose its camber, which is the natural spring in the wood. It is also possible to put away a tightened bow and remove a broken one.
- Remove the rosin and dust from the instrument's body (under the fingerboard too!) after *each* practice. Remove the rosin off of the bow stick as well. Use a soft cloth. Rosin caked on the top of the instrument dulls the tone and can meld with the finish. Old rosin plus humidity = a rosin crust.
- If the rosin is caked on the body, purchase special cleaning solutions. This won't repair the finish, but can prevent further damage.
- Remove rosin from the strings by using a clean, soft cloth. Do not allow your instrument to ever get wet!
- Keep fingernails trimmed. Long nails fray the strings' windings (and make it harder to play).
- *Never* store the instrument where it is hot, cold, dry or damp! Do not keep the instrument in the trunk while you are at work. It is pretty easy to crack the glue holding the instrument together, or the wood itself.
- Monitor the fine tuners. They can be so tight that they create a divot in the instrument's body. To fix, loosen the fine tuners and correct with the pegs.
- Keep the bridge upright and centered between the f-hole notches. Firmly grasping it with both hands and gently sliding it, or righting it can move the bridge. Re-tune after moving.
- Strings wear out. Replace them when they: sound "tired;" not as brilliant; produce weak and wavering pitches; or are unraveling.
- Bow hairs wear out. Replace them every six-12 months.

These simple steps enable a string instrument to produce the best tone it can.