

# Instrument Care

**Important:** We are loaning out string instruments to students with the expectation that students will be playing on them. We understand and expect that things will happen and instruments may occasionally be damaged. Not only that: string instruments require regular maintenance such as string changes and bow re-hairing. Regularly played instruments by professionals are usually restrung once a year at minimum. **Although we request students to be careful with their instrument and not damage it unnecessarily, if something is wrong, please do contact the classroom coordinator or registrar as soon as possible so we can help make sure your student has a working instrument.** Sometimes, problems that start small (such as an unwinding string) can end up causing bigger issues if not dealt with promptly.

**Parents may be charged for a replacement instrument if they fail to return the borrowed instrument after leaving the course.** We have *not* charged parents for instrument repairs for violins and violas and we do not expect to unless there are extenuating circumstances. Instrument repairs are part of the course budget and built into our annual planning. Parents contribute to the costs of these repairs by participating in fundraisers. Adult members of the Sequim Community Orchestra also subsidize the cost of these repairs by supporting the Peninsula Community Youth Orchestra's budget with their dues as needed.

String instruments loaned out by our program average \$300-\$600 for violins and violas and easily approach several thousand each for cellos. We also have been donated a couple intermediate violins that can be loaned out on special request that may be worth a couple thousand dollars.

## Handling Your Instrument

1. When your student brings the bow out of the case, they should tighten it a bit as taught by the teacher. When they are done, they should **loosen** it again. If the student doesn't remember to do so often, it may cause the hair to stretch out and break and cause us to need to rehair the bow more frequently.
2. Each instrument will be loaned out with a cleaning cloth. When the student is done playing, they should take a minute to **wipe the rosin off** of the fingerboard, instrument body, and strings as well as the wooden stick of the bow. Rosin left on the strings of the instrument will make it more difficult to play properly and rosin left on the body of the instrument body or bow will eventually cake up and require a special effort to clean it off.
3. Each instrument should be loaned out with an instrument blanket or covering cloth. When the student has put their instrument back in its case and velcro'd in the neck (if it has velcro), they should **place the**

**blanket over the body of the instrument.** This helps protect the face of the instrument from banging against the bow or the top of the case.

4. Always keep your instrument in the case with the **zippers and or latches closed** when done playing. It is very easy to think you are going to come back and leave it unlatched and unzipped, and then accidentally fling the instrument around moving it in a hurry.
5. Instruments we loan **should not be played by anyone except your student.** Your student is the one who has been in classes and understands how to hold and care for their instrument. Friends and family should not be picking up their instrument or playing it.
6. String instruments like cellos and basses, even at the most inexpensive entry level, are very expensive. If you do not mind your student having a tracker item like an **optional tile tracker** in their instrument case, let us know and **we will purchase the tracker** and issue one along with the instrument. If you do not explicitly request one and give us permission to place one in their case, we will not issue a tile tracker. **The exception to that is for cellos, basses, and other expensive intermediate instruments,** where we require a special loan policy. For instruments worth more than \$600 like cellos and basses, trackers may be required if your family chooses not to participate in our deposit program.

## Storage

7. All instruments loaned by us are wooden instruments as these tend to produce the best sound. **Wooden instruments are particularly vulnerable to problems due to moisture and temperature.** This means you should *never* leave your string instrument in a hot or cold car overnight or anywhere that it could get wet. Even leaving your violin in a car for a couple of hours can cause the strings to detune and that will make it more difficult for young students to play on them at home. Leaving it in hot or cold places for longer amounts of time can cause cracks in the instrument or cause the bridge to break, and these are expensive repairs that we would prefer to avoid when possible. Sometimes, instruments with cracks in the wrong place are unable to be repaired.
8. **Pets:** if you have pets, please keep the instrument and its case off the floor or store it in a room where the pets cannot go.
9. String instruments like violins are often easily **stolen** -- we have had our own instruments stolen at times. Ensure your violin is not left anywhere it could be stolen, like in an unlocked car or out of sight at events. (This kind of theft is pointless as student string instruments are extremely illiquid, but it does happen nonetheless.)
10. **Do not stack** items on top of your violin or viola case or lean them against cello or bass cases. Many of our instruments are donated and the cases vary significantly in the amount of protection they provide.
11. **Long term storage:** If you are for sure not going to play your instrument **at all** for a long time, such as the 3 months over summer, we recommend you return your instrument and borrow it again when you return to the program. When instruments are returned to us for long term storage, we can very slightly loosen the strings and make sure the bow is at the right tension. (This is finicky as if the bridge is too loose, you can accidentally allow the sound peg to fall over during storage, which requires a trip to the luthier. Please do not loosen strings for storage at home.) We can also check your instrument to make

sure it is in good condition for the fall term. In addition, many students grow out of their instruments pretty quickly so you may be ready for a bigger instrument in the fall term.

## Absolute Nos

12. Students should **never write on or stick stickers** on their instruments. The teacher may issue students a sticker to put on their bow to identify it as theirs.
13. Foam shoulder pads and other items should **never be glued** or stuck to the instrument. If something is rattling inside or falling off of the instrument, talk to the teacher or write to the registrar if it's after hours.
14. On that note, **bridges should never be glued** to the instrument. String instrument bridges stay in place via pressure fit with the strings. If the temperature varies wildly, the bridge may fall over. The bridge may also fall over or break over time as it starts to weaken and bend. Your bridge will also lean over once your student learns to tune their instrument (not for beginners) and then it may need more frequent adjusting by the teacher. If you see your student's bridge start to bend or if it is leaning more than 10 degrees in any direction from the perpendicular, inform the teacher.
15. Each instrument and bow will have a little clear metallic sticker on it somewhere to identify it uniquely to our system. Please instruct your student **not to pick off these identifier stickers** as they help us to manage our resources properly, which helps us to get grants so we can repair and buy new instruments.