

The Recorder – looking after the instrument

Assembly

The Recorder has two or three sections depending on whether it has a separate foot joint. There is the "**head-joint**" (which the player blows into); the "**body**" (with most of the "**tone-holes**"); and sometimes a separate "**foot-joint**" (with just two little tone-holes for the little finger). The body of the Recorder has a "**tenon**" at the top end that fits into the "**socket**" of the head-joint (and if there is a foot-joint there will also be a tenon at the bottom of the body to fit into the foot-joint socket).

On wooden Recorders each tenon has a ring of cork to help create an airtight seal between the parts of the instrument, occasionally these tenons must be greased to ease the assembly of the instrument and protect the cork from water damage. Plastic Recorders do not usually have a ring of cork on the tenons, but the tenons still need to be greased occasionally to help seal the joints and ease assembly. When assembling the instrument **always twist the joints together**.

Warming up the instrument

Each woodwind instrument has particular maintenance problems; Recorders are particularly affected by water from the player's breath blocking the air passage at the top of the mouthpiece – this either stops the instrument playing or makes it play quieter than it should.

Before playing the player should warm-up the instrument by holding it in his/her hands for a few minutes until it feels warm. This prevents an excess of water condensating from the player's breath and blocking the air passage of the mouthpiece in the first few minutes of playing.

If the player is playing for a while there will still be a build up of water in the air passage of the mouthpiece, so, when the player is in between pieces of music, s/he should clear the passage by covering the little "window" in the head-joint and blowing hard (it is actually better to clear the passage with a sharp intake of breath but children find this difficult).

Maintenance

A Recorder requires very little maintenance. After playing the Recorder use a Recorder mop to clean the head-joint, body and foot-joint of the instrument.

Keeping the air passage clean: sometimes deposits build up in the air passage (the entrance to the air passage is the small slot at the top of the head-joint that the player blows into; the air exits the air passage at the small rectangular opening called the "window"). Hold the head-joint of the Recorder to the light to see if the air passage is clear; use a piece of card to clean the air passage if necessary (inserting it from the window end of the air passage).

Keeping the tone-holes clean: deposits can build up in the tone-holes of the instrument. To clean the larger tone-holes use cotton buds and meths. For smaller tone-holes that cannot be cleaned using cotton buds use pipe cleaners.

Oiling the bore: three or four times a year oil the bore of the instrument. The easiest way to do this is to use a piccolo cleaning rod (or Flute cleaning rod for larger Recorders).

1. Tear a small square of kitchen towel and insert this into the "eye" of the cleaning rod.
2. Dip the secured kitchen towel into some Meths and clean the bore of the Recorder.
3. Once the bore has been cleaned thread a fresh square of paper towel into the eye of the cleaning rod
4. Place a few drops of bore oil onto the paper towel and polish the bore of the instrument.

Servicing and repair

The most common repair required is the replacement of the cork on the tenon joints – any woodwind instrument repairer can do this. On larger Recorders with keys it is occasionally necessary to replace the pads or springs – again any woodwind repairer can do this.

Beyond this Recorders do not require servicing and rarely need repair – but when a repair is required it is best to use a Recorder specialist (Such as the Early Music shop). Below is a list of repairs best carried out by a Recorder specialist.

Cracks: sometimes wooden Recorders develop cracks and these need gluing and/or pinning.

Thumb bushing: the thumbhole can get badly notched by the player's thumbnail so sometimes it is necessary to rebuild the thumbhole.

Intonation and response: over time the wood can distort and adversely affect the intonation and response of the instrument – this can be corrected by a specialist repairer.

Replacing the block: the block is a piece of wood that is fitted into the head-joint – the top of the block forms the floor of the air passage; over time this can distort and might need to be replaced.