

# Instrumental Hints for a Successful Year

Some of the prices below of repairs, step-up instruments, and accessories may surprise you, but like any school activity band is an investment: you get what you pay for. The better the equipment, the more successful the student. Please accept no cheaper substitutes for the accessories and supplies—you will not be happy with the results!

## Instrument Care

Those of you who own cars know what happens if maintenance is ignored: the car eventually becomes unusable! Regularly scheduled maintenance not only allows your child to play every note on the instrument with ease, it prevents costly repairs down the road.

We have technicians who repair instruments for us. Please set up a time with them to have your student's instrument looked at over this summer:

**BRASS**—Lou Fought (281) 341-1328

**WOODWINDS**—Ed Fleming (713) 426-3663

**Percussion Supplies and Repair**—Columbus Percussion (888) 422-1715

## Individual Maintenance:

Instruments need tender loving care! To keep from incurring costly repair, we've included a few hints (and why or why NOT to do these things):

### Woodwinds:

- Always disassemble your instrument. If you leave it assembled, the cork will go bad and will need replacing!
- Always use cork grease. If you don't the cork will tear!
- Always remove the reed and ligature from the instrument after each use. If you don't, mildew and mold will build up, and both mouthpiece and reed will go bad!
- Always put the instrument back in the case after each use. If you don't, keys and rods will get bent in your locker and you will need to have it repaired!
- Always latch the case! There have been too many "oops"es around the locker room
- Always swab out your instruments. Moisture inside the instrument in the case shortens the life of your instrument!

### Brass:

- Always wipe off the valves before you oil them. If you don't, the dirt your horn collects will turn the oil to sticky sludge!
- Oil often. Oil in the marching band sun burns off and evaporates quickly.
- Never eat and then play without rinsing out your mouth. The sugars from your food will eat your instrument from the inside out.
- Bathe your instrument often in lukewarm water and dish soap. You'll be surprised what comes out in the tub! Wash the valves and slides separately and carefully in the sink. Never use anything harsh or abrasive on any part of the horn.
- Remove your mouthpiece from the instrument, put the instrument in the case and latch your case every time you play. Failure to do these three things can bend, dent, and damage the instrument.
- Don't drop your mouthpiece! The shank will get bent and the rim will get dented, both of which make it hard to play.

**Percussion:**

- Never carry a drum by the rim. This causes damage and pulls the drum out of tune.
- Never strike a percussion instrument with anything but sticks or mallets that were made for it! (Metal beaters can damage wood marimbas, etc.)
- Move only what you've been trained to move, and how you've been trained to move it.
- All sticks and beaters need to be put away each time. This prevents them from getting lost, separated, or dirty.
- Never allow a non-percussionist to play your equipment!

**EVERYONE: NEVER attempt repairs by yourself! This can result in MORE costly repairs! Call one of the repair technicians above!**

Lou Fought and Ed Fleming (Repairmen Extraordinaire) Say:

“Please call us early in the summer. Don't wait till the last minute—we may not be able to get to you before Summer Band starts!”

## Time for a STEP UP INSTRUMENT?

Instruments come in three levels: *beginner*, *intermediate*, and *professional*. Sixth graders begin on instruments which allow them to learn, but eventually they grow beyond them just as we all grew beyond the “training wheels” on our bicycles! If your student is in high school playing on a beginner instrument, it’s time to step up! Call the band hall at (281) 341-3432 and speak with a band director about which instrument is appropriate.

### Step-up ACCESSORIES

Just as high school students need high school-caliber instruments, the mouthpieces and other accessories they play on need to be stepped up. We prefer that students all play on the same mouthpieces and ligatures as it makes it easier for the students to match sound and blend together. We recommend that you get yours as soon as possible from H&H Music (281) 531-0996 or Music and Sound (281) 342-6874:

**Oboe and Bassoon:** Brands and prices range, but expect to spend \$8-\$20 per reed, and by high school be playing on Medium Soft or Medium strength.

**Clarinet:** Van Doren 5RV Lyre mouthpiece (\$99) and a Rovner ligature (\$25), Van Doren V12 Reeds (your strength, \$20 a box)

**Bass Clarinet:** Selmer C Star mouthpiece (\$144), Rovner ligature (\$25), Van Doren Reeds (your strength, \$15 a box)

**Alto Saxophone:** Selmer C Star mouthpiece (\$135), Rovner ligature (\$25) Van Doren V16 Reeds (your strength, \$20 a box)

**Tenor Saxophone:** Selmer C Star mouthpiece (\$170), Rovner ligature (\$25) Van Doren V16 Reeds (your strength, \$15 a box)

**Baritone Saxophone:** Selmer C Star mouthpiece (\$250.00), Rovner ligature (\$25) Van Doren Reeds (your strength, \$25 a box)

**Trumpet:** Bach 3C mouthpiece (\$48.00)

**F Horn:** Schilke 30B mouthpiece (\$45.00)

**Trombone/ Baritone:** Schilke 51D Large Bore mouthpiece (\$80)

**Tuba:** Bach 18 mouthpiece (\$80)

**Percussion:** A stick bag (Pro-Mark DSB4 or Vic Firth MSBAG2 about \$20), a pair of Vic Firth SD-1 concert sticks (\$7), VFT1 General Timpani mallets (\$30) Americorps Soft Marimba mallets (\$27), Pro Mark PSX 20 Xylophone mallets (\$30)

**Note:** By high school, most woodwinds should be playing on a strength 3 to 4 reed.

## **EVERYONE:**

Metronome: Any small metronome, usually around \$20-\$25

Tuner: KORG CA-30 Chromatic Tuner (\$20) or Seiko Extended Range Chromatic Auto Tuner (\$25)

## **WOODWINDS:**

Cork Grease (\$2 a tube)

Mouthpiece cover (this prevents your brand new \$100 mouthpiece from needing to be replaced--\$2)

Neckstrap (Get the Neotech Neckstrap. It's padded for those long hours of marching band! \$20-\$30)

Woodwind Care Kit (these are specific to your instrument, but generally contain swabs, polishing cloths, key oil, cork grease, etc. They're about \$20)

Reed Cases (generally about \$2 for clarinet/sax, \$15-20 for oboe/bassoon)

## **BRASS:**

Valve Oil (Al Cass Valve Oil is the best! Don't buy the cheap stuff. \$5)

Trombones only: slide lubricant ("Trombotine" and a squirt bottle of water are great.) \$6

Selmer Slide Grease (\$3)

Snake (For cleaning out those yucky insides) (\$6-\$9)

Mouthpiece brush (for cleaning out the inside of mouthpiece) (\$3-\$4)

Polishing Cloth (\$3-\$8)

Mouthpiece cases (\$6) Made of molded plastic

Trumpets, French Horns, and Trombones should all own Straight Mutes:

**Trumpet:** Denis Wick Straight Mute (\$40)

**F Horn:** Denis Wick Straight Mute (\$60)

**Trombone:** Denis Wick Straight Mute (\$50)