

Care of your Instrument

Violin Tuning

A violin is tuned in perfect 5ths to GDAE. The fourth string (the thickest) being tuned to the "G" that is a 4th below middle "C" on a piano. We've found the best way for students to tune is using a violin pitch pipe because it helps build ear training, or of course a chromatic tuner.

Maintenance & Cleaning

The life span of a violin family instrument directly correlates to how well it is taken care of. The daily ritual of cleaning and the proper storage of an instrument are crucial to its longevity and playability. Always wipe down an instrument's strings with a soft, dry cloth after it is played. There will be rosin from the bow left on the strings and rosin dust underneath the strings on the body. This will build up and degrade the integrity and resonance of the strings if not wiped down, as well as leave a nasty build up on the body. Also, always loosen the tension on the bow after use. Not doing this could cause the bow to warp or break over time.

Violin Storage

Excessive humidity and dryness are arch enemies of violins. A good balance between the two is important for good violin health. Dry weather might cause cracking in the wood and finish whereas extreme humidity and heat could cause the varnish to bubble. It is best to keep the instrument indoors in an air-conditioned room. If you don't have the luxury of AC, an interesting trick is to keep a wet paper towel in a punctured plastic bag in the violin case. This will act as a humidifier and keep the violin safe. Never leave a violin in a car, as the heat will be devastating to it. Because it is easy to damage a violin, keep the instrument in a closed case after it has been played. A violin that's rarely used also needs its case opened frequently to prevent the appearance of carpet beetles, which destroy bow hair. Violins are delicate instruments that can be greatly injured by the slightest mishap. Following these simple rules can keep a violin around for a lifetime or longer.

Polishing a Violin.

Violins are much more sensitive than other stringed instruments and as such they need a bit more care. We recommend polishing a violin not more than once or twice a year. Polishing the violin will only help it to look better; it will not enhance the playability or sound. Otherwise, just keep the violin dry and dust free with a soft cloth. Use violin polish when ready but be careful NOT to get any polish on the strings or the bow. Getting polish on either of these will damage the items.

Applying Rosin to a Bow.

Before applying rosin to a violin bow, be sure that the rosin cake has some powder on the surface. If there isn't any powder on the surface, scrape a coin along the surface to give texture to the cake. Making sure that the bow hair is taut, rub the rosin gently along the bow hair from the frog to the top of the bow. Do this 25+ times if the bow is new, 4+ times if it is not. Be careful not to touch the bow hair with your hands when putting rosin on, as the oils in your hand will damage it. Put the bow to the strings and play a few open strings. If there is any slippage with the bow, or if little sound is being produced, it needs more rosin. A properly rosined bow will bring a very clear, expressive tone from the violin

This is one of a series of Instruction sheets prepared by JPB Music to help players gain a better understanding. We write these to assist, but if you are still unsure, please either phone for more advice, or ask your teacher for help. © JPB Music