



NECOM Instrument Cleaning Guidelines: COVID-19

These guidelines are designed for use by music educators but may also serve as a guide to help support the teaching of students and parents around how to clean instruments.

Pianos

The Australasian Piano Tuners and Technicians Association makes the following recommendations:

General Recommendations - Special care should be taken when using disinfectant products on a piano.

- Generally speaking, a soft disposable towel, using warm water and hand/dish soap is safe to use on virtually every finish, key, and case parts. Always follow up with a dry soft disposable towel to dry any standing liquid.
- Cleaning pianos is a gentle process not a scrubbing process. Pressing hard or vigorous scrubbing may lead to scratching or removing the finish. Always proceed with caution and use common sense. Remember to wash your hands after you have thrown away the towels. If using disinfectant products
- Use alcohol-based disinfectants, do not use bleach-based disinfectants or any product containing citrus. If using a spray or liquid bottle, use a disposable towel like WYPALL L30. Put the disinfectant on the towel and not the piano.
- After use, immediately put the towel or disinfectant hand wipe in the trash and wash your hands as the CDC recommends. Do not use reusable towels or cloths.
- Always follow up with a dry towel and never leave any liquids on the piano or keys.

Keys

- The keys are the most important part. Generally speaking, most disinfecting wipes or sprays (see General Recommendations) should be safe to use on the keys.

Case Parts

- Case parts finishes vary greatly and can be easily damaged by disinfectant wipes and sprays. A soft disposable towel, using warm water and hand/dish soap is safe to use on virtually every finish, key, and case parts. Always follow up with a dry soft disposable towel to dry any standing liquid.

String Instruments

<https://www.facebook.com/sydneystringcentre/videos/509019089787657/?v=509019089787657>

Hannah from Sydney Strings demonstrates in the above video how to clean/disinfect instruments during the coronavirus outbreak.

- We usually NEVER recommend using spirit-based cleaners on violins as they can cause a lot of damage to the varnish. However... during this period we feel it necessary/acceptable to use alcohol wipes on SOME parts of the violin to ensure it is properly cleaned and disinfected.
- Only use the wipes on the chinrest, strings, fingerboard and pegs. These parts are ebony and do not have varnish on them. PLEASE DO NOT USE ALCOHOL WIPES OR SPIRIT BASED CLEANERS ON THE BODY OF YOUR STRING INSTRUMENT ESPECIALLY ANY LIQUIDS SUCH AS METHYLATED SPIRITS as they can drip onto your instrument and strip the varnish!
- In this video Hannah also explains how to clean the body of your instrument without causing damage to the varnish. This kind of cleaning should only be done every 1-2 weeks.
- We didn't mention the tailpiece and fine tuners in the video, however to clean those you can use the alcohol wipes as tailpieces aren't varnished. You should also be cleaning the underside of the neck and this can be done using dishwashing liquid and water.

For daily cleaning and maintenance tips, please refer to our video on 'How to care for your violin, viola, cello or double bass'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6cqYIYyYkM&t=6s>

For advice on how to remove rosin and sticky residue from your instrument, please refer to our video on 'How to clean your violin, viola, cello or double bass' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZQvLxyb7E9I>

Woodwind & Brass Instruments

Please Note: Currently brass and woodwind instruments (including recorders) should not be shared.

Disinfectants do not remove dirt, so mouthpieces and instruments must be cleaned thoroughly before using such products.

NOTE: mouthpieces need to be washed only in cold water - hot water can ruin the plastic mouthpieces.

Instrument Hygiene

- Washing your hands before and after using an instrument is a critical first step to instrument hygiene. Basic soap and water can also be highly effective in reducing the number of harmful bacteria and viruses on instruments simply by carrying away the dirt and oil that they stick to.
- Individuals can maintain the overall cleanliness of an instrument via the use of cleaning rods, cotton sticks, mouthpiece brushes, etc., use of these items is necessary to prevent build-up of residue within the instrument. These pieces of equipment should be single use, or specific to the instrument designated to the individual.
- Certain cleaning products that can be used on the mouthpiece should not be used around the pads associated with a woodwind instrument's keys (e.g. flute, clarinet, saxophone, etc.).

Mouthpieces

- Adhering to the following procedures will help support to keep mouthpieces and instruments clean and safe for continued use.
- **mouthpieces need to be washed only in cold water - hot water can ruin the plastic mouthpieces.**

Cleaning the Flute Head Joint

- Use a cotton stick saturated with denatured, isopropyl alcohol, carefully clean around the embouchure hole.
- Mouthpiece cleanser can also be used on the flute's lip plate.
- Using a soft, lint-free silk cloth inserted into the cleaning rod, clean the inside of the headjoint.
- Do not run the headjoint under water as it may saturate and eventually shrink the headjoint cork.

Cleaning Bocals

- Bocals should be cleaned regularly with a bocal brush, mild soap solution, and running water
- English Horn bocals can be cleaned with a pipe cleaner, mild soap solution, and running water. Be careful not to scratch the inside of the bocal with the exposed wire ends of the pipe cleaner.

Cleaning Hard Rubber and Ebony Mouthpieces

- Mouthpieces should be swabbed and cleaned after each use.
- Select a small container that will accommodate the mouthpiece vertically and place the mouthpiece, tip down, into the container.
- Fill the container just past the window of the mouthpiece with a solution of 50% water and 50% white vinegar or hydrogen peroxide. Protect clarinet mouthpiece corked tenons from moisture.
- After the mouthpiece has soaked for fifteen minutes, use an appropriately sized mouthpiece brush to remove any calcium deposits or other residue from inside and outside surfaces. This step may need to be repeated if the mouthpiece is excessively dirty.
- Rinse the mouthpiece thoroughly and then saturate with disinfectant solution. Place on paper towel and wait one minute.
- Wipe dry with paper towel.
- Note: Metal saxophone mouthpieces can be cleaned with hot water, mild dish soap (not dishwasher detergent), and a mouthpiece brush. Disinfectant solution is also safe for metal mouthpieces.

Cleaning Saxophone Necks

- Cotton sticks are available to clean the inside of the saxophone neck. However, many saxophonists use a flexible bottlebrush and toothbrush to accomplish the same results.
- The saxophone neck should be cleaned and swabbed after each use.
- Use the bottlebrush with mild, soapy water to clean the inside of the neck.
- Rinse under running water.
- Disinfectant solution may be used on the inside of the neck if desired. Place on paper towel for one minute.
- Rinse again under running water, dry, and place in the case.

Cleaning Brass Instrument Mouthpieces

- Mouthpieces should be cleaned after each use.
- Use a cloth soaked in warm, soapy water to clean the outside of the mouthpiece.
- Use a mouthpiece brush with cold, soapy water to clean the inside.
- Rinse the mouthpiece and dry thoroughly.
- Disinfectant solution should be used on the mouthpiece at this time. Place on paper towel for one minute.
- Wipe dry with paper towel

Percussion Instruments; Drums, Xylophones, Marimbas, Percussion, Keyboards

Players must wash their hands before and after use for a minimum of 20 seconds.

- Plastic, metal and other hard surface percussion instruments to be wiped with disinfecting wipes or a washcloth with soapy water. NB: Do not submerge in cleaning solution.
- Remo products may be wiped with disinfecting wipes. Do not soak the drum.
- Rubber mallets may be completely wiped with disinfecting wipes or sprayed.
- Yarn and felt mallets may have the shafts completely wiped with disinfecting wipes or a washcloth with soapy water. The heads can be wiped with a washcloth with soapy water.

Choosing a Disinfectant for Musical Instruments

- Sterisol Germicide Solution can be safely used on plastics, hard rubbers, and metals.
- Mouthpiece Cleanser can be used on most materials. It is NOT recommended for use on hard rubber mouthpieces.
- Alcohol wipes are safe for most materials. They are NOT recommended for use on mouthpieces.
- A solution made with 50% water and 50% white vinegar or 50% water and 50% hydrogen peroxide can be safely used on plastics, hard rubbers, and metals.
- As with use of any disinfectants always make sure you read the directions on the label carefully