

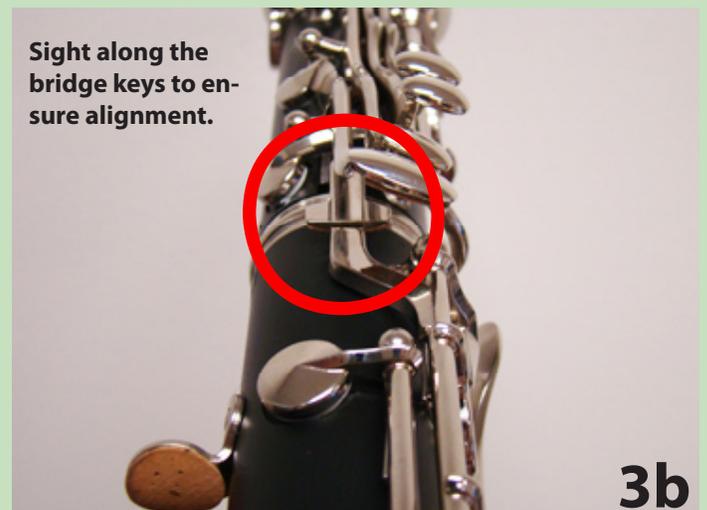
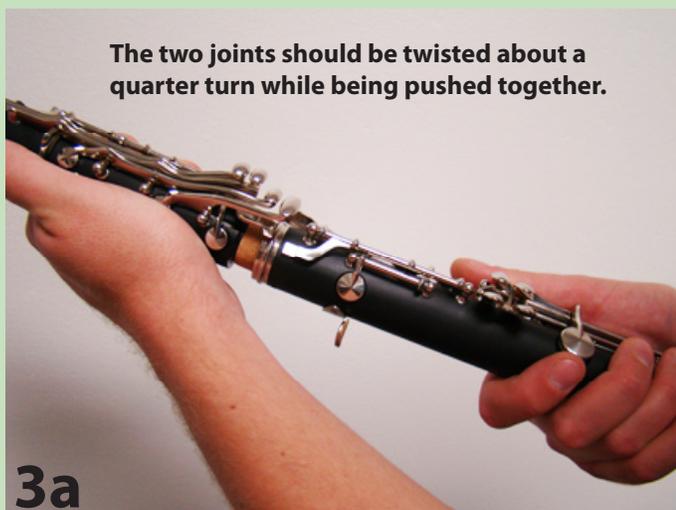
# Clarinet Care and Maintenance

Clarinets are made out of wood or plastic and are easy to care for. Both types need regular maintenance to help prolong the life of the pads. Wood clarinets need a little more attention to help preserve the integrity of the wood and to prevent cracking.

**Never eat or drink anything besides water before or while playing a wind instrument, since sugar and food particles will accumulate inside the instrument and mouthpiece, causing sticky pads and fostering bacteria growth – YUCK!!**

## Assembly

When assembling a clarinet, it should be handled and assembled in a specific manner to avoid bending keys and damaging corks. When the upper and lower joints are fit together properly, they align to activate the bridge key which is an alternate fingering for Bb/Eb.



If the joints are hard to put together, use cork crease to make it easier. Using too much force during assembly can bend keys and is hard on the hands! You may need to use cork grease regularly on a new instrument or if a joint cork has recently been replaced.

When handling the clarinet to attach the barrel, bell, and mouthpiece, do not put pressure against the keys as this can put them out of adjustment. The keys are made of a soft thin metal alloy and can be bent with just a little pressure applied in the wrong manner. This will make your instrument harder to play and will require a technician to fix it!

## Maintenance

Every clarinetist should swab their instrument before putting it away in the case after playing. When a person plays the clarinet, warm breath comes in contact with the cooler surface of the inside bore, causing moisture to condense and form small droplets. If this moisture is not removed, it will create a high level of humidity inside the case, and can drip onto the pads and damage them. When pads become wet and then dry out over and over again, they become hard, their shape gets distorted, and they lose their ability to create a seal on the tone holes, causing leaks.

Swabbing is easy! Remove the mouthpiece and drop the weighted end of the pull-through swab into the bell or barrel and pull it out the other end. Repeat this process a few times to ensure maximum removal of moisture.

Never store anything inside the case that may contact the keys like music. This added pressure on the keys can bend them.

Clarinets should never be set down on a chair, the floor, a table top, or anywhere else. They should either be in the case, in the player's hands, or on a clarinet stand.

## Wood Clarinets

Wood clarinets are usually made from grenadilla wood and need some special care. The grenadilla tree is a hardwood from Africa and is very dense which allows it to resonate with a beautiful "earthy" sound, but it needs to be oiled once in a while with bore oil. If the wood becomes too dry, it will crack and the instrument will either be ruined or severely damaged. Oil prevents moisture from repeatedly soaking into the wood and drying it out again. You can tell when grenadilla wood needs to be oiled because it turns a light grey or light brown color. Wood that is properly oiled has a dark sheen to it and appears almost black. The most important area to oil is the bore, and this can be done with either pull-through or a wire-handled swab. Just apply a small amount of oil to the swab and run it through the bore, one section at a time. Inspect the bore by looking through it while holding it up to a light. The bore should now appear smooth, wet, and shiny. If the wood is really dry, it will soak up the oil within an hour or so, and some areas will be dry; oil the wood again. A light coat of oil can also be applied to the outside of the instrument, but be careful to avoid contact with the pads. The bores of instruments with bore damage appear fuzzy and grainy. Bores in good condition look smooth and polished.

There is no golden rule about how often to oil wooden instruments – just make a habit to inspect the wood every time you open the case to assemble it, and if the wood looks dry, oil it. Many factors can affect the frequency for oiling wood clarinets: temperature, humidity, frequency of use, age of the instrument, quality of the wood, etc.

Only use bore oil that is especially designed for wooden instruments, or you can use almond oil which can be found at most supermarkets.