

Ten tips for caring for string instruments

1. Wash your hands before playing.
2. Know where string instruments are vulnerable.
3. Keep your instrument clean.
4. Clean your bow.
5. Loosen the bow hair after playing.
6. Always use the case.
7. Consider investing in a better case.
8. Learn to do simple maintenance.
9. Know when to visit a professional.
10. Protect your instrument from non-players.

1. String instruments get dirt from one major source, you!

Think of all the things your hands touch in a day. You can be transferring minute particles from everything you touch to your instrument's strings and fittings. **Even if they appear clean** to the eye, your instrument can still be affected by unseen contaminations, sweat and acid from your hands. **Washing your hands** before handling your instrument is a good habit to get into.

2. Avoid touching the varnished areas of your string instruments

Necks are not varnished on most string instruments. So **the neck is the best place to hold your instrument**. Endpins and chinrests are also less likely to be damaged by your hands. So feel free to hold your instrument by them, particularly if you're using two hands. Perspiration and abrasion from fingers can **degrade the varnish** and eventually damage the instrument.

3. Clean string instruments will naturally last longer and perform better

Always **wipe the strings, fingerboard and the top** of your instrument with a soft cloth before putting it back in its case. **Remove rosin** and make sure any dirt or sweat from your fingers has been removed from the fingerboard. Dirty strings and fingerboards compromise your Prodigy instrument's natural good looks. If left to corrode they will eventually require replacement.

4. Bows must also be kept clean

Run your cleaning cloth between the stick and the hair of your bow to **remove rosin from the stick**. Ensure that your bow makes it back into the case as clean as when it came out.

5. Take the pressure off your bow

Loosen the bow hair before putting the bow back in the case. It's a very simple thing to do. But failing to do so will stretch the hair and eventually, the stick will become weakened, causing it to warp. Loosening the hair relieves this needless pressure, which **results in a longer lasting bow**.

6. Use a case to store your instrument

How you choose to store and transport your string instruments has a great long-term effect on their appearance, playability, sound and value. Repair shops report that **the majority of damage** they see **results from careless placement of string instruments and bows** after use. Quite simply, if your

instrument is not in your capable hands, it should be in its case, not left on a chair, or music stand. The case is a safe place for your instrument and can protect it from almost any potential harm.

7. We said, “almost” any potential harm

Use a good high-quality case with your string instrument. But depending on your rehearsal and travel schedule, **it might be prudent to invest in a flight-case**. This stronger, heavier case is resistant to higher levels of impact, pressure and temperature extremes. Your instructor can recommend a case that suits your individual situation.

8. Day to day maintenance will bring you closer to your Instrument

There are many examples of simple maintenance that you can participate in. Keeping your string instruments clean and safe is the first order of business. **Replacing strings** is also something that musicians can learn to do themselves. Your instructor or Luthier will take you through those steps when the time is right.

9. Visit a professional Luthier regularly

Take your Instrument and bow to a qualified repair shop from time to time. **Minor adjustments**, such as straightening the bridge, adjusting the soundpost, cleaning accumulated rosin and dirt, repairing minor openings, **must always be done by professionals**. This also includes rehairing of bows, repairing or replacing grips. If you're not sure, take your instrument and bow to the repair shop. Qualified service is your best insurance to maintain your instrument's long-term value.

10. Well meaning friends can damage your instrument without even knowing it

As a musician, you've spent a huge portion of your life learning how to look after your string instruments. Eventually, caring for your instrument, and handling it properly becomes second nature. Those who don't play string instruments always want to hold them and play with them. But it's imperative that you **resist the temptation to let non-musicians handle your Instrument**. Playing music is fun. Having your instrument damaged by someone, even someone who means well, is no fun at all. There's no point in trying to explain why they can't touch your instrument. They just don't understand all the things that can affect string instruments. The best policy with people who don't play is to **leave your instrument in its case**. Buying your Instrument new means that **care and upkeep is never a chore**.