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Before Playing the Trial Instruments - Instrument Break-in

Welcome to your instrument trial!

Objective:

The guideline herein when followed is meant to gradually introduce moisture and reduce temperature variances in the instrument in preparation for full-throated play. There are two modes of immediate stress that can be harmful to your instrument if not 'broken-in' adequately, the first being temperature differences within the instrument, and the second being vibrational. Temperature equilibrium of the instrument is necessary to best ensure that when hot air is blown through the horn that certain areas do not heat any slower or faster than others; therefore allowing any expansion or contraction to occur while decreasing the probability of cracking. The same can be said of the vibrational aspect; when the instrument is at a homogenous level of moisture it should flex similarly to the other sections of the instrument; at this point, vibrations should equally affect all portions of the instrument in a like way.

Too much moisture inside the bore with too little moisture on the outside of the oboe, or too warm a bore in too cold an oboe will either one put the instrument at risk. The root cause of an instrument cracking can be multifaceted, but assuredly, any intense shock to your instrument without proper preparation can be a contributing factor to a horn cracking.

During the oboe trial and after purchase, please refer to these procedures to help prevent cracking: for all wood/lined top and used wood instruments that are new to your environment.

For plastic top/all plastic oboes you and may begin playing immediately, enjoy!

Break-in Procedure

- 1) Warm up the instrument before playing:
 - a) Hold the instrument with your hands or let the instrument rest on your lap to slowly warm the instrument. This is especially important for the upper joint. Do not immediately blow air through the instrument. This process should take a few minutes
 - i) **If you're in a cold environment:** Avoid blowing air immediately through the horn, allow the horn additional time to warm in your hands or on your lap. After you feel enough time has elapsed, then sparingly and gently begin to push air through the instrument



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- ii) **If you're in a warm environment:** Begin gently blowing air through the horn.
- iii) **In general:** Playing in a cold, overly hot, or quite dry room can be tricky, as the environment will be acting against your best efforts maintaining the instrument at a playable temperature and moisture level. Your awareness is key to keeping your horn happy 😊

2) Frequency of use:

- a) Play the instrument for short periods of time at first; fifteen minutes a day, no more than twice a day for the first week or so, increasing to 20 minutes, then 25 minutes, etc. Regular, steady introduction of moisture and vibrations is the goal, so it is important to play it almost every day during this time, though the argument could well be made that skipping one day every 5-6 days to let it "rest" can't hurt!

3) 'Stretch' before you exercise:

- a) Play connecting exercises, like long tones, slow scales, and melodies, so that the oboe becomes accustomed to continuous vibration. When doing this, pay special attention to connecting between the notes. This is good for your playing anyhow, obviously, but it is also good for the oboe! ...and use a tuner. Train yourself and your oboe to play at pitch

4) After playing maintenance/cleaning:

- a) Thoroughly swab out and dry the instrument after every use. Clear any accumulated water out of the tone holes by blowing air hard through them with the key open. Soak up any additional water with cigarette paper, placing it between the cork pads and the tone holes. Pay special attention to getting the water out of the octaves, the 3rd octave tone hole especially, and the triller tone holes. Also, if you've had any notes "burbling" from water, be sure to soak the water out of that tone hole with cigarette paper (*refer to instruction from your teacher*).

5) General Care and Upkeep:

- a) Even after an oboe is well broken in, continue being careful of extreme temperature and moisture conditions. Keep a 'WATER PILLOW' in the case in very dry weather, avoid air-conditioning drafts like the plague, avoid outdoor playing where the temperature drops below 70° F, avoid situations where strong sunlight can overly warm one side of the instrument causing it to warp... the list is long, and you can add to it with your own experiences and imagination!

Handling: Be gentle! Don't let any part of the oboe bang against anything! This bends keys. Also, take care when you put the instrument together not to bend keys accidentally. Use cork grease when the joints become difficult to assemble. Clean the corks with the micro fiber cloth before adding new grease.

Hannahsoboies is happy to answer all your questions.