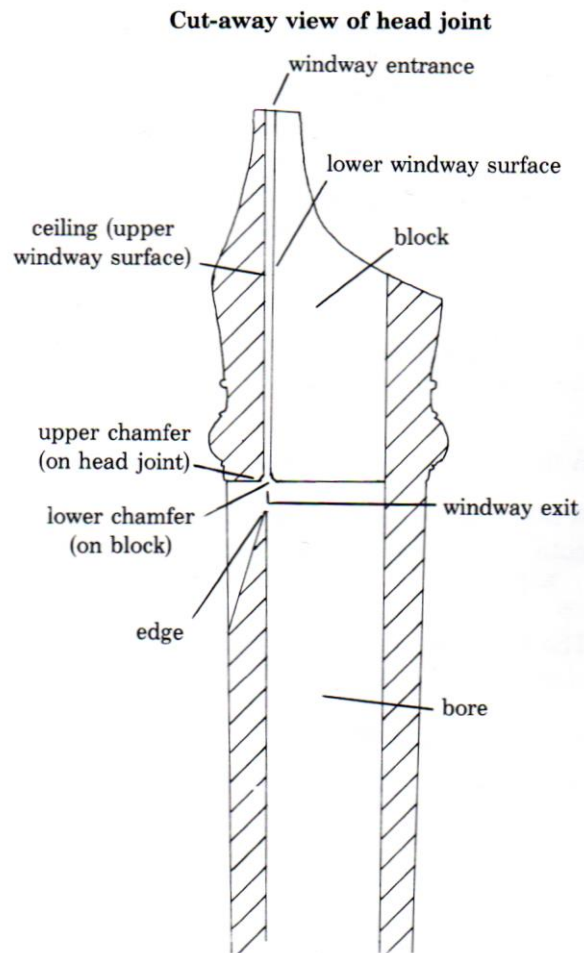


# NOTES ON RECORDER CARE



## HOW TO KEEP THE TENONS OF YOUR RECORDER IN GOOD CONDITION

The joints of a woodwind must be airtight. Any leak will interfere with the sound quality. To keep them in good condition they should be greased from time to time with cork grease available in good music shops. You can make something similar yourself by gently heating equal quantities of Vaseline and beeswax together in a *bain-marie* (a recipient heated in boiling water) and allowing it to set. Historically, goose fat was used for this purpose.

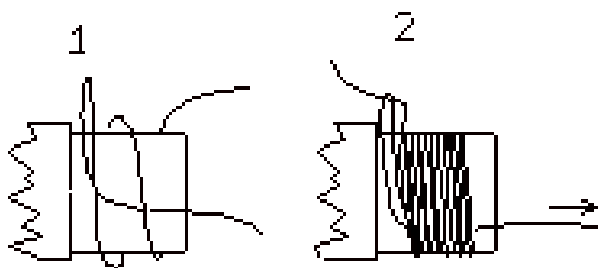
- Personally, I use a plain Nivea chap stick (c. \$5 in any supermarket or chemist).

### Thread joints

You can repair or adjust thread joints yourself. If they become too loose it is often sufficient to add a little thread. If they are too tight you can take some off. For this you can use buttonhole silk or polyester which you wax with beeswax. Simply pull the thread across the wax. It should then stick to the joint.

- Personally, I use Colgate waxed dental floss (c. \$4 in any supermarket or chemist).

Be careful not to put on too much thread or there could be a risk of splitting the instrument. Check this by carefully trying to assemble the recorder as you go along. After much use it can become necessary to change the joint completely. Cut away the old thread without touching the wood, and wind on some new waxed thread (c.f. drawing below). Begin by laying a loop lengthwise along the tenon, continue wrapping the thread around it, keeping the layer as regular as possible. Test the joint as you go. Be careful not to put on too much. To secure the joint just pass the end through the loop and pull it back under the joint. A little experimentation will soon show how this is done.

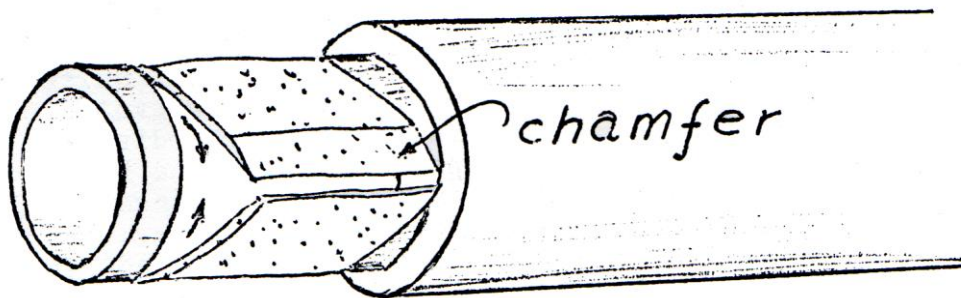


You can also secure the joint by using a needle to pass the end under the outer layers, in which case the initial loop is not necessary. Warning: the joint must be made tight enough not to slip on the tenon. If this happens it could cling to the socket and make the instrument very difficult to take apart.

## Cork joints

A defective cork joint is more difficult to deal with. If the cork has become too loose, it can be temporarily restored to its original thickness by very quickly heating it with a lighter flame (be careful not to burn the wood). However, the effect of this will not last long. Alternatively, a little thread or plumber's tape can be wound around the joint to make it thicker. However, sooner or later the joint cork will have to be replaced. The easiest way of doing this is to cut away the cork and make up a thread joint instead, as described above.

Making a new cork joint is more complicated. This is best done by a competent instrument repairer. However, if you prefer to do it yourself, first find a sheet of cork of the right thickness (good music shops stock this for clarinets and oboes). Next, cut from this a rectangle of the same width and the same length as the circumference of the groove in the tenon. This can be determined by trial and error or with a tape measure, or by calculation using the formula  $2\pi R$  where  $\pi = 3.142$  and  $R$ =half the diameter as measured with callipers. Fix the cork onto the tenon with contact glue. If the joint is too tight, sand it with 150 grit abrasive paper without touching the wood. If you are confident of your craft skills, cut the cork strip a little longer and trim each end using an oblique cut to lap them neatly, as shown below.



## For emergencies

In an emergency it is convenient to have a roll of plumber's sealing tape in your kit. You can buy a small roll in Bunnings for \$1). It clings to itself, is easily applied without the need for scissors or glue, and it is just as easily removed.

## HOW TO CLEAN YOUR RECORDER

### After playing

Carefully wipe out the bore with a lint-free cloth or piece of chamois. It is best to avoid using the fluffy mops provided with many recorders as these leave lint in the bore. Suck dry air into the windway through the beak, while closing the bottom end of the head joint with one hand, to remove some of the dampness in the windway, and exhale it outside the recorder. Do this for one or two minutes. Then let the instrument dry out completely (especially the inside of the windway, which cannot be wiped) before closing its case. It is a good idea to use a stand for this, so that the pieces are held vertically.

### How to remove the white deposit on the beak of your recorder

This is basically calcium from the moisture in your mouth. It is easily removed by laying a lint-free cloth moistened with white vinegar, leave this in place for 30 minutes or so, then rinse the beak with clean water and dry.

### If the windway becomes blocked due to condensation

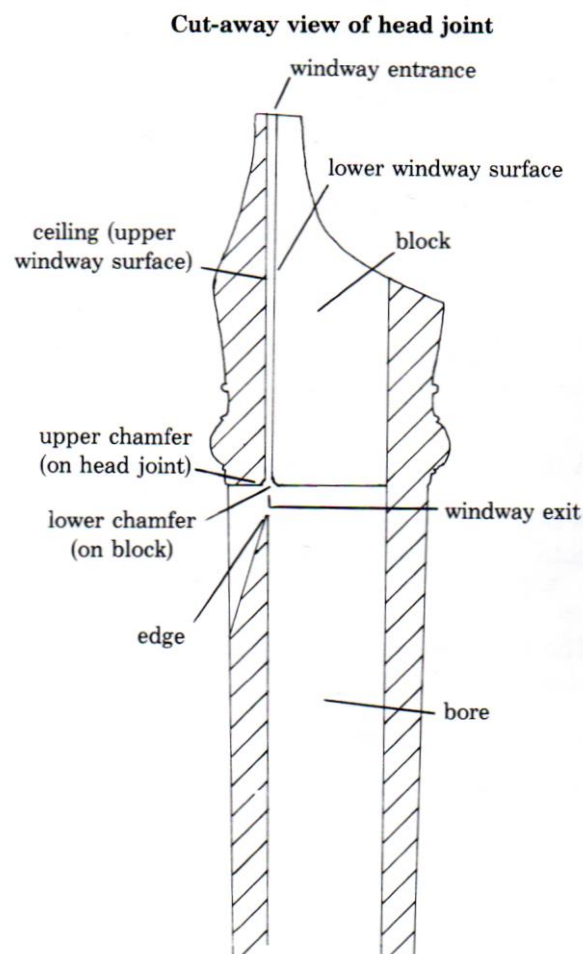
Whilst playing, condensation in the windway can be easily removed by sucking sharply through the beak, as if through a straw. It is best to avoid blowing through the windway as this will only introduce more moisture making things worse, and it will produce a loud high-pitched sound which your audience and playing companions will find distressing.

The buildup of oil and grease in the windway from your breath can be removed with a little detergent (washing-up liquid and water in a 1:50 solution) using a dropper to let it flow into the window end while blocking the beak end with one finger. Wait for a few moments, then blow it out backwards through the beak by blocking the socket and covering the window area with your mouth. Wipe of any excess detergent on the beak with a cloth.



For more serious blockages it is necessary to remove the block and thoroughly clean the internal surfaces of the windway, a job best left to an expert. Obviously, this can't be done with plastic recorders, but a good soaking in the sink with liquid detergent and water may assist with those.

Preparations such as *Anti-Condens* are nothing more than a weak detergent solution and will cost you c. \$10 for a small bottle!



## HOW TO STERILISE YOUR RECORDER

Perhaps the best way to sterilise a recorder is simply to give it a good wash (as above), let it dry, then ignore it for a few days. If you want to use something more thoroughgoing, then you will need a suitable antiseptic.

Milton sterilising fluid is produced by Procter & Gamble for home sterilisation uses. It contains 1% sodium hypochlorite (NaClO) and 16.5% sodium chloride (NaCl; common salt). 1:80 dilution is used to sterilise babies' feeding utensils, including baby bottles, teats, pacifiers, etc. It is sold in various liquid forms and as dissolvable tablets which are then mixed with cold water and placed in a lidded container.

A 1:20 solution is isotonic with body fluids. 1:4 dilution is used for wound management applications; this contains 0.25% (w/v) available chlorine and has a pH of 10.5–11.2. The fluid has been used in endodontics, for example to irrigate an infected root canal.

Obviously, you can make a Milton solution yourself using domestic bleach, table salt and water. But you may find it more convenient to dissolve ½ a Milton tablet in a litre of warm water.



**HOW TO USE - The Cold Water Method**  
**DO NOT MIX WITH DETERGENTS OR OTHER CHEMICALS. DO NOT SWALLOW.**

- 1. Clean:** Wash bottles, teats, breastfeeding equipment in warm soapy water, then rinse in cold water.
- 2. Prepare solution:** Fill your Milton unit or other plastic container with 4L of water, add 2 Milton standard tablets.
- 3. Add items:** Close the lid and in just 15 minutes everything is ready to use. No need to rinse. Items can stay in the solution until needed. Renew the solution every 24 hours.

**For home hygiene:**  
To disinfect cleaned non-metallic jars, bottles, storage containers, chopping boards, cupboards, work surfaces, shelves, cookers, fridges and freezers, use 2 Milton Tablets per 4 litres of water. Wipe with made-up solution. Wait 15 minutes.

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
You can also disinfect sponges, scourers, toothbrushes, kitchen tidies, home brewing equipment, or remove stains from cups and plates.

Items can be added or removed from the same solution throughout the day.

[miltonbaby.com.au](http://miltonbaby.com.au)

9 333583 005157 >

Warning: Sodium hypochlorite is corrosive to most metals (including brass), so don't use it to sterilise the bores of bass recorders.

### **Alternatives**

A good alternative is isopropyl alcohol, which has many uses in the home and can be found cheaply in any hardware store. It's probably best to avoid contact with the lacquer of a wooden recorder. Another alternative is hydrogen peroxide

Proprietary products for use with wind instruments are sold as

- *Sani-Spray*, simply 70-80% ethanol – c. \$12 for a small bottle!
- *Sterisol*, a mixture of sodium hypochlorite, common salt and oxidants – c. \$15 for a small bottle!
- *Steri-spray*, ? Chlorhexidine – c. \$7 for a small bottle

### **HOW TO OIL YOUR WOODEN RECORDER**

There are three reasons for oiling the bore of a wooden (non-wax-impregnated) recorder:

- It is essential that the bore of the instrument is airtight, for the tiniest leak at any point in the tube can markedly affect the response of the recorder and especially the strength of the low notes.
- The oil acts as a barrier preventing water from penetrating the pores of the wood, where it can cause swelling, or, in extreme cases, even splitting.
- Finally, regular oiling can prevent the inside of the bore from being colonised by fungi.

Warning: It is not necessary to oil the bore of wax-impregnated recorders!

Instruments made from coarser, less dense wood, such as maple, will require more frequent oiling than those made, say in boxwood, rosewood or ebony. Similarly, a recorder that is played often will require more frequent oiling than one that is only blown from time to time. As a guide, a baroque alto in boxwood should be oiled every fortnight when new, increasing to intervals of 2–3 months when one year old.

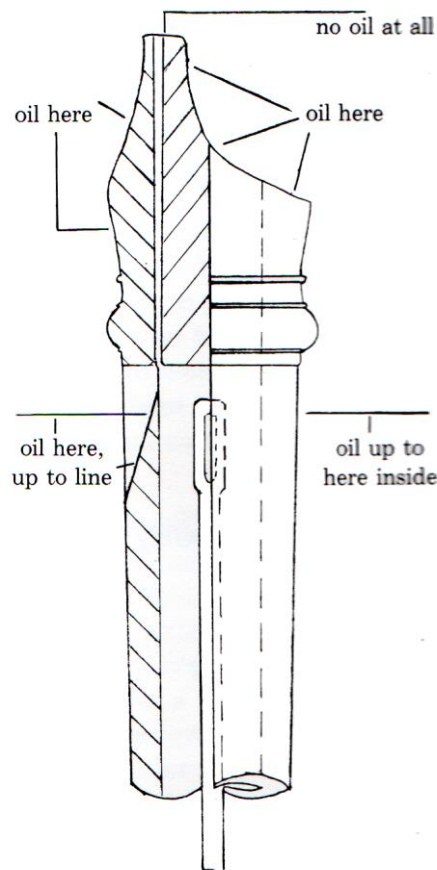
Historically, woodwind instruments were oiled with raw linseed oil with the addition of a little mineral turpentine as a carrier. This is my preferred option. Some people find the strong smell offensive, but I rather like it. These days, makers generally suggest the use of almond oil with the addition of a little Vitamin E as an antioxidant to prevent the oil becoming rancid. Cooking oils, such as sesame seed, corn, sunflower, canola, are to be avoided as they are far too thick and sticky.

The best method to apply the oil is to use a wooden, plastic or metal rod into which a piece of lint free cloth or chamois can be fitted to form a swab. A wooden dowel with

a slit cut into the end will do nicely. Warm the oil slightly by gently heating the bottle containing it in hot water for about 10 minutes. With the joint of the recorder in one hand and the stick in the other, push the rod up and down inside the bore of the instrument until the inside is completely coated with oil. When oiling a middle joint, try and get the oil to come out of the fingerholes so that the undercutting is well oiled. Any excess oil can be rubbed into the outside of the joint.

Once oiled, leave the joints standing vertically for 8–24 hours to allow the oil to soak evenly into the wood. During this time the middle and foot sections should be turned over a few times, to even out the penetration of the oil. After this, wipe away any excess oil with a dry cloth on the oiling rod; you can then reassemble the instrument.

During this operation, it is vital to ensure that the head joint is always held vertically, with the blowing end facing up. This is to ensure that oil cannot drip on to the inner surfaces of the windway and block. The ramp area can be oiled with a small paintbrush, but make sure that only the minimum of oil is used, as oil can easily find its way from here onto the sensitive areas of the windway and the block and its chamfers. Leave the upper 3–5 mm of the bore unoled.





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