

Instrument Cleaning and Sanitizing

Varnishes are made by dissolving natural compounds and resins in a solvent and applying the liquefied form to an instrument in layers. As the varnish dries the solvent evaporates leaving the dry resin mixture on the wood. Instrument varnish is applied to seal and preserve the wood while allowing the wood to vibrate freely. If a liquid solvent is applied to a dried varnish the area can soften, liquefy and badly damage the varnish. Many disinfectants and disinfectant wipes that contain ingredients that can break down the varnish on instruments. **Check before using any product on a string instrument varnish by testing on a very small area with a cotton swab with a small amount of cleaner first.**

A solution made with 50% water and 50% white distilled vinegar, 50% water and 50% hydrogen peroxide and Method All Purpose cleaner can usually be safely for cleaning on educational instruments. Some instruments have a softer varnish than others so **always test first**. These seem to be the best option for cleaning for varnished parts of the instruments.

Disinfecting wipes are usually safe for chinrests, tailpieces, string tuners, endbuttons and endpins, necks, and pegs.

Isopropyl alcohol wipes above 70% are good to clean and sanitize instruments fingerboards and strings.

Other potential disinfectants, including alcohol and bleach can be used as general disinfectants; however they are not recommended for use on varnished areas due to their potential effect varnish.

Case Sanitizing

Most sanitizing on the outside of the case including the handles and straps can be done with disinfecting wipes or distilled alcohol misters/sprayer and paper towels. The interior of the case including the lining, blankets and bow clips may be wiped with a Clorox type disinfecting wipe. You must allow enough time for the cases to completely open so it can dry thoroughly.

If these are personal cases take the time to clean other items like shoulder rests, metronomes and rosin containers.

Bow Sanitizing

The frog, winding and thumb grip, handle and button can be cleaned and sanitized for most student bows (Glasser/ Coda and carbon fiber bows) using Clorox type disinfecting wipes. You must pay special attention to not touch or dampen the bow hair with cleaning/alcohol products.

Additional Information

Sharing recommendations:

Instrument sharing should be avoided. This may not be an option for many schools so a routine of shared instrument cleaning and disinfecting is an important protocol to institute. Mandatory hand washing before rehearsals and masks are a necessity. Most of string instruments hygienic issues can be solved simply by having students washing their hands before and after use for a minimum of 20 seconds. Having personal shoulder rests, handkerchiefs to put over the chinrest area, and cello and bass bibs also help keep instruments clean. Basic cleaning can be highly effective in reducing the number of harmful bacteria and viruses simply by carrying away the dirt and oil that they stick to.

Materials:

50% water and 50% white distilled vinegar solution

50% water and 50% hydrogen peroxide solution

Paper towels

Clorox/Lysol type disinfecting wipes

Isopropyl alcohol wipe above 70%

Method All Purpose Cleaner

Latex gloves

Whichever disinfectants are chosen, it is crucial to read the product instructions and follow them closely. Be sure to use them in a well ventilated room.