

Maintenance of the traverso.

1. Playing and breaking in

Any wooden flute needs to be 'played in' gradually: ten minutes per session (maximum of two per day) for the first two weeks, then one thirty-minute session per day for another two weeks. No wooden instrument should ever be played more than two hours per day. If your traverso is not regularly played and has been allowed to dry out, play it in gradually again.

Keep the threads on the tenons adjusted so that the tenons will fit properly into the sockets. Unlike metal flutes, instruments of wood will shrink or expand with use and with changes in temperature and humidity. Keep the thread wrappings well lubricated with cork grease.

Use a twisting motion to assemble or disassemble the traverso. Never force a tenon into a socket, it will crack.

2. Oiling

The exterior and interior of the instrument can be oiled.

For the outside a very thin coat of linseed oil can be applied with a cloth especially where the finish becomes dull. Always leave to dry for a minimum of 48 hours, direct sunlight may aid to cure the oil.

For the inside pure almond oil is recommended. Always remove the cork and the key prior to oiling. Apply a thin coat of almond oil with a cloth or tissue paper on a rod. Leave the flute standing for about an hour or so and clean out excess oil with a dry cloth or tissue paper. Leave overnight and mount the cork and the key. Always apply cork grease before inserting the cork.

To remove the cork use a dowel with a diameter just smaller than the head bore (18 mm). Never use a metal stick (as supplied with Boehm flutes), this will damage the cork.

To remove the key simply pull out the pin (a slight twisting motion might help). Be careful not to damage the spring and not to get oil onto the keyflap or the pivot. Sticky oil will compromise the key action. Never oil the pin!

My flutes are treated with natural tung oil and require very little oiling. Oiling 2 or 3 times a year should be enough.

3. Care

Avoid extremes of temperature and humidity, or sudden changes. Because wood reacts noticeably to such things, it is common sense to minimize variations in humidity and temperature. If you live in a climate with hot, humid summers and cold, dry winters, it is especially advisable to stabilize the humidity and temperature as much as possible. Ideal conditions are 23°C and 50 % relative humidity. Above all, avoid placing the instrument on or near direct sources of heat, such as radiators or vents. When not in use (especially in winter), a traverso should be kept in an airtight plastic bag to help stabilize the moisture content, if you are in a geographic location of relatively low humidity. In a damp climate, a cloth or sheepskin roll-up bag provides the best protection, allowing moisture to flow to and fro.

Avoid drafts. The moving air originating from an open window, electric fan, or air-conditioner will quickly dry out an instrument and increase the risk of cracking.

Avoid direct sunlight. A traverso carelessly placed so that the direct rays of the sun hit it runs the risk of cracking.

Remove moisture from the instrument immediately upon cessation of playing. Even if only setting the instrument aside for a few brief minutes, one should swab out the inside of the instrument. As stated before, cracking is most often caused by humidity-induced stresses in the wood which occur when the inside of the bore is wet and the outside is dry.

The best swab to use is a piece of silk, cotton, or linen cloth threaded through the eye of a swab stick. Avoid denting the cork when swabbing. Always insert the swab from the 'thin' side and pull

it through. The traverso is a conical tube, doing it reversed may cause the swab to block inside the flute and cause a crack.

Do not let lipstick or ink come into contact with your traverso. Wood is very absorbent. A permanent stain will result if an instrument is used by a player wearing lipstick. Always carry your traverso in a proper case or bag.

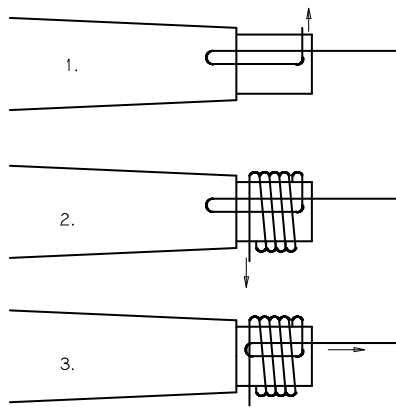
If a crack appears in your instrument, do not attempt to repair it yourself. Only an expert should do such a repair. Be sure to keep the crack clean.

4. Tenon grease

A small quantity of tenon grease is delivered with your flute. If you run out of tenon grease you can use commercial lip balm (chapstick) or make your own. A simple recipe consists of 50% to 60% almond oil and 50% to 40% beeswax, melt them together and let cool down.

5. Replacing thread wrappings

Use good quality sewing thread (Gütermann) in your favorite color.



1. Apply some grease and make a loop of thread on the tenon.
2. Wind the thread over and over until the required thickness is achieved. Apply grease regularly and check with the socket. One winding can make a lot of difference. The tenon should fit snugly into the socket with very little force applied.
3. Put the loose end into the loop and pull the other free end until the thread is under the windings. Cut the loose ends and apply more grease. The grease will penetrate slowly into the thread windings, so reapply often.

6. Cork position

There is no 'correct' position for the cork. It depends on the flute and the playing style of the player. As a general rule of thumb I place the cork for a 440 Hz flute at 23 mm and for a 415 Hz flute at 21 mm from the centre of the embouchure. The correct position is a compromise between response and tuning. A good way to set the cork is to check the octaves on G and A first, then check the tuning of high D. Setting the cork closer to the centre of the embouchure makes the octaves wider, setting it further makes the octaves narrower. For inexperienced players my 'rule of thumb' is a good compromise.