

TAKING CARE OF YOUR VIOLA

(a helpful guide)

1. Whenever you travel from the relative safety of home (see notes on teenagers), and to spare you from any possible embarrassment, be sure there is at least one viola and bow contained within your instrument case, with a minimum of 4 strings attached to the instrument, or 4 hairs if it is a bow.
2. You may also want to take your pencil, eraser, and rosin with you. But consider borrowing other players' pencils, eraser, and rosin as often as is reasonably possible to save wear and tear on your own, thus considerably extending the useful life of your own equipment.
3. Should another player request use of your personal pencil, eraser, or rosin, then lend them one of your special issue models (available from our online shop), namely: a pencil that is roughly half an inch in length with no lead, a rosin that consists of powder and sticky grit glued to a cloth, and an eraser that is professionally hardened to a glossy finish.
4. Don't refer to an eraser as a rubber, sometimes people get the wrong idea. Also, don't ask any colleagues to give you a good fingering. This can also lead to misunderstandings.
5. After using your instrument, whether it's a rehearsal or performance, and before putting it away, wipe off any sweat, blood, or tears. (Actually, you may want to keep the blood if it makes it look cool)
6. Regardless of what it sounds like, a viola is a precision instrument and should be treated as such. Therefore do not immerse it in water for prolonged periods, avoid setting it alight, try not to tie a long piece of string to it and whirl it around your head in a crowded room, supermarket, airport, machine shop, or sports event. Avoid wedging it behind your car wheels to stop it rolling down hill – preferably use a violin if you can find one. And if you require the use of a hammer then get a hammer, please don't use your viola for any major building projects but just for occasional odd jobs around the home and garden.
7. During rehearsals, don't be one of those people who leaves their cigarette on the music stand whilst you are engaged in playing. Stub it out and put the butt in your *f* hole. Empty your viola (not in a supermarket car park or other public space) when it is roughly three-quarters full as it may slightly muffle the sound – unless you want it to muffle the sound, that is.
8. Be sure to tune your viola at least once a month or every 10,000 notes (whichever comes soonest).
9. Within an orchestra or similarly large ensemble, avoid collisions with your section colleagues. There are certain players (you know who you are) who indulge in excessive swaying and flourishing with their bows. You cannot reason with these people so take the pre-emptive measure of arriving early and making sure you have plenty of free space around you by moving their chairs and stands away from your own personal space. Alternatively, wait for the rehearsal break and when they are away from their instrument cut some or all of their strings.
10. Gluing your pegs in and nailing on the bridge is a bad idea. Don't do it unless you really need to.
11. Finally, remember a viola is for life, and by following these guidelines you should be able to enjoy many years of satisfying playing while at the same time making life difficult for everyone else around you. If that's not job satisfaction then I don't know what is.