

**This presentation will help you understand some basics about taking care of your instrument, and how to diagnose some potential problems before they become an expensive repair.**

**THE BEST ADVICE – IF POSSIBLE, TAKE YOUR INSTRUMENT IN TO A REPAIR SHOP YEARLY FOR A CHECK UP!**

**Here are some other things you can do, and things to look out for:**



One of the best ways to keep your instrument in good playing condition is to properly pack it up in its case. Make sure the instrument is secure and can't move around too much. If you have a Velcro piece that secures the neck of the instrument, make sure it's closed.





Packing up the bow:

Loosen the bow 2 turns or so; it doesn't need to be very loose, just release the tension.

Make sure the bow is securely fastened in the case.



Let's review how much to tighten/loosen a bow:



This bow is too tight for playing. You can tell because the bow stick and bow hair in this picture are parallel. Keeping your bow too tight will eventually warp the stick. Once the bow is warped, it may not be repairable.

This bow is just right. Maintain camber, or curve of the bow:



Loosened bow, ready for case:



Before packing up your instrument, wipe down the strings and face of the instrument with a soft, dry clean cloth.

Rosin build up on the strings causes them to fail sooner, and if there's rosin build up on the instrument it can damage the varnish.





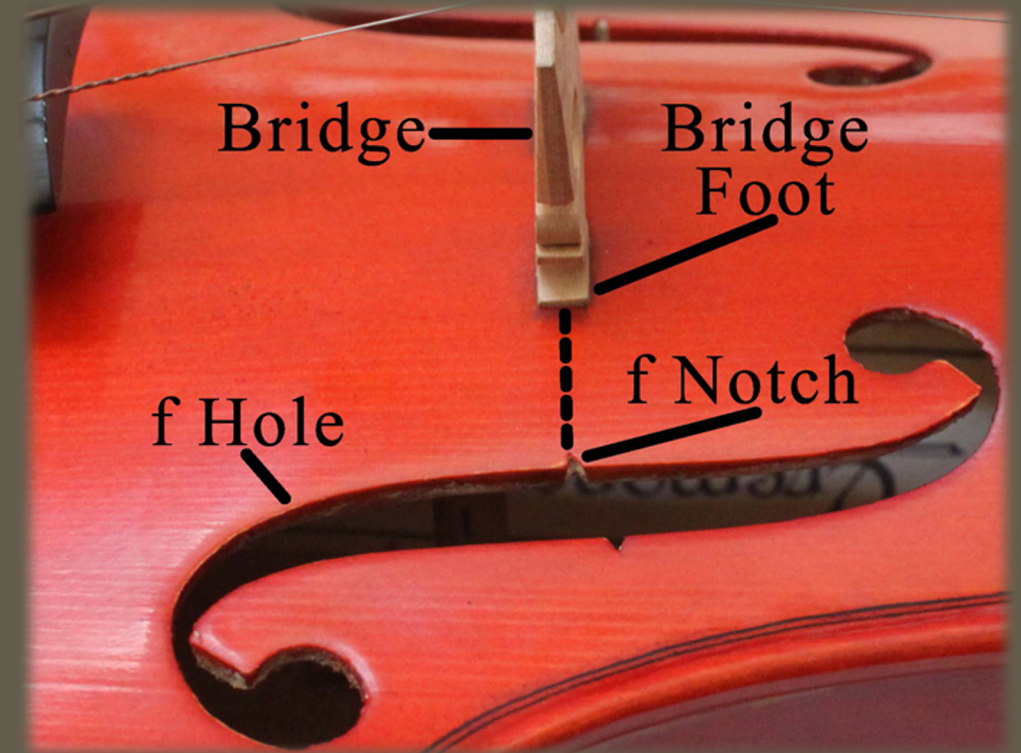
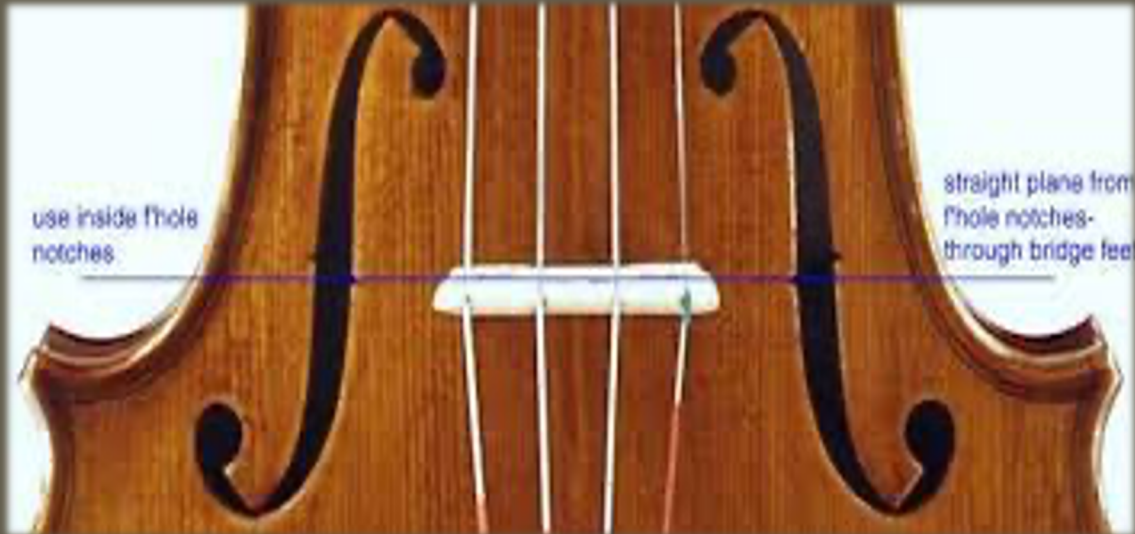
For violins and violas: make sure to remove the shoulder rest or foam pad before closing the case.

**\*\*Never force the case to close.**

Make sure all the latches and zippers are closed before you pick up the instrument. Although this seems like common sense, if you pack up in a hurry, you may forget!

Check your bridge for placement and make sure it's straight.

Proper bridge placement:



Bridge feet should line up with the notch in the f hole.



The bridge should line up with the fingerboard.



## Here's how to straighten your bridge:

Support bridge on both sides before moving it.

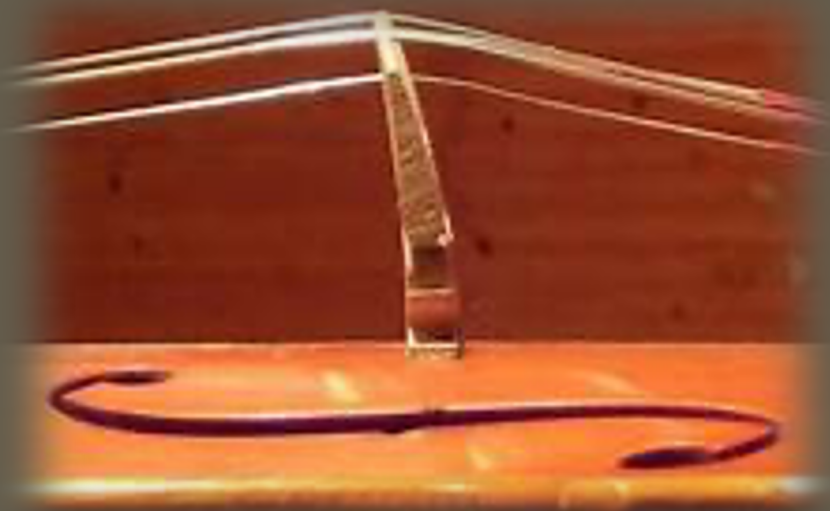
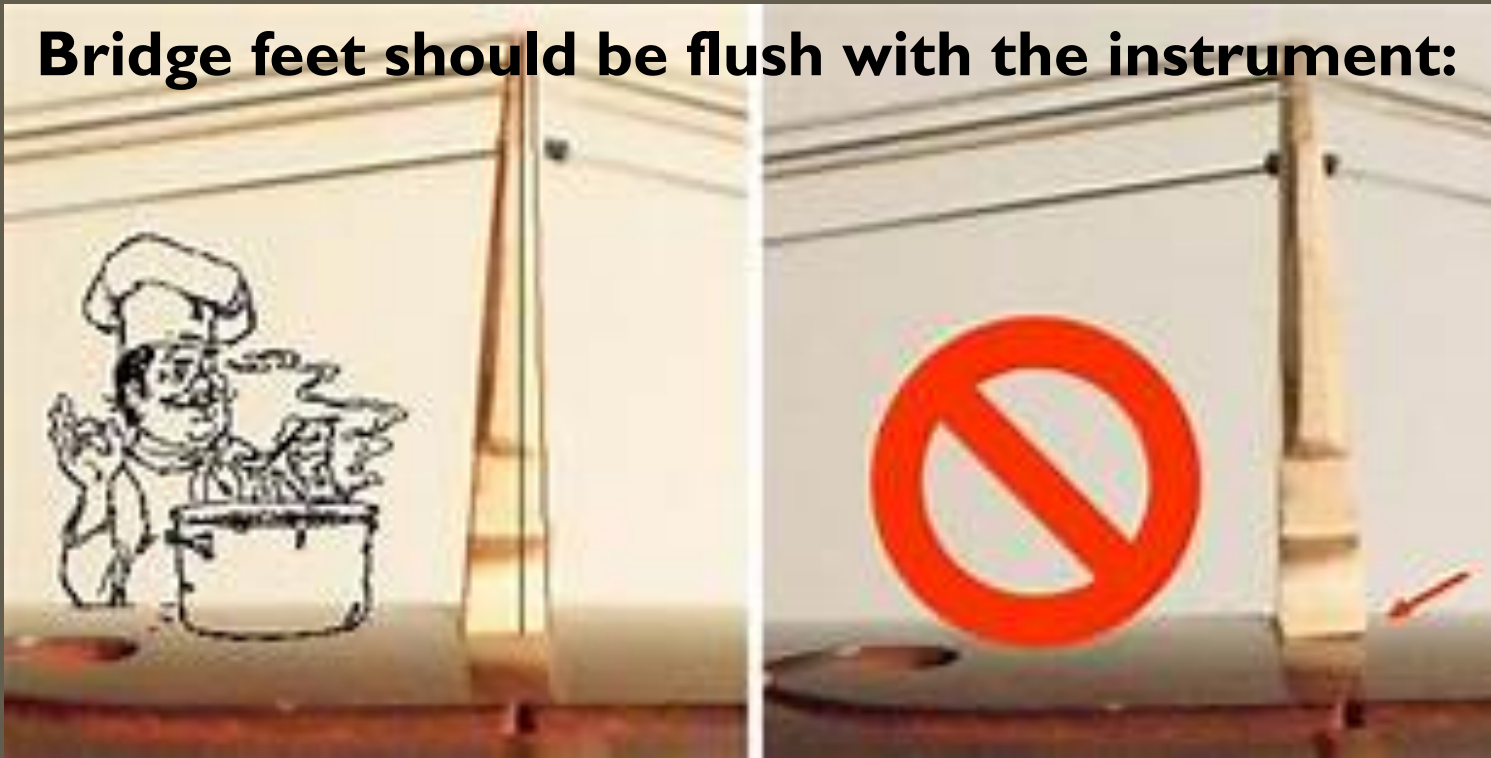
Instrument should be resting securely in your lap.

\*\* Note to students - Please ask your teacher for help with this step.





**Bridge feet should be flush with the instrument:**



If the bridge feet are flush with the instrument and the bridge is still leaning, it is warped and may need to be replaced.

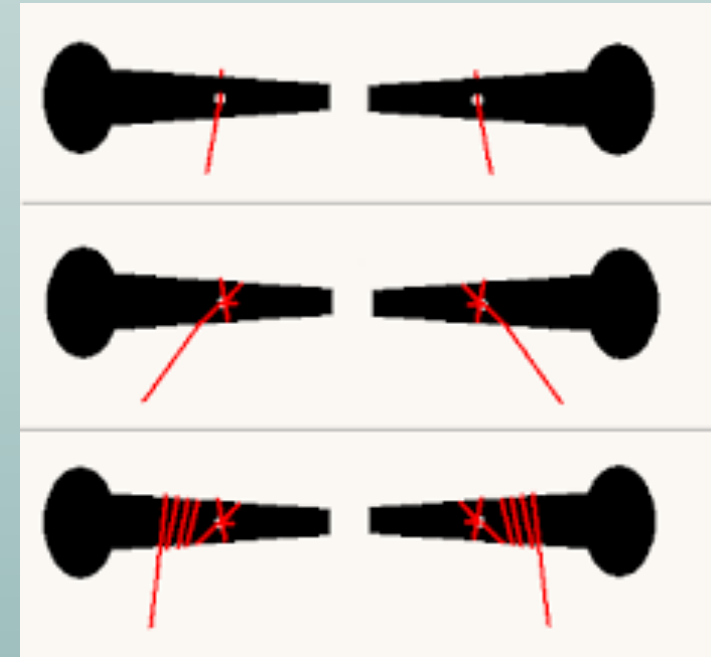


## Changing a string:

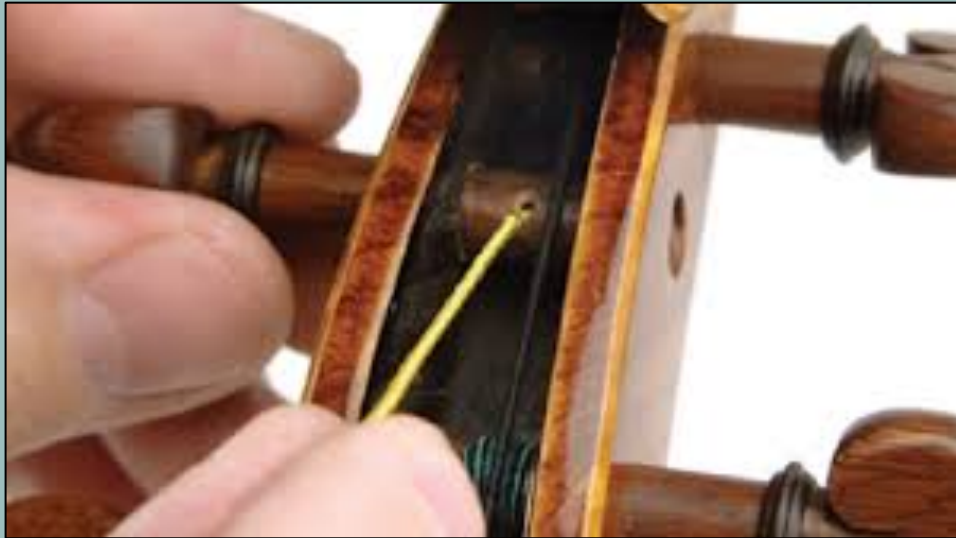
- Strings should be changed every 1 - 2 years or if the string is discolored, frayed, or false.
- Test for a false string by plucking it. If the pitch goes up, the string needs to be replaced.
- Cello and bass strings may last a little longer than violin strings.



The string should sit next to the peg box.



Wind the string by inserting the string into the hole and turn the peg away from you. Leave a tail when you first insert the string so you can wrap the string around it.

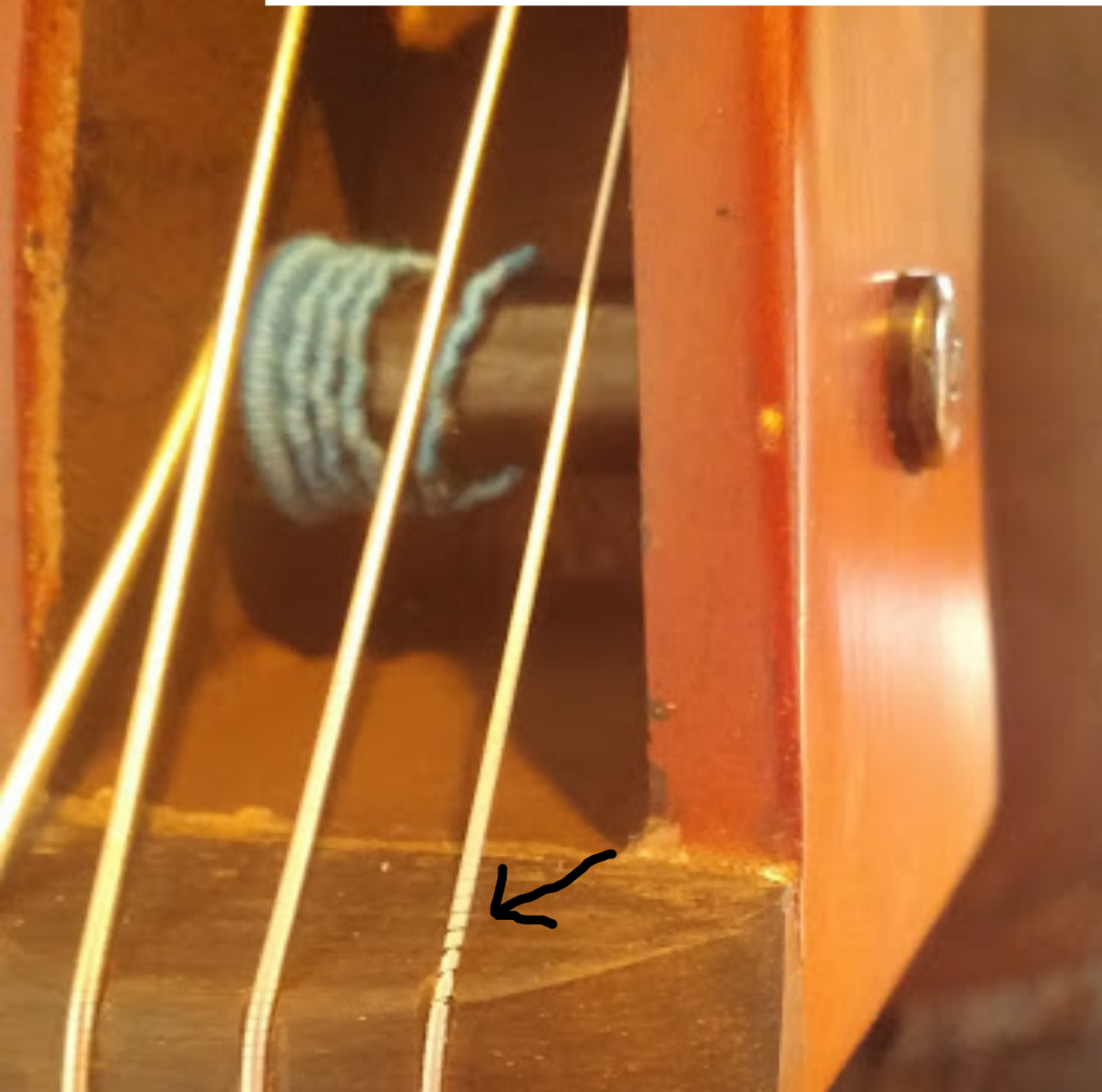








FRAYED STRINGS; TIME FOR A NEW SET!



Bows will need to be rehaired every 1 – 2 years, or sooner if you play every day.

If you notice the hair has become very thin or very dirty, or if it won't tighten or loosen, it is time to take it in to a shop for a rehair.

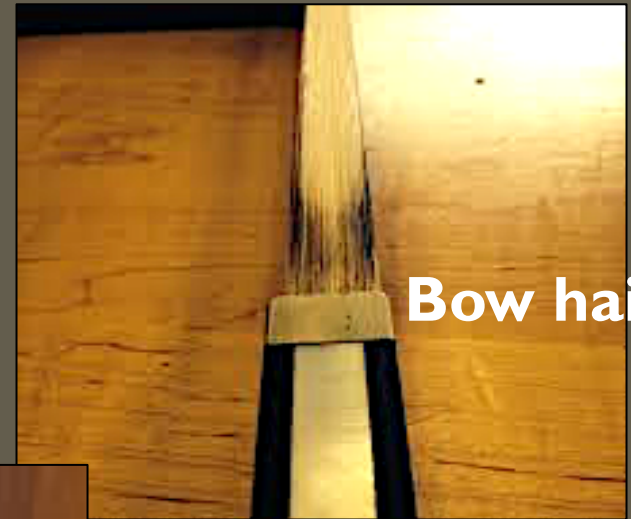


# How to know if your bow needs to be rehired:

**Bow hair is too thin**



**Bow hair is dirty**



**Wedge is coming out**



**Comparison of a bow that needs to be rehired and a newly rehired bow.**





## Spotting needed repairs:



**Open seams:** Open seams may be hard to spot. If your instrument is buzzing, you may have open seams. To check, take the corner of a piece of paper and run it along the seams of your instrument. If you have an open seam, the paper will go inside. Luthiers use special glue to repair open seams, and it is not an expensive fix. Never try to repair open seams yourself. That will end up being an expensive repair.



This piece is called a “button”. On a violin or viola, the button is the piece on the end of the instrument closest to the player that supports the tailpiece. On a cello or bass, it’s the endpin.





This is an example of a button that fits properly. Notice that it is flush against the body of the instrument.



This button does not fit properly. Even though there is just a tiny amount of space, it can cause a lot of damage to the instrument if it is not repaired. To fit a new button costs in the \$10-\$20 range. The damage an ill-fitting button can cause is in the hundreds of dollars.



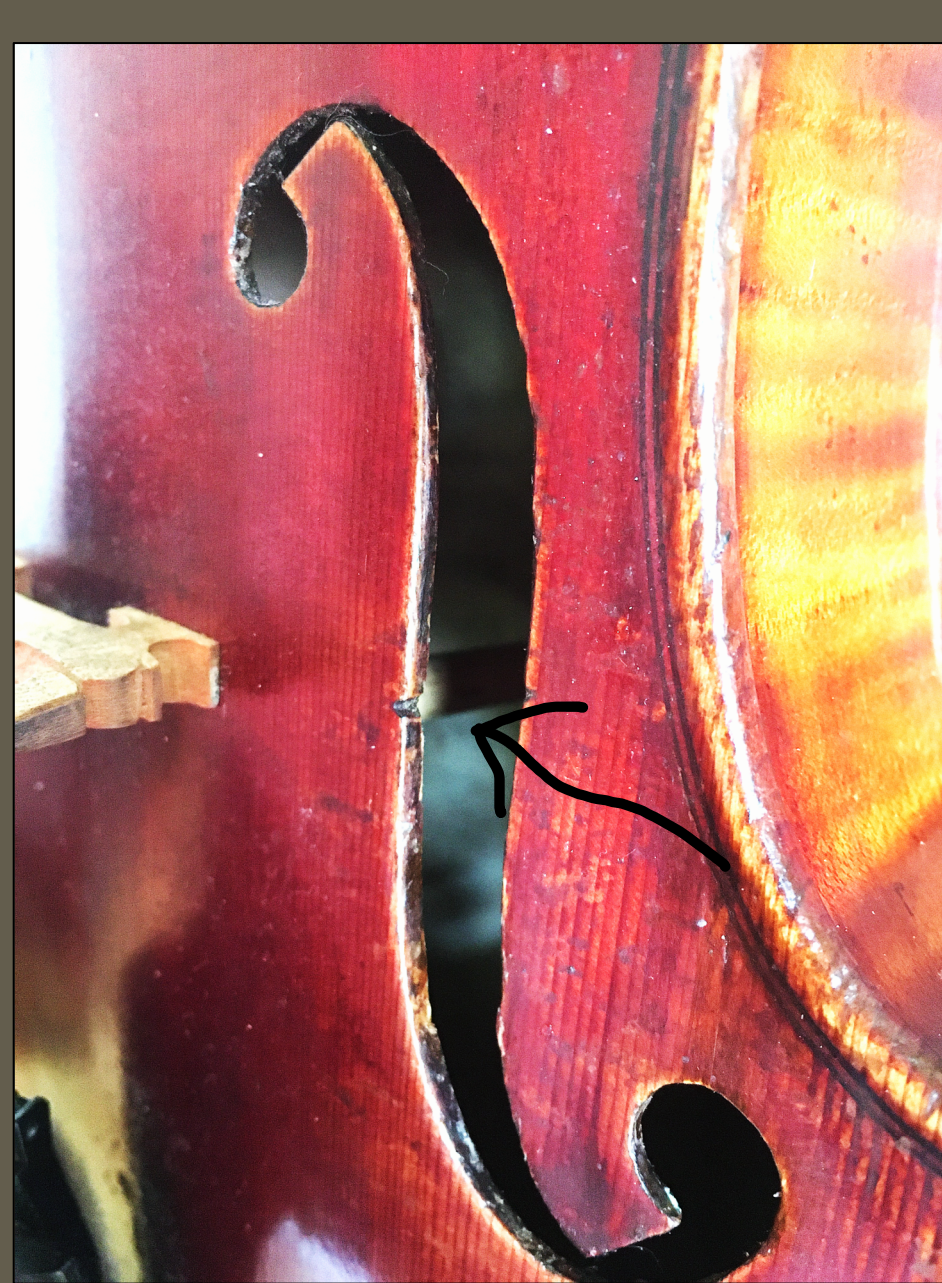
Here are some examples of damage that was caused by an ill-fitting button:



If you suspect there is a problem with the button or endpin on your instrument, take it to a repair shop immediately.







• This is a soundpost. If you don't see one in your instrument, loosen the strings and take it to a repair shop right away!

If you notice that the post is crooked, or not sitting close to the bridge foot, that is easily remedied at a repair shop.



Soundpost crack: This crack was caused by a soundpost that was too tight. When you purchase a new instrument, it needs to be set up. The soundpost is usually tight and needs adjustment.



Here's how to tell if your soundpost is too tight and needs to be trimmed. Run your index finger right behind the bridge. If you feel a bump, even a tiny one, the post needs to be trimmed. This is an inexpensive repair. A soundpost crack is expensive to fix.





Many cellos have soft cases. It is important to make sure you save some space for the car door handle when you put your cello in the back seat of the car.

Damage to a cello on the lower bout- this cello was laying across the back seat of the car and it looked like it fit, but the car door handle slammed into the instrument when the door was shut.

If you place your cello on the backseat, beware!



## Here's how to transport your bass safely:



**Notice that she is holding the bass around the upper bout and resting it on her hip. She is supporting the neck with her other hand. The position remains the same when the instrument is in its case. Basses are a challenge to transport because of their size. If the scroll or neck hits a doorway or a wall, it could knock the neck loose. Please alert your teacher at once if the bass hits something. A loose neck can be glued, but once it comes all the way off, it may not be repairable.**



**If you need to lay your bass or cello down, be sure it's on its side, and not in a place where someone can walk into it.**

**String instruments are delicate. Please follow these guidelines to make certain that your instrument will last a lifetime.**

- **Never allow a brother or sister or friend to handle your instrument.** You should be the only one to touch it.
- **Keep your instrument in its case at unless you are playing it.** Never set it down “for just a minute.” Something could happen to it when you aren’t looking.
- **The bow should be stored with the hair slightly loose;** never put the bow away with the hair tight.
- **Do not touch the horsehair on your bow.** The oil in your skin will leave a slick spot on the hair.
- **Keep your instrument in moderate temperatures.** Never leave your instrument where it could get very cold or very hot, like the trunk of a car. Do not expose it to quick changes in temperature.
- **Always wipe off the instrument and strings with a soft dry cloth when you are finished playing.** Be sure to remove all fingerprints and rosin.



- **Never use any kind of furniture polish on your instrument.** There are special polishes that are designed for the unique finish of a stringed instrument. Polishing your instrument is unnecessary if you always wipe it with a clean, dry cloth after playing.
- **Never let it get wet.** Your case should keep your instrument dry in the rain. If your case won't close properly or is broken, the instrument will probably be damaged.
- **Place a cloth over the top of the violin or viola before closing the case.**
- **When opening a cello or bass case be sure to:**
  - Take out the bow first and place it some place safe.
  - Lay the cello or bass flat on the floor or a table before you unzip it.
- **Change strings every 1 - 2 years.**
- **Bows will need to be rehaired every 1 – 2 years.** If you notice the hair has become very thin or very dirty, it is time to take it in for a rehair.
- **If repairs are needed, please take your instrument to a qualified repairperson. Trying to repair it yourself could result in more damage. Never, never use glue on any part of your instrument!**





Hobbes the cat hopes you found some good information here.

He is a big fan of string playing!

