

Woodwind Essentials

The book written by my repair teacher states, "It is essential that the student have an instrument in good playing condition..."

After having been with him in an academic situation, I know what he meant. He meant the instrument should be done right, and that means so much more than the bare minimum. In the classroom, we had all day to repair one instrument. What a luxury!

In the real world, you're lucky if you have about an hour. In a high volume shop, you have less than that.

So in my paraphrasing of his concept, I believe it is essential for a student to have an instrument that plays comfortably and well, and is in correct adjustment and regulation for them to have the greatest success.

What gets checked.

Level one - the body:

Shape and alignment, tone holes, posts attachments, and general condition and cleanliness.

Level two – the mechanism:

Key shapes and alignments, adjustment mechanisms, lost motion and range of travel.

Level three- Pads and corks:

All pads should be present, free of major defect, securely glued, and create an air tight seal. All corks should be of correct thickness for key height and regulation and also securely attached.

Once you've checked all these things and know where you're starting from, you're ready to begin the repair...

An instrument that plays poorly will cheat a student out of having a successful and rewarding experience.

Maintenance Schedule

It is recommended that woodwind instruments be checked once a year, or about every 250 playing hours, whichever comes first.

Normal wear and tear will cause an instrument to go out of adjustment. The change is gradual, and the more experienced student will adapt to these slow changes and not realize the instrument is not playing as well as it should. It is rare for a student not to notice the difference one the instrument is put back into correct playing condition!

Repair encompasses the correct reshaping or replacement of something damaged. This can be physical damage from a bump or drop, or damage by time, such as a pad that no longer seals correctly because it's dried out or misshapen.

Maintenance is preventive. It's purpose is to ensure that your instrument will continue in the best possible condition until your next scheduled check up.