

How to Care for Your French Horn

Supplies Needed to Care for the French Horn

1. Rotary Valve Oil
2. Slide Grease
3. Mouthpiece Brush
4. Soft Cloth
5. Snake Brushes

Before You Play

There is very little to assemble on a French Horn. All you have to do is place the mouthpiece into the lead pipe. Do this with a gentle twisting motion. Do not hit or pop the mouthpiece into place. This can lead to a stuck mouthpiece.

Oil the valves everyday you play your French Horn, or every second day. Your teacher will show you how to do this before you should attempt to do this yourself. Remove the rotary valve cover and use rotary oil on all moving parts. Alternately, remove each valve slide, place two or three drops of valve oil inside the valve tubing, replace the slide, and wiggle the valve.

The Mouthpiece

If your mouthpiece gets stuck while you are playing, do not attempt to remove it yourself or have anyone yank it out for you. Forcibly removing a stuck mouthpiece can break the braces on a French Horn. Carry the French Horn to your teacher (it may not fit into your case), and he or she will remove it with a tool made especially for pulling mouthpieces. To prevent stuck mouthpieces, always insert the mouthpiece gently, do not pop it during rehearsal, and do not use too much pressure while you play.

Regular Maintenance

A clean French Horn sounds better than a dirty one. Once a week, clean the mouthpiece with warm water and a mouthpiece brush. Help keep the mouthpiece and instrument clean by avoiding gum, candy and soda before you play. Rinse your mouth if you have been eating anything sweet.

After playing, wipe away any finger marks with a soft cloth. This will remove perspiration, which can damage the lacquer and metal. Do not use polish on lacquered instruments because it can scratch the finish.

Handling the French Horn

- The French Horn will dent easily. Dents look ugly, affect the tone of the instrument, and are expensive to remove. Always put the French Horn in its case correctly. Never set the French Horn in its case with the bell hanging over the edge. Anyone accidentally closing the case on a French Horn left like this will crinkle the bell.
- Do not cram books and music into your case.
- Be sure the mouthpiece and other accessories are put away properly so they do not jar loose and cause damage. If your case is equipped with a restraining strap, fasten it.
- Remember that the French Horn is an expensive instrument – not a toy – and it should be handled with care.