

Basic rules for maintaining your accordion

by Bernard Loffet

The accordion is a relatively robust instrument, which requires little maintenance to be kept in good working condition. Some points are important. A revision is necessary every 2 years, and tuning every 4-5 years.

An accordion should always be left on its feet!

Do you know that your accordion has feet? Yes, yes, look carefully... The bass side is made in such a way that the accordion can 'stand' naturally on its feet. Why feet? Because inside the accordion, there are leather reed valves (strips of leather) that provide airtightness. If the accordion is not standing on its feet, the leathers are left hanging down and fold or twist because of the harsh law of gravity. The leathers then make a noise, hum or sizzle especially when one plays softly. And it will get worse and worse. Whereas if you place your accordion on its feet, the leathers hang down naturally. Thus, they have no reason to lose their shape, and they will last longer. And the bass notes leathers have a spring which helps the leather to stay upright! Moreover, the feet avoid scratching the bottom of the accordion when you put it down... **A little tip:** in your car, put the accordion box standing behind the front seats!

Straps

To be effective, straps must be well adjusted. The longer one for the right shoulder, the shorter one for the left shoulder, so that the instrument is in the middle of the musician's chest and his/her right elbow is not along his/her body.

The shoulder straps adjust in the middle and only in the middle. The buckles above and below only serve to tie the straps on the accordion. Adjusting the straps there has several disadvantages: the leather buckles will wear out slowly over the metal fasteners. If you have adjusted the buckles up, ie to the last hole, you will not be able to move the point of breaking of the leather. Moreover, tightened up, the leather may damage the wood.

Temperature and your accordion

Accordions do not like temperature differences. The heat or the cold can cause problems, even permanently damage your instrument.

The cold, first: a cold instrument shall, before being played, be brought back to a normal room temperature. To reheat it, you must open and close it several times with the bellows valve in the open position and let it warm up for at least a quarter of an hour, repeating this operation several times during this lapse of time.

The heat is much more dangerous: avoid leaving the accordion in a place which is too hot. Many parts, including the reeds that produce the sound, are stuck in place with wax and this wax melts at around 70°C / 158°F. This temperature is easily reached in a car in direct sunlight. But less extreme temperatures also cause damage, however less serious. Bring the instrument back to normal temperature using the same method as when it is cold.

If you must take your instrument in extreme conditions (concert in the Sahara or camping at St Chartier, for example), wrap it in a survival blanket and put it in its box, itself protected from the direct sun. Think about it in the summer!

And humidity: nothing like it to unstick the wood or the leather, and make the keyboard keys stick... So store your instrument in a dry place at room temperature (no, not the boiler room!)

Enjoy !



Bernard Loffet, 4 rue cdt. Cousteau, F-56850 CAUDAN, Bretagne, France
Diatonic button accordions maker and tuner. <http://diato.org> info@diato.org