

SevenWinds Flutes Suggested Care

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This is primarily directed to those who have my flutes. However, many points may work for flutes from other makers as well. It should be noted that new flute players typically create more moisture in the flute than experienced players. To minimize potential of cracking, it is wise to follow the break in procedures to allow the flute to gradually acclimate to expansion of the wood

Break In Procedure

This is difficult, particularly for new flute players, initially you should not play the flute for more than 15 minutes, remove the bird, shake out any moisture by tapping the mouth piece on a cloth and wipe the area under the bird. After that, you can play another 15 minutes, remove the bird, repeat this process and allow it to dry until the next day. After a week you should be able to extend the playing time because the wood has stabilized. Now if the flute is stored for a long period of time (a month or more) the break in process may need to be repeated.

To minimize the potential of cracking, all of my flutes are treated on the inside with a blend of shellac and denatured alcohol with at least three coatings, followed with an additional three coats of finish. This helps repel the affects of moisture, but may not inhibit the swelling and potential splitting of the wood. The newer flutes which have a number greater than 210000 have the slow air chamber coated with food safe epoxy. This makes the slow air chamber completely waterproof.

Do's and Don't s of flute care

Do not consume food or drink before playing the flute. This particularly applies to consuming food or drink that contains sugar. Sugar will encourage the growth of mold in the slow air chamber.

Do not wrap your lips around the flute as if it were a whistle. Gently rest the mouth piece on the lower lip then raise it to your upper lip until it is sealed.

Repeated contact with lipstick can remove the finish on the mouth piece end of the flute. I have only seen this happen on one flute and do not know if it was the brand.

Do not clean the flute with any alcohol based products. Alcohol will remove the finish.

Do not store the flute in a hot place, like a car. Heat can cause unnecessary expansion of the wood potentially allowing it to crack.

Flutes are best stored in open air. Flute bags made of leather or hard flute cases are ok for short-term storage, however they should never be used for long-term storage since they prevent the flute from drying out. Soft cloth, material which can breathe, is the second best storage, to open air.

Re-Voicing / Re-Tuning

The Native America flute, being primarily a wooden device is subject to its environment and playing conditions. After six months to a year, it is possible your flute will require re-voicing or a minor re-tuning. Typically the flute will drop, or go several cents flat. This is due to the fact that wood shrinks and expands due to atmospheric and playing conditions. I will re-voice your flute at no charge, you will only be responsible for shipping expenses to me. I will pay for shipping expenses for the return. Please allow about one week (not including time for shipping) for this service.

I stand behind my flutes. If yours should crack, even if due to improper care, I can usually repair it. It may leave a visible mark, however the flute will be restored to its initial playing condition.

Spiritual Care

There is additional care you can offer your flute. I call it spiritual care, care in which you acknowledge the spirit of the flute. The flute is not a toy and it holds the potential to be more than a musical instrument. It is a connection to the spiritual realms, those realms not accessible by mind. A Cherokee friend and flute player tells me the flute is like a cell phone to the Great Spirit.

Begin your day playing the flute. Play the lowest three holes as you sending a message of how you feel to Great Spirit. Then (without thinking) play the upper three holes recognizing this is the Great Spirit communicating back to you.

Choose a place of honor in your home and keep your flute in that place. The flute is a spiritual instrument it is worthy of respect and honor. I have found what I offer the flute is returned to me many fold.

There has been much blood spilled upon the earth, the bodies of our ancestors are buried within the earth. From the earth springs the tree, hence the tree contains the spirit of our ancestors. From the tree, the flute maker creates a flute. Now the flute contains the spirit of the ancestors, the maker, and as the player, your spirit. This is why one should offer the flute respect and honor. Treat it accordingly. Most of my flutes have a small piece of the flute tied to the leather lace. You may not always be able to take the flute with you, however you can carry the spirit of the flute with this small piece, saved from the initial flutes tuning.

Before you play the flute, hold it before you, breathe upon it and ask that Great Spirit breathe through you bringing the Spirit into the world as sound. Upon completion of your playing, offer thanks and gratitude to Great Spirit for the gifts that have been given. Do not make a show of this process. If in public, just do it in your heart and mind. That will suffice.