

String Instrument Safety

Disinfecting Shared String Instruments in the Classroom

NYSSMA recommends consulting with your trusted local luthier before using any new product

Important Definitions:

Cleaning	Removes infectious agents, but doesn't necessarily destroy them
Disinfecting	Kills infectious agents
Sterilizing	Eliminates ALL forms of microbial life

Our goal as teachers is to mitigate the spread of infectious matter, meaning we will focus on **DISINFECTING**. As soon as an object is exposed to air it is no longer sterile, making a truly sterile surface impossible to maintain in a classroom setting.

Supply List “Must-Haves”

Water-based Disinfectant Wipes or Solution (Lysol, Clorox, Store Brands)

- Completely safe to use directly on:
 - chin rest, neck, strings, bodies of instruments with lacquer finish
- Wipes are preferable because there is little risk of extraneous liquid run-off
- If using a bottled solution, never apply directly onto an instrument!
- Alternative: 10% solution of bleach.
 - Take 9 parts water and add one part bleach to the water (whenever diluting dangerous liquids, put the water in first to reduce the risk of splashing when water is dumped in).

Applicators (Cloth, Disposable paper towel, Cotton ball, etc.)

- Use a dampened, *not wet*, applicator to put cleaning solution on an instrument
 - "Damp" means that when you squeeze/wring the applicator no liquid comes out
 - Have a dry cloth handy to dry off the instrument.
 - Water-based germicide will *not* damage an instrument *if* you wipe it off and don't leave drops

But What About...

Hydrogen Peroxide?

- **The good:**
 - Kills COVID19! H2O2 is a VERY effective germicide and non-toxic. It breaks down in very little time to water, and will not harm instruments if runs are wiped up promptly. Use a spray bottle on cloth to protect the H2O2.
- **The bad:**
 - Once it is poured out of a bottle any unused excess must be thrown out. H2O2 that has been exposed to air will be ruined; left uncapped, it will break down to water.

Isopropyl (Rubbing) Alcohol

- **The good:**
 - Kills COVID19! Alcohol is an efficient way to clean strings, fingerboards, and plastic chin rests.
- **The bad:**
 - Should only be used on strings, fingerboards, and plastic, NOT WOOD! If it is left to drip on the instrument in any way, it can cause permanent damage to the instrument's finish.

Disinfectant Windex

- **The good:**
 - Contains disinfectant.
- **The bad:**
 - Not all Windex has disinfectant, so make sure you buy the kind that does. All Windex does contain some alcohol, which can damage the instrument's finish.

What NOT to Use

These methods have been proven ineffective against COVID19:

Vinegar	Tea tree oil	"Natural" cleaners	
Ultraviolet (UV) lamp	Saline solution	Hand Sanitizer	Pure Bleach

Mitigating Damage

On the wood, applied with a cloth:

- Lemon/Orange Oil
- Pledge
- Instrument polish
- Old English Furniture Polish

On the fingerboard, neck, strings, applied with "0000" steel wool:

- Mineral Oil

*** This document has been created in consultation with multiple luthiers from across New York State ***