

ADVICE ON SHAKUHACHI CARE

Below is some information about shakuhachi care & maintenance. This advice is based on my experiences and observations. Hope you will enjoy the instrument. Happy blowing!

ASSEMBLING AND DISASSEMBLING THE SHAKUHACHI



To assemble the shakuhachi, line up the two marks or notches at the joint ring at the back side of the flute. Then, keeping the flute straight, holding with your left hand the lower half with the root end against your body and, holding the upper part with your right hand, push until the joint is completely closed.

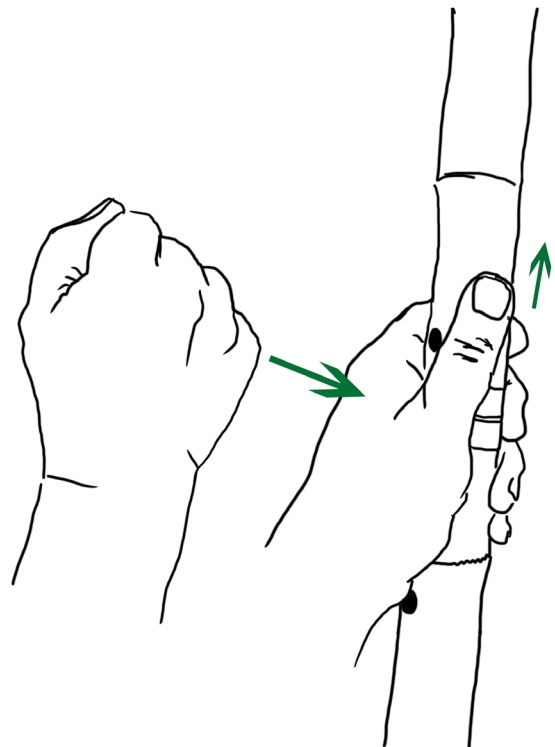
Never assemble the two halves of the shakuhachi using force as it will damage the urushi and joint.

Occasionally apply lubricant or grease to the joint.

To disassemble the flute, hold the shakuhachi at its joint and hit your hand lightly with your other hand. While doing this push the thumb upwards to help with separating the joint step by step. Once there is a sufficient gap the shakuhachi halves can be easily separated.

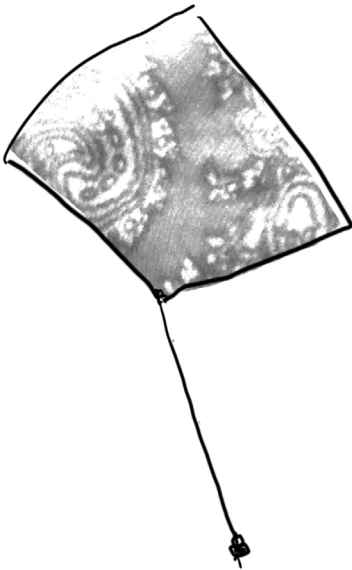
DO NOT twist the joint to take the shakuhachi apart.

After taking apart the shakuhachi also clean the joint area with the cleaning cloth and wipe off any moisture.



CLEANING YOUR SHAKUHACHI

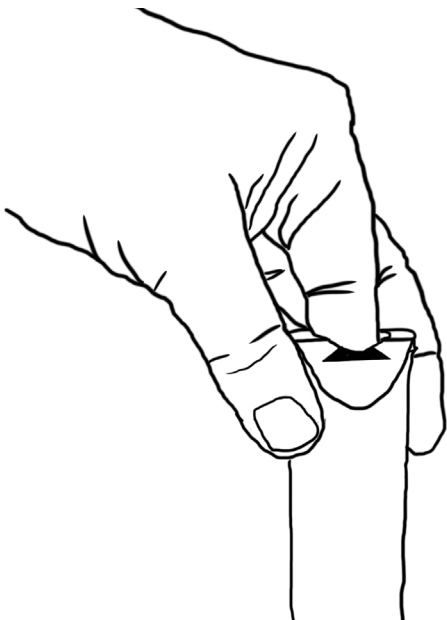
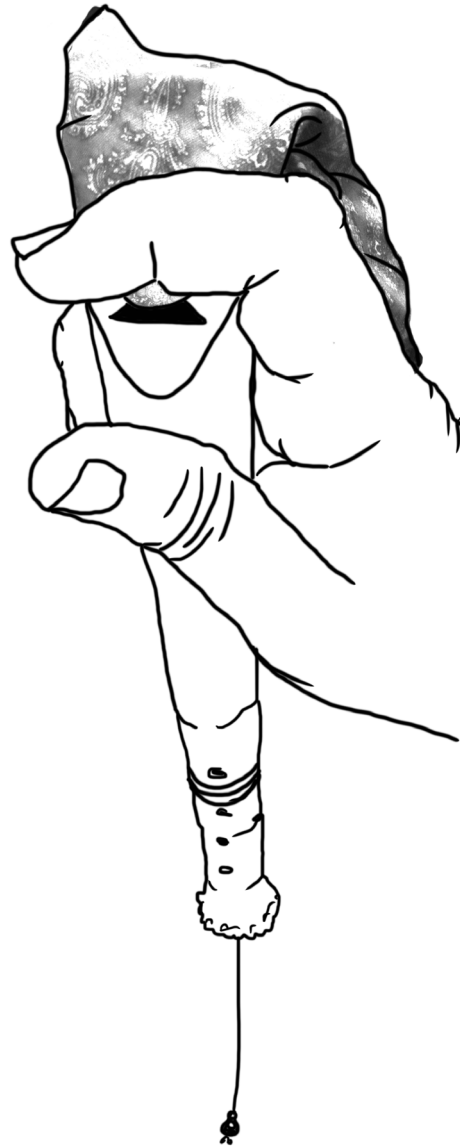
use a tsuyutoshí (cleaning cloth) to wipe off any moisture after playing.



Insert the weight from the top, protect the utaguchi blowing edge insert with your index finger while pulling through the cleaning cloth.

Wipe any residue or dirt of the walls and edges of the holes and in particular around hole 5 (thumb hole) where moisture likes to collect.

Disassemble the shakuhachi regularly to also wipe away moisture in the joint area.

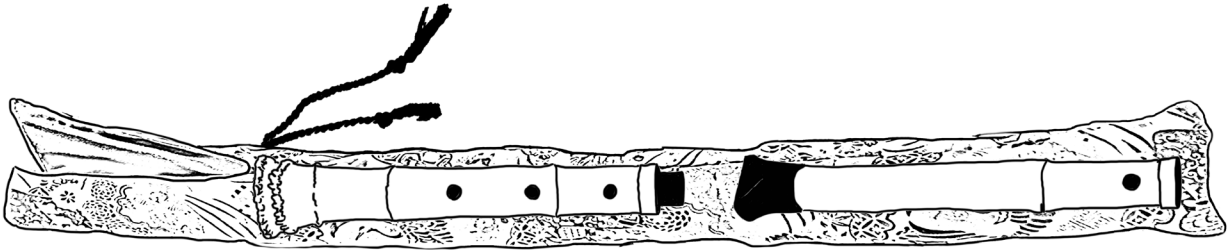


To clean the utaguchi and zetsumen (the flat, diagonally cut surface with the insert) take extra care not to damage the fine blowing edge. Use some soft cloth or tissue and a tiny amount of water to wipe off any residues which may have accumulated there.

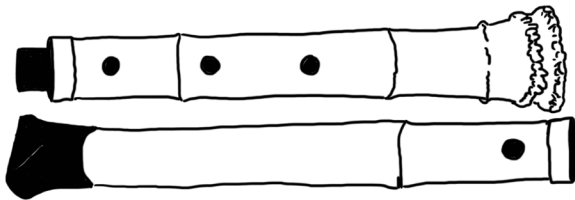
When cleaning it is best to support the blowing edge with a finger inserted.

CARRYING AND STORING YOUR SHAKUHACHI

Put the cap on. Then store the shakuhachi in a plastic bag and seal with a rubber band to prevent the bamboo from drying out.



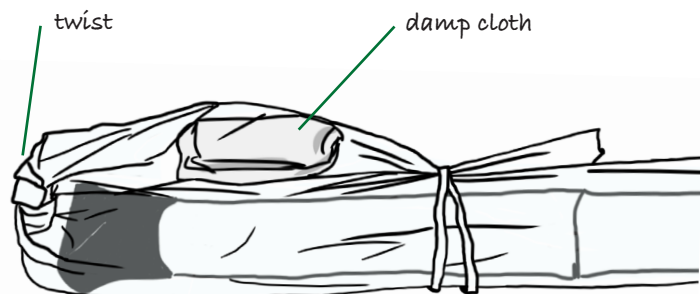
If you carry the instrument in a long bag folded in half, insert the upper half of the shakuhachi with the joint facing the bottom first, then insert the lower half with its joint also facing the bottom.



This way avoids the two joint parts rubbing against each other in the bag and potentially damaging the urushi, as well as having the mouthpiece pushing against the root end when transporting the shakuhachi.

When storing your flute for longer time or if the humidity levels around you are low, a damp piece of cloth can be placed inside the top of the plastic bag.

Make sure it does not directly touch the bamboo – just twist the plastic bag at the top and place a small piece of damp cloth in the resulting pocket.



NEVER place or store your flute anywhere near a radiator as the dry air can crack the bamboo.

It is not necessary to apply oil to the bamboo as it does not protect the flute from cracking. But it is possible to apply a little bit of walnut oil to the surface of the bamboo and then wipe it off with a soft polishing cloth. In this way the natural colour and sheen can be enhanced over time.

A note about Japanese urushi lacquer: Natural urushi (the resin from the urushi tree) is used in the shakuhachi bore. Urushi can cause an allergic reaction in some people, usually if the urushi is relative fresh and may not be fully hardened yet. If you develop a rash or other allergic reaction, stop using the instrument for a while, and consult a pharmacy or a doctor for advice.