

Brass Instrument Cleaning Tips

GOOD

- Wash Cloths
- Shower Sponges
- Snake Brush
- Paper Towels
- A few disposable cups
- Lemon Joy or Palmolive (liquid)
- **PLAIN** Body Wash (not scented, or moisturizing)
- Rubbing Alcohol
- Valve Oil
- Slide Grease / Petroleum Jelly

BAD

- Brillo Pads
- Scrubbing Sponges/Dish Sponges
- Wire Brushes
- Toothpaste
- Abrasive soaps
- Brasso
- Tarnex
- Any soap or chemical that turns water milky
- Fantastic, Mr. Clean, 409, etc.

Cleaning a Brass instrument every so often will make a huge difference in the quality of the instrument over time. It will look nicer, and play more easily. The steps are pretty simple, and usually can be completed in about 30 minutes. This only has to be done about once every month, so the time is worth it.

When preparing, go ahead and pick up the items on the **GOOD** list. Many are already available in your home. A Snake Brush can be purchased at just about any music shop for a few dollars. Do not ever substitute anything from the **BAD** list for something on the **GOOD** list. All the items there have the potential to permanently damage your instrument one way or another.

1. Start by filling a sink or bathtub with warm water (depending on how large the instrument) and liquid soap. Fill with enough water to fully immerse the instrument and allow it to soak for five to ten minutes.
2. Remove all the slides, and wipe any slide grease from them using paper towels. Clean the slides using warm soapy water and a wash cloth. Clean the inside of the slides using the snake brush and warm soapy water. Once you have cleaned them, rinse them and set them safely aside. Remove the valves from their casings and set them aside.
3. Remove the instrument and scrub the inside gently using the snake brush. It is more important to clean the lead pipe and slides with the snake brush than it is to clean the bell. Gently clean the entire outside of the instrument and the inside of the bell with soapy water and a wash cloth or shower sponge. **DO NOT EVER** use a rough sponge, steel wool, or Brillo pad. Rinse the entire instrument completely (inside and out) leaving no soap. **DO NOT EVER** put a brass instrument in the dishwasher.
4. (Trombones can skip this step) Take the valves that you removed earlier and set them in a small cup of rubbing alcohol (NOT THE SLIDES). Allow them to sit for a few minutes, and then gently scrub any debris away with the snake brush. Rinse these clean.
5. Towel off the outside of the instrument, and allow time for the inside to dry. Take valve oil and drop 5 – 10 drops around the inside of each valve casing. Put an additional 5 – 10 drops on each valve. Take each valve and replace it in the correct valve casing. Each valve must be in its correct casing and turned the correct way for the instrument to play. Make sure each valve is moving easily before moving on. Now take a small amount of slide grease and put it on the end of the slides. You only need to cover the end of each slide, as the grease will spread when you re-insert it. Make sure slides that are supposed to move quickly can still be moved.

This care, done once a month or so, will keep your instrument in top working shape and shining.