

How to Protect Your Instruments from the Heat

Have you ever walked by an old wooden ship? If you have, you've probably noticed the planks can become quite crooked. This is, in part, because significant temperature changes shrink and expand wood. The same process can damage the delicate structure of musical instruments.

Heat above 100 degrees will cause the glue in string instruments to degrade. While it's unlikely to melt completely, it's just enough for the tension in the strings to start damaging the neck. Brass instruments and pianos are not resistant to heat either. Metal can expand and shrink, and piano keys become "sluggish" if you expose them to extreme temperatures.

So what can you do to protect your investment? In this article, we cover everything you should know about protecting your instrument from the heat.

Basic Musical Instrument Protection

First of all, don't leave your instruments in the car. It seems obvious, but your car is just about the last place you should ever leave an instrument. On a hot day, when the outside temperature rises anywhere near 80 degrees, car temperature quickly rises above 100 degrees Fahrenheit.

Direct sunlight is another major problem, especially with string instruments like guitars. Extended exposure to the direct sun could damage the lacquer and loosen the strings, making them fall out of tune and weaken over time.

Guitar finishing is also susceptible to rapid temperature shifts. Of course, the same applies to any other wooden musical instrument. A good basic rule of thumb is to keep your instruments in the same sort of conditions you would like yourself - comfortable room temperature and humidity at around 50%.

Storage Temperatures for Various Instruments

A vital part of proper instrument care is knowing proper storage methods and techniques. Regardless of what instrument you play, it is crucial to pay attention to both temperature and humidity at all times to help carefully preserve and protect your investment.

Be sure to store the instrument in its case whenever it's not in use. We recommend a wooden shelf in a temperature-controlled room for optimal storage. Also, be sure to only use quality hard-cases. Soft cases heat more quickly and, more importantly, allow excessive transfer of heat and humidity to the instrument.

The proper room temperature and humidity varies from instrument to instrument. For example, guitars are optimally stored at between 72 and 75 degrees Fahrenheit, with humidity levels between 45% and 55%.

Humidity below 40% will cause the wood to shrink, but anything above 55% may risk expansion or warping. A similar range applies to many other instruments, but it's crucial to research what your specific instrument needs. There is no such thing as a heatproof musical instrument, and different families of instruments react differently to various humidity levels.

Temperature and Moisture Control

It's impossible to appropriately protect against humidity when you don't even know the current level in your own home. Thankfully, a humidity monitor is the easiest way to get a dynamic, accurate measurement. Prices range widely, but even moderately priced devices have a margin of error of only around +1/-1%.

Depending on whether you are living in an arid or humid area, you may need to consider a humidifier or a dehumidifier, respectively. Some advocate for cheaper solutions, such as humidifying a room by drying clothes there or leaving the bathroom door open while showering, but these methods should be avoided. These methods are a lot less effective and not worth the risk at all.

Controlling general room temperature and keeping it in the desired range tends to be a bit easier. Generally, understanding the ideal range and setting the thermostat to match will keep the temperature where it needs to be. Depending on your climate,

the time of year, and the insulation of your storage area, you may need to consider additional preventative measures.

Get Full Protection

Ensuring your musical instruments are appropriately stored and maintained will help significantly extend their longevity, but there is more you can do. Ensure you have everything you need to restore your [musical instruments](#) should the unexpected occur. Anyone can make a massive mistake, or simply be the victim of terrible luck. Accidents happen whether we like it or not, and Clarion Associates is here to help you when they do.

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