

# Bassoon Pad Sealing

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Bassoon pads need to be sealed. The natural leather is not airtight. Sealing the pads after they're installed and seated will improve the results of padding a bassoon.

## History

The earliest method of sealing pads was to use hot paraffin wax to seal the center of the pad. Typically, the tip of a screwdriver was heated in a flame, dipped in a cake of paraffin wax, and "painted" onto the pad. This was applied only to the center of the pads, within the area that would be inside the tone holes. The wax did not make contact with the tone hole facings.

Although this was a significant improvement over unsealed pads, it wasn't really that good. The stiff wax center wasn't desirable. Worse, as the hot wax cooled it caused the pad to distort and actually created leaks that hadn't existed before the wax was applied. Plus, if the pad were heated up too much in the future for re-seating the pad, the wax will spread, possibly coming into contact with the facing and potentially causing sticking problems.

The next method used a wax applied as a liquid to the entire pad. This material was called "Carnauba Cream" and was sold by Tandy Leather Co. It was an improvement over the paraffin, but if overused tended to turn the pad into a hard waxy object. Tandy took it off the market at about the same time as the silicone method of sealing came into use.

## Silicone Sealer

This method of sealing the pad uses a widely available form of silicone produced by DAP. Be sure you get the clear version. In addition to the silicone sealer you'll also need some baby powder and a cake of paraffin, plus some shop cloths.

After seating the pad, wipe a small amount of the silicone onto the pad using your finger as an applicator. Cover all of the exposed leather. Use the shop cloth to wipe off all the excess silicone. Don't leave a layer on the surface—you're interested in the silicone that entered the leather not what's left on top. Then sprinkle some baby powder on the pad, and again rub it in and wipe off the excess. The padded key is immediately ready to put on the instrument.

Timing is not critical, but don't wait long. It'll get hard to wipe the silicone off if you wait too long. It's quite practical to apply this to several pads as a group. Other than that all the steps can be done without pause.

If the pad has a center stitch that stitch needs to be sealed separately after the rest has been done. The stitch will need to be sealed with paraffin applied with a hot tool. If the tool is too hot it will cause the paraffin to spread and to discolor the leather. Heat up the tip of the tool, press it into the paraffin to melt a small bit of wax and pause until it cannot be further pressed into the solid paraffin. At that point the tool has cooled down to the correct temperature and the paraffin can be applied without staining the pad.

## Re-application

This process can be re-applied to pads that have previously been sealed. Sometimes it can be difficult to be certain that pads were previously sealed. Go ahead and do it.

