

# Tools, Tips & Techniques

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9/20/2004

What can make our job easier? What things don't.

## Brushes

Use natural bristles. Nylon bristles will spread apart.

- Hairbrushes for aluminum tin in the hair: from hair salons. These are excellent for cleaning between tuning pins.
- For cleaning the narrow end in the treble end of the soundboard, use brushes for cleaning espresso machines. Also basting brushes work. Also, for hitch pin and tuning pins
- Artist brushes.
- Brushes for cleaning solvents on automotive brushes. These are great for getting in the area where the string felt is & where the vacuum hose won't reach. This is also good for strips of felt in the back area.
- Bill Spurlock's cleaning tools can be used to move brushes.
- Crafter's Choice scrubber brush set are perfect for applying Teflon powder to knuckles. Mix a little of the Teflon powder with naphtha solvent it will go farther. Varnish Maker's and Painters' Naptha (used as lighter fluid) is good for cleaning carbon grease off the knuckles. Naptha will remove tape off lacquer without hurting the finish. By mixing the powder with naphtha you can paint it on, and then you can scrub it in. Put a little Teflon in the cap so the bristles pick up only a small amount.
- Short stubby glue brush with stiff bristles, about the size of a small oil paint brush, is excellent for applying glue.
- Flux brush for soldering is also good for applying glue.

## Tripod

Use a camera tripod for supporting a grand action as it is slid out from the keybed. Since the height is adjustable, the action can be raised and lowered to make it easier to eyeball various angles.

## Magnets

- Rubber-bottom magnetic metal bowl used by auto mechanics will hold metal tools, screws, etc.
- Radio Shack magnet blocks are good for holding protective cloths to the plate.
- Drill holes and insert circular magnets into the Spurlock lid prop. Use this for holding screws to keep track of their order.
- Tiny strong magnets from used Sonic Air toothbrushes. Stick them on the end of your screwdriver for picking up dropped screws. Stick them on the plate to hold loose screws.

## Key Pounders

- Two hammers glued end-to-end with a hole in each hammer for an elastic to hold to your hand and allow the hand to work freely.
- Hammer pounds can also be used to erase chalk marks.

## Bridle Straps

- Glue bridle straps with PVCE glue to the tops of the butt. The straps are about 1-3/4" from the hole to the end. Enlarge the bridle hole to make it easier to install & remove.
- Tip the action cradle so the hammers tip up and back. Do this without the dampers in. In uprights, if you have to do dampersw, you probably have to do bridles, too.
- Use thin scissors to snip off the old ones.
- Do first, before bridles:
  - Hang hammers
  - Tighten screws
  - Replace centers
  - Etc.

### **Spreading glue**

- Coffee stir sticks: for string leveling sound, chipping the piano, spreading glue,
- Bamboo skewer sticks
- Tongue depressors
- Popsicle sticks (craft sticks) are great for making your own upright dampers. Apply the glue to the stick, then lay bushing cloth on the stick. Cut the sticks to length afterwards.
- Chop sticks come in both wood and plastic. Glue does not stick to the plastic ones. They make good voicing tools, glue spreaders, and more.

### **Nasty Tones**

- The crusty tone comes from the edge of the groove on the hammer. Skin the peak of the hammer just a tad. Daryll uses a tiny sanding paddle.
- “Brassy woodpecker.” Daryll uses a hammer made with a brass rod head with about 28 little #6 needles. Use the handle and repetitively tap the top of the hammer.
- Tiny rolling needler. When you buy hammer shanks, each box comes with a few of these little strips of hornbeam wood. Daryll made a grid of about 50 #7 needles.

### **Upright hammer removers**

- The upright tool won’t fit in spinets. These require clamps.
- An old screwhead will fit on the butterfly handle
- Use a drill and a support block to pull the backchecks out.

### **Protecting the piano**

- Foam pipe insulation sleeves
- 2” metal flashing with felt glued onto the inside
- Sticky felt bottoms for piano benches on wood floors, glued on with PVCE.
- When installing metal glides, always pound them in with a rubber hammer so the glides aren’t dented.

### **Mutes**

- Paps mutes are the most versatile of all. Originally they were used for overdampers of birdcage actions. They are excellent for all difficult situations, even though they don’t always totally damp.
- File down or cut the mutes, and spray them to make them stiffer, to create custom mutes.
- Scissors mutes tend to break off after a while, and the pins come out. They’re great for pulling out mutes that have fallen down into the action.