

BEWARE OF THE V.S.O. ‘VIOLIN SHAPED OBJECT’

On behalf of Teachers, Violin Shops, and Beginning Players across the country, we encourage parents to avoid the temptation to buy a cheap internet-auction violin outfit, commonly known as a V.S.O. – Violin Shaped Object.

V.S.O.’s look like violins, but a very high percentage are virtually unplayable due to innumerable structural and set-up problems. Many well-meaning parents bring in their **V.S.O.’s** to violin shops around the country and are disappointed to find out that the repairs needed to make their instrument playable far exceed both the price they paid for the instrument and the price of a properly made and set up instrument without any of the problems of a **V.S.O.**

Common V.S.O. Problems

Frustrating pegs that are very hard to turn making tuning difficult even for an experienced player or they “slip” causing frustration when instrument constantly goes out of tune. Caused by improper peg installation and/or low quality pegs made of wood that is too soft or green (not dried properly). Cost to install new pegs: \$50 to \$100

Awful sounding strings that have a shrill sound or just one or two bad ones that give an uneven and unpleasant sound from one string to the next. Caused by low quality strings and/or improper set-up causing string damage. Cost for new set of strings: \$10 to \$30

Annoying & frustrating string buzzing sound when played. Caused by string being too close to fingerboard due to improper set-up and/or low quality wood parts (fingerboard, nut, bridge, neck) that are too soft or too green (not dried properly). Cost for a new nut \$30 to \$50, plane the fingerboard \$30 to \$50, new bridge \$30 to \$75, correct neck projection \$200+.

Painful/uncomfortable fingers (especially younger players) during and/or after playing because string height is too high requiring too much pressure to push them down to the fingerboard. Caused by nut being too high, and/or fingerboard not having proper “scoop”, and/or bridge being too high, and/or neck projection being too low. See “string buzzing” for costs to fix.

Frustration with bow hitting two strings when trying to just play one string. Caused by improper set-up where bridge curvature is too flat so difficult to have bow touch just 1 string at a time.

Beware! The \$99.00 violin

Welcome to Frank's Violins' Comedy Corner, a little laugh and a little lesson!

The \$99.00 violin outfit usually features:

- Heavily sprayed lacquer finish, almost "dipped" in appearance, shiny but not an open sound, unusually heavy instrument weight, sometimes an airbrushed faux finish that appears to be a highly flamed piece of wood, also know as "photo flame"
- Unseasoned or improperly seasoned wood of questionable origin
- Stained hardwood fittings (in lieu of solid ebony) for the fingerboard, nut, saddle. Often called ebonized or ebonite
- Plastic fittings which may include the tailpiece, chinrest, end button and saddle
- Poorly fitted thick bridge and sound post made of soft, unseasoned woods, improper arching of the bridge makes playing one string difficult
- Inexpensive steel core strings with a bright, tinny, piercing sound
- Corner blocks and/or linings in the interior of the violin have been omitted to save production costs which lead to diminished structural integrity
- Rough cut scrolls sometimes with glue-on scroll eyes with poor peg placement causing strings to rub on pegs and become frayed and eventually break
- A "mystery wood" bow (not brazilwood) with synthetic hair (not horse hair), half lined plastic frog (not ebony), usually weak or flimsy, sometimes straight
- Case that provides a low level of protection with an inexpensive zipper that breaks easily.

These outfits are available very cheaply! Less than the cost of a good set of strings, a well cut French bridge and an ebony fingerboard! They are not set up and have no manufacture's warrantee. If you are looking for a "VSO" (violin shaped object) as a toy, a tree ornament, a prop, or an art project this outfit is for you. If you desire an encouraging musical instrument don't make the \$99.00 violin mistake.

<http://www.franksviolins.com/vso.asp>

<http://www.sharmusic.com/vsolanding.asp>