



Vinyl Record Care Guide

Full cleaning instructions can be found overleaf.

Tutti Audio's Bob Amos offers some important tips to help keep your cherished vinyl collection in tip-top order.

Vinyl storage, handling and cleaning

Always store your records upright like books with minimal lean on a firm shelf. Never stack them flat one on top of the other as this will lead to warping and circle wear on the album covers. Handle them with extreme care and never touch the playing surface with your fingers or hands. Always hold the record by its outer edges. If you do touch the playing surface it's always wise to clean the record before putting back in its sleeve.

The grooves naturally collect dust, dirt and debris. So it's vital to frequently give them a good clean with a dedicated and recommended vinyl record cleaning fluid. Never use any other liquid or cleaning substance unless it specifically states it is intended for use on vinyl records. Always read and carefully follow the manufacturer's instructions. Ensure you use a microfibre cloth and avoid at all cost a general household rag, paper towel or tissue, no matter how soft they may feel.

Before each play it's a good idea to use a carbon fibre vinyl record brush to lift dust and discharge static followed by a quick clean and wipe over.

Stylus and pick-up cartridge

The pick-up cartridge is a transducer device that your record player's stylus (needle) is suspended from. As the stylus runs through the record's groove, the cartridge converts the vibrations into the electrical signal that becomes your audio. Both are extremely delicate and intrinsically important to sound quality and the wellbeing of your records.

Quite frequently during play you'll notice, usually by a characteristic impairment in sound quality, that dust and grime has collected around the tip of the stylus. It is fundamental therefore that you frequently clean the stylus with a dedicated cleaner and fine brush/blower. Always follow the cleaning instructions and go extremely gentle using back to front strokes only.

As a rule of thumb you should be looking to change your stylus at around 1000 hours of playing time. This equates to about every 2 to 3 years if you're playing records for an hour or so per day. Please remember that both stylus and pick-up cartridge are easily damaged by rough handling.

With vintage record players extra attention needs to be paid to the type and age of pick-up cartridge. There are a number of important factors, which run the risk of causing inadvertent damage to your vinyl records:

Age, where over time the stylus suspension medium can stiffen and cause damage to your vinyl record due to lack of compliancy.

Stereo compatibility. Many players from the 50's and 60's are fitted with mono only cartridges, which may not be compatible with stereophonic recordings. Early mono recordings only required lateral compliancy (stylus moving from left to right) whereas the arrival of stereophonic recordings required compliancy in both lateral and vertical axis. It is worth getting this checked as a mono only cartridge will need replacing with a suitable stereo compatible alternative.

Stylus force. This is vitally important for all turntables as setting it too high or too low can damage your records. Players from the 50's 60's and some from the 70's rely on different pick-up cartridge technology to function correctly. Unlike most modern day hifi/audiophile equipment utilising magnetic cartridges that track at typically 2gms, crystal and ceramic vintage cartridges need to track up to three times greater. The correct tracking force is cartridge make and model specific.

A number of newer, low cost record players have the arm and usually a ceramic cartridge already assembled, so there's not a lot you can do about it. Midrange to high-budget record players however, will allow you to modify the alignment and weight of the arm by carefully following the manufacturers instructions. Stylus force adjustment on vintage equipment however is generally more involved and will require a special gauge and knowledge.

Finally, don't forget about the turntable platter mat. It's not uncommon for a rubber mat on a vintage turntable for example to have perished to the extent that it has lost some or all of its suppleness. There's only one option if that's the case – replacement.

Don't despair if your unsure on anything, you can always contact us for impartial help and advice without any obligation whatsoever for old school service and support!