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AND COMPANY

Joining Cork with a Butt Joint

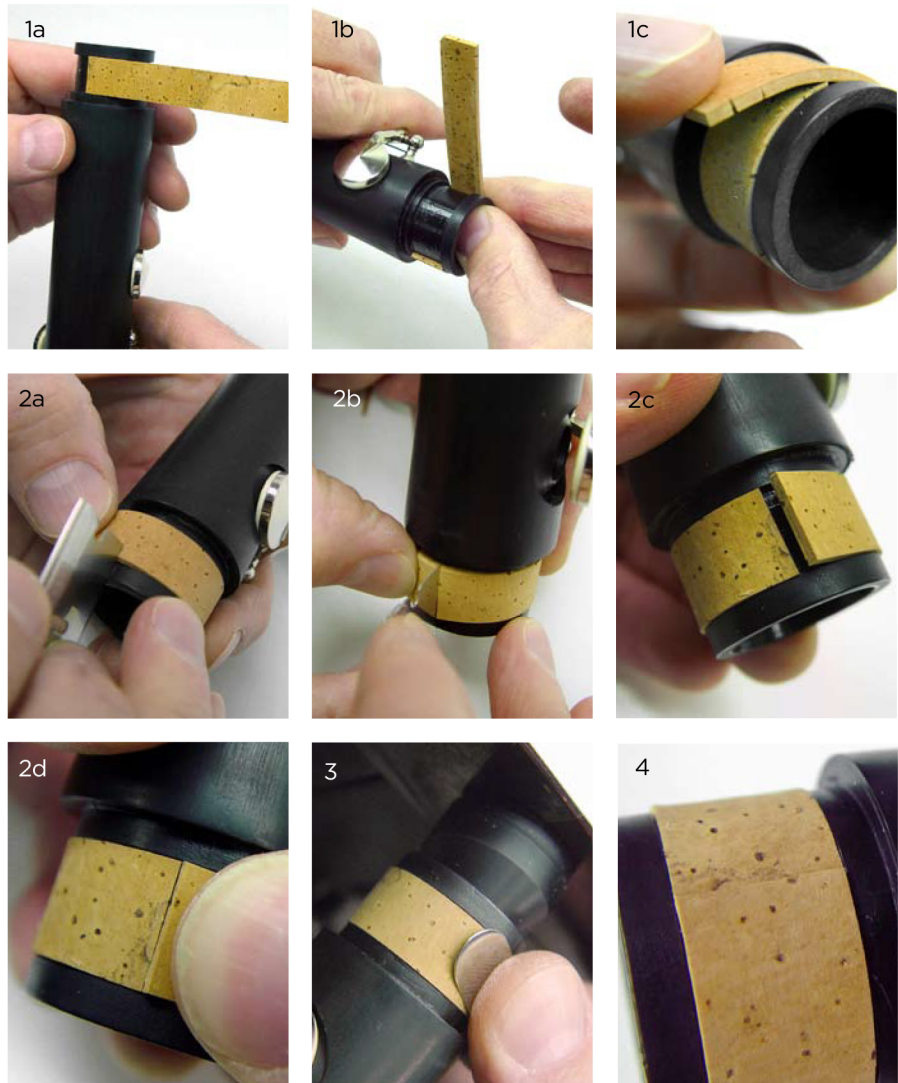
The method I'm describing below is the "butt joint" method. Though it is simple and elegant, it is rarely done. Most often people use a lap joint.

Though I learned how to make the lap joint at the beginning of my career, I soon came to adopt the butt joint, and have used it successfully for 30 years. I feel that the butt has advantages in several ways: it takes less time, it is easier to make round, and it is prettier.

It takes less time because of two factors—you don't spend any time creating a bevel, and you spend no time sanding down the hump that a lap creates. It's easier to make round, because it is never out of round. You simply sand the entire surface of the cork, you don't need to first concentrate on the hump and then try to blend it in. Prettier: the joint will almost disappear if you make the joint on a "clean" area of the cork. A lap joint tends to look like a scar.

Does it work? As long as you have glued up properly, you would need to destroy the cork to remove it. I've had no failures with the butt joint method and I use this method on saxophone necks also.

1. Start the cork in the middle of the back side of the instrument. This is so we don't see a seam when we open the clarinet case, and it is to keep all our corks consistent in appearance (very professional).
Align the cork strip with the track and press the first end down firmly. Slowly guide the rest of the cork around the tenon, encouraging it into the track. Press firmly as you go to seat the cork and to ensure good contact with the cemented surfaces.
As you get back around to the starting area, let the cork overlap, without pressing the last 3/8" down.



2. Carefully lining up a razor with the cork's starting line edge, cut the overlapping tail of the strip with one straight and perpendicular cut right above the starting line. Now firmly press the last 1/4" of the cork strip down into the track. The seam should mate perfectly without a gap.

Do not be embarrassed if your first attempt isn't quite satisfactory, but do be embarrassed if you leave it that way. I don't want you to do ugly work and credit me as your teacher. Take the time to do it again both to improve your technique, and to treat the instrument fairly.

3. "Burnish" the cork by firmly pressing around the tenon with a straight edge or another polished metal slick. This will help set the cement, creating a very secure bond.