



# How to Replace the Cork in a Trombone Water Key

A leaky water key can make playing difficult...

Written By: Esther Unti



# INTRODUCTION

A leaky water key can make playing difficult and a horn sound strange. Instrument repair professionals can fix leaky water keys, but often times all a water key needs is a new cork—an easy fix you can do at home. Water key corks are inexpensive and available at most music stores and online, but a wine cork cut to the right size will work in a pinch.

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## TOOLS:

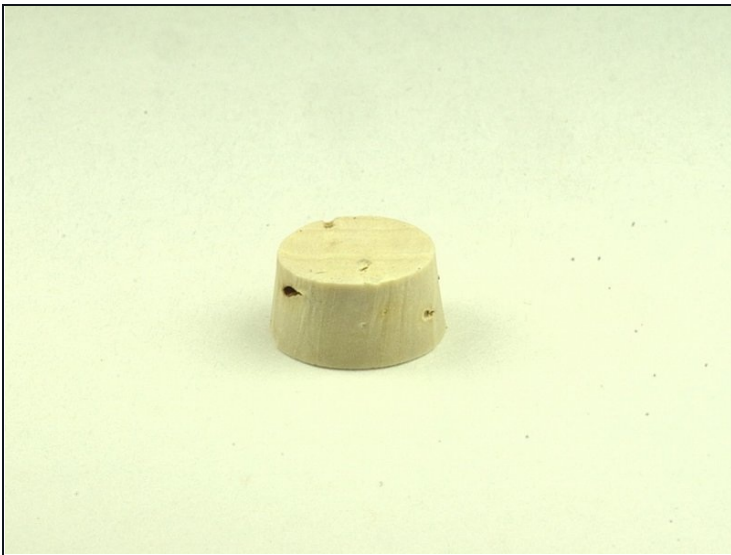
Ruler (1)  
Serrated Knife (1)  
Cutting Board (1)  
Glue Gun (1)  
Pencil (1)  
Tweezers (1)

## PARTS:

Water Key Cork (1)  
Wine Bottle Cork (1)

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## Step 1 — Water Key Cork



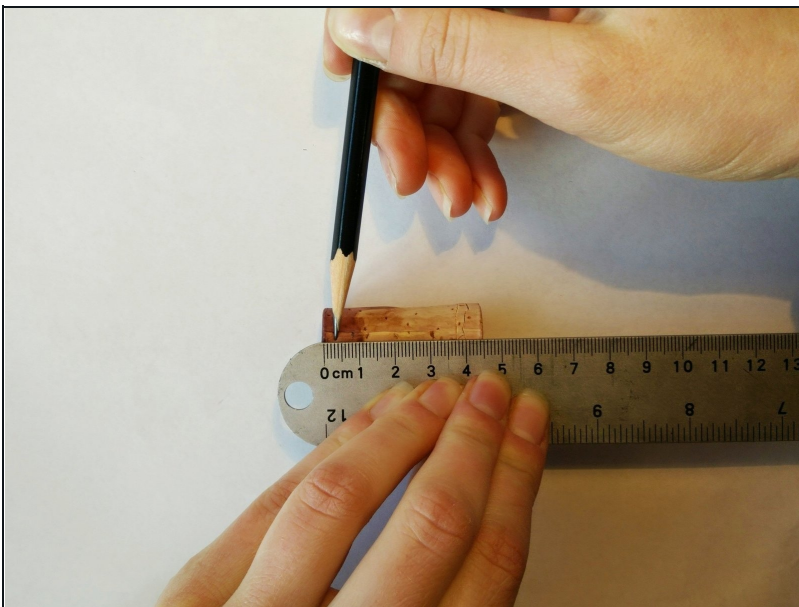
- Obtain a replacement water key cork.
  - ① If you're in a rush and don't have a replacement cork, you can make a temporary one out of a wine bottle cork.

## Step 2



- Remove the old cork.
- Insert a sharp tool, such as one tine of a pair of [tweezers](#) or needle-nose forceps, between the cork and the metal edge.
- Pry up the cork using the metal edge for leverage.
- Repeat this at several points around the cork until the cork comes free.

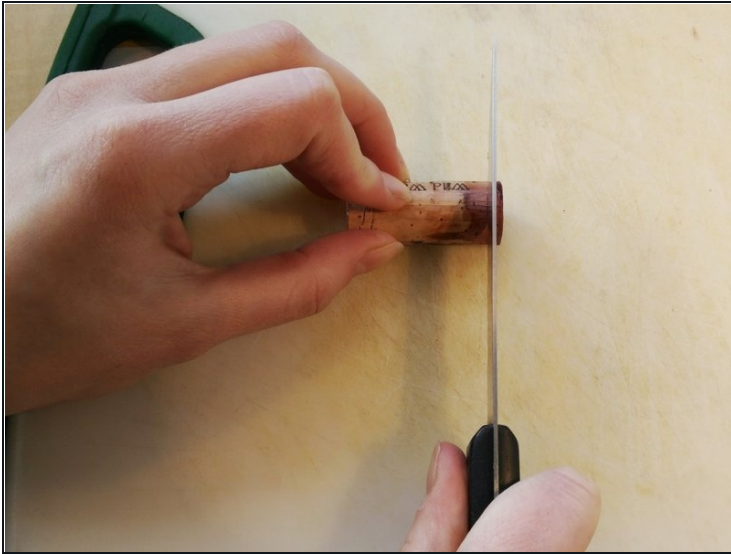
## Step 3



- If you have a replacement cork, skip to Step 10.
- If you're using a wine bottle cork to make a replacement cork, place the cork on its side and measure 3 mm from the cork edge. Mark this point.



## Step 4



- Using a serrated knife (such as a steak knife), cut the cork horizontally along your mark.

⚠ Cutting corks can be tricky. Make sure to keep fingers out of your knife's way.

## Step 5



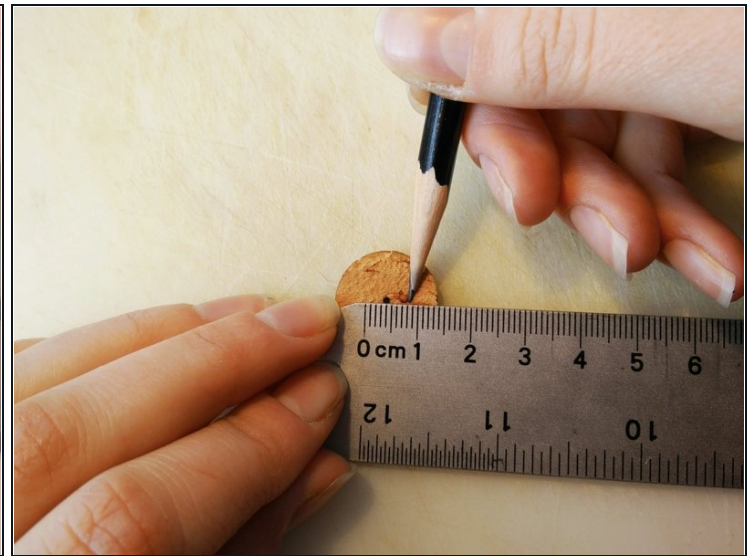
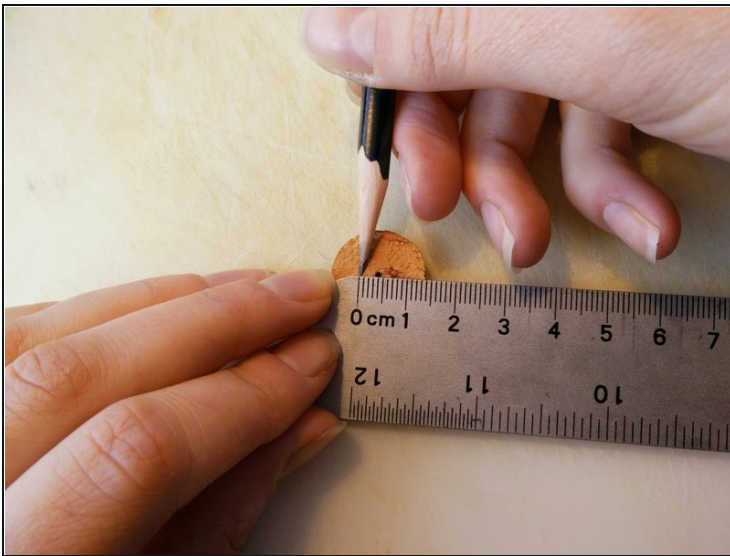
- Using a ruler, measure the diameter of the water key slot you removed the cork from in Step 2.
  - ① Measure from inside edge to inside edge.

## Step 6



- Place the 3mm slice you cut from the wine cork flat on a surface.
- Mark a point in the center.

## Step 7



- Using a ruler, measure half the diameter from Step 5 above and below the center mark.



## Step 8



- Rotate the ruler 90 degrees and repeat Step 7.
  - ① Your cork slice should now have four marks equidistant from the center mark.
- Draw a circle connecting the four marks around the center.

## Step 9



- Using your knife, cut out this circle.
  - ① It helps to slice edges off at angles, one at a time.
- This might take a few tries, so if you end up with a non-round circle cut out, repeat Steps 3-9 with the remaining wine cork.

## Step 10



- Dry fit the new cork in the water key slot to make sure it is the right size.
- If your cork is too big, you'll need to cut it a little smaller.
- If your cork is a little uneven, don't worry. Its job is to seal the water hole, which is much smaller than the cork itself.

## Step 11



- With a hot glue gun, put a drop of glue in the water key slot and place the new cork on top.
- Press firmly on the cork for a few seconds.

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If your water key still leaks after replacing the cork, it may need to be bent back into place or may need a new spring. See an instrument repair professional or another online guide for help with this.