



Graham's tips for successful cottoning are

- 1) Wash your hands VERY well and dry them on clean kitchen roll before you start
This minimises wheel touching effects
It also stops grease from your fingers getting on the cotton during teasing and application
Slightly greasy cotton can cause the "gone all quiet with new cotton" effect
New, clean cotton on a clean wheel should be good straight off
- 2) The thinner you can tease the cotton the easier it goes on
It needs to be very very very thin
If you don't get enough on you can add more
- 3) Apply a little rosin to the string, rolling the string to get it all round
This will keep the cotton tight on the string when you have done
I don't think this helps the application process
Brush off any rosin dust from the wheel after this, don't blow it off, you will get moisture drops on the wheel
Alternatively you can slip a piece of clean paper under the strings to stop this happening
- 4) Apply a little rosin to the wheel
I DO think this helps the application process
- 5) Only apply enough cotton to cover the string
On chanters and trompette you should only just be able to see the extra thickness of the cotton
Drones need a bit more
- 6) The cotton can do crazy things like bunching up at one side of the wheel
Before tightening up you can rearrange the cotton with a clean fingernail(s)
After tightening you can loosen it by turning the wheel backwards and then rearrange it before re-tightening
- 7) Whispy bits at the ends don't matter, untidy but not touching the wheel
- 8) You MUST tighten the cotton by turning the wheel and rolling the string while pressing it against the wheel
It won't play well without this
You need to do this on a regular basis when playing
This will restore the sound without re-cottoning
Some players do this mid-play by a short reverse then forward flip of the wheel
Chanter and trompette cotton should last at least 10 hours of playing
Drone cotton seems to last forever
- 9) Add rosin to the wheel little and often (not more often than every hour or so of playing)
Tighten the cotton more often than this
Inspect the cotton, if it's not smooth and even, re-tighten it
Tightening can even sort out frayed ends
When you notice the sound getting lower try tightening the cotton first
Then add a little rosin to the wheel (2 turns maximum) only if needed
- 10) Apply rosin to the wheel with all the strings off
Then put on a bourdon only and tighten its cotton whether it needs it or not
This is a good thing because it gets a little extra rosin on the bourdon cotton
This reduces the bourdon startup delay
It also removes any rough rosin from the wheel
The last thing you need is to get rosin particles into the chanter cotton

Stick at it, it will all come ok in the end

Graham Whyte

graham@altongate.co.uk