

# Stringing Your Acoustic Guitar


This manual explains how to string your steel-string acoustic guitar, as well as how to remove your old strings. Any beginner can complete these tasks; you do not need previous experience or knowledge. Before we can begin, you will need the following items:

## ♪ **Steel-string acoustic guitar**

- The following information is meant for only acoustic steel-string guitars and does not cover stringing information for electric or nylon-string guitars.

## ♪ **Six metal wires**

- You will need a string for each note: E-A-D-G-B-E.
- New strings are very tight and occasionally break or pop out of the bridge as they are being tightened. It may be useful to have back up strings available.

 Note: There are also nylon strings, which are for only classical guitars.

## ♪ **Wire cutters/needle-nose pliers.**

- Cutters or pliers are needed to get rid of excess wire or to dig out stubborn remnants in the tuning post. Needle-nose pliers also help to remove bridge pins.

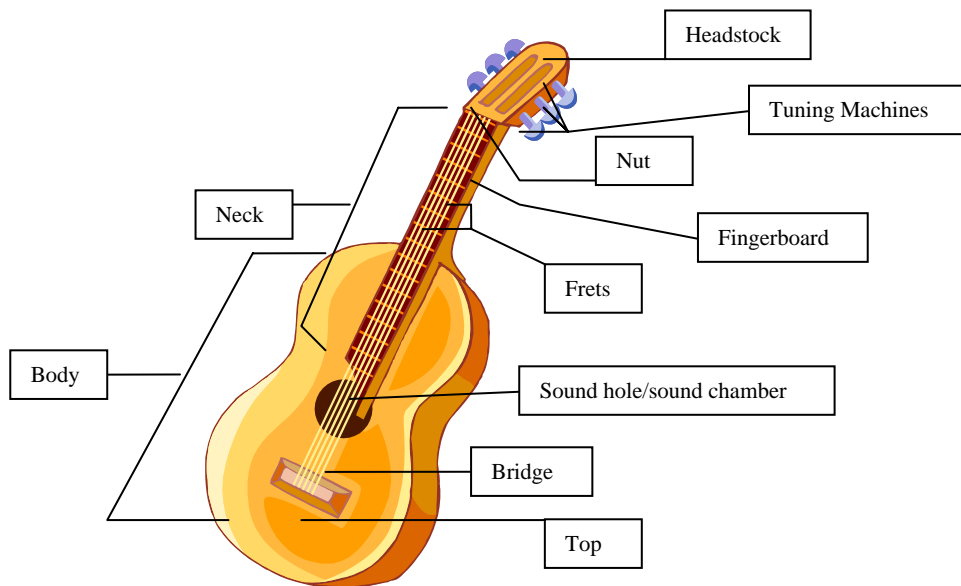
Stringing your guitar will require time and patience, so beginners should allot at least an hour. It is also best to be sitting down in an area with a lot of room. You can either lay the guitar on the ground, or for best comfort, lay the guitar across your lap. You will be cutting and twisting wires which will require manual dexterity and the use of both hands.

## When to Re-string Your Guitar

- ♪ There are noticeable signs of corrosion or dirt/grime embedded in the strings.
- ♪ The strings won't play in tune.
- ♪ You can't remember the last time you changed them.

Strings give their best performance when they are brand new. As strings age, they lose their ability to lose tension, which dulls their sound. Also, unless you are in an emergency situation or the strings are brand new, you should replace all of your strings at the same time; even if only one breaks. This way, you won't have to keep track of the last time you replaced each individual string.

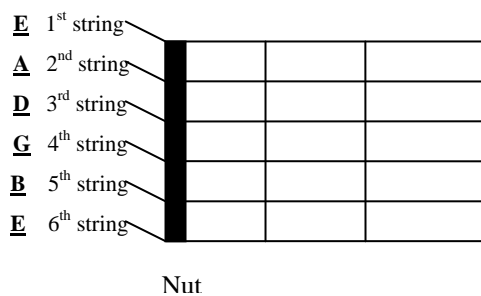
## Acoustic Guitar Anatomy



## Definitions

- ♪ **Bridge** A wooden plate that anchors the strings to the body of the guitar. A bridge has six holes that lead to the inside of the guitar.
- ♪ **Bridge pins** Small pieces of plastic that presses the strings tightly against the bridge. Bridge pins have slots that provide a channel for the string to get out. Be careful when removing or when tightening your new strings as they can pop out.
- ♪ **Nut** A grooved sliver of stiff nylon or other synthetic substance. The nut has a groove for each string that prevents the strings from vibrating beyond the neck. The strings pass through the grooves on their way to the tuners in the headstock.
- ♪ **Post** The part of the tuning machine that the string wraps around. The post goes through the headstock and is connected by gears to the tuning machines.
- ♪ **Tuning machines** Geared mechanisms that raise and lower the tension of the strings to creates different pitches. The strings wrap tightly around the post, that sticks out of the face of the headboard. Also called tuners, tuning pegs, tuning keys, and tuning gears.

## The Notes and Placement of Strings



The 1<sup>st</sup> string is the skinniest and closest one to the floor, whereas the 6<sup>th</sup> string is the fattest and at the top. Also, the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> are the higher-pitched, treble strings and the remaining three are the lower-pitched, bass strings.

## Removing Your Old Strings

There are two different ways to remove your old strings.

### **A. Loosen the string with the tuning gear or with needle-nose pliers.**

- 1) Turn the gear counterclockwise for strings 1-3 and clockwise for strings 4-6.
- 2) Continue turning the gear until the string is loose enough for you to pull it off of the post.

### **B. Cut the old strings off with wire cutters.**

- 1) Cut the string in the middle of the neck.
- 2) Untwist and remove the string from the post.

**! CAUTION:** Cutting the wires causes an immediate release of tension. The ends of the wires are very sharp and can break skin. Be careful not to poke yourself in the eye or hands.

**Following either method, you will need to remove the string from the bridge.**

- a. Using the needle-nose pliers pry out the bridge pins.
- b. Remove the string and throw it away.
- c. Leave the bridge pins out.

## Stringing Your Steel-String Acoustic Guitar

All steel-string acoustic guitars are strung the same way. The strings attach to the guitar in two places, at the bridge and the headstock.

### **Step 1: Attaching the string to the bridge (Figure 1.1)**


- a. **Remove old strings and pop out bridge pins.**



Figure 1.1

- b. **Place the end of the new string with the brass ring (called a *ball*) into the hole.** Make sure that each string corresponds with the proper note location on the guitar.
- c. **Replace the bridge pin firmly into the hole, with the slot facing forward—towards the nut.**
- d. **Pull lightly on the string until the string no longer moves around.**

### Step 2: Fastening the string to the tuning post

 Note: The following steps will differ depending on whether you are stringing the treble strings or the bass strings. Wind treble strings clockwise and wind bass strings counterclockwise. (Figure 2.1)

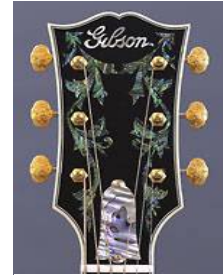




Figure 2.1

- a. **Pass the string through the hole in the post.** Leave around four inches of slack between the post and the bridge pin so you can wind the string around the post several times (Figure 2.2).
- b. **Kink the string back towards the bridge.** The kink will prevent the string from slipping while you are winding.
- c. **Hold the string tight against the post with one hand.**
- d. **At the same time, wind the corresponding tuning gear clockwise with the other hand.**
- e. **Repeat steps a-d for the remaining strings. Remember to wind the gears counterclockwise when stringing the bottom, bass strings.**



Figure 2.2

 Note: Step **d** can be difficult. Don't get frustrated if the string doesn't look exactly like the picture, this process requires practice.

 Note: Make sure that the string winds *down* the post. Winding the string downwards puts more tension on the nut which creates better *sustain*, the length of time the note continues.

# Troubleshooting

- ♪ **After you have finished winding a string, there is still too much slack.**
  - Simply unwind the string and try again. As long as the part of the string between the bridge and the post has not been kinked, the string can be re-used.
- ♪ **You didn't leave enough slack and the winding will not reach all the way down the post.**
  - If the string is unable to wrap firmly around the post, the string may slip off.
  - Simply undo what you have done and try again. This will require some practice to get it right.