

# **Sullivan Guitars State Line Luthier Works Acoustic Guitar Corner**

## **Changing Acoustic Guitar Strings General Acoustic Guitar Maintenance**

These are the steps used in the video on the Sullivan Guitars website at [www.sullivanguitars.com](http://www.sullivanguitars.com).

Tools to have on hand are:

1. A soft safe working surface
2. A neck rest or firm pillow
3. A string winding tool
4. Some 0000 steel wool
5. A soft brush
6. A vacuum cleaner
7. A small pair of dykes or wire cutters
8. Some Old English Lemon Oil or Stew Mac's Fingerboard Dressing
9. Meguiar's Mirror Glaze #9 Swirl Remover
10. Bounty paper towels or any soft non scratching cloth or paper towel
11. A soft guitar wiping cloth
12. Guitar tuner, pitch pipe, or tuning fork
13. Truss rod wrench

### **Steps for Changing the Strings on an Acoustic Guitar**

1. Place the guitar on a clean, soft, safe surface using a neck rest or firm pillow.
2. Check the neck relief by looking down the neck lengthwise at the top of the fingerboard and make sure there is a slight downward bow in the neck. An upward bow would be called back bow and would cause the strings to buzz and fret out while playing the guitar. If the neck needs an adjustment, use the appropriate wrench for your guitar. Turning the nut on the end of your truss rod in a clockwise direction will remove excessive downward bow thereby straightening the neck. Turning the nut counterclockwise will remove back bow thereby adding relief (or down bow) back into the neck.
3. Carefully loosen the strings with your guitar string winder being careful not to allow the string winder to touch or scratch the sides of your headstock and remove the strings from the tuning keys.
4. Remove the strings at the bridge by pulling the bridge pins. If necessary push the string down into the pin hole first, to free the string from the bridge pin.
5. With the strings removed, this is a good time to clean the frets and the fingerboard. Use the 0000 steel wool to clean off the frets and the fingerboard in a cross motion across the fingerboard and frets. This should help to remove the string path marks on the fingerboard while cleaning any discoloration or finger crud from the frets.
6. Carefully brush or blow the residual dust from the steel wool off the body of the guitar and fingerboard and vacuum from the work area so you won't scratch the body of the guitar while continuing to work on the guitar.

7. Using a paper towel or soft disposable cloth, apply the Old English lemon oil or Stew Mac's fingerboard dressing to the fingerboard and bridge and then wipe any excess off with a clean paper towel. You should see the cloth become discolored as it picks up the remaining dirt, and residual dust. When treating the bridge be careful not to get the oil on the guitar top.
8. Using the Meguiar's Mirror Glaze #9 Swirl Remover, shake the bottle to make sure it's well mixed and polish the finish of your guitar rubbing in the same direction as the grain to minimize the possibility of making any swirl polishing marks appear on the surface of the body and the headstock.
9. On the headstock, polish the headstock using a length wise motion to avoid making circular motions around the tuners. The tuners can be cleaned, but avoid touching the headstock with circular movements.
10. This is a good time to snug up the screws and nuts on your tuners being careful not to over tighten. Just tighten until everything is snug.
11. Now we are ready to put on the new strings. Pinch the string between your thumb and index finger and put a slight bend in the string at the string ball. Put the string in the pin hole with the bend facing toward the sound hole. Insert the bridge pin and while holding the bridge pin down with one finger, pull up on the string until it seats itself.
12. At the tuner wrap the string around the tuner  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 times on the lower note strings and thread the string through the post hole so that it comes out between the string windings. Tighten the tuning key until the string wraps pinch the string between the top and second wrap. Then bend the string straight up 90 degrees to the tuning key post and using your dykes or wire cutters clip the string close to the string windings. Repeat steps 11 and 12 for the remaining strings using more windings on the unwound strings. A guideline would be:
  - a. Low E and A strings, start with  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 wraps before threading the string through the tuner.
  - b. D and G strings, start with 3 wraps before threading the string through the tuner.
  - c. B and high E strings, start with 4 wraps before threading the string through the tuner.
13. If the strings pop or creak at the nut as you tighten them, loosen the string and slip it out of the nut groove then take a pencil and run the tip along the nut groove leaving a little graphite from the lead in the groove to act as a lubricant. This will usually keep the string from popping or creaking.
14. Tune the guitar up to pitch and then stretch all the strings by pulling up on them. This will help seat them into the pin holes and tighten up the wraps on the tuning machine posts. It also helps you stay in tune when your done tuning back up.
15. Finish tightening the strings and tune your guitar using your favorite method of tuning and enjoy the great sound of your fresh strings and feel of your clean guitar.

This regular maintenance on your guitar will help to protect your guitar and its finish for years to come. Be sure to check out on Sullivan Guitars ([www.sullivanguitars.com](http://www.sullivanguitars.com)) and Acoustic Guitar Corner ([www.acousticguitarcorner.com](http://www.acousticguitarcorner.com)) for other great guitar tips and articles, custom handmade guitars and acoustic guitar accessories.