

# Stringing a Guitar

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## Introduction

Stringing a guitar is a relatively simple process, however it can be daunting at first glance. This guide will walk you through the steps involved in stringing a guitar. It will cover everything from removing the old strings to tuning and stretching the new ones.

## Tools and Supplies

Before you begin, you'll need a few tools and supplies:

- A set of guitar strings
- Wire cutters
- A tuner
- A cloth or soft rag
- A string winder (Optionally)

## Definitions

- Headstock: The section of the guitar above the nut which contains the tuning pegs.
- Neck: The part of the guitar the strings run along.
- Nut: The channel that the strings run through before reaching the headstock.
- Bridge: The piece of the guitar that holds the ends of the strings.
- String Gauge: String gauge refers to the thickness of the strings; A common string gauge would be 9 gauge.

# 1 Removing the Old Strings

Before you can put the new strings on your guitar it's important to carefully remove the old strings. *Improper removal of the old strings can stress the neck and risk damaging the finish of the instrument.*

1. Loosen the strings: Begin by turning the tuning pegs on the head of the guitar. The direction you turn the pegs may vary depending on the tuner layout of your headstock. Headstocks with the "3+3" tuner layout, common on Gibson and PRS guitars, have the first three strings turn opposite to the last three as shown in Figure 1a. This is in contrast to the "6-in line" tuner layout, often found on Fender guitars, where the strings all turn in the same direction as shown in Figure 1b.

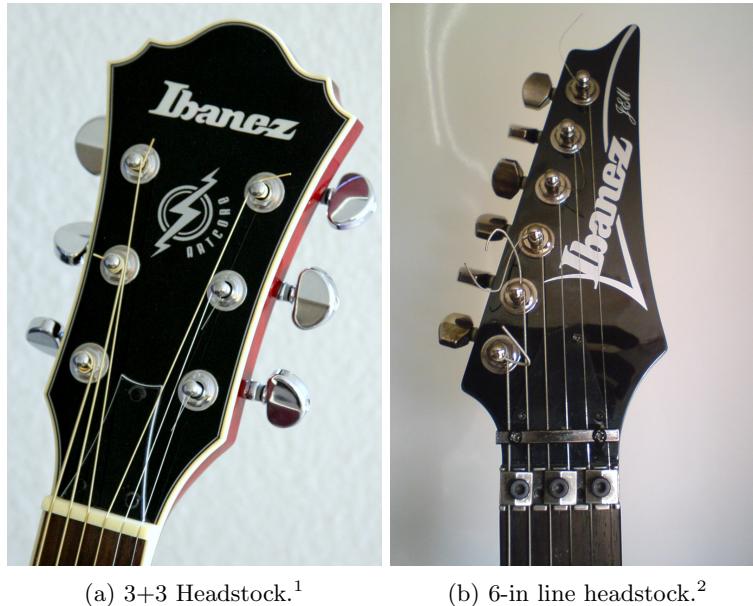


Figure 1: Headstock layouts.

2. Cut the strings: Once slack, use the wire cutters to cut the strings. Cutting them close to the bridge makes removing the strings easier.
3. Remove the strings: Carefully pull the cut strings through the holes in the bridge and remove them from the guitar. Then remove the other end of the cut strings from the tuning pegs on the guitar. The sharp edges of the cut strings can easily mark the finish on your guitar. To help protect the guitar from the strings it's advised that you use a cloth or soft rag to cover the finish during this process.

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## 2 Installing the New Strings

Now that the old guitar strings have been removed you're ready to install the new strings. *Note: It is a good idea to clean the guitar before restringing.*

1. Choose the correct string: Each string is labeled with a number and/or color that corresponds to its size and gauge. Make sure you use the correct string for each string position on the guitar.
2. Thread the string: Run the string through the hole on your guitar's bridge as shown in Figure 2; Guide the string straight across the neck, into the respective nut channel and into the tuning peg. If your guitar is equipped with a set of locking tuners, twist the locking mechanism to secure the string.



Figure 2: Feeding strings into the bridge.<sup>3</sup>

3. Wind the string: With the string inside the tuning peg begin winding it. Make sure the string winds in the direction of the peg, out from the headstock. (Figure 3) A string winder will make this step far less tedious however it is not required. Wind the string until there is no more slack.

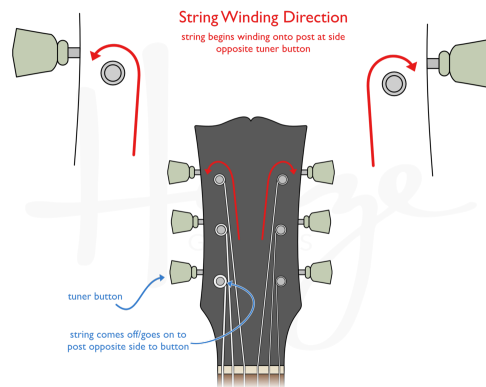


Figure 3: Winding strings on a 3+3 headstock.<sup>4</sup>

4. Repeat for each string: Repeat the process for each of the remaining strings, making sure to install them in the correct order (usually low E, A, D, G, B, and high E).

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<sup>3</sup>Attribution: Sweetwater

<sup>4</sup>Attribution: Haze Guitars

### 3 Tuning the Guitar

Now that your strings are installed it's time to bring them up to pitch.

1. Tune to pitch: Use the tuner to bring each string to pitch. Start with the lowest string and work your way up. Standard tuning for a guitar is "E2 A2 G3 B3 E4" however alternate tunings exist such as Drop D and E $\flat$  Standard.



Figure 4: A guitar tuner.<sup>5</sup>

2. Stretch and repeat as necessary: It's important to stretch the strings (Figure 5) and repeat the tuning process as necessary until each string is in tune and the guitar does not go out of tune during bends and spirited playing.



Figure 5: Stretching the D string.

3. Cut the excess string: Once the guitar is tuned and stable, use the wire cutters to cut the excess string.

### Conclusion

Stringing a guitar is an important part of maintaining the instrument. After following these instructions your instrument should be ready to play again for hours on end.

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<sup>5</sup>Attribution: Ernie Ball