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## Get up and dress your funky frets

If you play a fretted instruments, sooner or later the frets will wear down. No amount of planing, polishing, neck adjustment or setup will get around the fact that you need new frets.

Refretting is a job for a professional repairman -- unless you have a great deal of skill and patience. The only way to acquire skill is through experience, so if you have the patience, here's a step-by-step description for a refret of an *unbound fingerboard*. (Removing and replacing fingerboard binding is a separate procedure with its own set of problems and pitfalls, so don't try a bound fingerboard until you've mastered the basics of refretting.)

You will need the following tools:

- Fret puller pliers
- Flush cut pliers
- Truss rod wrench
- Fret hammer
- Super glue gel
- Fret plane
- 1" bastard file
- Fret crowning files
- 400 and 600 grit sandpaper
- 0000 steel wool
- Sanding block
- Cloth rag
- Straight edge



There is little margin for error. Read each step, even all steps, completely before proceeding. Go slowly.

1. Using the truss rod wrench, turn the truss rod into its tightest position. This will back bow the neck and open up the fret slots for easier removal.



2. Using the fret puller pliers, begin removing frets. Start at one end and work *gently* across the board, being careful not to chip the fretboard. If it seems like there will be a lot chipping, you may need to use heat from a solder iron on each fret before pulling it out. Continue until all frets have been removed.

3. Return truss rod to previous position and check neck for straightness.

4. Choose the correct frets for the guitar and check the fret slots for proper slot depth -- usually 3/64th" or 4/64th".

5. Pre-bend frets to a slightly over radius so that they will dig into the fretboard when installed.

6. Rest the neck on a wooden block with leather covering.

7. Put a drop of super glue gel in each end of the fret slot.

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8. Leave some fret overhang on each end of the fret and hammer fret into its slot. Pay special attention to seat the fret all the way down to the fretboard.



9. With flush cut pliers, trim the ends of the frets flush with fretboard.



10. Repeat this process until all frets are installed. Make sure the top of the instrument is protected when fretting higher frets.
11. With a 1" bastard file, file the sides of the frets flush on each side of the neck.



12. With a dark colored, wide felt-tip pen, mark across the top of each fret.
13. Using the fret level plane, begin leveling the frets until the pen marks have been removed uniformly across the top of the frets.





14. Place the straight edge across the tops of the frets and check for a uniform level. Repeat 12 through 14 until all frets are level.

15. Select appropriate size crowning file and begin filing the top of each fret. Round the top of each fret paying special attention to leave a small hairline flat surface on the top of each fret.



16. With the bastard file, put a 30-degree bevel on the ends of the frets uniformly down both sides of the fretboard.

17. Use 400 grit sandpaper and fingers to sand the rough marks on the tops of all the frets. Then using a sanding block, sand with 400 grit down the beveled sides of the frets.

18. Finish sand with 600 grit and 0000 steel wool.

19. For a highly polished, professional look, buff the tops of the frets using a cloth on a sanding block with some yellow jeweler's rouge.

Your action, feel, and intonation will be highly polished and professional as well.

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