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Basic Lessons on How to setup a solid body guitar

By Brian Calvert

The steps in this tutorial are meant to be followed in the order they are presented, failure to do so can cause frustration, a waste of time and a poor setup. If you are confident that you can skip a section by all means do so to save yourself some time.

In many of these tutorials measurements are used as a guideline and not a solid fact, you may need to change or adjust these measurements for your own personal playing comfort.

For this particular tutorial there are many pictures of different types of guitars in each step to help you better understand your own. A big thanks to the fine folks at [Gold Tone](#) for helping out in this project, if you have the time please visit their site by clicking on the link or banner above.

Step 1 Head Stock Area

First start out by making sure all of the screws holding your tuners on the head stock are tightened down correctly, For your reference I have photographed most of the common styles of tuners found on modern day solid body electric guitars and under each one you will see a description and also a pointer in the picture where the screw is located.



Common Sealed Tuners
1 per tuner



In-line open tuning machines
7 per strip



Kluson Deluxe Tuning Machines
7 per group



Generic Closed Box Tuners
2 per tuner



Sperzal Locking Tuners
no tie down screws



Generic Sealed Tuners
no tie down screws

Try not to over tighten these screws as they will strip out easily

if you should run across a screw that is in this condition pull it out completely and dab a little wood glue on the end. Insert it back into it's original hole and wipe off any excess. If you have determined that the screw needs replacing you can generally order one through your local music store or hardware outlet. The most common size is a 7/16" #2 Phillips head.



Now move on up to the top of your tuners and make sure the individual buttons are screwed down tightly. Believe me it is an embarrassment if you go to tune up and suddenly your lost because the button keeps spinning and the spindle goes nowhere leaving you tuned exactly where you were to begin with. Or even worse yet it falls off leaving you searching the ground like somebody dropped a contact lens, these screws are small machined so it can be difficult to get a replacement.



Now make sure the front of the tuner is firmly mounted, in some case's this will require a wrench as pictured to the left. In other case's you just need to make sure the grommets are firmly down as pictured to the right.



If your guitar is strung up loosen each string individually and check for spindle movement by grabbing the top and wiggling it. It is fine to have a small amount of play but generally little to no play is the expected rule. If you have open back tuners you can adjust this by tightening the screw located in the back as pictured on the right. Otherwise if you are experiencing too much movement you should consider replacing your tuners. Tune your string back up to pitch and move on to the next tuner.



The last thing to check on the head stock are the string tree's to make sure they are snugly fastened down. Not all guitars have these, and there is a wide variety available on today's market. Below you will see pictures of the most common one's used today



Standard 2 string tree



Full neck string tree



2 string roller tree

On to Step 1: [Head Stock Area \(You are here\)](#)

On to Step 2: [Truss Rod and Neck Bow adjustment](#)

On to Step 3: [Nut Height check and adjustment](#)

On to Step 4: [String Height and Bridge adjustment](#)

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