

EASY SETUP GUIDE FOR GUITAR & BASS

GROOVETECHTOOLS.COM



 GROOVETECH®

QUICK SETUP REFERENCE

* Use the blanks to write in your brand-specific setup parameters, if applicable.

TRUSS ROD – RELIEF

Measure At	Condition	Specification	Notes
8th Fret	Hold down first and last frets; check clearance at 8th fret	Guitar: 0.010" / Bass: 0.015"	Guitar: Check on 6th string Bass: Check on 4th string

BRIDGE – ACTION (STRING HEIGHT)

Measure At	Condition	Specification	Notes
17th fret	Clearance between string and fret	Guitar: 5/64" (2mm) / Bass: 3/32"	Unfretted

NUT

Measure At	Condition	Specification	Notes
First fret	Clearance between string and fret	0.020" – 0.022"	Unfretted

PICKUP HEIGHT

Measure At	Condition	Specification	Notes
Pickup	Depress last fret	Guitar: 1/16" – 1/8" / Bass: 3/32" – 1/8"	Adjust for equal volume on all strings

BRIDGE – INTONATION

Condition	Result	Notes
Compare fretted and harmonic at 12th fret	Fretted note sharp	Lengthen string
	Fretted note flat	Shorten string



Thank you for your purchase of a GROOVETECH® Kit!

We put a lot of care into selecting the right combination of tools and other contents to allow easy setup and other work on your instrument.

Pouches are designed for easy access to all items, and will fit into most gig bags. A large pocket is included to carry a spare set of strings, your owner's manual, this guide, with an additional pocket to store your picks (GTGTR1, GTBAS1 only).

Some tools may have an oily film which helps to protect against corrosion during transportation and storage. Now's a good time to thoroughly wipe tools down – especially the thickness gauge – using a soft tissue. Fractional hex keys have a black finish and metric keys a gold finish for quick identification.

In addition to setup, the GrooveTech kit should address most other tool needs of your guitar or bass including tremolo systems, pickguard, tuning machines, battery replacement, knobs, and so on.

TOOL KIT CONTENTS

		GTGTR1	GTBAS1	GTATC1	GTSH1
Screwdriver	6-in-1 with two each Phillips and slotted, plus 1/4" and 5/16" nut drivers	■	■		
	Locking bit driver			■	
	Magnetic bit driver				■
Hex Wrenches	1.5mm, 2.5mm, 3mm, 4mm*, 5mm*, 0.050", 1/16", 5/64", 3/32", 1/8"*, 3/16"*	■			
	1.5mm, 4mm*, 5mm*, 0.050", 1/16", 5/64", 7/64", 3/16"*		■		
Bit Sets	4mm, 5mm soundhole wrenches; 1/4", 5/16" nut drivers, #1 and #2 Phillips			■	
	19 piece inch and metric hex, screwdriver and nut drivers				■
Measurement	15-blade thickness gauge	■	■	■	■
	6" precision ruler with setup specs	■	■	■	■
	Capo - to free up a hand during neck measurement	■	■	■	■
Misc.	GrooveTech String Cutters	■	■	■	■
	String winder	■		■	■
	Telescopic mirror			■	■

*ball-end

NOTE: the work described in this guide is intended for individuals with basic mechanical skills. If you don't understand the procedures described here or are uncomfortable using tools, please leave work to a qualified stringed instrument technician.

INTRODUCTION

With so much expressiveness, it may be easy to overlook the technical aspects of your guitar or bass. Each string must vibrate at a certain frequency, frets allow precise control of pitch, neck curvature provides smooth and buzz-free playing, the bridge sets string length and height, and electrical components convert acoustic energy into electrical signals with further processing of those signals.

Many of these geometries are fixed at design by the manufacturer, but considerable adjustability remains. Adjustments may appear daunting at first, but with a little knowledge and experimentation you'll be well on your way as a basic technician. You will be surprised how much improvement in performance is possible from a properly set up instrument, and ease of keeping in top playing shape despite changes in temperature, humidity, string gauge, and handling. You'll also feel great about doing your own setups!

Before jumping into the setup process, a few general notes are in order:

- While all guitar and bass makes are fundamentally similar, any given brand or model will have its own nuances. Therefore, this guide should be considered a supplement to your owner's manual. In order to keep it simple, we provide general setup specifications. If your make has significantly different setup parameters, use those instead. We refer to inch-based measurements in this guide, but many manufacturers specify metric units. No problem – both the ruler and thickness gauge provide fractional and metric scales. In case you were wondering, simply multiply

any inch measurement by 25.4 to obtain the metric millimeter equivalent (for example, 0.015" multiplied by 25.4 equals 0.381mm).

- Your guitar or bass may have come with special tools – for example, a socket-style truss rod wrench. If so, simply store them in the GrooveTech pouch. Redundant items such as hex wrenches should be set aside in favor of the higher grade tools we provide.
- Always make adjustments at room temperature, and keep the instrument in correct tune throughout the setup process.
- Setup starts with the truss rod, followed by the bridge and pickups, and concludes with intonation. Find a surface with suitable space and good lighting – your kitchen table will do fine. Lay down a soft bath towel, and position a few books underneath the neck. Allow about an hour for your first setup; subsequent checks and adjustments will go much faster.
- For best results, take measurements with the instrument in its upright playing position to avoid the unwanted influence of gravity.
- Setup specifications are really just a starting point. For example, some players prefer the feel of a flatter neck and will try to set it as flat as possible without fret buzz. Shredders may want extremely low action high on the neck and be willing to accept some buzzing near the nut. Those with a light touch can set action lower. Once you become comfortable with the process feel free to experiment, taking small steps at a time. After finding a setup that works for you, be sure to measure and note settings - you'll always be able to return to it!
- Tremolo setup and adjustment is outside the scope of this guide – refer to specific instructions from the manufacturer. Regardless, GrooveTech kits already include necessary tools for most tremolo systems.
- Most of the bass references in this guide relate to four-string versions. The same principles apply to five and six stringers as well – we simply recommend that you refer to your owner's manual for potentially different setup parameters – that massive "B" string may need a little extra fret clearance!

CHANGING STRINGS

The ideal time for a complete setup is following installation of a fresh set of strings. A few notes on mounting strings:

1. Change only one string at a time, keeping other strings at regular tuning. This will help to maintain somewhat normal tension on the neck.
2. If using cutters to remove strings, detune the string a little first to reduce tension and the risk of injury or damage from “snapping” of the string.
3. Cut each new string two to four inches beyond the tuning post. You may see recommendations elsewhere for less, but the extra winds will help hold tuning.
4. Insert the tips of the string into the post, and wind from the top down. While turning the key, use your other hand to coil the string on the post – keep it nice and neat.
5. Bring the string to desired tuning pitch, then move to the next one.

Tuning machines are much better at tuning “up” than tuning “down.” Therefore, when you need to tune down it’s a good practice to go below the desired frequency and tune back up from there. A gentle tug on the string can also help.

TRUSS ROD

One adjustment that probably causes the greatest anxiety is the truss rod. While random truss rod changes can cause problems, the right tools and process will empower you to master this otherwise mysterious adjustment.

String tension pulls on the neck, creating a slight upward bow. This is called “relief” and desirable within a certain range. To provide an adjustable offset to this string-induced bow, manufacturers place a metal bar – called a truss rod – inside the neck with a nut on one end. Tightening the nut (clockwise) will flatten the neck, reducing relief. Conversely, loosening the truss rod (counterclockwise) will increase relief. Since the neck is made of wood, it won’t necessarily respond immediately to changes in truss rod tension. Therefore, it is generally recommended to wait a few moments between



adjustments to let the neck “settle,” then measure again. Only a small amount of adjustment is typically required; otherwise you may need to consult a professional.

Before making the first measurement, you can “sight” for curvature by looking down the neck. With the instrument in an upright position, set the body on a table or other surface and look down from the headstock. You can quickly get a feel of your starting point. After making adjustments, sight the neck again. After a while, you’ll be able to visually spot problems without tools.



To measure for proper truss rod tightness, an automotive-style thickness gauge and straightedge are needed. As it turns out, a string under tension happens to make a very good straightedge. The process therefore involves holding the string down at the two extreme frets and measuring clearance between the string and fret at the midway point. Since you only have two hands, a capo is provided for the first fret. Fasten the capo on top, rather than behind, the first fret.

You can measure relief by fretting at the first and last fret on the 6th string (4th string on basses), and checking clearance at the eighth fret. That is, with the first and last fret depressed, measure the distance between the bottom of the string and the top of the eighth fret on the E string. Gently insert the thickness gauge while laying it completely flat on top of the fret. Clearance for guitars should be about 0.010," and 0.015" for basses. You may find it helpful to check with the next highest and lowest gauges until you get a good feel for clearance.

If the gap exceeds thickness of the gauge, there's too much relief and the truss rod nut should be tightened. If the gauge pushes up the string, loosen the nut for more relief. You might end up overshooting the spec - that's OK; just go back in the other direction slightly. The important thing is to make small adjustments at a time.

Make sure you've selected the correct hex wrench. USA-produced guitars are likely to be inch-sized and offshore instruments totally metric. Ensure the wrench is fully seated. Finally, note many acoustics adjust through the sound hole - if so our GTATC wrenches are designed specifically for this job.

Truss rod nut adjustments may require a little force, but if you sense abnormal resistance or if the neck is significantly out of spec it may be prudent to leave further work to a qualified technician.

ACTION

Action refers to string height, which is adjusted by raising or lowering the bridge saddles. If set too low, buzzing occurs; too high and you're probably working too hard!

Measure clearance between the bottom of the string and top of the 17th fret, and adjust to about 5/64" for guitars (2mm may be easier to read on the ruler) and 3/32" for basses. Rest the steel ruler on top of the fret, placed behind the string, and measure. Bridge saddles require either a slotted screwdriver or hex wrench for adjustment. Make sure each saddle screw pair is set to approximately the same height. Since thinner strings move less from vibration, you can usually set action lower on these without buzzing. Similarly, those who play with a light touch can benefit from lower action without buzzing.

In addition to bowing in the direction of the truss rod, the neck features a fixed curve in the direction of the frets. If you were to complete an imaginary circle from the frets, you would be able to associate a radius with it. Most guitars and basses have a radius ranging from seven to twenty inches. Setting string height as described above will roughly match neck radius. For more precision, you can purchase a commercially available gauge, make one using a protractor, or find printable gauges on the web.

Action can be set to a wide range of preferences. Those who want lightning fast action might try for the lowest possible setting, perhaps even to a level that tolerates slight buzzing. Others may be more comfortable with a higher setting. The key is to experiment and find what best suits your style.

NUT CHECK

With the truss rod and action set, you're ready to check the nut - typically a one-time task. Measure for a clearance of 0.020" to 0.022" at the first fret, without fretting the string. This is an excellent "acid" test of your nut, which can cause

problems on an otherwise properly set up instrument. For example, you might set up a bass completely to spec, and be driven crazy by a buzzy E string. The nut check may reveal an excessively deep slot as the culprit. Alternatively, too much clearance will prevent action from being set sufficiently low.

Any nut work should be left to an experienced professional. However, if your string sits too low in the string slot with resultant buzzing, you can temporarily solve the problem by placing a shim under the string. Small pieces of business card stock work fine.

🔧 INTONATION

The other bridge adjustment sets length of the string by moving the saddle forward or backward. Proper intonation assures correct tuning increments over the entire fretboard, and is easily adjusted with the aid of an electronic tuner - preferably one with a needle in the display.

The process involves comparing tune between a fretted note and harmonic at the twelfth fret. A properly intonated string will have the same frequency under both conditions.



With the tuner ready, depress the string at the twelfth fret and observe the output frequency. Then, play a harmonic (with your finger only slightly touching the string) at the twelfth fret and note that frequency. If the fretted note is sharp, increase string length at the bridge; if flat, decrease length. Most bridges are adjusted using a Phillips or slotted screwdriver - make relatively small adjustments, retune, and check intonation again. If you're shortening the string, you may need to tap the top of the screwdriver handle to make sure the saddle moves forward; otherwise the adjusted screw head may not be seated against the bridge chassis.

🔧 PICKUP HEIGHT

Virtually all pickups can be adjusted, and it's not unusual for the treble side of the pickup to sit slightly closer to the string. Pickup adjustments are interactive, requiring listening through an amp over a range of playing conditions, and fine tuning for uniform volume levels across all strings.

Typical clearance ranges from 1/16" to 1/8" for guitars, and 3/32" to 1/8" for basses. Using the ruler, the measurement is made at the pickup's pole with the last fret depressed. Bass players with split "Precision" style pickups don't need to worry about having both pickup surfaces on the same plane - start with a setting using the ruler, and fine tune for uniform volume output.

🔧 BECOME YOUR OWN BASIC TECHNICIAN

After you've completed a few setups, you should feel empowered! Not only will there be a sense of satisfaction from doing your own setup, but you'll become more sensitive to the need for future adjustments. The truss rod is the most likely ongoing adjustment, with minor tweaks often necessary during seasonal temperature or humidity changes.

We sincerely hope this guide has been helpful, and welcome your feedback. Thanks for reading...

LIMITED WARRANTY & DISCLAIMERS

Hand tools are lifetime warranted against defects in workmanship when used under normal conditions. The remainder of kit contents and other products carry a one year warranty from GrooveTech. In the unlikely event that any GrooveTech item breaks or becomes unusable, simply contact us for a replacement. Your satisfaction is VERY important to us!

This warranty does not apply if the product being returned has been damaged by misuse, accident, modification or unauthorized repair. The warranty is not transferable to subsequent owners.

Contents of GrooveTech kits should be used only for their intended applications. Use of tools requires proper care and safety precautions, including eye protection.

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