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CARING FOR YOUR GUITAR

To avoid critical damage to your guitar, it is essential to pay close attention to how it is handled, as well as to humidity and temperature. Please read the following instructions carefully, and if you are in doubt about any aspect of caring for your guitar, please contact me. (Thanks to Armin Kelly for these guidelines.)

HUMIDITY AND TEMPERATURE:

To avoid shrinkage, cracking, swelling, and warping of your guitar, you must keep it in an environment which provides fairly constant temperature and humidity year round. **You must have an accurate humidity gauge with the guitar at all times and you must observe its readings.** These can be purchased for about \$45.00. The humidity level should be between 45% and 55%, and the temperature should be between 65 and 80 degrees. If your guitar is subjected to a humidity level of 40% or lower, it is at risk of cracking, having its seams open, or even having its bridge detach itself from the top.

To avoid shrinkage and cracking, never leave your instrument next to a heat source such as a radiator or woodstove, or a cooling source such as an air conditioning outlet. Low humidity is often associated with cold weather, but dry warm weather as well as air conditioning in warm humid weather can easily lower a room's humidity level below what is safe for your guitar.

STORAGE: When not being used, your guitar should always be stored in its case, not left in a room's open air. The case slows down moisture loss in a dry environment and moisture absorption in a humid environment.

TRANSPORT: When transporting your guitar in a car with heater or air conditioner on, you should place the guitar in its case inside a large airtight plastic bag (a garbage bag works fine) to seal in moisture and protect against excessive dryness. Do not leave your guitar in the passenger compartment or trunk of a car or anywhere else where sunlight can overheat the guitar.

Essential tools for monitoring and adjusting humidity levels:

1. **An accurate hygrometer (humidity gauge).** Radio Shack sells a very accurate digital humidity and temperature gauge for about \$45.00.
2. **A guitar humidifier--**Dampit or Milburn Guitar Humidifier or equivalent. If your guitar will be exposed to a dry environment of 40% humidity or below for not more than a few hours, you should keep a moist guitar humidifier suspended inside the sound hole. Follow the instructions carefully. Humidifiers that are too wet or improperly used can cause serious damage to the instrument. Do not use guitar humidifiers that seal the sound hole. Do not use a guitar humidifier if humidity level is 42% or above: over-humidification can cause swelling, resulting in structural damage. Properly used, a guitar humidifier can only protect against dryness for a few hours. If humidity level will be 40% or below for more than a few hours, you need to use a room humidifier.
3. **A room humidifier.** If humidity levels in the room where you play or store your guitar fall to 40% or below for more than a few hours, you should use a room humidifier to bring levels up to between 45% and 55%. Humidifiers are widely available at reasonable prices at stores such as Sears. Be careful not to over humidify the room: do not use the humidifier when the relative humidity level remains at a constant 45% to 55% with the humidifier off. Also, do not store your guitar directly next to a room humidifier.

FRENCH POLISH FINISH:

Your guitar is finished with shellac applied via the traditional French polish method. This finish is thin and very delicate. It can easily be damaged by contact with moisture (including perspiration), alcohol, heat which exceeds room temperature, or if it is struck or scraped with a hard object such as a fingernail, shirt button, or belt buckle. When playing the guitar, you should always place a protective cloth between you and the guitar to screen the finish from perspiration and excessive body heat.

It is not unusual for a French polish finish to require touch-up every three to four years. If touch-up or repair of your guitar's finish is required, please contact me first.

CLEANING: To clean your guitar, use Meguiar's Mirror Glaze #10 or #18 on a soft cotton cloth. Rub the guitar gently with the moistened cloth for 5-10 seconds, let dry for about 20 seconds, then buff the mirror glaze off with a clean, dry cotton cloth. Do not wax this finish.

TUNING MACHINES:

It is a good idea to lubricate each gear once a year with a heavy lubricant such as vaseline. The sixth string tuning gear is often used more frequently to tune the sixth string down to D; if so, this gear should be lubricated more often as use requires.

FLEXING THE SOUNDBOARD:

Never, ever apply pressure to the soundboard or bridge area. It is easy to severely crack a soundboard by flexing the top. When passing the guitar to another person, it must be held by the neck, not the soundboard.

CHANGING STRINGS:

Before changing strings, always protect the top with a "String Bib" (supplied with your guitar) or equivalent to keep from inadvertently marking the soundboard. Follow the procedure and diagrams on the next page. Note: this procedure does not include burning a "ball" onto the end of the treble strings, which necessitates checking the strings at the tie block frequently while bringing up to tension. If a ball is used, reverse the way the strings are inserted into the tie block.

If you remove all the strings at once, it may take several hours after string tension is reapplied for your guitar to sound at its best.

Drawing coming soon.