

Do I Need A Humidifier For My Acoustic Guitar?

By Billy Jones

Why do I need a humidifier for my guitar?

Guitars are made of wood, and wood expands and contracts with changes in temperature and humidity. If you live in an area with significant weather changes, like Maryland (DMV), you should consider investing in a few tools to help keep your guitar healthy.

What kind of guitars need to be humidified?

Acoustic guitars are hollow, so they are the most affected by humidity changes. Electric guitars will also benefit from additional humidity in the winter months, but in my experience seem to be less affected. If your guitar (electric or acoustic) has wood that is “unfinished”, I would recommend using a humidifier during the winter months.



What happens if I don't humidify my guitar? Guitar bodies, fretboards, necks, and even bridges are mostly all made from wood. When the temperature and humidity in the air changes, wood expands and contracts and can cause damage to a guitar including: neck movement, fret buzz, warping, and cracking.

In the winter months with colder temperatures and the use of home heating, the air becomes more dry, meaning there is less moisture, which causes wood to contract. In the summer months with warmer temperatures and high humidity, meaning there is more moisture in the air, wood tends to expand.

What if my guitar seems fine? If you've had a guitar for years and never had any problems with it, chances are it's a guitar that doesn't react much to changes in the weather. These may include: cheaper acoustic guitars (which are often made of laminate instead of solid wood), and most electric guitars.



In my opinion, the more expensive the guitar, the more weatherizing care should be given. Why? More expensive guitars tend to be made from higher quality or “real” wood and that higher quality wood will be more affected by changes in temperature and humidity. Time for some anecdotal evidence. My first acoustic guitar was a \$350 Fender. It’s lived in Boston, LA, DC, Springfield, VA and Rockville, MD and it has never had any weather issues. I think it’s mainly due to the fact that it isn’t made of high quality wood, so it’s not affected the same way a higher end guitar, like a Martin or Taylor, would be.

I want to protect my guitar, what should I do? If your acoustic guitar cost less than \$500, chances are it won’t be affected much by changes in weather/humidity. If you own an acoustic guitar that you spent a considerable amount of money on (\$500+), I would begin to use a humidifier during the fall/winter to protect your instrument.

What should I use? One easy tip is to keep your acoustic guitar in a hard shell case during the winter months. Second, try using one of these humidifier systems to help maintain moisture in the wood. There are many to choose from including: sound hole cover types, string suspended types, and humidity packs to place inside the case. For my Martin acoustic guitar, I currently use both the Kyser sound hole cover and place two D’Addario Humidipak’s in the hard shell case.

Here are more general guitar care tips that you can use year-round to help protect your guitar from damage caused by temperature and humidity changes.

1. Never leave your acoustic or electric guitar in a car!
2. Keep your acoustic guitar in a hard shell case during the winter months.
3. Experiment with the humidifier suggestions above during winter months.
4. Keep your guitars in a room that doesn’t have frequent, drastic temperature changes (i.e. not in the basement or attic).
5. Have your guitar “set-up” once or twice a year.

About the author:

Billy Jones is the owner and head guitar instructor at Bones Jones Music in Rockville, Maryland. He started his business in 2011 and has been training successful guitar players ever since. At [Bones Jones Music](http://www.bonesjonesmusic.com), they offer a modern approach to learning and mastering the guitar!

