String Life

by **Frogstomp89** » 11 Mar 2012, 03:08

So how long do strings last? I put strings on my guitar about 5 month agos and I did tune it and the effects I am using just don't sound the same, maybe the strings are now no good?

I had em for about 5 months and My guitars stays in its case but is also in a basement.

Also I got an unopened set of strings in my basement, THEY WERE SEALED so should they be fine ?

Frogstomp89

Re: String Life

by **DB Cooper** » 11 Mar 2012, 03:32

Can't say for sure how long strings "last" - as I think that's very subjective. I know a guy who changes strings on all his acoustic guitars weekly. He swears there's a difference. I know another guy - very good player - who says he likes the sound of older strings on his Martin D-28. He changes strings less than annually.

I know - for me - I changes strings more often on my acoustics than on my electrics. On my main acoustic I change strings every 1-2 months. On my electric I go 6-12 months. I simply can't tell the difference on my electric that I can on my acoustic.

Also, I wipe down my strings with a flannel cloth every time I put my guitar back in the case. I don't like the feel of "dirty" strings.

DB Cooper

Re: String Life

by **Zerksies** » 11 Mar 2012, 03:49

Years ago i use to change them every 30 hours of use.Then it became once a month now it's once a season

Zerksies

Re: String Life

by **DarrinPA** » 11 Mar 2012, 03:58

I used to change my strings everytime I'd perform or record at the studio, which could have been months apart or one week apart. I haven't performed in a year so some of my guitars are strung with old strings. One year is usually the limit because they become rough and hurt my fingers. I prefer every 2-3 months, I do like the metalic sound of new strings.

But it all comes down to; Does it sound good to your ears? And does it feel good to your fingers?

DarrinPA

Re: String Life

by **Frogstomp89** » 11 Mar 2012, 04:42

ok cool, yeah its been like 6 months plus its in a basement so the life is prob became shorter

Frogstomp89

Re: String Life

by **benh432** » 11 Mar 2012, 05:32

I just change mine whenever I feel they need to be changed. It's probably about every few months or so. I have a friend that bought a brand new Fender Jaguar about 2 years ago and has never changed the strings. Playing his guitar is a nightmare.... but you know... to each his own I guess.

benh432

Re: String Life

by **verivorax** » 11 Mar 2012, 05:52

If you play for more than an hour every day, you should probably change strings every 2 weeks or so. That said, most people end up like Zerks, and doing it once a season, or twice a year.. But there's a lot to the life of a string.

Strings "die" both in terms of surface corrosion and simply by being stretched at tension. A string's life is also highly subjective - one's perception of the string's properties will determine if you think the string is "dead" or not..

For example, a pure nickel string on an electric guitar seems to last longer than a comparable nickel-plated steel string, as the latter has more brightness to lose in the first place. The same applies to 80/20 Bronze and Phosphor Bronze for acoustic guitar.. the 80/20 starts so bright and crisp that they start to seem "dead" to some people after

a single gig or session.

The multifarious coated strings out there certainly prolong the feel of a new string, although they can't prevent the string's tension (and flexibility) from changing across its life just like any other string. I would go back to a guitar strung with Elixirs after six months, and the strings would be slick and clean, but stiff and uninspiring. That said, many people love the coated strings and feel that the prolonged "new feel" is worth the expenditure.. Of the coated strings, Elixir has the best coating, IMO .

verivorax

Re: String Life

by **natthu** » 11 Mar 2012, 10:47

I never change my strings unless I'm changing to a different type (not often). I prefer dull worn out strings.

I leant my Jag to a friend a couple of weeks ago. The first thing she did was complain that the strings were old (they've been on the guitar since I bought it more than 2 years ago).
Anyway.... I got it back yesterday with a brand new set of strings installed... she obviously couln't deal with the old strings

I'm currently changing the guitars I use most over to flats so that I end up using a uniform standard set of strings. I have had flats on both my fretless tele and my Thurston JM for almost as long as I have had them (also on my Fretless J Bass).

After that I doubt I'll change any strings again until I break one (also not often).

natthu

Re: String Life

by **Franzoni** » 11 Mar 2012, 15:05

Every few gigs on the electrics...last night i broke the high E on the strat and it was a brand new set....i usually buy the top three unwound in loose sets in case one of them goes on a gig without having to break into a new set....

On the acoustic i put a set of elixir .13's on it and tuned the whole thing down to D.....sounds great to me and the Elixirs seem to really bed in well.they still have a bit of the new string zing but have the nice roundness of older strings as well if that makes sense...?.....

Franzoni

Re: String Life

by **Zerksies** » 11 Mar 2012, 16:01

I have tried elixirs on my acoustic I do find that they are stiff, But the tone stays with them for a very long time. I have ran a TONERITE on my martin with elixirs on since before Christmas 24/7 and they still sound new but stiff.So it might say with a TONERITE that they have several thousand hours of use on them and the still sound new.

Zerksies

Re: String Life

by **visserman** » 12 Mar 2012, 14:43

Good post and good question, and simple to answer but sofar.....

Ah well who cares eh? Stings are made out of metal (or nylon) and they get stretched, this is what makes them loose their tone.
Put on new set of strings and do not play for about 5 months and the strings are gone: Becaue they have been on the guitar for 5 months, which makes them stretched, however do you really need to change them then? Well this is subjective and here is where the different stories and opinions come in. If you feel the strings are still fine you do not need to change them simple as that.

Your Hands: Sweaty hands: Your strings may loose their tone quicker as the sweat will corrode the strings. Wiping them down, as what some of you mentioned before, does help, but you may need to change your strings quicker compared to someone who does not have sweaty palms.

Low strings: Your low E, A and D loose their tone quickest, they may discolour. Compare the string over the fretboard to the string at the beginning of the nut (the bit from the tuner up to the nut) If the colour is very different, change them.
Usually the dirt will show up on these strings.

Having said all of this, and let us say you wipe down your strings and your strings still look like new, they still wear out. **Other visiable Issues** : Fretdints in all your strings, once you have these marks the string will not intonate as well as it can, and it may be time to change them.

Personally I would take on different habits for changing strings and see what works, changes are the habits will be different from time to time.
Usually putting on a new set of strings will be noticeable, but I also have had moments when I did not hear much difference, usually these were moments when I did use the Elixirs.

If monies are an issue: Instead of buying new strings you can take old strings off and boil them in a saucepan with water, get water to boil for a few minutes and strings will sound as new once they come out of the saucepan: The dirt has been removed and strings will sound like fresh for a very short time.

Enjoy!!

visserman

Re: String Life

by **Dirk** » 12 Mar 2012, 17:26

> *visserman wrote:*
> ***If monies are an issue**: Instead of buying new strings you can take old strings off and boil them in a saucepan with water, get water to boil for a few minutes and strings will sound as new once they come out of the saucepan: The dirt has been removed and strings will sound like fresh for a very short time.*

Adding a tablespoon of baking soda will help this process even further, this also works greatly for bass guitar strings.

Dirk

Re: String Life

by **Franzoni** » 12 Mar 2012, 18:27

..haven't done that in years....but it does work.....

Franzoni

Re: String Life

by **Pieces Of The Night** » 13 Mar 2012, 20:32

If you want to extend the life of your strings or clean them just get something like Fast Fret. I saw someone mentioned boiling strings EVH used to do that but with new strings.

Pieces Of The Night

Re: String Life

by **Pepe** » 13 Mar 2012, 20:35

I used Fast Fret a few years ago - for a year or so. I put it away again, because I didn't like the feel of my strings after applying this stuff. And I really believe that my strings got worse in sound and had a shorter life time when I used it.

Pepe

Re: String Life

by **Franzoni** » 14 Mar 2012, 16:35

+1.....Stopped using that stuff a long time ago.....also stopped using Lemon Oil as i think it was bad for the fretboard.....

Funnily enough i think a bit of Mr Sheen or whatever is on special at Aldi works wonders and sometimes when i'm changing strings i might rub a bit of virgin Olive Oil into the fretboard (only on the rosewood/ebony board guitars)....but as i said before i normally change my string every few gigs anyway....and i only ever boiled bass guitar strings as a short term measure.....

Franzoni

Re: String Life

by **Pieces Of The Night** » 14 Mar 2012, 17:39

I your using a fret board cleaner odds are that it's mineral oil or lemon oil which is just mineral oil with a few extra chemicals. Fast Fret is just a stick soaked in mineral oil so it works as both a string and fret board cleaner.

Pieces Of The Night

Re: String Life

by **Pepe** » 14 Mar 2012, 17:46

For rosewood (and similar) fretboards I use oil that is intended for wood instruments. Doesn't smell nor does it harm the wood.

Pepe

Re: String Life

by **Feedbacker** » 15 Mar 2012, 02:27

When I started off learning to play 'several years ago', and money was short, I'd pretty much keep a set of strings on my (electric) guitar for ever - if one broke, it'd get replaced, but that's about it. I'd rather spend the few quid a new set cost on a second-hand LP (cue the 'hearts & flowers' violin background music)
Occasionally I'd go mad and fit a whole new set - and I loved the twangy trebly tone I'd get, for a few weeks before it died down and the strings were played in. But for most of the time I'd play strings that were months, maybe a year or so old, and was used to that 'playability' and tonality.
I read a feature about (I think) the Stranglers and their touring gear, and was amazed that Hugh Cornwell had a new set of strings fitted for every gig. It suited his trebly, biting tone a treat of course, plus if you're a pro signed to a big label bankrolling your tour, that's the sort deal you can have.
But I also learned somewhere that Eric Clapton prefers played-in strings and hates new ones, changing strings as little as possible. So it's each to his own, I suppose.
As a purely amateur player, twanging away at home, it must be a few years since I changed a full set of strings. Obviously, very light gauge strings coupled with string-bending vibrato frenzies = breakages. I recommend using the heaviest 'top E' you're comfortable with; keep them clean if you've been playing in a sweaty, humid room; and trust your fingers, especially if you've not played a guitar for a while - if you pick it up, and the strings 'feel' grotty, then it might be time to change them.

Feedbacker

Re: String Life

by **skugga** » 15 Mar 2012, 04:08

Way back when I was finishing high school and doing regular public recitals I'd change strings at least the day before a recital without fail. So that's probably once every 1-2 weeks. I was playing on average 3-4hours a day back then and was 100x better than I am now . Damn you day jobs!

After that when I was rehearsing regularly with a band it was pretty much the same. It was a loud band and I played pretty aggressively so strings didn't last that long anyway.

Back then I only had one main guitar which I had 9-42's on it. I became very quick at changing strings on a Floyd Rose.

These days I've got more guitars and less time to play so strings don't get changed as much. I'm more likely to change strings to try out a different gauge than to replace with the same.

That being said I prefer the sound of new strings to old for the most part.

skugga

Re: String Life

by **sclitheroe** » 15 Mar 2012, 16:11

I was on a strict once every 30 day regimen, and then I stopped, and went about 3 months between changes - now I'm less happy with the tone and feel of the fresh strings than I was with the old ones, which is, of course, the exact opposite of how I felt when I was replacing monthly.

Can't win.

sclitheroe

Re: String Life

by **Laurie** » 15 Mar 2012, 16:32

> *sclitheroe wrote:*
> *I was on a strict once every 30 day regimen, and then I stopped, and went about 3 months between changes - now I'm less happy with the tone and feel of the fresh strings than I was with the old ones, which is, of course, the exact opposite of how I felt when I was replacing monthly.*
>
> *Can't win.*

Calgary is an interesting place... because the humidity is SO low, strings don't tend to corrode like nearly everywhere else. I think what you are seeing is that older strings sound fine... as long as there is no corrosion.

Laurie

Re: String Life

by **sclitheroe** » 15 Mar 2012, 16:54

It's not like your hands get very sweaty in a Calgary basement either...most nights I need a space heater to be comfortable practicing.

sclitheroe

Re: String Life

by **DB Cooper** » 15 Mar 2012, 18:37

Not to sidetrack this string discussion *too much*...but I remember the '88 Calgary Winter Olympic Games...my wife and I became so entranced with the Calgary scene and surroundings that we seriously considered relocating there.

Not quite sure where I was going with this...

Please resume your regularly scheduled discussion.

DB Cooper

Re: String Life

by **DarrinPA** » 15 Mar 2012, 21:43

Maybe Canada would be good for you. You could lose some of the heat. You would think that they'd stop looking for you after all this time, but I guess that's what happens when you hi-jack a plane and run with the ransom money.

As for basements; I really hate bring my guitars into people's basements because of the shortened string life.

DarrinPA

Re: String Life

by **natthu** » 16 Mar 2012, 00:26

> *Laurie wrote;*
> *...I think what you are seeing is that older strings sound fine... as long as there is no corrosion.*

Supposedly John Frusciante used a vintage Jaguar to record pretty much all of the Chili Pepper's "Blood Sugar Sex Magik" album. The strings on it were so old they were rusty. He didn't change them once. I'm not sure how true this story is... just something I heard...

natthu

Re: String Life

by **Pepe** » 16 Mar 2012, 08:33

Was he able to wash off all the smell from his fingers?

I really hate the smell of old strings. Of REALLY old strings!

Pepe

Re: String Life

by **BearBoy** » 16 Mar 2012, 12:35

Since I started unsing flatwounds I haven't felt (heard) the need to replace strings anywhere near as often as I used to with roundwounds. The strings on my Jag and Dot are both well over a year old and still sound fine. I used to notice a massive drop off in sound with roundwounds after a month or so. Never really liked the sounds of brand new strings for a couple of days either. Too bright and twangy.

> *Pepe wrote:*
> *I really hate the smell of old strings. Of REALLY old strings!*

I don't think I have ever had strings so old that they started to smell

BearBoy

Re: String Life

by **jungleboy867** » 20 Mar 2012, 03:33

If I put on a standard pack, id give it a week before they begin to rust. I am one of those unfortunate guitarists who sweat through their fingers while playing. Though when I use coated strings, a week turns into about 6 months of life.

jungleboy867

Re: String Life

by **Pepe** » 20 Mar 2012, 09:34

> *BearBoy wrote:*
> *I don't think I have ever had strings so old that they started to smell*

In the music shop I work in, I have to replace strings of various guitars. From time to time, people come to us with classical guitars that have been hiding in some corner in the basement or the attic for decades. Those silver wound strings have become black and stink so much that I have to wash my hands at least two times to get rid of that smell.

Pepe

Re: String Life

by **Franzoni** » 20 Mar 2012, 10:10

Why don't you get a box of rubber/latex gloves .....?.... .....

Franzoni

Re: String Life

by **Pepe** » 20 Mar 2012, 10:20

Nah, that would be too easy!

Pepe