

Adjusting the truss rod on a Gramann Handmade Guitar

First, make sure the truss rod really needs adjusting. The truss rod adjustment is for changing the amount of relief in the neck, not for adjusting the height of the action. Guitars are made of wood. Wood bends and wood absorbs moisture, so changes in the guitar are normal. The action can change from at least three things:

1. Seasonal movement of the wood in the guitar body. You may need to have a winter saddle made for the instrument if the action gets too low in the winter. I will make you one, if necessary, but I have to have the guitar in front of me to do it.
2. Small changes in the body as a result of constant string tension. Usually, changing the saddle height takes care of this. Sometimes a neck reset is needed. This is part of your warranty. A reset on one of my instruments can often be done in less than an hour.
3. Too much or too little relief in the neck. Here is where the truss rod adjustment comes in.

To check neck relief, fret the instrument at the first and twelfth frets and



look for air under the strings at about the seventh fret. Enough to slip an index card between the seventh fret and the string is the way I like it. Some players like a little more, some a bit less. Most folks will agree that if it's a sixteenth of an inch or more, it's probably too much. In the picture on the right,



you can see just a little air between the string and the frets. The guitar pictured buzzes if you hit it hard and plays cleanly if you pluck it moderately. That's the way I like it. Some like it different.



I will do this for you (for free of course) or most luthiers can do it. If you want to avoid sending me the guitar or finding another luthier, here's how to do it yourself: Adjusting the truss rod is a three or four handed job. Through the soundhole, slip the long end of a 5 mm allen wrench into the end of the truss rod with the short end sticking up. (Be careful with the metal tools around your guitar finish.) Put a 5mm nut driver over the short end (this gives you some leverage). While someone else holds the neck over his(her) knee to remove the tension on the truss rod, turn the wrench toward the treble strings to decrease the relief or toward the bass strings to increase the relief. Don't force the

wrench. It doesn't take much of a turn to have an effect (although the first adjustment on a young guitar can sometimes require a 180 degree or more turn of the wrench.)

I don't mind doing any of these adjustments for you. If you have concerns about changes in your guitar, feel free to pop me an e-mail or give me a call.

Hand-Made Guitars by Bob Gramann

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