

## Packing a guitar for shipment



Guitars are shipped every day without a hitch. Manufacturers use heavy duty, brand new, properly sized cardboard boxes with cardboard inserts to stabilize the lower bout of the guitar case and the neck portion. Often no other packing is used or (apparently) needed.

Good guitars should travel first class, in hardshell cases. If yours has a soft-

shell case, buy a better one or keep the guitar at home. This applies to shipping either acoustics or electrics. Start with the heaviest guitar shipping box you can find at your local music store. My favorites are the boxes from Martin, Gibson, Fender and Guild.

UPS, FedEx, DHL, and other shippers do a great job of handling all kinds of fragile and expensive stuff. When shipping exceptionally valuable guitars, talk with your shipper to make sure that the full amount you're thinking of is covered in case of a lost guitar. (It happens.)

### How I box up a guitar

Remove any unnecessary items from the case's interior accessory box, and pack what you do leave in there well. Make sure that the lid can't open.

Tune down the strings until they're slack. During a fall, pressure from tuned-up strings can easily break a headstock on a Gibson. Fenders can handle almost any fall if packed well.

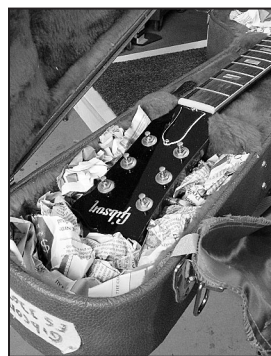
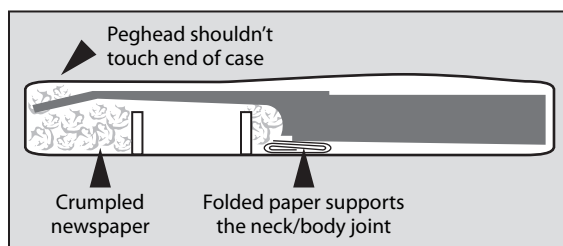
Slide something under the strings, protecting the nut and frets (cloth, paper towel, whatever). Protect an electric guitar's pickguard and pickups by sliding folded paper over them. With an archtop, pad all around the bridge with paper pushed under the strings and tail-piece, or remove the bridge entirely.

Be sure that the tuners are securely in the peghead and can't vibrate loose to rattle around inside the case.

See that the neck rests in its support cradle. Don't depend on the cradle to keep the guitar in place. The headstock shouldn't be able to touch the case, and it should be supported all around with wadded balls of newspaper. For acoustics, fold some paper and support the back of the guitar under the neck block area if there's a gap between it and the case.



The guitar shouldn't move inside when you shake the case. If it does, pad the waist and bout areas with paper.



Drop a layer of crushed newspaper balls into the bottom of your shipping box, and lower the case into it. Center the case in the box (below) and fill the box snugly on all sides with paper balls; use a stick to push them down where you can't reach.

If your box still has the original cardboard fillers inside, use them and/or the crushed newspaper. Stiff cardboard placed in the right areas can really firm up a box. Use gummed, fiber-reinforced tape to seal the box.

Clearly print the shipping address on the box. I always print "Fragile, Please" on all four sides (I think that adding the word "please" is important), and draw a picture of a broken long-stemmed wine glass—the international "fragile" symbol.

Insure the guitar for more than it's worth, pay the UPS person, say your prayers and you're done. You'll be in good shape.

