

VINTAGE YAMAHA FG NUT REPLACEMENT INSTRUCTIONS

A guitar's nut can need to be replaced for a few reasons:

1. Part of it is broken.
2. Some of the string slots have been worn down due years of tuning and changing strings and the strings are buzzing when playing open notes.
3. You want to change the string spacing. A wider string spacing can make playing easier, but if the strings are too close to the edge, and you bend notes, you may have problems with the strings slipping off the edge of the fretboard.
4. You want to change the nut material, although the nut doesn't affect the guitars sound as much as the saddle.

Unlike modern guitars, vintage Yamaha FG's were nearly fully assembled when the final finish was applied. The neck was glued to the body and the nut was glued to the neck. The finish is partially holding the nut to the neck. An attempt to knock it loose will fail or you will take chunks of finish and wood with it.

OLD NUT REMOVAL:

To be able to successfully remove the nut you need to cut the finish between the nut and neck:

1. Remove the truss rod cover.
2. Remove the strings.
3. Put a piece of masking tape on the headstock behind the nut.
4. Use a sharp razor blade or scalpel to cut the finish between the nut and neck on the sides and back of the nut.
5. Continue to cut between the back of the nut & headstock until the nut is free. I used to tap the nut out from the fretboard side but that typically results in wood still being stuck to the bottom of the nut.
6. Be sure the surface of the neck where the nut sat is flat and free of glue.

NEW NUT INSTALLATION:

The new nut has had the height left slightly oversize. You will have to sand the bottom to get the nut action correct.

1. Place the new nut centered in the nut slot and tune the guitar to STANDARD D. When setting the nut height I tune the guitar two steps down to hopefully not break the strings during the few times you will have to tighten and loosen them. Be aware this will affect the final nut height very slightly, maybe .010". Tune the low E and B strings to standard pitch to verify this.
2. This check is assuming your frets are in good condition. Any divots are going to cause erroneous readings and result in a low nut.
3. One at a time press the strings at the 3rd fret. There should be a very small gap at the 1st fret, checked by pressing directly on the 1st fret and feeling a little movement. It should be very hard to see but you should feel and hear the string hit the fret. All strings must be checked. IF YOU ARE TUNED TO D there should be about .010" gap, about 2-3 thicknesses of paper. The low E can be slightly more, about .005", taper the gap down for each string to the high E. Feeler gages would be more accurate than paper.
4. Make a mark on the bottom side of the nut with the gap for each E string. Be very accurate.
5. Sand to the lines on a flat surface. Be careful to take it off evenly front to back.
6. Go back to step 1 and check again.
7. When you think you're good tune the guitar up to standard E & check again.
8. Ideally you want to be able to fit a piece of paper under the strings at the 1st with the 3rd pressed, but not much more. But there should be barely be some visible movement and you should hear an audible "plink". If not, you've sanded too much.
9. If you sand off too much, all is not lost. Stick the bottom of the nut to a self-stick label and trim off the excess flush with a razor, and try again.
10. After the nut action is correct add a small drop of wood glue to the bottom of the nut and install the strings.