



## How To Series

### Basic Paint / Lacquer Stripping

Now matter what your instrument is or what type of finish it has, removing the finish can be a difficult task. Great care must be taken not to damage the instrument. In this "How to Sheet" we'll describe how to remove the common types of finish.

#### Oil/wax finish:

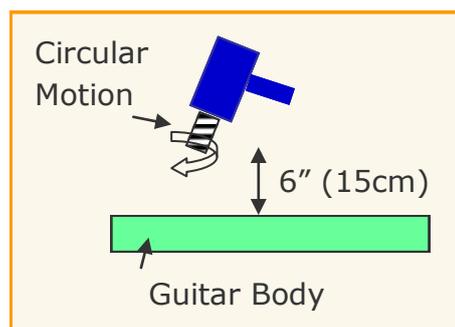
Using acetone on a cloth, rub over the instrument several times over to remove as much oil/wax as possible. You may find using a cabinet scraper or Stanley blade useful to remove wax in-between washing with acetone. Allow to dry and it's ready for the sanding stages to get it prepared for refinishing. If refinishing with paint/lacquer, wash again with acetone to ensure all the oil/wax has been removed.

Take care not to get acetone on any plastic i.e. binding.

#### Cellulose or Thin Lacquer Finish:

Using a hot air gun, carefully heat a small area at a time whilst keeping the hot air gun moving in circular motions about six inches above the finish until the finish softens. DO NOT get the heat gun too close or heat one area for more than a few seconds at a time. Once the finish is soft it can be scraped away using a cabinet scraper. Cabinet scrapers come in a variety of shapes so you should be able to strip every part of the instrument. Avoid using chisels or trying to scrape into the grain. (For advice on sharpening your cabinet scraper, see our How to Sheet, [Sharpening a Cabinet Scraper.](#))

You should find that stripping a neck is easily done without a heat gun – simply scrape, however, a little heat can be used if the finish is difficult to remove.



You must take **extra care** around plastics and when using a heat gun care must be taken not to soften any glue joints. You want to apply enough heat quickly to soften the finish *only* – prolonged heat exposure will damaged the wood.

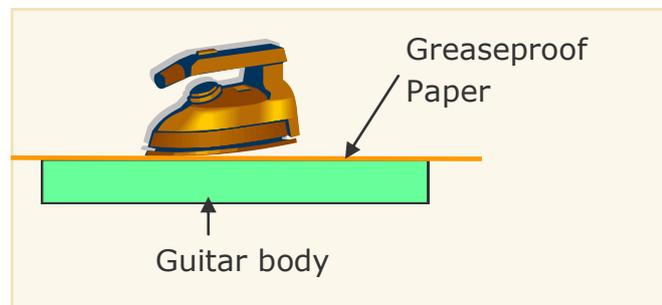
Cellulose is a volatile substance and will catch alight if you over heat it, it's recommended that this procedure is done in a well ventilated area and using appropriate protection against inhalation of the fumes.

### **Polyester/polyurethane/acrylic finishes:**

Follow the same instructions as removing cellulose finishes but more heat may be required to shift polyester.

Polyester can sometimes come off very easily with a little heat, sometimes it can be a very difficult finish to remove. Either way, heat is still the best way to remove it.

If you find that the finish comes off easily you can also use a household iron and some grease proof paper to quickly heat the finish. Simply Iron as you would your clothes using the grease proof paper between the iron and the finish. The finish will start to lift and come away in strips – this is the only time a wide chisel should be used to lift the finish. Simply lift the finish off with the chisel, if you have to use any force the finish is not hot or loose enough.



If the finish proves to be difficult to remove simply keep heating and scraping.

You must take extra care around plastics and when using a heat gun care must be taken not to soften any glue joints. You want to apply enough heat quickly to soften to the finish *only* – prolonged heat exposure will damaged the wood.

### **Chemical Paint Strippers**

We do not recommend using chemical strippers, it takes longer – it's very messy – and can cause problems with dyes/stains at the finishing stages.