



# Solo EXP Style DIY Electric Guitar Kit

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Assembly Manual  
EXK-1

**V 1.02**

## Materials List

- Threaded hex bushings (6 pcs, 6 flat washers included)
- Tuning machines (6 pcs, 6 mounting screws included)
- Truss Rod Cover (3 mounting screws included)
- Neck
- Strings (6 pcs)
- Strap Buttons (2 pcs, 2 mounting screws included)
- Neck Pickup (2 mounting screws with 2 springs attached)
- Bridge Pickup (2 mounting screws with 2 springs attached)
- Tune-o-matic Bridge with 2 threaded thumbwheel studs and 2 bushings
- Stop Bar Tailpiece with 2 height-adjustable threaded mounting studs and 2 knurled bushings
- Body
- Neck Plate (4 mounting screws included)
- Pickguard (6 mounting screws included)
- Back cavity cover (2 screws included)
- 3-Way Pickup Toggle Switch (includes knurled mounting nut and flat washer)
- Control Knobs (3)
- Control Potentiometers (3 pcs, 1 capacitor for tone control included)
- Hex Wrench and Allen Key
- Output Jack with Plate, mounting nut and washer
- Cord
- Wires, including ground wire

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## Show Off Your Custom Built Guitar!

When you have your guitar finished, please take a few pictures and send them to us for potential posting into the picture gallery on our website.



**Post your photos to our Facebook page**

<http://Facebook.com/SoloMusicGear>



**Post your photos to The Solo Café**

<http://TheSoloCafe.com>

Remember, you can always find us online at <http://SoloMusicGear.com> to upgrade your parts, try a new kit, or ask us a question.

Thank you for purchasing a Solo DIY guitar kit. This unfinished guitar kit has everything for building an electric bass guitar – you will need only some basic tools and finishing supplies. All challenging wood cutting, drilling and shaping is already professionally done, as well as fret leveling and dressing.

## **1. CHECKLIST**

Before you start working on your DIY guitar project, please check all the parts received in this kit using the materials list above.

## **2. TOOLS AND MATERIALS NEEDED**

You will need the following tools and materials:

1. Sand Paper (180, 240 and 320 grit)
2. Sanding Block
3. Soldering Iron & Solder
4. Masking Tape
5. Finishing Supplies
6. Screwdrivers
7. Power Drill

## **3. SAFETY MEASURES**

Some woodworking skills are required to complete this project. Always be aware of the necessary safety precautions and follow them – be sure to use safety glasses and a dust mask when you are working with any tools. If you are a novice, you should look for help and guidance of a more experienced friend. And never forget that it's always better safe than sorry.

## **4. FINISHING THE BODY AND NECK**

Before you start finishing the neck, please inspect the frets and the fingerboard. Even though all wood is kiln-dried it may still shrink a little so you may get sharp fret edges.

In this case you need to use a fine needle file (Emory boards for finger nails can be used instead) to remove all sharp edges: first make all fret edges flat with the fretboard edges on both sides, then use masking tape on the top of the fretboard to protect it, and work on each fret's edge to smooth it by slightly rounding it. Before removing the masking tape, consider polishing the frets with fine steel wool.

**STEP 1** – The body and neck have been coated with a poly resin sealant. They need to be sanded before

finishing. **DO NOT SAND THE FINGERBOARD.**

For sanding both neck and body, use a flat sanding block for all flat surfaces and by hand for edges and rounded/curved surfaces. Start with 180 grit sandpaper, continue with 240 and finish with 320, always moving along the grain only. Before the final sanding, wipe the wood with a damp cloth and let it dry to raise the wood grain.

STEP 2 – There are many different ways to apply finish to your guitar. Do a little research to decide which type of finish you want to use. One good starting point is to review tutorials at the Project Guitar website: <http://www.projectguitar.com/tut/tutorial5.htm>

STEP 3 - For any type of spraying finish (lacquer or paint) you will need to mask three areas with masking tape: neck pocket on the body, neck's fingerboard and truss rod nut. Press the tape tightly to the wood, not allowing any gaps at the edges, to completely prevent the finish leaking to these areas.

STEP 4 - You will also need to make hangers for both the body and neck (if you want to apply any spraying finish). Make them from a strong metal wire (wire dress/coat hanger can be used for it).

STEP 5 – Apply the finish by following the manufacturer instructions. Remember that spraying the finish is not an easy process as it requires certain skill and experience – you might want to practice first on some scrap wood. Always remember your safety – work only in a well ventilated area, away from any open fire and wear a respirator mask and safety glasses.

STEP 6 – Final polishing for high gloss finishes can be done manually or using a power drill with a foam polishing pad. The finishing tools and materials are readily available in many automotive/hardware supplies stores.

TIP: Consider an oil rubbed finish (sometimes called “wipe-on oil finish”) as a good and safe alternative. Tru-Oil® (known as a “Gun Stock Finish”, based on Linseed Oil) or Waterlox® (Processed Tung Oil) is highly recommended. Oil finishing takes longer, but it is very safe and easy to apply and a high quality finish can be achieved, even by a novice.

## 5. ASSEMBLY

STEP 1 – Install the Machine Heads on the neck's headstock. Use the threaded hex peghead bushings with washers - initially tightening them with your fingers only. Align each machine head to match the pilot holes for the mounting screws and use the screws to secure the heads. Finally, tighten the hex bushings with a socket wrench (or regular hex wrench).

STEP 2 - Attach the neck to the body each using 4 screws, a neckplate and a setter. This step can be performed later as you may find it easier to assemble the body without the neck.

STEP 3 – Install the mounting bushings for the bridges and the tailpiece. Before pressing in the mounting

bushings, you must insert the ground wire into the small angled hole on the inside wall of the hole for a tailpiece bushing (the one closer to the controls cavity). Strip the end of the wire (up to an inch long), wrap it around the bottom of the tailpiece bushing and tap the bushing tightly into the hole - don't forget to separate the mounting studs first! For tapping, you can use either a plastic headed hammer, or a regular hammer, by placing a small piece of wood on the top of a bushing to prevent any potential damage. Tap the other tailpiece bushing and then the separated bushings for the bridge. Now screw in the mounting studs.

STEP 4 – Wire all electronics. For wiring instructions, use the diagram on the last page of this manual.

Before mounting the Pickguard and jackplate check out the electronics: plug it in with a cable to the amp and see if all switches and pots are working properly by slightly tapping the magnetic poles of each pickup with a screwdriver. Now, properly align the Pickguard and jackplate with pilot holes for the screws and tighten them down. Do not over tighten the screws as it can crack the plastic (be careful with other plastic parts to be screwed down).

STEP 5 - Install the tailpiece and the bridge – note that the bridge must be installed with the saddle adjustment screws turned towards the pickups. The saddles are pre-notched to match the neck radius. Inspect the notches and if they have any sharp edges smooth them down with a fine needle file or fine grit sandpaper to prevent string breakage.

STEP 6 – The fretboard has been pre-oiled at the factory, but before stringing your guitar, you may want to apply some more oil to the Rosewood fingerboard to protect it from possible shrinking and cracking. Tung oil or Linseed oil work well, or it's OK to use Walnut or Olive oil. One thin layer is enough. Wipe the fingerboard thoroughly with a clean cloth.

STEP 7 – Install the strings by inserting them through the holes on the back of the tailpiece, over the bridge saddles. There are a few different ways to wrap the strings around the post of a tuning head. When threading the string through the post hole, bring it tight before wrapping it in the opposite direction of the threading, under and then back over the string and around the post, holding it tight as you tighten to pitch. Wrapping each string around two-three times should be enough.

## 6. TUNING AND SETUP

Tuning a 6-string guitar:

The open strings of a guitar, from the thickest to thinnest, in standard tuning are:

- E (2nd octave) – the thickest (or lowest sounding) string - is the 6th string
- A (2nd octave) – is the 5th
- D (3rd octave) – is the 4th
- G (3rd octave) – is the 3rd
- B (3rd octave) – is the 2nd
- E (4th octave) – the thinnest (or highest sounding) is the 1st string.

There are different methods to tune a guitar. Using a digital tuner is the easiest way. However, it is good to learn tuning (and checking the accuracy of tuning) by ear with natural harmonics, unisons, octaves etc.

Guitar playability and intonation depends on its setup, so you may want to spend some time mastering the necessary skills – be persistent in finding the optimal action (string height), neck relief and intonation throughout the entire neck.

### Adjusting Strings Height:

String height is adjusted by the bridge height of tune-o-matic bridge. You may use a flat screwdriver to turn the adjustable studs – turning the stud clockwise sets the bridge lower, turning it counterclockwise sets it higher. Thicker strings need more room for vibration without “buzzing” (touching frets) so the bridge must be set up a bit higher on bass (wound) strings side. Low action allows easier fretting and faster playing. Recommended measurements for electric guitar with low action:

For the 1st String (the thinnest) – height at the 1st fret: 0.01” – 0.016” (0.25 – 0.4mm); at the 12th fret: .063” – .078” (1.6 - 2mm).

For the 6th String (the thickest) – height at the 1st fret: 0.016” – 0.024” (0.4 – 0.6mm); at the 12th fret: .078” – .01” (2 – 2.5mm).

The height at the first fret can be adjusted by cutting deeper slots for strings at the nut. However, it needs a very precise job not to spoil the nut. If you are not sure that you can do it properly, stay with a factory pre-cut nut.

A higher string action makes the guitar harder to play, yet some musicians may prefer it. Tailpiece height can regulate string pressure over the bridge, changing both tone and sustain.

### **Adjusting Neck Relief:**

The truss rod compensates for string tension and allows adjusting the neck relief. You may need such adjustment due to changes of humidity and temperature (or if you switch strings to a different gauge). Lay a straight edge on the frets of a properly tuned guitar and measure the clearance at the 8th fret (alternatively you can put a capo on the first fret and press down 6th string at 16th fret – then the height of the string at the 8th fret will show you the clearance). Optimal relief for an electric guitar neck must be very small – around .001" - .002" (0.25 - 0.5mm). Turning the truss rod nut (with the included Allen key) clockwise will reduce neck relief and turning it counterclockwise will increase the relief. Be very careful with truss rod adjustments and never turn the nut more than ¼ of a turn at a time.

### **Adjusting Intonation:**

The “speaking length” (or “working length”) of each string can be adjusted by turning the saddle position adjustment screw. The best intonation can be achieved when the string fretted at the 12 fret sounds precisely an octave higher than the open string. If the fretted string sounds sharper you need to increase the working length of the string by moving the saddle away from the neck. If it sounds flat, you need to shorten the working length of the string by moving the saddle towards the neck. The alternative way to intonate your guitar is to compare a natural octave harmonic of the open string (you can get it by touching the string exactly above the 12th and picking it) to the pitch of the string fretted at the 12th fret and adjusting the saddle position so that they sound the same. This method is less accurate because the fretted string sounds a bit sharper due to the height of the string, and the higher the action, the sharper it gets.

### **Adjusting Pickup Height:**

Before adjusting the pickup height, make sure that both the volume and tone controls on your guitar are set to the full (“10”) position. Get your amp set to a medium/low volume and all tone controls to the middle. You will get a better picture of the pickup’s tone change during its height adjustment with a clear sound.

There is no universal “optimal” pickup height position in a setup – it depends on playing style and personal preferences of a guitarist. Remember: bringing a pickup closer to the strings makes it sound brighter, but bringing it too close will make the magnetic field of the pickup interfere with the vibration of a string which will, not only result in reduced sustain, but may also cause complex harmonics sound rather unpleasant. Moving a pickup too far from the strings will result in loss of its output signal and some higher frequencies. It’s not necessary to maintain an even height of the pickup – you may find it more satisfactory sounding by setting it somewhat angled, depending on what you are looking for in the output sound.

There are a few mm of real usable range where you can find the pickup tone that you’ll like the best.

## EXK-1 Wiring Diagram

