

# Left or Right

The world is not always kind to people who are not right-handed.

It is thought that approximately 80% of the worldwide population are right-handed whereas only 10% are left-handed. It therefore follows that the majority of players will be right-handed and the majority of instruments will also be right-handed.

Converting a right-handed instrument for a left-handed player is not simply a case of swapping the strings around and holding the instrument the other way round. There are a range of potential problems to overcome...

1.. The nut (the piece of bone at the head-end of the fretboard) will have slots cut into it commensurate with the gauge of string that is intended to pass through it. (The thinner top E string of a guitar requires a much narrower slot than that of the low E string.) It may be possible to remove the nut and turn it around but it's more likely that you'll need to have a new nut.

2.. There may be a similar problem with the saddle (the narrow piece of bone set into the bridge). If this is compensated for intonation (the requirement for lower, thicker strings to have a slightly longer vibrating string length), you won't be able to turn that around: you'll need a left hand saddle.

3.. Worse, the bridge of some instruments (acoustic guitars mainly) have compensation for high and low notes so that too may need to be replaced. Electric guitars often have adjustable compensation for each string so that is less of a problem but the bridge would need to be dismantled and re-built with everything turned around.

4.. The internal bracing of a left-handed acoustic guitar is often a mirror image of its right-handed counter-part and changing that is all but impossible.

5.. Other problems include the position of any electric controls (volume, pickup switching, etc) , the fact that electric pickups may be designed for left or right, and pick guards being in the wrong place makes right to left conversion impractical.

