

Telecaster Setup Checklist

Printable Step-by-Step Reference Card

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0.1 Telecaster Setup Checklist

Print this page and keep it at your workbench. Follow the steps in order.

0.1.1 Before You Start

- Fresh strings installed and stretched
- Guitar tuned to pitch (standard or your preferred tuning)
- Tools ready: feeler gauges, ruler/action gauge, correct truss rod wrench, screwdriver
- Clean workspace with good lighting

0.1.2 Step 1: Neck Relief (Truss Rod)

Target: 0.010" (0.25mm) gap at the 8th fret

- Capo at 1st fret
- Press low E string at last fret (or where neck meets body)
- Measure gap between string bottom and 8th fret crown with feeler gauge
- If gap is too large: tighten truss rod (clockwise) — max 1/8 turn
- If gap is too small: loosen truss rod (counter-clockwise) — max 1/8 turn
- Retune to pitch after each adjustment
- Re-measure and repeat if needed

Truss Rod Location	Wrench Size
Headstock (Modern/MIM)	4mm Allen
Headstock (American)	1/8" Allen
Heel (Vintage/Squier CV)	Phillips screwdriver

My measurement: _____

0.1.3 Step 2: String Action (Saddle Height)

Measure at the 12th fret — bottom of string to top of fret

String	Target Height
High E (1st)	1.6mm (4/64")
B (2nd)	1.7mm
G (3rd)	1.8mm
D (4th)	1.9mm
A (5th)	1.9mm
Low E (6th)	2.0mm (5/64")

- Measure each string at the 12th fret
- Adjust saddle height screws (tiny Allen screws on each saddle)
- Retune after each adjustment
- Re-measure until all strings are within spec

Tele Note: If you have a 3-saddle bridge (vintage style), each saddle controls two strings. You'll need to compromise between the two — aim for the average of both target heights.

My measurements: E ___ B ___ G ___ D ___ A ___ E ___

0.1.4 Step 3: Pickup Height

Fret the last fret, measure from pole piece top to string bottom

Pickup	Bass Side (Low E)	Treble Side (High E)
Neck	2.8mm (7/64")	2.4mm (6/64")
Bridge	2.4mm (6/64")	2.0mm (5/64")

- Press strings at last fret
- Measure neck pickup — bass side, then treble side
- Measure bridge pickup — bass side, then treble side
- Adjust with screwdriver (screws on each side of pickup)
- Clockwise = lower, counter-clockwise = raise

My measurements: Neck B ___ T ___ | Bridge B ___ T ___

0.1.5 Step 4: Intonation

Compare 12th-fret harmonic to 12th-fret fretted note

- Plug into a chromatic tuner
- Play 12th-fret harmonic on each string — should read in tune
- Fret the same string at the 12th fret — compare to harmonic
- If fretted note is **sharp**: move saddle **away** from neck (lengthen string)
- If fretted note is **flat**: move saddle **toward** neck (shorten string)
- Retune the open string after each saddle adjustment
- Repeat until harmonic and fretted note match within +/- 1 cent

Tele Note: On 3-saddle bridges, intonation is a compromise between paired strings. Compensated saddles (angled or staggered) help significantly.

0.1.6 Final Check

- Play open chords — listen for buzz or dead notes
- Play barre chords up the neck — check for choking
- Bend strings on upper frets — notes should sustain, not die
- Check tuning stability — strum hard, retune, repeat
- If everything sounds good: you're done!

Specs based on Fender factory recommendations. Adjust to taste.

Download the complete Fender Setup Cheat Sheet at owningafender.com/products/fender-setup-guide

Thanks for downloading!

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