

MAKING ROOM FOR MUSIC

ACOUSTIC ROOMS FOR CONSUMERS



The placement of your humidifier (centered, in the foreground) should be as far from the guitars, windows, and electronics as possible. As long as the room remains at a constant 50 percent relative humidity, the guitars and electronics should be fine. If you experience condensation on the windows, place a rolled-up towel along the length of the window sill. The towel will absorb any excess moisture. Replace the towel as needed.

BY TERRY MYERS

As owners of high-end instruments, Taylor customers have an investment in their guitars. As we've become more aware of the many players who own *more* than one Taylor, I've decided to address one of my favorite subjects: humidity — but this time with a twist.

In different ways and from a number of angles, we've communicated the importance of keeping your guitars in their cases, and using "Dampits" during the cold/dry winter months (or in extremely dry regions of the country). But although we've mentioned that some people have dedicated "music rooms" where they live, we've never

discussed the particulars of creating a special, climate-controlled room in your home in which to properly store your instruments. Until now.

There are a variety of approaches to creating such a space, and while I might not have *all* the answers, the following should cover the basic do's and don'ts. The information specifically applies to humidifying a room somewhere in the main, attached part of your home. But it also should be of use to those of you who have been thinking of creating a music room in another environment, such as in a studio, garage, office, and the like.

The Positives

- Because the goal is to maintain the optimal playability and prolong the life of your guitars, the overriding purpose of a music room is to replicate, as much as possible, the environment in which the guitars were made. The climate-controlled area of our factory is set to remain at 75 degrees (Fahrenheit) and 47-percent relative humidity (RH) all year long. So, obviously, those levels would work best to maintain your guitars at exact factory specs.
- If possible, use the smallest and coolest room in your home for a dedicated music room. It is easier to maintain the proper relative humidity levels in a smaller space, and the humidifier won't have to work too hard. Also, the coolest rooms naturally will maintain higher levels of humidity.
- Purchase a digital hygrometer to monitor the levels of relative humidity in the room (available at Radio Shack outlets for about \$28). Digital hygrometers usually are the most accurate. The needle read-out type occasionally will go out of calibration, leaving you with a false sense of security. *However*, even digital hygrometers can be inaccurate to a small plus-or-minus degree. For example, if your hygrometer reads 45 percent RH but is off by five percent, it might *actually* be 40 percent RH in your room, which is a little dry. For this reason, it is prudent to maintain a good, solid 50 percent level, which gives you a little margin for error. Slightly higher humidity will not significantly affect your instrument, but slight dryness can.



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- Place the hygrometer on the opposite wall from the humidifier to receive an accurate reading of the overall room.

- To keep a room in the 50 percent RH range, purchase a free-standing, 10- to 15-gallon home humidifier from Sears, from your local home center, or from an industrial supplier, such as Grainger.

Note: Although many homes have central humidification systems that work in conjunction with their central heating, I have rarely found these to keep a home in a true 50-percent range of relative humidity. As with hygrometers, the needle readouts on these humidity-stats frequently go out of calibration. Also, in most homes the humidity will vary from room to room, due to the amount and length of heating/air ducts, and the open/close factor of the vents.

- If there is a heating duct in the room, close it off as much as possible. Too much heat entering the room will quickly counteract your humidifier by evaporating the moisture it produces. A room maintained at a temperature of 65 degrees will not adversely affect your guitar.

- A room lined in *solid wood*, such as cedar planking, is ideal. The wood will retain moisture, providing an additional measure of protection for your guitars. It also will help to keep the humidifier from over-exerting itself. Hardwood floors are similarly beneficial.

- When it's extremely cold outside, humidifying a room to the recommended extent can cause your windows to "sweat," or form condensation, on the inside surface. To alleviate this, roll up a cloth towel and place it on the window sill.

- Make sure the room has a good, solid-core entry/exit door, and adequate weather-stripping on doors and

windows. This will help retain the area's moisture level.

The Negatives

- If your music room doubles as a recording studio, it is wise to keep the humidifier at the *maximum* distance from your electronics.

- Using spotlights in a room can enhance the "presentation" aspect of showcasing your instruments, but it is not advisable to do so. Lights generate heat, and when directed at or positioned close enough to the guitars to produce the desired aesthetic effect, they can dry out your guitars. Lights also can lower the humidity level in the room.

- Do not leave your guitars hanging higher than eye-level. As we all know, heat rises. In rooms with high ceilings, the humidity level can be as much as *10 percent lower* in the vertical space between eye level and 12 feet.

- Do not leave the room's windows or doors open for extended periods.

- Do not hang your instruments directly over the humidifier or within three feet of it.

General information

We're continually preaching to leave your guitars in their protective cases when they're not in use. A climate- and humidity-controlled room is the only safe, reasonable environment in your home in which it is permissible to leave your guitars out of their cases. When taking on a project like this, remember that maintaining the humidity levels in the room is just as important as keeping a guitar humidified when it is inside its case. Regularly refilling the room humidifier is even more important than re-wetting your Dampits, because in a room the instruments are more vulnerable to environmental elements. If you *do* leave your

guitars exposed in a music room, it is even more imperative that you know how to "sight-read" signs of dryness in your guitars (as outlined in the Taylor Tech-Sheet, "Sight-reading Humidity").

Some adjustment to a climate-controlled environment might be necessary. Although 50-percent RH normally is not considered "high" humidity, to a person conditioned to 10- to 30-percent humidity, it could feel like the Amazon basin. Conversely, to someone accustomed to the high humidity levels of, say, tropical climes, which can stay at the 75- to 90-percent level for long periods, 50 percent would feel absolutely arid.

Dehumidifying for humid climates

If you live in a region of the country known to experience long stretches of high humidity (RH consistently 70 percent or higher), such as the Deep South or the tropics, there are two ways to keep the situation in check.

- 1) Central air conditioning acts as a dehumidifier for your home, and will aid in keeping your instruments in good working condition. For example, if the humidity outside is consistently 90 percent, central air conditioning will reduce the RH level inside your home to approximately 60-65 percent.

- 2) If your relative humidity levels are high and you *do not* have central air conditioning, a *dehumidifier* in your music room is required to maintain safe levels (in the 50 percent range).

Dehumidifiers can be purchased just as readily as humidification units. As outlined above, a digital hygrometer also will be needed to monitor the humidity levels of the room.

Those who might require more specific information are welcome to call our customer service department at (619) 258-6957.

