

TAYLOR TECH SHEET
A WINTER'S TALE

**TRACKING THE
PROGRESSIVE EFFECTS OF
LOW RELATIVE HUMIDITY
ON YOUR GUITAR**

45% -55% Relative Humidity (RH)

Your guitar is in the same good condition as when it left the manufacturer.

40% RH

Sharp frets might appear, as the fretboard slightly shrinks from the loss of moisture.

35% RH

Your guitar now has sharp, uncomfortable frets. Some fret filing is necessary. Your solid acoustic top begins to shrink. No cracking is apparent, but the neck needs some adjustment and the action begins to lower.

30% RH

You might or might not see the first crack appear on your solid top, depending on a lot of factors. But chances are good that the guitar has lost an ounce of water, and the top has shrunk almost 1/8-inch in width. This

is what wood does. Because it is glued to the sides and braces, the tension on the top increases as it loses moisture and it somehow has to relieve that tension. Some tops might crack, others might not. In any case, guitars that have been exposed long enough will be in embarrassingly bad playing condition. They definitely are *not* in the condition intended by the manufacturer and should be restored.

25% RH

By now, the problems with your guitar are getting pretty obvious. For one thing, it might require some kind of fret dressing. You might be spending time on the phone asking the guitar manufacturer or your dealer how to remedy the situation. You might mistakenly believe that the problem is with that one guitar, or even that one *brand* of guitar — that, in other words, it is an isolated problem. It is not. If the “problem” guitar has cracked, your other solid-wood guitars have sunken tops that are on the verge of cracking. Meanwhile, you probably are upset with the manufacturer *and* the dealer.

20% RH

You guitar is cracking, that's all there is to it. You're becoming frustrated, and you wonder why manufacturers can't “get it together.” You don't remember this happening in past winters that seemed just as cold. It's possible that the humidity during previous winters hovered around 29% — just enough to get by. If you're not accurately measuring your humidity with good gauges, you can't say.

15% RH

Forget it. There's no hope of maintaining your guitar in playable condition unless you use a soundhole humidifier or have a humidified “music room.” If you have such a room, you could maintain a 50 % RH level in the area where your guitar is stored, no matter how dry it is elsewhere in the house or outdoors. And you could get on with the business of *playing* your guitar instead of being aggravated by it.

