

EXPLANATION & CONVERTING GUITAR GRADING SYSTEMS

Since the 15th Edition *Blue Book of Acoustic Guitars* continues to use the descriptive grading system of Average and Excellent factors to describe condition, please study the digital color acoustic guitar condition photos on the following pages carefully to help understand and identify each acoustic guitar's unique condition factor. These photos, with condition factors, serve as a guideline, not an absolute. Remember, if the condition factor isn't right, the price is wrong!

The Acoustic Guitar Factor chart listed below has been provided to help you understand the Photo Grading System™ and other condition factors that may be used in the industry. All percentage descriptions and/or possible conversions made thereof are based on original condition - alterations, repairs, cracking, refinishing work, and any other non-original alterations that have changed the condition of an instrument must be listed additionally and typically subtracted from the values based on condition throughout this text (please refer to page 23 for an explanation of these critical factors affecting both condition and price).

ACOUSTIC GUITAR CONDITION FACTORS WITH EXPLANATIONS

100%/New - New with all factory materials, including warranty card, owner's manual, case, and other items that were originally included by the manufacturer. On currently manufactured instruments, the 100% value refers to an instrument not previously sold at retail. Even if a new instrument has been played only once and traded in a week later, it no longer qualifies at 100% - no dealer is going to buy the same guitar at the 100%/New price since they can buy it at the wholesale price. Likewise, no independent buyer would buy a used guitar when they could buy one brand new from the same dealer. The 100%/New condition factor only applies to guitars that are currently manufactured or that have been discontinued no later than 2007 since it may take a while for inventory to sell out. It is instinctive to consider the 100%/New condition factor a "mint" category, but the reality on vintage instruments is that if it is truly mint, it needs to be evaluated and appraised individually.

Excellent & Average condition factors are typically represented by a price range that reflects the high and low condition factors in each range. Obviously, an Average acoustic with a lot of body wear (low average) is less desirable than an Average acoustic with little body wear (high average) - and should be priced accordingly.

Excellent - the Excellent condition range is represented by both High Excellent and Low Excellent condition. High Excellent refers to an instrument that is very clean, looks almost new (perhaps a few light scratches/dings only), and has hardly been used. Low Excellent refers to a guitar that has been played/used, and has accumulated some minor wear in the form of light scratches, dings, small chips, etc. The older an instrument, the less likely it will be in High Excellent condition. Even Low Excellent is seldom encountered on instruments over 50 years old, since most acoustic instruments were originally purchased to be played. High Excellent condition also includes currently manufactured instruments that have been previously sold at retail, even though they may have only played a few times. On recently manufactured instruments, there usually is a fairly large price difference between the 100% and High Excellent condition factors due to used instrument pricing which typically is affected by dealer replacement costs. Instruments in this condition may not have the original manufacturer's warranty card, depending on the age of the instrument, but should include the original case if it was included when new.

Average - The Average guitar condition factor indicates an acoustic guitar that has been in a player's hands and has worn due to player use (hopefully, no abuse). High Average condition instruments have normal dents, small chips, and light dings on the body, and/or scratches on the top and back. However, there should be no problems unless indicated separately. Low Average condition instruments may reflect major finish problems, replacement parts, previous repairs (especially on older instruments), alterations, and neck/fret wear is typically visible. No excuses as a player, however. May or may not have case.

Below Average - Finish and or colors are still discernible, some parts possibly missing/replaced/repared, could be either refinished or repaired, structurally sound, though frequently encountered with non-factory alterations and other problems. Must be playable. This condition factor is not valued in the *Blue Book of Acoustic Guitars*.

Poor - Ending a life sentence of hard labor, must still be playable, most of the licks have left, family members should be notified immediately, normally not worthy unless the ad also mentions pre-war D-45. May have to double as kindling if in a tight spot on a cold night. This condition factor is not valued in the *Blue Book of Acoustic Guitars*.