

How To Make Your Own Bottleneck Guitar Slide

There is nothing like the soulful sound of an old glass bottleneck on an acoustic guitar.

Lots of myths and stories abound on how to make a good slide from a bottleneck. One of my favorites, is where an old bluesman used to take a piece of twine and soak it in kerosene wrap it around the neck of the bottle, light it on fire and when it burns out, plunge it in a bucket of icewater. Presto ! the bottle is supposed to break off clean at that point and then only takes a little grinding on the sidewalk to polish off the edge. This sounds good, but after trying it several times, I can tell you that more than likely, you will get jagged break at best, and the bottle with crack and fall apart at worst.

I will tell you how to make your own bottleneck slide. First, find a bottle, usually a wine bottle, but lots of other types of bottles will work as well. There are two basic types of bottles you should be looking for, one has a straight neck and the other has a flared or slightly curved neck. There are pros and cons to each. I prefer using the straighter type. but other players like the curve, as it makes it a little easier to play on the lower strings. My advice is to try both types and see what you like the best. There are no rules here! Some other considerations, are the thickness and color of the bottle. The color is personal choice, but the thickness is very important. Use a thin bottleneck, and the sound you get will be wimpy and no one wants wimpy. Try to find bottles with thicker necks that you can also stick your finger into. I use my little finger, but here again, no rules. Use the finger you feel most comfortable with.

Once you have found a bottle you like, get a couple more, as the odds are you will probably break one or two before you really perfect this operation.

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There are some other methods along that line as well, but what I have found works the best is to use a glass cutter, a large nail and some emery paper.

First take the glass cutter and scribe a line around the neck of the bottle at the length you would like. Opps, here is another thing you might consider as well. Some players like the lip of the bottle left on the slide, others do not. I do not, so I have to cut off the lip. Do this first before removing the neck from the bottle. If you really get into this, you can still find a device called the Fleming bottle cutter, or some such thing, I have seen them on Ebay and in thriftstores, etc. These make it easy to keep the scribe line straight, but not really necessary if you are only going to make one or two slides.

After making your scribe lines, carefully start tapping on the line from the **INSIDE** of the bottle with the head of a **VERY LARGE** nail. Do this carefully and you will be able to make a clean break of the neck from the bottle. Another thing you can do is heat the nail with a torch or over the stove and just keep pressure on the scribe line with the nail. (Again, you are putting the pressure from the inside of the bottleneck).

Like I said, practice on a few bottles and you will get the hang of it. After breaking off the neck, you can use the emery paper to smooth the sharp edges off. Be very careful as the edge will be razor sharp until you sand it smooth.

Practice and patience will yield your own "bottleneck" guitar slide. This will have much more "mojo" than the wimpy Pyrex slide they sell at your local music store.

Short note about the author

Denny Tryon is an author and slide guitarist. Please visit his website <http://www.slideplayer.com> "The best slide guitar resource on the internet"

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